

**The Experience of Urban Space and Time
Within Wong Kar-wai Films**

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İSTANBUL BİLGİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
SİNEMA VE TV YÜKSEK LİSANS PROGRAMI

2006

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Introduction

“We are always alone whether in the studio or before the blank page.”
Godard (Stam, 2000: 86)¹

The usual rhythm of the urban society and coherence of time and space used to be more or less the same in everyday life until the times of modernity. Lefebvre mentions that “[o]ne only has to open one’s eyes to understand the daily life of the one who runs from his dwelling to the station, near or far away, to the packed underground train, the office or the factory, to return the same day in the evening and come home to recuperate enough to start again the next day” (Lefebvre, 1996:159). In the 21st century the vicious circle of the daily life is filled with shattered visions, and shuttered boundaries of experiences where we stepped into a blurred swift time and space. The perceptions have been fragmented like the city is fragmented in everyday life more than it was in the representations of the city scenery of Weimar Republic period in German cinema, which was behind the balusters. The site of personal and social fear and imprisonment behind the bars or fences interchanged and enlarged to a scale of regular intensified vision that infuses the mind, filling with images. Images of all kinds pumped up with media, data flow, and speedy traffic in the city accumulate the chaotic perception of everyday life.

Chaos is a substitute for the connective tissue [bubble of security we occupy -a job, a walled condominium compound]. It is not the most comforting kind of order we could imagine. Still, there is comfort in the perception that we are all in this chaos together. Though the world has become fragmented, we are all fragmented equally. A community of chaos is still a community, of a kind.

(Mushamp, 1995: 104)

Mushamp illustrates the chaos of today with universal explosions and terror threats, therefore the imposed necessity of control drive power. “Today it is the informational highway –data banks and video monitors, its surveillance cameras- that seeks to keep the peace” (Mushamp, 1995: 104-

5). Every kind of surveillance is accepted as normal and mandatory to keep peace while it is legitimized by authorities and became habitual for inhabitants. We are no longer aware where we are looked at or where we are not able to look back. The territory of new technologies is splashed onto our heels, following us like shadows, to anywhere yet to deep end of the cities. Community of chaos weakened more under the shadows of sovereignty of surveillance. Those eyes are wide shut whom everybody is a potential criminal under the power of control, appearing with trailing volatile identities, fleeting over the interchanging fragmented perceptions of cities within all sorts of fear and unawareness. “Inner cities are the laboratories of for change. They are the microcosms of a new world order” (Mushamp, 1995: 104-5).

Whether in a new world order or not, everyday life generates the outer and inner universes of one’s own, at home, at work, in family, in the streets, and in the so-called leisure. My study is about this universe in through the cinema of Wong Kar-wai, which is constructed in everyday life that functions with the dialectic of space and time.

Wong Kar-wai is an utterly *sui generis* director from Hong Kong. Narrational devices like slow motion, stop motion, stretch printing, voiceover, sound bridge, and changing cinematographic preferences like handheld camera, lighting, shifting color to B&W are dominantly used in his stylistic films. These elements within the thematic continuity create a universe of Wong’s Hong Kong.

The cities that I will be trying to disclose will not be restricted with Hong Kong only, where his films usually take place, but it will be relocated in the surrounded perception of the cities where ever it is found typified. The symbiotic relationship of “Hong Kong cinema” and Wong films is not included to the discussion. The interactive association of this relationship is inescapable where they are both nourished mutually. The macro and micro members of this symbiosis change where Wong’s style had taken its shape in the culture and industry. The impact of his innovative style and thematic

building has influenced not only Hong Kong cinema but also overseas.² Thus this is completely another large area, apart from the discussion of this thesis.

The shimmering city runs fast-forwarded in the films of Wong Kar-wai. The isolation and alienation in lonesome stories mostly hopelessly emerge in slow motion and stretch-printed moods of the characters through the narratives. My intention is to deal with the intertextuality which includes the interdependence of the texts and the references of meaning through and between Wong films. Thus to highlight Wong Kar-wai's repeated views on lovelorn, lost, isolated, and alienated urban identities those are rambling through the streets by their shifting voices. This panorama is attempted to range from the exteriors of the city to interiors of body and mind, where a memory is constructed through the films.

The body and mind are constructed in the society, culturally, politically and historically by the representations of media while the narratives of every medium force the interaction. The methodology of the thesis has a double spiral of cinematic discourse with intertextuality, repetitions and self reflexivity; through historical, political and mainly cultural approaches to the city, time and space in the following chapters. The former paradigms of cinematic discourse will be explained mainly in the introduction. The spiral is going to envelope the connection of Wong films with the state of urban perception in the following chapters. Some quotations will take part as the author's voices in the flow of the thesis, and whenever it is needed the dialogues of the films will be included in to the text.

The intertextual narratives and self reflexive aspects of narration of Wong Kar-wai films reflect the experience and the perception of the daily life, by aesthetics and meanings. The compound meaning is integrated by *inner speech* while the practicum of watching becomes self-conscious by awareness of the mediation with self reflexivity. By self-consciousness I

mean the recognition of the audience's presence which occurs by the self reflexive elements and repetitions.

“Reflexivity subverts the assumption that art can be a transparent medium of communication, a window on the world, a mirror promenading down a highway” (Stam, 1989: xi). The subversion of reflexivity is paradoxical in Wong films, because while the flow of narrative is interrupted the sense of mirroring remains permanent.

Myriad strategies that interrupt the narrative in order to foreground the filmic production; [] demystify fictions, and our naive faith in fictions, and make of this demystification a source for new fictions.

(Stam, 1989: xi)

Self consciousness oscillates between activating the awareness and slipping the audience expectations into the pleasures of the narrative in the next second. “Narrative discontinuities, stylistic virtuosities [undoubtedly] deploy a disruptive relation to established norms and conventions” (Stam, 1989: xi), while narrations surprisingly locate a playful, furthermore a mystifying fiction in Wong films. Predominantly uses of frame in frame, stop motion, slow motion, freeze frame etc, draw the attention to the moods in the diegesis. In spite of the self- reflexive narration, the diegesis drifts the audience to its moods in to its microcosmic world. The flowing images on-screen in a diegetic world pull the audience to its flow, whether the previous image makes them conscious of the medium. The power of this fact is most common for Wong films. The aesthetics of the films attract the audience with the music, often use of voiceover, shifting color to B&W, and altering stylized colors from one film to another. All these aspects within framing and editing verify the consciousness of watching a Wong film.

Self reflexivity in Wong films doesn't only appear by production process, but also with repetitions in and in between his films. The director references to himself or to the previous films by repeated themes, frames, and effects, etc. More than like a sublime entity that refers to him, it constructs an urban point of view specific to Wong cinema. This

construction is sometimes narratively motivated; sometimes non-diegetic inserts create the same account. The correlation is made clearer in each film one after another, constantly evoking the awareness of the audience, however the recognition of the narration mode, and the thematic continuity of the films seizes the audience in its microcosm. Seamless attachment might be said is reached by *moodification* in narration. By *moodification* I suggest the mood and the sense of the character that passes to the viewer. It will be discussed further in chapter two. The stop-motion moments identify the private view of the characters. This includes two different flows of time in the same frame. Because the distancing fact of the different filmic time also captures the private moment, the mood of the character is perceived by the audience. The perception of the characters passes to the viewer while the films develop the urban perception.

Robert Stam describes experimental filmmaker Stan Brakhage's "[c]inema" as "an adventure in perception, where the director can deploy transgressive techniques –over exposure, improvised natural filters- to provoke a transperspectival vision of the world" (Stam, 2000: 86). As Stam's interpretation, by the self-reflexive elements and repetitions in and in between Wong films, not only the spectator may become self-conscious without being alienated, neither only the director's style crystallizes, but also the urban perspective; moods and cognition appear filtered from the director's point of view. Through the watching experience, the image of the city as the negative space and the representations mirror the perception of urban identities.

Repetition outplays itself as repetition and each repetition is never the same as the former. In it, there is circulation, there is intensity, and there is innovation.

Repetition sets up expectations and baffles them at both regular and irregular intervals. It draws attention, not to the object (word, image, or sound), but to what lies between them. The element brought to visibility is precisely the invisibility of the invisible realm, namely the vitality of the intervals, the intensity of the relation between creation and re-creation.

(Minh-ha, 1991: 190-191)

The aim of this thesis is to perform both analysis within repetitions, in and in between the films visually, and the content in an interactive relation which constitutes the state of urban existence of the current time. The city takes place in almost all Wong films, except *Ashes of Time* (1994). *Ashes of Time* takes place in a desert and it can be called a martial-arts movie, which is defined in Mandarin as *wuxia pian*. As Wong films are never standard conventional genre movies, *Ashes of Time* is also not a pure martial-arts movie. On the contrary it reverses the genre and its meaning. Apart from the aspects that I will use in the representation of the city, the recurrent issues like time, the use of space and memory take part in the film. Although time is not underlined by clocks as usual, it does occur by definitions of the period of seasons and changing terms typically keeping the ambiguity and anachronism.

The thesis includes Wong Kar-wai feature films, *As Tears Go By (ATGB)* (1988), *Days of Being Wild (DoBW)* (1990), *Ashes of Time (AoT)* (1994), *Chunking Express (CE)* (1994), *Fallen Angels (FA)* (1995), *Happy Together (HT)*(1997), *In the Mood For Love (IMfL)* (2000), and *2046* (2004).

The narratives are reflecting similar moods and perceptions by telling different stories. The thematic and artistic values display a similarity although the director playfully becomes active with changing preferences of narration. The intertextuality of the plots refers to the repertoire of his storylines where for example sometimes the character names and dialogues are repeated besides the thematic and aesthetic articulation. The enunciation of the films marks the intertextual integration. The films are each independent in themselves and interdependent in each other. Stam explains how intertextuality is more active and genre has a more passive principle. Genre limits itself to the circular characteristics whereas intertextuality “sees the artist as dynamically orchestrating pre-existing texts and discourses” (Stam, 2000: 202-3). Other than intertextual characters of other

pre-existing texts, the intertextuality between Wong films crystallizes the director's orchestration.

“Any text has slept with another text, to put more crudely, has necessarily slept with all the texts the other text has slept with” (Stam, 2000: 202). Like a character carries the spatial indicators metonymically, or vice versa the films wrap their spirit, on and on over meaning, one after another. Consequently, not only the style combines his films together, but also the textual references between the films function to coalesce the meaning. They are more than just references, maybe they can be described as hyperlinks, since they do not only remind other films of Wong, but also take between the diegetic worlds of his films back and forth by constructing a memory through films.

Each of his films bears the traces of another story []. Wong Kar Wai's fiction films are less stories than crossroads of stories.

(Lalanne, 1997: 11)

Jean-Marc Lalanne takes Wong films as a project and compares them all to a story by Borges about a map of an empire where by every detail, the map had grown “vastly out of proportion until it exactly covered the very territory it was intended to denote [] Wong Kar-wai's films resemble this map, dreamed too big to hold together in one piece and of which there remains only bits and pieces” (Lalanne, 1997: 9).

This narrative jolt is only the most spectacular example of a more general aesthetic project which consists in favoring detail above totality and the part above the whole.

(Lalanne, 1997: 10)

The films can be deemed as a project, but the space in mind that they create is further than bits and pieces. Rather than Lalanne's analogy of the Borges story by the map of an empire which enlarges so much to expose a proper mapping in dispersed details, coalescing the meaning of Wong films can be taken upon a new world order instead, which became more distinguished by the expanding empire of cultural and economic globalization that infuses to the character based narratives. The shattered

perception of time, space and identity convey a mapping of ambiguity in each film and in the joint meaning equation of the films together. Moreover about the project that Lalanne puts forward Wong sets out his deed in Jimmy Ngai's interview which was made in 1995. Wong Kar-wai declares: "To me, all works are really like different episodes of one movie"(Ngai, 1997: 98).

Wong's approach differs itself from the classic narrative cinema and the canonic story/plot formula is again ambiguous in his narratives. The "detail above totality and the part above the whole" (Lalanne, 1997: 10), they are more or less a collection of moments and moods. Wong Kar-wai works more with ideas than the scripts, which are usually transformed and taken shape throughout the filming process. This might be another reason why his films do not have a stiff motivated narration and the events are not presented in an exact cause and effect chain, as they are not in a chronological order.

There are almost no dramatic conflicts, neither resolution, at least not in the classic narrative sense. Consequently what is left after watching a Wong Kar-wai film is usually a state of mind or a mood about time and space, rather than a complete story. In the same interview the director announces: "One day I discovered I could chop those happenings into small pieces, and rearrange them with numerous possibilities...It was like I saw the light" (Ngai, 1997: 105)

The light which appears with the practice of watching his films through the open-endedness, is released by inner speech, where the perception of the city and experience articulated more in depth in meaning in a carnivalesque manner. Following Vygotsky, Bakhtin's concept of inner speech is one of the terms that is necessary to analyze a text, "it is a process of comprehending an ideological phenomenon, like film, music, custom, or a ritual that is only possible when inner speech is intervened" (Süalp, 2004: 63)³. Süalp elucidates the term quoting from Bakhtin as;

[Inner speech] is not an utterance which is lowered down. It does not only use the verbal sounds, but also every kind of sound and graphic figures, images, schema of symbols and phonetic pieces. It is a fragmented, jumping, incomplete, ongoing, changing dialogue style, which is without any rules. Bakhtin defines inner speech as “flow of utterances”.

(Süalp, 2004: 63)

Wong’s narrations embrace an attitude for the viewer to diagnose the meaning more freely by inner speech in the practice of viewing experience. “An emphasis on inner speech requires film theory to take account of attention (thought) itself as a *mobile* process that allows for various *degrees of intensity from day-dreaming to focused concentration*” (Morris, 1994: 19). Wong creates the day-dreaming and the meaning within his cinematic aesthetic and narrative which is attained with inner speech. The films work upon the viewer’s knowledge and understanding in a register that is in-between reading the text and mood procedure in an active film viewing mode. There is no manipulation of an authorial voice or dictation of an authoritarian discourse in a densely layered social space. The fragmented time and space in nonlinearity foreshadows a freedom of a free floating signifier that can be launched by the viewer as a personal trajectory of a sense of time and place, thereby the experience tracks socially more meaningful. Bakhtin describes inner speech as a “variegated verbal dance” consisting in a “stream of words, sometimes joined up into definite sentences, but more often flowing in a sort of unbroken succession of fragmentary thoughts, habitual expressions, some general merged impressions from some objects or phenomena from life” (Stam, 1989: 64).

Wong films get resembled to jazz, and also are considered poetic where artistic creation and potential rhythm reign. Süalp mentions the innovative techniques of storytelling in films *Chunking Express and Fallen Angels* where she proclaims “by the cinematography and postproduction techniques the director originates a jazz master like reproduction of storytelling” (Süalp, 2004: 289). The continuity of the narratives is also like improvising a tune, in this case a frame, in each film and citing from one

another. Thus the resemblance becomes clear if narrational oeuvre and the narratives of Wong films are considered. Bordwell quotes from Christopher Doyle “Each film I see less and less written down.” “Wong is fond of many retakes, allowing actors to find rhythm of their part slowly [to release them from the bad habits they have fallen into by working so fast]. Like a silent-film director, he plays music to enhance the mood” (Bordwell, 2000: 271). Improvisation of scripts, the narrational patterns, repetitive motifs and the self reflexive characters are like *call and response* pattern of improvisation in jazz. Improvisation in a poetic district, the *call and response* pattern invites the audience to a complex experience of moods. Christopher Doyle, who is the cinematographer of Wong films, since his second film, has a major contribution to the aesthetics of the films. Christopher Doyle illuminates the assertion in his diary, which was kept during the shootings of *Happy Together*, in Argentina.

‘If only film was jazz, if only we could jam... We get closer to this each film; my camera becomes more and more of a musical instrument,’ Doyle writes. ‘...I riff you solo, we jam towards a free form that we believe a film can be.’

(Stokes & Hoover, 2001: 273)

On balance I suggest Wong Kar-wai films induce a *moodification* in them all, which belongs to the city and to the human nature which is through the perception of our times. In the first chapter *Society, Culture and Identity*, the survey of world perception begins with a close *History of Hong Kong* to connect Wong films in historical, national, cultural and political dynamics where the films take place. The conflicts of social and political anxieties regarding the transition period of hand over of Hong Kong and the surviving character of the triple identity will be discovered in liminality, displacement, diasporic and exilic conditions. In the second part, *Globalization* is examined to describe the economically and politically generated blindfolds of the society in abolishing localities through the international capital flow, technology and media in individualized society where the unemployment, displacement and poverty grow. I aim by mentioning orientalism and

oppression of colonialism those redefine the representations and the lowered down voices of locality or the appropriated look adopted by the very owners of the cultures. In *Memory, Nostalgia*, I will try to reflect the sense and mood of lived experiences with recollections where memory, nostalgia and forgetting take an important part in Wong films. The wish to hold on to memory and the past which is the need of today with emptied meanings of musealized past where the social conscious and coherence leaks away in imagination of historicity and locality. In the end of the chapter the entity of mirrors in Wong films that subvert and recreate extra volatile identities will be added to the discussion.

In the second chapter *Everyday Life in Moods*, in the first part by *Nowness, Flashes in Circular Narration* I will try to define “nowness” of experiences that fly away in everyday life within forgetting and the disappearing collective/ individual pasts where we loose the standing points. Thereby in the circular narration of Wong films how ‘now’ and ‘then’ intermingles, not only by flashbacks/flash-forwards but also by narrational aspects how the time is called back to ambiguous “nowness” with the experiences of moments by detouring the memory and the perception of time that emancipates the *inner speech*. In the second part of *Dialogic Encounters* the point is the significance of everyday life and its experiences and how the flowing images block the real experiences and voices. *City Ballads Through Flaneur Camera* depicts the passerbies of urban society stroll without realizing the other and the environment in constant change and how the camera portrays by capturing a gaze of *flaneury* in the city. To decipher the city as a whole is limited in traces where time, space and memory in ambiguity consolidates the reign in unawareness of everyday experience. In the last part of the second chapter in *No Place Like Home, If There Is One* is about the experience of home/homeland that vanishes in Wong films with lonely identities who are in constant transition in displacement without roots or families. I aim to exert the displacement as a

common experience at home in homeland in global uncertainty within the ideologies of global economic and social policies.

In the third chapter *Time and Space* I aim to describe the defenseless city in fluid time and space within the change of time and space perceptions in entrapment of loneliness, shattered visions and split identities which is mapped by ambiguity in through the aesthetics and spatiotemporal structures in depiction of Süalp that defines the ‘transformed choronotope of film noir.’ In the first part *Nomadic Volatile Time* I will try to define the subjective and cyclical nomadic sensibility in Wong films that is catching carrying and retuning the volatile time which renders the moods of mobile, floating characters always on the move in urbanized fragmented city without any promises of the wholeness of any kind in time, space, history, identity or society. In the second part *Space on the Threshold: Rented Spaces and Home de Novo*, I will try to characterize the deserted spaces of inexperience where home dissolved in nakedness and how it is intermingled with streets in transition; private and public is dispersed in which no sight left to follow an intelligible time and space in *terminal spaces* with the push and pursue of speed and flow of media, new communication technologies, transportation and commodity culture. Transgression of private and public boundaries will be disclosed in *street homes* those dissolve in the transition passages resembling *nonspaces*, *non-places* that drag the society in its inadequate genuine experiences, in cloned identities with stereotyped repetitive behaviors leaving no space for belonging or to organic society, mesmerized lonely by the speed and instability. *End of a Period; 2046* depicts the claustrophobia that is urged by the pasts which invade the lives of characters, and the installation of memory in and in between Wong films.

CHAPTER I

SOCIETY, CULTURE, IDENTITY; WORLD PERCEPTION TODAY

*“I’m becoming less defined as days go by
fading away
well you might say
I’m losing focus
Kind a drifting into the abstract in terms of how I see myself”*

Nine Inch Nails “Only” *With Teeth*

1- A Short visit to the History of Hong Kong:

Colonialism, Imperialism, One Country Two Systems; Triple Identity

The reason that the title introduced with a tourist phrase like a *short visit*, is to look to a history of a national cinema which bears the historical, cultural and social background has a heavy responsibility, where in any case history as the study and interpretation is problematic in itself. Furthermore, the era is going to be a restricted period with clues of prior and subsequent times, which may not be able to bear a whole history of a city in this study. On the other hand beholding the background is necessary, if not impossible. Thus this thesis will not take the specific Hong Kong’s historical, spatial qualities, however it is not viable not to take it into consideration, at all. It will be a starting point to look Wong films, and to relate further terrains of the world. “Hong Kong remains as a whole to open a gate to *the terrain of a borderless world*” (Yau, 2001:1).

Wong Kar-wai was born in Shanghai, and came to Hong Kong when he was five years old. Apparently he has a cohesive relation with the city where he sees, lives and observes within the realm of memory. Hong Kong is a modern, industrialized, cosmopolitan city, which was formerly a British colony and has been a part of an empire like China.

Hong Kong was handed over to the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1997 as a special administrative region. Hong Kong is guaranteed to have a relatively high degree of autonomy for at least 50 years under the policy of "*One Country, Two Systems*" preserving the capitalist system, instead of the practice of the socialist economic system in mainland China. According to the agreement known as the Sino-British Joint Declaration, signed by the PRC and the United Kingdom in 1984, the whole territory of Hong Kong under British colonial rule was going to become the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the PRC in 1997. The "Systems" was promised by PRC which was proposed by Deng Xiaoping in the Joint Declaration with regard to adaptation of Hong Kong during this period. British Government was responsible of economical prosperity of Hong Kong until the year 1997. After the year 1997, previous capitalist system of Hong Kong and life-style which was constituted during the colonial rule would not be changed for 50 years, or literally until 2047. "Hong Kong would enjoy a high degree of autonomy in all matters except diplomatic affairs and national defense"⁴.

The transition period brought economical conflicts and political anxiety between two big countries, along with the declaration, the period between the decision and 1997 predictably increased a tension of the society. The tension has drawn the social susceptibility, political anxiety, and cultural response, before and beyond the period. So the process was more than a change in city politics. It was a big pressure which attained the social and socio-cultural transformation.⁵ The effect of this particular social transformation is also observable in cultural productions, as it is seen in Wong Kar-wai films. Especially in *Happy Together* (1997) where the national identity was underlined by the characters' British National and Hong Kong branded passports in the opening scene with the stamp of Argentina where they entered. *Happy Together* is about a gay couple who goes to Argentina to start over. Ultimately they fall into an experience where is similar to their homeland, Hong Kong. In a sequence, Hong Kong

is shown upside down, as the other side of the world according to Buenos Aires. Towards the end of the film leaving Ho Po-wing behind, when Lai Yiu-fai is about to leave Argentina in a terminal space of a hotel room, Deng Xiaoping's death is announced from the television like a reminder of 1997 anxiety. As mentioned before Deng Xiaoping had taken a part in resolving the Joint Declaration, along with his proposal "*One Country, Two Systems*". The coincidence of Deng's year of death is also like a witty remark which underlines the change, the time limit and the anxiety of 1997. In addition to that the film *2046* (2004) also emphasizes the process of another time limit of Hong Kong even by its name.

“In 1984, the decision of returning of British colony to mainland China causing a deep concern to citizens who were already shocked by the 1989 events in Tiananmen Square, 1997 represents an apocalyptic “end of the world” for most of Hong Kong residents” (Williams, 2000: 140). When the British government, which had wrested Hong Kong from the Chinese in 1841, agreed to return the colony to PRC in 1997, also the problems of identity became apparent in 1984. The crisis of identity is set up between two "empires," the British and the Mainland Chinese. Socio-cultural changes in difficulties within confused identity evidently reflected the cultural representations. Chu points out the changes of cinematic cultural representations of Hong Kong since beginning of film industry:

Since the inception of the film industry in the early twentieth century, cinematic cultural representations of Hong Kong have consistently progressed in line with changes in the triangular relationship between the British colonizer, the Chinese motherland and Hong Kong's self

(Chu, 2003: 92)

The city holds a trait of its own that is characterized under the influence of two sovereignties and the outcome of Hong Kong's partial autonomy. The identity of Hong Kong thereby has a triple quality. As Wright adds to the elaboration of Wong's cinema⁶;

The identity of Hong Kong is perpetually marked by its closeness to the motherland China, and its Western link as a British colony. Yet in the face of its history, Hong Kong has duly created its own culturally specific identity, one that inevitably combines both elements of the West and Mainland China. The cinema of Hong Kong reflects this notion of a dual identity, combining to create a third, localized identity.

(Cheuk-to, 1994:160)

The repeated mirrors of Wong films might be a multiple reflection of the confused identity. The mirrors will be dealt at the end of the chapter. When a PhD student from Hong Kong mentioned about the identity of Hong Kong in his e-mail, the continual fact of triple identity was even sealed; “...it’s a very (post)colonial culture we maintained in HK, the city inherited both British and Chinese cultures, but it is considered as neither, just a hybrid.” Thus, after 1997 the balance of the triangular relationship was not changed. The triple poles of the national and cultural identity remain by the imposed conditions.

“The British are no longer the colonizer, but the colonial influence remains, which possess challenges to the new Hong Kong government. [] Under the policy of ‘one country, two systems’ China has the right to intervene in Hong Kong’s affairs. On the other hand, the policy specifies that Hong Kong maintain its distinct capitalist system.”

(Chu, 2003: 120-1)

It was not merely a dilemma between economics and politics, but also tradition and the colonial influences of modernity. In between tradition and modernity the residents of Hong Kong were apparently unstable, and the elusive and ambivalent socio-cultural space must have been another fact of disillusion and anxiety of displacement and the combination of these binaries.

Homi Bhabha brings into subject the analogy of feuds that prevail between communities with adjoining territories that Freud uses in *DissemiNation*, to illustrate the ambivalent identification of love and hate

that binds a community together. He takes the problem as the ambivalent identifications of love and hate occupy the same psychic space: and paranoid projections ‘outwards’ return to haunt and split the place which they are made (Bhabha, 1990: 300).

It is in the space of liminality in the ‘unbearable ordeal of the collapse of certainty’ that we encounter once again the narcissistic neurosis of the national discourse []. The nation is no longer the sign of modernity under which cultural differences are homogenized in the ‘horizontal’ view of society. The nation reveals, in its ambivalent and vacillating representation, the ethnography of its own historicity and opens up the possibility of other narratives of the people and their difference.

(Bhabha, 1990 :300).

If we consider “the Hong Kong identity” in a liminality, a period of neither one status nor the other, a threshold of identities occur within a period of transition. No need to have a feud of communities like Bhabha gives an example of ‘Spanish and Portuguese’, or like in *Le Mur* (Alain Berliner, 1998) in which an appearance of a wall is represented surrealistically at millennium party night, between ‘Flemish and Walloons’ region. Although it does not carry an exact triple quality, borders of identity in Wong characters oscillate back and forth, and linger in a betwixt and between status. In *Fallen Angels* (1995) when the mute character *He Qiwu* falls in love with *Charlie*, whom he met incidentally he starts to change and becomes blond. Desperately falling in love with somebody, changes his outlook. Although falling in love has the power to change the state of being, in this case there is another clue lying beneath. If being blond carries the western identity in the films, it contains a paradoxical twofold nature, akin to love and hate, or like and dislike. If the understanding of beauty of the society is stereotyped into blondness, like as it is pushed by the media into slimness, the westernized standard look is drawn closer to focus. The playful character transformation is distinguished by other examples, as well. Being blond however is not only accentuated by falling in love or fancying the westernized appearance, but also with quite the opposite. *Charlie* is in

love with *Johnny* while he notifies her that he is going to marry a girl, whose nick name is *Blondie*. *Charlie* is never able to reach *Blondie*, but she tries to find and beat her, while she has no idea where she can find her. There are two more blonds in double plots of *Fallen Angels*. One is a guy again whose nick name is *Blondie* who is attacked by a full of angry girls at a snack bar, as *Charlie* bursts out her hatred of *Johnny's Blondie* to *He Qiwu*. And the other is the assassin's girl friend, who has a dyed blond hair. She had an affair with him before, whereas the assassin doesn't remember her, neither that he called her *Baby*. Not to be forgotten again, she dyes her blond and is called *Blondie*, as well. *Chunking Express* (1994) is a film with double plots likewise *Fallen Angels*. *Fallen Angels* has a lot of connotations of *Chunking Express*, like repetitive elements and motifs as dialogue, character names, place names as a fast-food place, and as narrational devices. In *Chunking Express* the blondness comes up with a wig. The woman in blond wig is involved to drug-smuggling business. Her drug dealer is a blond "Westerner", who then deceives her in drug dealing. He fantasizes blonds to make sex even if they are fake blonds. The American drug-lord owns a bar where he makes sex with his Filipina paramour. The Filipina woman seduces him with the same wig that the 'woman in blond wig' has. After she found out that she is duped by him, she kills the drug-lord at the end of the first part of the film. When she is leaving the bar district, she takes out the wig and carries on. The attractiveness of blondness is not only the desire to be rare in a society, rather the forced understanding of dominant ideology, media, and culture invasion of west that put on.

The state of being blond by wig or per se change in a so called *Far East* society exceeds the limits of fancy identity through the binary oppositions of fake/real, western/eastern. Consequently the wicked state of invasion of the colonizer that trapped and recreated the state of being and the state of mind appears. The ebb and flow position is not reinforced merely by the colonizer but also by the dominant role of mainland economically, politically, historically and culturally.

The intriguing triple identity of Hong Kong goes along with the liminality, anxiety and displacement drastically in their ostensibly local places. The ostensible locality also includes the migration because of the transition in Hong Kong and Mainland China, for instance between Shanghai and Hong Kong. Even the variants of spoken Chinese are different enough to be mutually incomprehensible in this ostensible locality. The identification of the varieties of Chinese as Mandarin, Cantonese and so on, makes clear the possible lack of lucidity in between Mandarin and Cantonese speakers. The migration from one region to another becomes an issue even in one country besides varieties of languages, in addition to British vernacular English. The displaced people live in exilic and kind of *diasporic* conditions in one country, two systems.

The language barrier becomes also an issue through Wong's own experiences. When Wong family moved from Shanghai to Hong Kong at his age of five, they did not speak the local dialect Cantonese, but Shangainese (Brunette, 2005: 133 - Ngai, 1997: 88). "For some time, I was totally alienated, and it was the biggest nightmare of my life" (Ngai, 1997: 88). Wong mentions the resemblance as "Like the characters *In the Mood for Love* we were Shangainese." The sense of exile is spread to most of his films. Belonging and home as a secure place is not visible in the films as it will be revealed in the later on.

The problematic of national identity and belonging is not hidden only under colonization, but also in *diaspora* where the struggle of identity within its liminality is easy to grasp. "The subject is graspable only in the passage between telling/told, between 'here' and 'somewhere else', and in this double scene the very condition of cultural knowledge is the alienation of the subject" (Bhabha, 1990: 301). The obscure limits of identity and belonging follows the passageways, all along in the orders of everyday life.

In an era of ethnic cleansings and refugee crises, mass migrations and global mobility for ever more people, the

experience of displacement and relocation, migration and diaspora seems no longer the exception but the rule.

(Huysen, 2003: 25)

There is no need to have created notions of national identity, no need to have borders between countries, or to have feuds where authorities push and pursue ideologies. The boundaries are set up in individuals already ahead of the society. The disorientation occurs when the sense of identity dissolves, where the liminal state is characterized in ambiguity, vacillation and indeterminacy.

Hong Kong is not a country, but a temporary region or a city of a 'limited time' by its traditional, colonized, and capitalist entity. The cosmopolitan urban space surrounds the society within the multicultural associations, where a unique but also a common global city is generated which is open to isolation, alienation and dislocation.

2- Globalization, Globalized Uncertainty; Glocal

In Wong Kar-wai films local spaces can become one of the most global. The global cities are in a way all similar with the nature of urbanization, like the high buildings with constantly blinking lights, the flowing data of new technologies, traffic and commodity within the highway surroundings, including the transnational culture and Diaspora. The flow of images and the speed of everyday mobility are equally mesmerizing. The flow is so rapid in through the shimmering lights, as well as images, that sometimes it is not possible to see what is looked at. Potentially it is not so easy to be able to hear the sound of inner selves, no need to mention the lack of ability or wish to listen to each other. The speechless and willingly deaf society is drifted into microcosmic realities which are sustained by blurred and fragmented visions. They are the capsulated images of individual narrow worldviews.

It is a question of globalization if ever there could be a social solidarity in such dazzled, individualized society. “By contrast [to collective consciousness] individualism is consistent with social solidarity in developed industrial societies because solidarity is organic, that is deriving from contractual relationships which develop within an increasing division of labor” (Sibley, 1998: 270).

The collective conscious which embodies formal and informal norms and values of the society is formed socially and culturally, but it is mainly constructed by mass media by the late twentieth century. The questions are asked and the answers are obtained through a mental journey within the social and political conscious, and cognizance of selfhood. But the society became individualistic and much more involved in commodity. The ability to associate and to produce a collective conscious, to interrogate the skeptic social and private realities is less recognized today. This disables determining the point of view, the perspective of self and the world. The

disability expands and becomes visible with individualism, alienation, cliques, and fragmentation.

Mike Featherstone brings the fact that “the cultural factors associated with the process of postmodernization—the postmodern emphasis upon the mixing of codes, pastiche, fragmentation, incoherence, disjunction, and syncretism – were the characteristics of cities in colonial societies, decades and or even centuries, before they appeared in the West”⁷. He suggests beyond the effects of Eurocentric notions of industrialization, urbanization, cultural modernity, rather than being preoccupied with the transitions from tradition to modernity and postmodernity, instead focuses upon the spatial dimension, the geographical relationship between the center and the periphery in which the multiracial and multicultural societies were on the periphery, not the core, where the cultural diversity and dislocation occurred there first (Featherstone, 1996: 65).

The blindfold acceptance of globalization is generated economically and politically behind the scenes, whereby it is triggered and driven in everyday life. Abolishing the local is not enabled by unidentified powers of distant planets, they exist nearby ‘east’ to the ‘west’ at the core, but unlike its appearance, the confusion and its existence are clear. “The global/local tracks the space of disorientation, the rendering and deforming local of Western universality as standard, center, and dominant knowledge” (Wilson & Dissanayake, 1996: 6). The assimilation of the local into the global in a Machiavellian manner, like the imagery of fictions fuse right into the center of our lives, the perpetual experience of, yet distant and invisible, metropolis vanishes.

“Western culture was to be normative civilization, and the indigenous cultures were banished as premodern and marginal” (Miyoshi, 1996: 80). The centralization of ‘West’⁸ as the *normative civilization* and its hegemonic description is the fact of colonialism and orientalism. Edward Said explains how western writers and academicians objectify the East by orientalism. The self-confidence of unbearable desire to possess and to

subordinate the East seizes the self identification of eastern point of view which is diminished under sublimated representation of the West. West signifies itself as the hearth of knowledge and enlightenment, whilst the East recognizes the issue by admiration. The worst part of orientalism is not only the penchant of representation to construct an ascendance or identities as West wish, the crucial part is the eastern boundaries of lack of representation via the confusion of identity and inveterate adoration. The reason that *orientalism* takes part in the thesis is the acceptance of this manipulated look, not because Wong films can be taken as orientalist. Using the orientalist codes that West polishes one by one gradually prolongs the affirmation and manipulation of the discourse; it is like accepting the resignation instead of representing oneself.

“To confront them is not to represent (*vertreten*) them but to learn to represent (*darstellen*) ourselves” (Spivak, 1994: 84). When Spivak asserts learning how to represent ourselves by “darstellen”, she means studying how to define and to express ourselves. The “subaltern” is who remain under the oppression of colonialism, and have the lack of ability to speak with their own voices, that they are the “others” who are subject to be spoken in their names for. Subaltern is a term that the intellectuals of the colonized countries use for the local people who are suppressed by colonialism, which preserves a bitter smile, by naming them as *subaltern* drags the intellectuals out of the call of the term.

The heroes and heroines of Wong films are from the edges of the colonized society but have their own voices. Although mainly narrated by voiceover it is the voice of the characters. They are represented, they are the subjects. *He Qiwu* in *Fallen Angels* is the mute character but is heard by Charlie even he does not speak. He struggles to create a job by abusing others' small local enterprises. Unfortunately he is too small to conceal his exploitations. After a while obliquely he questions the moral value and decides not to do it, although then he repeats it again in contrast to those big ones which can hide and abuse forever. His outlook also changes to blond

when he falls in love and becomes normal after a while. But he remains lonely and in between, until the impulse of belonging loosens completely when his father dies. He remains alone in sorrow without a place, a home, a tie. The only position that preserved is his mute liminal state for instance by becoming a westernized blond or returning to what he is.

East and West are located according to where the viewer stands. A part of Asia can be more European, whereas some parts of Europe can be more Eastern. The point is the position of the point of view, from where the meaning is created. We can face the east, or the west, and posit the point of view while defining the identity according to that. Identity is a created notion like nation, home, and homeland. The formed dream which takes its influence from the social and cultural scenery, in fact we are just born into a cultural environment, not genetically have the cultural values and shared believes that “completely envelopes individual consciousness.”⁹ Once the envelopment of the conscious is cultivated, the sense of belonging, cultural and national identities which are regulated in society might be expected as clear however the boundaries are never that precise. This might also bring flexibility to existence, thus it might leave a room to recreation, however while the identity splits back and forth by dissolving in disorientation, the ambiguity, vacillation and indeterminacy bounces the spatiality and the spatial perception.

The conjunctural situation [the local as a product located in the same temporality, but different specialties which gives rise to the problem of the local] defines the culture of the local, which is stripped of its reification by daily confrontation between different cultures and appears instead in the nakedness of its everyday practice.

(Dirlik, 1996: 39)

‘The naked spaces’ will be elaborated in the third chapter *Time and Space*, however we blend in the nakedness of everyday practice and surrender in split identities by the naked conscious of global uncertainty, that transforms the local and its dynamics. “The boundaries of the local need to be kept open (or porous), if the local is to serve as a critical concept. The

contemporary local is itself a site of invention; the present is ultimately the site of the global” (Dirlik, 1996: 42).

Masao Miyoshi’s article *Borderless World?* is concerned about the transformation and persistence in the neo colonial practice of displacement and ascendancy. He argues that colonialism is even more active now in the form of transnational corporatism (Miyoshi, 1996: 80).

Once absorbed into the “chronopolitics” of the secular West, colonized space cannot reclaim autonomy and seclusion: once dragged out of their precolonial state, the indigenes of peripheries have to deal with the knowledge of the outside world, irrespective of their own wishes and inclinations. And yet conditions of the modern nation-state are not available to most former colonies.

(Miyoshi, 1996: 81)

This is like how Hong Kong faces the conditions under the colonialized, decolonialized states, and the pressure of Mainland China above and beyond when they are squeezed in between the dominant powers, of these countries/empires, and their economic and politic strategies which obligate the cultural and social track of being. Miyoshi elucidates the rise and fall of nation-state, and colonialism. He follows the path as the colonialism and historical sight of colonial powers in economic, political, and military meaning, and how mean the conditions were; Western construction of the nation-state, and how it was a function of colonialism around 1800; the myth of nation-state, and “imagined [or manufactured] community”, “In the very idea of the nation-state, the colonialists found a politico-economical as well as moral-mythical foundation on which to build their policy and apology.” (Miyoshi, 1996: 81-2). Then he encloses the history of the earth market developed until today.

Actually the apology is not supposed to be accepted because it is not only hard to digest the whole intimidation and oppression, for the reason that the exploitation carries on in labor, in perception, so in daily life. The deception pervades the society, in constructed saturated imagery which is dressed well to exploit ‘as an antidote’. Expansion of the trade market, so-called liberation opens a bag to integrated world market encouraging the

rapid development of “multinational enterprises”, “transnational corporations” globally.

Today the dominant politics of globalization, globalized capital leaves no opportunity to inhale to small and medium sized local enterprises, while brings them out as an exclusive solution against intense conflicts, offers as an antidote.

(Süalp, 2004: 139)

The limits of the accumulation of the capital seem endless or only as limited as the variety of giant companies. The local companies dissolve in the market. ‘The’ market operates as the master discourse of mass media and politics, which occupy the dynamics of economy and the decisions of every kind, no matter if they are governmental, sociopolitical, or humanitarian. Miyoshi affirms that part of the profit is gained through the low costs of skilled labor and devalued trained and trainable cheap labor, and tax inducements. “Low civil rights consciousness, including underdeveloped unionism and feminism, is crucial; although female labor is abused everywhere, the wage difference between the sexes is still greater in the Third World – the target area of [transnational corporations]” (Miyoshi, 1996: 89).

Without comprehending that we confront an economy model which does not require production, we come across a picture of the earth which is already shaped by global unemployment and poverty.

(Süalp, 2004: 140)

Globalism which works economically based, does not offer anything to the outsiders who do not carry the corporate identity, neither to the unemployed or underemployed, nor to the displaced or to the homeless, so it protects the benefited sectors and hurt others.

Transnational corporations rationalize and execute the objectives of colonialism with grater efficiency and rationalism. And they are, unlike imperial invaders, welcomed by the leaders of developing nations. [] Authoritarianism is unlikely to diminish. Oppression and exploitation continue. Ours, I submit, is not an age of *postcolonialism* but of intensified colonialism, even though it is under an unfamiliar disguise.

(Miyoshi, 1996: 97)

Through political and economic inequalities while there is no unity, there is no awareness. Increasing poverty and displacement take the places in lives, however everybody gets poorer, the penniless others are disregarded, or just forgotten about, in a split second, even if it is regarded. The disparities between the urban zones have become enormous. The invisibility of the difference is likely to contribute to further conflicts: the indifference of greedy globalism versus the unawareness and rage of the poor. Moreover how could it be possible to empathize with others, if one is not aware of the conditions of oneself? It is like a constant eclipse.

What Miyoshi submits as ‘intensified colonialism’ is parallel to what I would call global imperialism. Süalp mentions the match of purposes of imperialism with the globalization today (Süalp, 2004: 248). The reason I prefer to call the latter is because imperialism broadly envelops also the indirectly concealed control which is implemented formally and informally, whereas colonialism impose the rule directly¹⁰. Although it is obscurely dominated, the shadow of multinational economic circulation power of global imperialism is outlined economically, culturally, socially so that individually.

The way of accumulation of capital, passes through the advanced communication and transportation where technology is the foremost obvious hand of globalization. “Because of the rapid development in sophisticated computer technology – often justifiably called the third industrial revolution – in communication, transportation, and manufacturing, the transfer of capital, products, facilities, and personnel has been unprecedentedly efficient” (Miyoshi, 1996: 89). The efficiency is on behalf of flow of global capital whereas by the technology transgresses into the everyday life it seems like the time is gained on behalf of individualism. The individuals are lost in the gained time in which they run to catch the giddy flow of everyday life.

Hence the giddy flow and characteristics of Wong films insistently have the recurrent underlined time issue, which also might refer to the

deadline. Yet the time is a common issue not merely specific to Hong Kong dwellers, but in the age of every kind of speed in communication and in transportation world wide, where the technology approved itself as the forgoing touch of the society, it is conversely the most distancing element of individuals ever after, by the support of media. The technology has the power to develop every minute, to expand as an indispensable commodity, to permeate the city, work, home, body, leisure in everyday life. While it is engaged to everyday life so tightly, it is not so easy to “deconstruct the mythology that technology is a panacea” (Drucrey, 1995: 12) anymore:

Perception, memory, history, politics, identity, and experience, are now mediated through technology, in ways that outdistance simple economic or historical analysis. Indeed technology pervades the present not simply as a mode of participation but as an operative principle. Beneath the facades of ownership through consumption and conceptualization through use, technology subsumes experience. The relationships between technology and knowledge, class, scarcity, and competition can no longer be framed in strictly economic terms, they have encompassed the individual. In forms that assail the boundaries between understanding and certainty, technology is operational not merely in the formation of ideologies but also in the practices of everyday life.

(Drucrey, 1995: 12)

The technology circulates even transgresses the essence of everyday life. It merges in the cradle of the “fast-forward”¹¹ moving city like Wong Kar-wai films represent. The technology changes everyday life. It is hard to reach its altering speed. Technology itself has the capability to change everything whatever it touches. It changes the city, the perceptions of time, body, and mind within the city. Technology is a playground on global villages. It is the initial weapon of the authorities, and the toy of the media. It is the invariable entertaining merchandise of the consumer society. It magnets the individuals, surrounds the public, calls the techno subcultures. Technology is a sly poison, and there is no antidote to cure from the attraction. Electronic technologies corrupt the identity and loosen the ties of belonging at home, at offices, on the streets. The romanticized visions of identity and belonging, hang around the edges of simulated faces of life.

People survive disconnected from their experiences, infected with images and tainted with trade marks.

New technologies and their ideologies impose distinct styles other than traditional ones, the division of capital and labor which is obliged to chart new maps; just as it does.

(Süalp, 2004: 140)

Just as Süalp brings the fact of new mappings of new technologies, Donna Haraway states that the new technologies were not the reason but are enabled the homework economy to become a world capitalist organizational structure, and that the term “homework economy” refers to female jobs. Haraway explains how “new [third] industrial revolution” produces a new working class, as well as new sexualities and ethnicities. The members of this working class become isolated and gain economic vulnerability as they age (Haraway, 2000:304). In parallel to this approach, Süalp describes “the loss of experiences in the cities which are reorganized according to ideologies of electronic technologies”. She also points out that, “the representations occur like a public Television in daily city life” (Süalp, 1999: 80). The example of a woman who is working at home, on pieces of textile is far from the complete work that she is taking part. She is unaware of her working class conditions and the notion of her rights. “She is not only alienated from the outside world, but also from the self producing spaces as a worker. She is neither aware that she is separated from the experiences of social life, nor of herself” (Süalp, 1999: 79). Her isolated position would leave no space to realize the need of a public sphere while she might believe to have a right is a fairy tale.

The exploitation of culture seems no longer to be linked directly with labor but with a problematic connection - desire. To be “disconnected” stands as a form of impotence, of lack, of alienation.

(Druckrey, 1995: 5)

The disconnection of experiences and unawareness of itself is far from what Druckrey calls as “connection – desire.” While it is possible to connect to the opposite side of the world by communication technologies,

the close touch of society is reduced to its lower limits. According to Baudrillard “we no longer partake in the drama of alienation but are in the ecstasy of communication” (Baudrillard, 1988: 22). The alienation remains, but we are not aware, because of the ‘ecstasy of communication’ technologies. The knot is tight, on our blindfolds.

So far I tried to open a gate for the looks we embrace in globalized localities with the economic sociopolitical consequences where the blindfolded very beings persist. Hong Kong was the preliminary city with a rough close history which carries Wong Kar-wai films that indent the volatile identity, space and time through the others. From now on, the vision will include the rest of the whole as well, as glocal state of Wong films, obtaining the ‘global and the local’. ‘Whole’ is in cross cultural perception that activate the peninsula of locality with the similar perceptions of different cultures.

Glocal is a term that Yingjin Zhang had derived from Roland Robertson’s formulation of ‘glocalization’ of “the reconstruction, in a sense of ‘home,’ ‘community,’ and ‘locality’ in the same process”¹². Zhang analysis “cinematic configurations of contemporary Chinese urban cinema of Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Taipei, with extending the limits of global city to the “glocal city” to capture the integration of local and global processes, and their fluid boundaries” (Zhang, 2002: 253-5).

Although it is a playfully combination it does not offer a playful vision and background. The big definition of globe composes the diminishing intimate locality and ambiguous identity which are big enough in themselves as well.

Zhang discusses and criticizes Ackbar Abbas while he adopts the ‘disappearance’ fact that Abbas propounded to define Hong Kong entity through its cinema.¹³ Saskia Sassen espouses Abbas’s gaze at Hong Kong, as it had no pre-colonial past, only a colonial present and always the imminence of its disappearance. Zhang brings the fact that New Hong Kong cinema which emerged in 1970s, has found Hong Kong itself as a subject

and articulated an uncanny feeling what Abbas calls “the *déjà disparu*”: “the feeling that what is new and unique about the situation is already gone, and we are holding a handful of clichés, or a cluster of memories of what has never been” (Zhang, 2002: 256). This looks very familiar to the situation of the rest of the world today, considering the global uncertainty, but especially, Andreas Huyssen’s interrelation of memory and urban palimpsests.

Huyssen criticizes the sublimed past without borders institutionally, academically is internalized, thus the meaning is emptied in musealized monumental past where it was scraped and written over on the erased surface of urban sphere (Huyssen, 2003). Wong rewrites the memories, nostalgia with longings on recreated periods or times on pellicle where the films articulate the undertones and off the tunes. The physical, social and mental lament of loneliness that come down by industrialization, urbanization, and modernity attuned to the recreated memories to hold on the moments on the pellicle against the leaky historical, cultural, individual memory yet foreshadowing the ambiguity in through amalgamated postmodernity up to global uncertainty.

3- Memory, Nostalgia

“...So then, yours is truly a journey through memory!”
Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

Wong Kar-wai films are pointed as the reason of resemblance of Marcel Proust because of the repetitive themes of memory as the remembrance of past and with common use of voiceover (Teo,1997), but Proust is going to be mentioned in *Memory, Nostalgia* with “Proust effect”.

The recollections of past times occur when the memory is evoked by a specific scent belonging to a place, and by a tune of music that belongs to a moment. Remembering the feeling of the world of a book while listening to some music; or the recognized smell while entering to a place that recalls a specific time, even if the place is totally new other than the recalled, put one in a sense and mood of lived experiences. This “involuntary memory” is also called the Proust effect, “named after the French author Marcel Proust, which refers to the phenomenon of a particular smell or odor bringing a memory to mind”¹⁴. The sound and the scent of remembrance which are disguised in music and in the spaces are blossomed when the experience is repeated by the supremacy of memory. The vision, the sound, and the scent recall the experiences within the memories over the places that become sort of a *déjà vu* like peculiar feeling, only it is not the false sense of familiarity, but the feeling that depends on the genuine experiences from the personal history.

Loosing the accustomed feeling of the recollections of the space and the music by new experiences of the former and the latter when the feeling is diverted by getting used to them disturbs as much until the remembrance disappears and forgotten completely. Likely the slight sorrow of finishing a book until the book is over which continues until the reader is dragged out of the diegetic world. It may be a brief nostalgia in advance, by worrying about mislaid pleasure, and getting exhilarated of an unknown upcoming mood; actually of the change. The genuine feeling of past disappears by

overlapping other scents and sounds, when the involuntary memory departs towards new experiences.

The proliferation of experiences by the process of living is scraped to the memory that structures the dimension of mental space of our very beings. Memory subsumes what is learned and the process of the cognizance of ongoing life within self-hood holds one to carry on. Individual memory is wrapped up tightly with the dominant ideology of the construction of nation-hood in society and in local environment. The history is wrapped up further than the actual facts in the formation of nation, to form a national identity by the dominant ideology that shovels the imagined community. The notion of a nation is formed by the agency of politics in everyday life while the formation of self-hood is affected thoroughly. The restraining of the disreputable past is confined in false memories by the complex problematic process which is involved in historical reconstructions. The denial and forgetting are always easier than facing the challenging facts and change. Even though it is hard to accept the failures, it is better than denial and escaping while the conflicts of forgetting causes self-destruction in self-hood which reflects the identity. If the compulsory disavowal is nation wide which “the equivalence of will and plebiscite, the identity of part and whole, past and present, is cut across by the ‘obligation to forget’, or forgetting to remember” (Bhabha, 1990: 310), then the problematic of identification in society extend in articulated unawareness of leaky historical memory, beyond the gaps. “Being obliged to forget becomes the basis for remembering the nation, peopling it anew, imagining the possibility of other contending and liberating forms of cultural identification” (Bhabha, 1990: 311). An imagined past over forgetting carves a redefined presence of an imagined nation which avoids the consciousness of the society while escaping the core and the periphery.

If the historical past used to give coherence and legitimacy to family, community, nation, and state, in a discourse that Eric Hobsbawm called the “invention of tradition” then formerly stable links have weakened today to the extent that national

traditions and historical pasts are increasingly deprived of their geographic and political groundings, which are reorganized in the processes of the cultural globalization. This may mean that these groundings are written over, erased and forgotten, as the defenders of local heritage and national authenticity lament.

(Huysen, 2003: 4)

The dual ascendancy as the global imperialism and national authority loosens the correlation of present and past within the society where the social conscious leaks away in individual and social imagination of historicity and locality with international political economy. “[As] a serious problem of strategic concept of resistance, the assimilation of the local into the global, so that different localities become pawns in the hands of global capital in its guerilla warfare against societies globally” (Dirlik, 1996: 40). The global capital and its strategies mislead the societies in a sly conflict of locality which is assimilated by the global.

[Dirlik presents] a critical localism wary of romantic nostalgia for communities past, hegemonic nationalism, or a museumifying historicism that would imprison the past and disguise oppression in a neo-ethnic sheen.

(Wilson & Dissanayake, 1996: 8)

Instead of resisting to what is imposed, or rather than insisting to change it, in conformism and individualism, there is “no doubt, the world is musealized, and we all play our parts in it” (Huysen, 2003: 15). Now the cultural tradition is also in question, likewise locality where the global unawareness brings a conformism, however embracing the real experiences of past and present, might discharge the passiveness also by utterance, which would interrupt the blind silent acceptance. “The form in which we think of the past is increasingly memory without borders rather than national history with borders” (Huysen, 2003: 4). Ongoing instability of displacement, loss and gaps or filled-in memory dissociates the human agency as collective, historical dynamic, social beings, which can be organized to act in resistance in public sphere. The free will of making decisions and being open to enact collectively; not necessarily in harmony,

on the contrary including different voices, undertones and off the tunes are better than singing alone in the scratched halls of *urban palimpsests*.

Cultural survival and resistance in any condition is valuable if it does not vanish in unawareness where memory and nostalgia evoke affect of emotion under the current agency of economy politics on behalf of cultural imperialism. “A literature that has both post-mimetic, postmodernist, both historical and attuned to the erasures of the historical record, partakes in the force play of remembrance and forgetting, vision and blindness, transparency and opaqueness of the world” (Huyssen, 2003: 10). As reverberating Huyssen the *remembrance and forgetting, vision and blindness, transparency and opaqueness of the world* becomes a factor of the *palimpsests* of memory and nostalgia.

Memory and nostalgia play a role “as if one is recalling, revisiting, or reworking a place already visited; imagining a place not yet seen; rewriting what is already experienced” (Naficy, 2001: 150). Nostalgia in fact, is not the wish to return to a place, but to a time, the time that is remembered without the conflicts which belonged to its own period. However time is an abstract concept which belongs to the events when they are taking place while it is irreversible. Therefore past is a past since the events once occurred, the experience of those events fades away, taking their places in memory. Yet again nostalgia does not cover the authenticity of the past as it was experienced. It is imagination and idealization of memory including the longing. The reflection of the perfect model of the past that it is peeled out of its defects is projected to the undesirable situation of the present. Thus nostalgia is about the memory polished with forgetting. It is the past, crystallized into precious moments of memory, which is overlapped by forgetting. Nostalgia is more likely an intricate projection than simple memory, where the romanticized history merges with dissatisfaction in the present. It flashes in two discrete temporalities, the safe feeling of the past which is carried by extensive emotional burden to the present. The memory and nostalgia driven narratives are about journeys to

find the perfect time and space from the present looked upon, as the past viewed from a future vantage/disadvantage point.

The films *Days of Being Wild* (1990), *In the Mood for Love* (2000), and *2046* (2004) only by taking place in the 1960s inevitably indicate nostalgia, where in fact, they refer to today. Actually nostalgia is also about the present, including the past as it was mentioned above. The films are not entrapped in solely an idealized past. They include the reflection of present defects, otherwise it would be a different kind of articulation, unable to envision now; or the actuality of today while we are already in a sense in daily life. “If the Romantics thought that memory bound us in some deep sense to times past, with melancholia being one of its liminal manifestations, then today we rather think of memory as a mode of re-presentation and as belonging ever more to the present” (Huyssen, 2003: 3). The films that take place in the past have the similar themes like time, memory, loneliness, and lovelorn identities which can be read from present’s point of view. The Hong Kong in the films is a re-created entity by the director’s imagination. Peter Brunette takes the issue in the part of *Days of Being Wild* from an interview of Wong as the director explains the process of the film as “Since I didn’t have the resources to re-create the period realistically, I decided to work entirely from memory. And memory is actually about a sense of loss—always a very important element in drama”.¹⁵ The recollections of Wong’s childhood take a great influence in his films. Apparently after coming from Shanghai to Hong Kong when he was five years old, he internalized the city after a while and embraced the dweller identity. In conflict to his gained dweller identity, inner spaces seem temporary and unlike homes where the city is in continuous flow. This re-presentation of ephemeral time and space however may include forgetting, as well as his remembrances in re-created city.

Memory is one of the paths where the main avenue is met, whether it calls back the past, or heralds the future of the diegesis in narratives of Wong films. Wong Kar-wai takes the memory as the main repetitive theme and destructs the memory building with the narration while he also plays

with the memory of the spectator. The double plots and the circular narration might confuse the spectator. Although the characters are keenly worked, they are also open to confusion especially in *Chunking Express* (1994) and *Fallen Angels* (1995) with double plots and *Ashes of Time* (1994) with complete circular narration. Potential confusion expands when the minimalist plots intertwined with the complex editing which is mostly arrived by nonlinear, elliptical narration that befits to the liquid time along with selective and vague memory in creating the meaning.

As Wong films are compared to works of Marcel Proust because of the repeated theme of memory and voiceover of the characters as a narrator (Teo,1997) the narrationally motivated perception of the films generates the Proust effect; an involuntary memory that passes to the spectator what is lived in the diegesis. The self-reflexive attempts like repetitions which refer to the previous films of Wong, slow-motion, stop-motion and fast-forward editing, or the shifting image from color to B&W or vice versa instead of purely subverting the transparency of the medium in continuing second the sense of mirroring the moods remain. For Godard the style “is just the outside of content, and content the inside of style, like the outside and the inside of the human body—both go together, they can’t be separated”(Roud, 1970). The spiral of content and style can be applied to Wong’s cinema, as well. Continues thematic and visual unity obtains the meaning mutually supportive where the ambiguity takes the track.

Ashes of Time mainly concentrates on memory where the circular narration is complete within the spiral of narrative as a code of immutable life in capitalism that surrounds it.

“It’s said that memory is the fount of worry. Ever since that year, I started to erase my memory. All I can remember is my fondness for peach blossoms.”

Ashes of Time (AoT)

The quotation of the voiceover of ‘Huang Yaoshi’ also known as ‘Evil East’ discloses his feelings and his state of mind towards the end of the film. *Ashes of Time* encircles lovelorn identities, in isolation, loneliness, and

exile in a drama of martial-arts film. The same sequence of ‘Ouyang Feng’ who is also known as ‘Malicious West’ takes place at the beginning. He is an agent of swordsmen who markets them.

“The five Golden meet Star Jupiter this year. There are famines everywhere. When ever there are famines, people have problems. Problems mean business for me.”

(AoT)

Ouyang Feng markets his friends who are skilled in martial arts. The capitalism shows his face in the protagonist’s phoney businessman manner. In the repeated scenes at the beginning and at the end, in a fixed frame he tries to convince the possible client with his offering enticement, for a convenient price.

“You must be forty. In forty years you must have come to hate someone. Someone you want to kill...”

(AoT)

The reverse shot is never shown, where the concentration is only on his confident, indifferent, persuasive mimics. Ouyang’s face is constantly concealed with an unknown object as a character of Wong’s films. Like questioning his manner and dim self-hood, as a consequence the body of capitalism as a whole. He serves to individual clients and to villages which are in need to be protected, for example to protect a village from horse thieves. So the personal and general problems and needs support the dealer.

Ouyang Feng introduces Huang Yaoshi as ‘Evil East’ and himself as ‘Malicious West’ while they are framed separately in canted angles within an insert in between of wavy sea. Their western and eastern identities appear in the fight of life uncannily at odds, after the establishing shots of desert and wild water sceneries, threatening, lonely in ambiguity.

Ouyang is visited in his isolated temporary inn in the desert, once a year by his friend Huang. This time he visits him with a gift of wine, “A Happy Go-Lucky Life” which takes the memory of the past. The metonymic relationship of wine encapsulates the film with being happy by being able to forget, and not to render the past into the present with memories.

“Inevitably, every act of memory carries with it a dimension of betrayal, forgetting, and absence” (Huyssen, 2003: 4). The task of the wine is to erase the memory which entwines the betrayal and absence of a past

love affair. Actually the magic wine is given to Huang to bring it to Ouyang by his love. She had rejected Ouyang, since he was always away for his adventures, and could not utter his love to her. Then she married with Ouyang's elder brother whom Ouyang was grown up with as an orphan. They both had realized that they loved each other after they had separated. Towards the end of the film by the dialogue between Huang and the woman, and from the long monologue of the woman most of the restricted relationships of the characters are disclosed. The reason that Huang visits Ouyang every year is because she wants him to do so while he is the only link to her past, memory and longing is scraped by her love.

The woman is in a house where she has closed herself to her past and to the future. She is framed in frame by the window of the house. Her silent son who is a child of an unhappy marriage, never speaks, not even smiles. She does not consider him as a prospect for her, because she knows she will be left alone by him some day, just like the foster mother in *Days of Being Wild*.

Soon after she elucidates her love to Ouyang, she wishes to go back to past. Before she dies she gives a bottle of wine to Huang in the hope that Ouyang forgets her. She does not want to be remembered by her love Ouyang Feng, not to leave him in agony by the remembrance of their past which includes the precious times that they had and the rejection that put an end.

Ouyang learns that she had died two years later. Then he tries the magic wine which is left a little from Huang. To taste the wine is an attempt to forget "but then Freud already taught us that memory and forgetting are indissolubly linked to each other, that memory is but another form of forgetting, and forgetting a form of hidden memory" (Huysen, 2003: 17).

"Magic wine was a trick she played on me. The harder you try to forget something, the more it'll stick to your memory. If you have to loose something, the best way is to keep in your memory." (AoT)

Unrequited love of Huang with Blindswordman's wife Peach

Blossom is also revealed by the long monologue. He drinks from the wine at

the beginning but the magic is not able to erase the memory of Peach Blossom either, but many of the rest. He does not remember Ouyang anymore. When he stares at the birdcage Ouyang asks why and the answer is that the birdcage looks familiar to him. Forgetting locks and blocks the society and identities in a cage unable to decipher the moment incapable of moving ahead. After his visit Huang never comes back to Ouyang's place although he awaits him to come. The futures of characters are displayed with the inter-titles towards the end of the film in a self-conscious mythic code historicizing the characters. Martial art movies are the ground to create a mythic Chinese identity, as it is in classical Hollywood Western, whereas "Wong's film is no martial-arts adventure, but a chamber drama that ruefully meditates on the destructiveness of the "swordsman" ethos"¹⁶. The heroes are no heroes to create a powerful mythic identity. The music also has an ironic reference in little trembling tunes. The tune trembles as at the scene of the wife of Hong Qi who insists not to leave the place without seeing her husband, just like a sound of a Sergio Leone spaghetti Western code, whereby 'Malicious West' Ouyang can also be interpreted as a reference of Wild West.

'The Evil East' becomes a hermit in Peach Blossom Island calling himself the master of Peach Blossom. The self-naming inquires Hong Kong's limited time of autonomy except diplomatic affairs and national defense as a self-deception of the island's insecure present and future. He defines himself as "the master" without any other confirmation. Thus, only he thinks he is the master as a self-deception. In fact he becomes isolated and alone as a hermit who has no mastery other than his sword skills. This is like the limited time of autonomy of the capitalist system as a mastery of Hong Kong. The clock is ticking during the independent conditions of economics and life style but for a restricted time, while dependency of diplomacy and national security remains all along. Motif as a place name of "Peach Blossom," which is introduced as Blind Swordsman's home town, actually is the name of his wife whom he longs for. He gets blind and dies in

a swordfight with the horse thieves. He is aware of Huang's fondness of her and leaves home. He can not make it "not to being late for peach blossoms." The motif is repeated with the blossoming tree, lonely as an island on a desert like a mirage. The nation, belonging, memory and the fondness of the land is replaced with the woman who is materialized in desire of Peach Blossom.

In the early inter-title: It's written in the Buddhist Canon: The flags are still, no wind blows, it's the heart of man that's in tumult! *(AoT)*

Ouyang envies Hong Qi because of his enthusiasm to wonder "the other side of the mountain" and to have a company to go on life. He watches the couple go away while he stays under a torn old flag. He conquers the torn nation on a desert in his heartbroken loneliness. Only the leeriness of capitalism remains where nation, love, memory, is in loss, society in exile.

The girl with the eggs who seeks revenge for her brother is rejected by Ouyang. Eggs are never enough to pay the cost, but Ouyang's offer is that she would worth more than eggs would. The abuse of woman sexually and female labor is almost legitimate in patriarchal societies where every other sexual abuse is covered and kept under as if none of them exists. Small sized local enterprises are not able to remain with their products against big enterprises, neither with enough capitals against the development of multinational enterprises. Ouyang is the manager who directs the swordsman not only from the area but with the ones coming from all directions, west or east. If the killing business is the market he works in the international market. Hong Qi is quick with his sword, skilled in martial arts. Ouyang discovers his skill and how much money that he can earn over him when Hong Qi had just left his hometown. His only failure is that he does not like shoes. Ouyang gives food when he sees he is hungry, and warns him that he will be hungry tomorrow again. Ouyang convinces him to fight for him to make a living, and to wear shoes for the impression to the villagers. He is the only character who has a reliable steady relationship with his wife who never leaves him alone even after he becomes a paid swordsman. The girl with the eggs asks all swordsmen to help her including

Hong Qi. When he accepts and fights for the Egg girl, Ouyang asks him if it was worth to lose a finger for a price of an egg. The question is asked on the frame where Hong's face is in close-up. Only the quarter of the frame is not covered by an unmotivated object's darkness. He says no, but that he felt great.

“[] I hated myself for refusing her. I become another person since I've been around with you. I've lost my real self. No I don't want to be like you. I know you'd never risk your life for the price of an egg! That's the difference between us.” (AoT)

His face is framed in close-up during his monologue above. Along his speech the darkness on his face is gradually unconcealed. He laughs when the split dim vision disappears completely. The light enlightens his face with the movement of his laughter. Taking part in the cruel business of “Malicious West” has harmed him and has changed his personality. His independent resisting position is underlined by his bare foot, and it is destroyed by involving to the capitalist system. The struggle of life in a capitalist society loosens the social connections and loses the ability of empathy as well as values like helping or supporting each other disappears. Thus it shapes the individuality within the capitalist identity without realizing the change, only by adopting to the flow of the system as a respectful criterion to earn money and survive. We will always be hungry again tomorrow. When Süalp puts on view “the geographies of nation states those are enable to settle down firmly,”

in the tension of international and transnational capitals in order to seeking for new markets the continual new formations of geographies; where we observe the growing terrorized sentiments of social process and migration, labor, belonging to a culture or a place, in pursuits of constant slipping identities, those who are losing the gravity.

(Süalp, 2004: 238-9)

The misplaced culture and lost values of locality encounter displacement, where the social contact dissolve in individualism on through the globalization which is uplifted by media and technology, the new kind of imperialism that surmount.

To ‘live well’ means not necessarily to live in comfort, or in wealth, or even in peace. It means to be a part of the community,

which is contingent on the question of community; which exists by virtue of addressing Rajchman's question of being "at home" in a world where our identity is not given our being-together is in question. (Donald, 1999: 155)

The characters of the *Ashes of Time* are in a constant flow in the desert. They have no wealth, no comfort, or piece at all while they are far from being a part of the community or having a home. Individuals are in an insecure and blurred state in society. Belonging is in loss in the conflict in between renegotiated globalizing forces and practices of local cultures, beyond the economically deserted conditions. The sorrow of loss and obstinate memory that Wong illustrates are both destructive drives, yet essential for endurance and empathy. Memory, in spite of the painful reminiscences, flourishes the experiences from innocence to experience, from love and to indifference, it includes the valuable past that we can count on to survive. The threat of socially produced amnesia is just too great and drastic to ignore, in which the volatile identities are operated through.

Any mutation in identity, in essence, in regularity, and even in physical place, poses a problem, if not a threat in terms of classification and control. If you can't locate the other, how are you to locate yourself?

(Minh-ha, 1989: 144)

"I finally reckoned that Yin and Yang are actually two persons in one. Behind these two identities was hidden someone with a wounded soul." (AoT)

Mourang Yang is the first *son* of the Mourang clan. He meets Huang at Peach Blossom Wood. Huang promises him to marry if he has a sister. Yang wants to hire Ouyang to kill Huang, because he dumped his sister Yin. Yang makes an offer that he can not refuse although he is one of his best swordsmen. Yin visits him as well, and wants him to kill her brother Yang. Yang as a woman in disguise is identified with desert under the blossoming tree, whereas Yin is fragmented by the shadow of a bird cage in the cave of Ouyang. The cave is mostly the inner mind where Yin is caged. The disguise holds the woman strong from the threats of a male dominant society, where all other swordsmen are man, and the rest of the women have no names except Peach Blossom. Yang is introduced several times as the

son of the Mourang clan emphasizing the patriarchy. Peach Blossom on the other hand is under the disguise of a land which is not exactly a name but definition. Peach is a flowering small native Chinese tree. Peach Blossom is the name of both the woman and the island, which keeps the potentially loaded meanings of sex, desire and longing, besides underlying maternity by blossoming.

When Ouyang discovers the wounded soul of the split identities Yin discloses herself and puts Ouyang into Huang's position. They start a game of love with substitute lovers. In the play as an answer to her question Ouyang tells the three words of love, that he could not utter to his real love. They make love in the remembrances of their ex-lovers. They were both rejected by the other parts. They try to substitute their lost loves with a self-deception, to try to share the heavy burden of longing and absence with a mutual projection.

She is never seen after she left Ouyang's place, but a legend about a *swordsman*¹⁷ with a mysterious history spreads who likes to practice his swordplay on his own reflection. He calls himself the Defeat-Seeking Loner. The distortion of the history is displayed by the legend with her Yin appearance. Although there are some shifts of Yin and Yang in a short montage-sequence, the future journey is about Yin as a female subject. The mythic talent of her sword comes to the image in the water where she spouts the calm water and makes a fountain out of it where she feels the nature in her hands. The split image mirrors her split identity in balance which is portrayed under the raising mountains. She is isolated, and alone like others, but she is the unique character who is able to stand in the vivid nature not to kill but to erect the nature by her power of ambition and emotion. As a *loner* with her wounded soul and split identity she is captured in the contradiction of desert and nature. Her legend character is captured in the nature, in the vivid water while she was characterized in the desert carrying the barren land; caged in her fragmented identity; lonely, alienated even to herself and to the community.

4. Mirrors of Volatile Identity

“You look in the mirror. You have doubt about yourself.”

Pierrot le fou (1965)

Mirror is an important aspect of *mise-en-scène* of Wong films. Except *As Tears Go By* (1988), all the films have the reflections of the characters onto the mirror, sometimes combined with the reflection, sometimes hard to differ if it is the mirrored image or the real. In *Fallen Angels* the assassin and her partner do not meet but communicate over fax machines. She arranges everything for the assassin, and faxes the plan to him. He does not like to make decisions, so he just takes the directions from her for execution. When he decides that he has to make a decision he leaves a coin and a number in the bar where they never meet, but always come separately. The number belongs to a song in the jukebox which is about that they do not belong to each other and he is about to leave. When the reflections appear upside down on the bar's mirror, it is still hard to tell if it is the image or the real. He is in need to change. However, foregoing the present situation, starting a survival struggle by making decisions, avoiding the comfort of being directed and the partner are tough enough to be lost. Later he even can not stand to hear the song again. His partner is the one who has been rejected by him forever. And one of the saddest mottos of Wong characters is to avoid being rejected beforehand. The female partner would not be able to substitute her love anymore even with the indirect communication in partnership relation. Furthermore she is about to lose her object of desire. Even falling into her fantasies will be more painful. Consequently both of them find themselves in an awkward presence, where the previous was not at ease either.

The reflection of the mirror subverts the original and recreates an extra identity in ambiguity. The alienated gaze of the split triple or more images, questions the identity where the reflected image turns the subject to an object. The reflected subject that turned to object will be erased when the

image disappears as the transitory reflection nature of the mirrors. The deception of the eye stimulates the image that does not exist. The identity is questioned externally in relation to state of being, and internally in relation to state of mind, whereby the existence is in question. The split and volatile identities can be envisioned on-screen representing today where “the gravity is lost” (Süalp, 2004: 239).

The images are not only reflected on plain mirrors but they are also reproduced on the tainted mirrors where ambiguity is doubled by the thoroughly alienating twin image. A clear image is echoed with a blemished one. The blurred, shadowy reflections embrace a pattern of past on old tainted mirrors where the certainty of history is lost. The belief of self-hood is in doubt because of misplaced identity via ambiguous and temporary reflection. While individualism increases along with the doubt of history and oneself, to trust one another in society decreases

The foster mother in *Days of Being Wild* and macho, bitter character Yuddy are also doubtful identities. Actually Yuddy doubts about his past, foster mother does about her future. She resists telling him who his real mother is because she does not want to lose him, selfishly. She believes that once she would tell him, she would be left alone and would not be remembered anymore. Their both reflected images constantly appear on the mirror throughout the film. When he decides to go to find his mother he opens a window looking out to the vast and ambiguous future to run/fly away. He is framed like looking to a mirror directly to the screen while his movement reflects on a mirror at his back. The sound of a ship’s siren is heard off-screen. He is volatile just like Ho Po-wing in *Happy Together*. Then the foster mother worriedly looks at her back to the screen, out from the balcony, like looking at him with a disclosure. She is aware of that he is flying away.

In *Ashes of Time* the flashback brings the mirror in. Not only the identities but the inner space is on mirror where the past and present is volatile in ambiguity of haziness of a subjective point of view.

In the Mood for Love is full of shady and tainted reflections where the coincidence of two betrayed people rent rooms at the same time. They realize soon after the relationship of their spouses. Their spouses are always hidden in the frame. But the cry of the woman is reflected on a vaporized mirror outside the hall while she is in the bathroom. The misty reflection of the weeping is in anxiety if she loses her lover and never be able to see him again in case he has to confess to his wife.

The fleeting and moody character Ho Po-wing in *Happy Together* is not only looking to the mirror but also to the screen again, when he is checking his look from a wardrobe's mirror. He is the most volatile identity, who does not have the strength to fight back with life to survive. His last dance remains on a cheval glass while he is dancing with somebody else with the reflection of Yiu-fai. The unbearable longing, incapability of living together and the inability to forget deep down in loneliness is barren on the reflection and the darkening passion of tango.

Volatile identities do not belong to anywhere and they drift away due to a need or change, or due to a longing for a past, home, or a beloved. The liminality between the future and the past is stuck in a red-brown dry space of desert in *Ashes of Time*. The wish or hope of a lonely blossoming tree, or the cages and caves of depth of minds is kept in that liminality. The disability of the volatile identities to predict what is behind the point of where they are to delineate the trajectory is also repeated in other films.

The recreated extra identity which is subverted by the reflection of the mirror from the original spreads the ambiguity in diegesis. The destiny of the ambiguous identity characterizes the liminality where the filmic image is constructed with self reflexivity. Self reflexivity as a strategy of Wong films differ from the recognized reflexivity, which is mainly to estrange audience exposing the filmic production, is appropriated to reflection of life in art. "The space of liminality in ordeal of the collapse of certainty" (Bhabha, 1990 :300) in his films identifies the viewer with the shift and flow of filmic images but also questions neither/nor transition of

the liminal stage. Reflexivity becomes the object of narrative that defines and questions the plot but also modifies the jouissance in loose ends.

The present time in Wong films is perceived through the nonlinear narratives which is mapped by the juxtaposition of multiple voiceovers, and is encircled with a-chronologically located events, rare flashbacks, told or titled futures, back and forth in filmic time. Spaces unfold and are edited through the self-conscious division of memory. Nostalgic longings, multiple losses and displacements of the characters, the traits those are ajar to change meet in perpetual fragmentation of visually harassed postmodern times in oblivion.

Inter-title: He remembers those vanished years. As though looking through a dusty window pane, the past is something he could see but not touch. And everything he sees is blurred and indistinct.

In the Mood for Love (2000)

CHAPTER II

EVERYDAY LIFE IN MOODS

“Not the labile mists of memory nor the dry transparence, but the charring of burned lives that forms a scab on the city, the sponge swollen with vital matter that no longer flows, the jam of past, present future that blocks existences calcified in the illusion of movement: this is what you would find at the end of the journey.”

Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

1 – Nowness, Flashes in Circular Narration

‘Time is a panacea’ not because it only helps forgetting like the wine in *Ashes of Time* as a magic potion, but also allows a spell for forgiving; further more to evaluate what has ensued kept in a big basket of *nows* and to find out the spot one is standing so to appraise to look away forward. It is always now with the hopes and prospects and the burden loaded previous *nows* over memory hauling the experiences, but the balance is somewhat lost to weigh the basket of moments. Looking into a collective past without a blurred vision in everyday life is almost not possible within the ideological construction of powers that drives with forgetting. The only maneuver of contriving the standpoint is to hold on to the personal experiences lived socially and individually. Regaining the moments is necessary not to let them disappear in forgetting in ongoing sense and the stance of *now* to keep in between back and forth. *Now* is equal to moments which Wong films are overloaded with. Simply even the names of the films refer to the moments and time, *As Tears Go By*, which also indicates the reference to the popular soundtrack of *Casablanca* (1942) “As Time Goes By”, *Days of Being Wild*, *Ashes of Time*, *In the Mood for Love*, and *2046* which preserve a year long,

actually referring to almost a period of fifty years. Of course these are according to the English translated versions of films' names.

“Cinema has a structure that necessitates converting the past to the present tense” (Erdem, 2001: 166-7).¹⁸ It is constructed on to generate the ‘nowness’ during the practice of watching a film. The narratives of Wong films are not in chronological order. The time circulates the nonlinear narrative in circles. In the flow of narrative *now* and *then* disappears. It becomes a whole within the story as it is; on the other hand it is even hard to define the story chronologically. Rather than a tangible cause and effect relationship the meaning is built with a fortiori integrated plots and different times. The voiceover explains what happened before on the flow of narrative while the explanation may also tell about the future sometimes. Thus the plot includes a past tense onscreen like a flashback. But also the plot continues in the present when the voiceover notifies forward information of an oncoming future. Surrounded by the ambiguity of the sense of time, the seized moment keep *now* and *then* in it, where before and after all become *now*. It is also like a remark of self reflexivity in liminality of time engendering the revival of the very moment which includes the before and after in the flow of narrative. Consequently it is perceived as *now* but an ambiguous one in liminality which is practiced along the narrative in circular narration that turns into nowness by detouring the memory and perception of time.

All films have some continual allusions not only in themselves but also along each other. “For Kristeva, as for Bakhtin, every text forms a ‘mosaic of citations’ a palimpsest of traces, where other text may be read” (Stam, 1992b: 201) although here the citations of Wong films is taken to the issue. The narratives contain tight intertextual connections within repeated narrational devices, especially beginning from *Chunking Express* and *Fallen Angels* and almost over them all in 2046, the usual reflexive repetitions appear like a retrospective, as if presenting a final of a period of Wong Kar-wai cinema.

The explicit repetitions of voiceovers in *Chunking Express*, and *Fallen Angels* echo in each other. *Chunking Express*: “Everyday we brush past so many people. People we may never meet or may become close friends.” *Fallen Angels*: “We rub shoulders with people everyday, strangers who may even become friends and confidants.”

By the lost ability of tying the social contacts, people are restricted to the imaginary liveliness far from belonging to a place, home or to a community. We became swinging souls lost in our deep minds alienated to the society not letting the dialogical encounters. The loosened ties of the social contacts are in a nutshell of *nows* in urban environment. The loosened ties start right in the urban society until the infinity of our mental depths which is controlled and exposed in everyday life, where it leaves no sights to be expressed.

Flashback/forward as a technical quality partakes Wong films, as it is in *Chunking Express* and *Ashes of Time*; the characters or like the inter-titles in *Ashes of Time*, narrate the stories as lived before, or as it will be lived after, while the narrative flows. So in the present time of diegesis, the ‘future’ and the ‘past’ mixes together with ‘now’. Memory works as a way of capturing and holding on to the past and living as if the past were the present additionally introducing the future in the course of now.

In *Ashes of Time* the fates of the characters are written in calligraphic inter-titles but voiced over when it is about someone else. If the fate includes the onscreen character only the calligraphy is due. The legend about Yin and Yang is retold on the inter-titles by the voiceover of Ouyang Feng, where s/he becomes the Defeat-Seeking Loner. When Hong Qi leaves, the end of calligraphic inter-titles introduce Hong Qi’s and Ouyang Feng’s duel, where both of them had died. Evil East, Huang Yaoshi’s voiceover exclaims the end of “the woman” which actually is chronologically the beginning with the given wine that comes towards the end of the film.

He Qiwu, the cop 223 comes across with the 'woman in blond wig' in *Chunking Express* while his voiceover declares "Fifty seven hours later I fell in love with this woman." The film is built out of moments where time is presented as evanescent, which replay that have gone before. Bordwell describes it as "an instant becomes a curiously static point condensing both past and future" (Bordwell, 2000: 276). The notion of present appears to be a paradox when the meaning is carried onto the future, past and present. It becomes a perception of mind creation in a presence of time fallacy. "The films trace repetitive loops, and lines of dialogues. Wong ingeniously explores cyclical patterns of plotting – usually to show his apparently free-floating characters locked in work habits and ill-starred loves and friendships" (Bordwell, 2000: 275-6).

The real flashbacks which interrupt the nowness at a blink second with 'lightened brief interval of pasts'¹⁹ appear rarer in narratives which are usually motivated of a unique character's point of view. The circular narration however is not restricted to a motivation of one POV. The circular narration is also like a flashback as an input where the present 'now' is a result of the past. The meaning is set upon the ambiguity of time through the non-linear flow. The circular narration more than metaphorically representing the spiral of life, for example in *Ashes of Time* is like the continual circuit of modernity and capitalism where memory, identity, culture, social unity are confined on a threshold. In spite of the temporal shift considering the martial-art genre *Ashes of Time* is directed to the very day. The genre distorts the configuration of mythic representation and characterization of *wuxia pian* whereby interrogates the mirrored now and the myth by the aesthetic and dramatic structure. Whenever it rains Ouyang Feng thinks about his love. When Hong Qi leaves with his wife, Ouyang is reminded of his regret of his past in loneliness along with the falling rain. He thinks he could have a company and be free to discover to the back of the hills like Hong Qi. The embedded flashbacks first bring a quick and hazy frame of married woman's inserted close shot in traditional wedding

dress. There is a temporal jump first to the meeting two together with his love on a hill. Then to the wedding night which is also the last time that they had met, where they are in a dim old house. She indecisively can not go in and hangs back in front of the room door where her new wedded husband is inside. Her image is reflected on the mirror when she passes by, through stairs. When she has a struggle with Ouyang the candle in her hands fall down in between the surrounding stairs, and the light turns off. The house itself embodies the dark past with limitation of narrow corridors within edginess of handrails on one side, the walls on the other, and closure in dimness. The objects and space provide a metaphorical rendering of imagination with the dark atmosphere in relation to the dark diminishing past with lost and longing. The mirrored past, alienated with their stance and future reflects also the stairs of the house. The stairs are nearly always the symbol of the relationships in Wong films. In *As Tears Go By* Wah finds his cousin Ngor at the hotel she is living and the sign of the relationship appears at the stairs of the hotel; in *Ashes of Time* the love game played with Yin and Ouyang begins at the dim stairs of Ouyang's dark cave; in *Fallen Angels* Blondie/Baby convinces the Assassin to come upstairs to her place and seduces him at the stairs; In *In the Mood for Love* the couple passes by each other in intimate moments at the dark stairs of the street. Although the flashback of Ouyang and his love is clearly motivated by Ouyang's POV it includes the shared feeling of hers, as well, within the information of the woman given before. When she drops the candle from her hand, it falls down to the hall, darkening the stairs, actually both of their lives darkens beginning from that moment. By the darkening stairs their contact and their relationship end. His disability to utter his love and his fondness of martial-art adventures bring the insecurity of the woman so to design her life according to the suppressive convention of patriarchal society whilst he becomes a "deal-making middleman who bridges the gap between sole proprietor and transnational capitalist" (Stokes & Hoover, 2001: 190) in the middle of desert who tries to persuade who ever comes from east, west, or

north. “Wong is not particularly interested in historical authenticity for its own sake, clearly preferring to use the past and generic conventions as symbolic tools for expressing his sense of the present” (Brunette, 2005: 42). In *Ashes of Time* all characters proceed to death, but there is no sign of birth, except the alienated furthermore excluded non-speaking son of the woman. Circular narration follows the circuit of capitalism, where the spiral of life mutely twists again in vicious circle of capitalism by ending the film with the beginning which is actually the end.

In *Days of Being Wild* the flashback comes into view with the vision of Yuddy at the moment before his death. He is shot in a train where he is running away from a gang of passport dealers those want to kill him. The camera approaches to a woman fleetingly and adopts her POV. She looks down to a hall, from a ring gallery upstairs. She circles around the gallery’s hole while the camera follows her POV. The voiceover of the foster mother narrates the taking up of the baby, and until he becomes eighteen years old that her financial worries were over. They are separated with the storey where there is no stairs in between. Therefore it may point as there is no relation between the real mother and foster mother, as the baby will have no relation, either, with his mother anymore. Considering the class disparity that became apparent with the levels of the mise-en-scène, and the POV that remains at the top, looking down from above, in placement of Yuddy himself, according to foster mother’s expression, or to indifferent rejection of the mother, there never will be. Before the flashback is over on a sound-bridge Yuddy’s voiceover starts to explain that he always wanted to know what he would have seen at the last moment of his life. Then referring to the flashback he says that ‘he should not close his eyes’ in order not to be reminded so that not to fall into a flash of his real history of abandonment.

Both of the flashbacks are not exactly restricted to only on one subjective POV. In *Ashes of Time* it may adopt both POVs of the forlorn lovers, and in *Days of Being Wild* the flashback is imagined by Yuddy, narrated by the foster mother, but the sequence espouses the real mother’s

POV. Both of the flashbacks may pass on to a collective imaginary and history in loneliness and in longing.

Despite the complex combination of self-conscious visual and auditory indications in achronological narrative such as voice-over, filmic punctuations like stretch printing, slow-motion, and changes in image qualities such as color to black and white, shifting diegetic music to non-diegetic deepens the characters' subjective thoughts and emotions, whereby the self-reflexive cinematography generates an emotional closeness instead of distancing the viewer. Voiceover generally constructs the range of knowledge of the narration. In addition, it renders the internalization of the emotional closeness to the character and a psychological correlation in Wong films. The gaps obtained in the disposition of nonlinearity contribute to the ambiguity in elliptical narration. The abstraction of the temporality and deconstruction of a strictly fulfilled storyline does not let the viewer get lost in filmic reality. Nonetheless, the emancipation of inner speech is urged in momentary emotions by "degrees of intensity from day-dreaming to focused concentration" (Morris, 1994: 19) calling the *moodification*.

David Harvey elaborates the 'moment' in his 'Afterword' in *The Production of Space* as one of the key concepts of Lefebvre "which he interpreted as fleeting but decisive sensations [] which were somehow revelatory of the totality of possibilities contained in daily existence" (Lefebvre, 1991a: 429). The stretch-printed moments in Wong films coin a subjective time in effect of slow motion of the clear subjects, while the background flows in dissimilar rapid speed with a brushed hazy vision. The uneven pacing in a frame persuades the intimacy of the characters lived and perceived usually individually. The ephemeral moments break the oblivion of instance and in the passage of the intense sensation of the moving moment which is conceived by the viewer. The most intimate moments that separate the characters from the entity of usual sequence of time become a subjectively observed sense of time which dissolves into the viewing experience by encapsulating the time that lived in diegesis. The stretch

printed scenes are like depth scenes. Like the character is falling into a deep thought or into a very intimately sensational moment. Uneven flow of the images acquires the psychological situation of characters' minds which separates from the usual sense of time and speed of the everyday life. The depth scenes instead of stimulating purely the awareness of the production of film, take the audience in by diminishing the fact of watching inactively, it internalizes the experience in the density of the moment. The maneuver of self reflexive narration allows the viewer experience identification, stitching to the perception of subjective time and point of view. As a result the mood and the sense of the character that passes to the viewer is what I would call *moodification*.

In *Fallen Angels* the mute character He Qiwu who becomes blond when he falls in love with Charlie dives to a momentary escape from flow at the fast food restaurant. He falls to his emotions in love's haze. Without an apparent touch he enjoys leaning his head to Charlie's shoulder in slow-motion. The flow of people runs at the back, unconscious of the subjective hazy moment that he had fallen.

Police officer 633 in *Chunking Express* pauses when he learns that his lover who abandoned him, left a letter to the fast food center for him. He resists taking the letter and falls to a miasma by smoking his cigarette. While his smoke steams away in slow-motion, people flow beside him. His expectation of return has become a dream with the letter, which he denies reading. The smoke covers the moment with its atmospherizing visual, while it entails the momentary but self-destructive entity.

Exposure of the intimate moments elucidates an emotional presence that becomes a practice of empathy for the viewing subject. The leaking experiences enlarge in a déjà vu like sensation, where the feeling depends on the observed experiences from the personal moments of characters. The interrelationship between films in *mise-en-scène*, like the falling rain and the stairs, the déjà vu like sensation completes with a Proust effect where the verbal and visual repetitions provide an access to memory. The experiences

that diminish with overflows of media, technology and commodities in global postmodern schemata rather urge to hold on to the past. Even though the characters change in films the *mise-en-scène* of *moodification* is repeated. Hence the urge to depend on memory and nostalgia recur in *nowness* within repetitions spanned in moments. An ambiguous *nowness* along the narrative in circular narration turns into a desire to “freeze the moment of experiences”²⁰ by detouring the memory and the perception of time. Especially love and love caused inner struggle are elements of these moments. They are moments of escapes from the alienated condition of everyday life which can be experienced by falling outside of the capitalist consumerism in volatile time, in hidden authenticity and instantaneity of the moments.

The city encircles the society with physical and mental dimensions. Urban society is put down to the streets or behind the windows. Points of views remain surrounded with everyday life constructions. Naked eyes are almost disabled to see the sky barely with rising buildings or lacing wires which interfere and fragment the point of views. The interference carries on without the resign of billboards with every kind of publicity signs of media that ethereally dissolve in perception without being aware of being affected mentally. The daily experience splits our very eyes and minds through the insistent flow of physical and informational speed in a constant change. Thus the bare sky behind the construction is almost imperceptible or at least concealed both figuratively and literally.

The clouds in the sky have been intruded with the buildings is perceived by the urban society in the middle of the city. The process of intrusion had begun a long time ago, since industrialization, urbanization and modernity. The intruded skies are diffused to all of Wong films whether they are narratively motivated or like non-diegetic inserts, they work as transition elements that evoke an atmospheric quality. Even in the *Ashes of Time* the sky is seen in between the old torn tent when the Blind Swordsman is about to die. He hears the sound like a breeze of death.

After Peach Blossom's image the sky is seen behind the torn tent. The frames of clouds in the cityscape resemble the daily perception and posit the urban point of view in *moodification*. The bare clouds however only stimulate the moods while they are inserted as transition elements which move the expectation.

Nature echoes their passions. Lowering clouds always threaten rain, the formulaic climate of movie sadness. At moments of crises people lift their eyes to the skies, as if seeking deliverance.

(Bordwell, 2000: 279)

The films motivate the desire of open space although the characters rarely look up the skies. Yet a full open space is almost inaccessible in an urban environment, neither it is easy to reach to openness in an urban society. "The romantic lament about a world lost under the onslaught of industrialization, urbanization, and modernity only goes to show how fast and intense the transformations toward the future had already become by 1800" (Huysen, 2003: 2). The disturbance of perception has already existed however the intrusion is not only increased to an upper degree, now every kind of sight is interfered, blurred and indistinct. The perception of the past, the future and the present, the look to each other, and to oneself, the sight to the sky or to the city and beyond, all are fragmented and cloudy.

"...the cloud hovered, having barely left the lips, dense and slow, and suggested another vision: the exhalations that hang over the roofs of the metropolises, the opaque smoke that is not scattered, the hood of miasmata that weighs over the bituminous streets."

Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

2 - Dialogic Encounters in Everyday life

Daily life is the ordinary setting of society's central universe. Although it is ordinary, the aspect of being mundane doesn't make it insignificant. On the contrary everyday life is not something that can be overlooked, as it generates the outer and inner universes of oneself. "Every project begins from it and every realization returns to it to acquire its real significance. Everyday life is the measure of all things: of the fulfillment or rather the nonfulfillment of human relations; of the use of lived time; of artistic experimentation; of revolutionary politics" (Debord, [1961]: 239). Even if it is considered insignificant or significant, survival struggles are experienced in everyday life.

[C]onsequence of the everyday alienation as a whole, which could be defined as the inability to invent a technique for the liberation of everyday experience. [A]wareness of the profound richness and energy abandoned in everyday life is inseparable from awareness of the poverty of the dominant organization of this life. Only the perceptible existence of this untapped richness leads to the contrasting definition of everyday life as poverty, and as prison [].

(Debord, [1961]: 241)

The struggles may be handled in direction of liberation or may result to be trapped in remoteness of alienation. "The everyday life is either too far or too near; a correct distance in which the experiences of everyday life can be intelligible seems to be, precisely out of reach" (Tang, 2002: 124-6). Everyday life potentially contains the privileged experiences of the expected 'real life' that is encircled within the history and politics of time and space. In the era of 21st century we are primarily used to the simulacrum experiences without much meaningful utterances. Mundane and unimportant details of everyday life shape the individual along with the hazy mystery of subtle politics seized urban life. In everyday life or in leisure, which has to be actually inseparable, the subject is directed with these fake images and alienated experience bombings. Gardiner adds Baudrillard's '*image saturated society*'

(Gardiner, 2000: 84) to the differentiation between everyday life and leisure where Lefebvre pointed out by '*illusory reverse image*';

What we find is a false world: firstly because it is not a world, and because it presents itself as true, and because it mimics real life closely in order to replace the real by its opposite. How strange the split between the real world and its reverse image is. For in the end it is not strange at all but a false strangeness, a cheap-and-nasty all-pervasive mystery.
(Lefebvre, 2002: 230)

The simultaneously flowing images of television, advertisements, all kind of media reach the consumer society and lock it to the nonexistent experiences and block out the real ones leaving no chance to escape. The individual becomes mute while the society becomes deaf. We are less involved in 'the molten lava of events as they happen'²¹. Gardiner's quotation of Holquist explains how 'this [] crucial to Bakhtin' [is] (Gardiner, 2000: 47);

[B]ecause this is where the unique character of our everyday actions and deeds, and indeed our selfhood, is constituted. It is the paramount reality where 'we create, cognize, contemplate, live our lives and die - the world in which the acts of our activity are objectified and the world in which these acts actually proceed and are actually accomplished once and only once'.²²

The experiences are set up in the dynamics of everyday life environment reared in social and cultural aspects. The culture is shaped through the history, language and believes while the society reproduces the culture in the melting pot of experiences, through communication, and social relationships. Likewise the society is shaped by the culture, while it is affected and directed by media and politics, 'though not exclusively' especially in the cities, globally enforced by authorities. "[T]he total control or homogenization of space eliminates the local particularities and differences emptying the daily life of its lived affective meanings and qualities" (Gardiner, 2000: 90).

The individual is hold in the center of the daily life, in spite of being a part of the society, remains a sort of outsider, set aside individually in the very midpoint to the outskirts. "Communication within

modernity is increasingly mediated by electronic forms of storage, reproduction and transmission, and hence abstracted from everyday sociality” (Gardiner, 2000: 92). Yet, the transmission outside and inside the individual is developed by language through expressions. In contrast the electronic and digital media which create a solitude understanding of communication, the verbal expression is a try given to understand each other and self when the message within the words is shared with or through the other. “The upshot is that the other is I-myself – my body and self can only have a value in the presence of another” (Gardiner, 2000: 55). The exchange of mutual expression does not impose a sole perspective or remain intangible, if the process of understanding is set through the other and self. Bakhtin puts into words like ‘I-myself cannot be the author of my own value, just as I cannot lift myself up by my own hair’.²³ The mutual dialogue emancipates the awareness of a worldview orientation by reasoning and observation that does not lock one to subjective perception.

While the spiral of alienation and individualism escalates the mind and the memory, up to such emptiness and remoteness, that the fall to loneliness, isolation and alienation is inescapable. Bakhtin sets the configuration of initiation of self awareness appearing through dialogic encounters, ‘just as the body is formed initially in the mother’s womb, a person’s consciousness awakens wrapped in another’s consciousness.’²⁴.

The existence and the conscious of one’s own in this daily universe are sealed if the voice of the individual is unheard. And this universe is capable of directing the private/social perspective but also might include the resistance to the power obligatory point of views. “Absolute death [] is the state of being unheard, unrecognized.”²⁵ Bethinking Bakhtin’s analogical argument of self recognition and survival, it might require the resistance to clear the concealed oppressive impositions. In order to be heard and hear, to be recognized and recognize ‘*I-myself through the other*’ the key is to involve to the dialogic world, and to be open to the

dialogic encounters; not to linger barren in simulacrum experiences but to be aware as a participative subject and to be in an interconnected collective society.

Wong characters yearn about the possible encounters with others in everyday life (*Fallen Angels*, *Chunking Express*), they talk to themselves (*2046*) or (*Fallen Angels*) desperately seek somebody to talk over telephone, or some just do so (*2046*) and they are all alone in society in need to share and to express themselves but stuck to their own voices (*Happy Together*, *In the Mood for Love*). Although there are dialogues, mostly the voiceovers express their feelings and their positions, the dialogues in Wong films are sentenced to silence in their everyday lives. Intradiegetic narrators of Wong films give their sound in voiceovers in different parts of films and voiceovers of different characters are paragliding over subjectivity in through the films. The spectators are pulled in the inner-spaces of self experiences and moods of the characters. The canonic hierarchic characterization of narratives finds a democratic resonance in Wong films. The reliable voiceovers denote the realities of different protagonists' pasts and state of minds which never trick the viewers within *multi-vocality*. The multi-voiceovers decentralize the plots, while inner speech of the urban persona is embodied in the minds of the spectator. Data of the images and voices maintain the sufficient density to get into the dialogue in rebellious *inner speech* of the viewer. "The texts which are not consisted of linear, complete, progressive logic or structure are open texts since they provide an insight to the reader/viewer regarding inner speech and inner thought" (Süalp, 2004: 111).

3- City Ballads Through Flaneur Camera

The characters in *Chungking Express*, *Falling Angels* and *Happy Together* are in despair because of loneliness, disappointment, and the loss of love in a swirling maelstrom of contemporary life. Just like the dual relationships can be translated as social ones it can be enlarged to a nation wide connection. A love affair in between two individual identities includes the *others* according to each other. And the dialogic encounters begin in the nucleus relationship of the individual widened to a 'mass social order that encourages such a conception of self.'²⁶ The lost ability of dialogue in films characters verbalizes themselves through voiceover. Apart from the self-consciousness of imaginary reality of the fiction the voiceover narration demarcates the impracticality of encounters of the society, instead of dialogue the induced inner monologue, in this manner implicitly the firm attitude of introversion of individuality.

The inability of the characters to connect with each other is a consistent trope in Wong's films, prompting some speculation whether Wong views perpetual solitude and unrequited love as the unalterable "human condition."²⁷

(Payne, 2001)

As it was mentioned before in *Fallen Angels* and *Chungking Express* the possibility of meeting the other is accentuated with the same lines of voiceovers that we brush pass strangers everyday, although we may not know each other, we could be close friends one day. The repetitions are not only by the accentuated lines but also by the same actor who appears with the same names in different characters. The first appearance of He Qiwu is in *Chungking Express* his lines falls onto the empty streets in the beginning of the film. He is the cop 223 in the first episode of the film. He runs in the streets and through a local markets place full of people, while he tries to catch a running criminal whose head is covered with a paper bag in disguise. Whereas the same lines is echoed

in *Fallen Angels* by He Qiwu who is an arrested criminal before when he is searched by cops in his father's pension. After he was hiding in a single door cabinet like narrow toilet, he goes out and remaining hidden with a wall he adds to the lines that he would never become friends with cops.

The permutations of character traits and resonances between characters describe fluid identities and selfhoods created by contingency, not distinctive individuals but a collective persona reflective of human beings coexisting over time.

(Stokes & Hoover, 2001: 188)

The fluidity of characters although playfully shifted in between films from a cop to a criminal, it resonates and reminds the streets, possibilities, coincidences of everyday life of the city. The similar conditions of urban life circulate the urban society even if the individual takes part as a cop in the police force, or as an arrested prisoner. The same ideological courses of control mechanisms repress and affect the identities in the same order. He Qiwu can be a cop, or a criminal, or the disguised runner who is running away from a cop.

The city as an entirely urbanized space with possibilities and expectations maintains transition and change in everyday life. The urban environment within the change and transition of the city is repeated through the identities like the double faced space is the middle ground of barbarity and civilization or the twisting past and future within the ambiguity of right or wrong. In *Fallen Angels* killing is taken as it is in *Ashes of Time* as a professional occupation to earn and to go on in everyday life. The assassin is comfortable because he does not need to make any decisions, instead he is informed by his partner where and when to go and whom to murder. Who actually gives or give the order of the assassination is in question while none of the partners question, or answer it. They just dissolve into the act while it is not an unusual aspect of everyday life while the urban society does the acts by the given order without questioning it in conformism. And when the assassin starts to be uncomfortable and decides to change his living conditions and occupation,

his very partner decides him to die, in the same order. Further more, not the assassin, neither the drug dealer nor the ‘Woman in Blond Wig’ but the small capital abuser He Qiwu, who abuses the small sized local enterprises, is depicted by the Law and Order.

The loneliness of the individual in urban society sharpens within the living conditions of the city. And the possibility of connection dissolves into the rhythm of life where love and social conscious is dispersed within the perception of the individual. Instability and social incoherence backed by the transitional period specific to Hong Kong and the global transitional phase of everyday life appears through the films.

The solitude subjects are captivated in a fleeting nonlinear time of the city. The silhouettes of the urban society pass by at the background while they are frozen in a subjective time. Sometimes the tension of the intimate moments of the characters takes them in and even though they are one of the unrecognizable runners of the streets they fall into a frozen moment, while the others dissolve in their perception which is also conceived by the spectators in *moodification*.

The mobile city appears with the intermingling dreams and realities in everyday life where the view is *veiled*²⁸ with unknown objects, everything is perceived in fragmented pieces of images.

The sky and the passing clouds above the roofs of the city buildings occur in the frames from the urban individual’s point of view. The clouds proudly pass over the roofs, sometimes in luminous sunshine, occasionally with the hope of sun, while giving hazy signs of change, in addition to anxiety.

Like Dickens exposes the “oppressive presence of crowds of strangers always on the move, jostling the observer, their anonymity emphasized by their umbrellas” (Donald, 1999: 2) Wong frames the clouds in the cityscape. The clouds also herald the rain sometimes. The rain falls down to the haunted city in the troubled moments, to the narrow streets glimmering on the dark pavements at night. The labyrinth like

places and arcades of the city remain in turmoil where strangers pass by without having any options of contacts. This is the urban society that passes without even realizing each other or the environment in constant change. The camera portrays the everyday life capturing a gaze of *flaneury* in the city while the runners of the city pass by.

In “*City, Image-Subject and “Excluded” Chronotopes*”²⁹ Süalp depicts “that nobody fall under the spell of the city, neither the flaneur/flaneuse is fascinated anymore” (Süalp, 2005, 1). The “excluded glance” of the viewing subjects reflects the representations of the city, without embracing the look of the city in “excluded chronotopes.” She indicates that the new strolling viewers of the city are far much different than Benjamin’s 19th century flaneur/flaneuse as a historical figure that had been enjoying being a spectator in the middle of the crowd and in center of the flow.

Yet Benjamin’s flaneur that he was describing in this maelstrom of the city standing on both thresholds of the big city and the bourgeoisie class without becoming a part of them was getting fascinated with wandering in this enormity and maelstroms, actually they were the ones who were viewing and enjoying it. Now however he/she is from different classes who do not enjoy looking at the others. [] The audiences of every kind are obsessed with their self images.

The filmmakers are still in a close relationship with the morphed flaneur/flaneuse within the ebb and flow power relation of between watching and making watch, looking and being looked at that shapes and diversifies the representations of the city.

Today it is not even an incident being got lost in the mentioned tunnels, caves, and maelstroms. This does not astonish anybody.

(Süalp, 2005, 2)

The city is laid down at the negative space as the part of the narrative in Wong films. The shifts of B&W and color intensify the remote experience of daily life. The city is never brand new and untouched which reserves a peculiar lived and fluid density of past. Camera selects the empty streets or the flow of traffic, or the people in move. It’s different than the transformed flaneur’s experience which we encounter now, where either nothing real is subsumed or the touristic gaze catches the floating images bumped all together. It leaves a sense of lived experience however there is

also the left heaviness of the images with the crowd of flow, or a counter display of the inability of spotting the gaze that is taken out by unawareness of the urban society.

“The American city seems to have stepped out of movies. To grasp its secret, you should not begin with the city and move inwards toward a screen; you should begin with the screen and move outwards towards the city.”

(Baudrillard, 2000: 56)

Usually the films begin from the general view of a city by approaching towards inside. This however is also a kind of conventional rule; going inside but leaving the unnecessary poverty, ruins or outsiders for instance, outside the screen, so beginning in the city from inside but getting outwards towards the outskirts may be a way of possibility to represent the space and the subjects that always remain out of the frame except in stereotypical “appropriated other” representations. ‘Outwards the screen’ the non-diegetic insert of the restricted area lies in front of the city in *Happy Together*. They tango with the touching passionate sound of music. Their movements show their intimacy of love and joy. After the tango lesson, the banded city image appears from far away. The caught intimacy is not permanent. There is no entrance to the city from the outskirts of ruins. The banded city image appears from far away. The closed part is in damage, dangerous, and empty. Ho Po-wing and Lai Yiu-fai can not live together but they can not do without each other, either. Every time they have to start again. They remain in Argentina for an uncertain time. They actually are in the city, where they have no interaction with the society, except during Lai-fai’s jobs, and Po-wing’s ‘affairs’. Where everybody is a stranger, not necessarily because of the closed locality of Buenos Aires on the contrary, the people on the flow can be from anywhere. It is the alienation and isolation of the current global city, reverberating Huysen’s words of “mass migrations and global mobility for ever more people, the experience of displacement and relocation, migration and diaspora seems no longer the exception but the

rule” (Huysen, 2003: 25). They are on the opposite side of the world according to Hong Kong. But they bear the British, Chinese, and Hong Kong intermingling national identity to the other side of the world. It is the year of take over of Hong Kong in 1997. They are stuck to the temporary closed narrow, tight places within the conditions of not getting along together; neither quit longing each other to remain separately. They are not only strangers in the city as migrants they are also strangers to each other and to themselves. Their continuous need of nearness and remoteness indicate the empathy and wonder like towards a migrant, “but also inwards a recognition of our strangeness to ourselves” (Donald, 1999: 156) in the era of migration and diaspora.

In an early day Po and Fai are caught in a speedy walk on a bridge to the city, because of Po-wing’s insistent wish to go out to jog. The cold makes them go back in a hurry without passing the bridge. They can not enter the city from the outskirts of ruins; neither can they pass the bridge. They remain as an outsider in the very middle of it. They are actually in the city where they are not allowed in, and not allowed out without their passports. The fleeting character Po-wing is in need of to be cared for. He is beaten up when the case is realized that he has stolen an expensive watch from one of his affairs as a present to Lai-fai. Then the happy times begin until Po-wing is cured, and the wish of flying away appears to get rid of the boundaries of possession of Lai-fai. Lai-fai brings packages of cigarettes not to have the need to go out for Po-wing, further more he hides his Po-wing’s passport to make him remain where and how they are together. After they have a jealousy argument, they are seized up on the roof. Po-wing pours water on Fai’s shoulder and kisses him. The life goes on under the buildings where they are wedged in the roof watching. Volatile Po-wing looks up the sky, camera tracks the runny clouds. The bird is going to fly and the spectator becomes aware of that.

In *Happy Together*, the camera is frequently placed indoors while the subjects are framed outdoors. The line of the sight of the transitional

windows³⁰ is from the inside where some of the indoor places are unknown, irrelevant places. The point-of-view conveys the outer gaze from the inside, and portrays the characters always outside shaded with the parts of the inside. It is like the glimpses in the cities, or the alienation of looking the image of ourselves from a window. Either we are watching, or we are watched, or to have the paranoia of being watched, and the tougher part is looking our images by being afraid of looking inner selves. This repeated irrelevant placing of the camera makes the spectator unsure who is looking from where, however the gaze is like, it belongs to someone in the city and that camera becomes the viewer, I.

The camera of Wong films does not always frame the look of an unknown observer as sometimes in *Happy Together* but the camera never frame the high standard lives, since there is no economic wealth observed in Wong films. Class inequalities lay in the urban landscape, although it is not explicitly compared. There are almost no rich people like no wealth exists. Only the mother of Yuddy in *Days of Being Wild* who denies that she is in the house and rejects him once again after his birth, lives in an enclosed wealthy country house which is surrounded with a plantation and a long path in between the trees covered from the outside. She is the utopic worth that Yuddy always dreamed of. He wants to get close, to know and to be accepted by her. The house and the mother are inaccessible almost for anybody who is ordinary. The longing for the roots, mother and motherland is contained in the same personality and environment those are all unreachable. The fragility and the volatility of the emotional sentiments embodied in the nation and struggles of the individual. As it was mentioned before rejection is another repeated aspect in the films that characters try to reject the rejection. As in the *Ashes of Time* it is verbalized like “the best way to avoid rejection is to reject others first.”

Strolling in the city without anticipating the possibilities, what would be faced or lost in sight, naturally unaware of the coincidences.

Benjamin points out that ‘the delight of the urban poet is love, not at first sight, but at last sight. It is a farewell forever which coincides in the poem with the moment of enchantment.’³¹ It is to fall in love with the other by coincidence of the eyes that come across, which ends farewell after the encountered looks pass away. The swift flow of the people in the streets leaves no opportunity to enjoy the sight instead the camera depicts the ongoing life in the city. The flaneur/flaneuse characters dissolve in the speed and chaos through the labyrinths within the poetics of the cityscape.

It is also specifically declared by He Qiwu cop 223’s voiceover, in *Chunking Express* as "This is the closest we ever got," he specifies the space between them and the time they are going to meet, as well, "just one cm. between us. But 57 hours later, I fell in love with this woman." His voiceover also connects the second episode of the film referring to another character Faye, “and this woman was going to fell in love with another cop in a few hours”. Becoming self-conscious of the film is not only perceived by voiceover but also by foretelling the future in the past tense in the mode of viewing the nowness, having past tense information of the future.

When Cop 223 decides to fall in love with the first woman who enters the bar in his desperate heartbroken mood, the coincidence brings the Woman in Blond Wig to the scene. He tries to contact with her completely unaware of her being in a drug-smuggling business, he speaks in four different languages to be comprehended. He asks the question in Cantonese, Japanese, English and in Mandarin Chinese. The two strangers unaware of the conflict of their professions’ opposition find each other in a hotel room without any intimacy, without any communication neither a touch. The inability to understand each other does not go any much further than the tower of Babelon. He just enjoys her silent and ignorant accompany by not being alone. While she sleeps on the bed he remains awake until morning watching television. They share a room together like century’s family having no communication when the space of television

that lacks of real experiences. Whereas He Qiwu in who became mute after eating canned pineapples in the age of five, is comprehended by Charlie who is in love with Johnny. Although he is mute they have the close connection enough to be understand each other at least as long as Charlie is in need of his company. Canned Pineapples is a specific symbol of commodity that charges the limited time within capitalism and industrialism, repeated with the Cop 223 in *Chunking Express* and He Qiwu in *Fallen Angels*. The multilingual performance of he Qiwu contains Hong Kong's colonial, postcolonial hybrid identity in liminality and China's suppression but also the global economy and multicultural society is drawn closer.

The global city becomes clear in the films *Chunking Express*, *Fallen Angels*, and *Happy Together*. The global city is recognized through the mobile city with the fast forwarded flow of the traffic; fascination of the neon lights; constant displacement, relocation, and migration; cheap labor (*Chunking Express*, *Fallen Angels*, and *Happy Together*); international trade; mole (*Chunking Express*). The political, and historical, economical issues are not explicit however infused to the frames. The spectators are the active participants in the narrative. The meaning wraps the information about the location, culture and history, and if the information is less, just the global part is put into the consideration, which is full of data of the contemporary everyday life of the cities. "Time and memory are inexorably linked and these notions are in turn linked to both personal and historical. Wong depicts the transience of life and reveals that nothing is permanent in the world that he creates."³²

Constructions of space and time by the editing shape the rhythm of everyday life through the thematic and perceptive installation of meaning. 'A cry of loneliness rises from the depths and the caves where, at the heart of everyday life, the most limited and specialized quotidianness lies coiled, the intolerable loneliness of unceasing communication and information' (Lefebvre, 2000: 125).

Sometimes living in a struggled everyday life is like trying to read a writing that is diminished on the page. It is apparent that there is something missing that had been written before which you want to know desperately at least something about, but can not decipher as a whole, maybe only a bit might be traced. The wish is to have the idea of the whole, untied in open ends. A scraped and written again time, space, memory in ambiguity consolidates the unawareness of the “inability to invent a technique for the liberation of everyday experience” (Debord, [1961]: 241).

4- No Place Like Home, If There Is One

Where should the birds fly after the last sky?
Mahmoud Darwish

Experience of home disappears in narratives of Wong films. Home as the domestic space that embraces the warmth, comfort, and safety of the family those gather at ease is not the setting of the films, either. There is no home, no families in the common sense. The characters are alone. They live isolated in a deserted privacy but more restricted in their minds, physically on the move. It is like there is no home, neither homeland where they are in a constant dislocation. Displacement is a common experience at home in homeland in global uncertainty within the ideology of global economic policies, and new media technologies. The fixity of inhabitants is also shaken by transportation and transmission. Home as an impossible permanent residence is conveyed from Süalp's 'excluded' look to be an outsider at home/homeland, as well as "diasporic deterritorialization's crucial role in shifting and redefining hybrid identities" (Shohat, 1999: 230) in liminal boundaries of experience.

Home is the split between inside/outside, beginning as the body, as family, as locality, as nation or country. The split between outside and inside of home is perished where they became intermingled. It is not the hearth that family gathers anymore. It is not the roof that shelters them even if they have no interactive communication between, where they are isolated in their own rooms of the place or minds, neither the alienated assemblage from each other in front of the television. There are no social, familial ties or boundaries since there is nobody left around the individual yet to share the alienation under the same roof. The loneliness is identity, space and nation wide where it resonates from local to global. It seems to be there has no protective barrier between inside and outside that

reorganize the internal and privacy concord from the territory of external life. It is not the return to homely privacy in need to hide after the long day or night of the everyday life.

The sphere of private life ought to be enclosed, and have a finite, or finished aspect. Public space, by contrast, ought to be an opening outwards. What we see is just the opposite.

(Lefebvre, 1991a: 147)

Lefebvre's conclusion of opposition of private life and public space recurs in Wong films. Resident places are transparent and temporal like a reflection of an exterior. Home will be elaborated again in the third chapter *Space and Time*, through the transparency of place/space in tune of outdoor transiency. The reverse telescopic eye envisions the near home inside, instead of the distance. The social contact is as much, far away in the distance. Beginning from the absence of family, lack of children, lack of stable relationships, lack of any family ties or childhood memories and it goes far as they have no past and roots. Residences have no personal persona which perpetually belongs to the single dwellers, only. If we begin the examples from the *As Tears Go By*, home is at most, like a newly moved temporary flat where *Wah* sleeps on a bed on the ground. There is a sofa in the second room which is like a train seat without any homey cast. The utopic dreamscape in *ATGB* is the "idyllic Lantau Island"³³ in nature, where his cousin/lover *Ngor* lives, whereas *Ngor*'s room is in a hotel in which she also works. Countryside or the city does not differ in the means of home, privacy or stability maybe only in the means of a district of safety in tranquility. In *Days of Being Wild* *Yuddy* stays in a room, in a split house, shared with many people including his foster mother. The place does not include a personality more than a hotel room in regards of a temporary privacy. Not the corridor like claustrophobic pension room of *Lai-fai*, neither the mirror coated room of *Po-wing* has any resemblance of home in *Happy Together*. The flats that are shared with different couples in *IMfL*, yet have no privacy. The protagonists of the couples are also single dwellers since their spouses are

always for some reason away. Albeit the spouses if at home either they are off-screen, or only fragmented pieces of them are on-screen. In fact they do not exist more than bits and pieces as a shady substance for audience, because they do not exist for the characters as underlined blatantly throughout the narrative. *2046* is partly a journey of a tunnel to the future and has no space other than corridors, night clubs, diners, along with hotel rooms without intimacy, except the rooftop to hide away in an open space.

The protagonists are perpetually devoid of an environment of privacy, coziness, and rootedness. Assassin in *Fallen Angels* remarks in voiceover “Even an assassin has a past.” After an operation of assassination he gets on a bus. The man sitting behind recognizes him from the high school. Although he ignores his insurance agent old schoolmate, he insists to talk and ask questions. Assassin complains about the same old question that is always asked, “What do you do for a living?” When he is asked about his family, he shows a photograph that he carries with. The photo is for the latter frequently asked question. It was taken when he requested a black woman who had accepted, with a boy that he bought an ice-cream to convince him. Therefore he has a permanent family whenever he is asked, but fake. His mate invites him to his wedding and tries to persuade him to insurance him and his family while getting off the bus. The bus rides in the dark night, isolated from the outside of the city in B&W, his voiceover asserts “I always wanted to attend a wedding but I know it’s not my scene.”

Dislocation between subject and the city is described in flowing city and fleeting characters lacking their pasts. City is encoded as the negative space in alienation and fragmentation among everyday life. Repetitions activating the memory and lost hope to be remembered as mother of the mute boy in *Ashes of Time*, and Yuddy’s foster mother in *Days of Being Wild*; longing to be remembered like *Baby* who turned to be blond in *Fallen Angels*, and being able to remember is like searching through the circular time and meaning, to restore the past, to replace the “security” of home, thus

to renegotiate with culture and society in search of belonging with rootedness. Yuddy tries to reach to his mother to embrace a home of tenderness, and to find out his roots that he would belong. Whereas the house of the mother rises far beyond a home, more like a palace of a realm, which he can not enter after all, whereby he was refused and rejected once again.

The isolation of the cities that had began with the industrial revolution is supported within the new media technologies, speed of transportation and the media those are serving the systems of power of economical globalization. “The present disintegration of the urban nuclear family progressively relieves threatened populations of any prospect for organized resistance” (Virilio. 1991, 126). We were always alone; however maybe we had the chance to bond in utterances, in thoughts to survive, to unite against the common inequity towards a collective conscious, at least to be in a sacred, safe refuge like home.

CHAPTER III

TIME AND SPACE

*“It was a large room
Full of people
All kinds
And they had all arrived at the same building
At more or less the same time
And they were all free
And they were all asking themselves the same question:
What is behind that curtain?”*

Laurie Anderson “Born, Never Asked” *Big Science*

The sky would be the most untouched space over the cities (leaving the air pollution with the “bituminous weigh” on the side), if the urban point of view was not fragmented by the sky intruders like wires and tops of buildings. The contiguous urban zones under the sky, mirror the shadows of the clouds, but juxtapose the layers of the city more intimately which are articulated within the zones in lucidity of class inequalities. The belonging is diminished without discriminating the classes whereas the survival ability weakens in that bias through the division. The urban point of view does not differ in social classes unless the higher classes keep away their dwelling places out of downtown where they arrive from the highway turning around the shanty towns without realizing their existence, drop by at the moles and place themselves in front of the blue screen with their connected part of the body of the remote control. The latter however does not change in the shanty towns, either. The delinquency is always hidden in the shanty towns where these settlers can not stay away from the city but are as much invisible and hidden in it as their towns are.

“[I]t is not only the transmigration of capital that takes place in this global grid, but also that of people, both rich (i.e., the new transnational

professional workforce) and poor (i.e., most migrant workers) []” (Sassen, 1998: 168). The disparity of social classes in Wong films are not represented through the comparison of rich and poor. The reason that the state of wealth or luxury does not take place in films, as if it is only a utopia which is unreachable (*Days of Being Wild*), being rich is not even the dream of the characters. However in Ruth Mader’s film *Struggle* (Ruth Mader, 2003) the relationship of an illegal immigrant and upper middle class real estate agent puts the class comparison and the difference of economic conditions, but develops and ends in similarity of alienated state of being in the film. In *Struggle* the communication is lost in the deserted sterile places of Austria, where the pretentious satisfactions fit to the consumer society in a global city beyond the desired contact of genuine emotions. The whole film gives a feeling of ice cold, emotionless, secular image, which doesn’t contain any hint of humanity.

Crossing boundaries, from a familiar space to an alien one which is under the control of somebody else, can provide anxious moments; in some circumstances it could be fatal or it might be an exhilarating experience – the thrill of transgression.

(Sibley, 1998: 269)

The unique sentimental moments in the film are when Ewa breathlessly runs away with her daughter, first to stay in Austria as an illegal immigrant, then, when the police or the immigration agents try to trick the waiting immigrants as employers, they again run away until she stops and cries. The anxiety that she lives is the only clue of her sensibility out of her alienation and indifference. The close border between wealth and poverty is mapped through the struggle of the corruption of daily lives of Ewa and Marold who is an Austrian emotionally and physically isolated real estate agent. The exhibition of impoverishment is more than just money and displacement in the film. It reveals the cold misery about the soul of human being, which is not purely the state of the poor neither the female.

In Wong films ordinary characters from the outskirts of the city reserve the remoteness to almost any kind of relatives and relationships

where the time is subjective and cyclical within a nomadic sensibility. A strong sense of displacement intertwines the cyclical and subjective time which goes back and forth to the shattered space without pasts and roots of the characters. The perception of time and space is fragmented in the urbanized city which is never perceived as a whole whereby it contains no promises. “As spatiality ebbs, so does intimacy. The privatized city of bits is a lie, simulating its connections, obliterating the power of its citizens either to act alone or to act together” (Sorkin, 1999: xv). The fragmentation of the city is not only visual. The fragmented image is the reflection of the space, time and the society. The space is fragmented in layers where the inhabitants are trapped to the layer they belong. Each inhabitant illustrates the same fragmentation in her/his place, so the connection is lost in invisible layers in the same place. The passers of the layers are either invisible or on the simulated connections. And fragmented time is the route taken in the layers which reproduce the fragmentation by the schedule. The remoteness and nearness of these layers leave no trespass to each other, thus it leaves no contact point to interact, or awareness to act.

“The space that produced socially (Lefebvre, 1991a) is the common living area which we participate socially in its production everyday. It is the topography of reproduction of ideology and culture; therefore it is the ground which the social dynamics can be read over” (Süalp 2005, 2). The time and space in a diegetic world has the faculty to generate the outcome atmosphere of a specific period in through the texts which can be read socially, historically and ideologically. The concept of “chronotope”(literally time-space) was developed by Bakhtin.

Bakhtin’s description of the novel as the place where time “thickens, take on flesh, becomes artistically visible” and where “space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot, and history,” seems in some ways even more appropriate to film than literature, for whereas literature plays itself out within a virtual, lexical space, the cinematic chronotope is quite literal, splayed out concretely across a screen with specific dimensions and unfolding in literal time[.

(Stam, 1989: 11)

Süalp encloses the similar conditions and aesthetics of the films beginning from the German expressionism those are produced in the conditions after the WWI, and the Film Noir films those are produced after the WWII in USA that Sobchak (Sobchak, 1998) argued as a chronotope of the period, and the relationships are conveyed to some extent of productions of a wide geography after 1980s, in *film noirish* films (Süalp 2005, 5).³⁴ She has been declaring the chronotope of this third term of film noir films since almost a decade which appear in the conditions of uncertainty of never ending wars around the world with ambiguity of their beginnings and ends (Süalp 2005, 4-7). “This is a new term that exists in the infinity of non-space and non-time, where all boundaries are carried on the human body” (Süalp 2005, 6) where she adds to the examples that Wong films take part in it.

Whenever rearrangement and redefinition of labor divisions are necessary, and the new cognitive maps of crowded space of industrialized and/or post-industrialized urban life need to be sorted out, or male ego has to deal with unemployment and confront this new shared space by his others, or broken social wholeness and disabled publicness of everyday life become a heavy pain over the shoulders, fear and the fantasy regenerate the forms of representation of specific genre and aesthetic.³⁵

The unstable and volatile cultural and economic conditions those crossing the borders of locality are creating the need of redefining the division of labor whereby unemployment and poverty are enlarged. Within the displacement in transition of exile of urban society anxiety and instability are reiterating by concealed ongoing wars. Widened distrust of others in social incoherence of individualized society and the reconstructions of class, gender, ethnic qualities carrying all the former issues mirror Wong films that everybody is entrapped in loneliness, alienated through the shattered perception of fragmented time and space in split identities is identified by a mapping of ambiguity in trough the aesthetics and spatiotemporal structures befits which Süalp defines as ‘transformed chronotope of film noir’ by *Image-Subject and “Excluded” Chronotopes*.

The characters in Wong films do not have a past; they are trapped in the position where they are all alone. The reflected and repeated mirror images in split identities fetch the obsession of self images in recreated identities. The entrapment of time and space expands by ultimately longing of loss of love and their past, trying to keep their memories live in nostalgia by the dreamers. They live constantly in noticeably temporary fragmented spaces such as hotel rooms, pensions, or in single rooms without any home characteristics, which are claustrophobic, tight and narrow. The lack of families, children and home within the lack of rootedness in volatility resemble the genre *film noir* despite of the subversive genre amalgamation of Wong cinema. The rootless characters in transition within the repeated mise-en-scène of dark rainy streets, the close ups of street lamps, the bars, fast food places, endless cigarette smoke, framing and canted angles which motivates the uncanny insecurity that activate the resemblance more.³⁶ *Fallen Angels* especially, with continual wide and canted angles, shifts of B&W, the costume besides the final act of partner as The Assassin's Agent in a silhouette of *femme fatale*, and finally puts on the film noir film of *Fallen Angel* (Otto Preminger, 1945)³⁷ by its name.

The city is defenseless against the fluid time and space. Political and economical systems supported with the media, technologies of every kind and transportation change the social life habits ever more within the new time and space perceptions. The different, unusual durations that even fluctuate in the negative space, of the quickened or slowed down movements, mirrors the changing perception of the urban life. The flow of the leaking lights of the city and cohesive actions follow one another despite the nonlinear narratives like probable real encounters besides experiences are hidden in the escaping images and time of the everyday life.

1 – Nomadic Volatile Time:

Time, to me forever brings a loss of innocence.

Wong Kar-wai³⁸

Time is a very subjective notion that it may differ in perception of duration at the same room, same moment according to different people. It lengthens under the anxious conditions sometimes when the subject is frozen in it or it may pass quickly when the time is enjoyed. Sometimes however the blissful time which is full of experiences expands in the memory, whereas the anguished or inexperienced ones diminish in the same memory. “The past leaves its traces; time has its own script” (Lefebvre, 1991a: 37). Wong captures the time in its own grid where a surfeit of clocks prevails all his films, either electronic or mechanic. Selim Eyüboğlu defined³⁹ the key motifs of clocks and watches alongside the time metaphor, as a “found object” which the meaning is loaded personally or as a “lost object” a mislaid past, a toy that would not be obtained again.

The captured time on clocks or watches is in repetition and circularity where time goes back and forth, mirroring the non linearity of narration. Not only with the mechanic clocks are repeated in e.g. *DoBW*, *IMfL*, or electronic clocks e.g. in *CE*, *HT* but also “the space envelopes the time’ (Lefebvre, 1991a: 339) still in circularity in *Ashes of Time*. The times are also mentioned repeatedly in *Ashes of Time* by verbalizing in the narrative as *last time*, *a month later*, *then*, *a year ago* etc. reminding the memory and past/future in nowness by every sentence in transition of the scenes. “Space is the envelope of time. When space is split, time is distanced [.]” (Lefebvre, 1991a: 339). When Ouyang Feng and Yin/Yang are in the dark cave like the space of their dim inner mind, Yin is mostly fragmented by the shadow of a bird cage. The whirling bird cage is like the history and the past is caged in the circular time, while the reflection of the cage imprisons the split identities of Yin and Yang and Ouyang in

their memories of past where they are distanced from the linear flow of ongoing life.

In nature, time is apprehended with space – in the very heart of the space: the hour of the day, the season, the elevation of the sun above the horizon, the position of the moon and stars in heavens [] Time was thus inscribed in space and natural space was merely the lyrical and tragic script of natural time.
(Lefebvre, 1991a: 95)

The circular narration of *Ashes of Time* becomes visible when the turns of the days, climate or seasons are announced from the almanac by voiceover on calligraphic inter-titles. In the order of;

“Day 6, insects awaken,” “Day 4, first day of spring,” “Day 15, sunny and windy,” “Day 10, autumn begins. Sunny,” “Day 15, rainy,”...

Just like the time on clocks, sometimes remain the same sometimes goes back and forth, by the described days and times amid *Ashes of Time* related with the ambiguous urban temporality and spatiality. “Temporal cycles correspond to circular spatial forms of a symmetrical kind” (Lefebvre, 1991a: 175). The adverbs of time and day descriptions attribute the physical and emotional conditions of characters over the fragmented time and space symmetrical to repetitions of volatility. Catching and carrying the loaded space on time render the moods of mobile, floating characters on the move.

Like the unique moment of sensibility ends with tears in *Struggle* running occurs in *Happy Together* and *Chunking Express*. After bumping each other with Po-wing along with his boyfriends who he prostitutes, in the bar that Yui-fai works, Po-wing reaches him over phone from his pension room. Yui-fai leaves Po-wing in tears in his mirror surrounded hotel room, runs in a hazy mood in the streets running away of his fury, from his regrets of coming together to Argentina after all, being together with him and to starting over. He runs in faint streets of leaking lights in stop-motion, the point of view is captured slow in brushed texture of streets, fast in motion by hand held camera. The time again is never in certainty in the flow but volatile where the blurred space is hanging on.

Jogging in *Chunking Express* according to He Qiwu Cop 223 is something private, not something to be done in front of the audience. He jogs when he is lovelorn like we all are sometimes. The body loses water when jogging, so there is none left for tears. Whenever he arrests somebody he wants to share that with May first, who had left him. When a man answers her phone he runs up the escalator from the restricted direction upwards in haze.

Cop 223 gives chance to May to reach him until his 25th birthday May 1st. Because May likes canned pineapples he gets expired dated pineapples on the 30th of April. He gets angry in the grocery because everybody wants to get rid of the expired food without realizing the process of growing, harvesting and slicing the fruit, ignoring what a can would feel about it. Not even a bum accepts his offer of one of the expired canned foods, while he strolls with his trolley carrying his mobile roofless home in the streets. 223 yearns if there is anything left without an expiry date. As it was mentioned before canned pineapples is a symbol of commodity that charges the limited time within capitalism and industrialism. It is repeated with He Qiwu in *Fallen Angels* when he became mute after eating canned pineapples in the age of five, as an extremely rare information of past, of a childhood that occurs in Wong films. Still it remains ambiguous if the story is for real, or the character is mocking about it, in addition via self reflexivity. The society is displaced and isolated in individuality as never be able to shape any cohesive scale, consequently globally interchangeable whose defining character is no longer use value, memory or history but image and commodity with the temporality in limits of time. Spreading out indispensable commodities infuse the time and space of the city, work, home, body, leisure in everyday life, ignoring the labor and leaving real experiences of past, present and the prospect of the future on the side.

After eating the 30th of pineapple and becoming sick Cop 223 encounters the Woman in Blond Wig in the bar where he then takes her to a hotel room so that she can sleep. In the morning he leaves the hotel room to

jog in the edge of his age 25, 'a quarter of the century to celebrate this historical moment'. While he is 'getting rid of his body's excess water' under the rain, he is captured constantly behind the wire fence in the sports ground. After jogging he ditches his pager on the fence, but it starts beeping before he leaves it behind. The message is from the hotel room which congratulates his birthday, just at the moment the clock turns to 6 a.m. exactly at the time he was born.

"Now I'll remember her all my life. If memories can be canned would they also have expiry dates? If so I hope they last for centuries."

Now love can expire, truth along reality may expire; within them memory does expire, countries and cultures possibly will expire. Preserving a temporary autonomy in Hong Kong charges the anxiety of the dwellers that float in the current system in between transition of two countries, and for a limited time of fifty years in between two systems. Social and socio-cultural transformations within emptied history yield longing to substitute the dismantled memory, where the practice of the zenith capitalist system above and beyond leaves the society fleeting on a global socioeconomic and multicultural ground. The time and memory takes place in all Wong films in a giddy flow of narratives those are capable to play with the memory and perception of time of the spectators. Not only by the narrational occurrences or double plots but also as mentioned before in *Chunking Express* the utterances of cop 223 by definitions of "57 hours later, I fell in love with this woman," "and this woman was going to fell in love with another cop in a few hours," literally in the play of narratives.

Yuddy in *Days of Being Wild* seduces Su Li-zhen by taking her interest to his watch when they observe the very minute together while close up of the clock is due. He specifies the date of the year, day and hour "I'll always remember this minute because of you. From now on we're one minute friends." The nomadic volatile time is in urge to be stabled in

remembrance instead of letting the memories of shared experiences of history lost in forgetting.

“Time comes back into its own privacy, inner life, subjectivity” (Lefebvre, 1991a: 393). The stretch printed and slow motion characteristics of films that were brought up before reinforce the subjectivity in time ever more. These could make a self-conscious effect pointing to the medium; however, those are the unique intimate moments of the characters, as well. Those are not the moments of an excuse of a passage to the depth scenes like dream or fantasy, on the contrary are the precise hazy subjective perception of time of diegetic characters smoothly stop transition for a while. The perception of extreme subjectivity turns up the depth of the character which motivates to seize the spectator. Even though the spectator does not adopt the POV of the characters mainly, in spite of the self-consciousness that subverts the identification, the transmission of the characters’ perception is in sight.

Linear time can not be captured in which the time and space is nomadic where volatile identities fade in temporariness. Distanced from coherence, the perception is not lucid trough cloudy intermingled ideologies of time and space. Relationships are temporary and fragile in individualized society; those who stuck to the non-private spaces which are skimmed off from any persona and dissolve in a nomadic time. It might not be *the time that brings the loss of innocence*, but dissolving in ‘the’ experiences of politics of time and space.

2 – Space on the Threshold: ‘Rented Spaces’⁴⁰ and Home *de Novo*

Home and homeland is dissolved in transition, private and public is dispersed in the flow of interchangeable deserted streets, reality and fiction is fragmented and intermingled in imaginary illusions, there is no sight left to follow an intelligible time and space to construct the memory of experiences and to hold on belonging, to touch the society, or to put the distinction of in and out, neither of the past present, and future.

Morse argues that “the features of [] derealized or *nonspace* are shared by freeway, mall, and television alike [where] first distinguishable feature is its dreamlike *displacement* or separation from its surroundings” (Morse, 1990: 197). The experiences sink in nonspaces lowered into its limits in “destructive and inexperienced place” (Morse, 1990: 197). If it takes too long the after experience of these nonspaces stimulates the giddy state of mind. To get rid of the dizziness needs a break of the flow of every kind.

It is not only that it holds the fascinated ones in silence nailed down in front of the mesmerizing blue reflection, it is the space that wraps the personal domain of memories, feelings which is superseded and which replaces the conventions and cultural rules, moreover substitutes the social connections and the presence of others to a degree that mesmerized ones get lost in that inexperienced deserted space. Overabundance of television sets not only takes place in the main road of the living rooms to catch the eye instantly, it is in the kitchen, in the bedroom if necessary now and then in the bathroom, and moreover they are everywhere.

“The screen abruptly became the city square, the crossroads of all mass media” (Virilio, 1991: 25). The uncertainty of the saturation of the fragmented city vision starts with *As Tears Go By*. The film begins with a repetitive *mise-en-scène* in a wide angle the city in the negative space remains in a canted angle and in the front side multiple televisions take place as the main object in front of the passing clouds of the sky. However

the usual prop of this repetitive mise-en-scène onwards *ATGB* e.g. in *Happy Together* is clocks, it also is the sign of the shattered framing of concealing objects that shade the vision frequently. “[The] visual density that produces an overall sense of spatial ambiguity and discontinuities, like the juxtaposed images of the neon-lit Chinese emporium sign and multiple television screens already alluded to” (Abbas, 1997: 52). Not only is the city square covered partly with the television screens but also the sight of the city transients are intervened with the screens carried along the opening scene of the masculine brotherhood gangster melodrama of Wong’s first feature. Again a rejected son is fleeting in the city, distinctively in this film with his gang, again without roots and a permanent space that would tie him down. The displaced characters do not belong to the city where they try to build something but like the escaping images of television, either they flee away or the city slip aside, yet spits them out in the end.

Television regularly takes place in Wong films but it leads in *Fallen Angels*. The assassin lies down on the bed and watches TV after he enters the indoors of outdoors of his homelike place. He is isolated in comfort. The comfort resembles that he does not need to decide anything just as he takes the orders from his dispatcher for the assassinations.

Mute He Qiwu watches on TV his friend Sato San who was formerly a film director, recording a birthday tape for his son. He prefers to communicate his family over video whenever there is an occasion. It is not clear if he is away from his family and dislocated or if he just prefers to contact so, still the remoteness and nearness intermingle in the same character of performance. In the same wide angle of recording, watching and displaying, the frame is distorted which the TV takes the side. Sato San sings the song in the depth of field while his gestures are repeated on TV. Then they watch together the same recorded tape in the distortion of canted angle becoming more and more reflexive in the same sequence. He Qiwu longs to do the same but he does not have anybody to send the tape.

Instead he tapes his father by handheld camera cooking, in the toilet or sleeping in awkward positions while they both enjoy watching after. Not together though, He Qiwu watches his father from a window framed frame and takes pleasures from his joy. “Being photographed will shorten your life.” It is not the lives that shorten; it is the authenticity of the past that is emptied within the recreated history that gets lost. After his father gets sick he passes away. He becomes a grown-up but he just wants his father to be with him. He refreshes his memory by watching the same records over and over and feels happy for having the copies afterwards while it is not the image that there is on the photograph, which is blurred or in pixels, it is the image that one sees that remain in recollections. Although he knows he would never be able to taste his delicious stakes after loss of his father he is sure that he would “never forget how they tasted.”

The taste is lost in the freeway that settled around the city that segregates the terrain into two which are unreachable without following the appropriate map. The segregation is twofold, the space and the practice of the land. If a traveler of the city needs to pass the freeway, s/he has to have a vehicle applicable to the freeway; even if s/he wants to get across the roads in reverse directions it is impossible to do so. The flowing images from the window of the car fly away or the passing images follow the ride backwards from the rearview mirror,⁴¹ on empty isolated roads, leaving the riders isolated in the car, letting no creature pass over alive. The experience of time and space fades in an unfamiliar practice of a journey, where “the space and time are sundered, but space brings time under its sway in the praxis of accumulation” (Lefebvre, 1991a: 218) ever more. The time is volatile in no man’s land of an inexperienced space becoming a nomadic time once again, belonging nowhere but circling in between spaces of a kind.

In *Happy Together* Po-wing and Lai-fai on the way trying to reach to Iguazu Falls they are stuck to a road with an old broken car. Their wish to see the real scenery on a lamp of the falls and “then go home” disappears

when they got lost. Lai-fai tries to find their way from a map when Po-wing wanders around where they can not chart their direction. They are lost in a small highway in the middle of nowhere, in non-space in between directions of cities with their ambiguous affiliation which is taken them in and out, with their inconsistent bound, with their lost identities of opposite poles, as in the dynamics of society of centripetal/ centrifugal forces. The roads intersect with jump-cuts as in the reflection of jump-cuts of the roads Goddard's *Breathless* (1960). Jump-cuts irrationalize the boundaries without an end, bringing them nowhere to convert the liminality in between identities, cities, countries and cultures. The map waves and flutters in the wind in stop-motion alone, when they try to catch a hand by hitchhiking where they remain for a while, in ambiguously lengthening time. Their instable existence in "terminal space" (Bukatman: 1993) resists augmenting until they are separated in the next scene. As their opposite poles of characters remain sucked in liminality until towards the end of the film where Hong Kong is framed upside down as the opposite pole according to where they stand in Argentina which actually is not much different than one another. They never accomplish to go together to the Iguazu Falls which carries all along the utopic unity of enthusiasm in their unstable relationship and the search in another land. Lai-fai insists to arrive either alone in spite of the lack of the enthusiasm which was framed in the repetitive sequences of falls recalling over also by the music as a leitmotif of their passion.

As the "terminal space" which does not let to inhabit, the main road of the city that is used with an unending flow of mobility appears in *Happy Together* with the phallic monumental main road which is inserted repetitively to the film. It puts an outer look by putting a bird's eye view to the center of the flow of speed. Without opening a room for gatherings only lets the flow of the speed with an endless alteration. The alteration of the city space, bearing the "transformation of the cultural space" is not only the reason of;

[new] technologies that increase the movement, but also the technologies that increase the speed of reproduction and information. In Wong's cinema, speed (like politics) is also represented obliquely, in terms of the characters barely conscious social adjustments or maladjustments to the new speed-dominated cultural space, a space that seems to have lost its measure. Space now becomes incommensurable, unprecedented, exorbitant.

(Abbas, 1997: 43)

The spatial and temporal discontinuities of the city carries on likely others in *Chunking Express* within the distinctive angles, saturated colors, freeze frames, jump-cuts and blurred and shadowy images. The transnational and multicultural associations relate consumption infusing the disoriented notions of time and space in a global city as kept in a nonspace.

“Nonspace is not a literal “nonplace,” it is also *disengaged* from the paramount orientation to reality – the here and now of face-to-face contact” (Morse, 1990: 200). Morse's argument of non space/place division disparity loosens in elaboration of *Non-places: introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity*. Augé introduces the concept of supermodernity's characteristic that concern about the “invasion of space” (Augé, 1995: 99) in the “shrinking planet” (Augé, 1995: 31). Social organic life is reduced in non-places through the airports, supermarkets, hotels, and cash machines etc. where the awareness altered incoherently whereby in conditions of today history lost the meaning within the “places of memory” in reverse to anthropological places in the study of Augé's non-places.

[A] dense network of means of transport which are also inhabited spaces as developing; where the habitué of supermarkets, slot machines and credit cards communicates wordlessly, through gestures, with an abstract, unmediated commerce; a world thus surrendered to solitary individuality, to the fleeting, the temporary, and ephemeral []

(Augé, 1995: 78)

Without the need to be in a non-place The Woman in Blond Wig mainly with rude gestures and by roughly hustling the Indian immigrants under the identity of blond wig reminding the manners of a colonizer also by using them as a cheap labor in drug-smuggling business. When she loses

all of them prepared and dressed with the drugs at the airport she runs here and there in the heart of the non-place where everyone is alike and unrecognizable. After searching everywhere and threatening an innocent Indian by kidnapping his daughter, she leaves the girl unaware with cups of empty ice-cream in the ice-cream shop, letting the father and daughter meet. She wanders in the empty streets in vain with the disappearance of the illegal commodity worn by illegal employees as an anxious “external *flaneuse*”, in labyrinths like characterless uncanny spaces of narrow corridors, where even the city is hidden. When she becomes the runaway who is chased by a gang of Indians, this time they appear from every edge of the labyrinths. The run takes until she catches the underground in the brushed flashes of light and color like the city fades out in the speed through the fragmentary emptiness. After she kills the American fraud drug-lord, at last she gets rid of her sunglasses, wig and coat, freed from her disguise while walking through in the empty streets of the open air, discharging the claustrophobic and uncanny spaces that she had mostly worn until then.

Prolonged transition passages of nonspaces, non-places that locate the society in its lack of tactile and dialogue floating in inadequacy of genuine experience, in cloned identities where the sense of reality decreases in the order of the stereotyped repetitive behaviors. “The space of non-place creates neither singular identity nor relations; only solitude and similitude” (Augé, 1995: 103).

If echoing Bukatman (Bukatman, 1993:122-3) with terminal space where actually his discourse is over the science fiction and cyberspace the reflection goes over the current urban realities induced with terminal space; nonspace; nonplace partake in the urban realm. The fast food places are likely in a manner of small theme parks or on the carriage of moles, applicable to the highway sides, with the dishes of similar tasteless foods they present that partake in that very realm. “A paradox of non-place: a foreigner lost in the country he does not know (a ‘passing stranger’) can feel at home there only in the anonymity of motorways, service stations, big

stores or hotel chains” (Augé, 1995: 107). The fast food chains are like encountering the homey feeling as in the cyberspace, wherever the e-mail box is opened the page comes identically but not as much as tasteless as the *somethingburger* is.

Given transculturalization and the relentless to-and-froing of informations and commodities, across national borders, we could multiply examples of such displacement: fears of rootlessness at the shopping mall give way to global nightmares of electronic propinquity, cultural vanishment, and semiotic overload.

(Wilson & Dissanayake, 1996: 7)

The fast food places reign in Wong films sometimes rearranging the dialogue and contact in an interval such as in *Chunking Express* at a local fast food place that Cop 223 and Cop 633 go regularly. Nevertheless the place and the characters still include the temporariness and transition. However the encounter at Mc Donald’s in *Fallen Angels* preserve the alienation and isolation until Blondie comes and sits right next to the assassin in the wide room of completely empty place. The empty terminal space which is usually crowded, sarcastically motivates the mirroring of the terminal space to the possible relationship that might begin will be temporary which only might long briefly for a short-term. The possibility of the relationship is hinted at the stairs, where they come out from the full bright sterile and artificial place together, up to the streets to a dark ambiguity. The stairs at Blondie’s place again signals the beginning of the relationship. Thus the stairs include a sense of home and inner world intimacy that would be stepped up to share with each other, although the stairs asserts the upwards road of a beginning, it always preserves the parting ways of the fall in backwards within the temporariness of the relationship.

In *In the Mood for Love* the stairs are in the street where especially the characters take their time to go to a local noodle takeaway place. Inside their rooms maintain no intimacy where they search the space for themselves outside the streets. Film quotes the beats of the city concentrated more on the rhythm of unexpected deception, anguish and love of two

neighbors sharing a coincidental common fate. Their smooth attraction, and the shivering facade of their intimacy is indicated when they pass by on the narrow stairs in the dark streets, first without realizing each other. The dim stairs, secret hotel room, rainy pavements exhibit the diverging life turning the inside outside, and outside to inside. They exist on the sidewalk, as spectators of their lives; not being aware of their coincidental situation. They don't become neighbors incidentally, but they accidentally fall in love still resisting to it. The 'coincidence' is created by their spouses. It is in fact a bad game, which is played by each other's spouses as their 'husband' and 'wife' only as restricted images and sounds. Film sets apart the modernity and tradition over the deception which is attributed to the cities in the nature of insecure metropolis, within the character of human nature.

Mrs. Chan, Su Li-zhen, and Chow Mo-wan can be sure of their spouses' affair at a modern restaurant. Actually they usually eat alone outside, from the traditional noodle takeaway, until they decide to spend some time together out of sight of potentially scrutinizing eyes of their neighbors in fact without ever getting intimate. Su Li-zhen wears the traditional outfit *cheongsam* changing all film long, within the time lapses become clear with the constantly changing outfit. *Cheongsam* displays her charm as well as representing the traditional 'constricted femininity'.

The cheongsam encapsulates opposing forces of tradition and modernity, revealing a femininity at once sexualized and constricted, and it is no coincidence that it features prominently in popular culture as an emblem of the personal and social dilemmas faced by woman.
(Cook, 2005, 10)

Cheongsam as a 'cultural icon of Chinese tradition'⁴² and restaurant with the cultural icons of knives and forks western modernity come together in the same place. They both can not confess the basic truth and articulate an easier way to find out, about their doubts of their spouses' relationship. Instead they question each other covertly by the commodities. First Mr. Chow asks about her purse as if he wants to get a present to his wife, then Su Li-zhen asks about his tie in the same direction. Actually they both know

that their spouses own exactly the same commodities. This time Su Li-zhen is the one who confesses with honesty that she knows Mrs. Chow has the same purse and thereafter they remain aware of their betrayal. The restaurant becomes the place of discovering the deception like cursing the modernity which motivates the space of duplicity and betrayal within the reticence of tradition at the beginning. Subsequently they keep coming to the same restaurant where they try to pretend like their spouses to each other at the same western restaurant. They use forks and knives instead of sticks; they order the dishes that their spouses would prefer to each other, and force themselves eat as the others' preferences, where Su Li-zhen suffers, but still endures to eat hot mustard which is a data of western taste, that Mrs. Chow is fond of. The playfulness of the camera at the confession moment carries on with their play if the modernization of everyday life conveys the deception. Like the *Ashes of Time* the continual circuit of modernity and capitalism where memory, identity, culture, social unity is confined on a threshold. In between tradition and modernity the instability of the local within the elusive and ambivalent socio-cultural space goes together and beyond with the disillusion and anxiety of displacement with lack of roots and home.

The experience of cabs in Wong films is different than the car-highway nonspace inexperience. In *Happy Together* and in *In the Mood for Love* and *2046* the cabs become the space of intimacy, driven by another, temporary but out of sight and intimate, although in both of the films one of them resist to the other.

“Vis-à-vis lived experience, space is neither a mere ‘frame’ [] designed simply to receive whatever is poured into it” (Lefebvre, 1991a: 93-4). In *Days of Being Wild* the subplot of Smirk and again Su Li-zhen who was asked by Yuddy to be friends for a minute then became lovers, come across at night when Su Li-zhen is rejected and left alone by Yuddy. They stroll in the dark rainy streets, under the street lamps share their longings. While she gazes at the watch in the station the bars of the station

gets closed and locked. She remains outside in the street next to Smirk locked to the time to her memory. She tells her about her friendship of one minute while Smirk tells about his childhood, when he first had gone to school he realized his poverty and that he can not be a sailor because he can not leave his sick mother as the opposite of the repeated theme of mothers, who have no prospects of their sons, and forlorn Su Li-zhen says that Hong Kong is not her home. She lacks of money and place to survive in the city. The emotional and economic poverty through their past and memories' leaves the traces of their shared and lived experiences on time and space. Street provides a threshold in its dark limits within their longings and expectations of their liminality. She owes money from the Smirk and goes up the street to catch the street car after she promises to call him from the phone booth. The phone as the regular reminder of distance remains in silence every time when Smirk passes by within a probable expectation of a terminal space of privacy in a street.

"I didn't really think she'd call me. Passing that telephone booth every time, I would just hang around. It was possible that she had gone back to Macao. Naturally, she only wanted someone to talk with her for one night. Soon afterwards, my mother died and I went to the sea."

The scenes of streets that they strolled together, where they stopped for a while, and separated afterwards come in emptiness once again when the phone rings. Displaying the same places after moving outward into the world puts us on a familiar terrain of thematic visions. The repeated settings refresh the memory of the same experiences without retelling the story in the familiar terrain. The space becomes the familiar object of the memory recalling the experiences of diegesis with a Proust effect.⁴³

At the end of the film Smirk gets prepared to go outside in a narrow small room with the lowest ceiling in a Wong film. Most likely it prompts a ship's cabin, exceeding all the claustrophobic places ever, in Wong films. Then Su Li-zhen comes onscreen working at a ticket window of a stadium that she had mentioned before. As usual she is framed in covered

window frame but this indicates a possibility of old smirk / new sailor might be coming over. In spite of the open ends of the films, they usually preserve a light of positive possibility, although not clearly neither as a rule.

The constant claustrophobic places which lacks of a distinctive personality indicate dislocation and the global diffusion in local. Volatile social and economic conditions in a way explicit with constant displacement, but mostly implicit in anxieties which characters do not resist in a social political context as the films are neither ever explicitly political but they dissolve into a transitional social context.

Dislocation of the Assassin becomes explicit by the articulation of his voiceover, “when you live out of a suitcase you don’t need a place of your own.” Identities are not unitary, not stable, but mobile and multiple within reflections of the mirrors and the potential of change. Suitcase replaces a secure home or a stable homeland in rootlessness. Hotel rooms, homes like rented rooms exhibit the life in transition instead of steady residence, in instability of rootlessness and temporariness.

Wong characters do not own a fixed home but they are sheltered in temporary internal places whereas the *rough sleepers* of the urban area are destined to be sheltered in temporary, public, private places, including the streets. *Rough sleepers* is a term used for homeless people whose lack of housing condition is a current concern in the cities. The homeless in *Chunking Express* who refuses to get any of the expired canned foods, passes by with a trolley. Trolleys are the homes of the homeless in the documentary *Trolleywood* (Madeleine Farley, 2004). As an icon of the consumer society trolleys of supermarkets are used distinctively to reverberating homelessness, as the icon of inequality of the consumption culture. A trolley marks the transition in the streets letting homeless people carry their bits and pieces to travel in *the street homes*. Suitcase substitutes home, trolley substitutes suitcases, streets substitutes hotels and again homes.

3. Street Homes in “Naked Spaces”⁴⁴

There is no home as personal as one own which one can be sheltered from outside world in refuge. In *Ashes of Time* Ouyang Feng and Blind Swordsman leave their home town, keeping themselves in exile. They both are longing for their love, while Ouyang also for his past, and Blind Swordsman for his homeland. Ouyang stays in the inn where incessantly passengers drop by in a setting of a naked desert. It's been told that he then burns it down and leaves back to sword fighting at the end of the circularity of the film thereafter he dies at a duel.

Desert resembling home is as a mirage formed in the nakedness of the desert. If needed there is no place to hide, where crying out would not work either, when there no sound is to be heard by anybody. Desert illustrates the pale images in severe climates of hot and cold, thirst in dryness, hunger in famine; being lost in mirage with the resemblance of blurred vision in transformed dynamics of the local, culturally, economically and socially outlined in a global uncertainty within the motivated solitude individuality.

Auge quotes Descomb's question “where is the character at home?” and the answer is “[where one is understood] without any long explanations” (Auge, 1995: 108). The clear answer of “the character is at home where one is understood” conveys the questions ‘if anyone is really at home’ and ‘if anybody is clearly understood’ taking the lonely characters of Wong films into the consideration those are always in places unlike homes.

P]eople are always, and never at home .” Supermodernity (which stems simultaneously from the three figures of excess: overabundance of events, spatial overabundance, and the individualization of references) naturally finds its full expression in non-places.

(Auge, 1995: 109)

Auge's paradoxical answer of “always and never” might reveal the fact of flats. As mentioned before there are flats, but none of them is like home. Only in *Chunking Express* the flat of Cop 633 meets with a try to be like home in contribution of May's fantasy. The flat has a symbiotic

closeness with the bond street, down next to it where the escalator climbs just to the bond.

In Hong Kong day and night the street is in everywhere. Private space is like an attachment, tight; more like a safety box. [In *Chunking Express*, a] caravan like flat right next to the mole, viewing the escalator from the window, the vivacity which challenges the perception, the crowd and festivity of lights encounter the poverty of the flat.

(Süalp, 2004: 310)

May enters the flat with the key which was in the left letter for 633 by his ex-girlfriend. 633 resisted to take the letter. He was hurt with a pin after he had seen the letter that was pinned to the board. He shares his misery with the commodities at home, by identifying himself with them, actually identifying them with him. He says not to cry to the wet torn rag which drops water. He irons the shirt to warm that he thinks is cold. After falling in love with 633 the curiosity takes Faye to his flat where she create a fantasy in the place by changing commodities that are timeworn, cleans the flat. She enjoys the space that turns to a similitude belonging, as well as if sharing the place with him. He does not realize any of the differences. Once when he comes home with the feeling of finding his ex-girlfriend hiding from him, he plays the game he used to play with her. He questions while he roughly checks the possible hiding places, where each time Faye is precisely hidden. Even if he looks to the right places his disability to see or find continues. The blindness of cop 633 ends or starts to end when his despair weakens by time by the awareness of the lost that the one is not coming back within the passing ambiguous time. Thus he becomes able to think that the commodities, in fact the previous entities differed by their amount, for example as size of a soap or became a brand new cleaning rag, the added facts or details like the fish tank, or a picture attached to the mirror. Moreover he starts to realize the altered taste of the dozens of sardines which the labels are changed. The lack and disability to realize the changes in a private space like home where one has to belong and recognize is reversed by alienation. Home is not a personal private space but a part of

the street. It is naked in poverty, economically and socially within the concealed perception. Non-space is moved to the privacy of indoors which there is none left than the temporariness of outdoors. Even though we pass every day through the constant change of the streets we get lost in the environment of metamorphosis where we rarely realize the alteration. When Faye comes across with 633, right in front of his door she gets trapped in the threshold. She can not move anywhere but remains stuck to the threshold, where she is glued with the disability of moving in or getting away; out.

It is not the swell comfort to enter the neighborhood where the breath is taken deeply as if you arrived almost home not even likely when arrived the home street, it is like the nomadic sense when you arrive the street homes to close the doors inside but still remain outside.

We live in a world ruled by fictions of every kind – mass merchandizing, advertising, politics conducted as a branch of advertising, the instant translation of science and technology into popular imagery the increasing, blurring, and intermingling of identities within the realm of consumer goods.

(Ballard 1984: 97)

Residential areas in Wong films are noticeably devoid of people. Fragmented social interactions show the impotence of inhabitants in the empty streets like an evacuated area. Lack of visibility of social validity in the public space, brings the question if there is any possibility left for the public sphere as a body emptied out from essential living parts to remain alive, as the city is emptied from the organic wholeness in production of space and connections.

As Broadsly explains: “Metropolitan life suggests the disintegration in space and time of individual’s various dwelling places. Often living in ‘communities without propinquity’ the individual metropolitan must somehow confront the task of reintegrating his or her environment...one doesn’t dwell in the metropolis; one passes through it between dwelling places.”⁴⁵

(Morse, 1990: 200)

The characters do not live in unity but diverge in the speed of fragmented time and space by sinking between the non-transparent social relations and the obscurity of one self. Street homes link the impossibility

of reunion of characters even if they desire each other. In *Fallen Angels* Assassin and his partner are framed in a much distorted wide canted angle. The framing continues all film long. They just communicate over phone and fax machine while all point to the physical and psychological distance between each other. Assassin's home is at a higher level than the road next to the railway which is placed over the columns again higher than the main road in between the railway and the residence. The home place is surrounded with windows encircled with transparency of the inside. The main road in between home and railway of runaway trains is covered with the flow of the leaking lights of the traffic. Home is exposed attached to the transition of the mobility as a part of the flow and the street. Likely how Raymond Williams defines home as a mirage;

I know very well that home is a mirage, but even so only transit, transfer, translation and difference. It is not the house passing away like a mobile home or the shepherd's hut, it is in passing that we dwell.⁴⁶

None of the characters that are in a constant transition murmur about their displacement neither they complain about their liminality. The cases are written on the space and time and the occurrence of the actions of the characters. Assassin's slight murmur about living out of a suitcase is an exception likewise his expression about having a past in spite of being an assassin. The fixed home in reflection of the flow is captured as a flying nakedness. The naked place is the partner's space of desire. She enters the place with the key hanging outside, just like the assassin's entrance. The naked space is not under surveillance. It is open to panopticon gaze however it is the part of the street not to be considered private but a street home, open to the partner when she desires to enter in. Just like Faye, she cleans the house but with a gauze mask and in a sexy leather suit, corrects the big street clock hanging on the wall and she checks the trash in detail, to get more information about him. She masturbates on his bed. Then she cries in despair, becoming more aware of her desperate love and loneliness. When the assassin decides to take a

decision for his life and breaks the partnership, she plans an assassination to destroy him on behalf of her lost object/ space of desire in with her hope. As the decision maker, the threat of her control mechanism over his profession and his private space makes her take a last decision. Nevertheless she was alone and will be alone like other strong women in disguise, nameless, and vulnerable⁴⁷.

We are captivated in time of a mesmerizing speed where the private and public boundaries are dissolved in the instability of constantly changing space which prevails in with the nomadic time. Transgression of boundary maintenance in the city transcend by the solitude dreamer in need to locate oneself against the transitional dynamics of space and time which otherwise leaves no room to resist.

Mute He Qiwu in *Fallen Angels* breaks in to anonymous business places of any kind at night. He can easily exploit the stores and shops while he abuses the customers. He explains his decision of being 'his own boss' as it was hard for him to find a job because he is mute. He pushes people to buy fruit as much as he wants, where there is no escape from him, he even makes a bum take out of his cloths to be washed in a laundry , while he is forcing him, he tears down his cloths actually while they are already torn. The most abused customer, each time unluckily bumps into He Qiwu, is subject to admit whatever He Qiwu insists because if not, he forces and threatens to do so. He has to let him shave, wash his hair otherwise his hair will be cut, and eat dozens of cups of ice-cream. The ice-cream van is the worst experience that he had at the beginning as there is a capability of eating but the amount he insists never ends. When he tries to explain his wife that he is captured by the same lunatic he tells her to join to convince her. She comes with all family, along with children including the grandfather. He Qiwu not only makes them eat cups and varieties of ice-cream but also takes them to a city trip with the van. They ride with the van like a flaneur at night. The family enjoys the journey in the city observing the road downtown towards surroundings. He Qiwu thinks that it was one of

the family's best times that they had together. Spending hours encapsulated in a van while riding through the city is a more vivid experience than the time in front of a TV which is the usual, especially for low class families.

Faye and assassin's Partner try to build a place in fantasy in men's places. Knocking the patriarchal society as leaving less space to the women, their fantasies are even constructed over men and men owned places. The women are in connection with *Bin-jip* (Kim Ku-duk, 2004) is the drifter who enters the empty houses, eats resident's food but instead of damaging or stealing something, he just enjoys the private space of other people which he does not own or belong, neither has no permission. He is comfortable in any place in realm of tranquility of not owning the space, but using it temporarily. Each time he enters a ready home with different characteristics, where he pays the owners back by washing their dirty cloths, and repairing everything broken, to show his gratitude in very natural manners, as if it is a mundane work. The style and aim of Faye and the Partner partly differ from *Bin-jip* because the women fantasize about a specific man and their spaces, belonging to a specific home, and longing for intimacy, beyond the displacement. Whereas *Bin-jip* just tries to define himself at any point of the world. Searching for belonging or creating a private space that they inject themselves is an issue of fantasy. But this is more than an adventurous solution of loneliness and displacement in fantasy without getting rejected. The case in *Bin-jip* is to find a place temporarily, a solution to manage the day in homelessness than displacement. They are the result of lacking of a propelling belonging, taking a part of a family, alienated as an outsider in the society, out of the security of a solid ground. He is one of the unrecognizable characters in society, after a while he becomes invisible in an esoteric tone. Despite the fact that supernatural line of the story however, he is *de facto* invisible in the system and in the society. He is a spirit, lost in the city, amid dwellers, and as an essence of his own.

It can be argued that the difficulty of handling the increasing complexity, and the doubts and anxieties they often engender, are reasons why “localism,” or the desire to return home, becomes an important theme – regardless of whether the home is real or imaginary, temporary, syncretized, or simulated, or whether it is manifest in a fascination with the sense of belonging, affiliation, and community attributed to the homes of others.

(Featherstone, 1996: 47)

To use other people’s flats, and keep changing the places is the need of displacement whereby he also has the ability to change the spaces that he does not own in his and its own rights. He brings his spirit in and adds his productivity without doing any harm, leaving only a trace for the keen eyes of the owners. As in *Chunking Express* and *Fallen Angels*, the owners of the flats do not realize the changes at home in their street homes. Individualized society is the key of the lost enthusiasm and skill to share the space and possessions where the identities are in the need to get out of their liminality and define themselves in the society.

Is it not one of the main purposes of imperialism what we discuss as the dynamics of globalization today? In this respect, nation-state can be viewed as a form of state which fixes certain ethnic features through assimilation in the process of fabrication of a supra-national identity in a particular region via merging and hybridization.

(Süalp, 2004: 248)

The impure systems of globalization in a new kind of invisible imperialism pervade the cultural, local and private zones. Saturated transgressions enforce the unawareness where the identities dissolve, duplicate and become invisible in the saturation of speedy flow of integration of non-places through economics and politics, backing by media and technologies. Where the unawareness lock the perceptions and ways of seeing that are concealed like the frames are shaded with fragmentations of unparticular objects within walls, doors, curtains, or corridors, and windows generate frames in frames, either rain dropping windows or curtains cause shaded visions.

We came to a wide room full of anxieties, worries and pleasure. We all came free in advance, but do these pleasures, worries and anxieties carry on in freedom and awareness or is it the curtain which restricts the freedom and consciousness by putting a filter to the point of view that overcomes? And who put the curtain there which outgrows in the perception that all visions become blurred and fragmented? 'What is behind that curtain' is a question, what confronts the curtain is another. Is it only you, me, and the other, or me, me, me as a unity of perception which is certainly divided individually. There is no 'we' in front of the curtain in the narrowing room. Sole transitive identities confront the curtain where the loneliness of every kind is behind.

4. End of a period; 2046

*A mysterious train left for 2046 every once in a while. Everyone who went there had the same intention.....to recapture their lost memories. It was said that in 2046, nothing ever changed. Nobody knew for sure if it was true, because nobody who went there had ever come back... except one. He was there. He chose to leave. **He wanted to change.***

A story which has a world of its own is at the same time like a closure of a puzzle, which references to most previous Wong films in bits and pieces. If the retrospective of Wong films is familiar with, then in the first practice of watching the film is mainly followed over the traces of previous ones, than capturing the new diegetic world becomes continually self conscious. The repetitive motifs and themes are more than just references. Characteristically the repetitions more than just functioning as reminders of other films bear the previous diegetic worlds on onscreen diegesis, where the meaning is carried upon. Especially the textual references of *Days of Being Wild (DoBW)* and *In the Mood for Love (IMfL)* in 2046 do not merely function to coalesce the meaning, they become the experienced pasts of the characters as if the films those took place in the '60s are in an elliptical continuity. When *IMfL* was screened 2046 was announced within the connection of the former, and the correlation of two by the hotel room number was noticeable, but some places, characters, their stories, even mimics of *DoBW* are carried over to 2046, as well.

In 2046 visions are not shaded behind the curtain. It is the past that remains concealed behind the curtains. And it is the past that narrows the frames. When Chow comes across with Mimi/Lulu at a night club, he tries to convince her that they have met before. He asks her name and the answer is the same line of Su Li-zhen (*DoBW*) where she refused telling, and her gesture just mimics Yuddy (*DoBW*) in 2046. Chow reminds her that she was Lulu in Singapore. She seems completely forgotten, but surprised and wants to be reminded more. When he tells her that she was constantly telling about her Chinese/Filipino ex-boyfriend who died

young, her look freezes where Chow's voice slowly fades out. Camera tracks the red thick curtain which was already covering from the beginning a big part of the frame, the curtain fills the frame completely. The past leads the characters' decisions where they front the past, inactively unable to look forward or act, emancipated of the past. The past in *2046* is not history yet, it takes part in diegesis and on the frames. The frames are constantly divided by curtains and walls, or shaded by lesser light, where the characters are squeezed in one third of the frames. The claustrophobia is set in the frames in which the pasts of the characters invade their lives.

After bringing Lulu to her hotel room, Chow leaves her asleep and realizes the room number 2046. When he learns that she does not stay in the room 2046 anymore, he wants to rent to room. But because it is not available of redecoration, he moves to the room 2047. Then he finds out that Lulu was stabbed by her drummer boyfriend whom Lulu compared with a bird that could never land. "She was always the leading lady." Chow's voiceover once again refers self reflexively to the previous films that she had taken part as a leading character.

'Legless bird' is Yuddy (*DoBW*) whom Lulu is still longing for in *2046*. In *DoBW* he was killed in a train when he was leaving Philippines after he was rejected by his mother. Legless bird is the story of the bird that flies all the time and can not land. After he dies in the train, the bird-eye-view shot tracks over the train through the utopic landscape of the forests, carrying his volatile soul who could never land before. The meaning is carried to 2046 where nobody is able to land anywhere. There are no street homes, or deserted places in 2046 just hotel rooms, one specific Orient Hotel which is borrowed from *DoBW*, night clubs, casino, etc., and a train to the future 2046. There is no sign of stability where everybody is always in transition, reflecting Yuddy's characteristic of legless bird, and Orient Hotel is like Hong Kong where nobody can land except temporarily.

Bai Ling and Chow borrow their times from each other. The 'borrowed time' is when they sleep together but not spend the night after, and pay a small amount of money when they leave, where everything is for sale. Long after they became strangers, they meet as drinking pals keeping the remoteness. She is actually still in love with him. She asks to borrow him at least for the night. He refuses to come in, remaining at the threshold of her hotel room. "You once asked me if there is anything I couldn't lend. I gave a lot of thought. And I know there is one thing I'll never lend to someone." He leaves taking the stairs down where he diminishes. There is no substitute in love. He still is in love with Su Li-zhen (*IMfL*) that he slipped it away once he was together with.

Intertitle: he didn't return back. It was as if he'd boarded a very long train. Heading for a drowsy future. Through the unfathomable night.

2046 is the story that Chow writes. It is a science-fiction story where the film begins in a dystopic city that developed towards the sky where almost there is no space in between, which is nourished from *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982) but more colorful, and bright with lights. The city is only received with a wide view in the anime part, which resembles *manga* films where Japanese voiceover reinforces the sense more. The film begins with the Tak's voiceover in Japanese, to the protagonist of the story in the futuristic train which leaves to 2046. Tak is the character who Chow as the writer of the science-fiction identifies himself. In actual part of the film Tak is the boyfriend of Hotel manager's daughter Jing-wen/Android.

There is an area in the train which is very cold thus passengers are advised to hug to keep warm. Since Tak is the only passenger he hugs the Android, his cabin attendant. The area between 1224 and 1225 is the Christmas Eve / Day when people gather in family rituals, in search of share, togetherness and warmth, an area in the train where they have to be advised to get close, a time in real.

2046 is a place not a time in the film as an allegory, where the train leaves every now and then to the tunnel of liminality which encapsulates

the memory in concern of future of Hong Kong in the “limited time of 50 years” where “origins are forgotten and future is inconceivable” (Bukatman: 116).

“In 2046 every railway network spreads the globe.”

No need to go forward 50 years, there is no ‘time travel’ possible yet, neither the cybernetic organisms prevail. But the technology is integrated already to our very bodies, and the travel of cyber space fronts the computers.

“Our cabin attendants are superbly designed. One problem is while they’ve served on so many long journeys, fatigue begins to set in. They might want to laugh, but the smile would be slow to come ...cry...tear wouldn’t weep till the next day.”

There are no Androids around yet but “the time delay” mentioned in the film is the effect on society. Every kind of speed dominates the lives, where the responses get delayed through insensitivity and numbness that occur by the giddy flow of the city. Larger networks of communication and control surround the globe where the remoteness is clear within an ambiguous nearness is attached. Insistent phone calls, letters and the question “will you come with me” in *2046* are the iterative metonymies of distance and dislocation. The repeated theme of the request of going together locates the characters in need and desire for a companion, a call for intimacy, family, social unity and collectivity, sometimes to run away or change.

Chow asks the question to Black spider. They are on the dim stairs of the Casino where he is in despair of Su Li-zhen (*IMfL*) in Singapore. The jump cuts of the stairs dislocate the characters, their direction and position. She asks him “you know nothing about my past, do you?” Her remark is as much as to Chow, as to audiences. Black spider has a glove on her one hand as a metaphor of her gloved past.

She rejects him with a card play. He requests her to find him if she can escape from her past. Where after he realizes that she knew the same

thing about her gloved past, was valid for him. It is not possible to interchange the love as a substitute, if you are twisted with the spiral of past.

The most pessimistic city ballad of Wong Kar-wai is covered with “all memories are traces of tears.” The circular narration continues, first the traces of the past is given then the disclosure of the traces come after in to the sight with the circularity.

The story of secrets is conveyed from *IMfL* to *2046* in which the secrets that wouldn't wanted to be shared was whispered to a carved hole of a tree up on a mountain, and it was covered by mud, not to be heard anymore. Chow in *IMfL* told his secret to a hole in ancient ruined city of Angkor Wat and filled the hole with straw. Probably it is the main engine of the high speedy train which is like the eye that was hung in the sky in *Blade Runner*. The engine room is the eye. It absorbs the secrets in its dark deepness of its pupil, keeping the experiences dispersed in the vague lines of the iris which remain in the very eye of the memory. The eye is also placed in between the blurry facets of the outer walls, the ruined city with countless traces of past, is moved to the ruined memory of our eyes in an “inconvincible future”.

“If we tell the truth about the past, maybe we can tell the truth about the present.”

Ken Loach, 2006 Cannes Film Festival.

CONCLUSION

“I speak and speak,” Marco says, “but the listener retains only the words he is expecting.”

Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

If I compare the city to a book, to a writing (a semiological system), I do not have the right to forget the aspect of mediation.

Lefebvre *The Specificity of the City*⁴⁸

We read and understand, able to decipher as much as we know.

Wong films are never explicitly political however they all have an implicit standing carrying the influences of the perception, or the present point of view, moods and emotions.

I examined Wong films in general in order to seize the portrayal of everyday life, time and space, and society through the narratives that sets a perception of the present time as I have initiated in the introduction with the intention to compare the everyday experience. Exteriors of the city that infuse the interiors of the mind within the ongoing life which is outlined socially, culturally, politically and historically as I tried to discuss over the previous chapters within a global uncertainty that decreases the real experiences is surrounded by an ambiguous unawareness.

Global imperialism is internalized and articulated socially and institutionally extended over organized power relationships. Individualism on the rise in which the individuals are disabled to connect or unite with the society, under the communication bombs of unreal experiences, empowered by new media technologies, as the forlorn identities of this century we face the images and moods of Wong narratives. Thus the facet interplays through the representations of the city in the negative space where foregrounds the identities which narrated playfully within the intertextual and self reflexive cinema of Wong Kar-wai. The thematic and narrational repetitions are the keys of speed, fragmentation of space, and time and incoherence of society

which memory is loosened and scraped over palimpsests those seal the ambiguous reality of today.

Classic Self reflexivity is meant to impel the alienation by subversion of the classical narrative however it is the time of adoptions of every kind, the unconventional becomes soon ordinary in mainstream. Innovative styles and techniques do not last long original. Even if it subverts the usual rhythm, nobody easily gets surprised any more. We are living in a fragmented city, displaced and fallen in to repetitive blurred perceptions or entrapped in *veiled* visions, as Wong displays in his films by concealed framings through the *mise-en-scène* over the cinematography and themes. The subversion of the divine proportion is also a criticism and interrogation of visual perception. The proportions of the frames in visuals innovatively illustrate a different perception mechanism apart from the mainstream. Framings of shattered visions point to the impure system of everyday life, and its tainted ways of seeing.

Urban society seems all alone, alienated as a whole, dispersed one by one, away from the association of unity. “The new prefabricated cities clearly exemplify the totalitarian tendency of modern capitalism’s organization of life: the isolated inhabitants see their lives reduced to a pure triviality of the repetitive combined with the obligatory absorption of an equally repetitive spectacle” (Debord, [1961]: 241). Self reflexivity by the self-consciousness mechanism brings the thought in consciousness. The repeated narration provides the familiarity of “artificial dialogues and mimics of a tape recorder”(Debord, [1961]: 238) that Debord mentions, not within the dialogues but in everydayness. The repeated themes point to the very day lived in a dizzy sense, in alienation, loneliness and isolation of time and space which occur like the perception of everyday life of urban society, where the characters are diverse but repeated. As each one of them belongs to the society, could be anyone. Oxymoronic influence of Self reflexivity works through the self consciousness and seamless like pleasure at the same time. The captivated moods activate the inner speech where in

the end the dizzy perception of the city lingers while half finished sentences track the moments in retuning the moods.

In this world of individuality that prisons the society one by one in the thresholds not only with lowered down voices, also by becoming mute. Media and technology conversely disable the state of being to be open to the world, as well as the ideologies that separate and mingle the identities where the standing points is missed and self awareness is vanished. In the strategies of building vague belongings which is filled up with every kind of representations of narratives, those invade and narrow the perceptual fields where the wars are perceived as dropping lights as if to empty fields, or the cases are forgotten after they received publicly crystal clear, the unrestricted inner speech might store the awareness to supply an accumulation to pass over the thresholds at least to construct a meaning other than it is implied through the elaborate narratives.

Images those fill our vision within the swift flow of the day of a city blurs the minds and perceptions. There is a need of a leak to operate the dizziness and clear the visions of the giddy flow, to become aware of the conditions which create the silence of the society. This leak is not an escape from the state of mind on the contrary to create an open gate to dialogic encounters in inner selves and in between society. The public sphere that is withdrawn from the city sphere might not find a place to construct the independency and emancipation of different point of views and voices to gather in through Wong films but the aesthetics and the content might find a leak to interact the joint of awareness without *forgetting the aspect of mediation*.

“At times all I need is a brief glimpse, an opening in the midst of an incongruous landscape, a glint of lights, in the fog, the dialogue of two passersby meeting in the crowd, and I think that, setting out from there, I will put together, piece by piece, the perfect city, made of fragments mixed with the rest, of instants separated by intervals, of signals one sends out, not knowing who receives them. If I tell you that the city toward which my journey tend is discontinuous in space and time, now scattered, now more condensed, you must not believe the search for it can stop.”

Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

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⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hong_kong (06.01.2006)

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⁷ Featherstone quotes from King, A. "The Times and Spaces of Modernity," in *Global Modernities*, M. Featherstone, S. Lash, R. Robertson (eds). Sage Publications, 1995.

⁸ 'West' and 'East' are coated under an homogenous category in the name of the rhetoric. In spite of many different 'eastern' or 'western' stances, the representative value of western enlightenment is taken to the issue in the argument.

⁹ Sibley underlines it when he mentions the *conscience collective* (Sibley, 1998: 270).

¹⁰ See for the difference between colonialism and imperialism the site Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/colonialism/> and Doctrines on Colonialism at the site <http://www.tibet.com/Humanrights/Unpo/chap2.html> (03.05.06)

¹¹ Gibson, William (1984) "Neuromancer", London: HarperCollins Publishers. p. 14

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¹³ (Zhang, 2002: 254-60) Zhang quotes from Abbas and argues his approach to culture of disappearance while he finds it limited and elitist; Abbas, Ackbar. *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

¹⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proust_effect (27.02.2006)

¹⁵ (Brunette, 2005: 20) from the interview; "Poet of Time." *Sight and Sound* 6.9 (September 1996): 42.

¹⁶ Payne, Robert M. *Ways of seeing wild: the cinema of Wong Kar-Wai* at <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc44.2001/payne%20for%20site/wongkarwai1.html> p.3. (04.04.2006)

¹⁷ The translation of subtitles is sometimes wrong, which can be depicted now and then. Some detected mistakes may destruct the meaning and it may be just the opposite. In the first scene of Yang s/he is asked if s/he is a man or woman, s/he takes it as an insult and attacks with her sword where s/he cries out that he is the first *son* of Mourang clan because she is Yang there, whereas the subtitle is translated as *daughter* which has to be *son*. Again at the end when Ouyang tells her future story as a legend of martial-art world that had started to spread in his voiceover, the legend character is again told as male but we see Yin as a woman on-screen although there are some shifts of Yin and Yang in a short montage-sequence, the future journey is about Yin as a female subject. If it is not a wishful thinking then the translation might be again wrong which means the distortion of the history by the legend is not present.

¹⁸ See for the concept of cinematic time, Erdem, Tuna in *Geçmiş Zamanın Peşinde: üç sinemasal anlatı*, *Türk Film Araştırmalarında Yeni Yönelimler 2* (ed.) Deniz Derman, İstanbul: Bağlam Yayıncılık, November, 2001. p.166-7.

¹⁹ See Turim, Maureen. *Flashbacks in Film Memory & History*, NY, London: Routledge, 1989. p.3. The flashback is described etymologically as “brief interval of light.”

²⁰ Süalp, Z. Tül Akbal pronounced the sentence “freeze the moment of experiences” which accumulates well the point while elaborating the text over.

²¹ Quoted from Holquist by Gardiner, see (Gardiner, 2000: 46-7). Holquist, M. ‘Forward’, in Bakhtin, M. *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993.

²² Quoted from Bakhtin by Gardiner, see (Gardiner, 2000: 47). Bakhtin, M. *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, V. Liapunov (trans.), Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993. p.2.

²³ See (Gardiner, 2000: 55). Bakhtin, M. *Speech Genres And Other Late Essays*, C. Emerson and M. Holquist (eds.), V. W. McGee (trans.), Austin : Texas University Press, 1986. p.55.

²⁴ See (Gardiner, 2000: 57). Bakhtin, M. *Speech Genres And Other Late Essays*, C. Emerson and M. Holquist (eds.), V. W. McGee (trans.), Austin : Texas University Press, 1986. p.138.

²⁵ Bakhtin, M. (1984) *Problems of Dostoevski's Poetics*, C Emerson (ed. and trans.) Manchester: Manchester University Press. (Gardiner:57)

²⁶ See for Traditional concepts of romance, individualistic identity and otherness; Payne, Robert, M. *Ways of seeing wild: the cinema of Wong Kar-wai*, in <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc44.2001/payne%20for%20site/wongkarwai1.html> (04.04.2006)

²⁷ M. Payne, Robert, *Ways of seeing wild: the cinema of Wong Kar-wai*, in <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc44.2001/payne%20for%20site/wongkarwai1.html> (04.04.2006)

²⁸ Süalp uses the term to *veil* as the blurred perceptions that are gained especially under the effect of the media.

²⁹ The presentation of Z. Tül Akbal Süalp “*City, Image-Subject and “Excluded” Chronotopes*” was presented at III. Architecture and Philosophy Meeting & City Workshops 2005 Exhibition, İTÜ İstanbul, November 2005.

³⁰ See for windows, Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1991a. p. 209

³¹ Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*, London: HarperCollins, 1992. p. 155-200.

³² Wright, Elisabeth. *Wong Kar-wai* at <http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/directors/02/wong.html>, p. 4. (05.10.2005)

³³ Abbas, Ackbar. *Erotics of Disappointment*, in *Wong Kar-wai*, Danièle Rivière(ed). Paris: Dis Voir, 1997. p.52.

³⁴ See for more detailed information of various chronotopes of contemporary cinema in Süalp, Z. Tül Akbal “*City, Image-Subject and “Excluded” Chronotopes*” which was presented at III. Architecture and Philosophy Meeting & City Workshops 2005 Exhibition, İTÜ İstanbul, November 2005.

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- ³⁵ Süalp Z. Tül Akbal, “*Film noir Cities: Lost in space and time, yet surviving*,” presentation at Third International Crossroads Conference, 2000. p.6.
- ³⁶ See for Film Noir, its iconography and more: *Sobchack, Vivian. *Lounge Time: Postwar Crises and Chronotope of Film Noir* in *Refiguring American Film Genres*, Nick Browne (ed.) Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998. *Joan Copjec (ed.) *Shades of Noir: A Reader*, London: Verso, 1994. *Süalp, Z. Tül Akbal, “*City, Image-Subject and “Excluded” Chronotopes*” presentation at III. Architecture and Philosophy Meeting & City Workshops 2005 Exhibition, İTÜ Istanbul, November 2005.
- ³⁷ The production year of *Fallen Angel* at <http://imdb.com/title/tt0037691> is 1945, whereas at *Lounge Time* (Sobchack, 1998: 145) it is 1946.
- ³⁸ From the interview; Ngai, Jimmy. *A Dialogue With Wong Kar-wai: Cutting Between Time and Two Cities* in *Wong Kar-wai*, Danièle Rivière(ed). Paris: Dis Voir, 1997. p.85.
- ³⁹ Selim Eyüboğlu had mentioned about watches that regularly appear in Wong films while elaborating *Days of Being Wild* in the course of Bilgi University “FTV 543 AUTEUR CASE STUDY - Unpacking Wong Kar Wai” Spring Semester, 2005.
- ⁴⁰ The term “*rented spaces*” is used in Sobchack, Vivian. *Lounge Time: Postwar Crises and Chronotope of Film Noir* in *Refiguring American Film Genres*, Nick Browne (ed.) Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998.
- ⁴¹ When Morse mentions about “paradoxical experience of motion” and “relative motion” on freeway she inserts the relativity in “the relative motion of an enclosed space beyond which the world passes in high-speed review [.]”(Morse, 1990)
- ⁴² See for more information of transformation of *cheongsam*; the costumes in *In the Mood for Love*; and “meditation on history, memory, and time” and nostalgic dynamics of the film, Cook, Pam. *Screening The Past: Memory and Nostalgia in Cinema*, New York: Routledge, 2005. p. 10-11.
- ⁴³ The similar repetitions of space had been displayed before e.g. in *Red Desert* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1964), and repeated again in *Before Sunrise* (Richard Linklater, 1995).
- ⁴⁴ *Naked Spaces: Living is Round*, a film by Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1985.
- ⁴⁵ Morse quotes (Morse, 1990: 200) from Brodsky, D. *L.A. Freeway: An Appreciative Essay*, Uni. of California Press. 1983
- ⁴⁶ Donald (Donald, 1999: 150) quoted from Raymond Williams’s essay, 1958 “Culture is Ordinary.”
- ⁴⁷ ‘Yin/Yang’ in *Ashes of Time* and ‘Woman in Blond Wig’ in *Chunking Express* are the other women in disguise have no names in particular and deeply fragile but do not let anybody see.
- ⁴⁸ Lefebvre, Henri. *Writings on Cities*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996. p.102.