I. The Relationship between Memoirs and Henri Lefebvre’s Theories of Space (Introduction)

A memoir is a piece of autobiographical writing. However, this kind of autobiography usually emphasizes what is remembered rather than who is remembering; the author, instead of recounting his/her life, deals with those experiences of his/her life, people, and events that he/she considers most significant. Besides, the memoir often tries to capture certain highlights or meaningful moments in the author’s past, including a contemplation of the event or particular scenes at the time of the writing his/her memoir. There are several characteristics of the memoir as follows:\footnote{1}

First of all, the memoir focuses on a brief period of time or series of related events. Secondly, it has narrative structures, including many of the usual elements of storytelling such as setting, plot development, imagery, conflict, characterization, foreshadowing, flashback, irony, and symbolism. Thirdly, the author contemplates the meanings of the events happened in his/her life in retrospect. Fourthly, it contains a fictional quality even though the story is true. Fifthly, it reaches higher emotional level that more personal reconstructions of the events, spaces and their impact are expressed. Lastly, it offers a chance for the author to reiterate his/her therapeutic experiences, especially when the memoir is of the crisis or survival type of writing.

Furthermore, Golden, too, states that, “[a] memoir provides a record not so
much of the memoirist as of the memoirist’s world. It must differ from biography in that a memoirist can never achieve the perspective that a biographer possesses as a matter of course” (1). In other words, what Golden insists is that a memoir is a narrative that the author only selects the unique and crucial moments within the fascinating life-story. The reader, too, suffers, triumphs, dreams and doubts with the characters in the memoir. bell hooks in her book, *Bone Black: Memories of Girlhood* also claims that “an unconventional memoir draws together the experiences, dreams, and fantasies. . . .This is autobiography as truth and myth as poetic witness” (xiv). She describes that though bits and pieces in a memoir connect in a random and playfully irrational way, these prevailing perspectives are always the author’s intuitive and critical thinking. By evoking the mood and sensibility of moments, a memoir is, in fact, an autobiography of the author’s perceptions and impressions. From the above-mentioned statements, I argue that memoirs are, actually, the productions of the social space in terms of the authors’ involvement of events, places and their impact through memories and storytelling in their society.

According to Henri Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre searches for a reconciliation between mental space and real space. In the course of his exploration, Lefebvre moves from metaphysical and ideological considerations of the meaning of space to its experiences in everyday life of home and city (Lefebvre 1-9). Lefebvre contends that there are different levels of space, from very abstract, crude, natural space (absolute space) to more complex spaces whose significance is socially produced. In Lefebvre's argument, “the (social) space is a social product” (Lefebvre 26). It is a complex social construction which affects spatial practices and perceptions. He continuously explains,

The field we are concerned with are, first, the physical—nature, the Cosmos; secondly, the mental, including logical and formal abstractions;
and, thirdly, the social. In other words, we are concerned with logico-epistemological space, the space of social practice, the space occupied by sensory phenomena, including products of the imagination such as projects and projections, symbols and utopias. (Lefebvre 11-12, italicized original)

Lefebvre further advocates the relationship between the concept of space and experiential social space and addresses that the discursively constructed representations of space and lived space are not independent of each other. He expresses,

Everyone knows what is meant when we speak of a ‘room’ in an apartment, the ‘corner’ of the street, a ‘marketplace,’ a shopping or cultural ‘centre,’ a public ‘place,’ and so on. These terms of everyday discourse serve to distinguish, but not to isolate, particular spaces, and in general to describe a social space. They correspond to a specific use of that space, and hence to a spatial practice that they express and constitute. (Lefebvre 16).

There are two aspects to explain that a social space is a social product, i.e., the illusion of transparency and the realistic illusion. First, a social space appears as luminous and intelligible through language, speech and writing, on the one hand. On the other hand, a social space contains real, and true characteristics of the imaginary and the symbolic dimensions and landscape. (Lefebvre 27-29)

There are several papers which discuss Lefebvre’s theories of space and apply the concept that a social space is a social product. For example, Chang Hsiao-hung’s “On Wearing the City” attempts to think through the “clothed” body-city by exploring the “haptic” experience of wearing, dwelling and walking in urban modernity. She explains Lefebvre’s social space to map out the spatial text/texture/textile/textuality of
both the embodied city and the urbanized corporeality.² Tsai Hsiu-chih’s “Mixture and Transition: The Urban Space(s) in Flannery O’Connor’s ‘Everything That Rises Must Converge’” focuses on the spatial politics inscribed on human memories and practiced in the public social spaces. Thus, Lefebvre’s concepts of the social space and his interpretations of the re/production in social space are re-examined and applied to analyze the various aspects of geographical, social, psychological and gendered spaces.³ I also had a chance to listen to 黃孫權’s speech on Lefebvre’s theories of space.⁴ Moreover, a Chinese book, Reading in Social Theories and the Cultural Form of Space, edited by Hsia Chu-chiu and Wang Chih-hung, lists valuable arguments and statements on Lefebvre’s theories of space. It includes Lefebvre’s two articles, translated in Chinese, i.e., “Space: Social Product and Use Value,” and “Spatial Planning: Reflections on the Politics of Space,” which discuss important concepts of Lefebvre’s social spaces.⁵ Furthermore, Li Chi-she’s “The Banality of Globalization: Henri Lefebvre’s The Production of Space,” and Wang Chih-hung’s “Fabrication in Regime of Memory-Representation: An Analysis of Official Writings on Taipei City” both apply Lefebvre’s theories of space and further elaborate the issues of globalization and official writings on Taipei city.⁶ Based on the above-mentioned references, we will interpret that a social space is a social product. Besides, memoirs deal with certain highlights or meaningful moments in the author’s past, including the particular events or scenes in his/her society. Memoirs actually reach higher emotional level that the author’s personal reconstructions of the events, places and moments are expressed. In this sense, memoirs are, hence, related to the productions of social spaces.

Lefebvre’s theories of space include the triad concepts, i.e., “spatial practices,” “representations of space,” and “representational spaces” (Lefebvre 33). This triad tends to distinguish professional practices such as planning (representations of space)
from spatial patterns of everyday life (spatial practices) and from the symbolic meanings enacted in spatial form (representational spaces). (Lefebvre 38-39) Thus, as social productions, memoirs can also be interpreted into three spaces: spatial practices, representations of space and representational spaces.

First of all, memoirs are narrative. Storytelling might be seen as Lefebvre's concept of spatial practices, which “embody a close association, within perceived space, between daily reality (daily routine) and urban reality (the routes and networks which link up the places set aside for work, ‘private’ life and leisure)” (Lefebvre 38). Next, remembering, contemplation, and personal reconstructions of the events, places and their impact can be counted as Lefebvre's concept of representations of space which is defined as “conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent—all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived” (Lefebvre 38). Finally, capturing certain highlights or meaningful moments, and reiterating the author’s therapeutic experiences, such as searching for wonderful dreamlands and beautiful homelands, would be considered as the symbolic meanings enacted in Lefebvre's concept of representational spaces which is the “space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’” (Lefebvre 39).

In this paper, there are two memoirs, that is, Arthur Golden’s Memoirs of a Geisha and Shirley Geok-Lin Lim’s Among the White Moon Faces presented as narrative forms to be viewed as the social productions of Lefebvre's concept of spaces. First of all, in Arthur Golden’s Memoirs of a Geisha, geisha, a group of beautiful and talented women, seem to be destined to attract people’s attention from all walks of life. However, those gorgeous women’s identities are so vague that outsiders can hardly define them. They reside in okiya, the geisha house, and make a living by
entertaining men in other public areas. Nevertheless, these places serve only as prisons that confine those geisha’ actions and emotions. Geisha, as human beings, are doubtless having their own feelings and aspirations. They are subjects with their own wills and want to seek happiness and bliss. Take the protagonist, Sayuri, for example, the thing she expires most is to become Chairman’s lover. She has her own longings and bravely takes drastic ways to achieve her dreams. Lefebvre demonstrates that “[i]n reality, social space ‘incorporates’ social actions, the actions of subjects both individual and collective who are born and who die, who suffer and who act” (Lefebvre 33). Arthur Golden’s Memoirs of a Geisha, in this respect, can be viewed as a production of a social space in terms of the perceived and the conceived life-experiences having been incorporated with the lived experiences. Thus, from a poor little girl, named Chiyo, into an alluring, attractive geisha, Sayuri perceives well for her hardships. She loses her families, including her father, mother and sister. She has to try very hard for geisha’s training in her conceived life. However, she never gives up her dream to be the lover of Chairman. No matter how bitter the situations are, she insists on the potential wishful dream as her way of life and lays aside that “we don’t because geisha because we want our lives to be happy; we become geisha because we have no choice” (Golden 409). She takes actions to win her social space.

Furthermore, Shirley Geok-Lin Lim also embodies her longing for home and her diasporic experiences in her memoir. As a short story writer, poet, novelist, and well-known Asian American critic born in 1944 into a Chinese family in Malaysia, Lim interlocks both Malaysian and American lives in Among the White Moon Faces. Writing between memories and desires to search for a home urges her to examine the theme of crossing geographical boundaries and home-seeking. In her memoir, Lim, vividly, delineates her painful growth in Malay, fragmentary bonds of family, and
injustice of education as well as her diasporic experiences in America, accompanied by her torments of distortions, displacement and alienation in the foreign world. Thus, dreaming for beautiful homelands is the ultimate goal for Lim to recover her sense of identity and dignity during her lifetime. We argue that Lim’s memoir is the production of social space because “[s]ocial space remains the space of society, of social life. Man does not live by words alone; all ‘subjects’ are situated in a space in which they must either recognize themselves or lose themselves, a space which they may both enjoy and modify” (Lefebvre 35). Lim’s social spaces include the material poverty and violence of her childhood in colonized and war-torn Malaysia, her father’s failed business and her mother’s abandonment. Grappling to secure a place for her in the United States, Lim is also caught between the stifling traditions of the old world and the harsh challenges of the new world. Gradually and painfully, Lim moves from a numbing alienation as a dislocated Asian woman to a new sense of identity as an Asian-American woman. In her memoir, she renders a haunting reflection upon her homelands—her social productions.

II. Memoirs as the Productions of Social Spaces

In fact, Lefebvre’s spatial triad includes the perceived, the conceived, and the lived spaces. The perceived space is so-called spatial practices. Spatial practice embrace productions and reproductions of space in a dialectical interaction within our society. In Arthur Golden’s Memoirs of a Geisha and Shirley Geok-Lin Lim’s Among the White Moon Faces, childhood memories and struggling for everyday life intertwine and web the protagonists’ life thoroughly and wholly. Natural spaces of their original birthplaces and the processes of growth have not vanished purely and simply from the scene. They are still the backgrounds of the landscape. However, nature is becoming lost to thoughts as Lefebvre cites, “nature is now seen as merely
the raw material out of which the productive forces of a variety of social systems have forged their particular spaces” (Lefebvre 31). Besides, the conceived space belongs to representations of space. It is the conceptualized space for scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdiverders and social engineers to design and reconstruct spaces. For Sayuri and Lim, in these two memoirs, life is unbearable. They need to rethink and change their circumstances in order to pursue the better ones. Therefore, they create new spaces and try their hearts to remodel the old ones.

Lefebvre argues, “[i]f space is a product, our knowledge of it must be expected to reproduce and expound the process of production” (Lefebvre 36). Finally, the lived space refers to Lefebvre's concept of representational spaces. Such spaces embody complex symbolisms, coded and linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life. It is the space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols. It is also the space of inhabitants and users as well as of artists and writers to seek and create their own spaces through appropriation of the environments. “This is also the dominated space,” Lefebvre confesses “which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate it. It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects. Thus representational spaces...tend towards more or less coherent systems of non-verbal symbols and signs” (Lefebvre 39). Moreover, Merrifield discovers that

[f]or Lefebvre, the spatial manifestation of Logos is found in the representations of space imposed by business, the state, and bureaucratic apparatuses. This, furthermore, is a space which must crush lived sensual representational space: the space of the body, of everyday life, of desire, of difference, and of Anti-Logos. Anti-Logos thus finds its embodiment in art, poetry, music, play and festival” (Merrifield 297, italicized original).

Thus, Lefebvre's spatial triad, i.e., the perceived, the conceived, and the lived spaces can be the theoretical frameworks to apply literary works of art, especially memoirs.
In this paper, I find out that, especially, the endings of these two memoirs present the ideal ways for Lim and Sayuri in searching for roots, identities, homelands, dreamlands, true love, and sense of security. The perceived-conceived-lived triad (in spatial terms: spatial practice, representations of space, representational spaces) forces the two memoirs to grasp the concrete events and incidents that can be established social relations among people and embraced the loci of passion, of action and of lived situations. Both two memoirs encounter wonderfully accessible journeys into rite of passage. Lim and Sayuri have gradually transformed from innocent girls to mature women; from fragile victims to stout survivors. Therefore, these memoirs are, in fact, the productions of Lefebvre's concept of social spaces.

III. Dreamlands in Arthur Golden’s Memoirs of a Geisha

In Arthur Golden’s Memoirs of a Geisha, memories play a vital role in searching for female identity and true love. When Chiyo is a little girl, her poor family chooses the easy way to sell two daughters, Chiyo and her sister, for survival. Poverty makes Chiyo a product which is once seen not worth of a thing. After being introduced to the okiya, where geisha are trained and caged, Chiyo has the chance to see the luxurious world of geisha’ life. It is different from what she sees in her home town. Later, she becomes a very famous geisha in okiya. The pursuing of the material world is the first step that Chiyo is gradually getting rid of poverty to fulfill her dream. This is also a turning point for Chiyo to think of much more important things which she, in her old days, cannot afford—the realization of the thirst of her heart. Through love, Chiyo grows even stronger than anyone in her world. She successfully turns herself from poor little Chiyo into alluring Sayuri. In her life as a geisha, what she never gives up is the dream to be the lover of Chairman.

Again, Lefebvre’s concept of representational spaces embodies complex
symbolisms, coded and linked to the clandestine side of social life. It is the space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols. Sayuri knows how hard it is to have her own will to love someone; however, she strongly believes that she can make choices within no hope. Her love for Chairman is nothing instantaneous but incubative. Love can motivate a person to do things beyond imagination and limitation. Her memoir to Sayuri is a journey of awakening. Such journey is long and painful but abundant, both in losing and gaining. Sayuri not only sees the true self in this journey but fulfills the great dream in her true life.

A. Spatial Practice

In the first place, the little poor Chiyo was born and misses her birthplace, Yoroido. She describes, “Yoroido was a tiny town, just at the opening of an inlet. Usually the water was spotted with fishermen, . . . Yoroido had only one road, leading right to the front door of the Japan Coastal Seafood Company; it was lined with a number of houses whose front rooms were used for shops” (Golden 13). For her, Yoroido is not only a hometown in her childhood’s memory but also a place that decides her miserable destiny—from Yoroido to Kyoto. She laments,

During those first few days in that strange place (Kyoto’s okiya), I don’t think I could have felt worse if I’d lost my arms and legs, rather than my family and my home. I had no doubt life would never again be the same. All I could think of was my confusion and misery; and I wondered day after day when I might see Satsu again. I was without my father, without my mother—without even the clothing I’d always worn. (Golden 45)

Kyoto’s okiya is the perceived place where Chiyo must stay and earn to be a geisha. In her perceived space, she learns to accept her fate. She even realizes that outside Kyoto she cannot live her life.
I was outside Kyoto, I could see that for most people life had nothing to do with Gion at all; and of course, I couldn’t stop from thinking of the other life I’d once led. Grief is a most peculiar thing; we’re so helpless in the face of it. It’s like a window that will simply open of its own accord.

The room grows cold, and we can do nothing but shiver. (Golden 255)

B. Representations of Space

Chiyo’s first impression of Gion forms the conceived space in her life. She amazingly sees its landscape: “[e]vergreen shrubs and twisted pine trees surrounded a decorative pond full of carp. Across the narrowest part of the pond lay a stone slab. . . .The massive building in the back was actually the Kaburenjo Theater—where the geisha of Gion perform *Dances of the Old Capital* every spring” (Golden 54, Italicized original). She, at once, knows that Gion represents the abstract space that she plans to shape her social relations as well as “the local concentration of specific activities and land uses, such as industry, transport, residential, recreation, retail, commercial and financial” (Smith 137). In this space, Chiyo begins her training as a geisha at a very young age. She is, first, put to work as a maid when she just arrives at the okiya. Except for doing all the housework for a whole day, she also has to wait late into the night for the senior geisha to return from engagements, sometimes as late as two or three o’clock in the morning. Chiyo must obey strict rules and endure many unreasonable accusations at the okiya. It seems that her existence has been designed and planned. She, even, has no right to resist and rebel the authority and has no choice but to become a geisha.

Chiyo later finds out the exact meanings of geisha:

the ‘gei’ of ‘geisha’ means ‘arts,’ so the word ‘geisha’ really means ‘artisan’ or ‘artist.’ . . .geisha usually dance to nothing more than the accompaniment of a shamisen. . . .my early-morning lesson was in the
little drum we call tsutsumi. . . .Following drums, my next lesson of the morning was in Japanese flute, and after that in shamisen. . . .After drums, flute, and shamisen, my next lesson was usually in singing. . . .In all of these classes, music and dance were only part of what we learned.

(Golden 141-43)

Generally speaking, geisha are trained in a number of traditional skills; Japanese ancient dance, singing, playing instruments, flower arrangement, wearing kimono, tea ceremony, calligraphy, conversation, alcohol serving manners, and more. Chiyo describes that, “[t]ea ceremony is a very important pat of a geisha’s training. It isn’t unusual for a party at a private residence to begin with a brief tea ceremony. And the guests who come to see the seasonal dances in Gion are first served tea made by geisha” (Golden 144). Besides, dance is also an important part for geisha to perform Japanese art. “Dance is the most revered of the geisha’s arts. Only the most promising and beautiful geisha are encouraged to specialize in it, and nothing except perhaps tea ceremony can compare to the richness of its tradition” (Golden 150).

In another perspective, geisha are entertainers. Their purpose is to entertain their customers by reciting verse, playing musical instruments, or engaging in light conversation. Thus, geisha engagements may include flirting with men and playing innuendos. When little girl Chiyo becomes an apprentice geisha, Sayuri. The Mother at the okiya arranges a danna for her. Of course, Mameha explains to Sayuri the role of danna:

Not only will [geisha’s] danna cover all of her living expenses, such as her registration fee, her lesson fees, and her meals; what’s more, he’ll provide her with spending money, sponsor dance recitals for her, and buy her gifts of kimono and jewelry. And when he spends time with her, he won’t pay
her usual hourly fee; he’ll probably pay more, as a gesture of goodwill.

(Golden 149)

Mameha, furthermore, speaks to Sayuri, “Neither you nor I can know your destiny. You may never know it! Destiny isn’t always like a party at the end of the evening. Sometimes it’s nothing more than struggling through life from day to day. . . . We don’t become geisha so our lives will be satisfying. We become geisha because we have no other choice” (Golden 294). Sayuri learns her destiny as the conceived space that she has no power to change.

C. Representational Spaces

However, space is no longer to be treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, and the immobile. Rather, “the spatialization of life is to fill out the contexts of social formation” (Liggett 3). Sayuri has her strange dream and she recalls:

[M]y feelings were strangely different. I felt as though I were looking at a world that was somehow changed from the one I’d seen the night before—peering out, almost, through the very window that had opened in my dream. . . . My existence was as unstable as stream, changing in every way. . . . I felt as though I’d turned around to look in a different direction, so that I no longer faced backward toward the past, but forward toward the future” (Golden 108).

Sayuri remembers that she makes a wish to become a geisha,

I rushed to Shijo Avenue and ran all the way to its end at the eastern edge of Gion, where the Gion Shrine stood. . . . I threw the coins into the offertory box--. . . , I prayed that they permit me to become a geisha somehow. I would suffer through any training, bear up under any hardship, for a chance to attract the notice of a man like the Chairman again” (Golden 114).
In her daily life, Sayuri never forgets her lover, the Chairman, and would like to share with him at every moment:

I imagine myself inside a teahouse, sliding open the door of a tatami room. The men turned their heads to look at me; and of course, I saw the Chairman there among them. . . .In [Chairman’s] fingers, as smooth as driftwood, he held a sake cup; more than anything else in the world, I wanted to pour it full for him and feel his eyes upon me as I did” (Golden 161).

The sweet kiss is the particular feeling that Sayuri changes her lived experiences.

It may surprise you to hear that this was the first time in my life anyone had ever really kissed me. . . .[T]his kiss, the first real one of my life, seemed to me more intimate than anything I’d ever experienced. I had the feeling I was taking something from the Chairman, and that he was giving something to me, something more private than anyone had even given me before. There was certain very startling taste, as distinctive as any fruit or sweet. (Golden 416)

As Williams defines, “such changes can be defined as structures of feeling. . . .It is not only that we must go beyond formally held and systematic beliefs, . . .It is that we are concerned with meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt” (132).

Representational spaces depend on memories. They require dreams and structures of feeling in lived experiences. Thus, within a social space which is still in process, Sayuri’s memoir offers multiple significance of productions including the Chairman as her danna, an apartment at the Waldorf Towers, a teahouse in New York City, New York’s Central Park, and the yellow taxicabs in Park Avenue.

Lefebvre's representational spaces can produce and reproduce the identities of places. In other words, “the identity of place is always formed by the juxtaposition and co-presence of particular sets of social interrelations and the effects” (Massey
168). In Arthur Golden’s *Memoirs of a Geisha*, Sayuri creates multi-layer spaces in her memoir through her dreamlands and recreates her social relationships in the lived experiences.

IV. Homelands in Shirley Geok-Lin Lim’s *Among the White Moon Faces*

Through writing her memoir, Lim also triggers continuity with her past, which paves the way of the quest for roots. From her early childhood, exams can lead Lim away from her miserable life and environment, which is full of poverty and hunger. Besides, indulging in reading, Lim discovers that through books she can see how large her own world can be. Lim also expresses her frustration about British colonial education in Malaysia. Thinking back through the cultural imperialism of British colonial education, Lim regrets the loss of the potential Malaysian intellectual. Moreover, Lim’s narration of home incorporates both homelands of the memory and homelands of the future. The discourse of home engenders a kind of inner voice, which urges her to reexamine his/her origins.

Lim’s memoir, thus, is also a journey for her to redefine and revalue the concept of her ethnic identities and homelands. Actually, her moving back to her homelands is a gesture to go beyond the actual and concrete spaces, and into the abstract and symbolized spaces which allow her to fly freely without any bondage. Such wonderful, conceptualized spaces would be the representational spaces that Lefebvre invites us to produce and reproduce them in our everyday life.

A. Spatial Practice

Born in Melaka, Malaysia into a life of poverty, deprivation, parental violence, and abandonment in a culture that rarely recognized girls as individuals, Lim has a pretty unhappy childhood. In Lim’s early memories, hunger is a terrible experience.
She recounts,

I lay on the lower level of the bunk bed in the brown evening. For the first time in my life I felt hunger. My stomach growled and I pressed back against the lumpy mattress with a lassitude that came from being alone and from not having eaten all day. What an odd sensation hunger was! An emptiness, it left me giddy and weak” (Lim 43).

Continuously, she suffers such nightmares, “The hunger was a pain in my belly. I was conscious of it all through the day so that it became part of me and I forgot that it was something new and different” (Lim 48). The perceived space in her everyday life is painful. She even, vividly, portrays that her father is a womanizer and beats her. Her mother abandons the family while she is very young. She endeavors to escape from her childhood poverty just as she describes, “[m]y own necessity—to move out of the range of the grinding millstone of poverty—was like a miniaturized engine implanted in my body, that I was fearless in the face of exams. What I feared was poverty” (Lim 84).

Besides, sense of loneliness is always haunted in Lim’s heart throughout her young life.

This dark scent overlapped with the dark nights when I found myself mysteriously alone. . . .The street below echoed with the bang of wood against wood, the noodle vendor’s announcement of his itinerant presence to midnight hungry insomniacs. . . .The entire scene was empty, like my body which hummed its hunger in an underkey, and like the room in which I stood for long minutes, without Mother and Father. I was beyond crying, and leaned idly against the window panels, curious about who I was in this world where everything had shut down except me” (Lim 50).

Lim, constantly, recalls her feelings that, “I was not afraid, only lonely. But the
loneliness was not new; it was strong, brooding, embracing. I felt like a ruminative animal, emptied of fear or sorrow or pain, and conscious only of the increasingly cold air and the silent darkness” (Lim 99).

When Lim decides to leave Malaysia for a Fulbright Scholarship at Brandeis University in America, she is also forced herself to leave the man she loves. The unbearable fear for her is a perceived space that she cannot resist it.

Then the strongest fear came over me—the fear of being alone. I could not wake up out of this fear. As I whimpered in my room, Karmal heard me. ‘Hold me,’ I begged him. ‘I’m afraid.’ . . . The total panic was like an accumulation of the pains of abandonment that had crowded my life, till I no longer understood the difference between abandonment and love, between the abandoned and the abandoner” (Lim 138).

Such spatial practice embodies a close association, within the perceived space, between daily routine and the routes and networks which link up the places set aside for Lim’s schools, works, lovers, friends, and family members.

B. Representations of Space

Lefebvre's concept of representations of space is defined as a conceptualized space which is also a space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers. Lim’s Malaysia is such an abstract space designed by educators, planners and politicians. She has her early education at Infant Jesus Convent in Malaysia under the British colonial education system. She later enrolls in the University of Malaya and earns a B.A. first class honors degree in English. However, the May 13, 1969 riots push her to leave the oppressive and depressive Malaysia for good. She describes:

[T]he May 13 riots provided the bloody revolution that changed Malaysia from the ideal of a multicultural egalitarian future—an ideal already tested
by hostilities over power-sharing—to the Malay-dominant
race-preferential practice in place today. . . .I rebelled against the notion
that I would have to submit to such attitudes. (Lim 136)
The conceived space of Malaysia becomes the space of injustice controlled by the
dominant race and state apparatuses.  Lim comments,

In 1969 I saw myself as a passive and innocent victim of the conflict
between elites and races.  After May 13, most events in Malaysia,
whether public or domestic, were and possibly still are, inevitably charged
with a racialized dimension, whether in civil service or private business,
whether professional or personal, economic or literary. (Lim 137)

Lim, further, expresses her ambivalence toward cultural and political domination.

After May 13, thousands of Malaysians like myself withdrew into mass
depression.  The censorship of news accounts, the compulsory black-out
of commentaries and analyses, and the consequent governmental revisions
of parliamentary rule to enact Malay domination only confirmed our
paranoia. . . .millions of Malaysians of Chinese descent still resident in the
country, and thousands more in a global diaspora, continue to bear witness
to the ideal of an equitable homeland for all Malaysians” (Lim 137-38).

She also suffers a lot on her traumatic experiences in this, socially and economically,
repressive and hierarchical system of education in Malaysia.

I believed that the university preferred a male and a Muslim over a
Chinese woman.  For the first time I saw that the prejudices I had
believed the product of small-town religious bigotry were systemic in
Malaysian society.  Worse, it became clear to me that merit was not the
main criterion for professional status.  In Malaysia, I would always be of
the wrong gender and the wrong race. (Lim 133)
Lim sees clearly that “Malaysia was never a homogenous society, and colonial education failed in preparing Malay Muslim royalty and peasants. . . .[R]ace, religion, language, and gender—four glaring sites totally ignored in British colonial education—shaped the emergence of the Malaysian nation-state” (Lim 88). In this highly conceived space, Lim realizes that she is no longer a social insider to change Malaysia’s situations. In other words, she cannot identify her birthplace, Malaysia, as a place like home because “home is no longer just one place. It is locations. Home is that place which enables and promotes varied and everchanging perspectives, a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference” (Massey 171). In A History of Malaysia, Andaya records that, “[a]fter the May 13 1969 riots, the government took steps to assure the dominance of the Malay language in the educational system. . . .The Chinese were fearful of total submersion by the Malays and felt being sacrificed at the national unity” (279). Later, Lim cries that she would never see Malaysia again, except through the eyes of a traveler.

C. Representational Spaces

Lastly, Lefebvre’s concept of representational spaces is the “space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’” (Lefebvre 39). Lim, happily, welcome such lived spaces to enlarge her friendship and connecting the varieties of people in Malaysia as well as in the United States. Lim elaborates her feminist thoughts, first, in Malaysia that:

My parents’ outrageous marital behavior left me unprotected and without social standing. As an outsider, I was not confined to an interior of domestic regulation. No mother lectured me on female morality. No aunts warned me of unfeminine ways. Surrounded by my four brothers and their chums and my stepmother’s three sons, I learned something about being a girl from boys. My brothers sneered whenever I cried.
A girl was a crybaby. I learned to swallow hard and to blink off tears before they could well up and fall” (Lim 92-93).

Later, in the United States, Lim develops her sense of sisterhood:

It’s true that women are divided by unequal privileges of race, class, age, nation, and so forth, but across these divisions, of white middle-class women and myself, for example, or young Chicanas and myself now, a rare yet common ground is visible. We understand each other in devious ways: our physical desires and the shame we have been trained to feel over our bodies, our masked ambitions, the distances between our communities and our hungry selves, our need to be needed. . . .Although some feminist theorists have bracketed the concept of ‘sisterhood’ as an anachronistic embarrassment, it is the only term I cam find to suggest not only the necessity for coalition and the work of solidarity but also the sensibility of support that grows when social gender is recognized as a shared experience’ (Lim 156-57).

Lim admits that as an avowed feminist, she has had to learn to trust, respect, and love women and overcome sexism. In this lived space, Lim claims that we need women of all colors to jump fences of gender, race, class, nation, and religion, to help us rescue ourselves from the empire of blankness.

As for the definition of homelands, Lim admires the abstract space like America. The U.S. Constitution, endowing every citizen with equal rights without regard to race, gender, religion, and national origin, protects individual freedoms, of speech, religion, public association, from the tyranny and prejudices of the majority. These are precious protections that humans long for, for love and plenty can only be assured when there is freedom from injustice. (Lim 230)
The sense of simply feeling at home is an attractive place as a familiar mental and social environment rather than the absolute or relative location of physical items. Lim expresses that “[t]he dominant imprint I have carried with me since birth was of a Malaysian homeland. It has been an imperative for me to make sense of these birthmarks” (Lim 213). However, through writing of her memoir, as well as her other stories, Lim is gradually moving home:

[H]ome is the place where our stories are told. Had I more time to talk to Mother, perhaps I could have learned to forgive, listening to her stories.

In California, I am beginning to write stories about America, as well as about Malaysia. Listening, and telling my own stories, I am moving home. (Lim 232)

Lim’s home-bound journey is a journey through her lived experiences which connect her diasporic identities, heterogeneity, and diversity. After her son’s birth, Lim even decides that “I wanted for [my son] to have a pride of belonging, the sense of identity with a homeland, that which I had possessed as a Chinese Malaysian for a brief time in my youth” (Lim 197). Home, thus, connotes an external and internal landscape as well as physical and mental sense of belonging.

V. The Social Productions in Memoirs (Conclusion)

To sum up, according to Lefebvre, the perceived space is captured as spatial practices, which embrace production and reproduction and are expressed in daily routines and the practice of everyday life. The conceived space embodies representations of space, which are tied to the relations of production. It is also the conceptualized and discursively constructed space used and produced by planners, architects, geographers, and social engineers, which codify, textualize, and, hence, represent space. Lastly, the lived space, or representational space, embodies
complex symbolisms. It is this space of symbols and images, which imagination continuously seeks to change and appropriate in our society.

For our individuals, social space incorporates social actions. In other words, we are born, die, develop, give expressions, suffer and act in this social space. Social space works as a tool for the analysis of our society. In this respect, Lefebvre’s concept of spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces contribute in different ways to the productions of this social space. As narrative forms, memoirs create and recreate the productions of a social space to see this spatial triad. Besides, such productions among three moments of the perceived, the conceived and the lived spaces are never simple or stable. It, thus, brings all the actions together and comprises disparate ideas to link these symbolized and conceptualized social spaces. Furthermore, Lefebvre also contends that “[t]he reproduction of the social relations of production within this space inevitably obeys two tendencies: the dissolution of old relations on the one hand and the generation of new relations on the other” (Lefebvre 52). Such social space is inscribed in transformation and welcomes differences.

Following this perspective, the issue of identities in memoirs as a social space is continually producing and reproducing itself anew through transformation and difference. The process of writing a memoir has always been constructed, reconstructed, transformed, and reassembled. Thus, searching for identities in memoirs, too, implies an absence of home and the yearning for home, which does not entail the lost origins, but a new home to be established in the adopted place. Home is no longer fixed but fluid and mobile according to memories. Home is a discourse of locality, which is the place of feelings of rootedness. Home signifies the social and psychic geography of space that is experienced in terms of a neighborhood or a home town. Home is not only a multiple place of desire but also the lived
experiences of a locality. The concept of an ideal home is, thus, a space of
dreamland for Sayuri as well as a homeland for Lim. Through recapturing her
precious memories, Sayuri regards Gion in Kyoto, Japan and New York city in
America as her dreamlands to fulfill her dreams and change her destiny. She cites,
“New York is an exciting city. Before long it came to feel at least as much a home to
me as Gion ever did. In fact, as I look back, the memories of many long weeks I’ve
spent here with the Chairman have made my life in the United States even richer in
some ways than it was in Japan” (Golden 426). Again, through writing her memoir,
Lim cherishes her homelands both in Malaysia and America. She also recalls,

   I begin my memoir in the United States. . . [I]t is the story of our mothers
that makes a female heroic so necessary, yet also so impossible. In my
first life, growing up as a Malaysian woman, I only could write of Asian
women whose identities intertwined with mine: mother, aunts, cousins,
rivals, and friends. In my second life as an immigrant Asian American, I
find that Western women have also helped me plot my life, as I write
forward: Women of all colors—workers, neighbors, colleagues, mentors,
and sisters. (Lim 5)

Memoirs capture certain highlights and meaningful moments, including particular
events and scenes. For memoirists, these meaningful moments and events are social
spaces interconnected with spatial practice, representations of space and
representational spaces. Through memories and storytelling, such social spaces
produce and reproduce the multiplicity of spaces through destructions, revolutions
and reconstructions in order to reach improvements. Thus, memoirs are the
productions of social spaces.

   “‘Change life!’ ‘Change society!’ . . . ‘Live better!’ ‘Live differently!’” Lefebvre
cries,
New social relationships call for a new space,…space of a different (social) life and of a different mode of production…straddles the breach between science and utopia, reality and ideality, conceived and lived. It aspires to surmount these oppositions by exploring the dialectical relationship between ‘possible’ and ‘impossible,’ and this both objectively and subjectively” (Lefebvre 59-60).

Confronting oppositions and crumbling reality through changes and exchanges, Lefebvre’s theories of space offer an alternative interpretation to analyze memoirs as social productions. Besides, the multiplicity of social spaces enriches the reading of memoirs by our readers’ reflections, recollections and decoding symbolism. Reading memoirs, definitely, enlarges our perceptions and lived experiences. As Sayuri finally admits that “I’m sure I might have thought of a hundred other things, for it was as if all the boundaries in my mind had broken down and my memories were running free,” (Golden 417) Lim, too, in her memoir, spiritually, moves herself, freely, from Malacca to New England, then to Brooklyn and to the rich New York suburb of Westchester County, now to Southern California, and then in dreams, in journeys home back to Malaysia and Singapore to meet the people she has known, feared, loved, and owned.
Notes

1 The characteristics of memoirs can be categorized into six types according to Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia, 26 June 2007 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Memoir/>

2 Hsiao-hung Chang, “On Wearing the City,” Chung Wai Literary Monthly 34.10 (2006): 168-69. This paper discusses Eileen Chang’s “The Red Rose and the White Rose,” Tien-wen Chu’s “Fin-de-Siècle Splendor,” and Tien-hsin Chu’s “The Ancient Capital.” It inspires me a lot for seeing the abstract background of the rural/urban space becoming the multiplicity of the body-city geography according to Lefebvre’s interpretations of the social space.

3 Hsiu-chih Tsai, “Mixture and Transition: The Urban Space(s) in Flannery O’Connor’s ‘Everything That Rises Must Converge,’” A Journal of English & American Literature 10 (2007): 75. This paper interprets Lefebvre's theories of space includes the triad concepts, i.e., “spatial practices,” “representations of space,” and “representational spaces.” It also offers the criticism and the problematic dialectics among the triad concepts. Furthermore, Lefebvre's triad spaces can also be seen as the perceived, the conceived, and the lived spaces. Tsai argues that the perceived space might be true for spatial practices because it is also the space of everyday uses for human beings. The conceived space can be designed by many scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers. However, the lived space is not only the representations of the current social situations but also the reflections and recognition of the past and history. I agree with her perspectives.

4 In that occasion, I got the clear idea of Lefebvre's theories of
space and appreciated Prof. Hwang’s detail interpretations.

5 夏鈺九 (Hsia Chu-chiu)、王志宏 (Wang Chih-hung) 編譯、《空間的文化形式與社會理論讀本》 (Reading in Social Theories and the Cultural Form of Space)。《台北：明文，民國八十八》頁 19-46。 From this book, I read the Chinese translations of Lefebvre's theories of space. I make clear some of the ambiguous arguments and explanations in Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* and I get vivid ideas on the dialectics of spatial formations.


These two articles offer interesting topics for me to understand the theoretical applications of Lefebvre's theories of space to several issues, such as globalization and urban Taipei city.
Works Cited


The study analyses how woman muteness is revealed as self-portrait of the Asian-woman in the literary memoirs of Maxine Hong Kingston's "The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of Girlhood among ghosts," and Shirley Geok-lin Lim's "Among the White Moon Faces: An Asian- American Memoir of Homelands." The meta-textualities of Woman-roles and Woman-lingo of Muteness are synthesized as Self-Portrait of the Asian Woman. Asian-woman muteness presents her role as daughter and daughter-in-law, wife, female peranakan sibling, mother and aunt in her Chinese family-where she experiences