

In this analysis of *Swordsman II*, and throughout *Hong Kong Dark Cinema*, Chan draws on Jacques Derrida's concept of *différance*, and on Derrida's more general deconstructive method. In particular, Derrida uses *différance* to refer to an iterative process grounded on a simultaneous gesture of differing and deferring—of mobilizing difference while at the same time deferring the putative site of origin. For Chan, this figure of *différance* offers a useful way of understanding the development and transformation not only of the film noir category itself, as it is redeployed at different moments and in different contexts, but also of a loose aggregate of socio-political and cultural categories associated with Hong Kong during the period in the years immediately before and after the Handover. Like the category of film noir, she implies, Hong Kong is itself a product of translation that is constantly being reinvented.

Challenging Beijing's Mandate of Heaven: Taiwan's Sunflower Movement and Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement. By Ho Ming-Sho. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2019. 269 pp. Paperback. ISBN: 9781439917077.

Reviewed by Ophelia Tung Ho-yiu

Ho Ming-Sho's *Challenging Beijing's Mandate of Heaven: Taiwan's Sunflower Movement and Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement* provides a detailed and perceptive account of Taiwan's Sunflower Movement and Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement, and how they radically and permanently change the trajectories of the political development of Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China in multiple socio-political aspects. Ho notices the many similarities of the two movements, both occurred in 2014, including their "unanticipated emergence, large-scale and intense participation," "deep and far-reaching consequences," as well as the bottom-up leadership style in face of China's autocratic mandate (3). In his book, Ho

conducts a synthetic approach from a social movement study perspective to understand the occurrence and outcome of the two movements by raising “six intellectual puzzles” in their similarities and deviances—“radicalism in conservative societies,” “‘hopeless’ protests,” “student leadership,” “the curse of movement resources,” “the sources of unsolicited contribution,” and “solidarity and schism” (8). In eight chapters, together with a conclusion that forewarns further tensions between Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China, Ho tackles these six inquiries and offers an account of “the origins, the processes, and the consequences” of the Sunflower Movement and the Umbrella Movement, chronicling the interlaced relationships of two of the most significant student-led social movements in the recent decade (18).

In the introduction, Ho explores the unprecedented radicalism in the two politically and culturally conservative societies. He points out the irregularity of the emergence of the Sunflower Movement and the Umbrella Movement due to the deep-rooted Confucian obedience to the authority and general indifference to politics in both Taiwan and Hong Kong. Before the two movements in 2014, both societies “remain fundamentally conservative” and share a low tolerance towards civil disobedience due to traditional Taiwanese protracted suppression for politics and Hongkongers’ “don’t-rock-the-boat refugee mentality,” placing their benefits from economic ties with China above their political dissatisfaction (4). Therefore, the outbreak of these movements not only demonstrates Taiwanese and Hong Kong people’s growing discontent with the Chinese government, which climaxes with the majority of citizens willing to forego their utilitarian and subservient mindset by defying China through civil disobedience.

In the first two chapters, Ho traces the genesis of the two movements to the two societies’ deep-rooted tension with China, and provides the historical background and development of Taiwan and Hong Kong in alignment with China’s worsening coercion. Opening with the chapter “A Tale of Two Cities,” Ho juxtaposes Taiwan with Hong

Kong from their shared origins as “edges of empires,” which he defines as “a zone of engagement among contending powers,” namely an expanding China determined in strengthening its sovereignty, and the two societies’ pursuit of autonomy and democracy (22). While Taiwan achieves a certain level of democratization in tandem with anticipated indigenization, Hong Kong’s semi-democracy is increasingly tested and threatened due to China’s interference. While Taiwan’s and Hong Kong’s paths of democracy diverge, they are united by a shared ambiguous Chinese identity, which is further complicated with China’s growing economic influences that Ho addresses in Chapter 2. Titled “China’s Impacts,” Ho exemplifies China’s “economic united front strategy” and its ability to create political dependence and allegiance from Taiwan and Hong Kong in forms of infrastructure projects and trade agreements (70). Under China’s cogent economic and political strategies as a rising world power, Taiwan becomes “a canary in the coal mine for China’s rise” (50), while Hong Kong’s close integration with China’s economy creates the popularized opinion that “China opportunity” is essential for the long-term development of Hong Kong (69). The profits brought by economic cooperation with China, however, are at the cost of mainlandization in both Taiwan and Hong Kong. The mounting anxiety and resentment over the looming presence and control of China in Taiwan and Hong Kong have given rise to grievances in both societies, culminating in the outbreak of the Sunflower Movement and the Umbrella Movement in 2014.

Ho proceeds to discuss the mobilization of the movements from Chapters 3 through 6. Titled “Movement Networks,” Ho discusses in Chapter 3 the “complex and highly heterogeneous network structures” in the Sunflower Movement and Umbrella Movement, making note of the phenomenon of generational revolt prior to the emergence of both events (72–73). Continuing from the previous chapter on the discussion of China’s political sanction in the name of economic cooperation, Ho closely analyzes how this directly impacts on the new generation,

especially the post-1980s who “enjoyed better material conditions and enlarged access to higher education” yet witnessed the deterioration of their society and “economic pain” under the tightening rule of China (93). Their discontent motivated their quest for social justice, leading to the rising political awareness and activism and protests such as the Wild Strawberry Movement in Taiwan and the anti-National Education Movement in Hong Kong that preceded the monumental protests in 2014.

In Chapters 4 and 5, Ho juxtaposes the Sunflower Movement and the Umbrella Movement, recounting the chronology of both movements and examining their persistence and relations to the political opportunities that arose during the movements. Ho evaluates the political opportunities from three aspects—“regime orientation, stability of elite alignment, and political allies,” and analyzes how they contributed to the prolongation of the movements (103). The young activists who emerged in civil disobedience before the two movements, as elaborated in Chapter 3, unsurprisingly became leaders of the two protests. Ho particularly highlights the fatal mistakes made by both regimes in endangering the protestors, the majority of whom were students. It evoked public discontent against the government and sympathy towards the students, and elevated movements as a necessary and urgent intervention to not only challenge the mandate and exploitation of China, but also protected the students, unintentionally boosting the participation of the movements. For this Ho introduces the concept of “standoff,” which he defines as an “unusual episode of contentious politics” where the normal functioning of routine politics is halted, “creat[ing] the possibility for a high-risk outcome that either endangers the security of the ruling elites or incurs the risk of severe sanctions for the initiators” (97). Finally, Ho assesses how the standoff dynamics and characteristics of the Sunflower and Umbrella Movements are situated between the “everyday” social life and what the Italian sociologist Francesco Alberoni calls “the nascent state” (the experience of

exploring the limits of a social system) as they attempted to pursue long-term social change (98).

Ho continues to investigate the spontaneous nature of the two movements in Chapter 6, "Improvisation," where he conceptualizes the term as "strategic response without prior planning" (152). In this chapter, Ho acknowledges the contribution of the anonymous, unsolicited support of the general public in both movements and their various degrees and methods in assisting the operation of the protests in the form of "decentralized collaboration" (165). The contrasting endings of the Sunflower Movement and the Umbrella Movement, however, showcase the limitations of improvisation, and how it poses as a double-edged sword that could either help or harm the long-term run of the protests.

Ho highlights the diverging outcomes of the Sunflower Movement and the Umbrella Movement both domestically and internationally in Chapter 7 and the conclusion. While the Sunflower Movement ended on a triumphant note as "Taiwan's DPP [Democratic Progressive Party] appear[s] better able to attract the new young activists and foster the growth of a friendly political force," the Umbrella Movement was met with bitterness and frustration as pan-democratic camps became further fractured (207). The contrasting political atmosphere in the aftermath of the two protests can also be attributed to China's different tactics in tackling them. While Beijing adopted a conciliatory and restrained approach in dealing with the aftermath of the Sunflower Movement, the participants in the Umbrella Movement experienced hardened, vindictive political suppressions and reprisals in forms of arrest and imprisonment. Both movements shattered the status quo of the socio-political culture and landscape of the two societies and stimulate political activism among the younger generation, and their consequences are destined to be enduring yet ever-changing as the grievance and apprehension against Beijing's mandate continue.

For sure, Ho could not have foreseen the protests against the controversial Extradition Bill and the National

Security Law in Hong Kong, but *Challenging Beijing's Mandate of Heaven* serves as a much-needed, informative and insightful analysis to two of the most recent and important political events that have reshaped the political trajectories of East Asia, serving as an important addition to the studies of the two movements, especially in English-language texts. Given that Hong Kong's socio-political terrain has changed a lot in the last two years with the enactment of the National Security Law, it now remains to be examined how the anti-Extradition Bill protests of 2019 speaks to or against Ho's analysis in this book.

The Umbrella Movement: Civil Resistance and Contentious Space in Hong Kong. Edited by Ma Ngok and Edmund W. Cheng. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019. 355 pp. Hardcover. ISBN: 9789462984561.

Reviewed by Justin Wu

Until 2019, the Umbrella Movement (UM) of 2014 was the most significant protest in contemporary Hong Kong history. This edited volume, largely drawing from papers presented at a workshop at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in June 2015, aims at analyzing different aspects of the 79-day occupation movement that attracted much international attention. Compared to other studies on the UM, this volume stands out for its use of rich empirical data. Most of the contributors began conducting fieldwork research at the occupation sites since the early days of the UM, and the volume concludes with a section comparing the UM with protests in Taiwan, Macau, and Shanghai. As Ma Ngok and Edmund Cheng note in the introductory chapter, the “peculiarity of Hong Kong’s new social movements lies in their transgression of stagnant repertoires in an apathetic society performed by rational spectators” (18). “Old” demand for democracy was infused with “new” tactics and a sense of identification that posed a challenge to the ruling regimes in Hong Kong and Beijing.