

天主教輔仁大學英國語文學系學士班畢業成果
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT, FU JEN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY
GRADUATION PROJECT 2019

指導教授：劉紀雯老師

Dr. Kate Liu

真善美聖

**Postmodern Films vs. Postmodern City?
The City of Taipei in Edward Yang's Films**

SANCTITAS BONITAS

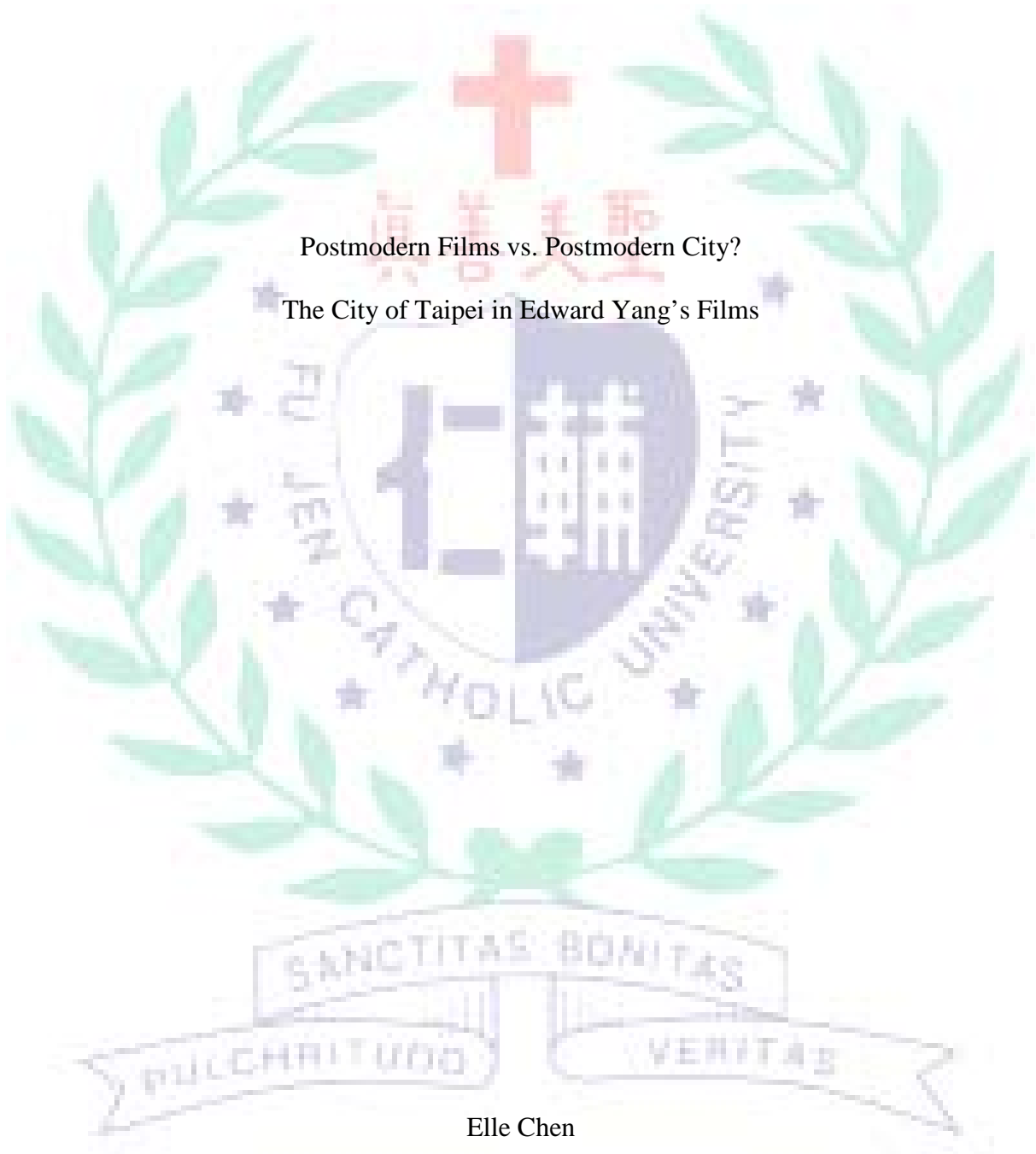
PULCHRITUDO

VERITAS

學生：陳以庭撰

Elle Yi-Ting Chen

Fu Jen Catholic University



Postmodern Films vs. Postmodern City?

The City of Taipei in Edward Yang's Films

Elle Chen

CCIII- Section C

Dr. Kate Liu

October 19, 2019

Abstract

The City of Taipei in Edward Yang's Films." Edward Yang, one of the founding figures and most influential directors of New Taiwanese Cinema, capsulized the postmodern condition of the city of Taipei in the 1980s and early 1990s. Out of the four films Yang made on Taipei city, *Terrorizers* (1986) and *A Confucius Confusion* (1994) respectively represent his critique of Taipei's socioeconomic transformation into a postmodern city characterized by overall commodification as defined by Fredric Jameson. While commenting on postmodernity, the two films are themselves examples of postmodernist art both in plot and in images, thus posing the question about whether postmodernism lacks critical distance from its society and where the solution could be.



Outline

I. Introduction:

Thesis statement: With their parodic use of author figures, the two films, *Terrorizers* (1986) and *A Confucian Confusion* (1994), critique the postmodern city of Taipei and its dwellers without, however, denying some slim hope for redemption in the characters' self-reflexivity, which, I argue, will be carried on in Yang's final work, *Yi Yi: A One and A Two* (2000.)

II. Methodology

III. Literature Review:

- A. Edward Yang
- B. Definitions of "postmodernity" and "postmodernism"
- C. *Terrorizers* (1986) and *A Confucian Confusion* (1994)

IV. Film analysis:

- A. Postmodernity presented within the two films: presentations of the postmodernization of Taipei City.
 - 1. The postmodern city in *Terrorizers* and *A Confucian Confusion* — degradation of traditional beliefs, multinational companies, overall commodification, simulation
 - 2. Characters as in *Terrorizers* and *A Confucian Confusion* — alienation, betrayal, and yet new forms of relations
- B. Postmodern features of the two films: how the two films are art works of postmodernism
 - 1. "Authors" in the text and self-reflexivity
 - a. The meaning of "art" in a late-capitalist society
 - b. The distinguish of "fiction" and "real": hyperreality

2. Decontextualization

C. Future prospects

V. Conclusion



Postmodern Films vs. Postmodern City? The City of Taipei in Edward Yang's Films

From 1980s to 1990s, the city of Taipei had experienced the lifting of martial law, political transformation and the practice of new policies that brought about great economic growth. In the meantime, Taiwanese film industry was also reformed with the emergence of a new genre, known as New Taiwanese Cinema. Edward Yang, as one of the founding figures of New Taiwanese Cinema, has produced eight “city films” in response to Taipei's changes. Out of these 8 films, four of them present in self-reflexive manners the human relations and social conditions in Taipei as a postmodern city.¹ Though postmodern art is sometimes considered “depthless” because of its use of pastiche, the two postmodern urban films by Edward Yang — *Terrorizers* (1986) and *A Confucian Confusion* (1994) — use pastiche self-reflexively to present Taipei's process of postmodernization, expose its city dwellers' depthlessness, and also suggest possible ways of retaining positive human relations a postmodern city.

This paper, therefore, analyzes how *Terrorizers* and *A Confucian Confusion* respond to post-modern Taipei both in content and form. Before text analysis, I will first relate Edward Yang's films to “postmodernity,” as a term for a social condition, and to “postmodernism,” as cultural responses to postmodernity — or the “cultural dominant” in Fredric Jameson's term. I will then analyze the two films, in order to explain how they illustrate the socioeconomic background of Taipei during the time since late 1980s and how they are featured with characteristics of postmodern art. *Terrorizers* and *A Confucian Confusion*, I argue, present Taipei as a postmodern city dominated by reproductive technologies such as photography, film and mass media, in which the characters find themselves either isolated or money-grubbing, at the expense of the

¹ The eight films include *That Day, on The Beach* (1983,) *A Summer at Grandpa's* (1984,) *Taipei Story* (1985,) *Terrorizers* (1986,) *A Bright Summer Day* (1991,) *A Confucian Confusion* (1994,) *Mahjong* (1996,) and *Yiyi: A One and A Two* (2000.) Among them, *Terrorizers* and the last three are postmodern, while the first three are set in the modern period and *A Bright Summer Day* in the white terror period.

people around them. With their parodic use of author figures, the two films critique the postmodern city of Taipei and its dwellers without, however, denying some slim hope for redemption in the characters' self-reflexivity, which, I argue, will be carried on in Yang's final work, *Yi Yi: A One and A Two* (2000.)

Edward Yang is one of the founding figures of New Taiwanese Cinema that set his trademark in postmodernism. With his first shot, "Expectation" in *In Our Time* (1982), Yang had already set his own style as being "extremely low key and contemplative" (Wilson 48). Yang is also distinctive from his contemporaries such as Wan Jen and Hsiao-Hsien Hou, for in Yang's films, the "Taiwanese features" — for instance, the use of Taiwanese dialect — are much more obscure and subtle than in films such as *Dust in the Wind* (1986) or *Super Citizen Ko* (1995). Instead, Yang's films stand out as a representation of postmodernism film art. Though vague in definition, one feature of postmodernism is the self-reflexivity postmodern arts are embodied with. Hans Bertens has, in his book, *The Idea of The Postmodern: A History*, concisely reaffirmed the self-reflexivity of postmodernism by saying: "postmodernism is the move away from narrative, from representation ..." (Bertens 4). Both *Terrorizers* and *A Confucian Confusion* are about writers, artists, and can be regarded as discussions of the ultimate meaning of "art." Features of the so called "postmodernity" — depthlessness, overall commodification, and the prevalence of electronic reproduction, and of "postmodernism" — self-reflexivity (meta-criticism), simulacrum, and decontextualization are to be discussed below, which can all be found in the 1980s to 1990s Taipei as presented in the two films by Yang.

First of all, what are the definitions of "postmodernity" and "postmodernism?" what does it mean to be postmodern? The answers to these questions are never certain. For instance, the word "postmodern" is said to be originated from the 1940s, but it can be variously defined. Secondly, whether "the postmodern age" as a historical period has already

ended or not is still controversial among scholars. Generally speaking; however, postmodernity is the postmodern condition of society. As the result of advancing (tele-)communication and media technologies in the post-industrial age of electronic reproduction, it is “the era of the ‘space age,’ of consumerism, late capitalism, and, most recently, the dominance of the virtual and the digital” (Nicol 2). Consumerism dominated late capitalism, which, in turn, led to the commodification of everything, including art, emotion, and relationships. In the meantime, the dominance of the virtual and the digital turns society into a world of simulations that constitutes a hyperreal world, which people are indulged in without developing relations with others.

During 1970s to 1980s, famous cultural theorist and scholars such as Jean-Francois Lyotard, Jurgen Habermas, and, of course, Fredric Jameson all developed their own definitions and theories for postmodern conditions of society. Generally, Lyotard is pro-postmodernist while Habermas held the idea of postmodern in rather dissent. Jameson, however, perceived “postmodern” more critically: he was the first to discuss the “postmodern” culture in relate to postmodernity, or its socio-economic and political conditions — in the context of the development of capitalism to its multinational phase. He believed that “‘Postmodernism’ as the cultural logic of late capitalism ... needs to be understood, analyzed, demystified, but not skittishly ‘embraced’ or tetchily ‘condemned’” (qtd. in Roberts 120). Considering postmodernism as “the cultural logic of late capitalism,” Jameson looks at the “postmodern” from a different perspective than other critics or theorists. He was “really the first major critic to insist on seeing postmodernism as a manifestation of certain *political* and *historical* circumstances. Late capitalism, a phrase Jameson adopts from the economist Earnest Mandel, represents a new economic logic, the third phase of capitalism development that has gained ascendancy over the old capitalism forms sometimes after World War II” (Roberts 119). While previous theorist consider postmodernism as a new

literary or artistic style comes after Modernism, Jameson saw it as “a periodizing concept whose function is to correlate the emergence of new formal features in culture with the emergence of a new type of social life and economic order — what is often euphemistically called modernization, postindustrial or consumer society, the society of the media or the spectacle, or multinational capitalism.” (qtd. in Hans Bertens 155).

Besides relating postmodernism to postmodernity, Fredric Jameson, in his book *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, presented the “constitutive features of the postmodernism: a new depthlessness; a consequent weakening of historicity, ‘schizophrenic’ structure (following Lacan) will determine new types of syntax or syntagmatic relationships in the more temporal arts; a whole new type of emotional ground tone – what I will call ‘intensities’ –; the deep constitutive relationships of all this to a whole new technology” (13-14). “Depthlessness,” besides referring to human loss of affect, is also interpreted as lack of aesthetic meaning or depth of a work of art or a text. Modernism believed that only by constantly interpreting, explaining, and probing into a text can we reach some aesthetic meaning. However, postmodernism refuses to explain, and asserts that the text cannot be explained, but be experienced. Therefore, postmodernism stops pursuing the “truth,” instead, it criticizes. Such “depthlessness”—mental or textual-- results in people’s loss of historicity, in light of which people stop considering their existence in line with the past, but see the past as mere images or allusions within photographs and documents.

Like modern science or other contemporary thoughts, “postmodernity,” as a social condition, took place and became prevalent in Taipei much later than it did in western cultures. Postmodernization in Taiwan is believed to take place in the late 1980s, with a series of events marking its increasing democratization and its turn to multinational and post-industrial period: the loosening of import/export regulations in 1983, The Fourteen Construction starting in 1984, the new foreign exchange regulation that allows people to

possess foreign exchange in 1987, and the opening for private banks in 1989. All of these have contributed to Taiwan's economic growth to be one of "The Four Asian Tiger/Dragon." In 1992, Taiwan's GDP reached over \$10,000 dollars and became a developed economic system. In 1993, Taiwan was in the 20th largest economic around the globe.

Culturally, likewise, Taiwanese society witnessed profound and radical changes in different aspects of its social structure in and around the time of the lifting of martial law in 1987, which Taipei, as the capital of the country, experienced first and foremost. *Terrorizers* and *A Confucian Confusion*, seen respectively as the last of Yang's "Taipei Trilogy" and the first film of "New Taipei Trilogy," offer us two microcosmic pictures of the post-modernized Taipei with its loss of affect and depthlessness. *Terrorizers* is seemingly melodramatic but actually self-reflexive in its meta-narrative or, as it's also suggested, anti-narrative structure. The interweaving of reality and fiction, the breaking of the fourth wall, and the alternative ending are all freshly new and innovative. The film depicts the story of an ordinary middle-class couple (Lizhong, a doctor, and Yufen, a writer), a young photographer from a wealthy family, and a rebellious single-parented young girl. The three storylines are intertwined with each other by prank phone calls made by the young girl. It displays how fragile human relationships are in an early postmodern society. The film first ends with the ending, in which Lizhong kills his supervisor and Shen. This ending could be functioning as a compensation for Lizhong's failures and his passive attitudes in life. A gunshot connects this ending to another, in which the police officer is astonished to find Lizhong has shot himself in the bathroom. Then, it cuts to Yufen, who appears to wake up from a nightmare and throw up. The film ends here, suggesting that everything is merely a dream of Yufen. The two endings ambiguate the line between truth and fiction, and question the authenticity of art and the "reality." Deeply reflective, the film suggests how the interconnected causes for terror can be found in the three unhappy families, culminating at the end with the police officer gun-

shooting that breaks the silence of this highly repressive society.

A Confucian Confusion is rather controversial and considered a failure by film critics. However, the film is unconventional and self-reflexive by placing artists and authors as characters and using intertitles that precede and reveal the diegetic lines, which reminds the audience of the repetitiveness and systemization of a late-capitalist society. Its casting theatre actors, instead of movie / TV actors is also unconventional, for their rather unrealistic, dramatized gestures and talks emphasizes the hypocrisy of people that the film itself accentuates. The film is not a comedy nor a tragedy, but a satire of 1990s' Taipei, an operating late-capitalistic system, in which people are laughable and pathetic. It is full of ironies; for instance, the plagiarizing playwright who is entitled (probably by himself) "Master Kun-Peng" (enormous mythological fish and birds) is just a "birdy" in English translations; also, it is revealed in the closing credits that the Confucius of today is not the writer but the taxi driver, an occupation that are usually considered for poorly educated people or those of lower social status.

The two films not only reflect significant features of postmodernity and postmodernism, but also examine possible roles and positions of art / artists and the fictionality, artificiality, and lack of practicality of art works. By comparing the two films, one can observe the gradual postmodernization in the city of Taipei. Both *Terrorizers* and *A Confucian Confusion* are set in a highly capitalistic society, in which money and financial success are held in high esteem and regarded as criteria to define one's value. In *Terrorizers*, a film from the 1980s, capitalism is already in the picture, while in *A Confucian Confusion*, a film from the 1990s, late-capitalism has prevailed and become a way of living. For example, in *Terrorizers*, traditional moralities and family structures are barely maintained, while in *A Confucian Confusion*, there are no conventional social institutions and no traditional moralities found among all the characters.

Cinematically as well as through plot, the two films attribute the characters' loss of affect to the postmodern conditions of Taipei. One result of late-capitalism is the prevalence of tele-communication and electronic reproductions, which constitutes a world of simulations. In *Terrorizers*, newspapers, photographs, televisions, and telephones are all media of simulation. These media not only are means through which we perceive reality, but also connect different storylines together. One example in *Terrorizers* would definitely be the telephones, which transmit codes or simulations representing the authentic "real" in the form of sounds. However, in the film the "real" is not represented by the prank calls, which are the center of the film, for it is the bridge between the two storylines. This is an example of Baudrillard's concept of "hyperreality," in which "the difference between 'real life' and 'stimulated life' (or 'simulacrum') has degraded to a point where it becomes hard to tell one from another" and where reality and stimulation are received as no different from each other" (Roberts 127-8). In *Terrorizers*, when Yufen is interviewed for winning the first place, the whole interview is presented on television screens. There are close-ups as well as wider shots contains piles of television screens synchronizing one another. This scene uses electronic simulations to create a sense of alienation, prevents the audience from projecting themselves to Yufen, and thus sets a rather ominous atmosphere for this seemingly victorious episode. Lizhong, on the other hand, is the most alienated and the only character that has no connections with any other characters. Even his connection with his police friend is weak and vain. Lizhong receives and believes the false information from the prank call, and thus becomes the victim of a simulated postmodern world. He also failed to distinguish a simulated marriage (in Yufen's short story) from his own marriage. To him, the simulated marriage has completely taken the place of his actual marriage. Only in his fantasy where he kills his supervisor and Shen did he construct solid connection and becomes involved in his society.

The results of such late-capitalism going rampant and the prevalence of simulations are both reflected through showing humans segregation in urban systems, human-environment relationships, and overall commodification, which can all be seen presented in the two films by analyzing character interactions, the presentation of city landscapes, framings, and camera languages as well. In *Terrorizers*, Lizhong, who failed in career, is characterized as rather timid and diffident; on the contrary, the people around him gain different degrees of success and power in different ways. For instance, Shen, Yufen's boyfriend back in college and the owner of a company seems more confident, and turns out to commit adultery with Yufen. Generally, Li-Zhong's failure in career (and in relationship as well,) put his male ethos at great hazard and results in the collapse of traditional ideal family structure.

Such capitalistic and entrepreneurial value and even adoration are more obvious in *A Confucian Confusion*, where the city of Taipei has already been de-industrialized and transformed into an international-capitalist postmodern city, where small and medium-sized enterprises (e.g. Shen's company) developed into multinational corporations (e.g. companies in *A Confucian Confusion*), and where people pursue business success at the expense of trust, loyalty, and even morality. For instance, Akeem and Molly are engaged only to benefit their family business. In the meantime, people like Larry and Feng date and have sex with others for their own business interests. Most scenes from the film are in companies, offices, and restaurants, characters dress in business suits, which gives a microcosm of late-capitalism one could find in a David Mamet play.

Terrorizers displays the disconnection among city dwellers with the use of windows representing urban grids. For instance, in the film, the hospital Li-Zhong works at is, at first, shot only outside of the windows. The spectators can only look into the place and the people within from a distance. People within the building have no interaction with each other and is

separated from each other by the windowpanes and are confined within the widows / building. Simultaneously, the audience hears nothing from those people but the convening of a meeting broadcasted, to which people seem to have no reactions. Often, throughout the film, the audience would see that, though characters are shot with middle shots or even close-ups, it seems like the director does not want the audience to be too identified with whoever in the shot. Instead, he uses windows to separate the audience from the character, creating a sense of distance. Therefore, the film is not only showing such disconnected and alienated interpersonal relationships in a mimetic way, but make the spectators actually feel it while watching the film. (Figure 1 -3) In *A Confucian Confusion*, such detachments and alienations subside and are gradually substituted with distrust, schemes, hypocrisy, and betrayals. For example, Larry betrays Akeem, Feng betrays Larry, Ming betrays Liren and Molly.

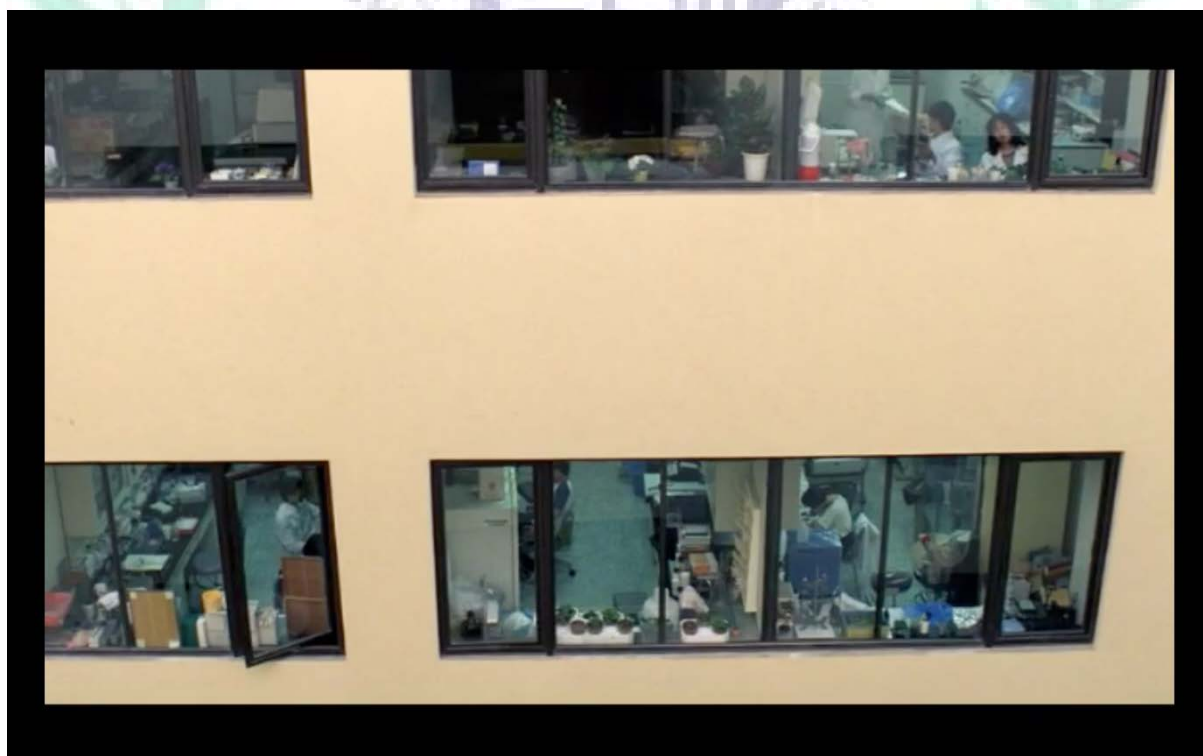


Fig. 1. The hospital, *Terrorizers* (09:59)

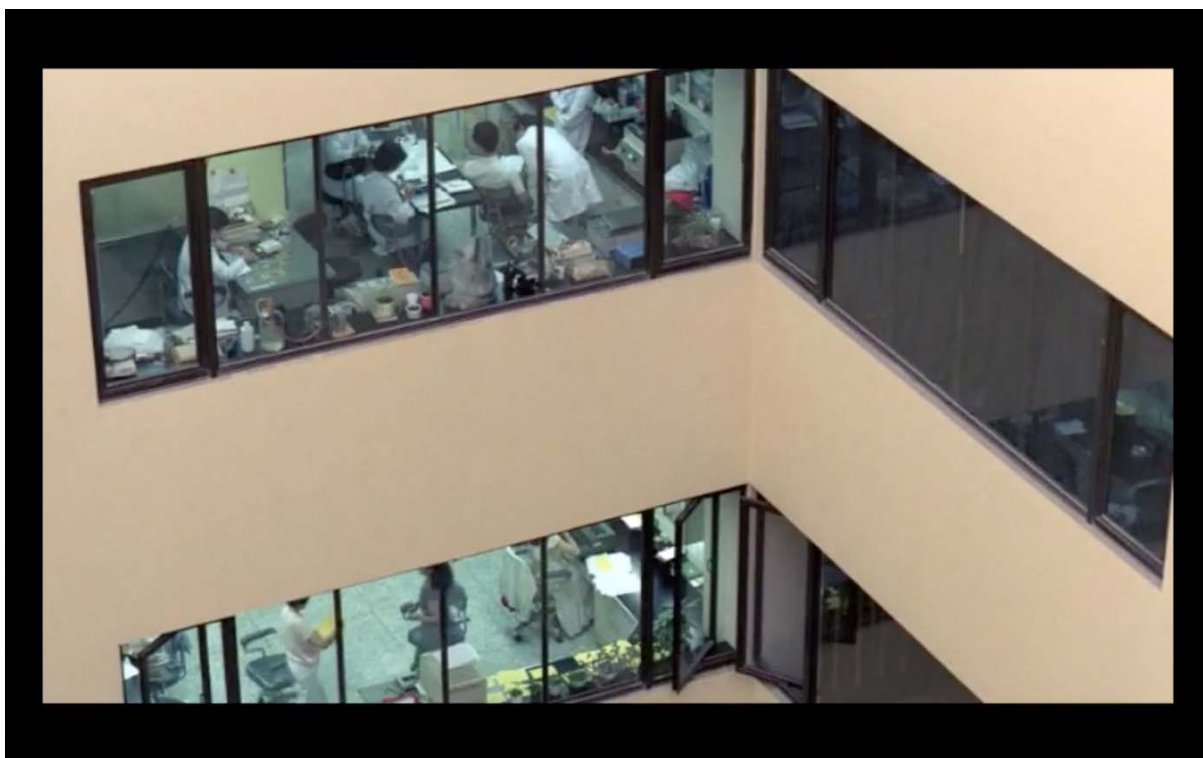


Fig. 2. The hospital, *Terrorizers* (10:13)



Fig. 3. The hospital, *Terrorizers* (10:04)



Fig. 4. The use of widows – confinement and imprisonment, *Terrorizers* (36:23)



Fig. 5. The use of widows – confinement and imprisonment, *Terrorizers* (17:11)



Figure 6. The use of widows – confinement and imprisonment, *A Confucian Confusion*

(56:19)



Figure 7. The use of widows – confinement and imprisonment, *A Confucian Confusion*

(02:45)



Figure 8. The city landscape shot without characters in (scenery shot), *A Confucian Confusion* (02:45)

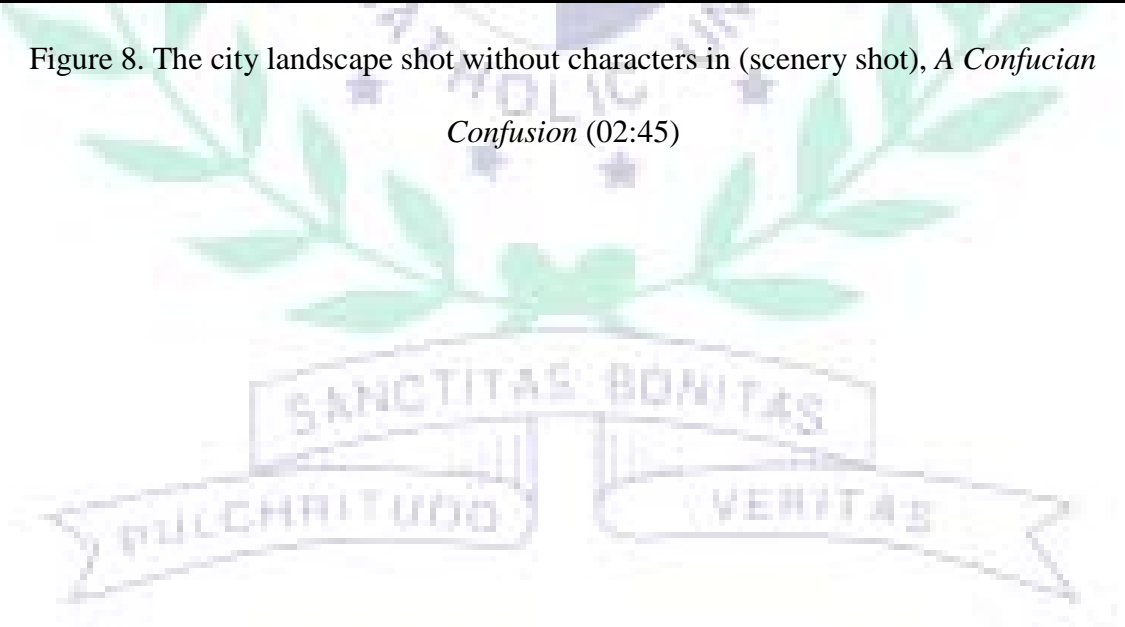




Fig.9. The city landscape shot without characters in (scenery shot), *Terrorizers* (02:45)



Fig.10. Kin Left the Hospital, *Terrorizers* (38:01)



Fig. 11. Lizhong in the hospital, *Terrorizers* (11:28)



Fig. 12. Lizhong passing movie posters, *Terrorizers* (1:42:37)

In Figure 12, Lizhong wanders directionlessly and walks through enormous movie billboards. Foregrounding his littleness and powerlessness, the scene presents Lizhong, confined and lost within the city and among all the people, as if he were trapped and cornered by all these signifiers of mass media and pop culture which suggest Western and Hollywood influences. Therefore, a landscape of “overall commodification,” another result of late-capitalistic in postmodern cities, is presented. As it is put in *A Confucian Confusion*, “Emotion has become a cheap excuse.” This line not only shows the alienation of interpersonal relationships, but also perfectly indicates how in a late-capitalist society, everything has been put a price on. Emotions, relationships, marriages, art, Literature, cinema, and everything, can be valorized according to monetary system.

Presenting postmodern conditions of Taipei and the city dwellers’ consequential alienation or segregation, the two films are self-reflexive with their characters of artists, writers, and photographer, which foreground the issue of commodification of “art”. In *Terrorizers*, Yufen’s award-winning short story provides with her the opportunity to be economically independent, and the young photographer can live a carefree life of shooting everywhere only thanks to his wealthy family. In *A Confucian Confusion*, Birdy the “Artist” succumbs to box office and plagiarizes popular romantic novel. Molly’s company is a publicity company for advertising and selling arts and literature, considering them mere products. This leads back to the question, “what is or what is the meaning of art, literature, and even cinema if they are not all about money?” — the question Yang raises meta-critically and self-reflexively with his films. In both *Terrorizers* and *A Confucian Confusion*, artists, writers, photographers, filmmakers, all play some central roles. With their intra-diegetic experiences and developments, the two films lead the audience to scrutinize and ponder on the question, but not necessarily answer the question. As Birdy, a playwright, said at the

beginning of *A Confucian Confusion*, it is artists' responsibility to reflect the status quo. However, this is a notion constantly questioned in *Terrorizers*. More than once, Yufen points out the "fictionality of a fiction," saying to Sheng "It's just a fiction, don't be too serious about it" and to Li-Zhong: "A fiction is fiction. Can't you tell it from reality?" However, it is, indeed quite difficult to distinguish out the intradiegetic reality of the film at first view, for the reality, the fiction within the film, and the alternative ending are all intertwined with each other towards the end of the film. Such arrangement enhances and reminds the spectators of the fictionality and artificiality of the film itself. While attempting to reason out the reality within the film, the spectators are already doubting the film's function of "reflecting reality." *A Confucian Confusion*, on the other hand, deals with this question in a more satirical way, in which characters refer to the others as "artists" in a sarcastic tone and see art as something to "do," to play with, and then discard when they fail to make any profit.

Besides questioning the boundaries between art and (commercial) reality, another way of critiquing postmodern art and culture is through the hyperreal world created in *Terrorizers* and decontextualization of Confucius in *A Confucian Confusion*. These two features of postmodernism are, once again, self-reflexively presented both in an intradiegetic and an extradiegetic sense. As discussed earlier, in *Terrorizers*, the characters live in a world constructed with phone calls, newspapers, and photographs, through which, and only through which, are they connected with each other. The young photographer lives in the hyperreal world he constructs with his photographs, while the young girl constructs her own with prank calls. In the meantime, for Lizhong, another hyperreal world is within Yufen's short story, where he failed to distinguish the true from the fictional. The photographs, the prank calls, and the short story, altogether, fashion the world within *Terrorizers*. If consider the film and the characters simulated images of the postmodern city the audience are living in, it is ironically interesting that, as the audience managing to tell the real from fiction within

the film, they have been caught in the realm of hyperreality, for the film itself and the characters within are, just like Yufen's short story, essentially and ultimately, artificial and fictional. With this film, it is the city the audience are actually living in that Yang reminds them to be aware of and involved in.

In *A Confucian Confusion*, again, the prevalence of mass media has developed from a threat towards people into a part of people's lives. Here, people have already adjusted themselves to a new life style, completing the postmodernization of the city of Taipei. It is such context Yang has placed Confucius in. Confucius seems to be the odd one out in the 1990s' Taipei, to be decontextualized, and therefore, confused. The values of postmodern city of Taipei have transformed from ancient Chinese doctrines he established centuries ago, to highly altruistic and money-oriented ones. Confucius would feel like an outsider if he were to be here. In *A Confucian Confusion*, the author seems to be the representation of Confucius. As Molly's sister tells him, "You'll find the world not accepting you. The world doesn't world needs you." However, at the end, the audience would find, in the closing credit, that the taxi driver is the Confucius in the film. Such an ironical arrangement not only is a strong reinforcement of the decontextualization of Confucius, but also juxtaposes the discards of traditional virtues as our society has transformed into a utilitarian and money-centric one. After the car accident, the writer in the film has a sudden epiphany, saying "The era of romance of my writing career has ended, so as the era of tragedy. Now, this is my ... my ...". The audience cannot help but fill in the blank with the title of the film — "era of independence." What this era is independent from are morals, traditional values, the fixated distinguish between ultimate truth and omnipresent hypocrisy, which are, in the film, represented by the already ineffectual figure of Confucius.

In other words, the postmodern cultures presented in the two films, though seemingly puzzling or playful in forms, is not depthless. Both *Terrorizers* and *A Confucian Confusion*

provide an adequately dramatized reality of the postmodernization of the city of Taipei and the city dwellers' responses, which we may find just in our daily lives. Through the two films, Yang criticizes the postmodernity of Taipei and the abandonment of traditional Confucius morals, his ending of *A Confucian Confusion* offers a seemingly optimistic and anticipative view towards the future. If *Terrorizers*, with its meta-narrative / anti-narrative form, harshly discloses the virtuality and detachments in postmodern Taipei, *A Confucian Confusion* seems to be less critical and less pessimistic at the end. As Qiqi and Ming, the "ideal couple," finally break up and then reach a reconciliation, we see a new form of interpersonal relationship which is neither confined by the labels of love, friendship or companionship, nor determined by traditional moralities or even the capitalist society itself.]

Such down-toned positive and hopeful future prospect is more clearly suggested in Yang's last work — *Yiyi: A One and A Two* (2001). Similar to the new relationship formed at the end between Qiqi and Ming, Yangyang writes a letter and presents it to his grandmother at the funeral — to show how he, a young generation refusing to communicate the grandma before, is at the end connected to others, to the past, and to the future. In the letter, Yangyang develops a new philosophy of life: to continue to be interested in what one does not know about this world and to share one's knowledge with others. Without experiencing the past, what is "postmodern" to others is to the eight-year-old simply "now," but this "now" is not separated from the past or the future. His lack of experiences gives him the opportunity to experience with a free and open mind, while he stays connected with his grandma, signaling the past, and his baby cousin from the younger generation. Photography, the symbol of simulations and duplications of postmodern culture, is transformed by Yangyang into a brand-new form of connection between him and people around him as he stated that with photography, he wants "to tell people things that they don't know" and "show them stuffs that they haven't seen." Without having to "adapt" to a new form of society, what Yangyang

holds as his interest and belief, then, is new possibilities for city dwellers of postmodern Taipei to live in, to connect and have fun with.

At the very beginning of *A Confucius Confusion*, the following conversation from *Analects* is quoted:

子適衛，冉有僕。(Confucius was heading to Wei with Jenyo by the side.)

子曰：「庶矣哉！」(Confucius: “The city is too crowded.”)

冉有曰：「既庶矣。又何加焉？」(Disciples: “What can we do about it?”)

曰：「富之。」(Confucius: “Make the people rich.”)

曰：「既富矣，又何加焉？」(Disciples: What comes next, after they are made rich?)

Analects

The quotation is followed by an intertitle: “Two thousand years of poverty and struggles later, it took a city named Taipei just twenty years to become one of the wealthiest cities in the world.” and ends without the answer from Confucius, which is:

曰：「教之。」(Confucius: “Teach them.”)

Analects

Do the films, then, give up being educational? No, I would say. With *Terrorizers* and *A Confucian Confusion*, Yang not only innovates in terms of forms but also offers us an epitome of how Taipei, as a postmodern city, and its city dwellers have been superficialized. While his characters are mostly aimless or depthless, Yang’s postmodern films are not. Instead, his films are aesthetically accomplished, thought-provoking, and most importantly, suggestive of hope towards human connections in the present time of the two films and their

future.



Works Cited

- A Confucian Confusion*. Directed by Edward Yang, Atom Films and Theatre, 19 Dec. 1994.
- Bertens, Hans. *The Idea of The Postmodern: A History*. Routledge, 1995, Taylor & Francis e-Library.
- Chang, Sung-Sheng Yvonne. "The Terrorizer and the Great Divide in Contemporary Taiwan's Cultural Development." *Island on The Edge: Taiwan New Cinema and After*. Hong Kong University Press, 2005.
- Davis, Darrell William, and Ru-shou Robert Chen, editors. *Cinema Taiwan: Politics, Popularity, and State of The Arts*. Routledge, 2007.
- Fredric, Jameson. "The Cultural Logic of Capitalism." *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic Of Capitalism*. 28, Feb.2015, pp. 13-14. *Internet Archive*, archive.org/details/FredricJameson.PostmodernismOrTheCulturalLogicOfLateCapitalism1990.
- Nicol, Bran. *The Cambridge Introduction to Postmodern Fiction*. Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Roberts, Adam. "Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism." *Fredric Jameson*, Routledge, 2000, pp. 111–133
- Terrorizers*. Directed by Edward Yang, Golden Harvest, 19 Dec. 1986.
- Wilson, Flannery. "Taiwanese-Italian Conjugations: The Fractured Storytelling of Edward Yang's *The Terrorizers* and Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blow-up*." *New Taiwanese Cinema in Focus*. Edinburgh University Press, 2014.