

of Wang Jingwei; and the wartime burning of Changsha, to name only a few), the conclusion is that Chiang “may” have been or “perhaps” was involved, but that he “probably” was not involved or that it was “unlikely” that he was involved. In his treatment of dissent, “Chiang was capable of ordering hundreds of assassinations and kidnappings ... and perhaps he did. But the evidence is not clear” (p. 105).

The sting of Chiang’s actions is often downplayed. Zhang Xueliang’s half-century house imprisonment was a “boring (but not unpleasant) experience” (p. 141); can any such lengthy confining prison sentence in whatever abode ever really be “not unpleasant”? After blowing up the dikes of the Yellow River, Chiang showed no remorse: “He spent little time expressing sympathy for human suffering, *but few leaders in the great war did*” (p. 155; emphasis added). Prices at the end of 1941 were twenty times higher than before the war: “a high figure but low considering the ... circumstances” (p. 184); most suffering consumers would probably not have “considered the circumstances.”

It is in the Chiang-Stilwell controversy that black and white appear most starkly. In Taylor’s eyes (as in Chiang’s diary), Joseph Stilwell had few redeeming qualities. For Stilwell, he says, “life was categorical, nuances nonexistent” (p. 192). Stilwell is depicted here as unqualified, vindictive, wrong-headed, and mean-spirited. Foreign service officers John Paton Davies and John Service, also critics of Chiang, had similar “black and white views of Chinese politics, ... curiously devoid of perspective or nuance” (p. 220). Ironically, in his treatment of these relationships, the author’s interpretation borders on being similarly “nuance-less.” In the end, though I would have wished for more nuanced analyses in places, Taylor has provided the first well-researched, serious biographical study of Chiang. Future studies must begin with this important book.

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*Taiwan Film Directors: A Treasure Island.* By EMILIE YUEH-YU YEH and DARRELL WILLIAM DAVIS. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005. x, 296 pp. \$28.00 (paper); \$75.00 (cloth).

*Cinema Taiwan: Politics, Popularity and State of the Arts.* Edited by DARRELL WILLIAM DAVIS and RU-SHOU ROBERT CHEN. London: Routledge, 2007. xvii, 236 pp. \$180.00 (cloth); \$49.95 (paper).

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The field of Taiwan cinema recently has witnessed a burst of new energy and talents, evidenced by a stream of books and collections of essays. However, few studies are devoted exclusively to Taiwan cinema. In June Yip’s *Envisioning Taiwan: Fiction, Cinema, and the Nation in the Cultural Imaginary* (Durham,

N.C.:Duke University Press, 2004); *Chinese-Language Film: Historiography, Poetics, Politics*, edited by Sheldon Lu and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005); Michael Curtin's *Playing to the World's Biggest Audience: The Globalization of Chinese Film and TV* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007); Tonglin Lu's *Confronting Modernity in the Cinemas of Taiwan and Mainland China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); and *Chinese Films in Focus II*, edited by Chris Berry (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), Taiwan cinema is studied in a comparative context of Chinese-language film, or treated as one of the art forms, among fiction, television, and theater, that have shaped and reflected political and social changes. *Island On The Edge: Taiwan New Cinema And After*, edited by Feii Lu and Chris Berry (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005) is an anthology of essays on "Taiwan New Cinema" with a heavy emphasis on Hou Hsiao-hsien.

While covering some of the same ground, *Taiwan Film Directors* and *Cinema Taiwan* complement these works. They address different issues in a broader context—to include nonfiction and independent filmmaking—and a wider historical framework beyond the period since the mid-1980s, when Taiwan filmmakers began to receive international attention. Devoted exclusively to the history of Taiwan cinema, these two books amply demonstrate why Taiwanese filmmakers matter.

*Taiwan Film Directors* provides a much-needed, comprehensive history of Taiwan cinema from the end of World War II through Taiwan New Cinema to its recent interactions with Hollywood. The volume integrates two voices: two chapters written by Yeh, two by William, and the rest cowritten by the two scholars. As suggested by the title, the structure and approach of the book reflect the authors' belief that "directors now take precedence over national cinema and the nation-state" (p. 6). The introduction and the first two chapters survey the social and political conditions of Taiwan, developing and contrasting the notions of Taiwan as an "Island of Greed" and a "Treasure Island." Though the authors allude to approaches inspired by Clifford Geertz's method of "thick description," the study is far from ethnographic. The book is auteur oriented, augmented by historical analyses (such as the forces of nativism and Hou Hsiao-hsien's films). In their analysis of key characteristics of Taiwan's directors, the authors suggest that some films are themselves "thick productions," such as Edward Yang's thickly textured *A Brighter Summer Day* (p. 93) and King Hu's films, supported by meticulous study of period details and "archival authentication" (p. 50). The two opening historical chapters balance the remaining four chapters' close readings of four well-known directors (Edward Yang, Hou Hsiao-hsien, Ang Lee, and Tsai Ming-liang) by introducing lesser-known but equally interesting filmmakers—Li Xing, Bai Jing-rui, Li Hanxiang, and King Hu in chapter 1, and Wang Tong, Xiao Ye, Wu Nienzhen, and Wan Ren in chapter 2.

The four directors are chosen for in-depth analysis because of the centrality of the question of Taiwanese identity in their works. Each of the single-director chapters delves into the visual strategies and details of selected films that may go unnoticed at first glance. The attention to details is remarkable, as is the study's capacity to initiate fruitful conversations between seemingly oppositional critical

practices informed by formal features and the politics of reality. Chapter 3 on Yang, “a moralist” according to Yeh and Davis, culminates in a reassessment of Fredric Jameson’s essay “Remapping Taipei,” which hails Yang as representative of the global postmodernity despite his relative marginality. They question whether “the allegory of space in the world system” is the best way to approach Yang’s work (p. 129). Chapter 4 delineates the theme of cultural patrimony in Hou’s films featuring “borrowed” autobiographies from Shen Congwen, Zhu Tianwen, Wu Nianzhen, and Li Tianlu (*The Puppetmaster*, 1993). The thematic close reading is rewarding, although the concise treatment of some films may leave some readers disappointed. *City of Sadness*, often considered a landmark in Hou’s career, is only mentioned in passing. Chapter 5 pursues the same theme in Ang Lee’s works and explores how his Confucian motifs and diligent craftsmanship transformed Hollywood and Taiwan film cultures. Chapter 6 traces the complex relationship between Tsai’s camp aesthetic and the “pan-Chinese cultural patrimony.” The authors claim that even though camp is rarely employed in studying Asian film directors, it is a “powerful strategy to account for” Tsai’s unique obsessions (p. 14).

*Taiwan Film Directors* would serve as a practical textbook, as evidenced by its structure and design. Yeh and Davis are mindful that readers may not have seen every film under discussion and preface their analyses with short, clear descriptions of relevant scenes. They chose their films with an eye toward the general readership and students, citing “sheer availability” as one of their criteria for movies receiving extended discussion (p. 11).

Prefaced by Ping-hui Liao, *Cinema Taiwan* casts a wider net to capture the interlocking meanings generated by transnational capital, local practice, and media representations in contemporary popular and film cultures. While *Taiwan Film Directors* focuses on canonized, internationally acclaimed directors, *Cinema Taiwan* collates fourteen richly illustrated historical essays on a wide range of issues and examines established directors alongside new Taiwan filmmakers. A selected filmography and Chinese glossary are also provided.

Davis defines contemporary “Cinema Taiwan” in terms of its unsettled, heterogeneous quality: “if Taiwan New Cinema was a reaction to a Cold War propaganda industry, ... today’s Cinema Taiwan is at once more market-driven and cosmopolitan, more jagged and factional” (p. 5). In the introduction, which opens with the mythologized figure Wu Feng, Davis rehearses the transformation of Taiwan cinema from a “civilizing mission” to a site of “charged political [and] social contestation” (p. 3). He also surveys recent developments in critical theories (Jameson’s “Mapping Taipei” is also discussed) that have opened cinematic imaginations to visual thinking and a platform for discussion of cross-media issues, “consolidating film scholarship as a postcolonial civilizing act” (p. 6). The book’s metacritical stance suggests a rather different readership, comprising field specialists and film scholars in general, than that for *Taiwan Film Directors*.

The book is divided into three parts. Essays by Kuei-fen Chiu, Chris Berry, Yomi Braester, Robert Chi, and Chi-chi Wu in the first part explore the politics of representation. Of special interest is Braester’s argument about “the impossible task of Taipei films” to “find a new city for every film, and yet at the same

time allude to the same place and root the images in its specific locations” (p. 58). Through an analysis of *My Whispering Plan* (2002, dir. Qu Youning), the essay brings artistic struggles with the rapidly changing cityscape into dialogue with politics of demolition. In his essay on Taiwan in Maoist, reform era, and global Chinese cinema, Chi theorizes the productive “(mis)representations” of contemporary Taiwan by mainland artists, and argues that they reveal not only historical contingencies but also “the future in ideology, politics [and] cinema itself” (p. 61).

Part II contains essays by Hsiao-hung Chang, Ru-shou Robert Chen, James Tweedie, Frank Martin, and Darrell Davis that explore the question of popularity in puppetry, *wuxia*, horror films, and other genres. Two of the essays explore contrasting aspects of *Double Vision* (2002, dir. Chen Kuo-fu). Inspired by the film’s high-concept tagline (“There is only what you believe”) and its “dualism of reality/fiction, science/occult, US FBI/Taiwanese police,” Chen situates the film in the contexts of spatialized narrative, visual realism, and special effects (p. 109). Tweedie’s analysis of films by Chen Kuo-fu, Tsai Ming-liang, and others (including Chen’s *Double Vision*) demonstrates the continuities between Taiwan’s art cinema and European “city films.” Tweedie’s and Braester’s essays on the images of Taipei on screen complement each other. Davis covers a lot of ground in his essay titled “Trendy in Taiwan: Problems of Popularity in the Island’s Cinema.” Analyzing the incredibly rich cross-fertilization among Taiwan’s puppet theater, television, comics, and cinema box office, he observes that “into the new millennium, a fresh but fragile force is trying to re-grow the popular market for Taiwan pictures” (pp. 155–56).

Part II, with essays by Peter Rist, Yung Hao Liu, James Udden, and Emilie Yeh, is entitled “State of the Arts.” Collectively, the essays historicize and theorize the aesthetic decisions and shifting “directorial signatures” of King Hu, Tsai Ming-liang (Liu’s detailed analysis of the opening credits of *Goodbye Dragon Inn*), Ang Lee, and Hou Hsiao-hsien. Thorough in its historical and historiographical analysis, Yeh’s essay, in particular, would work well as an introduction to the concept of *wenyi* film for students. She starts with the question of the less than ideal Chinese reception of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and suggests that the answer lies in film style (Lee experimenting with unpredictable and combinations of *wuxia* and *wenyi* genres) rather than simply cultural or political differences, as most critics have suggested.

Both *Taiwan Film Directors* and *Cinema Taiwan* offer considerable original research and valuable materials. They open new vistas for the study of Taiwan film and entertainment culture.

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