

# **Life after Primordialism: Globalization, Localization and Identity Crisis in Chu Tianhsin's "The Ancient Capital"**

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It might be an illusion that the subject will be empowered with hyper freedom due to the speedy development of globalization, but the striking impact of the globalizing force on the society can be too tremendous to be overlooked. As Zygmunt Bauman points out, the heaven of the Internet creates the illusory pleasure of "freeing from the body" and "exterritorial mobility" but it actually turns out to be nothing but "the illusion of interactivity" and results in more plaguing alienation (Bauman 8, 19, 53). Facing such an uneven development of globalization, Bauman seems more anxious than agreeable, especially on the issue of "the progressive breakdown in communication between the increasingly global and extraterritorial elites and the ever more 'localized' rest" (Bauman 3). As the world seems inevitably to be incorporated into the globalizing process, Bauman intends to disperse the mist which surrounds such a seemingly irreversible process, especially for those who tend to declare an early triumph of globalization and leave out its devastating force on the present-day human condition.

Unlike Bauman, Arjun Appadurai tends to view globalization from a cautious but neutral perspective by developing "a theory of rupture that takes media and migration as its two major, and interconnected, diacritics and explores their joint effect on the *work of imagination* as a constitutive feature of modern

subjectivity" (Appadurai 3). For Appadurai, new cultural forces, be it in the form of media and migration, work their way ambivalently: on the one hand, they offer new resources for the construction of imagined selves and imagined worlds; on the other hand, they may as well lead to perpetuating the imagined identity through the rapid transmission and reinforcement of media power. Apart from their seemingly contrasting attitudes toward the effect of globalization, both Bauman and Appadurai share similar concerns on the change of the nation-state and its citizenship, particularly under the violent contact of the intricately and promptly evolved power relations between globalization and localization in the post-colonial era. And the society of Taiwan, as the novelist Chu Tianhsin 朱天心 has displayed in her work, is facing such an identity crisis in this postmodern and post-colonial epoch due to the rupture of a "unified" nation-state. This paper, therefore, aims to take up the issues concerning the prevailing globalizing force, the practice of localization *on a global scale*, and the latent crisis of identification in the fin-de-siècle Taiwan as a developing nation-state. The discussion will proceed by examining the predicament of Taiwan in its on-going nation-building project as displayed in Chu Tianhsin's novella "The Ancient Capital"〈古都〉(1997: 151-233) in the light of Bauman's and Appadurai's discourses on the relationship between globalization and (im)mobility of the human subject.

### **Primordialist Bug and the Structure of Affect**

Some critics tend to highlight Chu Tianhsin's ethnic background and her speaking position as a second generation military dependent in their interpretations or reviews of Chu's works. The cause for such a literary phenomenon could be detected at least from two aspects. First, the awareness of ethnicity, whether it comes from political appeals in the post-martial law society or from the contemporary cultural theories of the West, has opened up a new horizon for repositioning local writers; second, Chu's straightforward critiques of the opposition

activities<sup>1</sup> and Taiwan's localization, as Chiu Kweifen 邱貴芬 points out, have led Chu's works to an ideological controversy or even expelled her works out of the canonizing process of Taiwanese literature (Chiu 115-116). Chu's recently-published novella "The Ancient Capital" has suffered a similar "fate." Some of the arguments on the work still circulate around arguments concerning Chu's being cornered by ethnic sentiment and her nostalgia for the past when life was undisturbed by ethnic strife.

The melancholic tone of Chu's narrator hasn't failed to allure most readers and critics to "hear" Chu's nostalgic return to the utopian past. Chou Ying-hsiung 周英雄 points out that "after session after session of 'memory-making'," the persona turns her "ethnological study [to] a utopian quest" only to find herself completely disoriented in such a strange city where she has positioned herself all her life (153). Similarly, Liang Iping 梁一萍 argues that Chu displays "the sort of 'imagined nostalgia' in Appadurai's terms" since she "turns her back on urban modernization" and "chooses to cling to memory" (162, 166). Besides a utopian quest, what else might Chu's nostalgic greeting with the past indicate when somehow the sophisticated narrator is aware that time and space of the past will easily trap the old-timers into the nostalgic impasse and that the future generations will have their own memories to hang on to? But why does the cityscape of the present-day world become so intimidating to Chu's narrator? The argument that the narrator has been torn and trapped in her utopian quest leads us to the author's resentment over the present-day condition and her sentiment for an irretrievable past, but it fails to reflect Chu's intricate thinking on the power of time,<sup>2</sup> and its intertwining relationship with history and memory.

It cannot be denied that in "The Ancient Capital" we still find recurrent themes and literary styles that can be seen in Chu's previous works such as *I Remember* 《我記得》 (1992) or *Thinking of My Brothers from the Dependents' Compound* 《想

我眷村的兄弟們》(1992). For that reason, the discussions on "The Ancient Capital" have "naturally" pointed to the controlling ideas of in what way Chu's narrator or even Chu herself undergoes a cultural/national identity crisis and whether the disturbed subject has succeeded in adjusting herself to the new social order. Yang Ruying 楊如英 argues that "The Ancient Capital" can be regarded as a milestone in Chu's writing career: Chu's intricate use of intertextuality not only forms a dialogue with her previous works but also provides a new way of conceptualizing cultural identity by mapping Taiwan as a postmodern and post-colonial space (Yang 1998). And hence Yang asserts that the narrator as an outsider should not be taken as Chu's gesture of refusing to identify with Taiwanese culture and that the position of an outsider can be seen as an ever-shifting subject that resists against a unified subjectivity instated by social power and mainstream ideology (Yang 1998).

Liao Chaoyang 廖朝陽 shares a similar attitude in terms of the problem of subjectivity. He points out that a closer look at "The Ancient Capital" can thus lead to less-confined interpretations because the work at first sight will easily be "characterized by a strongly authorial stance which resists (despises) change and nostalgically values a time when experience was relatively stable" (Liao 1999). Similar to Yang's notion of mobile subjectivity, Liao's philosophical conceptualization on the catastrophic hope within history and the subject also broadens textual and interpretative horizons pertaining to related works and topics: "Hope here [the last catastrophic scene] inheres in the drive of history toward incongruities, which always promise to bring about, not poststructuralist revelry in heterogeneity, but the catastrophic, cataclysmic encounter between the subject and its own unfulfilled desires" (Liao 1999). Based on Liao's arguments, the weeping narrator at the last scene (referred to as "You" by the narrator), as clearly identified as a second-generation military dependent, is thrown into such a historical limbo. And only

through such a catharsis can the troubled subject get redeemed by breaking up ethnic and national rigidity and thus move into a new historical dimension.

But the last scene, subtitled "Soulless Place, Island of Estrangement" (無主之地，無緣之島), depicting the Taipei City as a place full of all forms of ugliness and chaos, particularly inhabited by xenophobic residents, somehow tends to disturb some readers and critics to a certain extent. Shan Weichang 單維章, a Chu Tianhsin "fan and fellow second generation military dependent," feels unpleasant and puzzled about the "spiteful malice" of the final pages and attributes it to "desperate anger" of Chu (Shan 1997).<sup>3</sup> Likewise, Liang Iping points out that "embedded in [C]hu's discontents with Taipei is the deeper discontent with a larger issue: the collective identity of the island" (160). Both Shan and Liang indicate that the reader can hardly disregard Chu's anxious hostility toward the present-day Taiwan's identity politics as embodied in the desperate narrator. Apparently, Chu has employed a provoking narrative method by juxtaposing the narrator's resentment toward the Taipei City as a soulless place of estrangement and the negative comments on Taiwan from archives, and such an explicitly disconcerting tone has incurred not only dispute but disapproval. Chen Yihwa 陳怡華 asserts that such a literary device has revealed Chu's inability to rid herself of viewing Taiwan from an outsider's viewpoint and also her unwillingness to identify with Taiwan as a new national subjectivity (Chen 1998). Chen argues that Chu's work has revealed nothing but the writer's colonialist sentiment as Chu's use of historical allusions indicative of contempt and hostility against Taiwan all refer to people who once intended to colonize the island, such as the Spanish, the Dutch and mostly the governors sent by the Ch'ing Dynasty. If, as Chen pinpoints, the paranoid narrator is to be equated with the mindset of Chu and her kind, then what the narrator has been disturbed and anxious about is, after all, something overwhelmingly true though latent in life: "You've never tried to figure out why you're

feeling this way and never dare to tell anyone about this, particularly as you're aware that here people like to check your patriotism or loyalty to this place, even trying to kick you out if you dare show any sign of aversion toward this place" (你從未試圖整理過這種感覺，你也不敢對任何人說，尤其在這動不動老有人要檢查你們愛不愛這裏，甚至要你們不喜歡這裏的就要走快走的時候。) (Chu 169).<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, the arguments over Taiwan's identity-making and historiography in the post-martial law period can be clearly detected not only in Chu's fiction but also in Chen's and many others' critiques. What is ironically coincident lies in the fact that *primordialist bug*<sup>5</sup> has been plaguing not merely the fictional character but the down-to-earth residents on this island, including the author, critics and readers. And this primordialist bug has relentlessly devoured a broader horizon of interpreting such a text/novelist that highlights the risk of primordialism distinctly emerging in the post-martial law society.

Primordialism, as Appadurai points out, has become one of the main causes for ethnic strife because it scarcely fails to arouse people's emotions by appealing to group sentiments built on kinship, blood, soil, or language (Appadurai 140). Such sentiments, Appadurai argues, which are historically transformed or even politically constructed, tend to bring about "ontogenetic and phylogenetic ideas about human development" (Appadurai 140). This helps explain why the narrator in Chu's work feels painfully lost in her most familiar city because somehow some mysterious force, though vaguely looming in her, has strongly estranged her from the community that shares the same city. Such a force emanates from the affective core<sup>6</sup> structured like primordialist sentiments. The primordialist bug looming in the narrator tends to disunite her from the group which is imagined to rule out the intruding outsider from them because they speak a different tongue and look exceedingly different<sup>7</sup> for a *primordialist eye*. This primordialist eye can also be seen in the reviews of Chu's "Ancient Capital" as the critics tend to estrange Chu's literary

expression from a broader scope of interpretations by "involuntarily" appealing to Chu's ethnic background, blood and language, and thus they are confining the writer and her works in the prison house of primordialism. Should this be the case, the narrator's desperate anger indicates nothing but another evidence of Chu's refusal to identify with local Taiwanese culture. Apparently, the lamenting tone of ethnic anxiety and anger has indeed largely permeated in the narration of "The Ancient Capital," but we might commit the sin of intentional and interpretive fallacy if we tend to downplay the text and the author in terms of political correctness. As Yang Ruying has noticed, it is unwise and improper to equate the narrator with the author herself based upon their similarities in age, family background or mentality (Yang 14).<sup>8</sup> To accuse the narrator's remarks of being politically incorrect through a primordialist eye could relentlessly thwart literary imagination and further infra-textual/inter-textual dialogues.

### **The Invisible City: Globalization, Localization and Memory**

"The Ancient Capital" has undoubtedly displayed Chu's attempt to picture an intricate dialogical monologue of a city nomad, and such a city wanderer tends to ever move over the "sprawling temporary, shifting" space and she is never being totally incorporated into the striated space of power since "power is realized in the striated spaces of money and influence" (Cresswell 365). The unfulfilled desire of the city is acted out through the nomadic subject in that the subject is neither totally free from the power of the striated space nor completely disabled as a docile subject. Through the city wanderer invoked as "You" by the narrator, Chu initiates a tremendously huge amount of questions, critiques, mixed feelings of infatuation and resentment toward the city in terms of temporality and spatiality. These ambivalent utterances and the catastrophic vision thus constructed serve, as Yang pinpoints,<sup>9</sup> not merely as an elegiac monologue but also as a monological dialogue that aims to induce more communication and attention

in her desperate tone. But what drives the city wanderer to such desperation? Identity crisis could be a self-evident but fairly reductive answer if we tend to superimpose ethnic paranoia upon the underlying anxiety over the rapid loss of cityscape and group sentiments caused by the fast-pacing global and local cultural flows.

"Is it--that your memories don't count? . . ." (難道，你的記憶都不算數...). As the first sentence initiates a series of on-going desperate questions, the whole narration of "The Ancient Capital" proceeds in such a mixed tone of sadness and bitterness: bot elegiac nostalgia for a simple-minded past and skeptical cynic complaints of an unbearable present go hand in hand struggling within the narrator. The restlessness of the narrator emerges not so much from the disappearance of a past time and space as from the waning of affect. Jameson argues that the waning of affect in the postmodern society originates in the waning of historicity and temporality since people thereby will be trapped in the stasis of "history without memory" and, ironically, they might have nostalgia for the present rather than the past due to the fast-pacing movement of culture (*Postmodernism* 15-16). For Jameson, the cause for worrying about the dominance of the postmodernist moment--formally featuring "flatness, depthlessness" and favoring "categories of space" rather than "categories of time"<sup>10</sup>--lies in the intimidating power of capitalist logic and global commodification. Jameson points out that the postmodern spatial practice tends to homogenize spatial differences in the form of heterogeneity, and this *infinity of space* has deterred the human subject from formulating sense of time and history (*Cultural* 59-62). The present-day Taipei in Chu's work is by and large moving toward such a postmodern space. The cityscape of the fin-de-siècle Taipei, in a sense, frightens the narrator with such a look of depthlessness due to the over-expanding power of capitalist commodification: "Trees in the past were much taller and greener since the land by then remained intact and unspoiled, not being over-developed or even commodified as an item for

speculation" (那時候的樹，也因土地尚未商品化，沒大肆競建炒地皮，而得以存活得特別高大特別綠，...。) (Chu 151). Facing the modernized city, the narrator cannot but wonder if her daughter could have feelings for or even memorize these undifferentiated buildings as she grows up: "When people--of my daughter's generation--can order the same flavored and priced food in the same type of fast-food restaurant facilitated with almost identical decorations and temperature, will they have memories of the relocation of this MacDonald or that 31 ice-cream shop or even feel that these memories are irreplaceable?" (當你們在鳥不生蛋的國家都可以在布置、色調、空氣溫度一樣的速食店裏輕易點到口味價位一樣的速食時，女兒會對這家麥當勞移到隔條街口或那家 31 冰淇淋關門有若何不可取代的記憶嗎?) (Chu 198). For the narrator, the waning of affect for a city seems to come along with the waning of unforgettable places. People will have difficulties in identifying with their hometown as the city becomes indistinguishable from other places in the world.

But why does the change of the cityscape seem unbearable if it is somehow unavoidable? Is it due to a wistful thinking of going back to the "unchangeable" past so the narrator fails to adjust herself into this new spatiality? Instead of falling into the Manichean dichotomy, Chu Tainhsin tries to open up a discursive field for the dialectic between mobility and immobility, between progress and retrogression, between new experience and memory. Such a self-indulgent act as embodied in the paranoid narrator, it seems, turns out to be a rather paradoxical act of resistance. The subject refuses to recklessly negotiate with the homogeneous force which is relentlessly shaping history, time, and space. Paradoxically, however, when the narrator seems obsessed with the unforgettable roads, buildings embedded with old friends and adventures, she is meanwhile getting aware of her own folly of being too nostalgic: "Why the devastation of the former seems so tormenting to me? Is it because we're trapped in memories of the "good old days"? Then, accordingly, my daughter will keep memories of her own

time. Maybe I'm just falling into the trap of nostalgia, like many old-timers do?!" (為何前者的拆毀重建令人如此驚慟，難道只因爲附加了記憶嗎？那麼女兒的時代，必定也有屬於她充滿溫暖回憶的事物了，難道你只是像很多初老的人一樣，不知不覺掉進懷舊的陷阱罷了？) (Chu 198). The narrator seems to realize that memories tend to construct the way people feel about things and that new memories can be reinstated, as seen in her daughter's case, but why should she still hesitate to love the old city in its new face?

For moving unto the underlying cause for such an impasse, Chu has been jeopardizing her own authorial status and her text by exposing the latent crisis of new ethnic relationship and, what's more, by victimizing the narrator who shares her ethnic background and identical memories of space and time. Through the anxious utterances of the narrator, Chu touches upon the latent fear of people that are commonly identified as the second-generation Mainlander. Could they be entitled, she seems to ask, to criticize the place they love without being convicted of *disloyalty* or labeled as *an outsider* 「外省人」? To what ethnic group shall patriotism belong to? Can it belong to a group that tends to be estranged from the practice of localization? These controversial issues all point to the crux of localization: Could the practice of localization, like that of globalization, achieve its goal not at the cost of the respect for otherness?

Chu's skeptical attitude toward localization<sup>11</sup> has coincidentally echoed Bauman's critiques of globalization. Bauman argues that the globalizing force tends to cause the loss of capability to deal with the differences. Similar to Jameson's critiques of the homogenization of postmodernism, Bauman's arguments help disclose the underlying pitfall of globalization: "the intolerance of difference" (Bauman 47). By referring to Richard Sennett's analysis of the experience of American towns, Bauman points out that people have paid the price for their pursuit of building a "transparent," "logical," and

"functional" city as the space tends to cancel any need for communication by crossing out the possibility of confrontations:

[I]n such localities the support for the "we-feeling" tends to be sought in the illusion of equality, secured by the monotonous similarity of everyone within sight. The guarantee of security tends to be adumbrated in the absence of differently thinking, differently acting and differently looking neighbors. Uniformity breeds conformity, and conformity's other face is intolerance. (Bauman 47)

Bauman's insightful remark helps us to see the underlying peril of conformity usually built on the instrumental reason--an unnegotiable project, be it aimed for progress and prosperity, might impose violence upon those who fail to conform to an unified mindset.

For the narrator of "The Ancient Capital," the present Taipei City, remodeled under the call of localization and of the capitalist globalization, has gradually turned into a place of conformity that could tolerate no differences. The narrator argues that ironically such a place allows the over-spread of all forms of chaotic or flashy constructions but fails to tolerate historical compounds that are ideologically labeled as merely a colonial vestige of the previous ruling power: "Some day these compounds will be renovated into poor-quality dorms for public officials due to the 'hard work' of the new government always boasting about its efficiency. . . . And then you'll suddenly realize that you have no roads to linger, no memories to retrieve . . ." (有朝一日，這些人家巷弄將被也愛台灣的新朝政府給有效率的收回產權並建成偷工減料的郵政宿舍、海關宿舍、大學教師宿舍、首長官舍...屆時你將再無路可走，無回憶可依憑...) (Chu 187). Under the appeal for "Loving Taiwan," these symbolic acts of wipeout seem fundamentally correct, and no one dares to challenge the legitimacy of the call for "identifying

with the country-land and its people," not even the opposition party that always brags about their revolutionary stance--as thus despised by the narrator (Chu 199). If the project of localization, Chu argues, has to be done by excluding the compounds, can it avoid running the risk of ideologically excluding the group of people who used to live there? In what way can the group marked as *outsiders* show their patriotism if they refuse to embrace such a localization project?

The restlessness of the narrator results from the fear for the project of localization that tends to be structurally exclusive and politically justified. And such restlessness is not only a shaping tone in "The Ancient Capital" but, as Chiu Kweifen points out, a haunting theme in most of Chu's works: Chu prefers to use the mode of self-exile as her writing strategy, which can be seen in her refusal to create from the perspective of a fixed gender or ethnic identity, and such a mentality comes from Chu's claustrophobia (Chiu 131). Chiu argues that claustrophobia as exposed in Chu's works has been plaguing not only the author herself but the society as a whole. But, we might as well ask: Should we attribute claustrophobia to the practice of localization? A hasty answer for such a complicated issue will turn out to be equally reductive as the charge against the author's primordial sentiment. According to Appadurai, Benedict Anderson's notion of "imagined communities" has contributed to the fact that "much of national and group politics in the contemporary world has to do not with the mechanics of primordial sentiments, but with . . . 'the work of imagination'" (Appadurai 146). But Appadurai also notices that very often the politics of affect will be either skillfully or carelessly embedded into the work of imagination: "The great irony in much of the work is that . . . very often the creation of primordial sentiment, far from being an obstacle to the modernizing state, is close to the center of the project of the modern nation-state" (Appadurai 146). The creation of primordialism, Appadurai argues, works as a double-edged sword: On the one hand, it helps with the nation-building project of the nation-state at the post-colonial age but

on the other hand, it might as well jeopardize such a national reconstruction since the generation of primordial sentiment can also lead to ethnic strife and ideological impasse. Chu's "Ancient Capital" points to such an irony in Taiwan's nation-building project that builds on the practice of localization. And the irony of localization lies in the uneven development between the nation and its people. On the one hand, Taiwan is claimed to be an imagined community created by its people with diverse ethnic backgrounds; on the other hand, ethnicity tends to be regarded as "authentic" rather than "invented" and "developed" as a work of imagination.

In "The Ancient Capital," Chu creates such a primordial complex. The overly suspicious narrator keeps estranging herself and she is also being estranged from all the structures of feeling superimposed by both the old and the new ruling power. On the one hand, the narrator is trying to resist identification and alienate herself from the practice of localization. For her, such a project of conformity has elusively encouraged to wipe out memories of the other--"You just beg for an answer: By whatever means--usually in the name of prosperity, progress or hope and happiness--a city with no intention to keep its cultural heritage means nothing but an alien place! How to love, cherish, protect or identify with such an alien city?" (你只謙畏的想問，一個不管以何為名（通常是繁榮進步偶或間以希望快樂）不打算保存人們生活痕跡的地方，不就等於一個陌生的城市？一個陌生的城市，何須特別叫人珍視、愛惜、維護、認同…？）(Chu 187). On the other hand, she is showing how she is estranged from the new society as she hears and sees the latent crisis of ethnic rigidity: "One campaign speaker yells--Anyone like "You" should quickly kick himself off here and get back to Mainland China." "There's nothing engraved on your face. How can they recognize you are different?" (終於有名助講員說了類似你這種省籍的人應該趕快離開這裏去中國之類的話…臉上也無刺青紅字，他們何能認出你是異國之人？) (Chu 168, 232). Given that the double gestures of estrangement, does the narrator give up any

attempt to identify with this "ugly" city where she has lived all her life? Is she deprived of or is she depriving herself of any hope to imagine a community where she may claim home, as many critics argue over the utter despair at the very end of the text when the narrator feels lost in the city: "Where am I? . . . You cries out loud!" (這是哪裏? . . . , 你放聲大哭。)(Zhu 233)? If this is the case, is Chu implying that both ethnicity and localization cannot but be essentialized as a structure of affect exclusive of the other, and that accordingly, identity-making will be put at risk as it fails to function as "the process of construction and mobilization," or in Anderson's word, as a work of imagination (Appadurai 14)?

Judging the narration as a whole, we should not ignore Chu's attempt to imagine a community that is not yet born. Such a city project is displayed in the juxtaposition of memories of the beauty of Taipei, the archives of the ancient Taipei, the detailed observations of Kyoto as a model city. All the descriptions and commentaries are pointing to the experiences and memories of a city that has always exposed itself in time and space of the past, present and also the future. The narrator seems so anxious to look forward to the birth of a city laden with its distinctive memories of all times, both like and unlike Kyoto. And hence we see that Chu is actually never out of the structure of feeling in the act of estrangement. Through this invisible city, a not-yet-born imagined community--anticipated as transcending the perpetual present of the xenophobic Taipei, and through Chu's personal "fictional" act of localization both the narrator and the author can finally reconcile with the present.

### **Who are You—Tourists or Vagabonds?**

The final city tour that ends the novella is considered as the most controversial part of the text. Some critics argue about the utter despair of the narrator in her final mourning for an irreversible past whereas some point out that the catastrophic ending anticipates a hopeful catharsis.<sup>12</sup> The scene proceeds in a very symbolic way: The narrator who comes back to her trip

from Kyoto intends to disguise herself as a Japanese tourist and take a trip around the city by a "colonial map." This tour, nevertheless, does not move in an easygoing way as any tourist is supposed to enjoy; instead, it is pictured as a most nightmarish experience mixed in history, memory and a perpetual present—

. . . According to the brochure, in the summer time of the Island, trees on the sides of the road are carrying a touch of the Southern hemisphere, whose beauty is honored as the little Paris of the East. . . . You finally see the yard of the Taiwan Governor's Mansion, where you used to hang around in high school days. . . . The 228 Memorial Monument has confused your memories of the New Park. Oh, My God! The olive trees are all gone! For what should the trees be blamed?! . . . You envy those who were never silly enough to line up for the birthday buns of the leader (in memory, there seemed to be some in class), never silly enough to be moved and brainwashed by the Patriotism Policy, . . . so that they could save a lot of trouble in keeping one's integrity as they grow up. (Chu 212-214)

書上說，常夏的台灣，夾道的並木大王椰充滿了南國風情，景觀之美有東洋小巴黎之稱。…台灣總督官邸，你總算看到它的後園了。高中時，那是你們常流連晃盪的地方…二二八紀念碑區弄亂了你記憶中的新公園，天啊難道那幾株橄欖又礙誰惹誰了！…你真羨慕那些從來不曾去排隊領壽桃的（印象裏，班上確有那麼幾人），從來不會被統治者的愛國教育所感動所激勵所洗腦，…以至在日後的啓蒙成長和獨立自主人格的養成上，省了好大一段冤枉路。

And the journey ends in the tourist's intrusion into a ghettoized neighborhood by the river, where people speak a different

tongue and tend to estrange themselves from others. The narrator intends to estrange herself from the city as a tourist who can view the city from a detached perspective only to find that the unbearable change of the city tends to drive her away as a vagabond.

The double identity of a tourist and a vagabond has well elaborated the complex of a second-generation as termed in the name indicative of *outsiders*. As seen in "The Ancient Capital," the narrator's best friend (referred to as A by the narrator) chooses to be a tourist—a form of being an outsider—in the United States, rather than living as a restless soul who "has always felt like going away ever since the day people asked them to get out . . . or can survive the city where they grow up only by imagining it as a place you've traveled or never been to" (爲什麼打那時候起就從不停止的老有遠意、老想遠行、遠走高飛, …你甚至得時時把這個城市的某一部份、某一段路、某一街景幻想成某些個你去過或從未去過的城市, 你才過得下去…) (Chu 169). The narrator feels like a vagabond who is rejected by the society and doomed to wander away from the place where she calls home. Here Chu Tianhsin is trying to display the mentality of an outsider. A's choice of being a tourist in an unfamiliar place indicates that she intends to seek for "exterritorial" existence, as Bauman describes, "free from territorial constraints—the constraints of locality" (Bauman 8). For Bauman, such a term is exploited to describe those who can invest in faraway places—through the help of media—without really being there, and hence these investors can enjoy the utmost mobility and also freedom from territorial responsibilities. In today's consumer society, with the super-speed transmission of the Web or the TV screen, people enjoy changing places and feel the pleasure of being seduced by something they feel like seeing. As Bauman pictures, we are all on the move simply by "jumping in and out of foreign spaces with a speed much beyond the capacity of supersonic jets and cosmic rockets, but nowhere staying long enough to be more than visitors, to feel

like *chez soi*" (Bauman 77). For Bauman, tourists in a consumer society means a privileged class, empowered by their wealth to possess more freedom. It's true that the freedom of feeling at home while touring in faraway places is something Chu's narrator and her friends sharing a similar identity are striving for, as Liang Iping points out: People like them are "going home to a city abroad" (166). But unlike Bauman's hilarious, spatially-unbound tourists, in Chu's fictional world of the fin-de siècle Taiwan, people like the narrator and her friend A are actually pushed on the move, for freedom and also for fear of being driven away like a vagabond.

In his observations on a stratified consumer society, Bauman points out the uneven development of the globalized and the localized, as can be seen in the polarity between the tourist and the vagabond. As Bauman reminds us,

The vagabond is the alter ego of the tourist. He is also the tourist's most ardent admirer. . . . Vagabonds have no other images of the good life—no alternative utopia, no political agenda of their own. The sole thing they want is to be allowed to be tourists—like the rest of us . . . In a restless world, tourism is the only acceptable, human form of restlessness.  
(Bauman 94)

Bauman's arguments help clarify the struggle of the narrator who feels trapped in such an intertwined identity, but Chu's character features the restlessness of a more paradoxical identity--being a vagabond-like tourist. In Kyoto, she is supposed to experience the happiness of a tourist, but memories of Taipei, Kyoto's beauty, and a mixed projection of the spatiality of the two cities keep pushing her back to the position that she wishes to escape--her decades' experience of living in Taipei. Being a tourist in Kyoto, Wang Dewei 王德威 argues, the narrator cannot but be assured of her identity of an outsider no matter how much she admires Kyoto as a city of

beauty and permanence (29). Such a nightmarish state of being climaxes in the final journey of Taipei as the protagonist in disguise cannot but unveil the mask of a tourist and see her own real face as a vagabond. Should such be a catastrophic hope for the narrator, both tourists and vagabonds as such will never be the identity she aspires for. And the society that perpetuates such an identity should push itself on the move.

## Conclusion

Identification and primordial rigidity are not something inherent or inherited, but historically transformed and culturally mediated. By referring to Benedict Anderson's notion of "imagined communities," Appadurai repeatedly reminds us that a group's subjectivity or a person's identity should be a work of imagination, rather than ontological moorings. If a society has to function in a structure of feeling, it should empower its people to re-imagine and re-create the structure when it goes wrong. Chu Tianhsin's "The Ancient Capital," in a sense, is trying to open up such a seemingly closed structure which is supposed to be a work of imagination.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Yang Ruying 楊如英 points out that critics have noticed that the notion of political incorrectness has been haunting the critiques of Chu as the author tends to satirize the opposition activists in her works. Yang Chao 楊照, for example, argues that Chu's focus on the dark side of the opposition activities is actually a bias (Yang 1998).

<sup>2</sup> Critics have noticed that the desire to freeze the movement of time is a recurrent theme in Chu's recent works. Chang Ta-ch'un 張大春 points out that the six different stories in *Thinking of My Brothers from the Dependents' Compound* are closely related

through a recurrent theme—the old soul, with a desire to bring time to a halt and with the power to reconstruct history and memory (5). In his book review on Chu's *Ancient Capital*, Wang Dewei 王德威 states that the significance of Chu's works is recurrent meditations on time, memory and history and Chu's old-soul-like characters play the role of such mediators (10).

<sup>3</sup> The comments by Shan is originally written in Chinese, posted on a literary web-board. In his essay on Chu's "The Ancient Capital," Liao Chaoyang has translated some of Shan's words into English and here I keep Liao's translation.

<sup>4</sup> The translations of the references from "The Ancient Capital" are mine.

<sup>5</sup> In the chapter on "life after promordialism," Appadurai argues that ethnic harmony can easily be jeopardized by primordialist fevers, and that "even the most staunchly capitalist democracies are not eternally safe from the what is seen as the primordialist bug" (Appadurai 143).

<sup>6</sup> In his elaboration on the politics of affect, Appadurai argues that a theory of affect in relation to politics deserves much attention since it is the working force underneath most primordialist models (144).

<sup>7</sup> The episode occurs at the end of the novella. See Chu, p. 232.

<sup>8</sup> Yang's remarks referred in this paper have been paraphrased and the translations are mine.

<sup>9</sup> In her essay, Yang argues that the mode of a second-person narrator that creates a I—You dialogue is already used in Chu's previous work "Thinking of My Brothers from the Dependents' Compound" but Chu's intent in "The Ancient Capital" by applying the same mode seems relatively different: The dialogic mode is not to call for collective consciousness and primordialist identification; instead it functions as an inner self-reflexive

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dialogue (Yang 17).

<sup>10</sup> In the article entitled "The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," Jameson intends to characterize the features of the postmodernist moment in terms of artistic expression, architecture, and above all the state of being. Jameson argues that the idea of people's now inhabiting the synchronic rather than the diachronic may sound ambiguous for defining postmodernism, but he points out that it is at least "empirically arguable that our daily life, our psychic experience, our cultural languages, are today dominated by categories of space rather than by categories of time" (*Postmodernism* 1992: 16).

<sup>11</sup> As Chiu points out, Chu's skeptical attitude toward localization is understandable since in early periods of Taiwanese opposition activities the notion of "Taiwanese" is indeed reductively defined as those who speak Taiwanese as their mother tongue and whose ancestors moved from the Southern provinces of Mainland China and posterity has settled in Taiwan for more than three hundred years (Chiu 133).

<sup>12</sup> See Liao Chaoyang's article on "The Ancient Capital."

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