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NATIONAL HISTORY AND GENERATIONAL MEMORY –
TAIWANESE COMIC BOOKS AS LIEUX DE MÉMOIRE

1. Introduction

In the late 1980s, Taiwan embarked on a locally grounded nation-building process that has been markedly self-reflexive (Lynch 2004, Harrison 2009): as latecomers to a global trend, Taiwanese nationalists can borrow from other countries' experience and existing theory. Shifts in ruling political parties and cross-strait relations have resulted in changes within this national project. Mark Harrison (2015) highlights the fluidity of Taiwan as object of knowledge produced through stories from manifold sources: academics, policy-makers, artists, the media or city planners. He also emphasizes the ever-elusive character of Taiwanese national identity as a perceived imperative and target of continuous de-naturalizing attempts at discursive (re-)formulation (2009: 58).

A growing number of academic studies reflects the importance of popular culture for Taiwanese nationalism. However, they often concern cinematic works – from the historical circumstances that shaped divergent native Taiwanese (*benshengren*) and Mainlander (*waishengren*) subjectivities, reflected in the New Wave (Hong 2011: 142-153; Chen 2005), to native consciousness (Chiu, Rawnsley, and Rawnsley 2017) or the appraisal of Japanese colonialism in recent-year films (Wang 2012). My paper turns towards comics, a territory less explored by scholarly research.ⁱ Particular attention will be paid to graphic memoirs by Li-tsing Lim (2012a, 2012b) and Sean Chuang (2013, 2015), compared with educational historical comics in order to estimate their potential appeal and relevance for readers. More specifically, I will consider these

books' approaches to national history and historical continuity in the light of existing discourses and political or ethnic divides they may sustain or dismantle.

I will also tackle an issue pervasive in the public discourse – that of generations, foregrounded by the 2014 Sunflower Movement, but studied mostly through social surveys of political stances and national identity (Chang and Wang 2005; Hsiao 2010a: 12-16). A-chin Hsiao's qualitative research (2010b) focuses on Taiwanization and the politically passive 1960s generation opposed to the reform-minded 1970s (2010a), but does not explore younger age cohorts.ⁱⁱ This paper centers on the generation politically active in the late 80s - early 90s and on its link with present-day youth. It argues that Lim and Chuang build their memoirs' persuasive potential upon constructing their own generation as a *lieu de mémoire*.

Hsiao and other scholars of Taiwanese democracy and indigenization (Hsiao and Ho 2010) focus on “high” culture and intellectual elites. In line with Ye Chunjiao's study (2010), I turn away from highbrow discourse to show how Lim and Chuang build a local identity and generational memory through popular culture, and a view of history grounded in ordinary, everyday life.

2. Theoretical and methodological framework

Many constructivist accounts of nationhood emphasize history's role in nation-formation processes. Benedict Anderson (1991) speaks of the nation as an entity growing from a past tradition and with a destiny to fulfill, and underscores coherence and continuity as key features of national history. Michael Billig argues that “national histories are continuously being re-written, and the re-writing reflects current balances of hegemony” (1995: 70-71). Marita Sturken and the Popular

Memory Group (1998) discuss the plurality of sources involved in the “social production of memory.” Alongside sanctioned narratives constructed by the “historical apparatus” (the academia, state institutions) (ibid.: 76), there is also what Sturken calls “cultural memory” - the dynamic, political practices by which individuals and groups produce memory outside, in response to or as resistance against official history. However, these two sites are entangled rather than oppositional (1997: 4-5). Memories are constructed and shared through mediated visual technologies: photographs, cinema, television (ibid.: 8; 2008), or intimate cultural forms such as letters and diaries (Popular Memory Group 1998: 77). My article will examine historical comics, Lim and Chuang's memoirs as three kinds of stories engaged in cultural negotiation, situated between dominant history and cultural memory. It will also explore the relevance of personal memories for larger communities, with reference to Nancy Miller (2000) and Susan Suleiman's (2000) reflections on memoirs.

Instead of the dual axis of past and future prevalent in dominant theories of nationhood, Tim Edensor foregrounds the present (2002: 18-19) and argues that national identity is (re)produced through quotidian landscapes, familiar objects, everyday routines and performances. These are represented and disseminated in texts of popular culture (rarely considered by theorists of the nation), which leads to the formation of interconnected “maps of national meaning”. Edensor's theory will be applied to Chuang's memoir, which depicts elements of everyday life that sustain national identity and connects these representations with the actual present-day world in “complex links of signification” (ibid.: 139) in a way Edensor does not account for: it builds a sense of the past upon a multitude of details from familiar inhabited spaces, which work as signifiers of history.

This paper also draws on Pierre Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire* (“sites of memory”, 1996), which highlights commemorative activities related to practices, texts or concepts constitutive

of national identity, and the processes by which these traditions emerge and evolve. In contemporary established nations, experiencing the past in the present through collective rituals has been replaced by a preoccupation with recording and remembrance as source of identity, which has to be reflexively constructed in a fragmented world. Memory has been atomized and relegated from the community to the individual. Reconstructions of history are micro-scale and invoke the immediacy of personal experience by their marked sensual (visual and aural) dimension. In Taiwan, where nationhood is an ongoing project, the imperatives of establishing identity and re-writing history are prevalent both at a collective and personal level. Although often performed in the forms described by Nora, memory-making in Taiwan is not aimed at counteracting an emotional detachment from national history characteristic of contemporary societies. Instead, it is a deeply political undertaking of both state and individual actors striving to establish or contest dominant narratives.

Ron Eyerman and Bryan Turner's definition of generations (1998) focuses on culture and memory. A social cohort with a common habitus produces a generational culture and a collective memory which express its control over shared resources, integrate and sustain it as a group. The constitutive factors of generations include major traumatic events and cultural and political leaders speaking of them from outside the dominant culture. Generational memory is institutionalized through collective rituals and narratives recorded and disseminated in contemporary media and popular culture. Eyerman and Turner focus on the American 1960s generation, shaped not by traumatic events, but by social movements and mass-mediated consumerism (including the consumption of popular culture). My article argues that Lim and Chuang construct the Taiwanese *wu nianji* generation as *lieu de mémoire*, which increases their memoirs' relevance for readers. It also appraises the non-mainstream character of their viewpoint and its implications for further sociological research.

Michael Billig (1995), John Fox and Cynthia Miller-Idriss (2008) speak of nationhood as (re)produced by discursive acts. A collective past, present and future constitute core areas in the discursive construction of national identity (Wodak et al. 2009: 4). According to Nelson Phillips and Cynthia Hardy (2002: 3-4, 14, 20-21), discourses produce identities and social reality, the effects thereof can be determined through systematic investigation of texts. The analyzed comic books, which make and communicate meaning in several modes (image, writing, layout) (Kress, 2010: 79), are considered to be material embodiments of a discourse of national history and Taiwanese identity.

Discourses exist beyond individual texts, which are interconnected and embedded in a larger historical, social and political context (Phillips and Hardy 2002: 4). Cultural memory is constructed; its study should move away from truth and verifiability towards the “collective desires, needs, and self-definitions” reflected in it and significant at present (Sturken 1997: 2). Harrison (2015) shows that scholars are also story-tellers producing the sign “Taiwan” within ideological frames shaped by regional politics and existing theories, and polarized party politics reproduces these structures of knowledge. However, such stories are partial and contested. This analysis will trace existing discourses my research sample draws upon, its new contributions, the various agendas it responds to, and the degree to which it reproduces or challenges narratives of party politics. I am performing it with full awareness of being yet another storyteller, due to both the constructed and situated character of all knowledge, and to the perceived urgency of identity-formation in Taiwan, which engenders self-reflexive readiness to incorporate identity scholarship into identity-building.

3. “Taiwanization,” national history writing and the comic market

Drawing on Hutchinson's concept of cultural nationalism, Hsiau (2010a) studies the formation of a Taiwanese consciousness in literature, academic history and language politics. He focuses on the “realistic” cultural trend that followed diplomatic setbacks in the 1970s and on increasing indigenization during the 80s, initiated by cultural elites from the *dangwai* movement and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). This intellectual milieu opposed the Chinese consciousness promoted by the Kuomintang (KMT) and defined Taiwanese identity by contrast with China, a dichotomous view spurred by the normalization of cross-strait relations and anxieties related to the subsequent “Mainland fever” (2000: 87-108).

The “China factor's” growing political and economic influence has continued to cause unease among the academia and the broader public (Wu 2012). Further rapprochement with China during Ma Ying-jeou's presidency led advocates of localization to antagonism towards the political establishment, especially visible among the youth. Public anxiety about “re-Sinification” was fueled by alterations in the high school history, geography and civil education curriculum, which triggered student protests in 2011 and through the summer of 2015. The KMT's passing of the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement at the legislature without detailed review gave rise to the Sunflower Movement in March 2014, with widespread participation from university students. Discontent with ruling political elites may be a reason why popular culture became a significant site for self-reflexive articulation of Taiwaneseeness aimed at increasing the island's local and global visibility.

During the martial law period, national history in Taiwan was that of China. Indigenization included a preoccupation with re-writing history in the political, educational and academic spheres (Wang 2005; Lynch 2004). The revision of national history comprised debates on teaching history and social science in high school, which resulted in the textbook series *Getting to Know Taiwan*

(*Renshi Taiwan*). In the early 2000s, the youth-oriented popularization of history in comics became a conspicuous trend. Such projects are often coordinated by academics (Wu et al. 2005; Hao and Luo 2001) or research and cultural institutions. Many historical comics cover the pre-1945 past, especially the Japanese colonial era, now widely acknowledged as part of national history (ibid.; Wei, Chen and Chen 2014; Qiu 2011), but downplay or omit the post-war period. Although drawn by Taiwanese artists, most adopt the Japanese *manga* style dominant on the market. Some books in my sample represent the “historical apparatus” (Academia Sinica – AKRU et al. 2012; the National Museum of Taiwan History – BARZ 2011); others are connected to this discourse while not strictly part of it – comics issued by Yuanliu, an established, large-scale publisher with a marked educational profile.

Li-tsing Lim and Sean Chuang's graphic memoirs are not outcomes of academic or official initiatives, although they do have an elite aspect. Lim graduated in history at Taiwan University, and her memoir's forewords are written by academic and literary authorities: historian Zhou Wanyao, writers Yang Cui or Xiao Ye. Chuang received artistic education and works in video advertising. His book's prefaces are written by well-known media representatives, including Ke Yizheng, co-director of *In Our Time*, which marked the beginnings of the art house New Cinema, and scriptwriter, director and actor Wu Nianzhen. Both works come from smaller publishers (Wuxian and Dala) committed to cultivating homegrown artists and local themes. They are not targeted exclusively at young readers and were intended for both local and foreign audiences. Unlike historical comics, they arose in a milieu with European connections. Lim received artistic education in France, where her memoir was initially published. Dala's comics series popularizes European artists through Chinese translations of *bandes dessinées*, but chief editor A-Ho Huang also perceives himself as a patron and international promoter of the graphic novel genre in its newly emerged Taiwanese version. The first volume of Chuang's memoir has French and German translations. Cultural

annotations in the second volume also suggest an intention to market it abroad. Despite acclaim at international festivals (such as Angoulême), Taiwanese comic artists remain relatively unknown at home, especially those few who cultivate individual styles. Nonetheless, their popularity is on the rise – Lim's book has had several printings, and Chuang's was awarded two Golden Comic prizes in 2014.

4. Comic books as *lieux de mémoire*

In present-day Taiwan, history-writing is not merely an epistemological discipline, but an ideological undertaking aimed at establishing the kind of past that can be deemed national and how it should be assessed. This activity is characterized by strong emotional involvement in constructing a national community while deconstructing previous or alternative ideas of the nation in the name of Taiwan's subjectivity. Various actors engage in this process: the state, the academia, local communities, private enterprises and individuals. They propose commemorative initiatives aimed at (re)placing hitherto absent or displaced sites into the course of national history, thus building *lieux de mémoire*.

Hue-Tam Ho Tai points out that Nora's collaborative project represents the historical apparatus and contrasts it with American studies of memory "in a state of tension with national identity and history" (2001: 916). In Taiwan, both state and grassroots actors engage in defining the nation; what the latter contest is totalizing narratives, but to varying degrees. Historical comics and the two graphic memoirs tell stories about the past upon which they bestow new symbolic significance. The former reproduce mainstream themes and a tradition of top-down, elite discourse in a comic book guise likely to appeal to young, contemporary audiences. The narrative and visual

techniques employed by Lim and Chuang align them with another Taiwanese tradition – that of countering grand narratives by individual experience and non-elite, popular culture (Liu 2017; Zemanek 2019).

4.1. Historical comics for the youth

The ideological nature of history-writing in these books is visible in their explicit commitment to the national cause. The dedication “to all the Taiwanese who live on this land” (BARZ 2011) delineates a national community. Another preface mentions Taiwan's geographic and historical circumstances accounting for its current regional style and refer to the Japanese colonial period as most familiar to a national “us” (AKRU et al. 2012). Historical comics often reconstruct small fragments of the past, personal or related to peripheral groups: the 1930 Wushe uprising (Qiu 2011), the Kano baseball team's road to success (Wei, Chen and Chen 2014), or the root-searching story of a Taiwanese girl adopted by a Japanese family under the 1945 air raid on Taipei (BARZ 2011). Reprints of documents and old photographs impart a sense of visual immediacy proper to personal memories rather than to historical sources. Together with the dramatized reenactment of the past in comic form, they seek to reduce the distance separating readers from the depicted events.

However, they also induce such distance. Many of them include textual, analytical historical discourse appended to comic narratives, aimed at reconstructing the past as object of knowledge. They inform on the Kano team's history, the year 1945 in Taiwan, the Japanese-era healthcare system, sartorial styles before World War II, or Taiwanese women studying in Japan. Qiu Ruolong's book on the Wushe uprising ends with a detailed ethnographic-style account of traditional Seediq culture based on in-depth research and fieldwork conducted by the author. Thus the writer or editor

is positioned as authority with power over discourse, who transmits knowledge to the reader as passive receiver. Such positioning may make readers uncomfortable and undermines the sense of authenticity painstakingly built by the story's dramatic aspect and the additional visual and ethnological documentation. It is especially visible in Qiu's book, where the comic narrative is interrupted by lectures on Seediq customs and their contacts with the Japanese (2011: 55-63, 84-89). Value judgments obvious both at the textual and visual level highlight the story's ideological framing. The Seediq are portrayed as "galloping through mountain woods and yearning for freedom", and their revolt as "a war fought in the name of ethnic dignity" (ibid.: 11-12). By contrast, the Japanese are caricatured as repulsive oppressors towering over the Seediq or small and cowardly when directly confronting the latter. This foregrounds a contradiction between the historical task such comics assume and the impossibility of fulfilling it. History "is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer" (Nora 1996: 3), while these books represent the past in coherent, complete stories.

The analyzed historical comics do not engage with history-writing at the level of form, which seems to be primarily story-driven. They employ readily accessible visual conventions - regular panel division, *manga*-inspired character physiognomy, sharp, fine strokes, frequent aspect-to-aspect transitions and motion lines. The most innovative technique consists in irregular shapes, straight lines of varying length and narrow angles used to accentuate a rapid succession of traumatic events (the 1945 air raid) and the material damages, turmoil and panic they cause (BARZ 2011). However, this strategy only serves to heighten the story's dramatic effect.

Despite these comics' institutional and thematic connections with the historical apparatus, they are also entangled with "cultural memory" in Sturken's terms. Qiu's book inspired Wei Desheng's *Seediq Bale*; the quoted edition paralleled the film's release (2011) and contains many

references thereto. *KANO* the comic series was also part of the movie's marketing campaign.

Nevertheless, these historical comics only offer "second-order narratives" - reconstructions of the past with an epistemological purpose (Carr 1986: 131), which cannot effectively interpellate readers as members of a national group through an emotional bond with the reconstructed past.

4.2. Lim and Chuang's graphic memoirs

Lim describes her childhood under martial law (late 1970s-early 1980s), when she internalized the China-centered identity imposed by state education, and her university years in the 1990s, when she explored formerly repressed, traumatic national memories against the background of democratization and student political activism. Chuang places his young persona within the same time-frame. He mentions authoritarian state power and the oppressive school system, but mainly focuses on everyday life with its affluence resulting from the "economic miracle."

By virtue of their genre, Lim and Chuang's books distance themselves from historical knowledge; however, the issue of credibility applies here as well. Memoirs resemble historical writing and differ from fiction in that they make truth claims (i.e. claims to verifiability and referentiality) (Suleiman 2000: 544). Although for autobiographical writing the request of factuality refers to individual (the writer's own) experiences, memoirs also have a collective aspect (or relational mode), to some degree also established in fiction but essential for the memoir (Miller 2000: 422-423). Memoir readers' identification with the author is based on personal experience and the collective nature of individual memory (Halbwachs 1992: 38-40). Thus, from the onset Lim and Chuang's works have higher persuasive potential than historical comics.

However, there remains the question of their relevance for a larger community and the relationship between the personal memories they narrate and national history. Miller addresses this question as follows: “however solitary, memoir reading, like memoir writing, participates in an important form of collective memorialization, providing building blocks to a more fully shared national narrative. [...] the connections between a reader's life and a writer's text are often more easily seen in the case of memoirs that emerge from the experience of a generation [...]” (2000: 424). An awareness of these facts is conspicuous in the forewords to the two graphic memoirs, as this is the very task their authors undertake to fulfill. These are not simply individual memories; Lim and Chuang speak in the name of a whole generation and for a larger, national community.

Their books are more vocal than historical comics in declaring commitment to a national cause. This declaration starts on the front covers and continues both in the prefaces and the memoirs' contents. It is especially prominent in Lim's work, whose title (*My Youth, My Formosa*) refers to Taiwan by a name with pro-independence connotations and employs the modifier “my” that asserts the author's emotional bond with her homeland. The association of Lim's story with Taiwan suggests a growing-up process of the entire nation in terms of local awareness and subjectivity. The memoir's beginning also creates a national frame of reference by stating the nation's name and territory: it differentiates between Taiwan and Thailand and places the narrator on the former's map (2012a: 22-23).

All forewords contain repeated references to a national community through the pronouns *women* (“we”) and *ziji* (“oneself”) or by specifying geographic location: *Taiwan* or *daoyu* (“the island”). They state the need for self-understanding, for articulating national identity through a narrative emplotment which would organize and integrate the nation's experience within a temporal frame including both past and future (Hinchman and Hinchman 1997: 1). Writer Xiao Ye's foreword

is centered around the question “Who are we, after all?” (where “we” refers to the Taiwanese) and speaks of growing up and defining one's identity. Historian Zhou Wanyao's preface expresses concern with and a sense of personal obligation as to “Taiwan's future prospects” and “Taiwan's future path”. Both Zhou's foreword and Lim's memoir construct China as a threatening other. In an imagined dialogue with Mao Zedong, Lim's persona asserts Taiwan's media and political freedom and democratic ideals, then walks away, thus marking a determination to part ways with the PRC notwithstanding China's domineering attitude (Lim 2012b: 143-152).

The title of Chuang's memoir (in literal translation: *Collected Events from the 80s*) moves away from the author towards the period; the book's English title (*'80s Diary in Taiwan*) brings Taiwan to the foreground. Chuang's introduction states his role as chronicler of the decade which shaped his present self and places individual coming-of-age against the background of major events formative for contemporary Taiwan: “The period in which I grew up happened to be the 80s in Taiwan; during the 80s, Taiwan witnessed many events of key historical significance” (2013: 10). He builds his chronicler's authority upon his role as witness of history (Nora 1992: 956) and grafts his own memories onto the “Taiwanese experience”. Few of his stories are truly personal, specific to himself as a unique individual: most chapters depict situations typical for growing up in the 80s in an urban, middle-class environment. As discussed in more detail below, each is constructed as a *lieu de mémoire* as they commemorate and trace the evolution of key constituents of national and generational identity from a present-day standpoint: baseball, Bruce Lee films, secondary school entrance examinations, bodily discipline within the education system etc.

Chuang's book can therefore be regarded as the memoir of a whole generation, and this generational consciousness is directly and emphatically expressed in all forewords. The “we” community reiterated here is not national, but generational: the term *shidai* (“generation”) refers to

the *wu nianji* (“the fifth graders”) – people born in the fifth decade of the Republic of China (the 1960s – early 1970s). Chuang positions himself as chronicler not only of the 80s, but also of his own generation. Foreword authors mention strong identification with the narrator based on generational membership and the pleasure derived from recognizing shared memories.

A similar awareness is expressed in the forewords to Lim's memoir. Writers Yang Cui, Xiao Ye and Zhang Tiezhi state generational closeness with the author and clearly assert the “fifth graders” importance from a national viewpoint. Their formative period overlapped with the emergence of Taiwanese democracy: “As we grew up and became university graduates, it seems that Taiwan's democracy came of age together with us” (2012a: 17). Inside the memoir, Lim shows that her generation participated in making and defending freedom and democracy. Her political consciousness and activity began during university studies in Taiwan and continued in her 30s, when she joined demonstrations for Taiwan's membership in the World Health Organization (2009) (2012b: 83-101, 135-142). Furthermore, the prefaces build up a sense of intergenerational inheritance. The older Zhou Wanyao mentions the relevance of Lim's memoir for her own generation due to shared experience - the influence of state education on people's national and cultural identity under martial law. Both forewords and Lim's afterword build an intergenerational link with the memoir's young readers. Zhou is the most explicit: she directly addresses them as “you”, counts on the memoir to arouse their interest in Taiwan's arduous process of democratization, bestows upon them the duty “to defend our way of life”, and appeals to their feeling of responsibility for Taiwan's future (2012a: 10).

Chuang does not establish intergenerational connections in his memoir targeted at the *wu nianji*. However, in an interview I conducted (October 2014) he mentioned that young people would read it as well, out of interest in their parents' youth. Such intergenerational links call to mind Nora's

concept of the generation as *lieu de mémoire* constructed through remembrance (a glance towards the past to locate one's own generation in history), and through comparison that assesses distinction from other age groups (1992). Generational memory arises under the influence of external factors, as a reaction to expectations and a need for commemoration coming from younger generations, who turn towards their predecessors as they lack first-hand experience of significant historical events. Therefore, these two graphic memoirs construct the *wu nianji* as *lieu de mémoire*: they formulate its collective memory as basis for group identity and commodify it in pleasurable forms (Eyerman and Turner 1998) for both this and younger generations.

Unlike historical comics, these books make no claims to an intellectual, analytical historiographical discourse grounded in documentary evidence. Interestingly, Chuang mentions such evidence in his introduction (2013: 10-11), but in a context susceptible of subverting his trustworthiness as historian, as he points out that his narrative's visual coherence is artificial: the inaccuracy of his own memory caused him to use photographs as props for reconstructing the 80s and supplement them from imagination. Moreover, throughout the memoir his young avatar is almost speechless. Text occurs within frames as extradiegetic discourse coming from the narrator, and only rarely in bubbles as utterances attributed to Chuang's persona. This strategy creates a time axis in which the point of reference (the indexical “now”) is emphatically placed in the grown-up author's present time (i.e. contemporary Taiwan). Both his and the reader's gaze are thus directed towards the reconstructed past, a fact which reinforces the association with Nora's idea of generation as *lieu de mémoire*.

As Chuang and Lim do not present themselves as academic authorities instructing the readers, their potential credibility and appeal lies elsewhere – in the relevance the memories they revive may hold for readers, contemporary young Taiwanese whose motivation to turn back towards their

predecessors' contribution to the development of democracy comes from their own involvement in social movements and apprehension of “the China factor”.ⁱⁱⁱ Such readers are likely to identify with the alternative, grassroots voice constructed in Lim's memoir and Zhou's preface, antagonistic towards contemporary political elites and mainstream media (Lim 2012a: 8-10; 2012b: 144-147). However, Chuang's memoir does not locate itself outside mainstream culture, does not refer to “the China factor”, and does not depict political activism – political transformations since the 80s are mentioned only in passing (2013: 18, 24). Therefore, its potential appeal needs further argumentation, provided below in the account of national history in the two analyzed works.

The nation is constructed as a “narrative of 'identity'” whose key feature is continuity (Anderson 1991: 204-205). In Taiwan, the idea of forcible ruptures in history and the need to restore continuity emerged with the DPP's advent to power and are still expressed in the historical and political discourse.^{iv} Yang Cui's introduction to Lim's book also highlights the ethnic, generational and historical cleavages caused by the KMT authoritarian rule, the need to reshape historical consciousness and restore “the island's memory map” by recovering lost “shards of memory” (2012a: 13-14).

Insert Figure 1

The notion of continuity in national history is present in both memoirs, albeit in different forms. Lim speaks as a historian by education and retraces a personal quest for cultural and national identity and for reformulation of national history. Discontinuity induced by state education is visible at several levels. Young Lim cuts herself off from her Hakka and Hoklo parents and Japanese-raised grandparents in cultural and linguistic terms, a rift vividly illustrated by the metaphor of the severed tongue in the first volume's title and the drawing on its cover (**Figure 1**). Her center of national, geographic and historical belonging is displaced from her actual locality (Taiwan) and transferred to China. Her growing-up process consists in efforts to rebuild the previously dismantled bridges. In

this respect, Lim's memoir can be deemed a *lieu de mémoire* for an experience of loss and restoration of Taiwanese identity under Chiang's regime.

The ideas of individual involvement and responsibility are powerfully conveyed by visual techniques emphasizing the body. Subordination to the authoritarian regime is not depicted as top-down repression or lip service paid to state authorities. Instead, Lim's status of state subject is shown as actual part of her body, deeply internalized through repeated, long-term performances of willing compliance with dominant discourses. Multiple representations of her persona are drawn alongside each other during acts of allegiance to national ideology. Although some are actual (Lim as a pupil drawing anti-Communist cartoons), and others symbolic (a similar image of her performing the guard mounting ceremony before the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall, or as a pawn blown by the wind under the national flag), both instances are represented in concrete, bodily form, with sartorial indicators of regimentation (school or military uniforms) (2012b: 64, 80-81). De-indoctrination is depicted in similar terms: Lim as university student allows herself to be literally swept away by a river-like stream of hitherto repressed historical knowledge. She diligently absorbs this new discourse, and the resulting process of transformation is represented by her naked body cooked in a pot full of books, where it is distorted and acquires a new shape (ibid.: 51-52, 56-63).

Her personal path resembles many other cases of shift to local identification by people her age or older (Ye 2010) and may also appeal to young readers concerned with Taiwan's fate. However, it is also problematic. First, while the authoritativeness and persuasive potential of Lim's narrative are built on first-hand experience as empowered agent reclaiming her own story (Hinchman and Hinchman 1997: xix), that experience is only available to young readers as representation, "prosthetic memory" (Landsberg 2003: 149). Secondly, Lim's markedly negative account of the martial law era produces its own cleavages. She draws a parallel between Chiang Kai-shek and Mao

Zedong and calls for rewriting national history by accounting for the KMT government's crimes (2012b: 70-71, 48-81), a fact reminiscent of the DPP project of “de-Chiang-Kai-shek-ification” (Taylor 2010). Moreover, her standpoint is that of a native Taiwanese; Mainlanders are mostly absent or associated with state authorities.

Insert Figure 2

Chuang does not explicitly refer to continuity, lack thereof or national history, and his young persona's ethnic origin is ambiguous. His memoir's visual aspect is notably different from that of Lim. The latter employs a schematic drawing style and mainly renders her avatar's inner life, with graphic representations of reasoning processes, state propaganda and thought control. She provides few visual elements of the outer world, designed as easily recognizable cues that place characters in the appropriate context as required by the narrative. Most characters are not actual persons, but physical embodiments of what she sees with her mind's eye. Chuang's memoir comprises a multitude of meticulously reconstructed pictures of life in the 1980s which depict his avatar's larger physical and social surroundings. Edensor defines national identity as the way of life specific to a certain national community, played out in familiar spaces and objects, habitual performances and shared representations. It is exactly this kind of ordinary places and objects, shared everyday activities and habits that Chuang reproduces: styles of housing and sartorial styles; streetscapes and motorscapes; spaces of living, working, commerce, education, leisure, with things that populate them and the practices and routines performed within. All these sights are not specific only to the 1980s and those places actually represented in the book (mostly Taipei and Taizhong), but are serial elements, which still recur all over urban Taiwan and induce a sense of homeliness nearly everywhere across the nation (Edensor 2002: 50-53) (**Figure 2**).

Chuang's realistic, detail-rich graphic style facilitates instant recognition and prompts the shared sense of “how things are” and “how we do things” mentioned by Edensor (ibid.: 19). In

addition, the same minor, usually unnoticed and unquestioned elements of mundane everyday life that shape Chuang's discourse of national identity also embody his discourse of national history, in which two intertwined motifs are discernible. The first is cultural history. Edensor shows how particular national communities' lifestyles are outcomes of social and cultural relations and evolve in time, within specific institutional infrastructures and under global influences. Locally manufactured products acquire symbolic meanings that constantly change, and foreign commodities are domesticated by obtaining nationally relevant symbolic values (Edensor 2004: 102-103, 106; Hebdige 1988: 80-83).

Although his memoir depicts the 1980s, Chuang seems to have carefully selected aspects that are relevant to the present or allude to the multiple cultural influences which have contributed to making Taiwan what it now is – a unique, diverse configuration of global, regional, and local factors and of various identities that emerged at different times, became dominant or significant in different contexts. Thus, memoir chapters are constructed as acts of commemoration, tracing the processes that shaped significant elements of contemporary Taiwan. One of them explores the still popular baseball, which originated in the US and was introduced to the island by Japanese colonizers. The latter regarded it as an instrument of assimilation, and the Han and aboriginal Taiwanese who excelled at it – as an affirmation of their own existence and claim for equal treatment (Morris 2004: 178-180). The game retained its ethnic associations with the aborigines and native Han Taiwanese during the martial law era, a fact alluded to in the memoir by scenes showing barefoot boys trying their hand at baseball in the backyard and posing as if for a group picture, which recall the famous photograph of an aboriginal boy from the greatly successful Maple Leaf Little League (*ibid.*: 202). The series of victories inaugurated in 1969 in Williamsport (mentioned by Chuang) further exemplify the symbolic values which this imported game acquired in Taiwan: as Chuang emphasizes, baseball allowed the Republic of China to maintain national self-esteem

despite its 1970s diplomatic setbacks. At the same time (which Chuang only hints at), it was also instrumental in the formation of a Taiwanese identity disconnected from China – it was also in the 1970s that Williamsport became a favorite rally site for American-resident Taiwanese advocates of independence (ibid.: 185). The memoir contains many other instances of localization of foreign commodities: Japanese Super Alloy Robots (relatives of present-day Transformers) in the local context of family negotiations and economic power; Bruce Lee's Hong Kong movies that sustained the authoritarian KMT government's Chinese nationalism on a popular level; the taming of the Italian Vespa (scooters are still ubiquitous in Taiwan).

Insert Figure 3

The second motif in Chuang's discourse of history is not tackled by the cited theorists of nationalism in everyday life and popular culture. In his memoir, objects, places and persons which were part of everyday life in the 1980s (and many of which still are) perform an indexical function – they work as synecdoches (or signifiers) for major periods in Taiwan's history. Baseball and the meticulously drawn CK124-type steam locomotive produced in the 1930s that takes little Chuang and his mother to Ershui station (built in 1905) work as reminders of the Japanese colonial period (**Figure 3**). The juxtaposition of modern highways and buses with the colonial beginnings of public transportation (2013: 40-41) establishes a link with the past, and the stated higher efficiency and comfort of railway travel expresses recognition for Japanese-led modernization. The “shadows” of the years following World War II (mentioned in the author's preface) are impersonated in the veteran soldier through whom Chuang pays a tribute to Mainlanders and the trauma of their exile (ibid.: 10, 107-118). The economic affluence of the 80s emphasized in the introduction and depicted in scenes from Ximending stands for the “economic miracle” that brought Taiwan to its current developed country status (ibid.: 10, 13, 21) (**Figure 2**); although the China Shopping Mall and the Ximending Roundabout no longer exist, the district is easily recognizable for people familiar with its present-day looks.

Chuang's memoir builds a much more complex and positive image of the post-war era than Lim's. Martial law school education is an oppressive disciplinary system (ibid.: 14-15, 131-138), but although the Taiwanese teacher applying corporal punishment looks like the mainland PLA soldier torturing people in a propaganda cartoon, the tone is jocular and no allusion is made to distortions in the history curriculum. State power is not shown as unlimited, nor are individual Taiwanese portrayed as compliant subjects. The memoir does not reject the Chinese national identity promoted by the KMT government. Instead, it shows a subtle interplay between various sources and agents: state education, which imposed this identity in a top-down manner, popular culture that promoted it in pleasurable forms (through Bruce Lee films), and people themselves who internalized it, but not fully or passively (ibid.: 15, 16, 73-76). What Chuang seems to imply is that Taiwan's historical continuity need not be restored – notwithstanding the efforts made by subsequent political regimes to erase previous historical chapters, their traces have survived. They are embodied in everyday spaces, objects, cultural texts and practices available both in the present time of Chuang's young avatar and in that of his readers, in a Taiwan that still resembles what Chuang shows it to have been in the 80s. The persuasive strength of Chuang's historical account lies in this strategy of making national history, or cultural memory, readily accessible both through its material vestiges which are part of ordinary life, and through what Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka term “communicative” or “everyday memory” (1995: 126-127) in Chuang's stories.

Insert Figure 4

Chuang, therefore, proposes an idea of national history not shaped by an elite discourse, but available to readers of all ages through everyday sensorial experience. In this respect, he differs from Lim, whose memoir focuses on power struggle in historical discourse and relates her experience of internalizing and dismantling an official historical narrative. Lim constructs for her persona the elite viewpoint of an intellectual. Her experience is a mental process of learning and un-

learning the state-imposed, China-centered national identity and history, of renouncing and re-acquiring a local cultural identity. Although she chooses sensorial forms of expression – searching for historical truth in the dark with a torch (2012b: 53-54) (**Figure 4**) and casting away false knowledge by physically removing Chiang's head from inside her own (ibid.: 74-75) (**Figures 5a and 5b**) –, these are only bodily metaphors for intellectual allusions: to Diogenes and his search for honesty with a lamp, or to the idea of “de-Chiang-Kai-shek-ification.” She endows psychological activities (reflections, emotions, inner visions) with physical forms, personifies books and media outlets, brings media characters into direct interaction with the heroine, and depicts her body as readily available material for repeated surgery-like processes of (de-)indoctrination. This strategy poignantly shows that discourse (including historical discourse) is not an abstract, outward entity, but drastically affects the individual (the severed tongue, 2012a: 43-55) (**Figure 1**), shaping subaltern or empowered subjectivities. Nevertheless, this critical approach is fundamentally intellectual, and most of the above-mentioned processes take place in the environment of primary, secondary and higher education.

Figures 5a and 5b

However, both memoirs do share an important feature – they depict non-elite, popular culture as key site for formulating a Taiwanese identity. Lim's persona, cut off from her cultural roots (her parents' Hoklo and Hakka heritages) at school, can recover them through Taiwanese opera and puppetry TV shows, underground radio during the martial law era and local-language TV stations since the early 2000s (ibid.: 68-71; 2012b: 121). Popular culture is also a site where the Japanese colonial period, erased from national history, becomes accessible through songs hummed by the narrator's grandmother and comics, brought by her grandparents from Japan (2012a: 24-28, 57-67, 72-73). The role of popular culture as discursive site for the articulation of identities is even more pronounced in Chuang's memoir. He does not construct his persona as an intellectual. While representing education as prerequisite for social advancement (2013: 81-104), he dissociates

himself from this path by mentioning his less than outstanding learning records and non-elite student status or by jumping over the school wall in an intertextual scene reminiscent of Niu Chengze's film *Monga* (2010).

But Chuang also shares with Lim the discourse-related self-reflexivity characteristic of Taiwanese nationalism. His memoir's introductory chapter ends with an image which reveals that a chronicler can only be a *bricoleur* working with fragmentary sources (memories, photographs), recording and assembling tools such as cameras, drawing utensils and computers (**Figure 6**). He only employs regular panels when recounting single episodes of his life. Otherwise, his frameless pages are the effect of film-like montage. Representations of experiences from various moments or actual situations in Taiwan are combined with media images (reproductions of film posters, scenes from films and television news), flowing into and superimposed on each other. This strategy highlights the role of media culture in creating a sense of national community (news of Taiwanese baseball international victories keeping everybody glued to the TV screen at home and in public places), inducing allegiance to specific national identities (Bruce Lee in *Fist of Fury* smashing the "No Dogs and Chinese Allowed" sign), influencing social behaviour (Bruce Lee's aggressive postures while reclaiming national pride re-enacted in Taiwanese children's games), and as a shared resource for Chuang and his audience (visual allusions to Bruce Lee in depictions of the veteran soldier, to the aboriginal boy photograph in the chapter on baseball, or to the film *Monga*).

Insert Figure 6

Moreover, in a manner that recalls Eyerman and Turner's account of the USA sixties generation (1998: 101-103), Chuang's memoir as collective narrative for the *wu nianji* formulates this generation's habitus around the consumption of mass-marketed commodities made available by the "economic miracle" of previous decades: Nintendo consoles, color TV sets and videotapes, Vespa scooters, Walkmen, as well as media-disseminated popular culture: break dancing, Japanese

comics, American and Hong Kong movies, West European, American and local music.

Chronological tables ending each volume juxtapose Taiwan and world history by listing major events in popular culture instead of politics. Both these tables and memoir chapters constructed as *lieux de mémoire* define Taiwanese-ness as shaped by an interplay of indigenized transnational cultural influences and place Taiwan in the midst of global cultural flows, inhabiting a modern temporality, with no time lag in the island-bound transnational dissemination of popular culture.^v

Although Chuang's memoir makes no mention of China, such framing sets out a kind of history particular to Taiwan, at a time when the PRC was only embarking on its project of “linking up with the tracks of the world” (Zhen 2001).

Conclusions

Given their overt ideological mission and critical stance on specific official discourses, all the graphic narratives analyzed here can be deemed instances of cultural memory, albeit they differ in degree of entanglement with official history and relevance for the time they were issued.

Both historical comics and the two graphic memoirs testify to a preoccupation with recording, reconstructing and commemorating the past in small-scale, individual narratives and in forms that appeal to the senses by emphasizing the materiality, concreteness and immediacy of memories and vestiges of the past. They do so through the choice of comics as textual and pictorial art form, the inclusion of photographs in accompanying historical accounts, Sean Chuang's detailed graphic reconstruction of life in the 80s, or Li-tsing Lim's translation of intellectual and psychological processes into visual representations. While these traits may reflect the contemporary condition as Nora sees it, they are symptomatic not of a rupture between history, memory and the nation (1996:

13), but of a desire to restore their unity. In Taiwan, after violent repression of memory under the martial law, personal memories acquired high political significance. They were mobilized against untrustworthy historical grand narratives through practices of cultural memory (such as the cinematic New Wave) that employed lesser stories for locally-centered national narratives. More recently, weariness with and distrust towards party politics may sustain the need to focus on individual, active involvement in formulating collective narratives from a personal standpoint while also interpellating an entire national community above ethnic and political divides.

Educational comic books attempt to restore historical continuity through recuperating the Japanese colonial period, suppressed before the 1980s by the “historical apparatus.” While still relevant for articulating a non-Chinese national identity in various forms of popular history, this period has already become part of mainstream history-writing. As mere simulacrum of actual bodily experience, these works’ sensorial dimension cannot exorcise their status of “second-order narratives,” and their coherence (a key feature of national history), placed at the narrative level, is problematic. Moreover, they do not specifically engage with history-writing at the visual level.

As “first-order narratives,” Lim and Chuang's books hold higher potential appeal. This is partly due to the memoir genre, which presupposes proximity between the author and the related events and a relational mode between author and reader. More importantly, however, Lim and Chuang respond to anxiety-generating issues in contemporary Taiwan and are liable to actually reach young people, a group with growing local consciousness, increasingly estranged from the ruling elites, who regard personal involvement and experience as more trustworthy than authoritative discourses. Both authors address this point through personal graphic styles and visual techniques related to the body, experience and performance. They also contribute a new strategy to national history writing: they construct the *wu nianji* generation as *lieu de mémoire* by framing

Taiwan's most recent history in terms of this group's collective memory, a choice justified by their key contribution to shaping contemporary Taiwan. This strategy has strong potential appeal as well. It reflects a more general trend that came to prominence with the 2014 Sunflower Movement – building inter-generational links between present-day young people involved in social and political activism and their precursors, who also marked a locally-oriented turn in national identity (Chang and Wang 2005).

Lim's book explicitly foregrounds the “China factor”, voices distrust towards the political establishment and corporate media (a topical issue among Taiwanese youth, social activists and academics), and reports the author's path from conformity to a critical stance towards the KMT authorities, from “peripheralization” to discovery of “Taiwanese subjectivity” in history writing (Lynch 2004: 516-517). However, the historical continuity her persona restores is undermined by a negative appraisal of the martial law era that recalls a DPP discourse dominant in the 2000s. The personal experience she recounts is potentially divisive as it belongs to particular ethnic groups (*bensheng* and Hakka).

In a very postmodern manner, Chuang self-reflexively reveals the impossibility of narrative coherence as constructed by a single authorial voice. Instead, he involves the reader in a democratically available, unmediated game of building national identity, history and historical continuity upon fragmentary sensorial material de-naturalized for the purpose: popular practices, everyday landscapes and objects recurrent throughout the island. This strategy is both empowering and strongly engaging, as it draws upon the body as “receptacle of memory” (Sturken 1997: 12) and the strong emotional connections between objects and memories (Harrison 2015). It has the further advantage of showing Taiwanese identity to be already present, and not an ever-elusive “object in suspension” to be purposefully (re)constructed through a seemingly endless “active discursive

process” (Harrison 2009: 58). In order to articulate difference from China, Chuang replaces the disempowering strategy of embracing Taiwan’s colonizer (Japan) with a view of local culture as open to manifold global influences and co-eval with global trends. The memories he records are not ethnically specific, and his idea of national history seamlessly incorporates multiple periods and identities. Although this non-antagonistic approach constitutes an alternative to an already wearisome tradition of factionalism and polarization, it comes at a price, as it avoids critical engagement with potentially controversial issues.

Finally, popular culture is depicted as an important site for the formation and expression of Taiwanese and generational identity. In this respect, the *wu nianji* resemble the American 1960s generation. It was social movements and the consumption of popular culture that shaped its habitus and collective memory. Popular culture also provided the means for maintaining and sharing this memory, through such texts as the analyzed memoirs. A further step worth taking would be to consider the *wu nianji* in the light of a global social phenomenon attributed by Mike Featherstone to postmodernism (2007: 34-5), and inquire to what extent this Taiwanese generation, whose sensibilities were formed by popular culture, plays the role of new tastemakers and “cultural intermediaries” and is involved in the production, dissemination and consumption of postmodern symbolic goods that may constitute a counterculture liable to challenge the values of an older elite of cultural guardians whose influence is on the wane.

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- i Li (2012) covers Taiwanese authors only up to the 1990s. Ann Heylen (2013) briefly discusses Lim's memoir.
 - ii He does address the role of intellectuals in the post-1980 Taiwanese nationalist movement (1999), but not from a generational viewpoint.
 - iii Connections between the *wu nianji* generation and contemporary youth are also made in a broader discourse of social movements and opposition towards the political establishment. Some recent examples are books such as He 2014 and commemorative events attended by both generations, regarding student movements in the 1990s and recent years: the series of talks, a conference and exhibition on student movements in Taiwan organized by the Academia Sinica Institute of Sociology (2014, 2015).
 - iv Such as a March 2014 speech by current Taipei mayor Ke Wenzhe (www.youtube.com/watch?v=3xz6o7Q22wM&feature=youtu.be; accessed March 27, 2015).
 - v This sense of coevalness (a term borrowed from Johannes Fabian) is discussed by Iwabuchi (2002: 122).