

**ADOLESCENCE, LOVE & THE MEANING OF LIFE
IN EVERYDAY TAIPEI:
THE FILMS OF EDWARD YANG**

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Chapter One

A Master Barely Known

Accompanying the invention of cinema, our lives come to be more and more luxuriant and colorful. In some sense, thanks to the invention of cinema, the content of our lives as human beings triples.¹

—Edward Yang (楊德昌)

1. Getting to know Edward Yang

In August 2012, the British film magazine *Sight & Sound* publicized its latest list of “The Greatest Films of All Time”. This list is based on the magazine’s international poll which asks critics and experts to choose their own top 10 films of all time. This year 856 critics and experts around the world took part in the poll and replied with their top 10 list back to the magazine. It is worthy to note that *Sight & Sound* first conducted the poll in 1962 and released its list of “The Greatest Films of All Time” for the first time the same year. Since then, *Sight & Sound* has updated this list every 10 years and the list of 2012 saw the magazine’s sixth and latest release. In this year’s list, there are only three Chinese language films appearing on this year’s top 100 list— Wong Kar-wai (王家衛)’s *In the Mood for Love*, Edward Yang’s *A Brighter Summer Day*, and Edward Yang’s *Yi Yi*.² Only quite a small amount of Asian films broke into this top 100 list, and there are just four Asian film directors who have more than one film on the top 100 list. They are Yasujiro Ozu (小津安二郎), Akira Kurosawa (黑澤明), Kenji Mizoguchi (溝口健二), and Edward Yang.³

For various reasons, it is hard to say that Chinese language films have ever been fully valued by Western audiences and critics. Therefore in 2012, partially due to the “unfair treatment” towards the Chinese language films in the *Sight & Sound* poll, the authoritative Chinese movie website cinephilia.net (迷影網), carried out its own poll of “The Greatest Films of All Time” within the Chinese language world. Cinephilia invited 135 film critics, film scholars and filmmakers closely related to the Chinese language film industry to present their own film classics. Those polled came from mainland China, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and overseas. In Cinephilia’s top 100 list, as predicted, the number of Chinese language films increases to 9 compared with *Sight & Sound*’s 3. Surprisingly Edward Yang’s *A Brighter Summer Day*, following Orson Welles’s *Citizen Kane* and

¹ 楊德昌, “新的書寫方式”, 讓-米歇爾·付東《楊德昌的電影世界》, (楊海帝, 馮壽農譯), 北京: 商務印書館, 2011, 第171頁。

² Wong Kar-wai’s *In the Mood for Love* gets 42 votes, ranking 24th, Edward Yang’s *A Brighter Summer Day*, 19 votes, ranking 84th and his *Yi Yi*, 17 votes, ranking 93rd.

³ Yasujiro Ozu’s *Tokyo Story* (《東京物語》)(3rd) and *Late Spring* (《晚春》)(15th); Akira Kurosawa’s *Seven Samurai* (《七武士》)(17th) and *Rashomon* (《羅生門》)(26th); Kenji Mizoguchi’s *Ugetsu Monogatari* (《雨月物語》)(50th) and *Sansho Dayu* (《山椒大夫》)(59th).

Francis Ford Coppola's *Godfather*, is ranked 3rd in the top 100 list. As with *Sight & Sound*'s list, Yang's other classic *Yi Yi* also appears in Cinephilia's top 100, ranking 28th. Therefore in Cinephilia's poll, once again, Yang is one of the four Asian film directors who have more than one film in the top 100, and the other three directors are Yasujiro Ozu, Hou Hsiao-hsien (侯孝賢), and Akira Kurosawa.¹

When Edward Yang died of cancer at his residence in California in 2007, in the eyes of world media he was still "a master barely known". Since his death, the two independent lists of "The Greatest Films of All Time" conducted in 2012, show that Yang's reputation as a master of film art, has already spread across the world in both the east and the west.

Born in Shanghai in 1947, Edward Yang emigrated to Taiwan from mainland China with his family in 1949, following the retreat of the Kuomintang (Nationalist; 國民黨) government during the civil war with the Communist (共產黨). Yang's family was small, consisting of merely five members—his parents, an older brother, a younger sister and Yang himself. The Yangs also have very few relatives on the island. After graduating from Taipei Municipal Jianguo High School (臺北建國中學), Yang enrolled in National Chiao Tung University (NCTU; 國立交通大學) and studied electronic engineering. Four years later, he moved to the United States and took his master's degree in electrical and computer engineering at the University of Florida. Since childhood, Yang has cultivated an earnest interest in cartoon and cinema kindled by his brother and father, who were fans of cartoon and cinema respectively, and thus visual arts became a life-long favorite of Yang. After earning his master's degree, Yang moved to California and enrolled in a film course at the University of Southern California (USC). But it did not last long, as the ideas about film at USC were so different from Yang's own. Yang dropped out soon after and moved upward to Seattle. From 1974 to 1981 Yang worked at a subsidiary institution of the University of Washington designing computers. By the time he turned thirty, the film dream, which he cherished since childhood but had to put aside to please his parents by choosing to study science, led him back to Taiwan in 1981. "I'm already past thirty. It is time to do something that I'm really interested in."² In fact, at that time Yang went back to Taiwan, he was almost thirty-five.

Yang went back to Taiwan in 1981, when the island was just starting on its hard-earned journey of democratization, following the aftermath of the Formosa Magazine Incident (美麗島事件)³ of 1979. The political climate changed quietly— in 1986 the DPP (Democratic Progressive Party; 民進黨) was established as the opposition to the ruling Kuomintang (KMT, or Nationalist Party), in 1987 the Taiwan Martial Law (臺灣省戒嚴令) was lifted under which the Taiwan people lived

¹ Yasujiro Ozu's *Tokyo Story* (《東京物語》)(5th), *An Autumn Afternoon* (《秋刀魚之味》)(25th) and *Late Spring* (《晚春》)(44th), Hou Hsiao-hsien's *A City of Sadness* (《悲情城市》)(16th), *A Time to Live, A Time to Die* (《童年往事》)(46th) and *The Puppetmaster* (《戲夢人生》)(55th); Akira Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai* (《七武士》)(8th) and *Rashomon* (《羅生門》)(38th).

² 田村志津枝『スクリーンの向こうに見える台湾』東京：田畑書店、1992、p.26。

³ The Formosa Magazine Incident, also known as the Kaohsiung Incident, occurred when *Formosa Magazine* (《美麗島》) and other opposition politicians held a demonstration commemorating Human Rights Day in an effort to promote and demand democracy in Taiwan, on December 10, 1979. The protest led to a series of public trials, and the government of the Republic of China took the protest as an excuse to arrest the main leaders of the political opposition. The incident is the most important incident since February 28 Incident (二二八事件) in Taiwan, and regarded as the turning point of the Taiwan democratization movements.

for more than thirty-eight years, and in 1988 the ban on newspapers was also lifted. A progressing democratic society brought more and more freedom for Taiwanese artists to express what they saw and thought. Those ideological and aesthetic regulations imposed on Taiwan cinema before gradually disappeared. The Taiwan film industry encountered a significant chance of transformation and renovation in its history. In Taiwan the film industry was centralized within the hands of the state-owned companies, especially the Central Motion Picture Corporation (CMPC, 中央電影公司). The fresh air of democratization was brought into Central Motion Picture Corporation as well. The general manager Ming Ji (明驥), through the introduction of his two young and capable assistants Hsiao Yeh (小野) and Wu Nien-jen (吳念真), made a major decision to employ four talented yet inexperienced young directors — Tao Te-chen (陶德晨), Edward Yang, Ko I-chen (柯一正), and Chang Yi (張毅) — to make the omnibus film *In Our Time* (《光陰的故事》). This actually inaugurated the Taiwan New Cinema movement in the history of Chinese-language cinema. The four directors were responsible for four separate parts, representing childhood, adolescence, youth and adulthood respectively. With its originality in subject matter and cinematic techniques, *In Our Time* achieved both critic and commercial success upon its release, indicating a new dimension for Taiwan cinema. Among the four parts, particularly, the second part — Yang's *Expectation* — attracted much attention from Taiwan film critics, through its meticulous depiction of an adolescent girl's sensitive mood.

Beginning with *In Our Time*, and led by filmmakers such as Edward Yang and Hou Hsiao-hsien, Taiwan New Cinema focused on Taiwan's unique history and everyday life, put continuous efforts into renovating cinematic language and techniques and gradually established a worldwide reputation for Taiwan cinema and Chinese language cinema. Yang once said in an interview “he was luckily unlucky”¹ for growing and living in such a period of Taiwan history. Compared with the older generation of filmmakers in Taiwan, and his contemporary Chinese-speaking filmmakers in other areas where the government's high-handed censorship policy unscrupulously frustrated artistic enthusiasm and strangled creative freedom of film artists, Yang was much luckier. His luck was the blessing of the Chinese-language cinema as well.

2. 7¼ Films

In 1982 Edward Yang made his debut on the screen with *Expectation* (〈指望〉;「指望」) which was the second part of the omnibus feature *In Our Time* (1983) (《光陰的故事》;『時の物語』). This omnibus film is considered the first work of the Taiwan New Cinema movement by film scholars nowadays. *In Our Time* indicated a fresh thematic and stylistic dimension for the conventional Taiwan cinema, and its production pattern introduced a new mode for the Taiwan cinema industry as well. Therefore it is widely agreed that the film *In Our Time* presents an essential turning point in the history of Taiwan cinema.²

As mentioned above, *In Our Time* consists of four parts, each representing a period of growing up

¹ 白睿文 (Michael Berry), 《當代華語片導演訪談錄》, (羅祖珍, 劉俊希, 趙曼如譯), 桂林: 廣西師範大學出版社, 2008, 第 261 頁。Originally, Michael Berry, *Speaking in Images: Interviews with Contemporary Chinese Filmmakers* (New York: Columbia UP, 2005), p.288.

² 黃建業, 《楊德昌電影研究: 臺灣電影的知性思辨家》, 臺北: 遠流, 1995, 第 37 頁。

respectively, from childhood to adolescence to youth to adulthood. Yang's part focused on adolescent stage and it vividly depicted the subtle emotional changes of a high school girl, who is awkwardly visited by her first period and perhaps her first love as well. This is just a short of less than thirty minutes, but Yang revealed his surprisingly prodigious mastery of cinematic skills. In the eyes of contemporary Taiwanese film critics, *Expectation* is "the most stylistic and ambitious one among the four parts of *In Our Time*", as well as "the striking landmark of the long-expected Taiwan New Cinema."¹

In Our Time inaugurated the Taiwan New Cinema movement and rejuvenated the worn-out conventional Taiwan cinema industry. However, considering the amount of films released on the island then, the old-style commercial films rather than the films belonging to the Taiwan New Cinema movement remain the absolute majority within Taiwan film market. The major film directors of Taiwan New Cinema movement such as Hou Hsiao-hsien and Edward Yang are no more than marginalized filmmakers among Taiwan film industry. In the 1980s, Taiwan New Cinema had established an international reputation for the island with its continuous achievements in international film festivals, though its performance in box office steadily deteriorated in Taiwan film market. At the same time, domestically, the government's culture policy, the mass media's propaganda, and the film critics' comments, all threw cold water on Taiwan New Cinema. In a sense, Taiwan New Cinema movement came to an end in 1986.

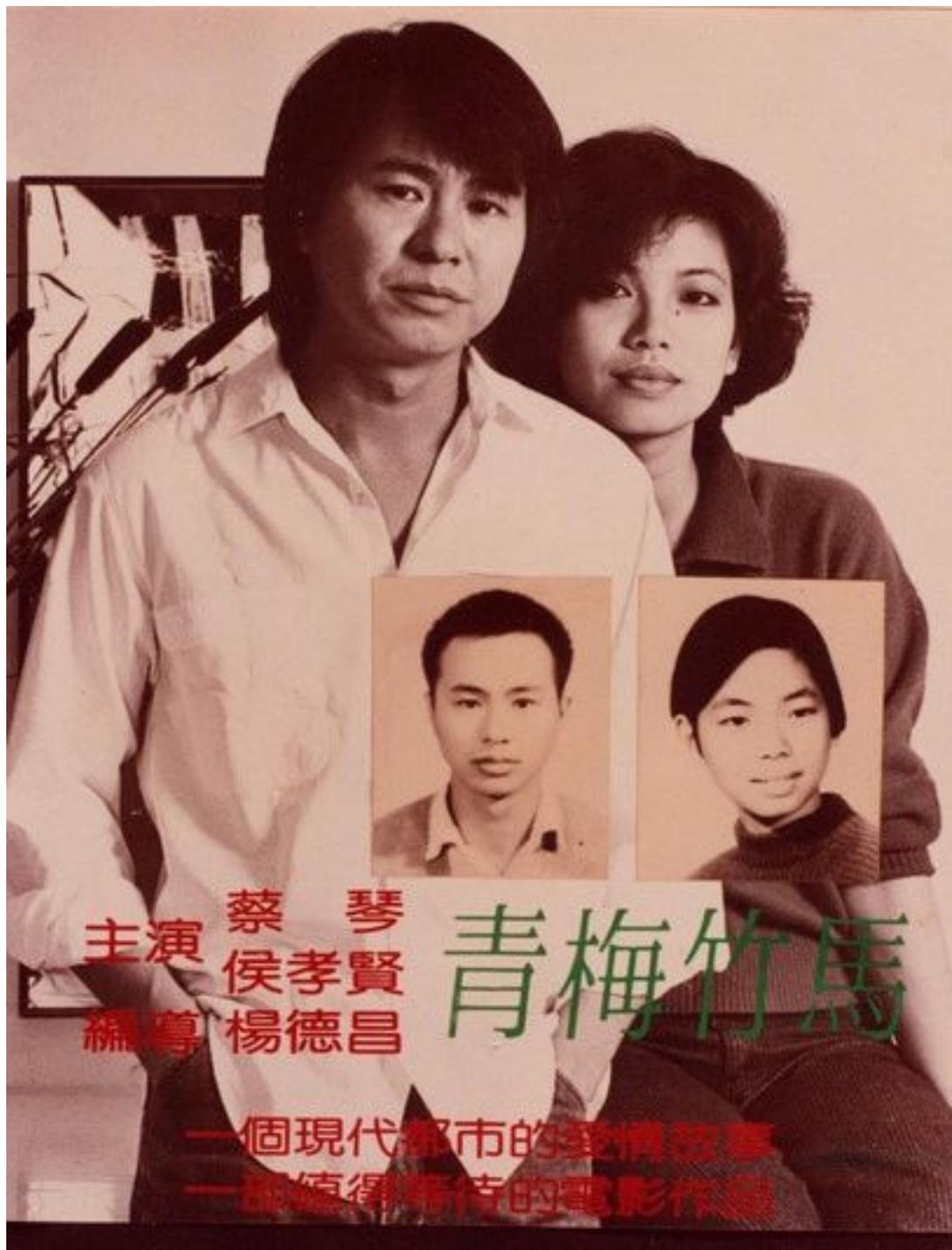
From 1982 to 1986, Edward Yang shot two features——*That Day, on the Beach* (1983) (《海灘的一天》; 『海辺の一日』) and *Taipei Story* (1985) (《青梅竹馬》; 『タイペイ・ストーリー』). Both of the two films are devoted to the investigation of the relations between the opposite sexes, which became popular in Taiwan cinema long before the Taiwan New Cinema movement. Mundane as the subject matter of the two films seemed, Yang made his successful exploitation and renovation in both themes and styles——efficacy of interpersonal communication, multiple-lined narrative structure, open ending, and frequent use of long shot and long take——for Taiwan cinema through these two works.

That Day, on the Beach is Yang's first feature, which depicts the decaying love between a young couple. From their first meet, to falling in love with each other, to getting married without the permission of the girl's parents, to their insipid and bickering marriage life, to the wife's discovery of her husband's infidelity, to the mysterious disappearance of the husband on the beach without knowing whether he is alive or not. The narration of the film however does not follow such a linear pattern but consists of at least two story lines——one about the young couple, the other about the girl's older brother and his former girlfriend. The development of narration is mainly motivated by the girl's recollection. Sometimes there are even further recollections within the sequences of her recollection. Contrasting strikingly to most conventional Taiwan film works, the end of *That Day, on the Beach* is quite open, with no one knowing whether the husband is dead or alive.

Taipei Story sets the vast and fast transformation of Taiwan from an agricultural to commercial

¹ 黃建業, "消逝的純真和碎裂的現實", 區桂枝編《楊德昌:臺灣對世界影史的貢獻》,臺北:躍升文化, 2007, 第10頁。

society as the backdrop of the film. It also tells a story of a young couple who are getting more and more weary of their present situation, especially their confusion and frustration concerning love. Many critics see *Taipei Story* as an exemplar showing the influence of European art film on Edward Yang—weakening the storyline, casting non-professional actors, capitalizing on long shots and long takes.



Taipei Story (1985)

Commercially, the grosses of the two films——*That Day, on the Beach* and *Taipei Story*——are distinctly different. *That Day, on the Beach* became one of most grossing films that year in Taiwan. This is thanks to two very popular film stars, Sylvia Chang (張艾嘉) and Terry Hu (胡因夢), starring in the film. *Taipei Story* was only run for four days due to its disastrous box office performance.

The years between *That Day, on the Beach* and *Taipei Story* witness the rise and fall of the Taiwan New Cinema movement. With the continuously declining commercial achievements of the films belonging to the Taiwan New Cinema movement, the environment became more and more unfriendly to these Taiwan New Cinema filmmakers and some film critics even equated the utter commercial failure of Yang's *Taipei Story* with the death of the Taiwan New Cinema movement. Certainly, commercial success is not the only valid standard to judge the value of a piece of artwork. Twenty years later, in 2005, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Chinese-language film, Hong Kong Film Awards (香港金像獎) publicized a list of “The Best 100 Chinese Motion Pictures” (最佳華語電影一百部) in the history of Chinese-language cinema, in which *Taipei Story* is ranked as the 80th.¹ In addition, in 2011, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the foundation of the Republic of China, Taipei Golden Horse Film Festival (台北金馬影展) organized a similar poll of “100 Greatest Chinese-Language Films” (影史百大華語電影) in the history of Chinese-language cinema, and *Taipei Story* once again appeared on the top 100 list, ranking the 50th.²

In 1986, Edward Yang released one of his best-known films, *The Terrorizers* (1986) (《恐怖份子》; 『恐怖份子』). This film tells a story connecting quite a number of unrelated characters and depicting how their lives get intersected. Three groups of complete strangers get their lives intertwined with each other in weird ways. In a sense *The Terrorizers* is an enigmatic thriller. It impressed the critics greatly with its multiple-layered themes, complicated narrative techniques, more-than-one opening end, and its daring exploitation on anonymous interpersonal relations in contemporary metropolis. With a bitter lesson learned from the poor box office performance of *Taipei Story*, the promotion campaign of *The Terrorizers* was greatly strengthened by Yang and his team upon the release of it. Seeing the posters for the film, the audience may have thought it was like a John Woo action or gangster movie. Whilst at the cinema they realized it was not that kind of movie——it was without the violent gunfires or blood-thirsty gang fights as in contemporary Hong Kong action films——and somehow difficult to understand. However, thanks to the misleading promotion campaign, *The Terrorizers* achieved both critical and commercial success. It won the Best Picture in that year's Golden Horse Film Awards (金馬獎), which is the highest honor in the Chinese-language film industry. The film's reputation even extends into the world of western intellectuals. Fredric Jameson devotes the second chapter of his book *The Geopolitical Aesthetics: Cinema and Space in the World System*——“Remapping Taipei”——to the analysis of

¹ Edward Yang has four films on the list of “The Best 100 Chinese Motion Pictures” by Hong Kong Film Awards, and they are *A Brighter Summer Day* (12th), *The Terrorizers* (41st), *Yi Yi* (56th), and *Taipei Story* (80th).

² Edward Yang has five and one fourth films on the list of “100 Greatest Chinese-Language Films” by Taipei Golden Horse Film Festival, and they are *A Brighter Summer Day* (2nd), *Yi Yi* (7th), *The Terrorizers* (11th), *That Day, on the Beach* (30th), *Taipei Story* (50th), and *In Our Time* (73rd).

The Terrorizers,¹ which helped introduce Edward Yang to many western film critics and scholars.



The Terrorizers (1986)

On January 24th 1987, Taiwan's *China Times* (《中國時報》) published "The 1987 Taiwan Cinema Proclamation: Give a Space of Existence for Another Kind of Cinema" (《民國七十六年臺灣電影宣言》). This statement is jointly signed by fifty-three Taiwanese film workers, including Edward Yang and Hou Hsiao-hsien. The statement aimed to condemn and counterattack the destroying influence on Taiwan New Cinema wielded by the culture policy of the government, the malfunction of mass media, and the slander of a group of film critics. This event marks a revolutionary moment in the Taiwan cinema history. In this statement, the new generation of Taiwanese film workers initiated "another kind of cinema" (另一種電影) which aimed to replace the declining Taiwan New Cinema and also carry on the spirit of it.² Although it seems the Taiwan New Cinema movement came to a standstill at this time, the statement is widely regarded as the

late-arrived charter of the movement for film scholars both then and today.

It is interesting to note that the original idea and first draft of the statement occurred at Yang's residence in Taipei—No. 69, Jinan Street (台北市濟南路 69 號)—on November 6th 1986, when young film workers gathered here celebrating Yang's 40th birthday.³ As a matter of fact, the conservative power within the Taiwan film industry has never ceased its attack against the young generation of Taiwan New Cinema. The works of the Taiwan New Cinema movement have also never become the mainstream of the island's film industry. However, the reviews and debates concerning the Taiwan New Cinema movement maintained the chief attention of the public during the whole 1980s. With the arrival of the statement, a new round of discussions on Taiwan New Cinema heated up. Lots of filmmakers involved in Taiwan New Cinema were interviewed by news media then, and many of them insisted that filmmaking practices are more important than empty talks and that the only way to defeat the conservative power in the Taiwan film industry is to make excellent film works of their own, which must achieve distinct success both critically and commercially.⁴

¹ Fredric James. *The Geopolitical Aesthetics: Cinema and Space in the World System* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), "Chapeter 2: Remapping Taipei". Its Chinese translation could be found in 詹明信, "重繪臺北新圖像", (馮淑貞譯), 鄭樹森編, 《文化批評與華語電影》, 桂林: 廣西師範大學出版社, 2003, 第 154-84 頁。

¹³ 葉龍彥, 《八〇年代臺灣電影史》, 新竹: 竹市影像博物館, 2003, 第 58-9 頁。

¹⁴ 讓-米歇爾·傅東, 《楊德昌的電影世界》, (楊海帝, 馮壽農譯), 北京: 商務印書館, 2011, 第 13 頁。

¹⁵ 李詠薇, 彭小芬, "臺灣 '新電影' 十七位工作者訪問錄", 《電影欣賞》, 第 26 期, 1987。

In 1989, Hou Hsiao-hsien won the Golden Lion Award at the Venice Film Festival with *A City of Sadness* (1989) (《悲情城市》). The film portrayed the tensions and conflicts between the local Taiwanese, i.e. islanders (本省人) and the newly arrived mainlanders (外省人) accompanying the retreats of the Nationalist government from mainland China onto the island. It is the first time that a Taiwan film won the top award at one of the three leading international film festivals. This Golden Lion not only presented a brilliant counterattack upon the conservative power, but also led to tremendous box office success for the film. For Edward Yang, it seemed the remarkable performance of *A City of Sadness* represented both a warm encouragement and a great stimulus.



A Brighter Summer Day (1991)

As the generally-acknowledged two forerunners of the Taiwan New Cinema, Hou Hsiao-hsien had already built an international reputation in Venice, and it was Yang's turn to shoot a classic of his own which could rival Hou's

marvelous *A City of Sadness*.

This partially explained why the production of *A Brighter Summer Day* (1991) (《牯嶺街少年殺人事件》; 『クーリンチェ少年殺人事件』), which was Yang's next work, was constantly extended and its whole producing progress lasted for five years.

In fact, since the lift of Taiwan Martial Law in 1987, Yang started preparing *A Brighter Summer Day* — the best Chinese-language film ever made in the eyes of many film critics. This film is based on a reported knifing of a fourteen-year-old girl by Mao Wu (茅武), a student of Taipei Municipal Jianguo High School. Yang was almost the same age as Mao, and studying at the same school when the murder occurred on June 15th, 1961. But in the film, both family status and study and love experience of Mao were replaced with Yang's own. Therefore, it may be said that *A Brighter Summer Day* was devoted by the director to commemorating the adolescent years of Yang and his generation who grew up in Taipei.

There are several minor storylines that overlap the major storyline of the teenage murder in *A Brighter Summer Day*. This film involves more than one hundred characters and lasts nearly four hours long. As complicated as it seems, the film showed Yang's ingenious techniques of narration.

Japanese film scholar Hasumi Shigehiko (蓮實重彦) said that he was amazed at the overwhelming vitality which runs through the film from the very beginning until the end and that like a creature with its own life “no matter which part you cut into the film, there would always be pouring out fresh blood of same high density.”¹ *A Brighter Summer Day* has multiple layers not only in its narrative structure but also in its subject matter. The audiences and critics can interpret this film from various perspectives—it could be about the conflicts between local islanders and newly arrived mainlanders; it could be about the white terror under Kuomintang’s high-handed rule on the island; it could be about the remaining influence of Japanese colonization on the everyday life of the Taiwanese in the post-Japanese-Occupation period; it could be about the tempestuous invasion of American popular culture into Taiwan society during the nineteen-sixties, especially among the youth..... Upon its release, *A Brighter Summer Day* achieved sweeping success both critically and commercially. Just like Hou Hsiao-hsien’s *A City of Sadness*, *A Brighter Summer Day* also prompted tremendous and lasting discussions on Taiwan’s past and present, particularly among the Taiwanese intellectuals. However, for Edward Yang, what remains a great regret for *A Brighter Summer Day* is, unlike Hou’s *A City of Sadness*, it did not have the chance to enter competition at leading international film festivals such as Berlin, Venice or Cannes. This was despite the fact it was such a great piece of work in the history of Chinese-language cinema and even world cinema. It is said that Cannes Film Festival politely declined *A Brighter Summer Day* that year, with a pretext that its screen time was too long to be acceptable. Although when it was released in France later on, it immediately reaped the high praises of film critics all around this country. After this, and for perhaps having a guilty conscience for the unfair treatment towards Edward Yang, Cannes Film Festival were extremely generous to him. Every time Yang submitted his new work to Cannes it always appeared in the competition list, such as *A Confucian Confusion* of 1994 and *Yi Yi* of 2000.²



A Confucian Confusion (1994)

After *A Brighter Summer Day*, Yang came into the transformation period of his film career—of course, for some critics, it is also regarded as a period when Yang hit the bottleneck of his cinematic creativity. His next two works, *A Confucian Confusion* (1994)(《獨立時代》;『恋愛時代』) and *Mahjong* (1996)(《麻將》;『カップルズ』), drew the story setting back to contemporary Taipei. The former focused on ten young Taiwanese and depicted several fragments of their metropolitan everyday life within forty-eight hours, revealing their own

frustrations and confusions. The latter concentrated on the encounter and conflict between a

¹ 蓮實重彦『映畫狂人日記』東京：河出書房新社、2009、p.28。

² 沈禕，“楊德昌，一個永遠處在遠景的觀察者：專訪電影《牯嶺街》、《獨立時代》、《恐怖分子》合作者鴻鴻”，《東方早報》，2012年6月29日。

French girl and a teenage gang of four boys in Taipei, reflecting upon the inner world of contemporary metropolitan adolescents. As comedies, these two films mightily impressed the Taiwan audience with the caricaturing portrayal of characters and the quick-witted languages. In fact, Yang continued his serious observation and criticism upon Taiwan society in these two works. The only difference is that the genre changed from historic epic of *A Brighter Summer Day* or melodrama of *That Day, on the Beach* into screwball comedy. Utilizing weird characters and resourceful lines, Yang condemned the continually deteriorating morality of Taipei after its economic miracle during the 1980s. However, the unexpected shift into comedy surprised many a critic. Through *A Confucian Confusion* Edmond Wong (黃建業) saw Yang saying farewell to the low-key and repressive stage characterizing his former works and displaying a wildly capricious look in his new picture.¹ Isabella Wu (吳佩慈) considered *Mahjong* as Yang's only work which quite indulgently releases the director's personal emotion and which most clearly airs his personal thinking.² However, generally speaking, commercially or critically, these two films were not quite satisfying, though there is no denying that as screwball comedy they did enrich this cinema sub-genre in the Chinese-language cinema history.



Yi Yi (2000)

There were another four years before the arrival of Yang's next and last work *Yi Yi* (2000) (《一一》; 『ヤンヤン夏の思い出』). Opening with a wedding and closing with a funeral, through the perspectives of three main characters — father, daughter and son — *Yi Yi* portrays the members of a contemporary Taipei family consisting of three generations and explores their inner worlds in an amazing depth. Different from *A Confucian Confusion* or *Mahjong*, *Yi Yi* resumed Yang's reserved and composed style. But dissimilar to all of Yang's former works, *Yi Yi* is unusually permeated with a tender affection. *Yi Yi* is another masterpiece of Yang's oeuvre, which won him the Best Director award at Cannes Film Festival as well as the Best Picture from National Society of Film Critics in the United States in 2000. One thing that remains

¹ 黃建業,《楊德昌電影研究:臺灣電影的知性思辨家》,臺北:遠流,1995,第184-5頁。

² 吳佩慈,“楊德昌及其風格的緣起”,讓·米歇爾·傅東,《楊德昌的電影世界》,(楊海帝,馮壽農譯),北京:商務印書館,2011,第218頁。

regrettable for both Edward Yang and his fans in Taiwan is that *Yi Yi* has never been shown to the public on the island due to complicated copyright and distribution problems.

During the years after *Yi Yi*, Yang had been quietly battling cancer until he died at his residence in Los Angeles on June 29th, 2007. It is said that Yang had still been preparing his new film——an animated feature titled *The Wind* (《追風》) about Chinese martial arts——in his last days.

From *Expectation* of 1982 to *Yi Yi* of 2000, there are only 7¼ films completed in Yang's cinematic career. Compared with many highly productive filmmakers, Edward Yang shot his films in a measured and scrupulous way. In a sense, it is true that the lack of supportive investment resulted in Yang's low productivity in the amount of works he produced. If Yang did not insist on his artistic principles in making serious movies, and capitalized on his well-established reputation in the Chinese-language film industry, it is highly probable that he would realize lots of filming plans for commercial movies with the strong support of cinema investors. However, Yang persevered and also did not compromise. Thanks to Yang's strenuous insistence, it becomes possible that the Chinese-language film history has become much more glamorous and glorious owing to these Yang-made film classics.

3. Literature on Edward Yang

In this thesis, the reference materials about Edward Yang and his film works will be restricted to books and articles written in Chinese, English and Japanese. In fact, the books on Edward Yang remain very small in number, while articles about him and his works have reached a large quantity though most of them only deal with his individual films.

Since his death in 2007 and with worldwide recognition of his cinematic achievements gradually increasing, Yang and his film works have won more and more attention in academic fields both domestically and internationally.

As for the articles about Yang and his works, there are three types. The first type of article focuses on one of Yang's films —— mostly *A Brighter Summer Day* or *Yi Yi* —— and elaborates the analysis on certain aspects of the film. The second type of article covers several or all of Yang's films and discusses a certain aspect of them, such as national identity, globalization, narrative techniques, etc. The third type of article makes a comparative study of Yang and his contemporary filmmakers, such as Hou Hsiao-hsien, usually setting in the context of the Taiwan New Cinema movement.

Considering the difficulties in reviewing such a large number of articles on Yang and his works, the following will be dedicated to a brief introduction of several academically influential books on Yang and his films. However, those illuminating viewpoints glittering in the large number of articles mentioned above, will be cited throughout this thesis.

Chronically, the first book on Edward Yang——in a sense it is also the most seminal one——is Edmond Wong’s *Edward Yang: An Intellectual Thinker of Taiwan Cinema* (《楊德昌電影研究：臺灣電影的知性思辨家》，臺北：遠流，1995). Wong is the former director of the Chinese Taipei Film Archive (臺灣國家電影資料館), and he and Peggy Chiao (焦雄屏) are widely considered the two leading film critics in the Taiwan New Cinema movement. Wong’s book begins with Yang’s growing-up experiences and the social background of the Taiwan New Cinema movement. It then gives a detailed analysis of Yang’s works from *Expectation* of 1982 to *A Confucian Confusion* of 1994, finally draws an open-end conclusion on Yang’s up-to-then film career. Wong’s book also includes Yang’s interviews, personal chronology, and filmography in the appendix. Through the book, Wong’s appraisal of Yang as “the intellectual thinker of Taiwan cinema” has become a widely accepted and often quoted comment. Wong praises highly the distinctly analytic reason, sharp social observance and constant cinematic innovation throughout Yang’s film career. In Wong’s eyes, “the rational cinematic style developed by Edward Yang represents a unique and promising factor in contemporary Chinese-language cinema”¹, and Yang’s cinematic achievements have already proved that he is a prominent figure characterized by incomparable thematic and stylistic originality in the history of Chinese-language cinema.²



Mahjong (1996)

However, one dissatisfying aspect of this book is that Wong could not incorporate Yang’s later works such as *Mahjong* of 1996 and *Yi Yi* of 2000 into his excellent analyses due to the early writing and publishing of the book.

The second book on Yang and his films *An Edward Yang Reader* (『楊德昌電影讀本』李鳳宇編、東京：シネカノン、1995) is written in Japanese and was published in July, 1995 in Japan, only about six months after Wong’s book which was published in January of 1995. It is an anthology consisting of articles on Yang and his works by many major Japanese film critics such as Hasumi Shigehiko (蓮実重彦) and Yomota Inuhiko (四方田犬彦). Among these articles,

Hasumi Shigehiko gives an insightful analysis of *A Confucian Confusion*, discovering a latent sense of despair looming behind this somehow hysterical screw-ball comedy. Tarumi Chie (垂水千恵) explores the Japanese elements in Yang’s works, because Taiwan has a fifty-year-long history as a colony of Japan. Tsutsui Takefumi (筒井武文) concentrates his essay on the techniques of lighting, sound and framing of Yang’s cinema. In this book, an interview with Yang conducted by Yomota Inuhiko is of particular significance, for it includes Yang’s own talk about his two plays staged during the early 1990s——*Likely Consequence*(1992) (《如果》) and *Period of Growth* (1993) (《成長季節》)——and their influence on his filmmaking. The discussion on

¹ 黃建業，《楊德昌電影研究：臺灣電影的知性思辨家》，臺北：遠流，1995，第15頁。

² Ibid, p.184.

these two experimental plays in his cinematic career could rarely be found in other books on Edward Yang. The fact that Edward Yang's cinematic achievements attracted such early and earnest attention in Japan is partially attributed to his impressive performance at the Tokyo International Film Festival with *A Brighter Summer Day* in 1991, which won Special Jury Prize that year at T.I.F.F.. Another reason could be the continuously intimate cultural exchanges between Taiwan and Japan owing to their unusual historical relationship.

In 2005, the first English-language book on Edward Yang by film critic John Anderson — — *Edward Yang*, Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005——was published in the United States. Anderson once served as chair of New York Film Critics Circle and is a member of National Society of Film Critics, and he also writes film reviews for *Los Angeles Times*, *Washington Post* and other publications. The construction of Anderson's book is similar to Wong's. Anderson first gives a detailed introduction about social and cultural conditions of Taiwan in the second half of the twentieth century, which bred the Taiwan New Cinema movement and its prominent representatives such as Edward Yang and Hou Hsiao-hsien. Thus Anderson begins his intensive analysis of Yang's film works one by one from *Expectation* of 1982 to *Yi Yi* of 2000. At the end of his book, Anderson attaches an extremely lengthy interview with Yang, which originates from several separate and relatively short interviews he held with Yang between 2000 and 2002. Anderson regards Yang as “a poet of film, a director less interested perhaps in pure image than in ideas, a director whose work is often so sophisticated in its thinking that it should be accompanied by footnotes.”¹ Anderson brings a wide range of perspectives into his analyses, such as feminism, colonialism, Confucianism and globalization. Compared with many Yang's critics with a Chinese cultural background, Anderson's western angles often reveal some new horizons in Yang's research. For instance, Anderson compares *That Day, on the Beach* with *Citizen Kane* (1941), and says that these two films as debut features of Edward Yang and Orson Welles “present[s] a filmmaker fully formed, one as adept with the stylistic facets of storytelling as he is with storytelling itself.”² Coming from the States, Anderson also acutely points out the Americanism frequently reflected in Yang's films, such as McDonald's and NY Bagels scenes in *Yi Yi's* Taipei, which discloses an irresistible cultural invasion of western consumerism.³

Following Yang's unexpected death of cancer in June of 2007, Taiwan Golden Horse International Film Festival soon published the book *Edward Yang: Taiwan's Contribution to World Film History* (《楊德昌：臺灣對世界電影的貢獻》，區桂芝編，臺北：躍升文化，2007) to commemorate this cinematic giant of the island. On the inside page of this book, it prints as follows——this book is dedicated to paying our silent tribute to Edward Yang, to expressing our great grief on behalf of the Chinese-language film industry, to showing our deep regret for the world film history. This book consists of ten articles on Edward Yang and his works, among which Edmond Wong's article “Disappearing innocence and shattering reality” (“消逝的純真和碎裂的現實”) serves as an introduction and gives a comprehensive description of Yang's film career. Wong compares Yang to two other film giants who also died in 2007——Michelangelo Antonioni and Ingmar Bergman.

¹ John Anderson. *Edward Yang* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005), p.1.

² Ibid, p.26.

³ Ibid, p.92.



That Day, on the Beach (1983)

“They are navigators among the modernist and humanist filmmakers, whose fundamentalist-like modernist inclination, and not-easily-accessible and uncompromising modernist persistence, seem extremely valuable in present world film industry.”¹ Each of the other nine articles focuses

¹ 黃建業，“消逝的純真和碎裂的現實”，區桂枝（編）《楊德昌：臺灣對世界影史的貢獻》，臺北：躍升文化，2007，第8頁。

on one of Yang's film works, and several of them are taken from Edmond Wong's book, *Edward Yang: An Intellectual Thinker of Taiwan Cinema*, such as the articles on *Expectation*, *That Day*, *on the Beach* and *A Confucian Confusion*. The other five articles on *Taipei Story*, *The Terrorizers*, *A Brighter Summer Day*, *Mahjong* and *Yi Yi* come from the prominent Chinese-speaking film scholars like Peggy Chiao, Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh (葉月瑜) and Isabella Wu. At the end of each article follows an interview with Edward Yang—except the article on *Yi Yi*—mostly about the production of the film discussed earlier. Most of the interviews come from Edmond Wong's book. At the end of this book, there is a bio-and-filmography of Edward Yang, which is edited by Ou Guizhi (區桂芝), that would help to readers' further understanding of Yang's cinematic career.

The most recently published book on Edward Yang and his works is Jean-Michel Frodon's *Le Cinéma d'Edward Yang* (Paris: Editions de l'éclat, 2010).¹ Frodon is the former chief editor of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, and this book is the first book on Yang written in French. Frodon's book consists of four parts—le regard vivant d'Edward Yang; les films; documents iconographiques; textes, témoignages, essais. The first part is a rather detailed introduction of Yang's film career, which mentions Yang's undertaking of internet business—Yang started his own internet company, miluku.com in his late years—and renders readers some new information about Yang's career map. The second part reviews Yang's 7¼ films one by one chronologically. With a profound experience of film watching and reviewing, especially his extraordinary familiarity with



“Expectation” of *In Our Time* (1982)

European film works and theories, Frodon frequently reveals the influence of European art cinema on Yang's works in an insightful way. For example, he thinks, Yang's debut short *Expectation* shows the impact of both Robert Bresson's *Quatre nuits d'un reveur* and Michelangelo Antonioni's *Il Deserto Rosso*; in *Yi Yi*, the young child Yang-Yang's way of framing while taking photos, both represents the style of Giles Deleuze and Henri Bergson, and embraces the spirit of André Bazin and Jean Luc Godard. The third part

exhibits quite a number of Yang's manuscript drawings for shooting preparation or self-amusement, and thus provides some precious original materials for Yang's researchers who want a better understanding of Yang's filmmaking processes. The last part collects two articles by Yang himself—“Le colorieur et l'identiqueur”(“顏色藥水和一樣藥”) and “Une nouvelle ecriture”(“新的書寫方式”)—and several articles in memory of Edward Yang by some well-known filmmakers such as Martin Scorsese, Hou Hsiao-hsien, Oliver Assayas and Jia Zhangke (賈樟柯).

¹ Its Chinese translation—《杨德昌的电影世界》(杨海帝, 冯寿农译, 北京: 商务印书馆, 2011)—was published by Commercial Press in Beijing in 2011.

4. Analyzing Yang's Film Works

As shown in the above-mentioned literature review of the studies of Edward Yang and his film works, it is clear that almost all of the books on Edward Yang fall into the following pattern: first, they provide a comprehensive introduction of Yang's film career while giving prominence to the historical and political context of Taiwan society; thus chronologically, they carry out further analyses of Yang's film works one by one in detail. Certainly, the studies of Yang's films conducted in such a way have distinct advantages. They help readers to easily find clues of the developments and changes in a director's themes and styles during his cinematic career and thus form a clear picture of a director's career map. However, for a giant of film art like Edward Yang, the research on his works should not be confined so narrowly. The research could be viewed from other perspectives. For example, the specialized studies focusing on Yang's film techniques and styles, or the biographical studies exploring Yang's personal life, or other detailed studies emphasizing one particular aspect of Yang or his works.

With this in mind, this thesis aims to conduct a research on Yang's film works in a relatively different way. Focusing on several recurring themes of Yang's films, the thesis attempts to probe into each theme in depth within the context of Yang's film oeuvre. It is believed that such an approach would help readers sufficiently explore the inner world of Edward Yang, a filmmaker who is widely celebrated as an "intellectual thinker"¹ of Chinese-language cinema.

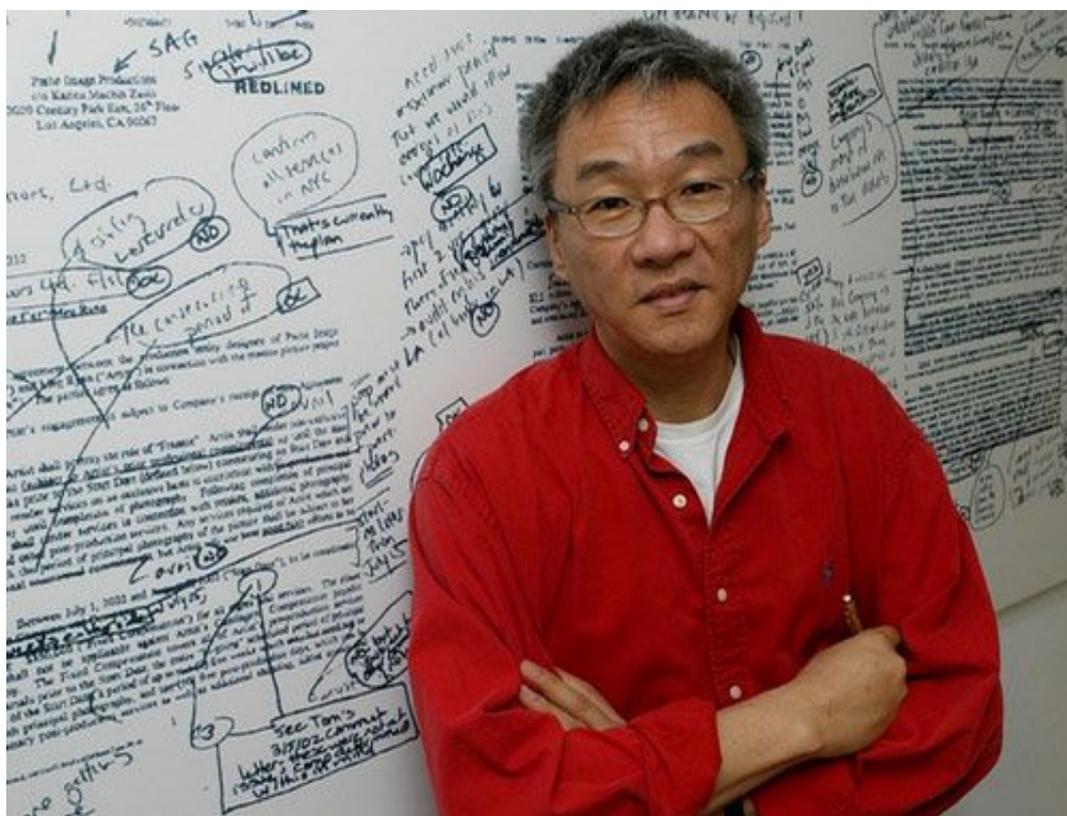
The themes discussed in this thesis are as follows——adolescence, love, life, death, and Taipei, each of which will be explored thoroughly in one or two chapters. The reflection on love and life is thought of as the motive force of artistic creation at all times. Certainly, the scrutiny of Yang's representation of love and life on the screen will throw an insight into the director's innermost spiritual world. And the subject matter of adolescence is also of particular significance to Edward Yang studies, for adolescent characters run through nearly all of Yang's film works and assume an important role in his masterpieces such as *The Terrorizers*, *A Brighter Summer Day*, and *Yi Yi*. In addition, the theme of adolescence itself is also inescapably linked with other themes such as love or life. Therefore, the exploration of adolescence in Yang's films will be intentionally divided into two chapters, devoted to the discussion of Yang's cinematic representation of adolescent girls and adolescent boys respectively. As critic John Anderson points out, what Taipei means to Edward Yang, is just like what Dublin means to James Joyce, or what New York means to Woody Allen. They are intriguing cases in the world art history because the creative career of an artist seldom has such a close link with a specific city like them.² Taipei is the common backdrop for all of Yang's 7¼ films, and in a sense Yang's film works could be read as a chronicle of Taipei from the 1960s to the early 21st century. To analyze Yang's films, Taipei is a topic impossible to shun. Hence, the main parts of this thesis consist of five chapters, discussing Yang's representation of adolescent girls, adolescent boys, love, life& death, and Taipei in his films respectively.

Academic research needs theoretical guidance. This thesis mainly looks to cultural studies for its

¹ Film critic Edmond Wong first employed "an intellectual thinker of Taiwan cinema" to praise Edward Yang in his book *Edward Yang: An Intellectual Thinker of Taiwan Cinema*, and Wong's remark is widely accepted as a consensus among Chinese-speaking film critics nowadays while discussing Yang and his works.

² See John Anderson. *Edward Yang* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005), p.2.

theoretical navigation. As a field of academic studies, cultural studies is characterized by its interdisciplinarity; as a form of art, cinema is unique for its combination of many art forms. Discussing what is theory, Jonathan Culler once listed four main points of theory, and the first one is “interdisciplinary”, that is, discourse with effects outside an original discipline——the other three points are “analytical and speculative”, “a critique of common sense” and “reflexive”.¹ Theory is interdisciplinary, and it is almost impossible to avoid drawing on other theories while applying one theory. Moreover, film is a comprehensive art form, which decides that film studies should absorb and adopt theories of various art forms and academic fields. “Film is a significant site for the confluence of representational traditions associated with literature, art, theatre, and music,” Mary Ann Doane says, thus film itself “seems to demand an interdisciplinary approach.”² Robert Stam conveys a similar view, “film theory is rarely ‘pure’; it is usually laced with an admixture of literary criticism, social commentary, and philosophical speculation.”³



Edward Yang (1947-2007)

The different theoretical approaches applied in each chapter are as follows. The second chapter entitled “The Body That Hurts” adopts theories of body studies and gender studies, and it aims to scrutinize the representation of adolescent girls in Yang’s films and reevaluate the widely-accepted view that Yang’s films are feminist tendentious works which could be classified as women’s films. The third chapter entitled “Struggling Through the Rites of Passage” capitalizes on the concept of

¹ Jonathan Culler. *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.14-5.

² Mary Ann Doane. *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, and Psychoanalysis* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), p.6.

³ Robert Stam. *Film Theory: An Introduction* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), p.5. Or see the Chinese translation of this book: 勞勃·史坦 (Robert Stam), 《電影理論解讀》, (陳儒修, 郭幼龍譯), 臺北: 遠流, 2002, 第 15 頁。

rites of passage, which is initiated and elaborated by anthropologists Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner, and attempts to explore Yang's inner spiritual world behind those adolescent boys in his films, who are usually regarded as Yang's semi-autobiographical alter egos. The fourth chapter entitled "The Bittersweet Eros" employs theories about desire and eros by Sigmund Freud, René Girard, Denis de Rougemont and other theorists, and probes into the cinematic world of love and desire in Yang's films. Many critics often compare Edward Yang with the European film giants Michelangelo Antonioni and Ingmar Bergman, both of whom are considered as filmmakers strongly influenced by existentialism. With this in mind, the fifth chapter entitled "The Weight of Being" focuses on the representation of life and death in Yang's films and discusses the impact of existentialism upon Yang's works. Utilizing theories of alienation by Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim and Karl Mannheim, chapter six "Lost in Metropolitan Taipei" will examine the city of Taipei and its people represented in Yang's films and analyze Yang's critical observation on contemporary urban life.

Chapter Two

The Body That Hurts

I know no woman—virgin, mother, lesbian, married, celibate—whether she earns her keep as a house wife, a cocktail waitress, or a scanner of brain wave—for whom her body is not a fundamental problem: its clouded meaning, its fertility, its desire, its so-called frigidity, its bloody speech, its silence, its changes and mutilations, its rapes and ripenings.¹

—Adrienne Rich

1. Adolescent Girls in Yang's Films

When evaluating Edward Yang's cinematic achievements, many film critics will begin with his first work *Expectation* (《指望》, 1982). This is one of the four shorts included in the anthology entitled *In Our Time* (《光陰的故事》) by four young Taiwanese directors, which inaugurated the Taiwan New Cinema Movement and announced a new era of Taiwan and even Chinese language film industry. *Expectation* gives a vivid depiction of the confusion and depression of an adolescent girl, Hsiao-fen (小芬) around her menarche. The first shot of this short is given to a close-up of Hsiao-fen's somehow timid and helpless facial expression.

For those familiar with Yang's films, it is not a surprise that the future master of Chinese language film gave the first shot of his cinematic career to a girl's face close-up. The image of adolescent girls will run through almost all of Yang's eight films. After *Expectation*, Yang finished his first feature *That Day, on the Beach* (《海灘的一天》, 1983), in which many of the flashbacks are used to depict the adolescent years of Jia-ji (林佳莉), the lead female character. In Yang's third work *Taipei Story* (《青梅竹馬》, 1985), Ling (阿玲), younger sister of the female lead Chin, is just a supporting character, but it is her role that puts forward the plot development since it is one of her juvenile friends who killed Lon, the male lead. The following two works *The Terrorizers* (《恐怖份子》, 1986) and *A Brighter Summer Day* (《牯嶺街少年殺人事件》1991), are now considered masterpieces both of Edward Yang and of the Taiwan cinema industry. Two girl characters, White Chick (淑安) and Ming (小明), respectively, play a key role in accomplishing the extremely complicated and ingenious narrative structure of the two works. Next to them, *A Confucian Confusion* (《獨立時代》, 1994) is the only work of Edward Yang without an adolescent female character. However, a French girl named Martre plays the main character in Yang's next film *Mahjong* (《麻將》, 1995). At the end of the last century, Yang released his last work *Yi Yi* (《一一》,

¹ Adrienne Rich. *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1986), p. 284.



The close-up of Hsiao-fen at the very beginning of *Expectation*, the debut short of Edward Yang

2000) which is another masterpiece in Chinese language film history. This is an epic family story seen through the eyes of three different characters: the middle-aged father, the young son and the teenage daughter Ting-Ting(婷婷). Besides Ting-Ting, her neighbor, another female teenager Lili(莉莉) also assumes an important role in this film.¹

Therefore, the frequent or continuous appearance of adolescent girls except in *A Confucian Confusion* becomes a conspicuous characteristic of Edward Yang's films. It seems necessary to conduct an analysis of these young girls to get a better understanding of Yang's cinema and even Edward Yang himself.

2. Hsiao-fen's Troubles

In Yang's cinematic career, the representation of adolescent girls begins with Hsiao-fen in *Expectation*. Hsiao-fen is also the first cinematic figure appearing on the screen among more than 100 fictional characters created by Edward Yang during his cinematic career.

¹ To define the phrase "an adolescent girl" is a difficult task, for there are different views on the age-limit for adolescent girls. It becomes even more difficult to find out the exact age of a fictional character in a film. Therefore, in this chapter, Yang's female characters of primary school and high school are tentatively selected as the objects for discussion. For this reason, the young female characters such as Ching-Ching (谭蔚青) of *That Day, on the Beach*, and S'ir's eldest sister (大姐) of *A Brighter Summer Day*, will be ignored here because their stories take place after their high school years.

Expectation is a story about the growing pains of Hsiao-fen, a middle school girl, and the changes and troubles brought on by her menarche. For girls, menarche is a critical embodied transition in life, which means an abrupt farewell to childhood and an unexpected arrival of adulthood. However, confronted with such a sudden bodily change, particularly the accompanying bleeding and pain, it seems that the journey to adulthood is destined to be more difficult for girls than for boys.

“Menarche is an event that symbolizes both reproductive and sexual potential and centers attention on the body.”¹ In *Expectation*, there lies implicit comparison between different young bodies, female and male—the body of Hsiao-fen/that of a small boy, her close friend; the body of Hsiao-fen’s old sister/that of a male college student, the new lodger of their family. At this transitional moment in her life, her body seems to form the source of Hsiao-fen’s troubles. Firstly, it is the physical pains resulting from menarche. “I don’t feel well,” Hsiao-fen says to her sister one night. “Go to bed early, then,” her sister replies indifferently. Menarche also brings the horror and embarrassment when the body is bleeding. In one scene of the short, Hsiao-fen is awakened



Hsiao-fen is awakened by the onset of her first period, in *Expectation*

by the onset of her first period. When she looks under the sheets, she shows a helpless and somewhat frightened facial expression. Then she looks to her sister’s bed. No one is there. She cries for her mother. No one comes. She is left alone in the night to face this critical change in her life. There are some subtle psychological changes accompanying the bodily transition for girls. “Sister, when did

you start liking boys?” The coming of the young lodger exacerbates Hsiao-fen’s sweet anxieties.

In comparison to Hsiao-fen, the body of the small boy shows something quite different. There is a developmental gap between girls and boys, and the bodily changes of boys come a bit slower and much smoother than girls. Therefore for boys, the growing pains may not be so sharp and obvious. The “periodically wounded” body of adolescent girls not only brings physical pains, it also confines the freedom of a girl’s actions in everyday life. “One day nothing is the same again, her body has gone through irrevocable shifts, which necessitate a new sense of embodied self. Even

¹ Janet Lee. “Menarche and the (Hetero)sexualization of the Female Body”, Rose Weitz. Ed. *The Politics of Women’s Bodies: Sexuality, Appearance and Behavior*, 3rd Edition, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 116.

the most commonplace everyday actions, to sit, to walk, to run, to behave normally, can become problematic.”¹ Obviously, for boys in the same process of embodied transition, it will not be a problem. In one scene of *Expectation*, after Hsiao-fen’s first period, the small boy meets her on their way home. “Why don’t you go riding any more? When will you go with me to learn?” the boys asks, for they learned to ride a bicycle together before. “Go by yourself!” was Hsiao-fen’s answer as she seemed a little irritated. At the end of this short, the small boy repeats his dreams to Hsiao-fen “From now on, I want to ride the bicycle every Sunday. I can ride wherever I want to go.” “I’ll dribble a ball to school every day.” Hearing so many “every Sunday” “every day” in the boy’s future plan, Hsiao-fen could not say a word and silence is the only answer from her.

This kind of comparison between the young bodies of boys and girls is shown frequently in *A Brighter Summer Day* too. In this film, Ming, the teenage girl in middle school and the lead character, gets her first frontal shot when she is playing basketball with Tiger, also a middle school student and one of her boyfriends in the school’s gymnasium. Ming looks shorter, slower and weaker in front of Tiger, and it is almost an impossible task for her to win the basketball from Tiger. What she eventually does is to pretend to get angry and shout “you are cheating, Tiger.” The next scene moves to the school’s clinic, and Ming is receiving treatment for her injured shin. The narration of these stories in Yang’s films seems unbiased, but there is still a sense of assessment in the difference between male and female bodies—order/disorder, robust/fragile, healthy/sick. The male body is generally considered the norm in medical practice, while the female body, especially as to its menstruation perceived as the failure to produce, represents decay and disorder.²



Ming (left) and Tiger are playing basketball on indoor basketball court at school, in *A Brighter Summer Day*

¹ Shirley Prendergast. ‘To Become Dizzy in Our Turning’: Girls, Body, Maps and Gender as Childhood Ends’, Alan Prout. Ed. *The Body, Childhood and Society* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 2000), p. 103.

² Alexandra Howson. *The Body in Society: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004), p.86.

Menstrual blood may bring girls more troubles than other physical pains as the blood trespasses the boundary of body and becomes visible. In most cultures, West or East, blood is conventionally associated with evil images such as murder, death, conspiracy, and so on.¹ It seems that the



White Chick is sitting in a surgical ward after she has broken her leg while escaping from the police raid, in *The Terrorizers*

female body starts to get an ominous shadow right after its first period. In some traditional Chinese families, the male family member may not be allowed to drop family rubbish for the rubbish may include some “women’s mess” which could bring bad luck to him.²

Therefore, women

on their periods must conceal and eradicate the traces of their menstruation, otherwise it is believed the males close to them will meet with bad luck. This kind of task gradually becomes a responsibility for women, and if they fail to hide the traces of menstruation they will get blamed and even resented. In *Expectation*, there is an interesting scene where after Hsiao-fen’s first period she is seen to be hanging out the washing to dry in the courtyard by herself. It is menarche that sharpens adolescent girls’ awareness of the need for hygiene and secrecy, and consequently they will bring their own bodies into the horizon of medical gaze to accept the bodily discipline more willingly.

In Edward Yang’s cinema, the depiction of links between girls and clinics or hospitals is frequently shown. Jia-ji of *That Day, on the Beach* spent her childhood and adolescence in the private clinic of her father, which is also in the house of her family. Besides this, both her father and her elder brother are doctors, and her father even arranges for her to marry to the son of a gynecologist. In *Taipei Story* Ling borrows money from her elder sister Chin to get an abortion, and Chin advises her to visit a well-qualified clinic instead of a cheap one. White Chick of *The Terrorizers* is taken back home from hospital by her mother after she wrenched her leg trying to escape the police raid. At the end of this film she will have a duel with another male doctor in Yang’s works, Lee Li-chung.

Among these encounters between girls and clinics or hospitals or doctors, the one between Ming and a young doctor in *A Brighter Summer Day* is most well-depicted. They might have got to

¹ Concerning menstrual taboo, particularly the taboo against blood, one telling example is, it is a common way for the sanitary-product advertising to avoid menstrual blood by pouring a blue liquid on its product to demonstrate its absorptiveness.

² Janet Lee. “Menarche and the (Hetero)sexualization of the Female Body”, Rose Weitz. Ed. *The Politics of Women’s Bodies: Sexuality, Appearance and Behavior*, 3rd Edition, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 104.

know each other after Ming got her leg injured while playing basketball with Tiger. It seems that Ming comes into the young male doctor's view as a symptomatic body, and receives her treatment submissively and obediently. As they become more familiar with each other, Ming, the rebellious girl—or promiscuous, depending on how the audience interprets her purposes—somewhat seduces the young doctor. Consequently the girl's body changes from a symptomatic body into a spectacular body. The body of an adolescent girl actually represents a special kind of spectacle—increasingly developed breast and hips, menstrual pains and bleeding, and even unexpected pregnancies for some girls. The female body is a symptomatic spectacle, and also a spectacular symptom. Correspondingly, Ming's body is placed under the double gaze of the young doctor—his clinic gaze and his erotic gaze. Rather than be objectified, Ming challenges the power of the doctor's authority and seeks what she wants through her bodily spectacle. However, at the end of the film, when Ming is murdered, the newspaper reporters gather around the clinic of the young doctor and claim that he is having an affair with the school girl. It is not difficult to imagine that when such a report is published, the reputation and even the career of the young doctor will be destroyed. This episode implies that the more spectacular a female body appears, the more symptomatic—dangerous, contagious, fatal, etc.—it may be. Without a strict discipline it will bring ill fortune to those who come close to it, especially males. But Ming's body is not so docile to be disciplined, and it will revolt whenever it gets a chance. Therefore, the last—perhaps the best as well—choice to deal with such an obstinate and unruly body is to erase it, then the audience see that Ming falls under S'ir's knife at the end of the film.

3. Electra's Grievance and Hatred

In *A Brighter Summer Day*, following the death of Ming, her single mother, who makes a life working as a maid, tries to commit suicide but fails and is saved. Girls living with a single mother are the majority of the adolescent female characters in Edward Yang's films. From Hsiao-fen



White Chick (left) is taken back from hospital by her mother, in *The Terrorizers*

sisters of *Expectation*, to White Chick of *The Terrorizers*, to Ming of *A Brighter Summer Day*, to Lili of *Yi Yi*, almost all the key adolescent female characters of Yang's films are from single-mother families. Maybe they could be interpreted as a

group of Electras, mourning their lost father, desiring a paternal love, and looking for a substitute

to fill the void. “The loss of the father, either by death or alienation, usually symbolizes or parallels a loss of faith in the values of the hero’s home and family and leads inevitably to the search for a substitute parent or creed”.¹ At the same time, the mother-daughter relationship in Yang’s cinematic depiction is often not perfect and even antagonistic sometimes. As to the suicide of Ming’s mother as mentioned, it could also feasibly be read as the despair for the loss of her future economic support rather than a deep love for her only daughter.

In *Expectation*, Hsiao-fen lives in a family consisting of only female members—a middle-class working mother, a senior school elder sister and herself. For a girl living in such family, the difficulties brought on by menarche should be smoothed over easily and quickly. “Mothers could smooth the transition and mediate if male members of the family became aware of what had happened and how they responded. In addition, mothers could ensure that girls did not have to deal immediately with remembering dates and buying their own supplies unless they wished.”² The fact of no male family members could give another big plus for a smooth transition for



Hsiao-fen’s elder sister goes to sleep after she comes back home from a date, in *Expectation*

Hsiao-fen. But things in her family are quite different. It seems that Hsiao-fen is only an ignored existence in this family, and she is more like Cinderella living with her step-mother and her daughter rather than living with her own mother and sister. Moreover, she is not as lucky as Cinderella; even the glass slippers are robbed and worn away by her elder sister when her prince,

¹ Jerome Hamilton Buckley. *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), p.19.

² Shirley Prendergast. “‘To Become Dizzy in Our Turning’: Girls, Body, Maps and Gender as Childhood Ends”, Alan Prout. Ed. *The Body, Childhood and Society* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 2000), p. 112.

the young lodger appears. Bodily comparison is also drawn between Hsiao-fen's sister and the young lodger. The sister is a beautiful girl in her late adolescence and there are sets of close-ups in the film to highlight her charming, well-developed female body—long legs, slim waist, sweet face, full-grown breast and so on. However, the possessor of such an attractive female body has a problematic personality—indifferent to her younger sister and mother, lazy with her study, even dating different guys at the same time. It becomes difficult for the audience to form a positive attitude towards the attractive female. In comparison, a set of close-ups of the muscular body of the young lodger expresses a different attitude towards the young male in the same film. Firstly, the director chooses high-key light and warm background colors such as red and orange to set off the young male muscular body in cinematography. Secondly, as to plot design, the young lodger just comes back from basketball playing, with a naked wide chest radiating vigor and energy. And he so willingly accepts the request of his landlady to help the maleless family to move heavy bricks in courtyard, that the audience cannot help but appreciate him and his body. From Hsiao-fen's point of view, both her sister and the young lodger have well-formed young and attractive bodies, but there is an implicit ethical difference lying beneath them. The body of her sister gives off indifference, coldness and even a sense of evil while that of the lodger offers heat, warmth and protection. Then, in *Expectation*, Hsiao-fen's sister assumes the role of Electra's



The young lodger helps Hsiao-fen's family in moving bricks in courtyard, in *Expectation*

mother of the Greek myth, and the rivalry for husband/father between mother and daughter changes into a rivalry for father's substitute between sisters. The two comparisons between the young female and male bodies—Hsiao-fen/the small boy, Hsiao-fen's sister/the young tenant—both represent a dislike, fear, and even a hatred towards the female body. The first

comparison reveals a kind of women's self-hatred—for instance, the pains and bleeding resulting from menstruation brings endless troubles to girls like Hsiao-fen. The second comparison gives a portrayal of women's potential hostility towards the bodies of other women, especially those existing as a powerful rival to them.

In Greek myth, Electra is an Argive princess and daughter of King Agamemnon and Queen Clytemnestra. Agamemnon is murdered by Clytemnestra and her lover Aegisthus upon his return from the Trojan War. Standing on her father's side, Electra plots and commits matricidal revenge against Clytemnestra and Aegisthus with Orestes, her brother and Pylades, Orestes's friend and her future husband.¹ Carl G. Jung is inspired by this myth and proposes the term "Electra complex" to describe a girl's psychosexual competition with mother for possession of father. Among Edward Yang's works, the story about Lili, an adolescent girl of *Yi Yi*, shares a similar plot structure with the Electra's myth. Lili, a cheerful and vigorous high school girl and her mother, a successful high class white collar, correspond to the myth's Electra and Clytemnestra respectively. But the audience know little about Lili's own father—what kind of a person he is, and why he is absent, etc.—Yang deals with the absent fathers of Hsiao-fen, White Chick and Ming almost in the same way. The involvement of an English teacher brings an end to the apparently harmonious



Lili (left) discovers her mother's affair with her English teacher (right), and gets furious, in *Yi Yi*

mother-daughter relationship. This man plays both the roles of Agamemnon and Aegisthus. He has affairs with Lili and her mother at the same time; therefore he is Agamemnon, a desired object for the two women. He is also Aegisthus, because he is kind of an accomplice with Lili's mother for

they conceal their affair from Lili until one day she comes back home unexpectedly and finds the cruel truth. Afterwards, the English teacher is expelled from the position of Agamemnon in Lili's mind, and becomes the Aegisthus who deserves a severe punishment. Soon, the audience will see that Fatty, Lili's boyfriend and the counterpart of Pylades in the myth, kills the English teacher brutally.

It is Freud who first outlines the Electra complex, but he rejects the term "Electra complex", instead he prefers the term "feminine Oedipus complex" or "negative Oedipus complex".¹ According to Freud, Oedipus/feminine Oedipus complex forms in the phallic stage, and boys and

¹ See Robert Graves. *The Greek Myths*, combined edition, (London: Penguin, 1992), "Agamemnon and Clytemnestra" and "The Vengeance of Orestes", pp.413-26.

¹ Marianne Hirsch. "Mothers and Daughters", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol.7, No.1 (Autumn 1981), 200-222.

girls resolve the complex through “castration anxiety” and “penis envy” respectively. Nowadays, Oedipus has become a synonym of a male’s desire for his mother and hatred towards his father. However, etymologically, Oedipus in ancient Greek means “swollen foot”¹ —in order to prevent the Oracle of patricide from coming true, Oedipus’s father pierced the baby’s ankle and abandoned him on nearby mountain right after his birth. Therefore, for Greek people, the word Oedipus may associate an image of a person with an injured leg in their minds. It is interesting to note that, in Edward Yang’s works, *White Chick* and *Ming*, the two “feminine Oedipus”, both get an injury to



Ming (left) is treated for leg injury by the young doctor in the school clinic, in *A Brighter Summer Day*

the leg soon after their first appearance on the screen. For *Ming*, as mentioned above, it is playing basketball with one of her boyfriends that causes an injury to her shin. For *White Chick*, it is the escape from a police raid that causes her leg to get injured. Both of them are projected onto the screen as girls with leg injured for a short period in the two films.

Following *White Chick*’s escape, the audience see that her mother takes her home from hospital, which is a well-depicted scene of the antagonism between mother and daughter in Yang’s works—the mother hits *White Chick* fiercely with magazines and shuts her into the small apartment room alone the whole day.

According to Julia Kristeva, Electra is the “father’s daughter”, and her hatred of her mother, especially of her mother’s jouissance, is the basis of a larger order of the city and politics.² Julia Kristeva’s words may be interpreted as follows: the periodically wounded and monthly bleeding female body could not shoulder the responsibility of administering a state; otherwise, all the city, all the state, all the politics will turn disordered, fragile and symptomatic, just as the female body is. Therefore, Clytemnestra must be punished, a female body occupying a dominant position which belongs to men must be expelled or erased.

4. Filles Fatales

During the 1940s a new subgenre began to emerge from the Film Noir in Hollywood. In the films belonging to this subgenre there is always a mysterious, attractive yet dangerous female and the male characters usually fall in love with her as well as the dangers associated with her. Because of

¹ Robert Graves. *The Greek Myths*, combined edition, (London: Penguin, 1992), p.375.

² Marianne Hirsch. “Mothers and Daughters”, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol.7, No.1 (Autumn 1981), 200-222.

the “fatal” characteristic of the female lead, this subgenre is named *femme fatale*.¹ The most well-known works under this subgenre include *Double Indemnity* (1944), *North by Northwest* (1959), *Chinatown* (1974), and *The Basic Instinct* (1992).

Among Edward Yang’s works, only *The Terrorizers* may be called a film noir while it is still difficult to categorize this film into the *femme fatale* subgenre of film noir. However, in a non-strict sense, the girls in Yang’s cinema share the same feature of “attractive yet dangerous” with those *femmes fatales*. White Chick of *The Terrorizers*, Ming of *A Brighter Summer Day* and Lili of *Yi Yi* are three self-evident examples. In her adolescence Jia-ji of *That Day, on the Beach* is not dangerous but when she enters marriage her husband De-wei ends up with a mysterious disappearance—most probably commits suicide in the sea although the director does not make it known until the end of the film. In *Taipei Story*, it is Ling’s adolescent gangster friend who kills Lon. As to Martre in *Mahjong*, she is not directly involved in the accidental deaths in the film, although the young boy Luen is kidnapped and nearly killed by mobsters while he is with her. Is it getting acquainted with Martre that brings Luen so many serious troubles? Ting-Ting of *Yi Yi* is shown being taken into the police office for questioning right after Fatty kills the English teacher,



Luen (right) is mistakenly kidnapped for ransom with Martre, in *Mahjong*

and it is true that Fatty’s increasingly hysterical behavior is closely linked with Ting-Ting during the last part of this film. Another much younger girl nicknamed Little Mistress (小老婆) in *Yi Yi*, whom Yang-Yang is secretly fond of, somehow presents a threatening power as well. In school she always acts like a bully towards the shorter and weaker Yang-Yang. As to Yang-Yang, dreaming of swimming side by side with her someday, he almost drowns when practicing alone in the school swimming pool. Of course, Hsiao-fen and her sister are two exceptions. But

Expectation is just a short, one of the four parts of the feature *In Our Time*. If it was long enough, it is quite possible that Edward Yang will kill someone in close contact with the two sisters in the film too, say, the young lodger or the elder sister’s ex-boyfriend or somebody new appearing in a long picture. Therefore almost all of these girls mentioned above are connected either directly or indirectly with the accidental deaths in their stories. Considering their younger age, it may be more appropriate to use “fille” (girl) instead of “femme” (woman) to make another French phrase “fille fatale” (fatal girl) to categorize them.

In Edward Yang’s films, to some extent, the adolescent girl is often the source of troubles and even disasters. It seems that their young adolescent bodies have been cursed therefore anyone close to them will become polluted, contaminated or even killed. This corresponds with the conventional

¹ According to Mary Ann Doane, the *femme fatale* emerges as a central figure in the nineteenth century, in the texts of writers such as Théophile Gautier and Charles Baudelaire and painters such as Gustave Moreau and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. See Mary Ann Doane. *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, and Psychoanalysis* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), p.1.

beliefs of many different cultures—a girl’s body will not be as pure as before since its first period; from then on, it turns into something dirty, profane and even dangerous. “A polluting person is always in the wrong. He (or she) has developed some wrong condition or simply crossed over some line which should not have been crossed and this displacement unleashes danger for someone.”¹ Julia Kristeva develops Mary Douglas’s analysis of pollution to argue that bodily boundaries should be seen as potentially disruptive and subversive. According to Kristeva, the female body is one typical category of the abject which provokes disgust because of challenges to bodily boundaries.² On the other hand, in clinical research, the male body is generally set as the norm. Therefore, the female body is easily seen anomalous and deviant vis-à-vis the norm. In other words, compared with the norm, the female body is a monster-like bodily entity, because the female body shares with the monster the privilege of bringing out a unique blend of *fascination and horror*.³ In *Mahjong*, the three young bad boys—Red Fish, Little Buddha and Hong Kong try every means to convince Alison, the girl Hong Kong brings to their shared house, that the three men’s friendship depends on the sharing of everything and Hong Kong’s girlfriend is also the girlfriend of other two house sharers. After a while Alison accepts Little Buddha’s sex request and goes with him into the bedroom. However, in the following scene, the audience will see with a surprise that Little Buddha bursts out of the bedroom almost naked, cursing Alison’s unceasing demands for kissing. He—Hong Kong as well—adheres to the principle of “no kissing with girls” for they believe that kissing girls will bring them bad lucks. For males, the female body often represents a paradox; it is at once attractive yet polluted, desirable yet dangerous.⁴



White Chick is making prank calls while locked at home by her mother, in *The Terrorizers*

¹ Mary Douglas. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p.113.

² Alexandra Howson. *The Body in Society: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004), p.164.

³ Rosi Braidotti. “Mothers, Monsters, and Machines”, Katie Conboy et al. eds. *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p.65. The italics are original.

⁴ Roy Porter. “History of the Body Reconsidered”, Peter Burke. Ed. *New Perspectives on History Writing* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), p.246.

The dangerous threats not only come from girls' bodies, they also could be spread widely and rapidly through a girl's voice—a kind of extension of the body. In *The Terrorizers*, the bloody killings of the doctor Lee Li-chung could be seen as a direct effect of White Chick's prank call. Even though she is locked alone in home by her mother, the young girl could still disseminate the seeds of danger by the way of her seemingly innocent voice. Once she gets the chance to escape her home and acquire freedom again, she soon turns into a more polluted, dangerous and fatal power. In the street, she pretends to be a prostitute and seduces the males lusting after her body into hotel rooms. While the guy is showering, she steals his money. When the guy catches her stealing the money, she stabs the man in the stomach with a knife hidden in her trousers then runs away. For such an undisciplinable adolescent fatal girl, eradicating her body may be the ideal way to remove social threats. At the end of the film, there is an encounter—or a duel—between this fatal young female body and Lee Li-chung, the sullen and somehow insane male doctor in a hotel room. Through the director's camera, an intense and blood-thirsty atmosphere is sensed between the two characters—White Chick is also seen fumbling in her trousers for the hidden knife. But Edward Yang soon moves his camera away and never turns it back to this scene again until the end of the film. However, the audience is left to imagine what might happen between them. The fate awaiting White Chick ahead must be the same with Ming in *A Brighter Summer Day*—in opposition to her knife, Lee Li-chung possesses a pistol and is alert and ready to use it.

In addition to voice, clothes are another kind of extension of body. The clothes of a character in a film, that is, costumes, often constitute an effective indicator of the implicit ideology of a film. At the end of *A Brighter Summer Day*, there is a fight between an adolescent girl and a male as well



S'ir imitates the pose of western heroes of Hollywood films in the school clinic, in *A Brighter Summer Day*

— — S'ir's knifing Ming into death in the night Guling Street. In fact, besides this shockingly impressive scene, there are at least two other "duels" between Ming and S'ir in the film. The first one occurs in the school clinic, shortly after Honey's death. S'ir strolls around inside the clinic alone. With a certain curiosity of adolescent boys, he tries the hat left by the young

doctor on his own head, and looks into the mirror on the wall with a rather excited expression. Satisfied with his smart look in the mirror, S'ir imitates various poses of western heroes of Hollywood films while waving his right hand like a pistol and shooting at various directions. Suddenly he turns back and aims his pistol/right hand at the gate of the clinic. In line with his

“pistol” stands Ming just outside the gate. The interesting thing is that instead of wearing her high school uniform, this time Ming is in a long baggy men’s jacket. Her fine and delicate face set off by the cumbersome dark jacket makes her look somehow monster-like, as if the head and the body are strangely mismatched. In this sense, the first duel occurs as if an encounter between a Medusa or Siren and a western hero.¹ The second duel happens in the home of Ma, the son of a general



At Ma’s mansion, the pistol in Ming’s (front) hands goes off accidentally when she trains it at S’ir, in *A Brighter Summer Day*

and a classmate of S’ir. Ming curiously plays with a pistol inside Ma’s sitting room and she mischievously pretends to train it on S’ir, who sticks out his tongue towards Ming and grimaces. “Bang” the pistol fires and a thin column of white smoke curls up. The cut between shots is deliberately delayed here by the director and the audience can only see the panic-stricken face

of Ming without knowing if S’ir is injured or not. Then the shot slowly cuts to S’ir’s face, seized with terror but he is safe. If the first duel between S’ir and Ming is just a well-meant warning from Justice (western hero) to Evil (monster), thus the second one is an unscrupulous ignorance and ferocious revenge from the evil to the justice. Therefore, in the face of such an unruly and venomous female body, the last duel where she is knifed to death seems rather unavoidable.

“Her ritualized death reveals her status as a mirror of deep male fears that extend beyond sexual inadequacy and the limits of social law, and thus require a deeper purgation”² —this is a critic’s review on the scene of Phyllis’s death in *Double Indemnity*, and it is well-matched to be used to describe the moment of Ming’s death in *A Brighter Summer Day* too.

It may be an effective new approach to undertake a full analysis of the representation of adolescent girls in Edward Yang’s films in the light of body studies. Film studies today continuously broadens its visions by borrowing useful theories from other disciplines, especially from cultural studies. Taking the body as an analytical strategy, we may come to new and different

¹ About this scene, in Emilie Yueh-yu and Darrell William Davis’s *Taiwan Film Directors: A Treasure Island*, there are five consecutive stills to give a detailed demonstration, though the authors aim to discuss S’ir’s obsession with gangster culture in their book. See Emilie Yueh-yu & Darrell William Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors: A Treasure Island* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), pp. 112-3.

² Jack Boozer. “The Lethal Femme Fatale in the Noir Tradition”, *Journal of Film and Video*, Vol.51, No.3/4 (Fall/Winter 1999/2000), pp.20-35.

discoveries underlying in Yang’s cinematic texts. “The body is a way of thinking about the points of connection between the person and the world. It is a way of thinking about the flesh or matter or morphology or biology of a person, and about how that conflicts with, connects with or constitutes culture.”¹ At the same time, the body is always a “gendered body”, just as what Judith Butler claims “considering that ‘the’ body is invariably transformed into his body or her body, the body is only known through its gendered appearance”.² This kind of body-focused analysis is inevitably closely related to feminist and gender studies approaches too, which may make the body-focused new perspective more efficient and more productive.

Through such a close reading of the representation of different bodies in Edward Yang’s films, especially the detailed exploration of the young adolescent females, a misogynistic attitude hidden deeply in Yang’s cinematic texts may be sensed. In Yang’s works, the representation of girls is still firmly confined to the basic dichotomy of female stereotype—whores and mothers. The representatives of the former are Ming and Lili whilst Hsiao-fen and Ting-Ting are typical of the latter. In Yang’s works, the girls who represent promiscuous woman could never escape the final punishment in their lives and none of the girls revolting against the mainstream values could achieve any success. As to those who represent motherhood, their weakness, timidity and helplessness only serve the conventional belief that women are inferior to men in society.



Ting-Ting (left) and Lili at a cafe-shop, in *Yi Yi*

However, through a simple analysis as above, to draw a conclusion that Edward Yang and his works are misogynist, may be unfair to him and his female fans. Although it should be known that misogyny is an inner socio-psychological structure of our patriarchal society rather than a derogatory term to denounce a person’s moral level. D.H. Lawrence is said to be a misogynist,

¹ Colette Conroy. *Theatre & the Body* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p.32.

² Judith Butler. “Performative Arts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory”, *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 40. No. 4 (December 1988), pp.519-531.

Samuel Beckett is said to be a misogynist, even Shakespeare is said to be a misogynist, too. Adding new ways of interpreting to Edward Yang's studies will only better our understanding of his artistry and thought. Shakespeare wouldn't mind being called as a misogynist if his critics rejuvenate his *Hamlet* or *The Winter's Tale* in a new way. Edward Yang probably wouldn't mind either.

Chapter Three

Struggling Through the Rites of Passage

But what is existence? It is that child who is begotten by the infinite and the finite, the eternal and the temporal, and is therefore continually striving.¹

— Søren Kierkegaard

1. A Circle Linked by Adolescent Boys

Many of the lovers of Edward Yang's films may get the impression that the theme of adolescence, sometimes late childhood, repeats continuously throughout his film career. In all the 7 1/4 films of Yang, the character of the adolescent boy occurs so frequently that it becomes impossible to review Yang's works without mentioning the cinematic representation of Yang's boys. It is also unimaginable for critics to discuss Yang's most important works such as *A Brighter Summer Day* or *Yi Yi* without regard to the adolescent characters of S'ir and Cat, or Yang-Yang and Fatty.

Yang's adolescent boy characters start with a bespectacled high school boy from his debut



The bespectacled small boy (right) is the first adolescent male character in Yang's film career, in *Expectation*.

Expectation. And it continues with the young motor-biker in *Taipei Story* and the young photographer in *The Terrorizers*. This is followed by S'ir and his fellow adolescent gangsters in *A Brighter Summer Day* and Red Fish and his gang of four boys in *Mahjong*. Thus it ends with Yang-Yang and Fatty in Yang's swansong *Yi Yi*. Therefore, it seems feasible to say that the characters of the adolescent boy form a full circle linking the

¹ Søren Kierkegaard. *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, Volume 1, trans. Howard V. Hong & Edna H. Hong, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p.92.

beginning with the closing throughout Yang's whole film career.

This chapter aims to give a close look at the representation of adolescent boys in Yang's works. If we take the character of the adolescent girl into our consideration as well, we will make a surprising discovery in Yang's career: both the first shot and the last shot of Yang's film career are devoted to adolescent characters.



Yang-Yang in the last shot of *Yi Yi*

Yang's debut shot is given to the close-up of the adolescent girl Hsiao-fen's ambiguously shy and helpless face expression in *Expectation* (1982). Eighteen years later, in his last work *Yi Yi* (2000), the last shot of this film, which in a sense is also the last shot of Yang's film career, is kept for the young boy Yang-Yang

reading his letter to Grandma at her funeral. Even in *Expectation*, the character who appears on the screen immediately following Hsiao-fen at the beginning of the short, is also an adolescent character, the bespectacled small boy, Hsiao-fen's pal and admirer. In addition, as the second part of the omnibus feature *In Our Time*, *Expectation* is devoted to depicting the adolescent experience in Taiwan during the 1960s, while the other three parts directed by three different directors portray childhood, youth and adulthood of contemporary Taiwanese respectively.

It is reported that Yang had been preparing two animated films——*The Wind* (《追風》) and *Zoo of Changjiang* (《長江動物園》) which was later retitled *Little Friend* (《小朋友》)——in his later years.¹ With Yang's death, it remains difficult to get a clear picture of what the two animated film would be about. However, Yang left some sketches for *The Wind* designing its characters and settings, and the lead of this animated film is an adolescent boy living in ancient China.² This leads us to infer that Yang's interest and passion in the theme of adolescence never ceased in his film career and weighed even more heavily in his mind during his later years.

As a unique period in life, adolescence is characterized by its defiance, sensitiveness, cruelty, romanticism and so on. These seemingly contradictory qualities of adolescence have revealed the colorfulness and unpredictability of this phase of life. As a precious experience shared by the adults, adolescence constitutes a favorite theme of artists, which can stretch a bridge from the artist to the audience, and evoke common memories between people.

¹ 藍慧, “楊德昌的激情才情與苦情”, 《亞洲週刊》, 2007年7月15日, 第二十一卷二十七期。

² 讓-米歇爾·傅東, 《楊德昌的電影世界》, (楊海帝, 馮壽農譯), 北京: 商務印書館, 2011, 第223頁以降“檔案”部分。

In the contemporary Chinese-language films, in addition to Edward Yang, the celebrated directors such as Hou Hsiao-Hsien, Tsai Ming-Liang (蔡明亮), Zhang Yimou (張藝謀), Chen Kaige (陳凱歌), Jiang Wen (姜文) and Wang Xiaoshuai (王小帥), all have their own adolescence-themed masterpieces.¹ However, considering the whole cinematic career of a director, it is clear that the theme of adolescence means a great deal more to Edward Yang than other well-known Chinese-speaking filmmakers mentioned above. This chapter aims to give a close analysis of the adolescent male characters in Yang's films, and explore the metaphysical thought and humanistic care behind his cinematic representation of adolescent boys.

2. Night Marching Boy Holding a Torch

While watching Yang's films, the audience will be strongly impressed by the frequent appearance of adolescent male characters, and find that the scenes with adolescent boys are often shot under a dimly-lit setting and their stories frequently occur in early evening or early morning. In other words, it seems that the adolescent male characters are often put into a place which lies at the borderline between dark night and feeble daylight by the director.

The representation of S'ir and his adolescent male friends in *A Brighter Summer Day* may be a telling example. In this film, the students of Jianguo High School, particularly the lead S'ir and his close friend Cat, often appear on the screen during night school time, with a torch held in hand. Due to the dark settings, from time to time, the audience cannot even tell who is who, without the



S'ir is writing his diary under torch light inside the closet, in *A Brighter Summer Day*

subdued lighting of the classroom bulbs, street lamps or the electric torches of these boys. Showing up between the dark of night and feeble torchlight, and fumbling on the way to school or home, the school boys of *A Brighter Summer Day* have left an enduring impression on the mind of Yang's audience.

The scene between the dark of night and feeble torchlight corresponds well with the phase of adolescence in our life, or in other words, with the rite of passage in our life, which is characterized by the state of "liminality". Liminality, the term first used by anthropologist Victor

¹ Hou's *A Time to Live, A Time to Die* (《童年往事》), Tsai Ming-Liang's *Rebels of the Neon God* (《青少年哪吒》), Zhang Yimou's *Not One Less* (《一個都不能少》), Chen Kaige's *Together* (《和你在一起》), Jiang Wen's *In the Heart of the Sun* (《陽光燦爛的日子》), Wang Xiaoshuai's *Beijing Bicycle* (《十七歲的單車》), are all adolescence-themed classic works of the Chinese-language cinema.

W. Turner, well describes the unique quality of adolescence——transition, anonymity, humility, silence, absence of status, and acceptance of pain and suffering.¹ Liminality is also referred to as a “threshold” or “doorway”, which represents a moment of indecision or limbo. John Anderson said in his book *Edward Yang* that in Yang’s works doorway comes up from time to time and doorway implies a point of return before the step into some new phase, some new dilemma.² Adolescence is just such a kind of borderline lying between childhood and adulthood in our life. It is a phase of “betwixt and between”——the old world is still within sight while the new world is yet a step ahead. Adolescence is like an arduous and ecstatic night journey, bidding farewell to childhood and ushering in adulthood. On this journey, the adolescents will be confronted with various kinds of ordeals before becoming an adult.



Luen (right) and Red Fish at the opening of *Mahjong*



Luen (left) and Marthe at the end of *Mahjong*

In Yang’s films, the scenes which are shot between dark night and feeble light, often impress the audience mightily. In the last scene of *Expectation*, the bespectacled young boy practices riding bicycle in the night alley and falls down heavily under the light of street lamps. In the opening of *The Terrorizers*, the siren in the dim early morning startles the Taipei city, and the young photographer risks the frequent shots from gangsters to record the city’s threatening dark moments. *Mahjong* both starts and ends with night scenes——Luen and Red Fish’s wild driving along Taipei street under the veil of night at the beginning, and Luen and Marthe’s silent kissing at the noisy night market in the end. Even in *Yi Yi*, the audience won’t forget

¹ In his book *The Rites of Passage*, anthropologist Arnold van Gennep points out, the rites of passage occur in various cultures, in the phase of birth, coming of age, marriage, or death. The rites of passage represent bidding farewell to the old and ushering in the new. The rites can be divided into three phases: separation (preliminal), transition (liminal), and incorporation (postliminal). Victor W. Turner furthers Gennep’s theory of rites of passage with the term liminality. Liminality is referred to as threshold or doorway as well. See Arnold van Gennep. *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika B. Vizedom & Gabrielle L. Caffee, (London & Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), pp. 10-11 and Victor W. Turner. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969), p.95.

² See John Anderson. *Edward Yang* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005), pp. 79, 91.

the scene Yang-Yang tiptoeing in the dusky corridor of apartment building to photograph mosquitoes or the scene Yang-Yang quietly gazing the profile of Little Mistress in the dark projection room at school.

All of the scenes mentioned above put the adolescent boys into the setting of borderline between the dark and light, which somehow reveals the link between adolescence and liminality. Among the adolescent boys in Yang's films, S'ir, the male lead of *A Brighter Summer Day* is an archetypal figure—a night marching boy holding an electric torch in his hand, on his way to night class in Taipei during the dark 1960s.

As to the lighting techniques used in *A Brighter Summer Day*, critics Peggy Chiao and Edmond Wong have already made excellent analyses in their articles.¹ The following part will discuss the world revealed by S'ir's torch light and its probable implications. In *A Brighter Summer Day*, S'ir and his friends explore the ambivalent world with the piercing light of the electrical torch. In this film, lots of scenes relating to S'ir's torch light are carrying rich implications. First, in the early part of the film, S'ir's torch light is mischievously thrown upon a young couple kissing in the park at night, then S'ir and his friends explode into wild laughter and run away quickly. Here the torch light has disclosed a world of erotic desire and romantic love, which features the adolescent years. A strikingly contrasting scene to this is one in which Shandong, the head of the 217 gang, is lying in blood and breathing feebly when S'ir casts his torch light over him in the pitch dark billiard room. If the former scene is intimately associated with Eros, then the latter one is closely related to Thanatos. On the ceiling of Cat's home, the torch light falls upon a dagger and a photo left by an unknown Japanese woman from Taiwan's colonial period. This scene not only suggests the impending and unpredictable death in everyone's life once again, but also leads the boys beyond their individual life into an even wider world of historical memory and national identity. Another scene exposed under S'ir's torch light is the steady night marching of a troop of tanks along the



Yang-Yang prefers photographing the back of people's heads, in *Yi Yi*

road of Taipei suburbs, which reflects the autocratic rule and white terror of the KMT government in the 1960s. Certainly, the unknown world is continuously unveiled by the torch light and will stimulate the curiosity of these adolescent boys and call on them to set out on a new and adventurous journey in life.

¹ 焦雄屏, “牯嶺街少年殺人事件: 一個刻意被忽略的時代”, 區桂枝主編《楊德昌: 臺灣對世界影史的貢獻》, 臺北: 躍升文化, 2007, 第 113-116 頁; 黃建業: 《楊德昌電影研究: 臺灣電影的知性思辨家》, 臺北: 遠流, 1995, 第 164-167 頁.

Adolescence is a phase of life which not only enhances the adolescent's inquiry into the world surrounding them, but also advances their recognition of themselves. Perhaps, it is only since adolescence that human beings actually start to consciously practice "know thyself", the maxim engraved on the Temple of Delphi. Our serious thinking on life first occurs during our adolescent years. Where am I from? Who am I? Where will I go? Yang-Yang, the little boy of *Yi Yi*, is actively and avidly seeking answers to such questions. At Grandma's funeral, the last scene of *Yi Yi*, Yang-Yang read his letter to Grandma in front of her photo, "they all say you've gone away. But you didn't tell me where you went. I guess it's someplace you think I should know. But, Grandma, I know so little. Do you know what I want to do when I grow up? I want to tell people things they don't know. Show them stuff they haven't seen. It'll be so much fun. Perhaps one day, I'll find out where you've gone. If I do, can I tell everyone and bring them to visit you? Grandma, I miss you." Moreover, Yang-Yang secretly took photos of the back of people's heads, and showed these photos to them, forcing them to look at the part of their body in their blind spot and to think further about themselves.

Another example of "know thyself" in Yang's films is connected with photo as well. Most of the



The huge photo of White Chick in the young photographer's dark room, in *The Terrorizers*

audience who have seen *The Terrorizers* will not forget the scene that White Chick got shocked and fell into a swoon when she unexpectedly found the huge photo of her in the young photographer's dark room. In a sense, the one we are most unfamiliar with is ourselves, and we are strangers to ourselves. Few people make real

efforts to "know thyself". Just as the frequently-quoted lines of Red Fish in *Mahjong* says, "no one knows what they really want these days. Everyone is waiting to be told what to do." In Yang's films, seeking self-recognition constitutes a major and constant theme, particularly in his films with adolescent lead roles, such as *A Brighter Summer Day* and *Mahjong*.

"Besides finding a way of earning a living and exercising his talents, the youth approaching adulthood must find a meaning in life or else he must persuade himself that he can be satisfied with a meaningless existence. It is in the nature of human beings to question ultimate goals and to want to be aware of progress toward these goals."¹ As Albert Camus said, judging whether life is or is not worth living is the only true serious philosophical question.² However, since adolescence, this question will continuously torture human beings throughout their lives. Love, family, friendship, profession, wealth, none would be the ultimately satisfying answer to this question.

¹ W. Tasker Witham. *The Adolescent in the American Novel: 1920-1960* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co, 1964), p.167.

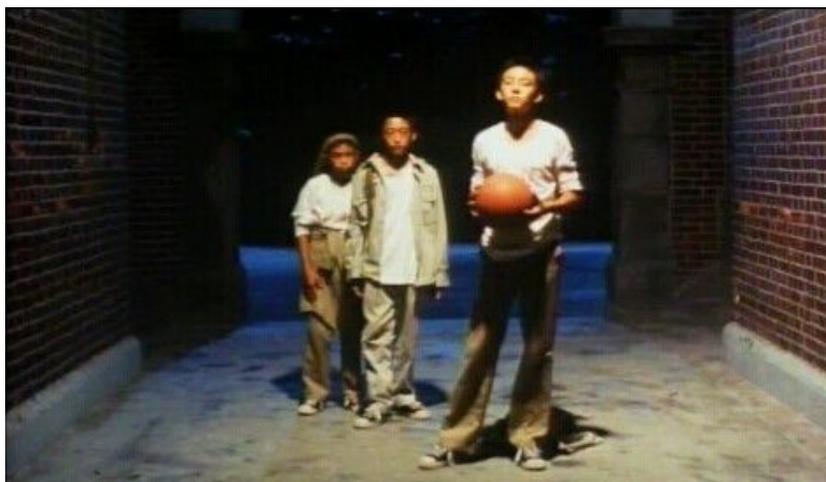
² Mary M. Litch. *Philosophy Through Film*, 2nd edition, (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 211.

Challenged with such a difficult question, the only thing that the traveler in life journey could do, is to continue their seeking. Yang's adolescent male characters, the night marching boys with a torch in the hand, are such indefatigable adventurers and seekers of the meaning of life. It seems that they are destined to struggle through the rite of passage into a new world and a new self.

In *Expectation*, the audience will hear the songs by the Beatles more than once——one time it is “Ticket to Ride” as diegetic sound, and the other time it is “Hello Goodbye” as non-diegetic sound. In fact, the titles of the two songs selected by Yang have implicitly set the keynote for this short film as well as Yang's future adolescence-themed feature-length films. When adolescence is coming, with an exciting anxiety for the future, the adolescent boys will set out on a new journey. Just like the lyrics say, “You say yes I say no. You say stop and I say go go go.” During the journey, however, these boys will feel rather tired and eager for a destination from time to time, and it is definitely not an easy thing to keep saying “hello” to this endless “ride”.

3. The Evil of Adolescent Boys

Usually, in traditional adolescence-themed Chinese language films, adolescent boys are depicted as naive, unsophisticated and kind-hearted characters. Occasionally there will be several bad boys appearing in the same film, but the purpose of such a set of characters often aims to emphasize the



S'ir (right), Plane and Cat (left) in school at night, in *A Brighter Summer Day*

good-natured lead adolescent boy/boys through the bad ones. However Edward Yang breaks down this convention using an amazingly large proportion of screen time to depict the evil — — or at least the wrong or immoral — — of adolescent boys.

In *A Brighter Summer Day*——the film with the largest number of

adolescent boys among Yang's works——S'ir, Cat, Plane, Ma, Tiger, Honey, Sly.....each of them has certain virtues, but none of them meet conventional standards of a good boy. In *Taipei Story*, it is the young motor-biker who stabbed the male lead Lon to death. In *The Terrorizers*, the young photographer himself may not be vicious, but he has a morbid fascination with vicious things like gang fighting and murder. In *Mahjong*, among the four major characters, in other words, the four members of the teenage gang——Red Fish, Hong Kong, Little Buddha, and Luen——only Luen is a good boy compared with his three evil friends. Perhaps the film attempted to give prominence to Luen's virtues by contrasting sharply with the wrongs committed by the other three, but the audience may be a good deal more impressed by the characters of the three villainous and

vigorous bad boys rather than Luen, who turns out so weak and flat a character by the side of his nefarious friends. There are two major boy characters in *Yi Yi*, Yang-Yang and Fatty. Just like S'ir or Honey in *A Brighter Summer Day*, or the young motor-biker in *Taipei Story*, or Red Fish in *Mahjong*, Fatty is a teenage murderer as well, who stabbed his girlfriend's English teacher to death. As for Yang-Yang, the weird young boy, he also behaves in a villainous way from time to time, mischievously attacking his female classmate with water-filled condom, and cruelly refusing to stay and talk with his affectionate but now comatose Grandma.

It is our stereotype that the adolescents are innately naive, unsophisticated, and kind-hearted. But where does this stereotype come from? Just like gender, the quality of a certain age, such as the purity of children or the sagacity of old people, is fabricated by culture as well. Certain culture fabricates certain quality of age. In his seminal work *Century of Children*, Philippe Ariés points out that the concept of childhood did not come into being until late medieval ages. The concept continues evolving throughout several centuries and the images of children are starkly different from each other between different centuries.¹ Similarly, the concept of adolescence is also a cultural invention, and the image of the adolescent varies greatly according to different places and times as well. Though the debates on “evil by nature” or “good by nature” seem far away from the daily life of ordinary audiences, the association between qualities of naivety and kind-heartedness and adolescents occurs quite often to most Chinese-speaking audience. Watching Yang's films, especially while seeing a series of wrongs committed by Yang's adolescent boys, the audience are



Fatty (right) and Lili in music instrument store, in *Yi Yi*

often forced to give a second thought to the borderline between good and evil, consciously or unconsciously. Through such an experience, often they will modify the stereotype of adolescents in their minds. In fact, behind the screen hides Yang's own reflection upon

good and evil. Unknowingly, the audience are led by Yang into these often-ignored inquiries in everyday life — Are human beings good by nature? Does goodness really exist? What is goodness? Is goodness conditional or unconditional? Is goodness natured or nurtured? Thus, what about evil?

¹ See Chris Jenks. ed. *The Sociology of Childhood: Essential Readings* (London: Batsford Academic and Educational Ltd, 1982), pp. 27-41. According to Philippe Ariés, the image of children evolved as the times changed. In the western world, until the thirteenth century, the image of children became similar to the modern one, and generally there were three types of images in that period, that is, the angel, the Infant Jesus/the Infant Notre-Dame, and the naked child.

Concerning the relationship between adolescence and morality, Moritz Schlick argues that adolescence “is beyond good and evil, that morality begins only with responsibility, and responsibility only with that seriousness which is alien to youth and the very opposite of play.”¹ In Yang’s films, almost all the murders are committed by adolescent characters. In *Taipei Story*, the young motor-biker stabs Lon to death; in *A Brighter Summer Day*, S’ir stabs Ming and Honey slays Red Hair; in *Mahjong*, Red Fish shoots Mr. Chiu dead; in *Yi Yi*, Fatty kills the English teacher; in *The Terrorizers*, even the adolescent girl White Chicken could be a serial killer. Each of these cases will force the audience to reconsider the borderline between good and evil. One telling example among these is Fatty’s case in *Yi Yi*. Most people watching *Yi Yi* might feel greatly surprised at the unexpected murder committed by the reticent boy Fatty in the last part of the film. Nobody would think Fatty is a bad boy or that he could do anything evil before the murder takes place. Though passionately in love with Lili, he remains too shy to ask for her new address and thus tracks the house-moving truck down to her new house. When squabbling with Lili, his reserved character keeps him from confronting her directly and he seeks help from Ting-Ting to pass love letters to Lili. During the short period of breaking up with Lili and falling in love with Ting-Ting, he gently declines Ting-Ting’s request of sex in a motel room, though that is a difficult decision for boys. As a music and cinema fan, he has shown his cultivated tastes through his impressive and insightful comments on music and film. He is also a sensitive and emotionally fragile boy, which is proved by the scene of his weeping in rain when sinking into the love triangle between Lili and Ting-Ting. However, a well-educated and good-mannered boy could so violently stab the English teacher to death, for the teacher secretly has a sexual relationship with Lili. Of course, Fatty’s atrocity may be the result of Lili’s incitement because Lili has discovered that the English teacher has a carnal relationship with her mother as well. Then, instantaneously, a widely-recognized good boy turns into a dreadful murderer. Which is stronger in Fatty’s nature, good or evil? As to the scene of Fatty’s murdering, Yang deliberately replaces the real scene with an animated fighting from a video game. Such a somehow humorous representation of murder has exposed the director’s mild and lenient attitude towards Fatty’s wrongdoing, and thus blurs the audience’s former borderline between good and evil.

In Edward Yang’s films, the theme of moral ambiguity is not only communicated through adolescent boys, but also exhibited through adult characters. For instance, almost all the characters of *The Terrorizers*—including the adolescents—are morally ambiguous, and it is hard to say which character is genuinely good in this film. In addition, Susan Sontag says that lying is a recurring visual theme in *Yi Yi* which suggests moral uncertainty.² Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh and Darrell William Davis also points, in Yang’s films “characters fumble in literal and ethical darkness, lighting it up with feeble torches and candles.[...] All of Yang’s characters are groping, they search for ethical frameworks that help explain and decipher their predicaments, seeking a way forward.”³

Adolescence as a rite of passage— in Victor Turner’s words, it should be called liminal rite or

¹ Moritz Schlick. “On the Meaning of Life”, Jonathan Westphal & Carl Levenson eds. *Life and Death* (Indianapolis & Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993), p.141.

² See John Anderson. *Edward Yang* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005), pp. 91.

³ Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, and Darrell William Davis. *Taiwan Film Directors: A Treasure Island* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p.118.

threshold rite, and accordingly Turner refers to people in a rite of passage as threshold people——distinguishes itself by the feature of liminality. Turner argues, “liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial.” Ambiguity and indeterminateness are major attributes of liminality. “Thus, liminality is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or moon”¹, then to the grey area between good and evil, perhaps.

In traditional Chinese culture, the debates on “innately good” (性善論) or “innately evil” (性惡論) are congruent with its particular emphasis on heavenly principles and feudal morals. There are two schools insisting on “innately good” and “innately evil” respectively in Confucianism since ancient China. Regardless of their conceptual divergence, the ultimate moral goals of the two schools are the same, and that is the realization of “the secular as sacred” (仁人). In order to achieve this realization, the practicable approach propounded by the Confucian scholars is to restrain oneself with reason. Reason is attached with supreme importance. It is believed that reason is the only way through which human beings could genuinely forsake evil for good. The Neo-Confucianism even strongly advocates the radical and somehow superhuman principle of “uphold Heavenly reason, extinguish earthly desire” (存天理，滅人欲).²



Fatty (left) and Ting-Ting in love hotel, in Yi Yi

However, is reason really so reliable and radiant in our daily life? Yang casts doubts on this through his films. As in *Yi Yi*, before the murder, few people will suspect that Fatty is a rational person. His insight into music and cinema art displays that he is a boy of high breeding. What reveals his admirable rationality

most is the scene of his declining Ting-Ting’s request for sex firmly and leaving the hotel quietly. Anyway, in the last part of the film, Yang confronts the audience with a bloody murder committed by such a rational boy. For human beings——the “animal in forming” in Nietzsche’s words——perhaps the instinctive impulse latent in the depth of the heart, rather than the unnatural reason acquired through cultivation, is more essential in human nature. As Yang’s adolescent boy characters have shown on the screen, with their vigorous, defiant and sometimes vicious impulse, they commit a wide variety of wrongs, which compels the audience to reconsider their former

¹ Victor W. Turner. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago:Aldine Publishing Company, 1969), p.95.

² 熊秉真,《童年憶往：中國孩子的歷史》, 桂林：廣西師範大學出版社, 2008, 第五章第一節“由‘本性’論‘人之初’”, 第 190-196 頁.

moral standards and to redefine the boundary between good and evil.

The principle of “upholding heavenly reason and extinguishing earthly desire” has been firmly and consistently carried out throughout the Chinese educational history. Even when the history has entered into modern times, the phantom of this principle is still lingering in the educational institutions from kindergartens to universities in many Chinese-speaking areas. And Yang—in a sense once a victim of such a conventional educational system strongly influenced by Confucianism during his school days in Taiwan — — kept his constant criticism of such an educational system that has done no little harm to the young generation, throughout his film career. From *A Brighter Summer Day* to *Yi Yi*, there are about ten years between the production of the two films in reality, and nearly forty years between the stories of the two in the fictional world. However, the image of academic dean of school—the embodiment of the traditional Confucian educational system—in the two films, has not evolved to be better, but remained autocratic, arrogant, and ignorant as ever. The adolescents growing up in such a Confucian educational system are in grave danger of losing their creative thinking and free will, though they may be well fitting into the pattern of good boy/girl upon conventional Confucian standards. Yang’s boys are not good in this sense, but they easily arouse sympathy and love among the audience from time to time. Confronted with such lovable bad boys—some of them have even committed murder—the audience will find it difficult to shun from giving a second thought to the boundary between good and evil, to the core of human nature and to their own lives.

Correspondingly, through his vivid and vigorous cinematic representation of these adolescent boys, Edward Yang has presented a eulogy to the original vitality of human life. Driven by will and desire, the adolescent boys set out on their arduous yet exciting journey towards growing up. Fumbling their way through the challenging world and tasting the joy and sorrow of love, death and dreams, these boys will gradually get to know the genuine flavor of life.

4. A Rite of Passage Without End

Stanley Hall regards adolescence as a rebirth in our life and an inescapable journey into adulthood. Hall perceives the emotional life of the adolescents as an oscillation between contradictory tendencies. “Energy, exaltation, and supernatural activity are followed by indifference, lethargy, and loathing. Exuberant gaiety, laughter, and euphoria make place for dysphoria, depressive gloom, and melancholy. Egoism, vanity, and conceit are just as characteristic of this period of life as are abasement, humiliation, and bashfulness. One can observe both the remnants of an uninhibited childish selfishness and an increasing idealistic altruism. Goodness and virtue are never so pure, but never again does temptation so forcefully preoccupy thought. Adolescents want solitude and seclusion, while finding themselves entangled in crushes and friendships. Never again does the peer group have such a strong influence. At one time the adolescent may exhibit exquisite sensitivity and tenderness; at the another time, callousness and cruelty. Apathy and inertia vacillate with an enthusiastic curiosity, an urge to discover and explore. There is a yearning for idols and authority that does not exclude a revolutionary radicalism directed against any kind of authority.”¹

¹ Rolf. E. Muuss. *Theories of Adolescence*, 5th edition, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988), p. 22.

To some extent, rebirth itself is an oscillation as well, oscillating between the old and the new, but finally reaching the new. In *The Rites of Passage*, Arnold van Gennep also refers to rebirth frequently while elaborating on initiation rites.¹ Only after passing the liminality of adolescence, and passing the rites of initiation, do the adolescents step into the world of adults.

Hall's description of adolescence as a rebirth corresponds to the pattern of Bildungsroman in the European literary tradition. Generally, Bildungsroman consists of three parts: the young hero departs from home, the young hero attains his enlightenment through educative experience, the young hero returns home. It is a journey for the young hero to accomplish his rationality and personality, preparing themselves well enough for the coming of age.² Thus, Bildungsroman could be read as a rebirth story of the young hero. However, the stories of Yang's adolescent boys conflict with the narrative pattern of Bildungsroman.

For Edward Yang, he may agree with Hall's depiction of adolescence as contradictory tendencies, but may not think adolescence as a rebirth. Just like the young hero in Bildungsroman, most of Yang's adolescent boys are unruly and rebellious, and they violently oppose the world surrounding them. But, unlike the ending of Bildungsroman, Yang's boys usually could not find a home to return at last. Yang's ending for his adolescent boys is rather a renewal than a rebirth and the rite of passage is still going on even at the end of his stories.



Red Fish (left) attempts to kill himself with pistol, in *Mahjong*

In *Mahjong*, before the end of this film, Red Fish's story fits well into the three-part pattern of Bildungsroman. Born in a wealthy family but of despicable parents, Red Fish chooses to leave home and make a living by swindling with his gang friends. Adhering to the principle of "Use

your head and don't get sentimental" taught by his father, Red Fish has experienced constant economic successes in cheating lots of people. But when facing the unexpected double suicide of

¹ See Arnold van Gennep. *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee, (London & Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), chapter "initiation rites". According to Gennep, resurrection is an essential phase of initiation rites, which symbolizes a farewell to the old and an arrival of the new.

² 梅家玲, 《性別, 還是家國? : 五〇與八、九〇年代臺灣小說論》, 臺北: 麥田, 2004, 第 201 頁. Bildungsroman originates in German Enlightenment Movement, the earliest origin of which could be dated to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*. For a detailed introduction about the genre of Bildungsroman, see Martin Swales. *The German Bildungsroman from Wieland to Hesse* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), chapter "The Bildungsroman as a Genre".

his father and the young kindergarten teacher, Red Fish's life creed collapses instantly. The scene in which he shoots Mr. Chiu — an embodiment of his life creed — in a violent rage, is a farewell to his past, saying good bye to his former self. But since Yang has designed the murder as the end of Red Fish's rite of passage, it is thus impossible for Red Fish to return home to accomplish the third part of Bildungsroman narrative pattern. In this film, after Mr. Chiu's death, when Red Fish aimed the pistol towards his own temple in tears in order to follow his father's footsteps, however, there is no bullet left for his suicide. Obviously, this scene is presented by Yang in a way quite similar to the drama by Samuel Beckett or Eugene Ionesco, disseminating a strong sense of absurdity. The past is already gone, but the future is still beyond reach. There is no home to return in sight. It seems that Yang's adolescent boys, just like Sisyphus, are permanently struggling in the rites of passage.



One shot at the beginning of *Expectation* (left); one shot from the closing scene of *Expectation* (right)

Such a permanent struggle is foreshadowed as early as Yang's debut short *Expectation*. *Expectation* kicks off from an alley of a Taipei residential area — the bespectacled small boy walks towards camera, with Hsiao-fen side by side, talking about his blueprint about the future, in the daytime. This short closes in the same alley — the same boy walks along the alley slowly, continuing his talk about a future blueprint, with Hsiao-fen rolling a bicycle by his side, both with their back to camera, at night. From the beginning to the end, it seems that these two adolescent boy and girl have never passed through this apparently not-quite-so-long alley.

In Yang's films, adolescence is not a rebirth, and the adolescent ordeal is not a ticket to a new world. All the joy and sorrow experienced during adolescence is just a rehearsal and a preparation for a much longer period of ordeal in our life, which is not essentially different from that of adolescent years. In *Expectation*, the bespectacled small boy has not really mastered riding bicycle until the end of this short. Falling from the bicycle, he says to Hsiao-fen who runs to help him, "you know, I've wanted to ride a bicycle. I thought then, I could go where I wanted, but now I don't know where to ride to." The boy's words reflect the contradictory nature of life and of being.¹ While talking about the characteristic of Bildungsroman, Thomas Mann uses the word

¹ Edmond Wong points out that the boy's confusion at the end of this short symbolizes the bafflement of the whole Taiwan society in the 1960s, and that the depiction of the confusion of modern urban inhabitants will repeatedly appear in Edward Yang's following film works. See 黃建業:《楊德昌電影研究:臺灣電影的知性思辨家》,臺北:遠流,1995,第74頁.

“inwardness”. “The inwardness, the culture [‘Bildungsroman’] of a German implies introspectiveness; an individualistic cultural conscience; consideration for the careful tending, shaping, deepening and perfecting of one’s own personality or, in religious terms, for the salvation and justification of one’s own life [...]”¹ In such a sense, the adolescent boys in Yang’s films who unflaggingly seek the meaning of life and inquire the myth of self, share the same spiritual feature with the young hero of traditional German Bildungsroman.



The bespectacled boy (left) confides his confusion to Hsiao-fen in night alley, in *Expectation*

In Yang’s films, it is not only the adolescent boys and girls who are struggling in the rites of passage, the adult characters are also landed in the rites of passage of their own. Therefore, to certain extent, the perplexity of Yang’s boys mirrors the confusion of all human beings, no matter whether they are children or adults. The feelings of anxiety, loneliness or depression have never been confined merely to adolescents. To be or to exist in this world means that we have to repeatedly face the severe test of such tormenting feelings in our life. In Yang’s films, both children and adults suffer from the perplexity of being. Perhaps because of this, some critics think that Yang’s films possess a hallmark of existentialism. De-wei of *That Day, on the Beach*, Lon of *Taipei Story*, Li Li-chung of *The Terrorizers*, S’ir’s father of *A Brighter Summer Day*, the Author of *A Confucian Confusion*, Red Fish’s father of *Mahjong*, and NJ of *Yi Yi*, all are continuously tortured by the feelings of anxiety, loneliness and depression. The adult characters are struggling with the similar rites of passage as well, but the exit of their passage seems far beyond their reach just as Yang’s adolescent boy characters. In one impressive scene of *The Terrorizers*, the novelist Chou Yu-fen discloses her emotional distress to her husband Li Li-chung, “I decided to marry you just because I wanted to bring a new beginning to my life. Afterwards I decided to get pregnant. It is also because I wanted a new beginning in my life. Recently I decided to resume novel-writing for the reason that I wanted a new start in my life. Yes, now I decided to move out and live separately with you also because I wanted a new start in my life. I do need something new in my life. Oh, how silly it is to say all these to you. You could never understand.”

Though Chou tried various means to arrive at a new phase of life that she wanted and needed, all these means failed to work and she was still stuck in her old life. As a matter of fact, Chou’s distress is also Li’s as the husband strove to lead their married life

¹ W.H. Bruford. *The German Tradition of Self-Cultivation: ‘Bildung’ from Humboldt to Thomas Mann* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. vii.

into to a new phase in his own way as well. However, though the methods they chose to cope with the impasse of their life are different, neither the wife nor the husband could really break the deadlock and find an entry into a new life.



NJ (right) and Sherry in night Tokyo street, in *Yi Yi*

In Yang's films, the rites of passage of the young generation often extend into the old generation, and the continuous struggle of the old generation also forecasts the infinite ordeal of the young generation in their future life. Or, in other words, the different generations are all struggling in the endless rites of passage. In *Yi Yi*, a series of mirror scenes¹

between father and daughter is underlined quite explicitly by Edward Yang to elaborate this. On the business trip to Japan, NJ enjoyed his reunion with his ex-girlfriend Sherry in Tokyo. At the same time in Taipei, his daughter, Ting-Ting just began her first date with Fatty, a reserved adolescent boy and the ex-boyfriend of Ting-Ting's neighbor and friend Lili. The scenes of these two pairs of couple wandering in Tokyo/Taipei are crosscut with each other. However, neither the



Fatty (right) and Ting-Ting in night Taipei street, in *Yi Yi*

first date of Ting-Ting and Fatty nor the reunion of NJ and Sherry would bring a happy ending for them. Fatty soon discarded Ting-Ting and came back to Lili's side, while NJ declined Sherry's love once again and went back to his wife Min-Min and his daughter and son, despite saying that Sherry was the only woman he ever loved. The experience of love is also a major rite of passage for the adolescents. It is

highly probable that Ting-Ting's sufferings from love in her adolescent years will go on in her

¹ Mirror scenes are a kind of device often used by dramatists and film directors. In a play or film, two (sometimes more than two) different scenes are represented at different time, while there are some connections or contrasts between the earlier scene and the later one, aurally or visually. Usually, the representation of the later scene will throw a new light on the earlier one, lead to a re-interpretation of the earlier one, and enrich the significance of the earlier one or both. See Oliver Taplin. *Greek Tragedy in Action* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), chapter "mirror scene".

future life just as her father NJ still suffers.

In the eyes of many critics, Yang's twenty-six-year cinematic career can be divided into three phases—the melancholy phase of the early period, the furious phase of the middle period, and the serene phase of the late period. This subtle stylistic gradation during Yang's career is impeccably mirrored in various characters of adolescent boys in his films. In his early period, the bespectacled small boy of *Expectation* and the young photographer of *The Terrorizers* are both clouded with some uncertainty and anxiety. Then in his middle period, both S'ir of *A Brighter Summer Day* and the adolescent gangsters of *Mahjong* are frequently seen overwhelmed with rage on screen. But in *Yi Yi* made in Yang's late period, Yang-Yang and Fatty are mostly peaceful and pleasant on screen. There is even a murder committed by Fatty, but quite different from *A Brighter Summer Day* and *Mahjong*, this murder scene is represented with animated characters fighting in a video game, without much blood or brutal violence.

In his cinematic creation, Yang repeatedly identifies himself with the adolescent boys in his films, observing the world from the perspective of his boys and conveying his own thoughts through the voice of his boys. Instead of choosing adult characters, who are much closer to the director in age, Yang prefers to examine the fictional cinematic world through the eyes of adolescent characters, seeking the meaning of life and inquiring the truth of being. Lucius Annaeus Seneca says that youth is a state of our mind rather than a phase of our life. For Edward Yang, a filmmaker who has never lost the vision of an adolescent boy, adolescence has never left him behind as well. As John Anderson points out, Yang is “an artist of eternal youth”.¹ Hark Tsui (徐克), Yang's contemporary and the founding member of the Hong Kong New Wave (香港電影新浪潮), once commented on Edward Yang's film works in such words, “in *A Brighter Summer Day* the triad reads *War and Peace*, the voices of the young are eternally innocent. Perhaps this is our impression of Edward — the free-spirited youth, bad-tempered perhaps but never short on character, and eternally childlike. His smile was the smile of an adolescent, so were his moods. That's why his films are very youthful.”²

With his cinematic works impregnated with philosophic significance, Edward Yang has made his own unique contribution to the history of the Chinese-language cinema, and helped the artistic achievements of the Chinese-language cinema fly to a new altitude. The above analysis of Yang's representation of adolescent boys in his films, may help the audience have a closer approach to the inner humanism and philosophical preference in Yang's works, and understand better Edward Yang and his cinema.

¹ John Anderson. *Edward Yang* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005), p.40.

² 張偉雄, 李焯桃, 《一一重現: 楊德昌》, 香港: 香港國際電影節協會, 2008, 第 41 頁.

Chapter Four

The Bittersweet Eros

While my hair was still cut straight across my forehead / I played about front gate, pulling flowers / You came by on bamboo stilts, playing horse / You walked about my seat, playing with blue plums / And we went on living in the village of Chokan / Two small people, without dislike or suspicion / At fourteen I married My Lord you / I never laughed, being bashful / Lowering my head, I looked at the wall / Called to, a thousand times, I never looked back / At fifteen I stopped scowling / I desired my dust to be mingled with yours / Forever and forever and forever / Why should I climb the look out / At sixteen you departed / You went into far Ku-to-yen, by the river of swirling eddies / And you have been gone five months / The monkeys make sorrowful noise overhead /¹

— Rihaku (李白)

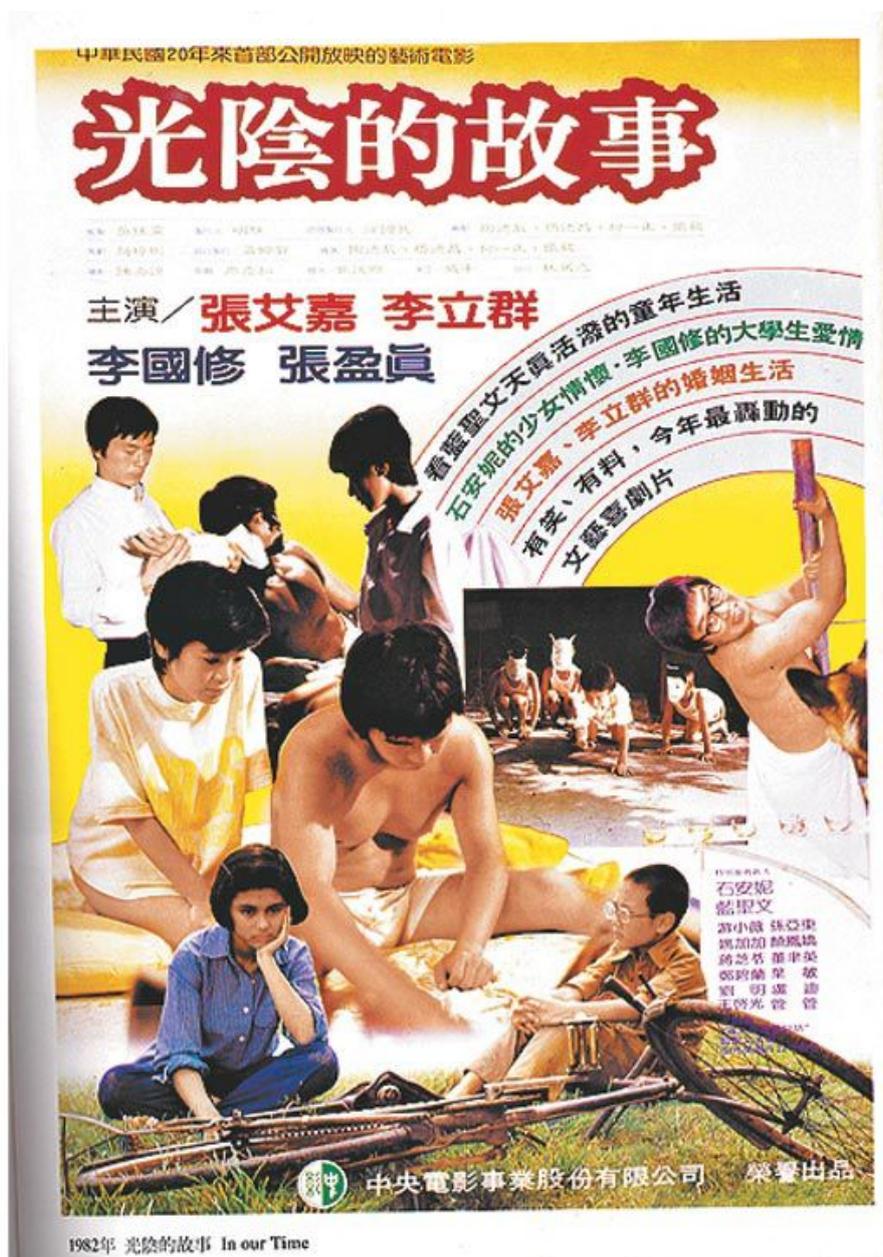
1. Expectation or Desire ?

For academic studies on a writer or a filmmaker, usually, scrutinizing his/her debut work will lead us to some surprisingly illuminating and intriguing new dimensions. In the case of Edward Yang and his debut short *Expectation*, it is also so. As Yang's debut work, *Expectation* (《指望》)²—the second episode of the omnibus feature *In Our Time* (1982)—vividly depicts the subtle yet difficult changes happening to a middle school girl Hsiao-fen when her first period visits, both physically and psychologically. The other three episodes of *In Our Time* are Tao Te-chen's (陶德辰) *Little Dragon Head* (《小龍頭》), Ko I-cheng's (柯一正) *The Jumping Frog* (《跳蛙》), and Chang Yi's (張毅) *Say Your Name* (《報上名來》), each telling a story about childhood, youth, and adulthood respectively. Together with Yang's *Expectation* about adolescence, the four-episode feature creates a picture of growing pains and adult quandaries. Compared with the titles of other three parts, Yang's "Expectation" seems a bit abstract and hard to grasp. Having seen this short,

¹ Originally, this poem comes from ancient Chinese poet Rihaku's (李白) *Chokan Xing* (《長幹行》) written in Chinese. The quotation here comes from Ezra Pound's English translation of the poem, which is titled "The River-Merchant's Wife: A Letter" in English. The rest part of the poem are as follows: You dragged your feet when you went out / By the gate now, the moss is grown, the different mosses / Too deep to clear them away / The leaves fall early this autumn, in wind / The paired butterflies are already yellow with August / Over the grass in the West garden / They hurt me / I grow older / If you are coming down through the narrows of the river Kiang / Please let me know beforehand / And I will come out to meet you / As far as Cho-fu-Sa. Rihaku's original Chinese version writes as follows: 妾發初覆額，折花門前劇。郎騎竹馬來，繞床弄青梅。同居長幹裏，兩小無嫌猜。十四為君婦，羞顏未嘗開。低頭向暗壁，千喚不一回。十五始展眉，願同塵與灰。常存抱柱信，豈上望夫臺。十六君遠行，瞿塘濼預堆。五月不可觸，猿聲天上哀。門前遲行跡，一一生綠苔。苔深不能掃，落葉秋風早。八月蝴蝶來，雙飛西園草。感此傷妾心，坐愁紅顏老。早晚下三巴，預將書報家。相逢不道遠，直至長風沙。 The Chinese title of Edward Yang's third film *Qingmei Zhuma* (《青梅竹馬》), the English title of which is *Taipei Story*, comes from Rihaku's this poem. The phrase "Qingmei zhuma" from Rihaku's poem—literally "blue plum and bamboo stilts"—became an idiom in Chinese language, which refers to a couple who grew up as childhood friends.

² In English references, the translation of the Chinese title of this short, i.e. *Zhiwang* (指望), varies according to different authors and sources. In addition to "Expectation", sometimes it is translated into "Desire" as well.

the audience might reckon that “expectation” refers to Hsiao-fen’s longing for or her fantasy about the young college student who rents a room from her family. In such a sense, “expectation” could also be interpreted as the desire of Hsiao-fen, which both excites and perplexes her.



In Our Time (1982)

Thus how do we define desire in the sense of romantic love? Often, desire is metaphorically described as the delicious wound of Cupid’s arrow, which involves a mixed emotion of madness, enchantment, exaltation and anguish. In romantic love, desire is both the poison and the antidote. The discussion on desire could date back as early as ancient Greece. In *Symposium*, through Aristophanes’s elaboration, Plato relates an influential fable about desire. According to *Symposium*, previously, there were three sexes of human beings, that is, man, woman, and the union of the two — in other words, the all male, the all female, and the androgynous; “the man was originally the

child of the sun, the woman of the earth, and the man-woman of the moon.” Infuriating Zeus with their arrogance, the human beings were chopped into two parts by Zeus’s thunderbolt as a punishment. After the division, the two parts of the human being, “desiring his/her other half, came together and threw their arms about one another eager to grow into one, and would have perished from hunger without ever making an effort, because they did not like to do anything apart.”¹ Therefore, as viewed by Plato, the origin of desire lies in the loss of the other half.

In modern times, Sigmund Freud’s hypothesis of the Oedipus Complex, constructs another powerful discourse about desire. According to Freud, the male child takes his mother as the first sexual object in his very early age, but in face of his father’s authority, he has to suppress his desire for his mother. This desire repressed into the unconscious forms an “original loss” for the male child, and the child will seek a substitute for the “original loss” the whole of his life. As to the female, the first object of sex for a female child is her mother as well. However, different from a male child, when a female child discovers the fact that what her mother wants is her father who possesses a penis that neither her mother nor she has, she will transfer her sexual object from mother to father. Due to the same incest taboo as the male child’s Oedipus Complex, the female child’s desire of her father has to be repressed too, and thus forms the same kind of “original loss”. This is also called female child’s Electra Complex. For both male and female, throughout their whole life, the original loss continues returning and presenting itself as desire.²

In Greek mythology, Eros is the god of romantic love——his Roman counterpart is Cupid——and both the names of Eros in Greek and Cupid in Latin literally mean desire. Etymologically speaking, “the Greek word *eros* denotes ‘want’, ‘lack’, ‘desire for that which is missing’.”³ Therefore, it is reasonable to infer that “lack is its (Eros’s) animating, fundamental constituent.”⁴

From the above-mentioned discourses on desire, it seems that lack lies at the core of desire. As a matter of fact, in Edward Yang’s debut short *Expectation*, lack assumes a major role in narration, which also anticipates a similar feature of narration in Yang’s future film works. At the beginning of this short, Yang presents the picture of an incomplete family to the audience——a middle-aged career woman and her two adolescent daughters, i.e. Hsiao-fen and her older sister, lacking a father, or any other male family member. Lacking male labor and probably lacking income too, Hsiao-fen’s mother has to rent out one empty room——another lack or want——of their house to help out with household expenses. Thus the lack of a lodger for their empty room constitutes a starting point for the whole story —— the arrival of the new lodger, a strikingly handsome long-legged college student, arouses the desire of the family’s two adolescent girls at the same time and somehow produces a love triangle between them. In a Freudian sense, for girls, the object of desire is nothing more than a substitute for a father. Therefore in *Expectation*, for the two sisters, the young lodger takes the role of a father after he moves in. Simultaneously, in terms of family structure, to certain extent, his arrival makes up the loss of the dead father, and he assumes

¹ See Plato, “Symposium”, *Six Great Dialogues*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York: Dover Publications, 2007), pp. 155-8.

² See Catherine Belsey, *Desire: Love Stories in Western Culture* (Oxford & Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994), p. 52.

³ Anne Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet* (Champaign & London: Dalkey Archive Press, 1998), p.10. *Italic is original.*

⁶ *Ibid.* p.63.

the role of father in this family frequently, which could be well proved by the sequences of his moving heavy bricks bare-chested in the courtyard or of his instructing the sisters with their lessons. The absence of father, not only represents a distinctive characteristic of Yang's debut short, but is a recurring theme running through almost all of Yang's future works, physically and spiritually, .



The table scene of Hsiao-fen's family, in *Expectation*

Just like the sisters in *Expectation*, for most of Yang's female characters, what they really desire is a man who can act both as a boyfriend and as a father at the same time. Then it becomes a bit easier to interpret why Ming of *A Brighter Summer Day* keeps swapping boyfriends. It is because she is looking for not just a teenage boy who is fond of her spiritually, but a reliable man who can take care of her and even her family materially as a father would do for his daughter. Compared with S'ir, certainly Ma——the son of a general——or the promising young doctor would be a better choice for Ming. Similarly, Chin of *Taipei Story* resolves to marry Lon though she is in dubiously loving relationships with several other guys at the same time, just because the reliability and generosity that Lon possesses is what her pompous yet cowardly father lacks. Conversely, Molly's indifference towards her fiancé Akeem, and the estrangement and separation between Molly's elder sister and her husband the Author in *A Confucian Confusion*, might be the result of the male part's remarkable father-like-less-ness such as immaturity and impracticality.

Another interesting aspect about Yang's *Expectation*, is that the basic structure of the story is René Girard's "triangle of the desire". Desire not only originates from the desirer's sense of lack, but self-confirms and self-strengthens through a third person who desires the same object of desire as the desirer. The arrival of the young lodger not only fulfills Hsiao-fen's sense of lack, but inflicts

mutual antagonism upon the two sisters. “When did you start liking boys?” Hsiao-fen asks her sister one night. But the sister responds with a contemptuous glance instead of any words, then leaves the room. Of course, the sister could feel Hsiao-fen’s affection for the young lodger of whom she is fond as well. Finally, through the dimly-lighted window of the rent room, Hsiao-fen



Hsiao-fen’s elder sister (left) visits the young lodger at night, in *Expectation*

discerns her sister and the lodger kissing each other half-nakedly on the bed. At this moment, for Hsiao-fen, the bitterness suffered from love may be tremendous, but on the other hand, through her sister’s unexpected and unwelcome interference, the lodger as an ideal boyfriend—an ideal object of desire—may be even more strongly confirmed and cherished in Hsiao-fen’s heart. “In the birth of desire, the third person is always present.”¹ In a way, Girard’s “triangle of the desire” corresponds with Jacques Lacan’s “Le désir de l’homme est le désir de l’Autre”. There are at least two sorts of workable English translation for Lacan’s original French sentence above, and one of them is that “I want what the Other desires, or I want the object of the Other’s desire.”² In such a sense, Lacan’s “Le désir de l’homme est le désir de l’Autre” could be interpreted as a variant of Girard’s “triangle of the desire”. In Yang’s films, such a “triangle of the desire” recurs almost all of his career. De-wei, Jia-ji & Hsiao-hui (劉小慧, De-wei’s mistress) of *That Day, on the Beach*, Chou, Li & Shen (小沈, Chou’s lover) of *The Terrorizers*, Marta, Luen & Markus (Marta’s British boyfriend) of *Mahjong*, Fatty, Ting-Ting & Lili of *Yi Yi*, to name a few. Desire is born from a sense of absence in the desirer, and it is enhanced by the mediation of a third part who

¹ René Girard, *Deceit, Desire and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, trans. Yvonne Freccero, (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1965), p.21.

² See Jacques Lacan, “Translator’s Endnotes”, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan, (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004), p.314. The two kinds of understandings of Lacan’s “Le désir de l’homme est le désir de l’Autre” are: 1. As a man, I want the Other to desire me; 2. I want what the Other desires, or I want the object of the Other’s desire.

desires the same object as the desirer does.

2. Unrequited Love

Another archetypal narrative pattern of Yang's love stories, which is also first brought about through *Expectation*, is the plot of unrequited love. Throughout *Expectation*, Hsiao-fen's feelings of desire towards the young lodger are no more than one-sided love, and an impassable distance between her and the lodger is always there. Such a plot of unrequited love appears again and again among Yang's oeuvres—the desirer keeps eluding or ignoring the desirer's desire. At the same time, usually, the plot of unrequited love builds up the narrative tension necessary for the



Hsiao-fen is stunned by the young lodger's glistening muscular torso, in *Expectation*

development of story. In *The Terrorizers*, Li Li-chung tries by every possible means to win back his wife Chou Yu-fen's love, as Chou responds with unflinching coldness and detachment every time. Like a cat-and-mouse game, the tension continuously gathered between this couple, keeps advancing the development of the tragedy.

never responded to or even never known the desirer's desire towards him/her, like the young lodger to Hsiao-fen of *Expectation*, Molly to Akeem of *A Confucian Confusion*, and Little Mistress (小老婆, the nickname of a tall girl of Yang-Yang's class) to Yang-Yang of *Yi Yi*. In the second sort, the desirer keeps shunning or declining the desirer's desire after a short-term relationship with the desirer, though the desirer is still in love with them and does not give up easily. De-wei and Jia-ji of *That Day, on the Beach*, White Chick and the young photographer of *The Terrorizers*, Ming and S'ir of *A Brighter Summer Day*, all belong to the second sort.

In Yang's film works, the plot of unrequited love can be further divided into two sorts. In the first sort, the desirer has

The stories of the first sort of unrequited love in Yang's films provide a vivid illustration of the bittersweet nature of love. In *Yi Yi*, Yang-Yang's pure love for Little Mistress, a tall girl in his class, is one interesting example. Physically, Little Mistress is much better developed than Yang-Yang, almost a head taller than him. Admiring her elegant swimming style, or hoping to swim side by side with her someday, Yang-Yang secretly starts to learn swimming by himself in a bathtub, with the door of bathroom carefully locked. However, it is not an easy task to master swimming skills and once Yang-Yang almost drowns himself when practicing alone in swimming pool at school. All of these efforts and adventures are known only to Yang-Yang himself, and it seems he enjoys

these trials even in mortal danger. But Little Mistress never pays any affectionate attention to him. The only occasion on which she speaks to him is the time Yang-Yang breaks some school rules and Little Mistress pops up before him with a stern face and a severe denunciation. However, no matter how unkindly and arrogantly Little Mistress treats him, Yang-Yang's innocent yet genuine love for her seems completely unaffected, if not enhanced. If love is a symptom, then simultaneous pleasure and pain are one of its essential features.¹ If love is defined as a noble, unselfish and stoic willingness to accept suffering, then the first sort of unrequited love is its exemplar and may be the only sort of sustainable romantic love as well.

Compared with the first sort, the second sort of unrequited love in Yang's films results in much more distress and torture to the desirer and often to the desiree as well. Since the desiree has been in love with the desirer for a while and later declines to continue their relationship, it is really rather difficult for the desirer to easily and quickly give up his/her love. Now for the desirer, the love is contaminated with a sense of grievance and even hatred, which may gradually escalate accompanying the desiree's repeated declining. The feeling of grievance is a major feature of the second sort of unrequited love, and the grievance may develop into a burst of violence, often perpetrated by the desirer upon the third part of the triangle of the desire or upon both of the other two parts. In the closing of *The Terrorizers*, Li Li-chung breaks into the flat of Chou Yu-fen's paramour and shoots both of them. At the end of *A Brighter Summer Day*, S'ir attempts to stab Ma —Ming's new boyfriend, but encounters Ming on the way and stabs her to death.



Chin (right) enjoys the night ride with the young motor-biker, in *Taipei Story*

Another example of the second sort of unrequited love, which is seldom discussed by critics, occurs in *Taipei Story*. The triangle of the desire is made up of Chin, Lon and a young motor-biker. Chin and Lon are a couple who have known each other since their childhood, just as the Chinese title “Qingmei Zhuma” — literally, “Blue Plums, Bamboo Stilts” or “Green Plums, A Bamboo Horse” in English — of this film indicates. But as time passes, a force keeps pulling them apart

¹ See Anne Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet* (Champaign & London: Dalkey Archive Press, 1998), pp.62-3.

— Chin works as an executive assistant in a real estate in the East District, the flourishing commercial quarter of Taipei, while Lon runs a family fabric store on Dihua Road (迪化街) in the West District, formerly prosperous downtown but nowadays in constant decline. Though they are meant for each other, their increasing spiritual disconnection poses a threat to their engagement. In the last half of the film, at loggerheads with Lon, Chin joins her younger sister Ling, and gets to know the young motor-biker who is a friend of Ling's. Chin and the motor-biker become more and more familiar with each other, riding together through Taipei at night by motorbike, and drinking quietly side by side at a bar. Through Yang's camera, it seems that the young motor-biker somehow falls in love with Chin. Although Yang does not reveal much about how intimate their relationship is growing, several sequences— for instance, Chin sits on the back of motor-bike holding her arms around the motor-bike's waist tightly in the night street, or the young motor-biker tenderly strokes Chin's arms staring at her quietly and affectionately at the bar— have disclosed the possible carnal relationship they might have, at least a one night stand. This is further proved by the following scenes in which the young motor-biker keeps waylaying Chin and repeatedly ringing her apartment doorbell late at night, when Chin refuses to meet him again. Chin cannot bear the motor-biker's unyielding advances and seeks out Lon for help. Lon shows up beneath Chin's apartment building, and warns off the motor-biker who is waiting downstairs for Chin. "Go home to bed! Don't come looking for Chin anymore! Once it's over, forget it, understand?" Lon speaks forcefully. In this triangle of the desire, forsaken by the desiree (Chin) and annoyed by the third part/the rival in love (Lon), the desirer (the young motor-biker) feels that he could not hold down his grievance and hatred any longer and stabs his rival to death in the night street in a hysterical way. An unrequited love results in an unexpected death.

This tragic "triangle of the desire" in *Taipei Story* is both a representative case of unrequited love in Yang's works, and a typical example of unfaithful love of Yang's characters, which will be further discussed in the following section. Film critic Edmond Wong thinks that the Chinese title of this film— "Qingmei Zhuma" (青梅竹馬), which literally means "Blue Plum, Bamboo Stilts" in English and refers to a long-term mutually attractive love relationship often developed as early as childhood between two lovers in the Chinese language— implies a heavy irony against the content of this film. "The world reflected through the Chinese title of the film, is actually an empty traditional ideal, the romantic morality of which could no longer find any space for existence in such a modernized city as Taipei"¹, Wong writes. In fact, the Chinese names of the two leading roles of the film also constitute a quiet irony. Lon (阿隆), which literally means prosperity in Chinese, never has a successful career as a grown-up; Chin (阿貞), which literally means fidelity in Chinese, keeps flirting with many a male character in the film.

3. Ubiquitous Infidelity

In *Taipei Story*, there is more than one "triangle of the desire" linked by Chin— besides the Chin-Lon-Motor-biker triangle discussed above, there is also a triangle formed by Chin, Lon, and Ko (小柯) who is a colleague of Chin and a married architect. Yang designs a scene of particular

¹ 黄建業：《楊德昌電影研究：臺灣電影的知性思辨家》，臺北：遠流，1995，第105頁。

irony in the film when the two triangles overlap. Chin dashes around Taipei at night, sitting on the back of a motorbike, holding the waist of the young motor-biker closely. They stop en route at a convenience store. Quite to Chin's surprise, Ko and his wife are shopping inside too. Chin takes on an expression of obvious embarrassment and hurries to hide herself from Ko's sight, though neither the young motor-biker nor Ko is Chin's real boyfriend.



Lon (left) and Chin in *Taipei Story*

From Lon's standpoint, as Chin's fiancé, he is the victim of her infidelity in their love relationship. But things become more complicated when the point of view changes. As mentioned above, Chin is at loggerheads with Lon and thus somehow falls in love with the young motor-biker. But the cause of the quarrel between Chin and Lon is because Lon deliberately lies to Chin and meets his ex-girlfriend Gwan (阿娟) without letting Chin know. When Lon flies back to Taiwan from the United States, he stops over in Tokyo and visits his old flame Gwan, who lives there and has already gotten married. For Lon, it is just a visit between old friends, at least for Gwan and him, and he knows that Chin would think too much about his Tokyo visit if she knew about it. Therefore he withholds the truth and tells a white lie. But from Chin's perspective, this white lie and the secret visit can also be interpreted as a kind of infidelity between lovers. The ex-girlfriend or ex-wife of a man always poses a potential threat to love for his present girlfriend or wife. In such a triangle, Chin turns from a perpetrator into a victim in this love relationship due to infidelity. At least in her mind things are so. Therefore, in Lon and Chin's love relationship, through different perspectives, both of them are victims of infidelity caused by the other part, and both of them are perpetrators of infidelity tormenting the other part.

In Yang's works, infidelity is a ubiquitous phenomenon running through all of his films, and usually in his every film there is more than one character who is unfaithful to his/his lover or spouse. In *That Day, on the Beach*, there are De-wei, Jia-ji's dad, guest professor and even Jia-ji who are disloyal in love; in *The Terrorizers*, there are Chou Yufen, White Chick, and the young photographer; in *A Brighter Summer Day*, the school girl Ming demonstrates a classic example of infidelity; in *A Confucian Confusion*, there are Ming (the same name as the girl in *A Brighter Summer Day* but a different male character), Larry and Feng; in *Mahjong*, there are Hong Kong (nickname of a young hairdresser), Winston Chen, Alison, and Markus; in *Yi Yi*, there are A-Di, Lili and Sherry. Even in Yang's debut, the short *Expectation*, according to several scenes—for instance, in one night scene, Hsiao-fen's sister dresses herself carefully, hurries from her home, and jumps onto the back of a young man's motorbike—it seems that Hsiao-fen's older sister has other men besides the young lodger. In a way, infidelity as an important theme emerges prominently and repeatedly throughout Yang's oeuvres. Watching Yang's films, the audience can feel a strong sense of uncertainty and even disbelief in love.

In the Freudian sense, the original loss is felt by everybody. Concerning love, man is merely seeking a substitute for his mother throughout life, while the complete indulgence banned by incest taboo is always beyond reach. The same happens to women as well. "All objects are second-handed—thrift-shop replacement for the original parents."¹ Nobody could make up this original loss, and nobody could bring the desirer fulfilled satisfaction. If Freud's hypothesis is correct, then infidelity seems to be more a human nature than a moral imperfection.

In Yang's works, there is another couple quite similar to Lon and Chin from *Taipei Story*, and they have a "blue-plum-bamboo-stilts"-style long-term love relationship too. They are Ming and Qiqi from *A Confucian Confusion*. Ming and Qiqi fall in love with each other in college. After graduation, Ming becomes a civil servant and Qiqi works as an office lady in a culture company run by Molly, a girl born of wealthy family and a college classmate of both Qiqi and Ming. In the film, Qiqi is a paragon of women in the eyes of other characters—good-looking, elegant, intelligent, warm-hearted and considerate. On the other hand, Ming is handsome, diligent, kind-hearted and fair-minded. Seemingly it is a perfect match. However, Ming, apparently honest and introverted, can not reject the seduction of Feng, a calculating girl and agrees to visit her flat alone late at night. On another night, in face of Molly's child-like caprice and ferocity, Ming attempts to quiet her down, starting with pushing and shoving each other in the dark alley but ending with hugging and kissing together on his bed. At these moments, all the admiration and envy at this ideal couple felt by others, has turned biting irony. Compared with Feng or Molly, Qiqi is much more attractive to males—in the words of Larry, a colleague of Qiqi, everybody in the company is fond of her and her presence in the company can bring emotional comfort to every one—and is an unparalleled choice of girlfriend or wife for males. Having such a girlfriend is like being stricken by unexpected good luck. Moreover, to a great extent, Ming is a good-natured man. Then why is Ming repeatedly unfaithful to Qiqi? Perhaps, Ming's frequent infidelities to Qiqi fairly prove Freud's hypothesis of the original loss. No matter how perfect she—his girlfriend or his wife—appears, "every woman, it would seem, is a surrogate object, a poor

¹ Elaine Hoffman Baruch, *Women, Love, and Power: Literary and Psychoanalytic Perspectives* (New York & London: New York University Press, 1991), p.89.

replacement for the original mother”¹, and will never completely satisfy the desire of her man.



Ming (left) and Qiqi have a quarrel inside taxi, in *A Confucian Confusion*

Of course, Ming’s infidelity could also be interpreted in terms of the distance or obstacle between the desirer and the desired. Generally, between the desirer and the desired, the distance is more insurpassable and the obstacle is more insurmountable, the longer and stronger the desirer feels an attraction towards the desired. “Object of desire that is known, attained, possessed, cannot be an object of desire.”² As the distance between Ming and Qiqi is largely contracted, the obstacle is greatly reduced, for Ming, Qiqi’s attraction is quietly weakened, even without Ming’s own awareness of its waning. Thus, from the other side, Ming and Qiqi’s case verifies the theory discussed in last section: the unrequited love may be the only sustainable love. “A sustainable love is based on constantly overcoming obstacles and bringing forth novelties between the two lovers. To some extent, the process of love rather than the result of love is what the lovers really desire.”³ And a certain distance between lovers will constitute an indispensable Saran Wrap to maintain the freshness of love.

In a sense, unrequited love and infidelity constitute the two extremes of the spectrum of a loving relationship. For Yang’s characters, relatively speaking, long-term faithful love is often accompanied with a certain uncontractible distance between the desirer and the desired. Yang prefers using the camera as an efficacious prop to represent this distance which is essential for

¹ Elaine Hoffman Baruch, *Women, Love, and Power: Literary and Psychoanalytic Perspectives* (New York & London: New York University Press, 1991), p.106.

² Anne Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet* (Champaign & London: Dalkey Archive Press, 1998), p.65.

³ 費孝通:《鄉土中國 生育制度》,北京:北京大學出版社,1998,第46頁。

sustainable love. In his two masterpieces *The Terrorizers* and *Yi Yi*, the camera as a prop has left an outstanding impression on the audience. In the two films, the camera seems to assume a role of maintaining a certain distance between characters, especially between lovers. Photography forms a major part of life for both the young photographer of *The Terrorizers* and Yang-Yang of *Yi Yi*.

The obsession of the young photographer with the Eurasian girl White Chick is meticulously depicted through his camera and photos from the beginning. Risking sporadic gunshots in the early morning street, the young photographer takes great effort to frame White Chick's every action into his camera, long shots or close-ups. However, White Chick, as a delinquent teenager, keeps drifting in and out of his frame and refuses to be confined into his camera. For the young



The huge picture of White Chick in the apartment of the young photographer (left), in *The Terrorizers*

photographer, White Chick's existence is just like the huge picture of her hanging on the wall of his apartment, which consists of numerous smaller photos and could easily turn into an unrecognizable picture when wind blows into the room and disturbs these smaller photos. Therefore, White Chick remains as an unsolved riddle in the heart of the young photographer, evoking his new and fresh imagination and his unceasing desire. As the desirer tries to

approach the desired through his camera, a tension forms between them. As Susan Sontag indicates, "the camera doesn't rape, or even possess, though it may presume, intrude, trespass, distort, exploit, and, at the farthest reach of metaphor, assassinate—all activities that, unlike the sexual push or shove, can be conducted from a distance and with some detachment."¹ Between the photographer/desirer and the photographed/desired, in order to generate desire and maintain it, "from a distance" and "with some detachment" have become an essential prerequisite, for "imagination is the core of desire"². Thanks to such a distance and such detachment, a necessary room for imagination has been preserved in the mind of the desirer.

In *Yi Yi*, Yang-Yang prefers taking photos of the back of people's heads and this kind of avant-garde work has invited him much ridicule from his impudent school instructor. Among these photos, some are of the backhead of his favorite girl nicknamed Little Mistress, but it seems that Yang-Yang does not possess any photo of Little Mistress's front. However, it is these obscure photos of the backhead without revealing the face of the photographed that preserve necessary and sufficient room for constant imagining and longing. On the contrary, if the photos of the desired fully unfold the photographed/desired before the eyes of the desirer, or even the photos

¹ Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Penguin, 1979), p.13.

² Anne Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet* (Champaign & London: Dalkey Archive Press, 1998), p.77.

incorporate the desired and the desirer closely together inside, then the desired might soon lose her/his glamour as a desired object in the mind of the desirer. Just as in the opening of *Yi Yi*, the wedding photo of A-Di and Xiao Yan, which was accidentally placed upside down at their wedding ceremony, humorously suggests the troublesome relationship between the two newly-weds.

“Perfect desire is perfect impasse. What does the desirer want from desire? Candidly, he wants to keep on desiring.”¹ No one can escape desire, no one can cease desiring, but there is no desired object which could be desired permanently by the desirer. At least, in Yang’s films, things are like that.

4. Lonely Married Couples

The marriage between A-Di and Xiao Yan is flooded with infidelity—as are the other marriages in this film. In fact, the marriage in Yang’s films has never seemed happy, even if the partners are faithful to each other. In *A Brighter Summer Day*, S’ir’s parents are unswervingly loyal to each other and share weal and woe in life hand in hand, but they truly lack a common language and frequently quarrel with each other about trivialities due to their rather different values. Thus it is hard to say that there are any happily married couples in Yang’s cinematic world.



The wedding photo of A-Di and Xiao Yan is accidentally placed upside down by NJ (right), in *Yi Yi*

In a way, the marriages in Yang’s films can be divided into two types: the couple with children,

¹ Ibid, p.136.

and the childless couple. The two couples mentioned above——A-Di and Xiao Yan, S'ir's parents ——belong to the first type. The couples with children in Yang's films also include Jia-ji's parents, Jia-sen and his wife of *That Day, on the Beach*, Chin's parents, Ko and his wife, the cabbie—— Lon's old pal——and his wife of *Taipei Story*, Ming's parents of *A Confucian Confusion*, Red Fish's parents of *Mahjong*, NJ and Min-Min of *Yi Yi*. Many of the husbands, such as Jia-ji's father,



NJ (right) dates his ex-girlfriend Sherry on his business trip to Tokyo, in *Yi Yi*

Ko, Ming's father, Red Fish's father and A-Di, have extramarital affairs, which sometimes leads them to living separately or to divorce. NJ of *Yi Yi* could be categorized as an unfaithful husband as well, for at least spiritually he has betrayed his wife Min-Min. On his business trip to Tokyo, in a hotel he confides to his old flame Sherry that up to then the only woman he really loves is still her. Both Ming's

father and Red Fish's father were lascivious playboys before, and the audience can easily tell that it is the infidelity of the husband that caused the breaking up of Ming's and Red Fish's parents. In the marriage of Jia-ji's parents, Chin's parents, and NJ & Min-Min, it seems that love has already quietly sneaked out of their family life a long time ago, and their conjugal life is no more than a conventional daily ritual forced upon them. For S'ir's parents and the cabbie & his wife, even



S'ir's parents in *A Brighter Summer Day*

more bitterness is found in their marriage —— breeding young children within straitened family circumstances adds miseries to their already heavyhearted marriage life. If love is an instinct of human beings to preserve and continue the species, then the ultimate function of our desire should be channeled into reproduction. However, “beget children!”——and that

was a negation of passion.”¹ In the traditional family in Chinese culture, the horizontal spousal relationship is always secondary to the vertical parent-child relationship.² In this sense, for the

¹ Denis De Rougemont, *Love in the Western World*, trans. Montgomery Belgion, revised and augmented edition, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 268.

² Elaine Leeder, *The Family in Global Perspective: A Gendered Journey* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2004), p.111.

couple with children, reproduction always takes precedence over courting each other. Hence, passion gets negated by reproduction, and desire gets inhibited by breeding. There is not much room left for romantic love for the couple with children.

In Yang's films, the couples with children share a common feature, which is that these families are characterized by a maternal father and a desexualized mother. A case in point will be S'ir's parents in *A Brighter Summer Day* and NJ & Min-Min in *Yi Yi*. The representation of either S'ir's father or NJ is widely different from the stereotypical image of the stern and strict father in traditional Chinese culture. They are distinctly tender, affectionate and considerate, especially when alone with their children. On the other hand, neither S'ir's mother nor Min-Min possess typical feminine features. Burdened with routine household chores, they each seem to have lost their charms as a woman long ago, physically and spiritually. Thus, the image of mothers in Yang's films becomes defeminised or even masculinized. Certainly such mothers——wives as well——aren't an ideal object of desire for their husbands or other males. At the same time, it seems that these wives have never desired any male either, at least in Yang's films. This results in a double loss for the mothers in Yang's films —— a death of both desire (of their own) and desirability (for other males). Therefore, for the couples with children, the desexualized mothers



NJ (left) takes his son Yang-Yang to McDonald's to have a snack, in *Yi Yi*

look active and adaptable, while the maternal fathers seem rather passive and vulnerable. Jia-ji's parents, the cabbie and his wife, S'ir's parents, Red Fish's parents, and A-Di & Xiao Yan, all belong to the couple of weak father and mighty mother. According to the theory of the Oedipus Complex, in the triangle relationship between father, mother and son, in face of the provocation of the young son, a weak maternal father would not constitute a truly threatening power. But for the son, to challenge his father's authority in the family, commences the process of socialization of a

young man. Only a powerful father, who fully represents the Law or the symbolic order, can extensively enhance and effectively accomplish the socialization process of his young son. Otherwise, with a weak father, the young son usually can not complete his socialization and is kept lingering outside the world of adults. Perhaps, this could also provide a justifiable explanation for the dense appearance of adolescent boys in Yang's films, who are painfully and perpetually struggling with the rites of passage but yet are seemingly always rejected by the world of grown-ups.

The childless couple as the other type of couples in Yang's films includes De-wei and Jia-ji of *That Day, on the Beach*, Li Li-chung and Chou Yu-fen of *The Terrorizers*, Molly's elder sister and



Chou (left) frequently pays secret visits to her lover Shen, in *The Terrorizers*

the Author of *A Confucian Confusion*. In Yang's films, if it is reproduction that negates desire for the couple with children; then it is death that replaces desire and thus wrecks the marriage for the childless couple. In *The Terrorizers*, the marriage of Li and Chou is constantly haunted by emotional abuse. Often, emotional abuse possesses an even more deadly destructive power over the marriage——for many partners, it

is better to be beaten than be ignored. Li is met with the emotional abuse by Chou from the beginning of the film to its end——indifferent attitude, restrained conversation, and separate habitation. At last, the husband is provoked beyond what he can endure and shoots both his wife and her lover and then finally himself. In *That Day, on the Beach*, the routine family life after the wedding gradually wears the former sweetness between De-wei and Jia-ji, and somehow even creates antagonism between them. For Jia-ji, it becomes rarer and rarer to have dinner with



Li (right) attempts to persuade Chou back to home in a cafe shop, in *The Terrorizers*

De-wei at home, and the husband is always too busy with his work. Perhaps, in the marriage, accompanying a removal of obstacles, it is the wife who loses her attraction more quickly. Just as Rougemont points out, “passion and marriage are essentially irreconcilable. Their origins and their ends make them mutually exclusive. Their co-existence in our midst constantly raises insoluble

problems, and the strife thereby engendered constitutes a persistent danger for everyone of our

social safeguards.”¹ From the aspect of sexology, “marriage itself might not be the happiest location for sexual activity. Legitimate sex leaves them frigid, while forbidden sensuality, by contrast, often releases a capacity for pleasure which cannot be found elsewhere.”²

De-wei’s infidelity drives Jia-ji to dating other men for revenge. As the mutual emotional injury becomes more and more severe, finally, the day comes when De-wei is completely out of contact and has probably drowned on the beach. Another childless couple, Molly’s elder sister and the Author, have encountered the threat of death as well. The Author, who lives separately with his wife — Molly’s elder sister — and keeps aloof from worldly strife, has once attempted to commit suicide. One night, he sits over the high viaduct, hesitating about whether he should jump off or not, but gives up at last. As is known, orgasm is an experience sharing many similarities with dying, for this reason desire bears an inherent relationship to death. “Thanatos is pure while Eros has, since the beginning, been permeated with Thanatos, the most deep-seated drive being the death drive.”³ However, for the childless couple in Yang’s films, it seems that desire usually does not lead to a jousissant climax, which is similar to dying, but instead to genuine violent death.

As a result of the unhappy marriage, many married characters in Yang’s films frequently attempt



De-wei (left) and Jia-ji get married without the permission of Jia-ji’s parents, in *That Day, on the Beach*

to run away from home, even just for a short while. In the last part of *That Day, on the Beach*, De-wei comes back home more and more rarely until completely out of contact. The characters such as Chou Yu-fen of *The Terrorizers*, the Author of *A Confucian Confusion*, and Winston Chen of *Mahjong* simply move out and live separately from their husband or wife. In *Yi Yi*, NJ’s business trip to Tokyo, Min-Min’s Buddhist training in a temple, and A-Di’s frequent visits to his ex-girlfriend, all are a kind of escape from home

in their own way. It seems that for the married characters in Yang’s films, marriage just means being confined and persecuted, to the point that it may even constitute a threat to their life.

In an interview he gave in the early period of his career, Yang was asked about his love life, he said, “the girls all thought that I was impractical. I lived in the world of film and fantasy. Nothing I could do about it. Perhaps that is the way it will remain in my life.”⁴ But, watching the love

¹ Denis De Rougemont, *Love in the Western World*, trans. Montgomery Belgion, revised and augmented edition, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 276.

² Catherine Belsey, *Desire: Love Stories in Western Culture* (Oxford & Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994), p. 46.

³ Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p.31.

⁴ 黃建業:《楊德昌電影研究:臺灣電影的知性思辨家》,臺北:遠流,1995,第199頁。See the English version of this interview in Bryan Chang(張偉雄), Li Cheuk-to (李焯桃), eds. *The One and Only Edward Yang* (《一一重

stories in Yang's films, perhaps surprisingly, the audience will discover the very opposite of what Yang said. In regard to love, Yang is not impractical, but too practical to pretend to have any illusory romantic affections. In his love stories on screen, there are no sweet fantasies, but genuine and often cruel reality of the desire of human beings.

In Yang's films, there is almost no place left for a lasting love or a happy married life. A strong sense of disbelief and detachment is permeated among the lovers and partners in his love stories. This sense of disbelief and detachment diffuses even further into the relationships between other characters, such as parents and children, friends and colleagues. There is always an implicit antagonism between Jia-ji/Jia-sen and their father in *That Day, on the Beach*, and between White Chick and her mother in *The Terrorizers*. In *Yi Yi*, the deadly silence of Grandma throughout the film also suggests an uncommunicativity between generations. De-wei and Ah-tsai in *That Day, on the Beach*, S'ir's father and Mr. Wang in *A Brighter Summer Day*, and Ming and Liren in *A Confucian Confusion*, though they have been close friends for a long time, they can not avoid terrible misunderstandings between them and sometimes even disloyal actions. Perhaps, behind all of these things is secretly hidden the director's profound pessimism about the volatility and unpredictability of human nature.

現：楊德昌》), (Hong Kong: Hong Kong International Film Festival Society, 2008), p.37.

Chapter Five

The Weight of Being

In *life* everything attained is like *death*. Nothing completed can *live*. In so far as we strive for completeness, we are striving toward the finished, the *dead*.....As a drama for others a *life* can appear to be complete; in reality it does not possess this character. *Life* is tension and goal, inadequacy and unfulfillment.¹

—Karl Theodor Jaspers

1. Lights Flickering

Shot 1: *At night, Hsiao-fen's home. The table lamp flickers while Hsiao-fen is doing her homework. Hsiao-fen sinks into her contemplation. It is heard off screen that the young lodger comes back, pushing open the door and entering.*

(*Expectation*, 44'37"/c32seconds)

Shot 2: *At a Disco. Ling and her young friends are dancing in high spirits accompanying the passionate music. Suddenly the lights of the disco go off and it turns pitch black and dead silent. After a short while, someone lights up his cigarette lighter and soon other lighters are lit up one after another quickly. Crazy laughter bursts out from the crowd and these young men and women resume their fast dance within the light of cigarette lighters in much higher spirits than before.*

(*Taipei Story*, 77'25"/c29seconds)

Shot 3: *At night. Hotel room. White Chick kneels on the edge of bed and switches off and on the floor lamp. Out of the screen the blended noise of showering and humming of the man she hooked on the street, comes from the bathroom. White Chick is neatly dressed as usual and looks completely unconcerned.*

(*The Terrorizers*, 63'42"/c5seconds)



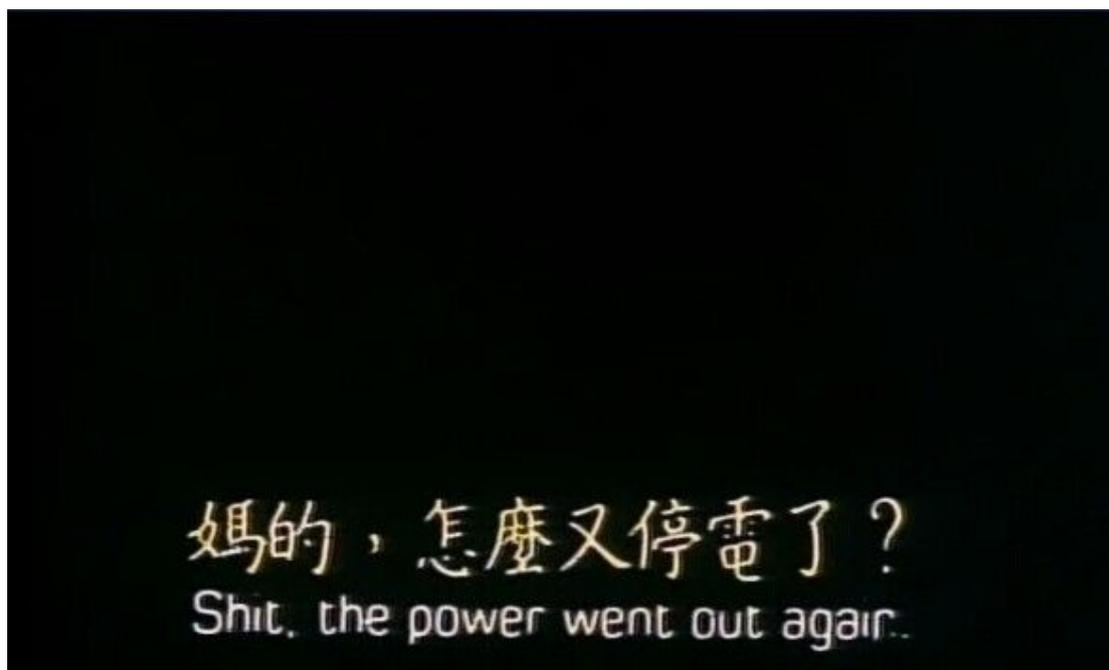
S'ir keeps switching the lights on and off at home, in *A Brighter Summer Day*

¹ Karl Jaspers. *Philosophy*, vol.2, trans. E.B.Ashton, (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), p.200. The italics are author's.

Shot 4: *At night. Taipei Municipal Chien-Kuo High School(臺北建國中學). Along the corridor on the second floor of a classroom building. S'ir keeps switching on and off the lights of every classroom. The light throws out of the window and falls upon the corridor. The corridor turns from dark to bright and from bright to dark, again and again.*

(A Brighter Summer Day, 9'35''/c21seconds)

Here are just several shots concerning “light flickering” in Edward Yang’s films, and the following are some other examples about “light flickering” in his works. In *Expectation*, on another night, Hsiao-fen’s home, the table lamp flickers again while Hsiao-fen is doing her homework. (50'37''/c21seconds). From *A Brighter Summer Day*, inside the billiards room run by Shandong, the bill due causes a sudden blackout. The followers of Shandong quickly light up some candles. However, shortly after, the electricity comes on again, and the followers blow out the candles. (40'53''/c52seconds). From *Mahjong*, inside the apartment that Mr. Chiu sent to Angela as a gift. The confrontation between Red Fish and Mr. Chiu turns increasingly fierce, until Red Fish loses himself in outrage and shoots and kills Mr. Chiu. In the whole course, on the background, a decorative lamp keeps changing the color of its light between red and green. (104'01''/c258seconds). From *Yi Yi*, at night, below the viaduct, Fatty is consoling Ting-Ting while the traffic lights in the background are switching from red to green to amber and to red again. (120'52''/c105seconds).¹



The power goes out unexpectedly in Shandong’s billiards room, in *A Brighter Summer Day*

There will be more examples of shot or sequence about “light flickering” to be found in Yang’s

¹ Concerning the portrayal of “lights flickering” in Edward Yang’s films, the Japanese critic Abe Yoshiaki (阿部嘉昭) has an early insightful account in *An Edward Yang Reader* (『楊德昌電影讀本』). See 阿部嘉昭 (楊德昌キーワード事典), 李鳳宇 (編) 『楊德昌電影讀本』 (日本東京: シネカノン, 1995.07)。

films under close reading/watching. In this sense, it might be said that the depiction of “light flickering” constitutes a signature of Edward Yang’s films.

In Chinese culture, usually, the portrayal of “light flickering” brings up association with the uncertainty of life and the inevitability of death. As a matter of fact, just like the flickering lights, the representation of death repeatedly appears in Yang’s films as well. In a way, Yang’s cinematic representation of death and that of flickering lights correlate with each other in a thought-provoking way. Death and life are an enduringly alluring topic for philosophers and artists



Hsiao-fen sinks into thinking while doing her homework at night, in *Expectation*

of all time. And Edward Yang, who is widely regarded as an “intellectual thinker” in Chinese-language cinema, certainly will deal with this topic in his own way. Behind his cinematic representation of life and death, hides the director’s serious meditations

on the existence of human beings. As will be discussed in the following sections, it seems that there is an undercurrent of existentialism within Yang’s films, which is well displayed through Yang’s cinematic representation of life and death.

Some film critics and scholars have already pointed out Yang’s existentialist predilection in his films. Perry Lim (林沛理) considers Yang the only genuine inheritor of Ingmar Bergman’s spiritual wealth in the Chinese-language film industry, because Yang’s concerns over the living condition of his characters reflect a Bergmanian philosophical thinking.¹ In addition, Yang has often been compared with Michelangelo Antonioni and regarded as “Antonioni of Taiwan” by critics in the early stage of his film career.² Though Yang personally dislikes such a comparison, it has proved according to critics that Yang and Antonioni have a lot in common in their films. As is widely known, these two European film giants Ingmar Bergman and Michelangelo Anotonioni are both considered the filmmakers strongly influenced by existentialism.³

On the other hand, existentialism has thrived from the ruins of World War II, and it advocates that philosophy should concern itself with the living condition of individuals, who suffered severely during the war. For this reason, an emphasis upon philosophical thinking on life and death constitutes a distinguishing feature of existentialism. The thought of existentialist philosophers

¹ 林沛理, “電影大師華語世界有傳人”, 《亞洲週刊》, 2007年8月12日, 第二十一卷三十一期。

² John Anderson. *Edward Yang* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005), p.3.

³ William McBride. “Existentialism as a cultural movement”, Steve Crowell. ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Existentialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p.62.

such as Martin Heidegger’s “being-unto-death”, Albert Camus’s elaboration on suicide has made a great impact on the intellectual history of the twentieth century and nowadays. Therefore, whether Yang could be categorized into the group of filmmakers influenced by existentialism, or whether the existentialist undertone could be found in Yang’s cinematic works, will be the chief purpose of the following discussion.

2. Fascination with Death

It is no exaggeration to say that Yang’s every film gives forth a scent of death, strong or weak. Those who saw *A Brighter Summer Day*—its Chinese title (《牯嶺街少年殺人事件》) literally means “A Murder Committed in Guling Street by An Adolescent Boy”—for the first time, might have been led by their awareness that there is a murder awaiting somewhere ahead throughout the film. In Yang’s first feature *That Day, on the Beach* and his last feature *Yi Yi*, only shortly after the opening of these two films, the director deliberately brings the uncertainty about death into the narration, and sets uncertain death as the background of the whole story. At the beginning of *That Day, on the Beach*, Jia-ji told Ching-ching that her husband De-wei was missing and probably got drowned at sea. At the early part of *Yi Yi*, Grandma fell down and went into a coma after returning from her son’s wedding banquet. Since then, the dying grandma has become a continuous concern for the other family members in their daily life, until her death and funeral at the end of the film. Of course, in the three films above, the death-related plots are more than those aforementioned. In *A Brighter Summer Day*, many a murder occurred and the murderers were not limited to adolescent boys. In Yang’s other works such as *Taipei Story*, *The Terrorizers* and *Mahjong*, the plots concerning murder and suicide construct several very impressive and important parts of the three films. Among Yang’s works, *A Confucian Confusion* is the only



The newsreel about Vietnam War on TV in the sitting room of the Hsiao-fen’s, the screen in screen in *Expectation*

feature which has not included a death event. However, there still appear plots about death in the film, at least twice: One night, sitting quietly on the viaduct, the Author—Molly’s sister-in-law—attempted a suicide by jumping down but changed his mind at last; in hospital, Ming’s father was critically ill and having an operation in the

emergency room, while Ming and other relatives were waiting impatiently outside and they were even preparing themselves for the doctor's death notice, though the father was eventually rescued from danger. As to Yang's debut *Expectation*, probably owing to its limited screen time—less than 30 minutes—there is no plot about death in this short. But it is noteworthy that the storyline of the short is unrolled against the background that Hsiao-fen has an incomplete family and her father is dead. Besides, in the family table scene in the sitting room, the TV news broadcast was about the Vietnam War and the Beatles's Tokyo concert—both of which must have been intentionally arranged by the director—and both of the two pieces of TV news gave out a faint smell of death.¹

Taking a look at the plots about death in Edward Yang's films, the audience will discover that suicide and murder cover a large proportion of these deaths. "There is but one truly serious philosophic problem, and that is suicide", Albert Camus said, "judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy."² Lots of Yang's characters committed suicide or attempted suicide. De-wei of *That Day, on the Beach* probably had drowned himself in the sea. In *The Terrorizers*, the young photographer's girlfriend tried to



The girlfriend of the young photographer is taken by ambulance to hospital after suicide, in *The Terrorizers*

poison herself with sleeping pills but was rescued, while Li Li-chung shot himself to death with a pistol. In *A Brighter Summer Day*, having learned the death of her daughter, Ming's mother swallowed gold jewelry in despair in order to follow her only child to the other world.³ The Author of *A*

Confucian Confusion once thought of jumping from the high viaduct to kill himself, but changed his mind finally. In *Mahjong*, Winston Chen and his young mistress chose to commit suicide together in their love nest, while his son Red Fish attempted a suicide but failed for the last bullet in his pistol had already been fired. In *Yi Yi*, A-Di nearly killed himself with a deliberate gas leak in the bathroom. Of course, these suicides or suicide attempts of Yang's characters were not all done in a Camusian sense, and most of them might have never given serious thought to the meaning of life. However, such frequent and consecutive representation of suicide in his cinematic works, more or less, has disclosed the director's own thinking on the meaning of life.

¹ John Lennon was assassinated at the end of 1980 and it shocked the whole world. Since the omnibus feature *In Our Time*, the second episode of which is *Expectation*, was released in 1982, certainly the audience would associate the newsreel of Beatles's Tokyo concert with Lennon's unexpected death.

² Walter Kaufmann. "Existentialism and Death", *Chicago Review*, Vol.13, No.2 (Summer, 1959), pp.73-93.

³ There are two characters named Ming in Yang's films, one is an adolescent girl of *A Brighter Summer Day*, who is loved and at last killed by S'ir, the other Ming is a young man of *A Confucian Confusion*, who is a civil servant and the fiancé of Qiqi.

Here, take Winston Chen's suicide in *Mahjong* for instance. As a businessman, Winston Chen had dramatically experienced the rise and fall in his career. By business tricks, he has accumulated large wealth in a rather short period. For this reason, he was addressed as "a big crook" by others at that time. Later, he was cheated by others and broke, then called as "a big dope" by people. Looking back to these years, he sighed with emotion to his son Red Fish, "I haven't accomplished anything since then. To make more money? Wasn't there enough? You know what's funny? When



The double suicide of Winston Chen and his young mistress in their love nest, in *Mahjong*

you're rolling in money like I was, you find you want things that money can't buy. If I died with nothing but money, I'd be the poorest guy on earth! I would regret it badly." His son could not understand him and asked mockingly, "Okay, what do you want? What can't money buy? Tell me!" Chen kept silence and chose double suicide

with his young mistress not long after, to the shock of everyone. In the heart of our hearts, everyone may encounter such questions — Where am I from? Who am I? Where will I go? Humans are distinguished from other beings by their capacity to put their own existence into question. It is a capacity as well as a need. Pursuing the clarity of oneself and the world around oneself is a fundamental human need. But in the face of a universe that has a nature foreign and irreducible to us, the clarity seems always beyond our reach, and such a pursuit is always futile. Life is but a small light in the midst of a vast darkness. For Winston Chen, probably, the frustration and even despair caused by the challenge of such questions — the failure to satisfy such a fundamental human need — led to his great weariness and a longing for death. What he feared might not be death but an unclear and somehow false life. Winston Chen's suicide could also be interpreted from another perspective. Since death constitutes a permanent and inevitable menace to our life and death may visit us at any moment, the so-called purposes, values and meanings of our life will all perish immediately and completely upon the arrival of death. Accompanying its arrival, all the possibilities in our life will turn impossible once and for all. Man never has and never will overcome his finitude. Hence, in such an absurd situation, facing the naked meaninglessness of the universe, some of us may choose to die instead of to live. Winston Chen might be one of them. Concerning the question "Is it a life worth living", the answer from Chen might be a definite "No". For the persons who say no to this question, to live has already become a deadly pain. More life is not always better than less. The only way to stop this pain is to kill themselves and no longer exist.

The hues of existentialism also fly in the plots about murder in Yang's films. Comparing Yang's

masterpiece *A Brighter Summer Day* with Feodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, or Albert Camus's *The Outsider*, or Jean-Paul Sartre's *The Flies*, the audience will find that the main characters of the four works are all murder suspects. In addition, all these murder suspects are characterized by moral ambiguity, which makes it hard to say whether they are bad or good in essence. As a matter of fact, not only S'ir of *A Brighter Summer Day* is a morally ambiguous murderer, but nearly all the characters suspected of murder in Yang's films have committed crime with some sympathy-provoking motives. Murderers like S'ir of *A Brighter Summer Day* and Fatty (Pangzi) of *Yi Yi* are good-mannered and well-educated adolescent boys, and their crimes might have been committed merely on a blind impulse. Both Li Li-chung of *The Terrorizers* and Red Fish of *Mahjong* have taken leave of their senses before their hysterical slayings. However, confronted with these characters of murderer in Yang's films, the audience seldom experience the



Red Fish shot Mr. Chiu to death in senseless rage, in *Mahjong*

feeling of disgust or hatred at them, and sometimes they even extend some warm sympathy or strong love for them. At these moments, it seems that those widely-accepted moral standards fall dysfunctional. In the view of existentialists, there are no universal moral standards. Generally, it is believed that reason is an essential feature of

human beings, which distinguishes human beings from other living creatures. However, existentialists advocate that existence precedes essence — — that is, man first of all exists, encounters him/herself, surges up in the world, and defines him/herself afterwards. Therefore there is no so-called innate human essence; even there is human essence, it is determined through life choices. Thus the hypothesis that reason is one major aspect of human essence would be difficult to defend. And since reason is the base of morality and now it is negated as a human essence, thus whether there are clearly-defined moral standards for human beings is thrown into doubt. To a certain extent, moral standards are just expression of our subjective preference, which may vary a great deal according to different individuals. For the art works influenced by existentialism, the representation of moral ambiguity is a common theme. Take for instance the film works by the two European giants Ingmar Bergman and Michelangelo Antoninoni, both of whom are frequently compared with Edward Yang. The plot concerning murder occurs in Bergman's *The Virgin Spring* (1960) and Antonioni's *Blowup* (1966), and the two murders both function to stimulate the audience's rethinking on the ambiguous morality and uncertain reason of human beings. The existentialists prize ambiguity. Just as what Simone de Beauvoir says, from the very beginning,

existentialism defined itself as a philosophy of ambiguity.¹ Within such a context, it may become a little easier to understand why there are so many sympathy-provoking murderers in Yang's film works.

The existentialist tints in Yang's late works often call up association with Martin Heidegger, particularly in *Yi Yi*, which has explored the theme of life and death most exhaustively among Yang's films. The representation of life and death in *Yi Yi* is quite different from Yang's former works. Though the plots of suicide and murder continue appearing in *Yi Yi*, compared with Yang's



Both Li Li-chung (left) of *The Terrorizers* and A-Di of *Yi Yi* commit suicide in bathroom

other works, the director gives death in this film a more everyday rather than dramatic depiction. Both A-Di of *Yi Yi* and Li Li-chung of *The Terrorizers* commit suicide in the bathroom, but Li is shown sinisterly lying beside the blood-tinted bathtub after a deadly shot to the head, while A-Di is seen quietly lying on the clean floor of the bathroom like a sleeping baby in warm light. The young motor-biker of *Taipei Story*, S'ir of *A Brighter Summer Day*, and Fatty of *Yi Yi*, all of the three adolescent boys have stabbed somebody to death with a knife in their films. The former two knifing scenes are given straight depiction with blood shed or desperate crying, while the third one



The animated murder scene in *Yi Yi*

is humorously displaced with a short animation imitating the fighting between Fatty and his victim. In *Yi Yi*, the representation of death is no longer conducted in a dramatic way, and death in this film is portrayed as plain as eating and drinking in our everyday lives. In this film, the side story of Grandama's coma——actually, it is a state of living death, physically alive but mentally inert——leaves the other family members to

live together with death under the same roof in their daily life for a quite long time. Martin Heidegger indicates for us that death is of my own, is one of my possibilities, and is the only thing that no one else can do for me.² In our everyday life, we get used to hearing the news that someone whom we have known died or is dying, but we seldom put into our mind our own death seriously. In the society Confucianism has a tremendous impact, people familiar with Confucius's famous saying “How can you know what death is before knowing what life is”(未知生，焉知死)

¹ Thomas R. Flynn. *Existentialism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.66.

² 段德智，《西方死亡哲學》，北京：北京大學出版社，2006，第239-246頁。

are even more reluctant to give a serious thought to their own death. However, in a Heideggerian sense, in refusing to think about death, one refuses to recognize life.

In *Yi Yi*, when Grandma is in a coma, in order to help her regain consciousness, it is decided that all the other family members should come to Grandma's bedside and talk with her in turn everyday. In fact, it is not a talk with Grandma, but a talk to Grandma, or a talk to living death. These soliloquy scenes in *Yi Yi* often remind the audience of Heidegger's "being-unto-death". Though Heidegger's "being-unto-death" refers to one's own death, since Grandma is one of the closest relatives for all the other family members, the close connection stimulates the other family members to think about their own death spontaneously in face of their dear dying Grandma. One day, NJ, son-in-law of Grandma, talks to her like this, "I wake up feeling unsure about almost



NJ talks to Grandma at her bedside, in *Yi Yi*

everything. And I wonder why I wake up at all just to face the same uncertainties, again and again. Would you want to wake up, if you were me?" Not only NJ, but all the other family members spontaneously rethink about their own life in a serious way when talking to their dying Grandma at her bedside. For them, the routine domestic rite of "talking to death" is also a learning process of recognizing death and reviewing life. "Just as the little deaths are preludes to rebirth, so death-facing—the facing of the one big death—is, finally, life-confirming. The point is to be able to live *with* thought of death, not to commit suicide and *be* dead."³ Therefore, for the family members, death is no longer a third-person accidental occurrence like a story of others—death is generally seen as Other, for death occurs at somebody else's body and occurs as an image, it is not my own⁴—but a first-person unsurpassable possibility as an intimate part of one's own life. Through talking to death, they have gradually got to know being-unto-death—death casts a shadow on everything in every moment and everything is moving towards death.

³ Eric Bentley. *The Life of the Drama* (London: Methuen, 1965), p.275. Italics are original.

⁴ See Kathryn James. *Death, Gender, and Sexuality in Contemporary Adolescent Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2009), p.20.

Being-onto-death is a way of life, which helps us understand how to live and particularly how to live a fuller life. Once we realize that at some moment we will no longer be, we gain some insight into what it means to exist. In this sense, being-onto-death is what gives life its intensity and urgency. Talking about *Yi Yi*, Edward Yang once said, “It isn’t death that I am interested in here, it is life. In life you have to go through these things to test our own boundaries. Sometimes it is only when we are faced with loss that we truly appreciate how sacred life is.”¹

3. Living in Confusion

Maternity ward. The video of A-Di and Xiao-Yan’s newborn baby is on the TV screen. Xiao-Yan sits on the front part of the bed, leaning against the wall. A-Di kneels down by her bedside, hand in hand with her. Suddenly A-Di bursts into sobs.

Xiao-Yan: What? You’re moved?

A-Di: Suddenly it all seems so cruel.

(*Yi Yi*)

Everyone of us is thrown into this world randomly, and we are completely denied the right to choose our birth time and birth place. However, since our arrival at this world, we are entitled to—no, condemned to—make numerous choices by ourselves until the end of our life. Each of



The video of A-Di and Xiao-Yan’s newborn baby is on TV, in *Yi Yi*

these choices might be an adventure for our life — it may lead to fortune and may result in disaster as well. Better or worse, it is ourselves who have to face the outcome of our own choice. Living such a life is really a cruel thing. If the newborn baby could speak his mind in words, quite probably he would tell us how much he is filled with dread and desolation. From

now on, he has to learn to make his own choice at every turning point in his life, and nobody else could really do anything to help him.

In Yang’s films, there are many in-depth accounts of the dreadful and lonesome situation of human beings. Existence, first of all, is the existence of an individual. The one who accompanies us most

¹ Michael Berry. *Speaking in Images: Interviews with Contemporary Chinese Filmmakers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p.290. Or see its Chinese version in 白睿文 (Michael Berry), 《當代華語片導演訪談錄》, (羅祖珍, 劉俊希, 趙曼如譯), 桂林: 廣西師範大學出版社, 2008, 第 260 頁.

of the time in our life is ourselves. We are alive and alone. Loneliness is a primary condition of human beings. There is always a sense of antagonism that faintly exists between persons. In a sense, Yang's characters—those urban inhabitants, mostly modern Taiwanese—have given a series of vivid demonstrations of metropolitan loneliness on the screen. The characters such as Hsiao-fen of *Expectation*, Jia-sen of *That Day, on the Beach*, Li Li-chung of *The Terrorizers* and Ting-Ting of *Yi Yi*, are the typical examples of lonesome urban inhabitants in Yang's films. Commenting upon *The Terrorizers*, critic Tonglin Lu (呂彤鄰) writes, "though the characters in this film are widely different from each other in their social status, profession and age, all of them seek to overcome their loneliness through different means — photo-taking, novel-writing, lie-telling, slander-spreading, prank calling, flirting, adultery, prostitution and manslaughter."¹ Even in Yang's screwball comedy *A Confucian Confusion*, which is the most cheerful and light-hearted among Yang's works, the audience still could sense an undertone of desperate loneliness behind those apparently jubilant young characters. Qiqi's sweetness of her smile and disposition is admired by everyone around her, but at the same time is seen as a fraud by others. Even from her fiancé or her closest girlfriend, she could not find a real understanding. Molly's elder sister is a successful career woman, the TV talk-show program on love and marriage hosted by whom enjoys a wide audience. But in her private life, she lives separately with her husband and constantly worries about its exposure by paparazzi. Akeem is a young man born with a silver spoon in his mouth but behaves just like a capricious little boy. He is followed by groups of people who want his money but refused repeatedly by Molly, the girl he really cares. Feng, the calculating pretty woman, keeps flirting with different men in order to climb higher in her career, but none of these men could really help her. No matter how joyful and careless these characters apparently look, when they retreat back to the small world of their own at quiet nights, all of them are confronted with the similar loneliness and helplessness.

Dread is another primary condition of human beings. In the existentialist context, dread refers to an indescribable feeling about the indeterminacy and nothingness of our life, which is somehow like being homeless. But it is difficult for us to name the exact object that we are really dreading. As to the source of dread, according to the existentialists, it is the menace of death—death must claim us and do so at any moment—that gives our lives the permanent character of dread.² It seems that several scenes from Yang's oeuvre are just depicting this "un-home-like" feeling. One representative scene takes place between the married couple Chou Yu-fen and Li Li-chung in *The Terrorizers*. In the dining room, facing Li's inquiry about her decision to live separately, Chou disclosed the inexpressible anxiety hidden deep inside her in a sobbing tone. The anxiety has perplexed her for such a long time that Li thinks his wife is somehow neurotic about everything, but according to Chou's own words, it is not neurosis at all, but a kind of anxiety impossible to name by herself and to be understood by others. In order to overcome it, she has tried many changes in life — getting pregnant, quitting novel-writing, resuming novel-writing, living separately, and so on—but none of them achieved the intended result. In *Yi Yi*, Min-Min, the wife of NJ and the daughter of Grandma, suffers a similar torture. The scene where she breaks

¹ 呂彤鄰, 《大陸台灣文化論壇: 新電影與現代性》, (蕭聿譯), 香港: 香港大學出版社, 2004, 第 198 頁.

² As to dread, philosophers such as Søren Kierkegaard, Fredric Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, and Jean Paul Sartre all have given elaborations of their own, and there is considerable difference between their thought on dread. In addition, some philosophers prefer "angst" or "anxiety" to "dread" to describe this primary condition of human beings. In Sartre's words, the existentialist dread is a feeling of being pointless, superfluous and a useless passion that one feels about him/herself.

down in tears in front of the dressing table is one overwhelmingly impressive performance in *Yi Yi*. “I have nothing to say to Mother. I tell her the same things everyday. What I did in the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening. It only takes a minute. I can’t bear it. I have so little. How can it be so little? I live a blank! Every day...Every day...I’m like a fool! What am I doing everyday? If I



Min-Min breaks down in front of the dressing table, in *Yi Yi*

ended up like her one day...” According to Heidegger, the essence of existence is nothingness and therefore everyone of us is rootless. For those who give their life a serious thought, it is understandable that they frequently feel anxious in face of such a sense of rootlessness and abandonment. Form time to time, such anxiety even

makes us feel life nauseating. At the end of *The Terrorizers*, the bedroom scene of Chou Yu-fen throwing up might be easily associated with Antoine Roquentin’s vomiting in Jean Paul Sartre’s *Nausea*, in the minds of the audience familiar with existentialist art works. Roquentin might share a similar feeling with Chou, “The Nausea has not left me and I don’t believe it will leave me so soon; but I no longer have to bear it, it is no longer an illness or a passing fit; it is I.”¹ According to the existentialists, the feelings of loneliness, dread and nausea constitute the truly basic condition of human beings, but only a few of us could be fully aware of it. Through his unique films, Yang keeps reminding his audience of their true condition and provoking them into a serious reflection upon their everyday life.

For the existentialists, these basic feelings of human beings discussed above may continuously torment us and bring us a sense of homelessness, but they also could provide a critical turning point in our life for us to review our past days in a serious way and take a more positive attitude towards our future life. What worries the existentialists most is, people tend to ignore the tormenting basic condition and escape into the condition of fallingness, in which they could live in ease and comfort. Then what is fallingness? In order to understand it, another related existentialist term “the One” must be explained first. In a Heideggerian sense, the One is somehow equal to the public or the other in our daily language. The One has established a set of value standards and behavioral norms for us beforehand. What we need to do is just to follow the One and do as the One tells us to do. The One makes choices for us and shoulders responsibilities for us as well. To entrust all of our choices and responsibilities to the One and flee into impersonality is the condition of fallingness. However, contrary to the condition of loneliness or dread, the condition of fallingness is an inauthentic existence. In such a condition that the One — an impersonal normative authority — governs our thoughts and actions, we have lost our unique identity or

¹ Jean-Paul Sartre. “Mysticism of the Absurd”, Jonathan Westphal&Carl Levenson eds. *Life and Death*, (Indianapolis&Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993), p.59.

authenticity. Then we do not live a life, but mimic a life. In *A Confucian Confusion* and *Mahjong*, the two films of Yang's late career, the director repeatedly warns his audience about the danger of indulging in fallingness. The following lines are often quoted in the reviews of Yang's these two films, which have revealed the director's worries.

Larry: But nowadays our society thinks highly of consensus and mutual understanding. Our behavior should not be too different from others. That's too impractical.

Ming: I would like to look the same as others. It isn't good to be like that?

Liren: Don't be cheated by them! It is the easiest way to avoid responsibility to behave the same as everybody else. You don't understand this?

Mr. Chiu: No one knows what they want these days. You know why suckers soak up so much TV, magazines and even ads? To be told how to live their lives?

Red Fish: No one knows what they really want. Everyone's waiting to be told what to do. Tell them what they want, and they will kiss your ass.[...] What they fear most is having to face their own mistakes.



Liren (left) and Ming have a drink after work at a bar, in *A Confucian Confusion*

In these films, Taipei has turned into a city dominated by the One. In this city, people have given up their own thinking and complied with what the One predetermines. The book that the One promotes will become a bestseller; the movie that the One acclaims will produce a box office success. The Taiwanese are disowning themselves and fleeing into doing what everybody else

would do. Critics often say that Yang's works in his late career are permeated with wild furies and these furies may be understood as Yang's furious worries about the fallingness of the city and its inhabitants.

4. Sisyphian Hero/ine

Randomly, everyone of us has been thrown into this world one day in the past; inevitably, everyone of ours will be thrown out of this world someday in the future. Death is a permanent menace, and it must claim us and do so at any moment. Upon the visit of death, every

achievement of us will, at last, be nothing but dust. In such an absurd situation, how could we persuade ourselves that it is a life worth living?

Certainly, for persons like Winston Chen, committing suicide could represent a way to escape absurdity. Concerning Yang's films, the characters like Winston Chen are definitely not majority and even in *Mahjong* Winston Chen is not a lead character. Comparatively speaking, it seems that in face of the absurd world the main characters of Yang's films are more like Sisyphus of Albert Camus's essay.

In Greek mythology, Sisyphus was a resourceful but avaricious king. Later due to his repeated trickery, Sisyphus was punished by Zeus to roll an immense rock up a steep hill but the rock will always roll away before Sisyphus reaches the top of the hill. In this way, Sisyphus is consigned to an eternity of useless efforts and unending frustration. According to Camus, Sisyphus is an absurd hero as well as the prototype of the modern individual. Sisyphus is all of us as we live in similar endless repeated patterns. "Rising, streetcar, four hours in the office or the factory, meal, street car, four hours of work, meal, sleep, and Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday according to the same rhythm."¹ However, Camus insists that Sisyphus is happy because for Sisyphus his rock is his thing and he lives every fleeting moment to the fullest. If life ever has any meaning in itself in such an absurd situation, it must lie in the gallant response to the absurd challenge. "The struggle itself toward the height is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy."²

Many of Yang's characters, particularly the leading roles in his films, have demonstrated a kind of Sisyphian heroism. Jia-ji of *That Day, on the Beach* is such a Sisyphian heroine. Jia-ji has been brought up in a traditional patriarchal family, whose father runs a private clinic. In order to escape



**Jia-ji in her adolescent years,
in *That Day, on the Beach***

the arranged marriage by her father and marry De-wei, the man she gets to know in college and really loves, she flees home on a rainy night and gets married with De-wei secretly. However, as time goes by, this hard-earned marriage dissolves bit by bit due to their prosaic post-marriage life and De-wei's extramarital affair. Though a victim of this torturing marriage, Jia-ji has not been brought down by it. Instead, at the end of the film, she has grown into a charming career-driven woman full of

daring and vigor. Usually the critics review this film—the focus of attention is mostly on Jia-ji

¹ Albert Camus. *The Myth of Sisyphus*, trans. Justin O'Brien, (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), p.10.

² Albert Camus. "Absurdity is the Divorce between Reason and the World", Jonathan Westphal&Carl Levenson eds. *Life and Death* (Indianapolis&Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993), p.77.

— from the perspective of feminism. Edmond Wong thinks that *That Day, on the Beach* has “conspicuously developed the important theme about contemporary women in the Taiwan New Cinema movement”¹. Jean-Michel Frodon considers that this film has led the genre of women cinema into a new height.² But since the ideal marriage is all what Jia-ji exerted herself for, the final breaking of her marriage renders her back to the starting point. In this sense, just like Sisyphus, the rock falls back to the bottom of the hill as before. But neither Sisyphus nor Jia-ji is a loser of life and both of them have displayed the heroism of resisting authority and scorning fate. Within a rather conservative Confucian society, Jia-ji dared to revolt against patriarchal authority and elope with her ideal lover towards a life she really wanted, though the hard-earned love marriage turned into an exhausting nightmare—probably even worse than an arranged marriage—she has not lost her courage. With a scornful smile, in the face of the cruelty of fate, she maintains her regular calmness and confidence, and devotes herself into a new start of life.

On the other hand, in *That Day, on the Beach*, the storyline of Jia-ji corresponds with that of her elder brother, Jia-sen. Both of them have been raised in a traditional Taiwanese family, have met



Jia-ji (right) meets Ching-ching again after a long separation, in *That Day, on the Beach*

their ideal marriage partners in college, and have been forced by patriarchal authority into an arranged marriage that they were unwilling to accept. But under almost the same situation, they have made rather different choices. Jia-sen chose to accept the arranged marriage by his father instead of marrying Ching-ching, the girl he truly loved but was despised by his parents for her low family background. Of course,

Jia-sen’s unquestioning acceptance of arranged marriage is a way of choice. But different from Jia-ji, whose choice is to refuse the arrangement and elope with her ideal marriage partner, Jia-sen has given up his freedom to exercise a choice of his own will. Behind that, it is Jia-sen’s evasion, probably unconsciously, to assume the responsibility resulting from the choice of his own will. It turns out that both Jia-sen’s arranged marriage and Jia-ji’s love marriage are miserably distressing for the two. But for Jia-sen, since the choice is not made of his own will, he could attribute his bitter married life to the fault of the patriarchal system. While Jia-ji has to take the responsibility all by herself for it is her own choice that results in such a nightmarish married life. Every choice is made just for our future life, but the future is only a possibility, full of uncertainties. For existentialists, those who understand that every choice of oneself is ungrounded but still courageously exercise their choice and accept their responsibility no matter what the result is, are truly existentialist heroes. Therefore, Jia-ji could be seen as an existentialist heroine in Yang’s

¹ 黃建業：《楊德昌電影研究：臺灣電影的知性思辨家》，臺北：遠流，1995，第 87 頁。

² 讓-米歇爾·傅東：《楊德昌的電影世界》，（楊海帝，馮壽農譯），北京：商務印書館，2011，第 67 頁。

films. Certainly, from the perspective of feminism instead of existentialism, Jia-ji could also be interpreted as a feminist character bravely revolting against the patriarchal authority of father and husband and seeking the self-recognition and self-independence of contemporary urban women. As a matter of fact, modern feminism has an inseparable relationship with existentialism from its very beginning, for Simone de Beauvoir, the founder of modern feminism, is also a key figure among the existentialist philosophers.

If Jia-ji is a female Sisyphus in Yang's first feature, then NJ could be called a male Sisyphus in Yang's last feature. As Sisyphus seems to be, in the eyes of the secular, NJ is a loser in life as well.



NJ (right) talks with his Japanese business partner Ota at a bar, in *Yi Yi*

His business steps into a slack period and his marriage slumps into a discordant stage. But similar to Jia-ji, the audience could strongly feel the positive influence extended by NJ in *Yi Yi*. The positive influence mostly comes from NJ's impressive quality — honesty. He is honest with his business partner. Feeling

like old friends at the first meeting with the Japanese businessman Ota, partially because both of them are honest people, NJ has a heart-to-heart talk with him and even confides the story of his first love to Ota. He is honest with his wife. He has a date with his ex-girlfriend Sherry, who is his first love, on his business trip to Tokyo, but he confesses it to his wife Min-Min as soon as he comes back to Taipei. He is honest with his former lover. He admits to Sherry that he still loves her but declines any carnal relationship with her because it is impossible for him to forsake his present family. Most important of all, he is honest with himself. In many ways, NJ's honesty is an equivalent to the authenticity advocated by the existentialist philosophers. For existentialists, to be authentic is not just to tell the truth about oneself willy-nilly, but to present oneself sincerely. This self-presentation must also appear spontaneous and natural. In *Yi Yi*, just in such a way, NJ presents himself to everybody, including himself. Actually, it is an authentic existence in an existentialist sense. The key to an authentic existence is to know oneself and live according to oneself. Those who are familiar with Yang's films may discover that "What are you/am I looking for?" is a recurring theme running through the whole of his cinematic career.

However, seldom could the characters of Yang's films provide a confident answer to the question "What are you/am I looking for". But NJ must be one of the few characters who know the answer clearly. Only when a person truly understands what he/she is seeking and recognizes whom he/she is, could it be possible for him/her to seriously think about the values and happiness of his/her life. Otherwise, his/her life is just an inauthentic existence for existentialists. However, to recognize oneself is really a difficult task. "We are unknown to ourselves, we men of knowledge. [...] So we

are necessarily strangers to ourselves, we do not comprehend ourselves, we *have* to misunderstand ourselves, for us the law ‘Each is furthest from himself’ applies to all eternity——we are not ‘men



NJ takes a walk alone at the night seaside on his Tokyo business trip, in *Yi Yi*

of knowledge’ with respect to ourselves.”¹

In order to know ourselves, we have to be always on the alert for the One, and we have to keep listening to our inner voice and living accordance with our inner voice. At the end of *Yi Yi*, Da-Da, NJ’s business partner as well as former classmate, complains about his life to NJ,

“I’ve worked my butt off all these years! I didn’t do it for fun! NJ, you know, I’m never happy.” NJ responds in an indifferent tone, “When you don’t love what you do...how could you be?” For NJ and those existentialists, only when a person genuinely recognizes oneself, understands oneself, and follows oneself, could he/she live a happy life.

5. Permanent Detached Onlooker

Through the analysis above, it is found that existentialism has a lasting and weighty bearing on Edward Yang’s film works throughout his cinematic career. When looking back to the growing experience of Yang, the audience may find that Yang’s adolescent years——which constitute the critical period of values shaping for the adolescent——overlap the years that the thought of Western modernism was imported into and spreading far and wide in Taiwan. Certainly, as one influential school, existentialism was among the modernist thought. Since the early 1950s, the literary journals such as *Modern Poetry* (《現代詩》) edited by Chi Hsien (紀弦), *Literary Review* (《文學雜誌》) edited by Hsia Tsi-an (夏濟安), and *Modern Literature* (《現代文學》) edited by Pai Hsien-yung (白先勇) started their first issue in succession in Taiwan. Almost all of these new literary journals advocate that literary works should explore the inner world of characters and examine the everyday life of individuals. Modernism, which flourished earlier in the Western literary world, now extended its power into this small island. Existentialism, generally considered a branch of modernist thought of the twentieth century, has played an important part in these new trends of the Taiwan literature. The forerunner of existentialist literature Franz Kafka is featured in the first issue of *Modern Literature*. In the following issues of this important literary journal, the major figures of existentialist literature Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus and Samuel Beckett are featured one after another. On the one hand, the constant elaborate introduction of Western

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche. *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans&ed. Walter Kaufmann, (New York: The Modern Library, 1968), p.451. The italic is original.

existentialist literature into Taiwan is closely related to the awarding of Nobel Prize of Literature to Albert Camus (1957) and Jean-Paul Sartre (1964) consecutively, which has attracted worldwide attention to existentialist literature. On the other hand, the mood of exile, rootlessness and anxiety in the existentialist philosophy, seems particularly intimate for the Taiwanese people whose island was just beset with serious difficulties both at home and abroad among those years. Hou Hsiao-hsien, another giant of Taiwan cinema who is of the same age as Edward Yang, has reviewed his college years in Taiwan during the 1960s in an article, and recollected that existentialism was just in fashion on campus those years and he had read many books by Fredric Nietzsche, William Barrett's *Irrational Man: A Study in Existential Philosophy*, and *The Dusk of Wild Doves* (《野鴿子的黃昏》) by Wang Shang-yi (王尚義), an early Taiwanese existentialist writer then.¹ Compared with Hou, who just moved from the provincial into Taipei since his college years, Yang has spent the whole of his childhood and adolescence in Taipei, which is the capital and the cultural center of Taiwan. It is highly probable that Yang has been influenced by the existentialist philosophy in an even earlier and stronger way than Hou Hsiao-hsien.

Of course, for a director like Edward Yang, who possesses a quite unique life experience in Chinese language cinema, the origin of his artistic style might be heterogeneous. It will be biased to maintain that the existentialist impact in Yang's films comes from the director's readings of existentialist literature during his adolescent years. There are other possibilities. Perhaps just like the forerunners of existentialist writers such as Franz Kafka or Feodor Dostoevsky, Yang has arrived at his own life philosophy tinted with existentialism through his personal experience even before he encountered the philosophical term of existentialism. Or, perhaps, the director's overseas student experience in the United States during the 1970s, or the director's cinema/video experience of his favorite European art house films, might constitute the source of the existentialist theme in his film works.

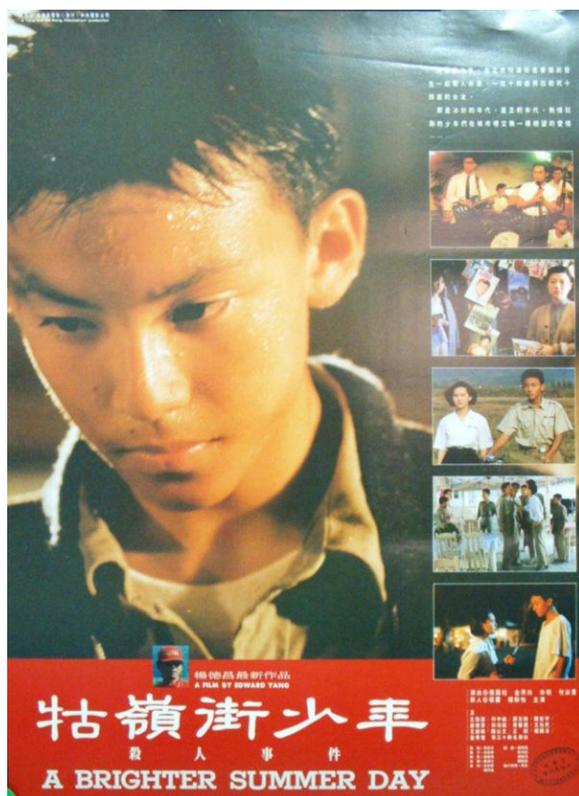
The existentialist theme in Yang's films could date back as early as Yang's debut short *Expectation* (1982). In this short, there is an often-quoted line by the bespectacled small boy, richly flavored with existentialist taste. It is said to Hsiao-fen when he fell down from bicycle while practicing riding in the night alley. "You know, I've wanted to ride a bicycle. I thought then, I could go where I wanted, but now I don't know where to ride to." Such an inward introspection from his character has never ceased in Yang's cinematic career. It is rather evident that Yang-Yang of Yang's last film *Yi Yi*, who also prefers observing and contemplating the everyday life of Taipei quietly and secretly, is a kind of reincarnation of the bespectacled small boy of Yang's first film *Expectation*.

Film scholars usually regard the consecutive release of the two films *In Our Time* (1982) and *The Sandwich Man* (aka. *His Son's Big Doll*, 《兒子的大玩偶》)(1983) as the inauguration of the Taiwan New Cinema movement. Both of the two are omnibus films—the former incorporates four shorts and the second one is Yang's *Expectation*, while the latter includes three shorts and the first one is Hou Hsiao-hsien's *The Sandwich Man*, the title of which is also that of the omnibus

¹ Hou Hsiao-Hsien. "Cinema and history: Critical reflections", (trans. Petrus Liu), *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Vol.9, No.2 (2008), pp.173-183.

film.¹ In later years, Yang and Hou have become the two giants of Taiwan cinema and even world cinema. And it should be recognized that the two shorts above have a particular significance to the two directors and to the Taiwan New Cinema movement. *Expectation* is Yang's debut as a film director, while *The Sandwich Man* represents a watershed in Hou's career as a film director—before this short, Hou has already won a recognition in the Taiwan film industry by a series of high-grossing commercial modern comedies. Concerning the Taiwan New Cinema movement, the two shorts *Expectation* and *The Sandwich Man* have foreshadowed the two kinds of subject matter of the Taiwan New Cinema film works respectively, that is, the individual's confusions in spiritual world and the conflicts of interpersonal relationships (*Expectation*), and the historical and political burdens and sufferings of the Taiwanese people (*The Sandwich Man*). These two kinds of subject matter of Taiwan New Cinema, which dominate the film works by the Taiwan New Cinema filmmakers, correspond with the new trends in contemporary Taiwan literature. As the critic Yeh Shih-tao (葉石濤) points out in his seminal book *A History of Taiwanese Literature* (《台灣文學史綱》), there are two major schools of novel writing in Taiwan during the 1980s, one school “aims to represent the conscience of the times, refusing to accept the donation from others and remaining independent from those power groups and political interference”, while the other group “sets the

background of their Taiwanese stories in the 1940s and 1950s, when the Taiwan society was flooded with political persecution and social injustice, and explores the social realities of those days which had been a forbidden area for novelists for more than thirty years”.² Such a thematic correspondence between Taiwan cinema and Taiwan literature in the 1980s is not difficult to understand, when readers take into account the fact that many major figures in the Taiwan New Cinema movement such as Hsiao Yeh, Wu Nien-jen, and Chu Tien-wen (朱天文) are celebrated novelists in Taiwan literature as well. In addition, concerning screenplay, the two shorts *Expectation* and *The Sandwich Man* have foreseen the two main kinds of screenplay in the Taiwan New Cinema movement — the former is an original screenplay written and directed by Edward Yang himself, while the latter is an adapted screenplay scripted by Wu Nien-jen



S'ir in the poster for
A Brighter Summer Day

¹ *In Our Time* consists of four episodes, and the four episodes are written and directed by Tao Te-chen (“Little Dragon Head” “小龍頭”), Edward Yang (“Expectation” “指望”), Ko I-chen (“The Jumping Frog” “跳蛙”) and Chang Yi (“Say Your Name” “報上名來”) independently. *The Sandwich Man* consists of three episodes, all the three episodes are scripted by Wu Nien-jen based on the stories by Hwang Chun-ming, and the three episodes are directed by Hou Hsiao-hsien (“His Son’s Big Doll”, “兒子的大玩偶”), Tseng Chuang-siang (曾壯祥) (“Vicki’s Hat” “小琪的那頂帽子”) and Wan Jen (萬仁) (“The Taste of Apple” “蘋果的滋味”) respectively.

² 葉石濤：《臺灣文學史綱》，高雄：春暉，2010，第 251 頁、第 250 頁。

based on Hwang Chun-ming's (黃春明) novel with the same title and directed by Hou Hsiao-hsien. In the Taiwan New Cinema movement have appeared many classics of Chinese language cinema — about half of them are filmed from original screenplay, often written by the directors themselves, and another half of them are adapted from novels by prominent Taiwanese writers.

Yang's indifference to political disputes and detachment from historical issues in his films constitute a constant and conspicuous feature of his works. Though his masterpiece *A Brighter Summer Day* is usually considered by critics as a historic epic about the Taiwan society in the 1960s, but seen from another perspective, this film could also be regarded as a rather personal semi-biographical work shot just in memory of his adolescent days. Through his films Yang frequently communicates such messages—I love Taiwan, and I love the people who inhabit the island, but I am not present there. Even in those characters such as S'ir of *A Brighter Summer Day* or NJ of *Yi Yi* who are widely seen as the embodiment of the director himself, Yang demonstrates a position of detached self-introspection rather than narcissistic self-immersion. Heidegger analyzes the word “existence” (in German, *existenz*) into Latin “ex”, meaning “out” in “exit” (goes out), and the verb “sistere” (to stand), such that “to exist” can be read as “to stand out” from the crowd, from the average everyday, even (in Sartre's interpretation) from our very selves.¹ In other words, man exists in a state of distance from the world that he nonetheless remains in the midst of. It is this distance that enables a man to maintain a critical attitude towards the world and to live an authentic existence. This may offer some fresh and insightful arguments to help us better understand Edward Yang and his cinema.

¹ Thomas R. Flynn. *Existentialism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.107.

Chapter Six

Lost in Metropolitan Taipei

Nowadays men often feel that their private lives are a series of traps. They sense that within their everyday worlds, they cannot overcome their troubles, and in this feeling, they are often quite correct: What ordinary men are directly aware of and what they try to do are bounded by the private orbits in which they live; their visions and their powers are limited to the close-up scenes of job, family, neighborhood; in other milieux, they move vicariously and remain spectators. And the more aware they become, however vaguely, of ambitions and of threats which transcend their immediate locales, the more trapped they seem to feel.¹

— C. Wright Mills

1. The Problem of Alienation

In his seminal work *The Sociological Imagination*, Mills vividly describes the spiritual perplexity that tautly grasps everyone living in modern society as above. Particularly those who live in modern metropolitan regions, cannot escape the grasp of that invisible giant hand, which usurps the will of their own and dominates the direction of their lives. Therefore, in a sense, life deteriorates into a meaningless exile for those living in modern metropolises.

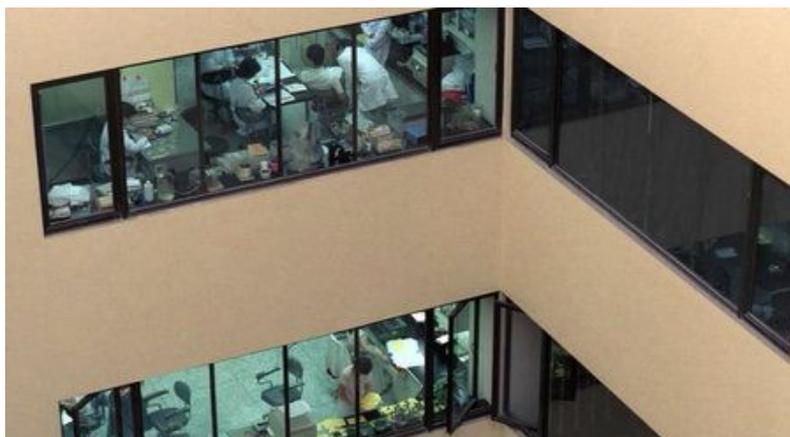
All of these could be well summarized in one word — — alienation. Theoretically speaking, the concept of alienation has various interpretations according to different schools of academic discourses. However, until the late nineteenth century, the word alienation came into the vision of modern thinkers who began to employ it to describe the spiritual perplexity of modern people living in a highly industrialized and highly urbanized society. According to Melvin Seeman's research, the usage of alienation in this meaning could find its origins in the classics of prominent thinkers such as Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim, and Karl Mannheim.²

Based on his keen observation of capitalist industry, Karl Marx points out that workers cannot dominate their own labor, therefore they unavoidably lose the control of their lives and themselves under a capitalist system. Labor, once belonging to workers themselves, gets externalized into products and becomes the opposite of workers themselves, which does not belong to workers any more and often stays beyond the reach of workers. “The externalization of the worker in his product means not only that his work becomes an object, an external existence, but also that it

¹ C.Wright Mills. *The Sociological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), p.3.

² Melvin Seeman. “On the Meaning of Alienation”, *American Sociological Review*, Vol.24, No.6(1959), pp. 783-791. According to Seeman, the concept of alienation used in the humanities and social sciences could be interpreted in the following five aspects, i.e. powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement.

exists outside him, independently, alien, an autonomous power, opposed to him. The life he has given to the object confronts him as hostile and alien.” In this sense, “the more the worker exerts himself, the more powerful becomes the alien objective world he fashions against himself, the poorer he and his inner world become, the less there is that belongs to him.”¹ Under such a system, workers are no longer human beings who can discipline themselves and realize themselves. Farm workers have grown and harvested rice and wheat, but they do not have enough food to fill their stomachs; construction workers have built and erected mansions and skyscrapers, but they only have a small and shabby house to live with their families.



A shot of hospital building in *The Terrorizers*

While Marx’s usage of alienation focuses on materialistic aspect, Karl Mannheim’s concept of alienation emphasizes the spiritual dimension. Since the Enlightenment Movement of the eighteenth century in Europe, reason has been unceasingly advocated, accompanying the continuous amazing

scientific breakthroughs in the modern history of science. It seems that it is rational thought that led to the success of the Industrial Revolution and the prosperity of capitalist civilization. However, from Kant to Hegel to Nietzsche, the caution against obeying reason blindly has been suggested repeatedly by these great thinkers. Karl Mannheim doubts about reason too. In Mannheim’s hands, reason is separated into two types — functional rationality and substantial rationality. In a given situation if a person acts intelligently on the basis of his/her own insight into the interrelations of events, such a capacity is called substantial rationality. On the contrary, if the person has to give up his/her own insight and meet the ends of his/her society, then this person follows functional rationality. An independent craftsman could have enough freedom to organize his professional activities, and readjust work tasks from time to time by himself to satisfy his other wishes. In this sense, he follows his substantial rationality. But, when the independent craftsman turns into a factory worker and becomes a member of a capitalist production line, there is little room left for his own wishes and he has to fulfill the requirements of the whole capitalist system. Now he is under a far-reaching organization, in which his every action must be carefully adjusted to all the others. Thus, substantial rationality gives way to functional rationality in the factory worker’s life. “As society increasingly organizes its members with reference to the most efficient realization of ends — that is, as functional rationality increases — there is a parallel decline in ‘the capacity to act intelligently in a given situation on the basis of one’s own insight into the interrelations of events’”², or put it more simply, the substantial rationality will decrease. If Marx’s

¹ Karl Marx, “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844”, *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, David McLellan, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp.78-9.

² See Melvin Seeman. “On the Meaning of Alienation”, *American Sociological Review*, Vol.24. No.6 (1959), p.786. The content inside single quotation marks are cited by Melvin Seeman from Karl Mannheim, *Man and*

usage of alienation tells that modern people get alienated due to the loss of control of their own labor, Mannheim's interpretation warns that with the incessant increase of functional rationality in our society, people are more and more in the danger of twisting their own wills, dwarfing their own minds, and turning inhuman.



Night Taipei mirrored on the window of Min-Min's office, in *Yi Yi*

Émile Durkheim's concept of alienation is elaborated by his term anomie, which refers to the alienated state of the whole society rather than individuals. The "processes of change in the modern world are so rapid and intense that they give rise to major social difficulties. They have disruptive effects on traditional lifestyles, morals, religious beliefs and everyday patterns without providing clear new values."¹ Durkheim employs the word anomie to describe these unsettling conditions. Anomie has been caused by a series of interlocking events. Accompanying the continual process of industrialization and urbanization in modern society, the social division of labor is becoming more and more specified, the differentiation of labor further causes wide income gaps among workers. A lot of workers could not satisfy their daily living demands due to low income, and therefore could not find a position of their own or any meaning of their lives in the society. Traditional moral controls and standards are largely broken down by modern social development, and religion is widely replaced by capitalist materialism. The society falls into an unsteady state and its members are at a loss for the meaning of life. If individuals of modern society could not avoid the fate of sinking into alienation as Marx and Mannheim observe, thus the society, which consists of these alienated individuals, is doomed to falling into disorder and normlessness, as Durkheim's anomie depicts.

As a typical symptom of modern society, alienation has many other interpretations by various scholars, in addition to those discussed above. If we venture to summarize those discussed above, the concept of alienation might refer to such a condition that the life falls into the domination of an external power beyond our control, and our subjectivity gets confined, eroded, and even subverted

Society in an Age of Reconstruction (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1940), p.59.

¹ Anthony Giddens. *Sociology*, 6th edition, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), p.15.

in a dehumanized way. In face of alienation in modern society, not only thinkers of the humanities have offered their insightful observation and warning, the artists have also given their vivid depiction of the alienated life in modern society through literature and cinema. As is well known, the literary works of Charles Baudelaire, Franz Kafka and T. S. Eliot have shockingly portrayed various aspects of alienated individuals and society. Film masterpieces such as Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times* (1936) and Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blowup* (1966) have also delicately depicted both the alienated outside and the alienated inside of modern metropolitan inhabitants. Just like these precursors, Edward Yang is a filmmaker who has demonstrated continuous concern over the problem of alienation in modern urban society as well.

Compared with another forerunner of the Taiwan New Cinema movement Hou Hsiao-hsien, whose stories are mainly about inlanders from countryside and small towns of southern Taiwan, Yang has set Taipei, the capital of Taiwan, as the backdrop of all his stories. As the center of politics, business, information and culture in Taiwan, Taipei has gradually developed into a global city at the end of the twentieth century. The process of Taipei's urbanization and the change in the way of life of its inhabitants since the 1960s to the 1990s, are lively described in Yang's films. *Expectation* and *A Brighter Summer Day* allow a glimpse of the innocent and repressed 1960s of Taipei; *That Day, on the Beach* reflects the honest, simple yet melancholy 1970s of Taipei; *Taipei Story* and *The Terrorizers* portrays the passion and perplexity of the Taiwanese in midst of rapid social transformation during the 1980s; *A Confucian Confusion*, *Mahjong* and *Yi Yi* have shown the impetuosity and solitude of the Taiwanese at the end of the twentieth century. In a sense, Yang's film works could represent a chronicle of the city of Taipei for half a century.



An overlooking view of Taipei street in *Taipei Story*

When Taiwan was recovered from the Japanese occupation by the Kuomintang government at the end of World War II, it was still a semi-industrial society and agriculture contributed a great deal to its domestic product. Undergoing the economic reorganization and reconstruction during the 1950s, Taiwan's economy started its consecutive leaps from the 1960s. Large quantities of investments

poured into the island from the United States and Japan, its exports grew steadily faster, and the process of industrialization proceeded briskly. With the implementation of technology-centered economic plans, the annual growth of GDP in Taiwan has averaged about 8% for a whole period of three decades. In the 1980s, Taiwan has become one of the most well-developed areas in Asia, along with South Korean, Singapore and Hong Kong.¹ Economic prosperity promoted the process

¹ See 尉天驄 (Wei Tien-tsung), “由飄泊到尋根：工業文明下的臺灣新文學”，李瑞騰編《中國現代文學大

of urbanization in the island and Taipei as the capital of Taiwan encountered its chance of high-speed development in the 1980s. The city became more and more densely-populated, its population turned more and more diversely-structured, and its public infrastructure kept improving vastly. In the midst of the 1990s, Taipei has already achieved its position as a cosmopolitan metropolis in the world, on a par with Tokyo and Hong Kong in many aspects. The Taiwanese novelist Shi-kuo Chang (張系國) once said, “Taiwan is changing rapidly, but in a weird way. On the one hand, the island opens itself more and more widely and the Taiwanese enjoy more and more freedom; on the other hand, people turn more and more aloof and indifferent towards each other.”¹ Accompanying the fast-moving process of industrialization and urbanization, as one aspect of the problem of alienation, the estrangement and isolation among metropolitan inhabitants become more and more conspicuous. In the films of Edward Yang, the audience will get access to an even wider and closer portrayal of the problem of alienation occurring in everyday life of the metropolitan Taiwanese.

2. Alienated Labour

According to John Anderson’s reading of Yang’s films, accompanying the growing prosperity of Taipei, along with its new buildings springing up everywhere and everyday, however, the people living in this city and in these buildings are becoming more and more alienated.² One scene of Yang’s *Taipei Story* gives a revelation about this. On a construction site Chin and her colleague,



**The buildings designed by Ko look quite similar,
in *Taipei Story***

the architect Ko talking with each other inside an uncompleted high building. Pointing toward a crowd of white buildings not far away, which are constructed almost in the same style, Ko says to Chin, “Look at these buildings, it’s getting harder and harder for me to distinguish which ones I designed. They all look the same, as if it doesn’t make much difference whether I exist or not.” What Ko

feels is consistent with Marx’s interpretation of alienation. The labour of workers fashions an objective which is alien and opposed to themselves. It becomes more and more impossible for

系·評論卷一》，臺北：九歌，1989，第96-97頁。According to Wei, the social structure of Taiwan has evolved through three different phases, i.e. Agricultural society during Qing Dynasty and the early Japanese Occupation Period, Semi-industrial society during the late Japanese Occupation Period and the late 1940s, and Industrial consumer society since the 1950s.

¹ Cited from 龍應臺，《龍應臺評小說》，北京：作家出版社，1988，第234頁。

² Anderson, John. *Edward Yang* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005), p.38.

workers to sustain themselves and realize themselves. “The more values he creates, the more valueless, the more unworthy he becomes; the better formed his product, the more deformed becomes the worker; the more civilized his object, the more barbarous becomes the worker; the more powerful labor becomes, the more powerless becomes the worker; the more ingenious labor becomes, the less ingenious becomes the worker and the more he becomes nature’s bondsman.”¹ To a certain extent, as an architect, Ko’s architectural designs have planned and changed the face of the Taipei city. However, in reality, Ko is just an ordinary employee struggling in the real estate company for meagre earnings to make a living. Sometimes, he is even threatened with the risk of getting fired due to the reorganization of his company. His own house is no more than an insufficient space hidden in an unnoticed corner of Taipei. For Ko, his profession has been losing its original flavor and passion day by day, and the only way to refresh himself is to drink some beer and eat pig-liver noodles at a snack bar after work, often with Chin who keeps an intimate relationship with him.



Jia-ji (left) and De-wei once had a happy time in their marriage, in *That Day, on the Beach*

The labor beyond the control of workers strips them of the chance of self-support and self-realization. The sense of satisfaction and happiness has got lost at the same time. Therefore the only yardstick to measure the value of a worker is the wage earned by selling his/her labor. “Money is the universal, self-constituted value of all things. Hence, it has robbed the whole world, the human world as well as nature, of its proper value. Money is the alienated essence of man’s labor

and life, and this alien essence dominates him as he worships it.”² In modern society, it is rather common that lots of people have lost themselves in pursuit of the maximization of material wealth. In Yang’s *That Day, on the Beach*, De-wei and Jia-ji have overcome all kinds of hardships to get married, and their heartfelt happiness——at least during the early stage of their marriage——is the result of their unyielding struggle. In college, they fell in love with each other but Jia-ji’s parents had already arranged a marriage for Jia-ji. Thus Jia-ji ran away from home on a heavily rainy night, and married De-wei without the permission of her parents. During the early phase of their marriage, the mild-mannered husband gives all his meticulous care for his pretty and gentle wife, gingerly treasuring their hard-earned happiness. However, as De-wei is promoted to the position of manager, his life comes under the sway of his work, which increasingly conflicts with Jia-ji’s family-centered values. Sticking to the work principle of “late managers get late workers”,

¹ Karl Marx. “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844”, *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, David McLellan. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp.78-9.

² Karl Marx. On the Jewish Question”, *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, David McLellan. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.60.

De-wei is the first person to show up in the company every morning, and he believes that such a daily performance will boost the morale of his staff. Gradually, it seems that his work occupies the whole of his life. “Every day is the same. I seem to arrive at the office, take off my coat, and the day is already done. So I come home with this strange anxiety that I’ve left so much undone.” There is little doubt that De-wei’s motivation behind his crazy work ethics is to earn more money and provide more comforts to his family. This will prove his own value as well as the correctness of Jia-ji’s choice of marrying him to Jia-ji’s family. But to the disappointment of this couple, who deeply loved each other in the past, alienated labor could not be rewarded with spiritual satisfaction or happiness as the husband expected. A splendid flat and a luxurious car accelerate the failure of their marriage rather than augment the sense of their happiness. The following sentences by Erich Fromm might give an explanation for De-wei’s awkward situation. “His actions are not his own; while he is under the illusion of doing what he wants, he is driven by forces which are separated from his self, which work behind his back; he is a stranger to himself, just as his fellow man is a stranger to him. He experiences the other and himself not as what they really are, but distorted by the conscious forces which operate in them.”¹



**Li Li-chung is a loser in both career and marriage,
in *The Terrorizers***

In Yang’s films, among the characters who are driven by the thirst for wage and promotion, which results in their bitter sufferings in life, De-wei’s case is not yet the worst one. In *The Terrorizers*, quite similar to what De-wei struggles for, the doctor Li Li-chung also believes that his promotion in hospital and the increase of his salary will ameliorate the deteriorating

relationship with his wife, the novelist Chou Yu-fen. In order to secure the chance of promotion, he even flings mud at his long-term close friend and colleague Jin. But in fact, the crucial problem of his married life lies in the spiritual incommunicability between his wife and himself, rather than material inadequacy. Unfortunately, Li could not understand this and finally chooses homicide and suicide as an extreme way to combat his utter despair of life.

Alienated labor causes the original sense of satisfaction and happiness acquired during the process of work to become impossible. In a spiritual dimension, satisfaction and happiness have been lost in the life of modern workers. Herbert Marcuse warns about the danger of becoming a “one dimensional man” in modern society. “The people recognize themselves in their commodities; they find their soul in their automobile, hi-fi set, split-level home, kitchen equipment.”² The spiritual world of modern metropolitan inhabitants has been gradually nibbled away by the

¹ Erich Fromm. *The Sane Society* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956), p.120.

² Marcuse, Herbert. *One Dimensional Man* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964), p.9.

incessantly expanding material world. And our souls turn more and more weak and hollow, withering and falling. Edward Yang, the social critic in the cinema industry, displays these displeasing scenes on the screen with his trenchant camera, though the audience, most of them probably, are unwilling to, or, not courageous enough to, face squarely these unpleasant fragments in their everyday urban life, which precisely mirror themselves.

3. Paradoxical Rationality

Since the Enlightenment Movement, it is believed that rationality, along with the continuous scientific breakthroughs brought about by it, led to amazing wonders one after another in human history — automobiles, telephones, computers, etc. The material living conditions have been lifted up to an unprecedented high level. It seems that rationality prompts science and science improves life. However, as Karl Mannheim argues, under the capitalist system which pursues meticulous organization and precise calculation, functional rationality — or instrumental rationality, in Karl Marx's term — is excessively stressed in exclusion of substantial rationality. Therefore, in an extremely high demand of precision and calculation, people become more and more in the danger of losing the control of their own minds and thinking. Under such a situation, an irrational rationality tends to dominate and dehumanize the life of modern people. Yang's films also give a glimpse about what the irrational rationality has done to his contemporary Taiwanese.

Quite often, the characters of Yang's films appear on the screen in company of various kinds of transport vehicles — bicycles, motorbikes and cars. In the fictional cinematic world, as the times change, the means of transport has made fast progress, continuously introducing new ways of transportation. This vast process is also regarded as an achievement of the use of rationality. From bicycle to motorbike, to car, to subway, the city of Taipei is driven by a faster and faster speed, and everything seems to become more and more precise and effective with such a high speed.



S'ir (right) and Ming go for a walk after class on a shooting range, in *A Brighter Summer Day*

However, moving with such a high speed, do people find it much easier and quicker to approach the happiness they dreamed about? Or quite the opposite, people feel themselves imprisoned in such a breathless speed and become more and more at a loss about what they really want? In Yang's films, it seems that the faster the transportation speed turns, the less harmonious the everyday life becomes.

Here are several scenes from Yang's films with bicycles appearing on the screen. In *A Brighter Summer Day*, the high school boy S'ir and his girlfriend Ming, rolling a bicycle, side by side,

saunter over the wide shooting range on an early summer evening. What the scene represents is the sweet date of a young couple with a beautiful grassland as their backdrop. In *Expectation*, Hsiao-fen and the bespectacled small boy practice riding bicycle together on a green playground. Clumsy as they are, the two innocent adolescent students are running and rolling, helping each other, happy smiles shining on their two ingenuous young faces. In *Yi Yi*, the adolescent music lover Fatty, with his bicycle, gives a ride to Lili and Ting-Ting, the two lovely girls in the film. No matter which girl is on the back part of Fatty's bicycle, the audience could feel the tender care and kindly trust of the same degree between the adolescent boy and girl .



The muddle-headed underling of a criminal organization, riding a motorbike in nighttime Taipei, in *Mahjong*

From bicycle to motor bike to car, the speed gets improved amazingly. But at the same time, the harmony between people and the world surrounding them gets lost gradually, at least on the screen of Yang's films. The motorbike assumes a particular role in Yang's *Taipei Story*. Chin, after her being dismissed from her real estate company, joins her younger sister's adolescent friends and then

dashed through nighttime Taipei by motorbike with them. The moment of sitting on the back part of a motorbike and dashing around night streets may be the only time she could forget the bitterness of her unexpected unemployment and her strained relationship with her fiancé Lon. However, it is just the adolescent boy who gave her a ride on his motorbike that has a crush on her and obstinately stalks her afterwards. It is a motorbike that brings Chin both brief refreshing revelry and consistent tormenting nightmares. In order to stop the adolescent motor-biker's stalking, as a last resort, Chin seeks help from Lon and asks Lon to warn away the motor-biker. The confrontation between Lon and the motor-biker leads to a quiet fighting between them on a desolate night street, and finally causes the meaningless death of Lon. In Yang's films, characters riding motorbike often appear vulgar or stupid on the screen, such as the muddle-headed mobster duo in *Mahjong*, who stalk Luen on their motorbike, mistaking him for Red Fish and abducting him afterwards.

Then, what about cars in Yang's films? In *That Day, on the Beach*, Jia-ji and De-wei experience great difficulty in their married life and the squabbles between the couple explode more and more frequently. One impressive scene regarding this is represented with a car as their stage. The couple start bickering again while driving their luxurious car down the street. De-wei accelerates the speed suddenly and the car runs wildly along the road. Jia-ji is so scared that she turns totally

speechless with a lifeless pale face, as De-wei wanted. In *A Confucian Confusion*, Molly



Molly (right) makes fun of Larry by giving him a ride to an unwanted destination, in *A Confucian Confusion*

and listening to Larry's incessant lies, just to disclose the hideous inner side of Larry bit by bit and throw him to shame at the last minute. In Yang's films, it seems that cars turn into an effective but often risky method to release the pent-up pressure of metropolitan life. Also quite often, it

is cars that provide the moving stage for those metropolitan inhabitants to enact their daily hypocritical and deplorable scenes.

While Taipei is moving into its times of high-speed transportation with a subway system, the city seems to turn even more immoral and disordered in Yang's films. In *Mahjong*, the French girl Marthe flies from Europe to Taipei, seeking her British boyfriend Markus. The adolescent gangsters she met in Taipei call her Marta jokingly in stead of her real name Marthe. It is just because Marta is a name these adolescent boys are more familiar with and often hear and talk about in their daily life. Marta is the name of a French transportation company that runs the first subway line of Taipei in the city's subway system. Ironically, since the commencement of the project of Taipei's first subway line, the construction falls into a series of controversies. There are lots of flaws and defects with the project discovered during the construction progress. When it was completed, accidents occurred one after another in the try-out period of the first subway line, causing risks of fire twice, thus the lawsuit over compensation between the Taipei government and the Marta Company has been drawn out a quite long time. At last, to the surprise of the Taipei people, it is decided that the Taipei government should pay a huge amount to the Marta Company.¹ In a sense, the first subway line of Taipei symbolizes a new height of instrumental rationality of the city. However, contrary to the earnest expectation of the new transportation vehicle of the city, the Marta incident shockingly throws those instrumental-rationality-propelled hot heads into cold water. Therefore, the reason why Yang chooses Marthe — Marthe sounds similar to Marta for Taiwanese — as the name of his female lead might be easier to understand, for the director probably intends to alert his Taipei folks to the enormous price they have paid due to an over-expected modern transportation vehicle brought out by functional rationality.

¹ See 藤井省三「地下鉄のない街、台北」『中国映画：百年を描く、百年を読む』東京：岩波、2002、pp.217-220。

Of course, there is no denying that the subway system has brought great convenience to the Taipei people. But have the people evolved better with the coming of the new advanced transportation vehicle? The characters of *Mahjong* are just living in such a high-speed period of Taipei. But what Yang impressed the audience most with this film is the evil of these ostentatious Taipei inhabitants. Red Fish, the major character of the film, whose father accumulated huge wealth by business tricks but now chooses to live a simple and honest life. Adhering to the principle of “Use your head, do not be sentimental” taught by his father in the past, Red Fish believes that money means the world. Everyone around him, including himself, is no more than a tool to collect money. What he thinks and talks about is money, money and money. Red Fish is an archetype of modern metropolitan inhabitants. These metropolitan inhabitants are bound up tighter and tighter by functional rationality, money becoming the highest and only goal for them. What do they really live for? What do they really want in life? Many of them have totally forgotten about these. Just as what Mr. Chiu, a vulgar businessman in this film, has described, “Nowadays nobody knows what they really want. Why do people take pleasure in watching TV, reading pop magazines, reading bestsellers, even watching ads? That is for what? Because they want to find somebody to tell them how to live their own life.” That is also the reason why Red Fish and his father easily succeed in cheating money from others. Red Fish once shared this with his gang friends, “In this world, nobody knows what they really want, and they are just waiting others to tell them what they should do. If someone tells them this, they will merrily conform to what they have been told and feel greatly grateful.” However, does Red Fish really know what he really wants in life? It seems that his father, Winston Chen got to know that after so many vicissitudes in his life. Winston Chen finally chose double suicide with his young mistress, an intelligent and elegant kindergarten teacher who really understands him and loves him, saying goodbye to this corrupt world and stepping off the stage of an absurd life. Red Fish seems to get to know after the death of his father as well and he chooses a more violent way to defy this world. He shot Mr. Chiu, who duplicates the former life of his father and indulges in it, to death in outrage, and aimed the pistol to his own temple. Ironically, there is no bullet left for him then.



Marthe (right) comes to Taipei from France, looking for her boyfriend Markus (left), in *Mahjong*

In Yang’s films, it appears that functional rationality ushers metropolitan inhabitants into desperate hell instead of promising paradise. The city of Taipei has been blindly misled by functional rationality into a spiritual wasteland. Also in *Mahjong*, the French girl Marthe symbolizes innocence and honesty, set off by the vulgarity and guile of

Taipei city and its local people. Three centuries ago, it is France, the homeland of Marthe, that

initiated the Enlightenment Movement which advocates rationality to an unequalled height. But the westerners soon sensed the danger of overstating functional rationality and constantly kept warning against the spiritual symptoms caused by it. Unfortunately, the modern Taiwanese people are still indulging in its blind fascination with functional rationality.

It is hard to tell that rationality will bring human beings more blessings or more mishaps. However, to keep constant vigilance over functional rationality should be a must for people living in modern society. Rationality of human beings is an ironic paradox itself. As early as in *Expectation*, Yang conveys his own conflicted feeling through the voice of the bespectacled small boy, “You know, I’ve wanted to ride a bicycle. I thought then, I could go where I wanted, but now I don’t know where to ride to.”

4. Anomic Society

In one scene of *Mahjong* Red Fish abuses his father Winston Chen in fury, “You are still the most shameless crook in this shameless country!” Here the so-called “shameless country” could be understood as a country of anomie in a Durkheimien sense. Since the 1960s, Taiwan has kept its miraculous economic increase rate for nearly thirty years and quickly brought this island into an industrialized consumer society. However, the westernized value orientation accompanying the arrival of consumer society, is not well in tune with the traditional ways of life and thinking belonging to the former agricultural society. Neither of the two kinds of values could predominate



A shot of Taipei at night in *Taipei Story*

the island or disappear completely in a short time, but a new merging of these two is still slowly on the way. As what Karl Marx and Frederick Engels once described, “All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and vulnerable prejudices and opinions are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and

man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.”¹ At the turning point of social transition, everyone living in a society of anomie, has to experience a difficult trying period of perplexity, anxiety and uncertainty.

¹ Karl Marx, Frederick Engels. *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, publishing year unknown), p.54.

A society of anomie is usually a society characterized by high suicide rates and high crime rates. In Yang's works, which could be read as a chronicle of Taipei city, suicide and crime appear almost in every film. The only film of Edward Yang without a death is *A Confucian Confusion*.



The Author attempted a suicide by jumping off but gave up at last, in *A Confucian Confusion*

However, there is still some plots closely connected with death in the film. The Author, brother-in-law of Molly, is an idealist writer. His love and marriage with Molly's elder sister is quite similar to De-wei and Jia-ji of *That Day, on the Beach*. Sister was born into a very rich family, which forms a great gap between her and the Author. It is pure love and common ideals that led

them out of various difficulties and into a hard-earned marriage. But as the sister devotes more and more time into the TV program she hosts, the more famous she turns, the more troublesome becomes the relationship between her and the Author. The Author follows the voice of his inner world, reading what he likes and writing what he thinks, while the sister concerns herself with the response of her TV audience, meeting their demands and pursuing high viewing rates. At last, they decide to live separately. In this society, the people like the sister are the majority and the Author is certainly peripheralized into his own small world, living like a prisoner confined to his narrow apartment day after day. Since the world outside mounts strong animosities towards him, the Author once attempted a suicide by jumping from the viaduct, but changed his mind while sitting quietly over the bridge and looking down at the streams of cars in the darkness of night. Afterwards, he recalled at that critical moment, and his inner voice started to talk, talking about the sweet memories of the past and the pleasant encounters of the present. It is just because the Author is not a person severely alienated that he could give up his suicide attempt at last. He listens to himself, thinks by himself and lives for himself. He is an authentic person seldom found in this alienated society.

In Yang's works, the plots concerning suicide also include De-wei of *That Day, on the Beach*, Li Li-chung of *The Terrorizers*, Red Fish, Winston Chen and his young mistress of *Mahjong*, and A-Di of *Yi Yi*. As Durkheim wrote in his influential book *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, "If therefore industrial or financial crises increase suicides, this is not because they cause poverty, since crises of prosperity have the same result; it is because they are crises, that is, disturbances of collective order. Every disturbance of equilibrium, even though it achieves greater comfort and heighting of general vitality, is an impulse to voluntary death."¹

¹ Émile Durkheim. *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, trans: John A. Spaulding & George Simpson, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1952), p.246.

In a society of anomie, for its members, their “aberrant behavior may be regarded sociologically as a symptom of dissociation between culturally prescribed aspirations and socially structured avenues for realizing these aspirations.”¹ Then the sense of frustration easily causes a large quantity of suicide cases. On the other side, such a disturbance of equilibrium may lead to certain violent irrational behavior for some members of the society. Edward Yang has also given much screen time of his films to depict this kind of aberrant behavior, or in other words, criminal behavior. *The Terrorizers*, *A Brighter Summer Day*, and *Mahjong* could be categorized into crime-themed movies in a narrow sense. De-wei’s embezzlement of *That Day, on the Beach*, the adolescent motor-biker’s slaying of Lon of *Taipei Story*, the malfeasance of Ming’s father and Liren of *A Confucian Confusion*, Fatty’s killing of the English teacher of *Yi Yi*, all of them correspond with the anomie of society in a certain way.



Little Buddha (left) is scared off by the request of kiss from Alison (right), in *Mahjong*

The crisis in belief is another feature of an anomic society, in which superstitious belief in ghosts and spirits, or fetishistic belief in commodities and money, has become the spiritual sanctuary for its members. In *Yi Yi*, A-Di is such a superstitious young man that his newly-born son is left unnamed until the end of the film just because he could not find a name lucky enough to counter the

bad-luck birthday of his son. A-Di is a weak and cowardly person as well, surviving an unsuccessful suicide attempt. In *Mahjong*—an adolescence-themed film Yang shot to symbolize the future of Taipei²—the adolescent gangsters have impressed the audience with their deep-rooted money worship and weird superstition. Not only the adolescents but the adults around them also behave in the same way. Knowing well the ignorant superstition of these adults, the adolescent gangsters frequently take advantage of them through nasty tricks. Ironically, the adolescent cheaters themselves are not less superstitious than those adults cheated by them. They believe that kissing a woman will bring bad luck to them and decline the request of kiss all the time. In one scene of this film, it takes great efforts for Hong Kong, the most handsome member of this four-member gang, to hoodwink his “girlfriend” Alison into sleeping with his gangfriends. But Little Buddha, another member of the gang, merrily went into the bedroom with Alison and furiously burst out of the room with only his pants on the next minute. Little Buddha is scared out of his wits, not by the sex with a girl, but by the request from a girl for kissing. In another scene, Hong Kong is also forced into kissing with three middle-aged wealthy and aggressive women,

¹ Robert K. Merton. *Social Theory and Social Structure*, revised and enlarged edition, (New York: The Free Press, 1965), p.134.

² 林文淇：“臺灣電影中的世紀末臺北”，廖咸浩、林秋芳編《2004 臺北學國際學術研討會論文集》，臺北：臺北市文化局，2006，第 113-126 頁。

whose money he attempted to cheat but failed and turned into their prey. The audience would be impressed deeply by Hong Kong's helpless weeping, left alone in the empty room after the leaving of the three lascivious women. According to Red Fish's taxonomy, the people of this world could be classified into two kinds—the cheaters and the cheated. In Yang's works, both the cheaters and the cheated share the same spiritual wasteland and it is not hard to understand why the world looks so bleak and gloomy.

It seems that in Yang's films alienation has sneaked into every corner of the city of Taipei. But the director has not told the audience where and how to find the antidote. However, at least, there are some characters such as the Author in *A Confucian Confusion* who have not been seriously alienated and the future of the city is not completely unpromising.



**One scene shot in Taipei's Eslite Cafe (誠品咖啡),
in *Yi Yi***

Thanks to Edward Yang, for keeping on reminding us of our deteriorating outer world and our inner selves. To clearly recognize and to bravely face the problem is always the necessarily first step to resolve the problem.¹ Yang really loves this city, really loves the people living in Taipei, and really hopes that the future of the city and its people will become

better and better. Therefore he willingly takes pains to disclose the often-ignored hideous parts of the city and its people and to send his timely and significant reminder. As film critic Wong Chi-fai (黃志輝) once said, "Yang has more concern for Taipei than any other filmmaker. For Hou Hsiao-hsien, Taipei is a temporal wasteland for someone who is struggling for survival away from his homeland. Taipei was where Yang grew up, and his films have always been critical of its people. Taipei was always his home, not the futile 'racial' column on his identity card, or the distanced 'mother mainland'"². It is believed that Yang's constant carping criticism of Taipei is always well-meant.

¹ The problem of alienation is a heatedly-debated topic in the humanities and social science for a long time. The thinkers such as Georg Fredrich Hegel and Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach had written on the alienation of absolute spirit and the alienation of humanity respectively, in a very early time. In Karl Marx's hands, the term alienation has turned into a keyword in social studies through his elaboration on alienated labor. However, as to the resolution of the problem of alienation, scholars have not reached a consensus yet and the problem remains an open question in academic world nowadays.

² Bryan Chang(張偉雄), Li Cheuk-to(李焯桃), eds. *The One and Only Edward Yang* (《一一重現: 楊德昌》), (Hong Kong: Hong Kong International Film Festival Society, 2008), p.137.

Afterword

Film is a 100 percent commitment. Even when I'm asleep and I wake up I think of ideas. I relax when I'm inspired. I get excited to tell my scriptwriter or friends about my idea. That's rewarding. That's the most relaxing thing for me.¹

—Edward Yang

1. If Yang Were Still Alive

In the contemporary Chinese-language film industry, it is hard to find a filmmaker like Edward Yang who is such an all-rounder in film making. He is both director and scriptwriter or co-scriptwriter for all of his 7¼ films. He took part in art design for his *A Brighter Summer Day* and *A Confucian Confusion*. Moreover, he was well-known for the marvelous caricatures of his friends and characters, and usually hand-drew the storyboard ahead of the shooting of his films. He was well-educated in classic Western music during childhood, and composed the music by himself for his *Expectation* and *The Terrorizers*, and even for Hou Hsiao-hsien's *A Summer at Grandpa's* (《冬冬的假期》, 1984). Hou Hsiao-hsien once recalled that Yang's attempt at using Antonio Vivaldi's *Le Quattro Stagioni* as the score for his *The Boys from Fengkuei* (《風櫃來的人》, 1983) instead of the original one breathed a new life into his work and offered him a life-long impressive lesson about the importance of film score.²

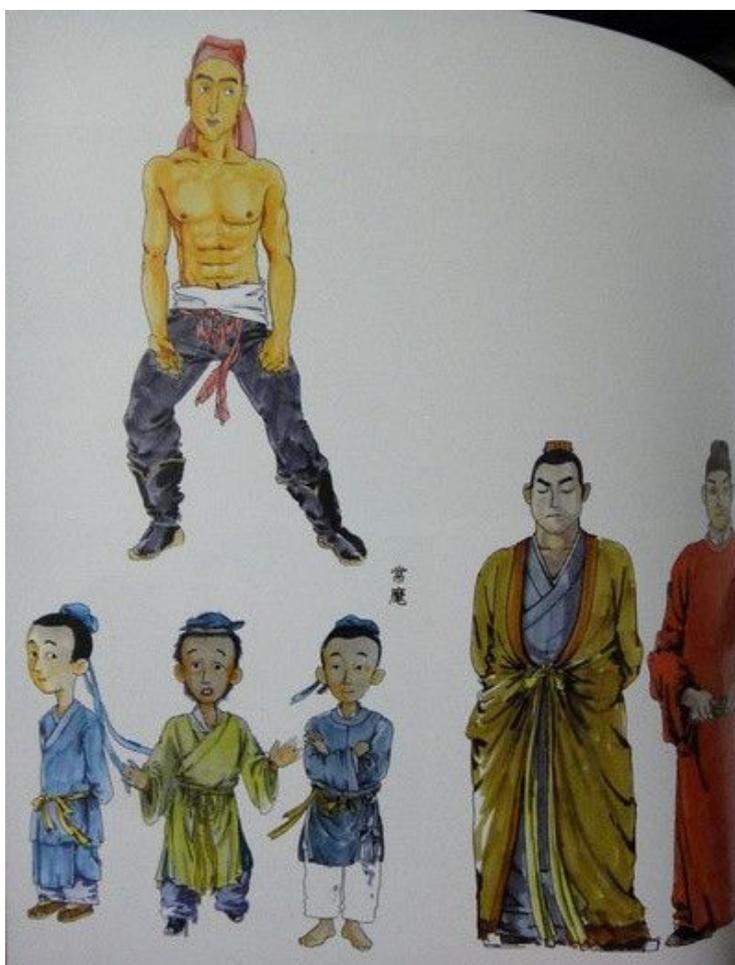
The Yang and Hou's generation witnessed the giant leap of the Chinese-language cinema onto the global stage with universal acclamation. As it is well known, since the early 1980s there are three apparently different but internally interrelated cinema movements coming into form simultaneously in Hong Kong, Taiwan and China mainland—the Hong Kong New Wave movement (香港新浪潮) led by Ann Hui (許鞍華), Hark Tsui (徐克), the Taiwan New Cinema movement represented by Hou Hsiao-hsien and Edward Yang, and the Fifth Generation in the mainland (大陸第五代導演) including Tian Zhuangzhuang (田壯壯), Chen Kaige (陳凱歌) and Zhang Yimou (張藝謀). Now many main figures of these movements are still rather active in the cinema industry—Ann Hui's *The Golden Era* (《黃金時代》, 2014) was screened at the 71st Venice International Film Festival and won the Best Director at the 51st Golden Horse Awards, Hark Tsui's *The Taking of Tiger Mountain* (《智取威虎山》, 2014) reaped both critical and commercial great success at the end of 2014, Zhang Yimou's *Coming Home* (《歸來》, 2014) was screened at the 67th Cannes Film Festival, and Hou Hsiao-hsien's new work *The Hidden Heroine* (《聶隱娘》) is expected to appear at the 68th Cannes Film Festival in 2015. However, seven years

¹ William A. Babcock. "Lights...Camera...Asia!", *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 12, 1988.

² 侯孝賢, "另一種視角", 讓-米歇爾·傅東, 《楊德昌的電影世界》, (楊海帝, 馮壽農譯), 北京: 商務印書館, 2011, 第 176 頁。

have already passed since Edward Yang left this world. Whereas his former comrades are working strenuously to navigate the Chinese-language cinema industry into a new century, what would Edward Yang bring to his audience if he were still alive?

One thing should be certain: Yang would continuously surprise the audience with his new attempts in both content and style of artistic creation. Edmond Wong once wrote in *Edward Yang: An Intellectual Thinker of Taiwan Cinema* as follows, “from *Expectation* up to *A Confucian Confusion*, Yang continues the rational analysis and social observation in his film works all these years, however, he also seeks breakthrough in each new work, deliberately avoiding those cinematic techniques he has successfully used in his previous works. For a filmmaker like Edward Yang, such dauntless pursuit of innovation and change in every new work is particularly commendable.”¹ For this reason, it is certain that Yang will keep bringing something surprisingly new to his audience if he were still alive.



**The characters of *The Wind*
by Edward Yang**

Firstly of all, Yang will move the setting of his stories out of modern Taipei. As is well known, the city of Taipei is the common backdrop for all of Yang's 7¼ films, and Taipei becomes a topic impossible to shun when analyzing Yang's films. Yang grew up in Taipei and the capital of Taiwan has become an inseparable part of Yang's life, just like what New York means to Woody Allen or Dublin to James Joyce. However, there are other reasons why Yang set all of his 7¼ films in modern Taipei. In an interview conducted in 2000, Yang explained why he always portrayed the city of Taipei in his works. “Part of it is economic. It's cheaper to set a story in the present time, because I don't have to build sets. I can use everything that's right there, and work efficiently with much less

cost.”⁵ Actually the trend of moving out of Taipei can be found in Yang's film plans after *Yi Yi*. It

¹ 黄建業,《楊德昌電影研究:臺灣電影的知性思辨家》,臺北:遠流,1995,第15頁。

⁵ Robert Sklar. “The Engineer of Modern Perplexity: An Interview with Edward Yang.” *Cineaste*, Vol.26,

was widely reported then that Yang's next work, an animated kung fu film titled "The Wind" (《追風》) was in preparation, the story of which was set in ancient China of the Song Dynasty (960—1279),¹ Besides, Yang also planned to make another film titled "The Assassination" (《暗殺》) based on Eileen Chang's (張愛玲) *Lust, Caution* (《色·戒》), aiming to develop the short story into an epic about Wang Ching-wei (汪精衛), a key political figure in the early period of the Republic of China, and Yang even contacted Hong Kong actor Leslie Cheung (張國榮) for the lead role.² If this plan had been realized, it would not only be a Yang's story taking place in mainland China during World War II instead of contemporary Taipei, also be a kind of remarkable "collaboration" between the cinema master Yang and the literary giant Eileen Chang.³



The setting of *The Wind* by Edward Yang

Secondly, as mentioned above, Yang would bring animated films for his audience. *The Wind* was in continuous preparation during Yang's last several years and the readers can find Yang's hand-written settings and characters for the film in Jean-Michel Frodon's *Le Cinéma d' Edward Yang*.⁹ This film is about a thirteen-year-old boy living in Kaifeng (開封) the eastern capital of the Song Dynasty, and the boy is also a master of Chinese kung fu.¹⁰ Because it was announced that *The Wind* would be co-produced by Yang and Hong Kong action film star Jackie Chan (成龍), the film had reaped world-wide attention since the very beginning of its preparation. In addition to *The Wind*, there was another animated film titled "Little Friend" (《小朋友》) under way during Yang's last years as well. *Little Friend* is a cooperation between Yang and his friend Chang Yi (張

No.1(2000):6-8.

¹ 讓-米歇爾·付東(Jean-Michel Frodon), 《楊德昌的電影世界》, (楊海帝, 馮壽農譯), 北京: 商務印書館, 2011, 第49頁。All the drawings by Edward Yang in this chapter can be found in Frodon's book, except the one on page 116 came from <http://ent.sina.com.cn/m/c/2008-06-30/09162080755.shtml> (新浪網“導演楊德昌逝世一週年祭”)。Retrieved 16/02/2015.

² 林奕華, “一一回到眼前”, 《新京報》, 2007年7月3日。

³ *Lust, Caution* was later adapted into a 2007 film with the same title, starring Tony Leung (梁朝偉) and Tang Wei (湯唯), directed by another master of Taiwan cinema Ang Lee (李安), which won the Gold Lion Award at the 64th Venice Film Festival and seven awards including Best Film, Best Director and Best Adapted Screenplay at the 44th Golden Horse Awards.

⁹ 讓-米歇爾·付東(Jean-Michel Frodon), 《楊德昌的電影世界》, (楊海帝, 馮壽農譯), 北京: 商務印書館, 2011, “檔案”部分。

¹⁰ 袁蕾, “楊德昌: 真的是拿命在創作”, 《南方週末》, 2007年12月18日。

毅), another major director in the Taiwan New Cinema movement.¹ *Little Friend* is a story about the friendship between a little girl and her Tibetan mastiff in the tough years during the Sino-Japanese War.² Unfortunately, accompanying Yang's early leaving, neither of these animated films is completed except a number of Yang's hand-written drawings for the settings and character of the two films. Yang started reading and drawing cartoon since his early childhood, and he said on many occasions that Tezuka Osamu (手塚治蟲) was one of his role models and had influenced him profoundly. For some critics, even Yang's films of real person, especially *A Confucian Confusion* and *Mahjong*, give the feeling of a live action cartoon.³ It is said that Yang also had the plan of adapting his master piece *A Brighter Summer Day* into comic strips.⁴

The two animated films above are closely related to the business Yang devoted himself to in his later years—the cartoon website miluku.com that he founded in 2001. With a Master's degree in Electrical and Computer Engineering earned as early as the 1970s in the United States, Yang is among the first generation of information technology elites in Taiwan. Therefore it is not surprising that Yang extended his film career into IT field at the beginning of the new century. Perhaps, in Yang's mind, if his miluku.com goes prosperous in the future, then the website can offer both necessary funds for his other film plans and a stronghold for his experiments in animated works. Unfortunately, due to Yang's gradually failing health condition and some other reasons, the business of the miluku.com was not as bright as he had expected.

In addition to the field of information technology, another area that Yang would probably take up is drama. In the early 1990s, Yang had been teaching at the Department of Drama of National Institute of the Arts (國立藝術學院)—it was renamed Taipei National University of the Arts (台北國立藝術大學) in 2001—for several years. During these years, Yang collaborated with his students and enacted two one-act stage plays *Likely Consequence* (《如果》, 1992) and *Period of Growth* (《成長季節》, 1993).⁵ In Yang's own words, through the two plays, he mainly aimed to train and select actors and staff for his new film plans, and cultivate a trusty relationship with these would-be collaborators.⁶ To certain extent, Yang's activities as a drama teacher and director have revealed his interest in the art of theatre. Besides the two one-act plays mentioned above, there is at least one more short play titled "Old Seven and Brother Nine" (《老七與九哥》) that was staged by Yang in Hong Kong in 1997, but there is little detailed information about the short play.⁷

¹ Yang's debut as a film director is "Expectation" ("指望"), which is the second episode of the omnibus film *In Our Time* (《光陰的故事》, 1982). *In Our Time* consists of four episodes and the fourth one is Chang Yi's "Say Your Name" ("報上名來"). Chang and his partner, Taiwanese actress Yang Hui-shan (楊惠姍) left the film industry in the late 1980s, devoted themselves into the arts of Chinese glass casting, and have become leading artists in their new field.

² Originally, Yang's story is titled "Zoo of Changjiang" (《長江動物園》) and about the withdrawal of a zoo from Nanjing (南京) to Chongqing (重慶) during World War II, but Yang later focuses the story on a little girl and her Tibetan mastiff accompanying the retreat of the zoo and retitles the story "Little Friend".

³ Stephen Holden. "Nasty Little Gang of Boys in the Low Life of Taipei", *New York Times*, October 7, 1996.

⁴ 四方田犬彦, 「Jamming with Edward」、李鳳宇編, 『楊德昌讀本』, 東京: シネカノン, 1995, p. 30.

⁵ Emilie Yueh-yu & Darrell William Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors: A Treasure Island* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), pp. 118.

⁶ 蓮實重彦・エドワード・ヤン, 「もっとも普遍的な都市映画: 『エドワード・ヤンの恋愛時代』をめぐって」、『ユリイカ』, 1995年7月号, pp.56.

⁷ 林奕華, "一一回到眼前", 《新京報》, 2007年7月3日。According to Edward Lam (林奕華), a Hong Kong stage director and playwright, Edward Yang staged *Old Seven and Brother Nine* as part of the Hong Kong artist Danny Yung's (榮念曾) "One Table Two Chairs: Experimental Chinese Theatre Plan" ("一桌兩椅" 實驗中國劇場計劃) in 1997, and both Edward Lam himself and the Hong Kong filmmaker Stanley Kwan (關錦鵬) had

Therefore, if Yang were still alive, it is highly probable that he will direct some one-act or multi-act plays at the intervals of his filmmaking.

2. They Belong to Yang's Gang

In 1989 Edward Yang founded his own film company “Yang & His Gang Filmmakers” (楊德昌電影公司), which was renamed “Atom Films and Theatre” (原子電影與劇場) in 1991. The company name “Yang & His Gang” resonated with Yang's teenage-gangster-themed new work *A Brighter Summer Day*, which was in production at that moment. Since it took about five years to complete the shooting of *A Brighter Summer Day*, deep mutual understanding and reliance have been built between Yang and the crew of *A Brighter Summer Day*, and some members of the crew even became Yang's long-term collaborators afterwards. In fact, as early as Yang came back from the United States and joined the Taiwan cinema industry in the early 1980s, he began to extend his influence on some collaborators in this circle. The work partners such as sound engineer and designer Tu Du-chih (杜篤之) and producer and director Yu Wei-yen (余為彥) are among them, and in a sense they could be called the members of Yang's gang.



A self-portrait by Edward Yang

In the Taiwan cinema circle, however, it is well known that Edward Yang is terribly severe as a director on shooting set and many of his collaborators have the bitter experience of being scolded into tears in the glare of the other crew members. Even for those producers of Yang's film, it is not an easy thing to work with him. Hsiao Yeh (小野) worked as producer and scriptwriter for Yang's *The Terrorizers*. While producing the film, Hsiao Yeh was frequently verging on a breakdown due to Yang's unpalatable unusual high demand in filmmaking. “If the composition within frame did not meet his expectation, he would keep shooting unceasingly until he felt satisfied. And it is quite common for him to force us to change this or that actor halfway in the shooting, even the actor only has three shots in his film.”¹ Though there were lots of unpleasantly difficult experiences during his cooperation with Yang, Hsiao Yeh insists that Yang is truly a great filmmaker with the character typical of an artist.² Jan Hung-tze (詹宏志) has collaborated with both Hou

Hsiao-hsien and Edward Yang, and produced Hou's *A City of Sadness* (《悲情城市》, 1989) and *The Puppetmaster* (《戲夢人生》, 1994) and Yang's *A Brighter Summer Day* and *A Confucian*

enacted their plays respectively at Yung's invitation the same time.

¹ 沈祿, “我們曾是彼此的‘恐怖分子’”, 《東方早報》, 2012年6月29日。

² 鄒欣寧, 《國片的燦爛時光》, 台北: 推守文化, 2010, 第15頁。

Confusion. Jan compared the two masters of the Taiwan cinema in the following words, “Hou is a very pleasant person to work with, and he is a born leader who always thinks of others, while it is a very tough thing to be Yang’s working partner because his ideas about filmmaking are always unusual and unintelligible.”¹ However, Jan Hung-tze also frankly admits that Yang’s uncompromising persistence in his extremely strict way of filmmaking is rather respectable and rewarding although often seems inscrutable and annoying.

As a fact of matter, Yang’s rigorous insistence of his own way of filmmaking had already been strongly felt at the beginning of his film career. When shooting his debut feature *That Day, on the Beach* for the Central Motion Picture Corporation, Yang’s own fresh ideas about filmmaking conflicted greatly with the conservative administrators of the CMPC. In those days, in comparison to the elder Taiwanese filmmakers, the new generation represented by Yang and Hou set a much higher demand on techniques concerning cinematography, lighting, sound recording and so on. The different understanding of filmmaking frequently led to unpleasant disputes on shooting set between the two generations of Taiwanese filmmakers. For this reason, the new filmmakers like Yang preferred choosing young technical filmmakers to work for their films, and these young technical filmmakers would grow into the backbone force of the Taiwan cinema industry in the 1990s.² Tu Du-chih was one of the them and now he is a leading sound engineer and designer in the Chinese-language film industry, who has worked for Hou Hsiao-hsien’s *A City of Sadness*, *Flower of Shanghai* (《海上花》, 1998), *Café Lumière* (《珈琲時光》, 2003), Tsai Ming-liang’s (蔡明亮) *What Time Is It There?* (《你那邊幾點》, 2001), *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* (《不散》, 2003), *Visage* (《臉》, 2009), and Wong Kar-wai’s (王家衛) *Happy Together* (《春光乍洩》, 1997), *In the Mood for Love* (《花樣年華》, 2000), *2046* (《2046》, 2004). Tu has helped Yang with the sound design and recording for all of Yang’s 7¼ films and considered Yang as one of the two persons who influenced him most profoundly in his life — another person is Hou Hsiao-hsien.³ In an interview, asked about what Yang would shoot now if he were still alive, Tu answered in a humble tone, “I am just a follower of him. Since he was always ahead of us, it is really hard to guess what he would think and do if he were still with us now. Anyway, I am sure that he will be like a prophet as before, silently observing this society with his sharp eyes.”⁴

Hong Kong film director Wong Kar-wai has a huge following world widely for his highly stylized and visually unique films of art house, such as *Days of Being Wild* (《阿飛正傳》, 1991), *Ashes of Time* (《東邪西毒》, 1994), *Chungking Express* (《重慶森林》, 1994), *Fallen Angels* (《墮落天使》, 1995), *Happy Together* (1997), *In the Mood for Love* (2000), and *2046* (2004). The achievements of Wong’s art films are inseparably linked to his long-term collaborator, cinematographer Christopher Doyle (杜可風), who contributed wholly or partially to all of the Wong’s films mentioned above. Doyle also works with other major Chinese-speaking filmmakers such as Zhang Yimou (張藝謀), Chen Kaige (陳凱歌), Stanley Kwan (關錦鵬), Peter Chan (陳可辛), Fruit Chan (陳果) and others. Doyle’s outstanding camera work won him the Best Cinematography award at the 1994 Venice Film Festival and the Technical Grand Prize at the

¹ 劉凱, “台灣全才詹宏志: 對不起楊德昌”, 《揚子晚報》, 2012年5月16日。

² 張昌彥, “現代台灣電影與傳統”, 焦雄屏編, 《新亞洲電影面面觀》, 台北: 遠流, 1991。?

³ 張靚蓓, 《聲色盒子》, 台北: 大塊文化, 2009, 第77頁。

⁴ 傅東, 焦雄屏, 杜篤之, “傅東焦雄屏杜篤之談楊德昌: 他走得比我們都快”, 《東方早報》, 2011年11月7日。

2000 Cannes Film Festival. However, it is noteworthy that Doyle's feature debut as a cinematographer was in Edward Yang's *That Day, on the Beach*. In the early 1980s, Doyle was an unknown young photographer coming from Australia without much experience in cinematography, and it is Yang who boldly invited Doyle to work for *That Day, on the Beach* against the overwhelming odds from the conservative CMPC.¹ But the collaboration was not very smooth and Yang's rigorous requirements even frustrated Doyle into tears from time to time. Sylvia Chang (張艾嘉), who played the leading role in the film, recalled the following scene many years later. "During a shoot by the sea, Edward and Chris had a row. It was the first time I saw a cinematographer cry. I wasn't sure if I should comfort the director or run after Chris, so I did both. This sort of thing happened many times, but we still felt we should support him (Edward Yang) because we knew how passionate he was about film."² At last, *That Day, on the Beach* won Christopher Doyle the Best Cinematography award at the Asia-Pacific Film Festival in 1983.

Nowadays in the Taiwan cinema industry the young generation of film directors have become more and more active with their notable achievements domestically and internationally. It is an interesting thing that many of these middle-aged filmmakers had been deeply influenced by Edward Yang this way or that during their youth. Among them Wei Te-sheng (魏德聖) is quite typical. Wei's *Cape No. 7* (《海角七號》, 2008) won six awards at the 2008 Golden Horse Awards and the success of this film initiated the commercial revival of Taiwan cinema after a long slump at the market. Three years later, Wei's *Seediq Bale* (《賽德克·巴萊》, 2011) won six awards at the 2011 Golden Horse Awards including Best Picture and appeared in competition at the 68th Venice Film Festival. Wei joined Yang's Atom Films and Theatre in his middle twenties and worked as a grip assistant. Later, he was promoted as assistant director on Yang's *Mahjong*. About three years of working with Yang have taught Wei a great deal about filmmaking. In Wei's eyes, Yang regards filmmaking as a life-long career, and Yang's perseverance and purity in filmmaking are the two things that inspired him most.³ In an interview, Wei expresses his eternal gratitude to his former boss, "He (Edward Yang) taught me to be a perfectionist and not sacrifice one's vision, even on a tight budget. He also told me to use my own experience and not copy anybody."⁴

A little different from Wei, Leon Dai (戴立忍) was Yang's student when Yang taught at the Department of Drama of National Institute of the Arts. Dai is both a talented actor and a successful director. The film *Can Not Live Without You* (《不能沒有你》, 2009) directed by him won five awards at the 46th Golden Horse Awards including Best Picture and Best Director. While talking about his college days at Yang's class, Dai said, "His class inspired me a lot. I gradually understood that as a film director, you should accumulate a great amount of materials from everyday life, then assemble and express them in your own way. Without the experience of studying with Yang, I might not have accomplished *Can Not Live Without You*. If there is a style belonging to me in my works, I think I owe this to Edward Yang."⁵

¹ 王昀燕,《再見楊德昌:台灣電影人訪談記事》,台北:時周文化,2012,第16頁。

² 張偉雄,李焯桃,《一一重現:楊德昌》,香港:香港國際電影節協會,2008,第42頁。

³ 魏德聖,王華震,“用電影直視歷史”,《收穫》,2012年, No.3,第114頁。

⁴ Sonia Kolesnikov-Jessop. "The director Wei Te-sheng's long road to fame", *New York Times*, November 7, 2008.

⁵ 戴立忍,“電影界的‘哈姆雷特’”,讓·米歇爾·傅東,《楊德昌的電影世界》,(楊海帝,馮壽農譯),北京:商務印書館,2011,第183頁。

The list of new generation of the Taiwanese film directors influenced by Yang also includes other names such as Hung Hung (鴻鴻) who was both Yang's student at National Institute of the Arts and his scriptwriter of *A Brighter Summer Day* and *A Confucian Confusion*, Chiang Hsiu-chiung (姜秀瓊) who played the role of Second Sister in *A Brighter Day* and worked as Yang's assistant for *A Confucian Confusion* and *Yi Yi*, Ivan Chen (陳以文) who played the role of Liren in *A Confucian Confusion* and worked as Yang's assistant for *A Brighter Summer Day*, *A Confucian Confusion* and *Mahjong*, Alex Yang (楊順清) who co-scripted *A Brighter Summer Day*, played the role of Shandong in the same film and worked as Yang's assistant for *Yi Yi*, Wang Wei-ming (王維明) who played both in *A Brighter Summer Day* as a member of the 217 gang and in *A Confucian Confusion* as the male lead Ming, and Alvin Chen (陳駿霖) who worked as an assistant for *Yi Yi*.

In his filmmaking career, Yang has also selected and trained many talented young actors, and some of them have already become the leading figures in contemporary Chinese-language cinema industry. Perhaps Chang Chen (張震) is the most famous one among them. As a teenager, Chang was selected by Yang to play the protagonist in *A Brighter Summer Day*, and this film helped Chang acquire his first nomination of Best Actor in a Leading Role at the 1991 Golden Horse Awards at the age of fourteen. After that, Chang works continuously with many masters of the Chinese-language cinema, such as Ang Lee (李安) in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (《臥虎藏龍》, 2000), Wong Kar-wai in *2046* (《2046》, 2004) and *The Grand Master* (《一代宗師》, 2013), Hou Hsiao-hsien in *Three Times* (《最好的時光》, 2005), Tian Zhuangzhuang (田壯壯) in *The Go Master* (《吳清源》, 2006), and John Woo (吳宇森) in *Red Cliff* (《赤壁》, 2008). Now Chang is already an experienced actor with international recognition. On many occasions, Chang says that without Edward Yang his acting career may be quite different, and it is Yang who made him believe that filmmaking is a great thing.



The characters of *A Confucian Confusion* by Edward Yang

Actress Chen Shiang-chyi (陳湘琪) was a student of Yang at National Institute of the Arts, and she was also the leads for Yang's two short plays *Likely Consequence* (1992) and *Period of Growth* (1993). As a favorite student of Yang, Chen both worked as an assistant for *A Brighter Summer Day* and played the lead for *A Confucian Confusion*. After graduation she went to New York University to continue studying in drama and film. When she came back to Taiwan, she keeps appearing in the works of Tsai Ming-liang, another master of the Taiwan cinema, such as *The River* (《河流》, 1997) which won Special Jury Prize at the 47th Berlin Film Festival, *What Time Is It There?* (《你那邊幾點》, 2001), *Goodbye Dragon Inn* (《不散》, 2003) which won the Fipresci Prize at the 60th Venice Film Festival, *The Wayward Cloud* (《天邊一朵雲》, 2005)

such as *The River* (《河流》, 1997) which won Special Jury Prize at the 47th Berlin Film Festival, *What Time Is It There?* (《你那邊幾點》, 2001), *Goodbye Dragon Inn* (《不散》, 2003) which won the Fipresci Prize at the 60th Venice Film Festival, *The Wayward Cloud* (《天邊一朵雲》, 2005)

which won the Outstanding Artistic Achievement award at the 55th Berlin Film Festival, *I Don't Want To Sleep Alone* (《黑眼圈》, 2006), *Visage* (《臉》, 2009) and *Stray Dogs* (《郊遊》, 2013) which won the Grand Jury Prize at the 77th Venice Film Festival. In 2014 Chen herself won Best Actress in a Leading Role at the 51th Golden Horse Awards for her excellent performance in the film *Exit* (《回光奏鳴曲》, 2014). It is her third time to be nominated for Best Actress in a Leading Role at the Golden Horse Awards and the first time to win. “Without Edward Yang’s leading at the very beginning of my career, perhaps I am still outside of the world of acting now.”¹ Like what Wei Te-sheng has learned from Yang, the uncompromising attitude in filmmaking of Yang has continuously encouraged Chen to move forward in her acting career as well.

Edward Yang is extremely strict with his actors, but at the same time actors benefit a lot from working with Yang, particularly for those novices. As mentioned above, through *A Brighter Summer Day*, Chang Chen acquired his first nomination for Best Actor in a Leading Role of the Golden Horse Awards at the age of fourteen. Lisa Yang (楊靜怡), who play the role of Ming in the same film, acquired the nomination of Best Actress in a Leading Role of the Golden Horse Awards at the age of seventeen as well. In addition to Chang Chen and Lisa Yang, many other young actors have also obtained their nominations or awards through acting in Yang’s films. Also in *A Brighter Summer Day*, by the role of Second Sister, Chiang Hsiu-chiung was nominated for the Best Actress in a Supporting Role at the 28th Golden Horse Awards. Through the role of Akeem in *A Confucian Confusion*, Berson Wang (王柏森) won Best Actor in a Supporting Role at the 31th Golden Horse Awards, while Joyce Ni (倪淑君) reaped the nomination of Best Actress in a Leading Role through the role of Molly in the same film. Wang Chi-tsan (王啟贊) won Best Actor in a Supporting Role at the 33th Golden Horse Awards by the role of Little Buddha in *Mahjong*. Through the performance in Yang’s works, many young actors have mounted to a new height in their acting career. Lawrence Ko (柯宇綸), who played the role of Plane in *A Brighter Summer Day* and Luen in *Mahjong*, expressed his gratitude towards Edward Yang when he won Best Supporting Actor at the 2012 Asian Film Awards in Hong Kong,² “I owe a deep debt of gratitude to Edward Yang, the most respectable teacher of mine. It is Yang who taught me how to make a film with your passion. He is the person who loves film best as far as I know.” Thanks to Yang’s passion for film. It is with such a passion that Yang helped establish a vast reservoir of experienced film workers for the further development of the Chinese-language film industry.

3. Prospect of the Research on Edward Yang

The main parts of this thesis have discussed several recurring themes in Yang’s films — adolescence, love, life, death, and Taipei. However, there are some other themes that repeatedly appear in Yang’s films and demand a close analysis as well. For instance, the representation of the United States in Yang’s works deserves a thorough discussion. From 1970 to 1981 Yang spent more than ten years studying and working in the United States, and he spent his last several years there as well. *A Confucian Confusion* (1994) was financed and distributed by the Asian subsidiary

¹ 吳世寧, “憑《回光奏鳴曲》摘影后 陳湘琪化演為活 打開反鎖那道門”, 《明報》, 2015年1月23日。

² With the same film *Jump Ashin!* (《翻滾吧!阿信》, 2011) Lawrence Ko was also nominated for Best Actor in a Supporting Role at the 48th Golden Horse Awards.

of Warner Brothers — Warner Asia, and it was also the first film on the schedule of the newly-founded Warner Asia then.¹ Yang once said that he developed a love for cinema after seeing *Escape from Fort Bravo* (1953) and *From Here to Eternity* (1953) at the age of six.² American filmmakers such as Stanley Kubrick, Woody Allen and David Lynch are Yang's favorites, and American pop singers Bob Dylan and Paul Simon are his role models.³ American pop music plays an important role in many of Yang's films, especially in *A Brighter Summer Day*.⁴ Some plots of Yang's works are closely related to the United States — in *Taipei Story*, Lon's elder sister and sister-in-law are living in the United States and Lon himself just came back to Taipei from there while Chin, Lon's girlfriend, dreamed to emigrate there with Lon; in *The Terrorizers*, it is vaguely depicted that the father of the Eurasian girl White Chick is a GI; in *A Brighter Summer Day*, Elvis Presley is a role absently present throughout the film; in *Mahjong*, there is a middle-aged American woman named Ginger who runs an escort agency in Taipei; in *Yi Yi*, NJ's old flame, Sherry went to the United States and married an ABC there. How Yang's American experience is reflected in his films requires further discussions from his critics.

The representation of Japan in Yang's works also deserves the critics' attention. Because of the specific historical relationship between Taiwan and Japan, fifty years of the Japanese colonization have left innumerable traces in the everyday life of the Taiwanese. From the perspective of colonial/postcolonial theories, almost every film about Taiwan can be a sample to observe the Japanese influence on the island. Concerning Yang's personal history, Japan is still a topic difficult to shun. *The Winter of 1905* (1981), the first film Yang took part in as he came back to Taiwan from the United States, was mainly shot in Japan. Yang is the scriptwriter of *The Winter of 1905* as well, and it is a story about the legendary Chinese Buddhist monk Hong Yi (弘一法師; 李叔同) who had studied at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts at the beginning of the 20th century. In the production of *A Brighter Summer Day*, due to Yang's slow pace and high production cost, the former investors stopped financing the film halfway, and it is the help from some Japanese investors that saved this masterpiece from coming to nothing.⁵ Afterwards *A Brighter Summer Day* failed to enter competition at the Cannes Film Festival that year, but won the Special Jury Prize and the Fipresci Prize at the Tokyo International Film Festival in 1991. Also in 1991, Yang's own film company "Yang and His Gang Filmmakers" was renamed "Atom Films and Theatre". The new name came from Yang's favorite cartoon character — Tezuka Osamu's (手塚治虫) *Mighty Atom* (鉄腕アトム; Tetsuwan Atomu; Astro Boy), and Yang regards Osamu and Naruse Mikio (成瀬巳喜男) as two role models in his life.⁶ In *That Day, on the Beach*, Jia-ji's father is a

¹ 吳舜華, “《獨立時代》的發行策略——訪華納亞洲執行總裁謝艾文”, 《影響電影雜誌》, 1994, 第 52 期, 第 42 頁。

² 張偉雄, 李焯桃, 《一一重現: 楊德昌》, 香港: 香港國際電影節協會, 2008, 第 140 頁。

³ See 讓-米歇爾·付東(Jean-Michel Frodon), 《楊德昌的電影世界》, (楊海帝, 馮壽農譯), 北京: 商務印書館, 2011, “檔案”部分; 錢欽青, 于國華, 梁玉芳, “楊德昌彭鎧立 很伍迪艾倫”, 《聯合報》, 2005 年 6 月 14 日; 沈祜, “楊德昌, 一個永遠處在遠景的觀察者: 專訪電影《牯嶺街》、《獨立時代》、《恐怖份子》合作者鴻鴻”, 《東方早報》, 2012 年 6 月 29 日。

⁴ Many a critic has discussed the role of American pop music in Yang's masterpiece *A Brighter Summer Day*, see 葉月瑜, “搖滾樂、次文化、台灣電影——《牯嶺街少年事件》與歷史記憶”, 《電影欣賞》, 1993, 第 61 期, 第 70-78 頁; 張英進, 《影像中國: 當代中國電影的批評重構及跨國想像》, (胡靜譯), 上海: 上海三聯書店, 2008, 第 353 頁; A. O. Scott. “Displaced, Disaffected and Desperate to Connect”, *New York Times*, November 25, 2011.

⁵ 劉凱, “台灣全才詹宏志: 對不起楊德昌”, 《揚子晚報》, 2012 年 5 月 16 日。

⁶ 讓-米歇爾·付東(Jean-Michel Frodon), 《楊德昌的電影世界》, (楊海帝, 馮壽農譯), 北京: 商務印書館,

doctor who has overseas studying experience in Japan and lives a Japanese-style life; in *Taipei Story*, Lon's ex-girlfriend Gwen is living in Tokyo; in *A Brighter Summer Day*, S'ir stabbed Ming to death with a knife left by an unknown Japanese woman; in *Yi Yi*, NJ's spiritual guru is a Japanese businessman Ota, and NJ dated his old flame Sherry in Tokyo. In addition, *Yi Yi* is also mainly financed by a Japanese filmmaking project named Y2K.¹

Another topic worthy of critics' attention is the role the European art cinema played in Edward Yang's filmmaking career. It is a famous story about Yang that one day around 1980 at Seattle Yang walked past a cinema with a sign saying *Aguirre, the Wrath of God*, then he walked in and came out a different person. Yang's excitement for film was re-ignited by this film, and shortly afterwards he quitted the job as an electrical engineer at Seattle and went back to Taiwan to make films. Werner Herzog, the director of *Aguirre, the Wrath of God* and a major figure of the German New Cinema, used the money earned as a blacksmith to finance the production of *Aguirre, the Wrath of God*. "Basically it's not the style or the beauty of the images that influenced me," Yang recalled, "it was the spirit of the filmmaking of Mr. Herzog that was never before seen. I had to do something I liked before I got real old."² In addition to Herzog, Yang's other favorite European cinema giants include Robert Bresson, Alain Resnais, Jean-Luc Godard and Reiner Werner Fassbinder.³ Moreover, Yang has often been compared with Michelangelo Antonioni and regarded as "Antonioni of Taiwan" by critics in the early stage of his film career, though Yang himself was rather reluctant to admit the influence from Antonioni. However, the resemblance can be found between quite a number of episodic motifs and symbolic images in their films, for instance, the resemblance between *That Day, on the Beach* and *L'Avventura* (1960), *Taipei Story* and *The Eclipse* (1962), *The Terrorizers* and *Blow-up* (1966).⁴ Yang is also a close friend of the French director Olivier Assayas. It is through Assayas that Yang decided Virginie Ledoyen to play the French girl Marthe in his *Mahjong*. Assayas is also a regular contributor to the influential film magazine *Cahiers du Cinéma*. Besides the influence of the old masters of European art cinema, the interaction between Yang and his contemporary leading European filmmakers such as Assayas is also a subject worth further studying.

A detailed comparative study between Yang and the other three world-class filmmakers of the Taiwan New Cinema movement is also expected in Edward Yang studies. As the two founders of the Taiwan New Cinema movement, Yang and Hou Hsiao-hsien have been compared by critics from the middle 1980s up to now. Of the same age, both transplanted from mainland China—even with the same ancestral hometown of Mei County of Guangdong (廣東省梅縣), the two giants of the Chinese-language cinema seem born to be close friends and intense rivals in their

2011, "檔案"部分。

¹ The Y2K Project is aimed at encouraging collaboration in filmmaking between Japan and other Asian nations, and breaking down borders between Asian cultures, the driving theme being the Asia's shift into the 21st century. In addition to Edward Yang's *Yi Yi*, the project also includes Hong Kong director Stanley Kwan's *The Island Tales* (《有時跳舞》, 1999) and Iwai Shunji's (岩井俊二) *All About Lily Chou-Chou* (『リリイ・シュシュのすべて』, 《關於莉莉周的一切》, 2001)

² John Anderson. *Edward Yang* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005), p.6.

³ See 讓-米歇爾·付東(Jean-Michel Frodon), 《楊德昌的電影世界》, (楊海帝, 馮壽農譯), 北京: 商務印書館, 2011, "檔案"部分; 沈祎, "楊德昌, 一個永遠處在遠景的觀察者: 專訪電影《牯嶺街》、《獨立時代》、《恐怖份子》合作者鴻鴻", 《東方早報》, 2012年6月29日。

⁴ Leo Chanjen Chen. "The Frustrated Architect: The Cinema of Edward Yang", *New Left Review*, Vol.11 (Sept-Oct. 2001).

filmmaking career. Usually it is thought that Yang is a filmmaker of the city, of women, of cultural cross-pollination while Hou focuses on rural settings and male-centered stories.¹ Tsai Ming-liang and Ang Lee are two leading filmmakers in the second wave of the Taiwan New Cinema movement. Tsai is an unswerving supporter of the art cinema and a beloved frequenter of the leading international film festivals such as Berlin, Cannes and Venice. Tsai is a Malaysian Chinese and spent his first twenty years in Kuching of Malaysia. After that he went to Taipei to continue his study in the Drama and Cinema Department of Chinese Culture University (中國文化大學) and keeps working in the film industry after graduation. Tsai, Yang and Hou, all of them are masters of the long-take and long-shot aesthetics. But Tsai and Yang share another similarity in their constant depiction of contemporary urban life, which often looks alienated and fragmented in their films. Generally Tsai's urban life is chilling and quiet while Yang's is poignant and noisy—Yang always has a strong sense of purpose in his films and he hopes to talk to everybody through his films.² After graduating from the National Arts School (國立台灣藝術專科學校)—it was reorganized and expanded as the National Taiwan University of Arts (國立台灣藝術大學) in 2001—Ang Lee continued his study at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and New York University. Both Lee and Yang have the overseas studying experience in the United States. But different from Yang, who was a student of science, Lee majored in theatre and film production in the United States. Later than Hou and Yang, Lee has established his reputation globally with many worldwidely acclaimed films such as *Sense and Sensibility* (1995), *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (《臥虎藏龍》, 2000), *Brokeback Mountain* (2005) and *Life of Pi* (2012). Lee has won the Academy Award for Best Director twice, and won the Golden Bear at Berlin Film Festival twice and the Golden Lion at Venice Film Festival twice. For some critics, Yang and Lee represent different dimensions of filmmaking. Jia Zhangke (賈樟柯), the leading director of the Sixth Generation from mainland China, thinks that Yang's works depict life experience while Lee's boost mass consumption.³ However, film critic Peggy Chiao has a different opinion about the two directors. For Chiao, Yang is an excellent filmmaker of art cinema but may not be able to shoot a successful commercial movie whereas Lee is capable to find an ideal balance between art and commercial, meeting the demands of cinema market while keeping his own style at the same time.⁴ It is believed that a detailed comparative study of the four Taiwanese masters will greatly advance the research in the contemporary Chinese-language cinema.

There is another point that requires academic attention. The research into the periods before *Expectation* (1982) and after *Yi Yi* (2000) in Yang's filmmaking career remains a virgin land in Edward Yang studies. In 1981 when Yang returned to Taiwan, he wrote and performed in *The Winter of 1905* (《一九零五年的冬天》), the independent film directed by Yu Wei-cheng (余為政) and co-produced by Yu and Jan Hung-tze. The film was later selected for Un Certain Regard at the Cannes Film Festival. After this film, Yang collaborated with producer Sylvia Chang— a prominent figure active as actress, singer, writer, director and producer in contemporary Chinese-language cinema industry, who also played the role of Jia-ji in Yang's *That Day, on the*

¹ John Anderson. *Edward Yang* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005), pp.15-16.

² 賴聲川, 王樽, “行走在舞台與影像的邊緣”, 許鞍華, 陳可辛等, 《一個人的電影·2008-2009》, 上海: 上海文藝出版社, 2010, 第 271 頁。

³ 賈樟柯, 《賈想 1996—2008: 賈樟柯電影手記》, 北京: 北京大學出版社, 2009 年, 第 80 頁。

⁴ 焦雄屏, 臧杰, “中國電影的現實憂愁”, 格非, 賈樟柯等, 《一個人的電影》, 北京: 中信出版社, 2008, 第 254 頁, 第 260 頁。

Beach—and directed *Floating Weeds* (《浮萍》) episodes for the Taiwan TV drama series *Eleven Women* (《十一個女人》). There is not much detailed information available on the film and TV episodes that Yang made before *Expectation*, his debut as a film director. Similarly, when Yang taught at National Institute of the Arts, he enacted two short plays *Likely Consequence* (1992) and *Period of Growth* (1993). According to the writings of some Yang's acquaints, Yang might have other theatre works besides these two plays. Many critics wrote that the influence of Yang's experience as drama director can be sensed in his following films, particularly in *A Confucian Confusion* and *Mahjong*.¹ But it is not quite clear yet about the plot, performance and reception of

these plays. On the other hand, after *Yi Yi*, Yang founded the website miluku.com in 2001 which specialized in internet animation, then announced his collaboration with Jackie Chan for the animation *The Wind* in 2002, and worked with Chang Yi and Loretta Hui-shan Yang (楊惠珊)² on the animation *Zoo of Changjiang* in 2003 which was renamed *Little Friend* later. These new plans represent a turning point in Yang's filmmaking career, which indicates Yang's preference for animated films in his later years. Though neither of the two animated films on plan has been completed, Yang kept



The characters of *Little Friend* by Edward Yang

preparing them until his last day³ and left quite a few drawings and several shorts concerning the two films. These precious materials deserve enough attention of Yang's researchers as well.

¹ Emilie Yueh-yu & Darrell William Davis indicate *A Confucian Confusion* as an example reflected the influence of Yang's activities as drama teacher and director, in their *Taiwan Film Directors: A Treasure Island* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), pp. 118.

² Loretta Yang is the partner of Chang Yi, a two-time winner of the Best Leading Actress at the Golden Horse Awards (1984, 1985), and an outstanding artist of the Chinese glassware.

³ 楊林, 賈維, “兩任妻子追憶楊德昌 彭鎧立還原最後七年”, 《新京報》, 2007年7月3日。

Edward Yang's Bio-Filmography¹

1947 Born on November 6 in Shanghai.

His father worked for Central Printing House (中央印製廠) while his mother worked for Central Trust of China (中央信託局). His parents were among the first generation of post-war wage-earners who migrated from the countryside to city.

1949 Moved with his family to Taipei in February, accompanying the retreat of the Kuomintang Government from mainland China to Taiwan.

1953 Started to develop a love of cinema after seeing *Escape from Fort Bravo* (1953) and *From Here to Eternity* (1953).

1956 For a while, he loved the Mandarin films made in Hong Kong and the stars such as Lucilla You Min (尤敏) and Kitty Ding Hao (丁皓).

1962 Entered Taipei Municipal Chien-Kuo High School (台北建國中學).

Favorite films as a teenager included *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962) and *Tom Jones* (1963).

Developed an interest in classic music after joining the high school military band and learned about the opera *Aida*.

1965 Studied Electronic Engineering at National Chiao Tung University (台灣交通大學).

1970 Went to study Electrical and Computer Engineering at the University of Florida in the United States.

1974 After receiving his Master Degree, enrolled for just one year in the film program at the University of Southern California.

Influenced by the New German Cinema, especially the works of Werner Herzog, that a good film is not necessarily costly.

Worked for the next seven years as an electrical engineer in a company in affiliation with the University of Washington in Seattle.

1981 Returned to Taiwan and pursued a career in film.

Wrote and performed in *The Winter of 1905* (《一九零五年的冬天》), the independent film directed by Yu Wei-cheng (余為政) and co-produced by Yu and Chen Hon-chi (詹宏志). The film was selected for Un Certain Regard at Cannes Film Festival.

Collaborated with Sylvia Chang (張艾嘉) and directed *Floating Weeds* (《浮萍》) episodes for

¹ Mainly based on Bryan Chang (張偉雄), Li Cheuk-to (李焯桃), eds. *The One and Only Edward Yang* (《一一重現：楊德昌》), Hong Kong: Hong Kong International Film Festival Society, 2008, pp.140-43; John Anderson. *Edward Yang*, Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005, pp.117-21.

Taiwan TV drama series *Eleven Women* (《十一個女人》).

1982 Wrote and Directed *Expectation* (《指望》), the second episode of the omnibus film *In Our Time* (《光陰的故事》).

1983 Directed *That Day, on the Beach* (《海灘的一天》), co-written with Wu Nien-jen (吳念真), which is also the debut feature of cinematographer Christopher Doyle (杜可風).

1985 Directed *Taipei Story* (《青梅竹馬》), co-written with Chu Tien-wen (朱天文) and Hou Hsiao-hsien (侯孝賢). Hou also played a lead role. The other lead role was played by singer Tsai Chin (蔡琴), who married Yang the same year and their marriage lasted about ten years.

1986 Directed *The Terrorizers* (《恐怖分子》), co-written with Hsiao Yeh (小野), winning Best Picture at Golden Horse Awards (金馬獎).

1987 Fifty-two Taiwanese filmmakers, including Edward Yang and Hou Hsiao-hsien, released a joint statement “The 1987 Taiwan Cinema Proclamation: Give a Space of Existence for Another Kind of Cinema” (《民國七十六年台灣電影宣言》), to define Taiwan New Cinema (台灣新電影) as “a meaningful creative activity”, “a form of art”, and “a national cultural activity with a sense of reflection and history”.

The authority of the Taiwan government announced reform in the film industry. The Taiwan New Cinema movement accomplished its mission and set a landmark in the Chinese language film history.

1989 Founded Yang & His Gang Filmmakers (楊德昌電影公司), his own film company, which was renamed Atom Films and Theatre (原子電影與劇場) in 1991.

1991 Directed *A Brighter Summer Day* (《牯嶺街少年殺人事件》), winning Best Picture and Best Original Screenplay at Golden Horse Awards, and Special Jury Prize and Fipresci Prize at Tokyo International Film Festival.

A Brighter Summer Day was selected by Japan’s *Kinema Junpo* (《電影旬報》) as the second place in the Top 10 foreign films of the year with Edward Yang as Best Foreign Film Director.

1992 Wrote and directed one-act stage play *Likely Consequence* (《如果》).

1993 Wrote and directed one-act stage play *Period of Growth* (《成長季節》).

In the two plays, Yang collaborated with his students at the National Institute of the Arts (國立藝術學院, it was renamed Taipei National University of the Arts in 2001, 台北國立藝術大學), where he also taught. Both plays featured Chen Shiang-chyi (陳湘琪).

1994 Directed *A Confucian Confusion* (《獨立時代》), which entered competition at Cannes Film Festival, and won Best Original Screenplay at Golden Horse Awards.

- 1995** Directed *Mahjong* (《麻將》), which entered competition at Berlin Film Festival and won Alfred Bauer Award.
Yang married pianist Kai-li Peng (彭鎧立).
- 2000** Directed *Yi Yi* (《一一》), which won Best Director at Cannes Film Festival, and won Best Picture from National Society of Film Critics in the United States.
Diagnosed with colon cancer in July.
Yang and Peng's son Sean was born.
- 2001** Jury member of Feature Films Competition at Cannes Film Festival.
Founded miluku.com, specializing in internet animation.
- 2002** Announced his collaboration with Jackie Chan (成龍) for the animation *The Wind* (《追風》) in August, using the likeness of Chan as the character, with plans for TV animation and internet games.
- 2003** Collaborated with Chang Yi (張毅) and Loretta Hui-shan Yang (楊惠珊) in Shanghai on the animation *Zoo of Changjiang* (《長江動物園》), later retitled *Little Friend* (《小朋友》).
- 2005** Chaired the Jury of Short Films Competition at Cannes Film Festival.
Went to the United States for cancer treatment.
- 2007** Passed away on June 29, at the age of 59, at his Beverly Hills home and was buried at Westwood Village Memorial Park, in Los Angeles.

Film Works by Edward Yang

- 1982 *In Our Time*, “Expectation”; 『時の物語（光陰的故事・指望）』の第2話「指望」
- 1983 *That Day, on the Beach*; 『海辺の一日（海濱的一天）』;
- 1985 *Taipei Story*; 『タイペイ・ストーリー（青梅竹馬）』;
- 1986 *The Terrorizers*; 『恐怖分子（恐怖分子）』;
- 1991 *A Brighter Summer Day*; 『クーリンチェ少年殺人事件（牯嶺街少年殺人事件）』;
- 1994 *A Confucian Confusion*; 『エドワード・ヤンの恋愛時代（独立時代）』;
- 1996 *Mahjong*; 『カップルズ（麻将）』;
- 2000 *Yi Yi*; 『ヤンヤン夏の思い出（一一）』;

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從二〇〇七年着手申請“日本文部科學省博士獎學金”算起，八年多的時光在生命中安靜的流淌而過。八年，也仿佛是一場舒緩而迂迴的流轉，從廈門，到長春，到名古屋，再回到廈門，中間還有一小段廣州的旅程。似乎，終點又回到了起點，只不過，那個乘著時光一路走來的人，卻多少與出發時樣子有些不同了。八年，不短的一段距離，這一路難免有風有雨，有雪有霜，回望來時的路，最想說的，總是“謝謝”這兩個字，謝謝這一路上支持、幫助和陪伴過自己的那些人。

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從兩位副指導教師村主幸一先生與松下千雅子先生那裡，自己同樣獲益良多。修讀村主先生的戲劇研究課的那兩年，每週都要閱讀大量的英文材料，課堂上還要用日文匯報和討論，而且先生對學生的要求又是非常之細緻和嚴格。回想那段時光，真的是頗為辛勞，卻也是頗有成就感的，而這份博論中若干章節的研究方法，其最初發想就是來自於村主先生課上的啟發。而在課下，村主先生又是一位可敬可親的長者，每一次去他的研究室約談，都能給飄泊異國的自己一份常常是久違了的溫暖。

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“Chapter 2 The Body That Hurts” has been orally presented in Chinese at “Move and Pass: Gender, Body and Space in Japan and Taiwan Literature” Graduate Workshop, Nagoya University, November, 2012.

(“煩擾的肉身——楊德昌電影裏的少女形象”「移動と通過——日台文学におけるジェンター、身体、空間」日台院生学術討論会、名古屋大学、2012年11月)

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(「通過儀礼の中で苦闘する青春——エドワード・ヤン映画における少年像」(星野幸代訳)、星野幸代ほか編『台湾映画表象の現在：可視と不可視のあいだ』、名古屋：アルム、2011)

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