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Auteurism and Taiwan New Cinema

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…le ciéma d'auteur devient *persona non grata* à Taiwan ….
(the *auteur* film has become an unwelcome guest in Taiwan)
—*Cahiers du cinéma*

Introduction

Following Edward Yang's death on June 29, 2007, the September issue that year of the French film journal *Cahiers du cinéma* paid homage to the Taiwan New Cinema director. Jean-Michel Frodon lamented his untimely death, which prevented him from completing several projects, including *Wind Chaser* (*zhuifeng* 追風), an animated film inspired by Tetsuka Osamu's *manga*.[1] In addition, Yang, together with Hou Hsiao-hsien, are eulogized as the leading figures "of the young Taiwanese cinema" (du jeune ciéma Taiwanais), meaning Taiwan New Cinema. Most notable is Frodon's high regard for this cinematic movement in 1980s Taiwan: "[It] accompanied the return of the island to democracy with a tremendous impulse of cinematic creation, and contributed to opening up the path to the flourish of the cinematography of the Far East, a principal event in the history of contemporary cinema" (principal événement de l'histore contemporaine du cinema).[2]

Especially worthy of our attention here is that Frodon refers to Yang as "auteur," a concept promoted by *Cahiers* when it helped establish the French cinematic

* This paper was first presented at the Conference on "History, Literature, and Auteurs: Revisiting Taiwan New Cinema" held at the Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy, Academia Sinica on Oct. 22-23, 2010. For the revision of this paper, I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments.

1 See Jean-Michel Frodon, "Espoir brisé" [Shattered Hope], *Cahiers du cinéma* 626 (2007): 66. Yang's other thwarted projects mentioned in the article are a whodunit about a Chinese policeman in Seattle; *Assassination*, a historic film set in 1930s Shanghai; and *Genius*, a film resuming the character of the little boy in *Yiyi* and starring Jackie Chan and Meg Ryan. Translation in this paper is mine unless otherwise indicated.

2 *Ibid.*

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movement *la nouvell vague* approximately from 1958 to 1964. Frodon, calling Taiwan New Cinema "la nouvelle vague," an unmistakable recognition of its affinity with its French counterpart, points out that "the auteur film becomes an unwelcome guest (persona non grata) in Taiwan."[3]

While the original Latin phrase "persona non grata" means "an unwelcome person," I am translating it into "an unwelcome guest" for double purposes. Other than for the sake of rendering the English smoother, the word "guest" indicates that Taiwan New Cinema was founded on the *auteur* theory, a concept alien to the island, or imported from France, to be more exact.

Identifying Taiwan New Cinema directors as *auteurs* has been an incontestable tribute to their achievements,[4] while they indeed pride themselves as such. It is well known that in their 1986 mission statement, cosigned by fifty film critics, directors, and literary men on Edward Yang's 40th birthday on October 6, they called themselves "auteurs" to distinguish themselves from commercial movie directors. They maintain that more government subsidies should be allotted to making "another cinema" (*lingyizhong dianying* 另一種電影), and that the media, "lacking knowledge and ridiculous in opinions," should improve and act as a support system for movies that have "earned prizes in international film festivals and promoted the national image abroad." According to the statement, film critics likewise do not measure up to their tasks:

> They [film critics] … criticize the *auteurs* who are endowed with creative intentions, and accuse them of "terminating the cinema" (*ba dianying wanwan le* 把電影玩完了). Attacking their kind of movie as "dull," these critics urge Taiwan cinema to learn from Hong Kong and Hollywood movies. [5]

The condescending tone disclosed here is incontestable. It is obvious that our self-proclaimed *auteurs* considered themselves way above not only commercial movie directors—such as those of the healthy realism genre or romance films—but also the

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[3] *Ibid*.

[4] See Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh and Darrell William Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors: A Treasure Island*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), pp. 6-9. When discussing the emergence of Taiwan New Cinema in the 1980s, Yeh and Darrell writes: "These Taiwan directors enjoy substantial attention, not as figures within the accustomed national cinema model but as *auteurs* of the international cinema, navigating the ceaseless roll of nation versus international, local versus global." See Yeh, p. 6.

[5] See Zhan Hong-zhi et al詹宏志等, "Minguo qishiliu nian Taiwan dianying xuanyan—gei lingyizhong dianying ige cunzai de kongjian" 民國七十六年台灣電影宣言——給另一種電影一個存在的空間[The Mission Statement of Taiwan Cinema in the Seventy-Sixth Year of the Republic of China: Give Another Cinema a Living Space], *United Daily* (24 January, 1987): 8, and DuYun-zhi杜雲之, "Qing buyao 'wanwan' guopin" 請不要『玩完』國片 [Please Don't 'Terminate' Our National Cinema], *Minshengbao* 民生報 [People's Life Daily] (29 August, 1985): 19.

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media and mediocre film critics. Thus with this outright elitism at war against Hong Kong and Hollywood films, they pronounced the mission of the most self-conscious movement in the history of Taiwan cinema. To many, this was also the end of the movement. Yet the belief in *auteurism* would continue to be embraced by Hou Hsiao-hsien, Edward Yang, and later Ts'ai Ming-liang for more than another decade, until Ts'ai's *Visage* in 2009, which epitomizes what Taiwan New Cinema stands for: film as a work of art and as the ultimate self-expression of the *auteur*.

Anyone familiar with *Cahiers du cinéma* is likely to remember that in its inaugurating issue in April 1951, the editorial statement took an elitist stance as well: it declares against "a malicious neutrality which tolerates a mediocre film, a prudent critique, or a stupid public" (une neutralité malveillante qui tolère un cinéma mediocre, une critique prudente et un public hébété).[6] But one should also keep in mind that the cover of the same issue presents Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard*, a 1950 Hollywood *film noir*.[7] Then the February 1952 issue published a fifteen-page special report on the American Western.[8] As will be discussed below, *Cahiers* has never turned its back on Hollywood- or Hong Kong-made commercial movies, as long as they are artistically distinguished as well. For *Cahiers* it is mediocrity that is detestable. Taiwan New Cinema directors' aversion to commercial films should not be attributed to *Cahiers* or the *auteur* theory it advocates. It is rather their own agenda: reaction against the popularity of not only the current trend of healthy realism in Taiwan film but also Hong Kong and Hollywood films; in their mind, popularity is equal to mediocrity.

How the New Cinema directors, following their unflinching faith in the French *auteur* theory, have become internationally and academically acclaimed is a phenomenon worth investigating in the history of cinema. For more than twenty years their *auteur* stature has been taken for granted. Few critics of Taiwan New Cinema, if any at all, ever look into *Cahiers du cinéma* to investigate the *auteur* theory, known as "la politique des auteurs," and the connotations of the honorific itself for the French.[9]

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[6] See "À Jean George Auriol" [To Jean George Auriol], *Cahiers du cinéma* 1 (1951): 9. The editorial pays tribute to Jean George Auriol (1863-1938), a poet, graphic designer, Art Nouveau artist, and the director and editor-in-chief of *La revue du cinema* (1929-31; 1946-9).

[7] Billy Wilder, *Sunset Boulevard*, *Cahiers du cinéma* 1 (1951): cover.

[8] Jean-Louis Rieupeyrout, "Un genre historique: le western" [A Historical Genre: the Western], *Cahiers du cinéma* 9 (1952): 4-18.

[9] One master thesis in Taiwan has investigated how the auteur theory informed the development of Taiwan New Cinema, but fails to examine the contents of the French theory itself. See Zhang Shilun張世倫, "Taiwan 'xindianying' lunshu xinggou zhi lishi fenxi (1965-2000)" 台灣「新電影」論述形構之歷史分析(1965-2000) [Historical Analysis of the Discursive Formation of "Taiwan New Cinema," 1965-2000] (Master thesis, National Chengchi University, 2001). See also Zhang Shilun, "Taiwan 'xindianying' yu guoji yingzhan luxian de xingcheng" 台灣「新電影」與國際影展路線的形成 [Taiwan New Cinema and the Formation of the Strategies of International Festivals], April 24, 2002. http://movie.cca.gov.tw/files/15-1000-648,c112-1.php

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It is time to examine *Cahiers* and the theory closely, and perhaps some light could be shed on why the *auteur* film has become a "persona non grata" in Taiwan.

I. *Auteurism* and *Cahiers du cinéma*

Before François Truffaut (1932-1984) launched the concept of *auteur* in 1954, *Cahiers* critics, including Jacques Doniol-Valcroze (1920-1989), André Bazin (1918-1958), and Eric Rohmer (1920-2010), had been engaging in a fierce battle against supporters of traditional French cinema. Their declared enemies included those who maintained the entertainment function of the movie; those who complained that they had controlled the jury of the Venice Film Festival and awarded films that would never be commercially successful; and journals in league with the leftist press.[10] Truffaut arrived on the scene with an article defending "American small films" (petits films américains) such as David Miller's 1952 thriller starring Joan Crawford, *Sudden Fear*, as a critique of the current French "cinema of quality" (le cinéma de qualité).[11] Then in the January 1954 article, "A Certain Tendency of French Cinema" (Une certaine tendance du cinéma français), Truffaut relentlessly attacked the "cinema of quality," or the school of "psychological realism" developed from the prewar "poetic realism."[12]

According to Truffaut, the movies of psychological realism, mostly adapted from bourgeois novels that belonged to the "tradition of quality," created the facile, shallow anti-bourgeois sentiment that movie goers were comfortable with: "Under the cover of literature—and, of course, of quality—one provides to the public its habitual doze of darkness, non-conformism, and facile audacity" (Sou le courvert de la literature—et bien sûr de la qualité—on donne au public sa dose habituelle de noirceur, de non-conformisme, de facile audace).[13] According to him, these movies often copy Hollywood films; worst of all, they tend to repeat themselves: "It is not exaggerating to say that the hundred odd French films shot each year tell the same

[accessed September 17, 2010]. For critics and journals promoting auteurism from the 1960s to 1980s, see my following discussion.

10 See Antoine De Baecque, *Les Cahiers du cinéma: Histoire d'une revue, 1951-1959* [Cahiers du cinema: History of a Journal, 1951-1959], vol. 1 (Paris: Seuil, 1991). According to Baecque, the three camps were represented by the following journals: 1) *Reflets du cinéma*, 2) *France film international*, and 3) *Les letters françaises*, *L'humanité*, *La nouvelle critique* and the leftist magazines.

11 See François Truffaut, "Les extremes me touchent (*Sudden Fear*)" [The Extremes Move Me (*Sudden Fear*)], *Cahiers du cinéma* 21 (1953): 61-63.

12 See François Truffaut, "Une certaine tendance du cinéma français" [A Certain Tendency of French Cinéma], *Cahiers du cinéma* 31 (1954): 15-29.

13 *Ibid*., p. 21.

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story: it is always about a victim, usually a cuckold" (il n'est pas exagéré de dire que les cent et quelques films français réalizés chaque année racontent la même histoire: il s'aigt toujours d'une victime, en general un cocu).[14] Truffaut scoffs at the concept of "realism" as seen in these movies, and analyses as an example Jean Aurenche's and Pierre Bost's adaptation of Raymond Radiguet's 1923 novel, *The Devil in the Body* (*Le diable au corps*) in 1947. According to him, this kind of movie, despite its commercial success, is unbearably mediocre, because the directors, trying to be "faithful" to the original work, consider themselves to be writers (littérateurs) and are underestimating the technicality of film making.[15] Truffaut calls these movies "films of scriptwriters" (films de scénarists), because the directors think that when they hand in the script, the film is made, and "the *metteur-en-scène*, in their eyes, is the mister who adds pictures thereupon" (le metteur en scène, à leur yeux, est le monsieur qui met des cadrages là-dessus).[16] Truffaut thinks the mediocre films of these directors are to blame for the public's low level; in contrast, the *auteurs* intend to educate the public (nos auteurs qui voulaient éduquer le public).[17]

Truffaut, following Alexander Astruc's 1948 declaration of the arrival of the age of the "camera-stylo" (camera-pen),[18] advocates the kind of director who functions like the *metteur-en-scène* in stage production, and who is the "auteur" to a film as is the author to a literary work. According to him, *auteurs* are "men of cinema" rather than scriptwriters, *metteurs-en-scène* rather than writers (hommes de cinema et non plus de scenarists, de metteurs en scène et non plus de littérateurs). He declares the impossible peaceful coexistence of the tradition of quality with the cinema of *auteurs*, and names the following as *auteurs*: Robert Bresson, Jean Cocteau, Jacques Becker, Abel Gance, Max Ophuls, Jacques Tati, Roger Leenhardt, who often write the dialogue and some of them invent the scripts themselves.[19] They will be members of *la nouvelle vague*, the movement launched with the *auteur* theory in mind by *Cahiers* critics.

In the same issue in which Truffaut's "A Certain Tendency of French Cinema" appeared, Jacques Rivette, commenting on a 1953 American movie by Henry Koster,

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14 *Ibid*., p. 23.

15 *Ibid*., p. 20. The novels adapted into movies since 1943 include Michel Davet's *Douce* in 1943, André Gide's *La symphonie pastorale* [The Pastoral Symphony] in 1946, Henri Queffelec's *Un recteur à l'ile de Sein* [A Rector on the Island of Sein] in 1950, François Boyer's *Les jeux inconnus* [Unknown Games] (film: *Les jeux interdits* [The Forbidden Games]) in 1952 and Sidonie-Gabrielle Colette's *Le blé en herbe* [Green Wheat] in 1954.

16 *Ibid*., p. 25.

17 *Ibid*., p. 28.

18 See James Monaco, "Introduction: the Camera Writes," *The New Wave* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 3-12. Alexander Astruc's article "Birth of a New Vanguard – the Camera-Stylo" was published in *L'écran français* in March 1948.

19 See James Monaco, *The New Wave* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 26-27.

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The Robe, announces the coming of the "Age of the *metteur-en-scène*."[20] Calling Koster a genius who goes beyond his time, Rivette lists four masters in the history of technicolor, among whom three are Americans: Jean Renoir, Alfred Hitchcock, Howard Hawks, and Fritz Lang.[21] As is known, *The Robe*, an epic film about a Roman tribune who wins Christ's robe after the crucifixion, was the first film to be produced in CinemaScope, an anamorphic lens series invented by a Frenchman and promoted by Spyros Skouras, the president of 20th Century Fox.[22] Rivette claims that with the advent of CinemaScope, geniuses like Koster are needed.

Then in "Ali Baba and the politics of *auteurs*" (*Ali Baba* et 'La politique des auteurs,' 1955), a review article of Jacques Becker's film, Truffaut declared that he and his colleagues are practicing "the politics of *auteurs*," defending directors who deserved to be called *auteurs*.[23] Indeed the *auteurs* need to be defended, because few of the general public can understand their works. Truffaut himself confesses that he had to see the movie three times to like it: "The first time I saw it, I was disappointed; the second time, bored; the third time, passionate and overjoyed."[24] According to him, Ali Baba has "a charming power," (une emprise charmeuse) which the most lauded French movies that year fail to provide. He quotes a famous line from Jean Giradoux: "There are no works, there are only *auteurs*" (il n'y a pas d'oeuvres, il n'y a que des auteurs), and praises *Ali Baba* as "an *auteur* film." He concludes the article with this statement: "The technical success of Ali Baba confirms the legitimacy (le bien-fondé) of our politics, the politics of *auteurs*."[25]

While Truffaut, at the age of twenty-two, became the harbinger of the *auteur* theory, Bazin, as one of the founders of *Cahiers*, was its conscientious critic. An advocator of the Italian concept of "neo-realism," he was known to maintain that cutting and montage distort the representation of reality, and that the full shot, the single deep-focus panning shot, or the long shot, respecting the spatial unity of an event and the duration of an action, are better able to produce the real effect and to allow the spectator to contribute to the interpretation of the scene.[26] But one should note that he

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20 See Jacques Rivette, "L'âge des metteurs en scène" [The Age of Metteurs en scène], *Cahiers du cinéma* 31 (1954): 45-48. For an English translation, see Jacques Rivette, "The Age of Metteur en scène," in *Cahiers du Cinéma, the 1950s: Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave*, ed. Jim Hillier (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), pp. 275-279.

21 See Jacques Rivette, "L'âge des metteurs en scène," p. 48.

22 Peter Gray, "CinemaScope: A Concise History," [1993] 2003. See http://www.petergray.org/scopehist.html [accessed September 30, 2010].

23 See François Truffaut, "*Ali Baba* et la 'politique des Auteurs'" [Ali Baba and the Politics of Auteurs], *Cahiers du cinéma* 44 (1955): 45-47.

24 *Ibid*., p. 45.

25 *Ibid*., p. 47.

26 Cf. André Bazin's "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema" and "The Virtues and Limitations of Montage." The two parts of the former was first published in *Cahiers du cinéma* in 1953 and

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never excludes the use of montage; according to him, the use of the "expressionistic procedures" of montage "from time to time in between one-shot sequences" will be given a new meaning.[27] As early as 1950 he declares that "the director writes in film,"[28] and in 1951 he already talked about "filmed theater" and "la mise en scence" of the cinema when most critics were drawing attention to the resemblances between the cinema and the novel.[29] Yet after Truffaut's famous article "massacring" movies of the tradition of quality, Bazin published in the following issue an article supporting Claude Autant-Lara's *Le blé en herbe* based on Aurenche's screenplay adapted from Colette's novel.[30] In April 1957 his thorough critique of *auteurism*, "On the Politics of *Auteurs*" (De la politique des auteurs), appeared. It is through his critical examination of the theory that its central concept is made clear, in fact much clearer than Truffaut himself could have put it.

Bazin's article is worthy of careful scrutiny. He calls the difference between his views and those of his colleagues supporting the *auteur* theory "a quarrel in the family." He admits that, although he agrees generally with his colleagues, he differs from them in evaluating the role of the *auteur* in the film. For him the work itself surpasses its author (l'oeuvre dépasse son auteur), whereas they believe in the contrary—for them Hitchcock, Renois, Rosellini, Fritz Lang, Howard Hawks or Nicolas Ray are *auteurs* who can never make a bad movie.[31] In order to point out the

1957, and the three parts of the latter, in 1952, 1955, and 1950 respectively.

27 André Bazin, "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema," in *What is Cinema?*, vol. 1, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p. 36.

28 *Ibid*., p. 39.

29 André Bazin, "Theater and Cinema," in *What is Cinema?*, vol. 1, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p. 76-124. The article has two parts, both originally published in *Esprit* in 1951.

30 André Bazin, "Les incertitudes de la fidélité (Le Blé en Herbe)," *Cahiers du cinéma* 32 (1954): 37-42. According to Neupert, Truffaut's article on the tradition of quality was severely criticized by Bazin before it was published: "It was not until January 1954, after more than one year of revisions and deliberations, that Doniol-Valcroze and Bazin agreed to publish 'A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema': even then, Doniol-Valcroze published a careful editorial preparing the readers for Truffaut's 'massacre,' as de Baecque terms it." See Richard Neupert, *A History of the French New Wave Cinema*, 2nd ed. (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), p. 31. De Baecque's words are as follows: "Truffaut's article plays a game of massacre" (l'article de Truffaut tourne au jeu de massacre). See Antoine De Baecque, *Les Cahiers du cinéma: Histoire d'une revue, 1951-1959*, p. 101.

31 André Bazin, "De la politique des auteurs" [On the Politics of Auteurs], *Cahiers du cinéma* 70 (1957): 2-11. For an English translation, see André Bazin, "On the *politique des auteurs*," in *Cahiers du Cinéma, the 1950s: Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave*, ed. Jim Hillier (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), pp. 248-259. Occasionally this English version eliminates passages from the original.

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fallacy of *auteurism*, he first refers to the fact that the *auteur* theory is applying to the cinema a notion of genius in art and literature established since the eighteenth century. He asks one crucial question: is "individualization" the most important element of a work of art? According to him, all geniuses are the composite of personal talent, natural gift, and socio-historical factors. In the case of cinema, which is a popular and industrial art, it is especially true. He admires American directors such as Chaplin, Hitchcock, and Orson Welles, and points out that the success of Hollywood depends on the vitality and excellence of its tradition as well as the personal characteristics of some directors. Furthermore, he maintains that even geniuses make mistakes or fail; one cannot presume that all works by a genius are masterpieces. According to him the key concepts of *auteurism* are as follows: 1) the politics of auteur maintains the superiority of *auteurs* over ordinary directors; 2) it supports the *auteurs* unconditionally, and maintains that even if the script is mediocre, it gives more room for the *auteur* to make personal contributions (la banalité du scenario laisse davantage de place a l'apport personnel de l'auterur); 3) no matter what the script is, the *auteur* is always a subject to himself and is always telling us the same story, from the same perspective and with the same moral judgment on the action of the actors. He agrees with Jacque Rivette that "the *auteur* is one who speaks in the first person" (l'autur est celui qui parle à la première personne). He concludes:

> The politics of *auteurs* consists, in short, of highlighting the personal factor in artistic creation as the criterion of reference, and then of postulating its permanence and even its progression from one work to the next. One admits that certain films that are "important" or "of quality" do not fit this mold, but no matter what, one will systematically prefer films—though based on the worst possible scripts—in which one can perceive the signature of the auteur like a watermark.
>
> (La "politique des auteurs" consiste, en somme, à élire dans la creation artistique le facteur personnel comme critère de reference, puis à postuler sa permanence et meme son progress d'une oeuvre à la suivante. On reconnaît bien qu'il existe des films "importants" ou de "qualité" qui échappent à cette grille, mais justement on leur préfèrera systématiquement ceux, fussent-ils sur le pire scenario de circonstance, où l'on peut lire, en filigrane, le blazon de l'auteur.)[32]

To Bazin the danger of *auteurism* is its inclination towards "an aesthetic cult of personality" (une culte esthétique de la personalité), and as a result all the movies of an *auteur*, even second-rate ones, are considered masterpieces, while the masterpieces of those whose films have been considered second-rate may be neglected. Bazin died of leukemia the following year and missed the chance of witnessing the birth of *la nouvelle vague* in France. If he had lived on and continued to act as the relentless critic of *la politique des auteurs*, would it have made any difference? This will of course

[32] André Bazin, "De la politique des auteurs," p.10. For another English translation, see André Bazin, "On the *politique des auteurs*," p. 255.

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remain an unanswered question.

It is exactly the "aesthetic cult of personality" intrinsic in "the signature of the *auteur*" Bazin cautioned against that has molded Taiwan New Cinema. It is the indulgence in the self that, starting the late 1980s, gradually drove away domestic audiences and inevitably made the *auteur* film *persona non grata* in Taiwan, as will be discussed later in this paper.

II. *Auteurism* as a Discourse in Taiwan

The success story of Taiwan New Cinema constantly winning prizes in international film festivals should be attributed to not only the talent of the directors themselves, but also efforts of film critics such as Peggy Chiao, Huang Jianye, and Chen Guofu at the time. They deliberately orchestrated the structuring of the *auteur* discourse while establishing connections with international film critics. One of their efforts was to approach people such as Tony Ryans from England, Marco Muller from Italy, Satō Tadao from Japan, and the French director Olivier Assayas, the then film critic of *Cahiers du cinema*.[33]

The first article on Taiwan New Cinema published in *Cahiers* was Olivier Assayas's seven-page essay, "Our Reporter on the Republic of China" (Notre reporter en République de Chine) in December 1984.[34] In the article he compares the new generation of Taiwan directors to the French new wave (quleque chose comme une nouelle vague de Taiwan). According to him, the new wave directors in Taiwan are much more independent and audacious than those in Hong Kong, where the new wave is already "passée."[35] He describes in detail his invitation by Chen Guofu to Taipei via Hong Kong, including the visit to the Central Motion Pictures Corporation and the marathon-screenings of the young New Cinema directors' works in a small projection room for him, and his interviews with them later over a wonderful dinner at a "French restaurant with a Beverly Hills look." He is very much aware that his star treatment is due to his identity as the representative of *Cahiers du cinéma*, the most prestigious film journal in Europe. He is quick to perceive that, abhorring Hollywood and Hong

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[33] See Zhang Shilun, "Taiwan 'xindianying' yu guoji yingzhan luxian de xingcheng" 台灣「新電影」與國際影展路線的形成. For an introduction of these international film critics into Taiwan, see Huang Jianye 黃建業and Peggy Chiao, "Zhexieren yu naxieren—yanjiu Zhongguo dianying de waiguoren" 這些人與那些人——研究中國電影的外國人 [These and Those People: Foreigners who study Chinese Cinema], *Four Hundred Blows* 1 (1985): 19-23. See my discussion of the journal bellow.

[34] Olivier Assayas 阿薩亞斯, "Notre reporter en République de Chine" [Our Reporter on Republic of China], *Cahiers du cinéma* 366 (1984): 57-66.

[35] *Ibid*., p. 58.

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Kong movies (although he considers such an attitude "excessive"), they look towards Europe for models. He recognizes Hou Hsiao-hsien as a true follower of the *auteur* theory. Referring to Hou as the "auteur" of the title episode (l'auteur de l'épisode-titre) in *The Sandwich Man* (*Erzi de da wan'ou* 兒子的大玩偶; 1983), he is fascinated by his "dazzling intuition" (intuitions fulgurantes) and his "firm hold on the *auteurist* position" (prises de position auteuristes).[36] Hou's own words as recorded by Assayas is most revealing in this regard, seeming to be André Bazin speaking through his mouth:

> I am no longer interested in narrative. I try simply to render an objective point of view. I love the pan-sequences. It is like when you look at an accident or a fight on the street, there is one single point of view, your own, that is in continuum. . . . For me realism is not reconstituting an event, but rather restoring an experience while directly perceiving it [réstituer une expérience au travers de sa propre perception]. From this point of view, European cinema greatly helped me. It taught me, thanks to films such as Godard's *À bout de souffle* [Breathless; 1960] and Pialat's *Loulou* [1980], to undo the constraints of logic and the obligations of montage. I learned to free myself of useless shots.[37]

But I presume Bazin himself would not have approved of the last part of the statement, since he never said logic and montage should be totally discarded, as discussed before.

After his trip to Taipei, in addition to writing the long article for *Cahiers*, Assayas recommended to the 1984 Film Festival of Nantes Hou's film, *The Boys from Fengkuei* (*Fengkuei lai de ren* 風櫃來的人; 1983), which eventually won the best film that year. From then on Hou became a constant winner in international film festivals. For Assayas, this movie "à la Pasolini" was "an attempt at poetic realism unique in Asian cinema as a whole" (une tentative de vérisme poétique unique dans tout le cinéma asiatique).[38] Assayas has remained an enthusiastic promoter of Hou. In 1996 he even made a 91-minute documentary *HHH—un Portrait de Hou Hsiao-hsien*, featuring Hou and his collaborators such as Chen Guofu and Zhu Tianwen.[39] In 1999 a book on Hou was published in Paris, with a preface by Assayas. In 2005 the revised edition came out with a new interview with Hou on *Millenium Manbo* (千禧曼波; 2001) and critiques of the film and *Café lumière* (咖啡時光; 2004).[40]

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36 *Ibid*., pp. 58-62.

37 *Ibid*., pp. 61-62.

38 *Ibid*., p. 59.

39 Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh and Darrell William Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors: A Treasure Island*, p. 133. The documentary on Hou was made as part of the French television documentary series *Cinema of Our Time* (Cinéma, de notre temps), first issued in 1964. The series also includes the Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami (1994), the Japanese director Kitano Takeshi (1999), and American directors Hitchcock and Ford (2001).

40 Emmanuel Burdeau, "Rencontre avec Hou Hsiao-hsien" [Interview with Hou Hsiao-hsien], in *Hou Hsiao-hsien*, 2nd ed., ed. Jean-Michel Frodon (Paris: Cahiers du cinema, [1999] 2005), pp. 63-131.

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The *auteur* theory had already been introduced into Taiwan long before the New Cinema emerged on the scene. With film journals such as *Theater Quarterly* (*Juchang*劇場; 1965-1967) and *Influence* (*Yingxiang*影響; 1971-1979), Antonioni, Fellini, Renoir, Godard, Bresson, and so on became familiar names for film critics.[41] Besides learning about the theory from translations of articles from *Cahiers*, they also learned from Andrew Sarris, the editor of *Cahiers in English*, who systematically propagated *auteurism* in journals such as *The American Cinema*. In April 1968 *Theater Quarterly* published a special issue on the *auteur* theory, with translations of Bazin's "On the Politics of Auteurs," based on *Cahiers in English*, and Truffaut's "A Certain Tendency in French Cinema," based on the original French version.[42] It is rather odd that in the special issue Bazin's article should be placed before and separated from Truffaut's, since the former was originally a critique of the latter. In this special issue, four articles by Sarris are also translated. Although the Chinese translation is awkward and sometimes not easy to understand, this special issue was a first full-scale introduction of the *auteur* theory into Taiwan.

During the 1980s the key Taiwanese journal that promoted the *auteur* theory was *Sibaiji* (*400 Blows* 四百擊), published from March 1985 to February 1986, altogether eight issues. It derived its name from Truffaut's 1959 movie *Les quatre cents coups*, generally thought to be the first *auteur* film. The first issue published a two-page excerpt of Assayas's 1984 essay, which, completely leaving out the series of crucial diction indicating the *auteur* theory, unfortunately doesn't quite do justice to the original.[43] For instance, he calls Sylvia Chang "a star in the service of the *auteur* film" (Une star au service du cinéma d'auteur), but the Chinese version becomes, "Silvia Chang—a real star" (張艾嘉——眞正的明星). This might partly explain why in the same issue Peggy Chiao criticizes Assayas's report in *Cahiers* for being "crude and shallow" (*cuqian*粗淺), "without enough knowledge or first-hand experience" of Taiwan cinema.[44]

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41 Qi Long-ren齊隆壬, "Taiwan dianying piping de qingxiang—'guanzhong dianying' yingping yu 'zuozhe dianying' yingping" 台灣電影批評的傾向——「觀眾電影」影評與「作者電影」影評 [Tendencies of Taiwan Film Criticism—the "Audiences' Film" Criticism and the "Auteur Film" Criticism], in *Taiwan New Cinema*, ed. Peggy Chiao (Taipei: Shibao Wenhua Chuban Shiye Gongsi, 1988), pp. 40-46.

42 Xu Yin-qiu徐尹秋, trans., "Lun zuozhelun" 論作者論 [On the Auteur Theory], *Theater Quarterly* 9 (1968): 1-4. See also Ke Guan-gung柯冠光and Guo Zhong-xing郭中興, trans., "Faguo dianying de mouyi qingxiang" 法國電影的某一傾向 [A Certain Tendency in French Cinema], *Juchang* [*Theater Quarterly*] 9 (1968): 38-42.

43 Olivier Assayas, "Shijie bianyuan de gongye—Taiwan dianying suojian suowen" 世界邊緣的工業——台灣電影所見所聞 [An Industry on the Margin of the World—What I Saw and Heard about Taiwan Cinema], trans. Zhang Yijun張宜君, *Sibaiji* [Four Hundred Blows] 1 (1985): 30-31.

44 Huang Jianye and Peggy Chiao, "Zhexieren yu naxieren—yanjiu Zhongguo dianying de

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One critic of *Four Hundred Blows* worth mentioning is Lü Xincang, who writes for "The Small Film" (*Xiaoxing dianying*小電影), a column devoted to the *auteur* theory. In "You Can Also Make a Movie" (*ni ye nenggou paidianying*你也能夠拍電影), the first of a series of articles explicating *auteurism*, he proposes "The twelve principles of the *auteur*" (電影作者守則十二條) as pleasantries. These "principles" admonish against dogma, lies, illusion of the self, China complex, taboo of history, depletion of creativity, political authority, and so on. Then he lays out the basic concepts of *auteurism*, such as "Every frame of a film is like a word in a literary work"; "Inspecting a screenplay is as preposterous as inspecting the script of a painting or of a piece of music"; "The cinema was born with the silent movie, dead with the star dream, and then resuscitated by *auteurism*"; "The worst camera-pen can write the best article; do not mind the good or bad of the camera, pay attention to thought and style." The techniques invented by Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Bazin, and Bresson are discussed in the form of multiple-choice questions.[45] In the following issues Lü's articles gradually become manuals of filmic technical know how. He discusses how to use the camera-pen, to write the continuity script, and to distinguish the language of cinema from written language.

In contrast to Lü Xincang's faithful support of the *auteur* theory, there were critics like Wang Feilin who raised doubts during the 1980s. In "The Fakeness of the *Auteur* Theory and Its Reexamination" (作者論的虛妄和反省; 1984), he points out that the *auteurism* known in Taiwan, being a French theory transported via American translation, is already different from its original. He refers to three problems connected with the *auteur* discourse created in the journals *Theater Quarterly* and *Influence*: 1) focusing solely on the metaphysics of *auteurism*, neglecting its philosophical and ideological background; 2) following unquestionably Andrew Sarris's theory, which deliberately eclipses the negative criticism of *auteurism* from outside *Cahiers du cinéma*, turns *auteurism* into a tool for collaborating with commercialism, and even establishes the top-ten or top-twenty lists of directors; 3) failing to connect with Taiwan's film industry. According to Wang, the advocates of *auteurism* in Taiwan, unlike those promoting the French *nouvelle vague*, were not ready to act and did not have the energy to effect a movement. In his opinion, *auteurism* became a mainstream film theory in 1970s Taiwan because it was needed to fulfill the national objective of the state machine, rather than because of its excellence as a theory.[46] One can contest

waiguoren" 這些人與那些人——研究中國電影的外國人, p. 23.

45 Lü Xincang呂欣倉, "Ni ye nenggou paidianying" 你也能夠拍電影 [You Can Also Make a Movie], *Four Hundred Blows* 1 (1985): 80-81.

46 Wang Feilin王菲林 , "Zuozhelun de xuwang he fanxing" 作者論的虛妄和反省 [The Fakeness of the Auteur Theory and Its Reexamination], in *Yiqu weiwan dianying meng—Wang Feilin jinian wenji*一曲未完電影夢——王菲林紀念文集 [An Unfinished Song of Dreaming Cinema—Collection in Memorial to Wang Feilin], ed. Jian Zhen簡媜 (Taipei: Kening Chubanshe, 1984), pp. 128-141. Originally published in *Dianying xinshang* [Cinema Appreciation], 2 (12): 35-44.

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Wang's opinions, of course. For instance, it is well known that *The Sandwich Man* was almost censored by the authorities: the squalid slum scene and the low-class people's ignorance described in the episode "The Tastes of Apple" were considered harmful to Taiwan's "national image." It was due to the strong protests in the media that the film remained uncut.[47] Although it is true that the state did act as sponsor as well as censor at the same time, to imply that the New Cinema functioned as a tool of the state machine is far from being fair.[48] This biased view can be best exemplified by a 1991 collection of articles criticizing Hou and the "conformist" ideology of *A City of Sadness* (*Beiqing chengshi*悲情城市; 1987), *The Death of New Cinema: from All for Tomorrow to A City of Sadness*.[49]

With all the critical energy teeming with pros and cons of the *auteur* theory, how was New Cinema's film practice informed by it? Peggy Chiao points out that the *auteurs* (chuangzuozhe 創作者) have created "a new narrative language, a new sensitivity, and a new experience." According to her, the main feature of their film language is "anti-drama": to achieve this effect it uses techniques such as ellipsis (deliberately eliminating the cause-and-effect logic necessary for dramatic presentation); long shots (allowing time and the visual freedom of deep shops to represent "reality"); filmic complexity formed by space and depth (shying away from reliance on dialogue and story); and quiet, reserved performance (discarding exaggerating, sensational drama).[50] She also states that, though grouped under New Cinema, each director has his own distinct film language, for instance, Hou Hsiao-hsien's "stylistic realism," Edward Yang's "self-conscious formal (or Western) aesthetics," and so on. According to her, the new sensibility created by New Cinema requires the audience to participate actively in selecting, absorbing, and examining information and think for themselves, instead of waiting passively for information to be

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47 Yang Shiqi楊士琪, "Erzi xianxie shiqu wan'ou" 兒子險些失去玩偶 [The Son Almost Lost His Doll], in *Dianying, Dianyingren, Dianying Kanwu*電影・電影人・電影刊物 [Film, Filmmakers, Film Journals] (Taipei: Zili Wanbaoshe, 1986), pp. 44-48. Originally published in *Lianhobao* [United Daily] on August 15-16, 1983.

48 Zhang Shilun張世倫, "Taiwan 'xindianying' lunshu xinggou zhi lishi fenxi (1965-2000)" 台灣「新電影」論述形構之歷史分析(1965-2000), p. 15.

49 Mizou迷走and Liang Xinhua梁新華, ed., *Xindianying zhi si—cong Yiqie Wei Mingtian dao Beiqing Chengshi*新電影之死——從一切爲明天到悲情城市[The Death of New Cinema: from *All for Tomorrow* to *A City of Sadness*] (Taipei: Tangshan Chubanshe, 1991). Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang also accuses Hou of being a "conformist." See Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang, *Literary Culture in Taiwan: Martial Law to Market Law* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

50 See Peggy Chiao (Jiao Xiongping焦雄屏), "Yuyan de tansuo" 語言的探索 [The Search for Language], in *Taiwan Xindianying*台灣新電影 [Taiwan New Cinema], ed. Peggy Chiao (Taipei: Shibao Wenhua Chuban Shiye Gongsi, 1988), pp. 315-317. In the discourse of New Cinema at the time, "chuangzuozhe" (creator) and "zuozhe" (author) were interchangeable, both meaning "auteur."

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given.[51]

Hou Hsiao-hsien's growth to an *auteur* is worth scrutiny. In an interview in 1999 with Emmanuel Burdeau of *Cahiers du cinéma*, he confessed that while he was acting as an assistant for veteran directors such as Li Xing and Bai Jingrui in the 1970s, he fell asleep in front of Fellini's *Satyricon* (1969).[52] He says, "I . . . . thought that this kind of movie was definitely too distant from me. I was aware that I was participating in making easy movies, but that did not prevent me from feeling certain that I would never make a movie in the style of *Satyricon*."[53] It was after he acquainted himself with Edward Young, Jim Tao, Ke Yi-chen, and Chang Yi, all just returning from studies in the States, that he began to be really exposed to European masters: Godard, Bresson, Pasolini, Fassbinder, Wenders, and so on. The enthusiastic friends would watch the cassettes of their films and discuss their techniques together, while comparing what Hou himself had done (the others hadn't made any movie yet). It was quite a "destabilizing" experience for Hou, questioning every aspect of his own work, including scenario, filmic form, artistic expression, discrepancy between sound and image, and so on. The results of this whole-scale self-examination were expressed in *The Boys from Fengkuei*.[54]

Let's examine Hou Hsiao-hsien's personal signature, the long shot that has been generally lauded by critics domestic and abroad. The concept of neo-realism represented by the long shot can be traced to Bazin, as discussed before. Hou's use of the long shot, allowing the eye to observe freely and requiring the audience to judge the "reality" by itself, is obviously a reexamination of filmic realism. In *A City of Sadness* the "reality" represented is the complex historical entanglements leading to the tragedy of the February 28 Incident in 1947 and the undecipherable enigma of its cause. What the victims or their families could see or feel is their personal grief; how could they grasp the "truth" of the historical event, the magnitude of which is beyond any single person's perception? The use of long shot, highlighting the single, fixed point of view, is complimentary to what the film intends to convey. In *A City of Sadness*, the aesthetics of the long shot is exerted to its utmost. If this technique is used in one movie, we could safely say that it is the excellent choice made by the director. But, if, regardless of the contents of the story, every film uses the same technique, that would be self-repetition. The long shot and pan-sequence techniques used in *Flowers of Shanghai* (*Haishanghua*海上花; 1998) virtually turn the movie into a "moving picture," or a Chinese scroll painting unfolded in time. Aesthetically a showcase, it becomes boring after twenty minutes of "non-drama" and inertia. Embracing the long shot as his personal signature, Hou has forsaken the other camera techniques and angles, and thus limited the possibilities for him to outgrow his old self.

51 *Ibid*., pp. 316-317.

52 Emmanuel Burdeau, "Rencontre avec Hou Hsiao-hsien."

53 *Ibid*., p. 72.

54 *Ibid*., p. 74.

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Ang Lee, who never considers himself an *auteur* and wouldn't have accepted such an honorific, criticizes the concept by asking, "What does *auteur* mean? One who repeats himself?"[55]

The myth of personal signature has impelled the New Cinema directors to engage in endless self-repetition, as is fully disclosed in Jean Renoir's famous statement, "I believe that many authors, and certainly myself, tell one story all our lives, the same one, with different characters, different surroundings." [56] Ts'ai Ming-liang is exactly another one of the "many authors" Renoir describes.

III. Taiwan New Cinema in a Museum

Ts'ai Ming-liang's 2009 film *Visage*, his tenth film, can be viewed as the epitome of the story of Taiwan New Cinema. Commissioned by the Louvre, it became the first cinema collected and regularly shown in the museum.[57] In September 2009 as the last movie shown at the Festival de Cannes, critics widely acclaimed *Visage* as a masterpiece, but many among the audience left before the end of the movie. Some complained that the story was loosely knit. Ts'ai replied: "I never tell a story. I concentrate on handling the images, the way a painter does."[58]

That a film is a synthetic art is a commonsensical thing to say; image, sound, performance, screenplay, and so on, are all indispensable. Yet Ts'ai has a unique view of cinema:

> The cinema has had a tradition. It is the search for images, or the aesthetics of images. Its essence lies in the celluloid, not in the story, not in the speaking accent, not in the language, not even in performance. It is ridiculous that later there should be prizes for performance and screenplay. Big productions such as epics emerged one by one, but we were pushed further away from cinema. . . . Our film schools gradually have become professional schools, teaching you how

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55 Ang Lee, "Things I've learned as a Movie Director," February 3, 2007. http://www.moviemaker.com/directing/article/things_ive_learned_as_a_moviemaker_2418/ [accessed September 27, 2009].

56 Rui Nogueira and François Truchaud, "Interview with Jean Renoir," *Sight and Sound* 37.2 (Spring, 1968): 57-62.

57 For a report on this in *Cahiers*, see Jean-Michel Frodon, "Ts'ai Ming-liang au Louvre" [Ts'ai Ming-liang in Louvre], *Cahiers du cinéma* 603 (2005): 62.

58 Chen Weizhen 陳委臻, "Nongwu liaoshui jinru bowuguan—zhuanfang Lian daoyan Ts'ai Ming-liang" 弄舞撩水進入博物館——專訪臉導演蔡明亮 [Dancing and Stirring Water Inside a Museum—Interview with the Director of *Visage*, Ts'ai Ming-liang], September 25, 2009. http://pots.tw/node/3412 [accessed September 30, 2010].

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to be in the business. But we are further away from this medium.[59]

Film schools should not be relegated to professional schools, of course. But as far as the nature of film as art goes, images are by no means its only aesthetic elements. Ts'ai's particular film aesthetics has nearly turned actors into moving props (as few spoken lines as possible, with performance forsaken), while the screenplay is outlines at best. The male protagonist in his movies is always Li Kangsheng; the images are as a rule his personal signatures: the mysterious water image, the gorgeous 1930s singing and dancing, surrealistic dreams, desire running amuck, and so on. He confesses that *Visage* is a film of self-expression, but is unhappy when it is pointed out by way of criticism. In his line of thinking, in order for the images to express his self, narrative logic can be given up:

> A creative work is allowed to indulge in the self, why can't a movie? Cinema is not a service industry; not all movies should serve the public. If in this movie I serve only myself, am I not allowed to? . . . In this movie, compared with narrative logic, the more important thing is whether the symbolizing concept stands. Or I should say that my priority is to treat the movie in the form of dreams. What I need to do is to convince myself.[60]

A movie made by Ts'ai Ming-liang for himself, *Visage* eventually becomes an item in the Louvre collection. The point is, should films be made for museum collection, or for public viewing in movie theaters?

Concerning this, a set of questions can be asked: are self-expression and narrative logic necessarily exclusive to each other? Furthermore, does self-expression have to be self-repetition? Self-repetition is by no means the same thing as self-creation, which starts with the non-self, or the self-in-flux. From the non-self and the self-in-flux, a new self or many new selves inspired by others can be born. Only with the notion of the constant "becoming" of the self is self-creation possible.[61] On the other hand, if one sees nothing but the self, if one's notion of the self is fixed—personal signature inevitably connotes fixed ideas of the self—the result is self-repetition and stylization. When stylization occurs, there is stasis, which is the precursor of death.

Another crucial question is: are creativity and commercialism always poles apart? Hitchcock was one of the foreign directors honored as "auteurs" by *Cahiers du cinéma*. A skillful storyteller and an expert of suspense, he knew how to engage the emotions of the audience, while his movies enjoyed global box office success. We can take another look at Woody Allen, who is referred to in *Cahiers* as "the great auteur, comic Jewish New-Yorker who read Freud and loves Bergman" (le grand auteur

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59 *Ibid*.

60 *Ibid*.

61 For the concept of "becoming" (devenir), see Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* (Paris: Minuit, 1991). For English translation, see Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?,* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

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comique juif new-yorkais qui a lu Freud et qui aime Bergman).[62] He started out as a master of narrative, while his specific sense of humor attracted worldwide audiences. But since the late 1990s when he became more and more philosophical, his films have failed. According to Roger Ebert, *Melinda and Melinda* (2005), with two couples at a dinner party imagining the same characters playing out a comedy and a tragedy in turn, "may be a dramatization of his creative process." He mentions A. O. Scott's *New York Times* article on the movie, which concludes that "Instead of making the movies we expect him to, [Allen] stubbornly makes the movies he wants to make . . . . Mr. Allen will never again be his younger self, and his audience . . . will never grow up, guaranteeing our further disappointment."[63] Ebert agrees with him, saying:

> Woody Allen made members of my generation laugh when we were young, and now he doesn't make us feel young anymore. Scott argues that by refusing to repeat himself, Allen has left himself open to the charge of repeating himself: There he goes again, doing something different. I cannot escape the suspicion that if Woody had never made a previous film, if each new one was Woody's Sundance debut, it would get a better reception.[64]

The same could be said of Ts'ai Ming-liang, Hou Hsiao-hsien, and Edward Yang, I am afraid. Nonetheless, Woody Allen is capable of self-examination, and, on top of that, self-mockery. In *Hollywood Ending* (2002), he plays the role of a Hollywood director who is honored as an *auteur*. Once a talented young director, with two Oscars in pockets, he has now lost his audiences, while no producers would support him. Through his ex-wife, who recommended him to her producer fiancé, he finally gets the chance to direct another movie. But, overstressed, he suddenly becomes blind right before the shooting starts. She hires an assistant to be his eyes, trying to cover up the fact that he is blind. After a series of blunders, the movie is at last made. After it is issued, no one understands what is going on in the movie, the box office flops, and relentless criticism pores in. But unexpectedly, there comes good news from France. He is called a rare talent and hired to make a movie in Paris. Getting back together with his ex-wife, he decides to go to France with her, while expressing his gratitude,

"Thank God the French exist!"

Conclusion

In his December 1984 article on Taiwan New Cinema directors, Assayas

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62 Hervé Le Roux, "Allen et Woody (*Broadway Danny Rose*)," *Cahiers du cinéma* 365 (1984): 47-48.

63 Roger Ebert, "*Melinda and Melinda*," in *Roger Ebert's Movie Yearbook 2007* (Kansas City, M.O.: Andrews McMeel, 2007), pp. 450-451.

64 *Ibid*., p. 451.

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records the following episode. He asked what Edward Yang thought of the renowned Hong Kong martial arts film director King Hu, and was surprised to hear this response from Yang: "I think he was a good actor before he went on with directing films" (Je pense que c'était un bon comédien avant qu'il ne passe à la mise en scène).65 The condescension in tone is unmistakable; for Yang, King Hu as a director was not even worth mentioning. In fact, the previous issue of *Cahiers* was a special issue on Hong Kong cinema, with King Hu adulated as "auteur" in a sixteen-page article written by Assayas himself.66 According to him, "King Hu, artist, Chinese, and independent *auteur*, cannot be integrated into it [Hong Kong cinema]. Hong Kong cinema is not Chinese. It is a cinema of genre instead of *auteur*" (King Hu, artiste, chinois et auteur indépendant ne peut s'y intégrer. Le cinéma de Hong-Kong n'est pas chinois. C'est un cinéma de genre et pas d'auteur).[67] It is no wonder that Assayas would think the New Cinema directors' dislike of Hollywood and Hong Kong movies "excessive" when he interviewed them in 1984. I would venture to say, the problem with their vision is that *auteurism* has become their Bible, while the French *nouvelle vague* stands for their only model. They have shut their eyes to alternatives and lost the chance to learn from others and thereby to transform themselves. Their problem, in a word, is their "excessive" faith in *auteurism*, more excessive than the French's.

What makes *Cahiers du cinéma* a leading film journal in the world for more than fifty years is its receptiveness of various film genres from different countries and its ability to appreciate them, be it Hong Kong martial arts film, Hollywood Western or *film noir*. However, as much as it recognizes the excellence of Hollywood tradition and the talents it has created, *Cahiers* critics are fully conscious of their competition with Hollywood. For the French, *auteurism* is a class thing, marking the superiority of French film industry over Hollywood in the fight over the influence on "world cinema." A *Cahiers* article in 2002, titled "Auteurs, classe affaires" by Olivier Joyard, can't be more expressive in this regard. It starts with the self-complacent account of foreigners' envy of the French film industry:

> What happens to *La Nouvelle vague*? What are Rohmer and Godard doing? Well, Truffaut is dead? But who replaced him? . . . . Your country is the house of blilss [maison de bonneur] for filmmakers, isn't it? How does your industry sustain against all odds?[68]

The answer to the main question—what sustains the French film industry—is "respect for the artist" and "public financing." But more significant is the answer to the previous question, "who has replaced Truffaut, Rohner, and Godard, *auteurs* representing the pinnacle of *la nouvelle vague*?" It turns out that the French *nouvelle vague*'s successors

65 Olivier Assayas, "Notre reporter en République de Chine," pp, 62-63.

66 Olivier Assayas, "King Hu: géant exilé" [King Hu: an Exiled Giant], *Cahiers du cinéma* 360 (1984): 15-30.

67 *Ibid*., p. 17.

68 Olivier Joyard, "Auteurs, classe affaires," *Cahiers du cinéma* 568 (2002): 82-83.

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are "a new class of *superauteurs*" in third world countries where "the industry is weak" (à l'industrie faible). Joyard names Abbas Kiarostami from Iran, Ts'ai Ming-liang and Hou Hsiao-hsien from Taiwan, and Wong Kar-wai from Hong Kong as members of the "new class of *superauteurs*." According to Joyard, those in a weak industry have two choices in order to carry on a film career: look towards Hollywood or France. The "superauteurs" have chosen France.

Joyard points out that starting the late 1990s, the so-called "world cinema" emerged. It is "an unprecedented mix of esthetics and economics, in which the national character of the modes of production is secondary." These *superauteurs*' films are shot in one place, edited in another, mixed elsewhere (often in Thailand), and produced in France. Why is France preferable? In contrast to Hollywood, which recruits filmmakers from different countries to work in its bosom, for France it is not a question of bringing people over and adapting to a system. Rather, it creates a refuge of prestige and esthetics.[69] Long has French as an international language been replaced by English. Now the war to fight is between French and American film culture. *Auteurism*, a matter of class, remains to be the pride of France, as long as the "superauteurs" from third-world countries keep it alive by practicing it.

As to the Taiwan New Cinema directors, it is the French *auteur* theory that has made them what they are: globally celebrated *auteurs* who have profoundly changed the landscape of Taiwan film industry; for decades Taiwan has been known as the country of *auteur* films. They have been the perennial subject of discussion in film courses and of academic books, domestically and overseas alike. On the other hand, it is also the unflinching belief in the *auteur* theory, to the point of endlessly repeating themselves and gradually driving away domestic movie-goers, that has "terminated" them along with Taiwan film industry. For nearly two decades before the revival of popular interest in home-made films triggered by *Cape No. 7* in 2008, laments about "the death of cinema" were rampant among film lovers on the island. Critics, still marveling at the achievements of Taiwan New Cinema directors, worried about the future of Taiwan film industry with the public losing interest in domestic films.

In the report on the Western in *Cahiers du cinéma* in 1951, Rieupeyrout points out that "A Western always 'goes' (marche) because the public remains to be its ally, even in 1951; only the critique no longer 'goes'."[70] With Taiwan New Cinema, it's the contrary. Critics in the academe are still faithful, but the public doesn't buy it anymore.

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69 *Ibid*., p. 83.

70 Jean-Louis Rieupeyrout, "Un genre historique: le western" [A Historical Genre: the Western], *Cahiers du cinéma* 9 (1952): 5.

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作者論與臺灣新電影

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一九八七年〈臺灣新電影宣言〉中，新電影導演們自稱是「有創作意圖的電影作者」，把自己與港片及好萊塢影片作區隔，自覺到與法國新浪潮電影理論的聯繫。台灣新電影導演在國際電影界頻頻獲得大獎，是各種因素匯聚的結果：本地電影雜誌對作者論系統性的引介；本地影評家努力連結國際影評家，尤其是「電影作者論」的機關刊物《電影筆記》的影評家；政府輔導金的補助，等等。然而此新電影宣言也等於預告了新電影的結束，原因是國內觀眾不久即厭倦了新電影的菁英走向。本文爬梳《電影筆記》，指出作者論強調導演的「個人印記」，可能淪爲導演自我崇拜的陷阱，導致無盡的自我複製。台灣新電影導演對作者論拳拳服膺，然而對《電影筆記》的影評家而言，第三世界導演對作者論的忠誠，代表法國電影工業與好萊塢競爭的優勢。

關鍵詞：作者論　臺灣新電影　法國新浪潮　電影筆記　個人印記

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Auteurism and Taiwan New Cinema

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The 1987 mission statement of Taiwan New Cinema declared that it supported "auteurs with creative intention," who were distinguished from commercial movie directors, especially those from Hong Kong and Hollywood. This indicates TNC directors' intention of allying with the French *Nouvelle Vague*. The success story of TNC directors constantly winning prizes in international film festivals was the result of an orchestration of various forces working simultaneously: the spread of the *auteur* theory in local film journals; local critics' efforts in connecting with international critics, especially those of *Cahiers du cinéma*, the hotbed for auteurism; government sponsorship, and so on. But the mission statement also prefigured the end of TNC, since domestic audiences soon lost interest in its elitist approach. This paper, examining the French journal *Cahiers du cinéma*, points out that the pitfall of auteurism is "an aesthetic cult of personality" and the myth of personal signature that leads to endless self-repetition. Taiwan New Cinema directors are all faithful practitioners of auteurism. For theorists of *Cahiers du cinéma*, on the other hand, the prevalence of auteurism in third world countries marks the superiority of the French film industry in the competetion with Hollywood.

Keywords: *Auteurism* Taiwan New Cinema the French *Nouvelle Vague* *Cahiers du cinéma* personal signature

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