Chapter 2

Remapping Taipei

The social totality can be sensed, as it were, from the outside, like a skin at which the Other somehow looks, but which we ourselves will never see. Or it can be tracked, like a crime, whose clues we accumulate, not knowing that we are ourselves parts and organs of this obscenely moving and stirring zoological monstrosity. But most often, in the modern itself, its vague and nascent concept begins to awaken with the knowledge function, very much like a book whose characters do not yet know that they are being read. So it is that the spectator alone knows that the lovers have only missed each other by five minutes, or that Iago has lied to the hero's uncle, giving him a view of the partners' motives that will never be corrected in this life, with appropriately disastrous consequences. These known misunderstandings bring into being a new kind of purely aesthetic emotion, which is not exactly pity and fear, but for which 'Irony' is an exhausted word whose original acceptation can only lend to conjecture. That it is purely aesthetic, however, means that this effect is conceivable only in conjunction with the work of art, cannot take place in real life, and has something to do with the omniscient author. These occurrences remain disjoined, unknown to each other, their interrelationship, causal or other, being a non-existent fact, event, or phenomenon, save when the gaze of the Author, rising over miniature roof-tops, puts them back together and declares them to be the material of story-telling, or Literature.

But the author must discover such ironies and not invent them – omniscience is like providence and not like creation. Nor does the chance seem to come often, or in every kind of social formation: the urban seems propitious to it, infinitely assembling the empty spaces of such meetings or missed encounters; while the modern (or the romantic) seems to supply the other vital ingredient, namely, the sense of authorial function or of the omniscient social witness. Perhaps it also serves to seal in the monads in some more airtight way, thus heightening the astonishing fact of their synchronicity. *Tom Jones* and indeed the Byzantine novel itself all made their living off the fact of sheer

coincidence (which generally involved the mysteries of birth and genealogy). But only the age of the modern is notoriously the moment in which the individual life is driven so deeply into its isolated 'point of view' that it is no longer capable of peeping out above the barrier. Modern relativistic plot, and its fundamental category, the unity of 'point of view', only come into being at the moment of late Victorian individualism, in which the monadic closure of the individual self becomes a desperate case, projecting just such an abstract representational form – a kind of relativistic synchronicity, in which a multiplicity of monads is imagined separately, and as it were from above, in but the most fitful relationship with one another – as its expression and its compensation alike.

The supreme plot-formation of this period then undertakes impossibly and paradoxically to reunite all these isolated monads, taking the older providential form mentioned above as its distant pattern. But we may be forgiven for thinking that its spirit is the inverse of that earlier one. There, unification of the multiple destinies and strands had the effect of reassuring its subjects of the ultimate unity of the social totality, and of God's design. Here, everything that is stunning about the accidents and peripeties that draw these isolated subjects together (crossing their paths, often, on the mode of showing their own individual ignorance of that momentary co-presence to space) would seem, by its very ephemerality, to have the effect of driving us all individually and privately back ever more deeply into our isolation, and of assuring us that the Providence-effect is little more than an aesthetic one: the bravura gesture of a Romantic or a modern, which corresponds to nothing in lived experience.

I think, for example, of a wonderful book by Ann Banfield on another narrative and representational peculiarity, so-called *style indirect libre*. Her very title, *Unspeakable Sentences*,[1] conveys the argument that such sentence structure can only be found in written and printed narrative and not in any speaker's mouth. So also with the Irony of synchronous monadic simultaneity: no human subject has ever known it as an existential experience (save in reading a book), nor has ever witnessed it as an observing eye. To attribute it to God is as grotesque as to imagine God following our innermost thoughts and muttering them out in His own distinctive form of *style indirect libre*. On the other hand, a return to our present context draws us up sharply and reminds us that the movie camera is also just such a non-human apparatus apt to produce effects and simulated 'experiences' that no one can possibly have had in real individual or existential human life. In fact, a filmic 'point of view' is less realistic than the other, written kind, since it shows us the viewer along with the viewed and has to include the viewing subject's body in the contents of the allegedly subjective experience, as if to mark the latter as seen by someone.

Such artificial constructs then pose the philosophical problem thereby implied: how to evaluate seemingly artificial or secondary 'experiences' generated prosthetically. They are evidently real, but at the same time inauthentic or untruthful insofar as they include the suggestion that the new experience-construct is somehow natural or 'the same' as ordinary or everyday viewing or experiencing. But this philosophical problem of film (which impossibly offers us, as Cavell has argued, the world viewed without ourselves present) is no doubt already implicit in the problematic of McLuhanism, and in the evaluation of a then equally new experience (writing, reading, printing) which is not natural either and which offers just such peculiar non-existential experience-constructs as the one Ann Banfield describes.

The phenomenon of the providential plot, therefore, and of the narrative of synchronous monadic simultaneity (henceforth known as SMS), is thus compounded by the intersection with film and its philosophical problems. And it is time to say that those compounds are in turn multiply compounded by the matter of modernism and postmodernism, which respecifies the SMS plot as a peculiarly modernist phenomenon and also, in the era of video, raises some questions as to the positioning of film itself as a medium. Historical and periodizing questions of that kind, however, require attention to the ambiguity of the term postmodernism itself, which must designate a whole historical period and its 'structure of feeling' in the preceding sentence, but which risks slipping inappreciably in this one into the rather different sense of an aesthetic style or set of formal properties. The slippage is significant, since it has been argued that much of the content of what has been called, in art, architecture or thought alike, postmodern is in reality modernist – indeed, that a pure postmodernism may well a priori be impossible as such, always involving the treatment of essentially modernist residues. The return, therefore, of what looks like a Western modernist narrative paradigm (the SMS) in the work of a Third-World film-maker (in the thick of postmodernity as a global tendency, if not a global cultural and social reality) can be expected to raise new questions, which do not include the relatively idle one, debated by critics and journalists at the film's first showing in its native Taiwan, as to whether the director had not sold out to essentially Westernizing methods or style.[2]

Indeed, I am tempted to say that this particular question disqualifies itself today, by standing revealed as a specifically modernist one. In the great debates in colonial countries over nativism and Westernization, modernization versus traditional ideals and values, fighting the imperialist with his own weapons and his own science or reviving an authentic national (and cultural-national) spirit, the West connotes the modern as such in a way that it can no longer do when the modernization process is tendentially far more complete and no longer particularly marked as Western (no one seems to have asked

the Ayatollah whether the use of audio-cassettes marked a corrupt surrender to Western technology and values).

I suspect, in any case, that the opposite of Westernization in such contemporary arguments in Taiwan cannot be China itself (even assuming that each individual speaker or participant had some relatively clear conception of Chinese aesthetic values and social realities), but that its empty place must rather be filled by the question about some putative Taiwanese identity that is itself as much a problem as it is a solution. In that sense, perhaps what is objected to in Edward Yang's film is not so much its failure to be Chinese or Taiwanese so much as the relative absence from it of any ostensible worry about the nature of Taiwanese identity, of any rehearsal of its very possibility. Indeed, it does seem to be the case that *Terrorizer* (a peculiar and pointed translation of *kong bu fen zi*, 1986) assimilates modernization, and the toll it takes on psychic subjects, more generally to urbanization than to Westernization as such. This lends its 'diagnosis' a kind of globality, if not a universality, which is evidently what has made Yang's critics uncomfortable – yet it cannot be said that Taipei is a modern and Western-style city, in the same way that one could affirm this of Shanghai, for example. Rather it is an example of some generally late-capitalist urbanization (which one hesitates, except to make the point, to call postmodern), of a now classic proliferation of the urban fabric that one finds everywhere in the First and Third Worlds alike. But if, as I am arguing here, it no longer makes much sense to talk about such cities in terms of an opposition between the Western and the traditional, then it would seem to follow that the opposite term is equally problematized, and that notions of national or ethnic identity (of the modernist type) are equally threatened by postmodernity. (What the television brings us in the way of civil war and nationality struggle – most notably from the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia – is something quite different from the above, something which we have every interest in identifying properly as the media phenomenon of neo-ethnicity, a simulacrum in which it is no longer a question of *belief*, in any religious sense, but very much a question of *practices*. Ethnicity is something you are condemned to; neo-ethnicity is something you decide to reaffirm about yourself.[3])

In any case, nothing is more distant from the stylistic features and formal problematic of the so-called Taiwanese *new wave* than the People's Republic of China (PRC) 'fifth generation' film-making that is contemporaneous with it. This last indeed seems marked by properly epic ambitions, in particular reaffirming its landscapes in an utterly different fashion from the ways in which Hong Kong or Taiwanese space is given, constructed, and experienced. A specific stylistic mannerism marks this particular ambition (about which this is not the moment to 'decide' whether it is authentic or manipulatory,

or to attempt to separate out from within it what belongs to propaganda and the staging of power, and what can be traced back to new and original modes of being-in-the-world). This mannerism is what may be termed a kind of aspiration to the bas-relief, the privileging of an epic mid-shot that associates film and frieze and scans a middle realm of landscape below the mountain peaks and eschewing the foreground plain, sweeping humans and horses along with it in an endless procession of moving figures without feet or heads, like a cinematographic scroll. This new technique of a mid-panoramic perspective becomes not merely a stylistic signature for the newer PRC cinema: it affirms its epic narrativity, by directing attention to a panning across the frieze, as in traditional painterly story-telling, at the same time as it defamiliarizes the conventional relationship of human bodies and their landscape contexts, allowing them to be grasped not independently (in old-fashioned ways), but rather in some new symbiotic relationship of volume to each other which remains to be determined. This epic shot is thus a symbolic act which promises some new Utopian combination of what used to be subject and object. Politically it claims to constitute some new way of appropriating tradition which is neither iconoclastic nor given over to Western individualism – with what truth one cannot say (save to register the claim as a rival form in competition with *nostalgia film* as the current dominant Western or postmodern form of telling history).

Epic of this kind must necessarily include the countryside (even when the shots are limited to city space). Its perceptual allegory, indeed, implies a reduction of the city to human praxis and politics, and reaffirms the immense agricultural hinterland of the peasant masses as its incontrovertible mid-perspective and wall in depth. Urban PRC film, however, seems to take a very different stylistic turn, as though its relations were not those that led into the Chinese land mass, but rather the discontinuous vertical openings onto the media and the Pacific Rim, that is to say, onto whatever is fantasized as the West. What one notes here, in a film like the 1987 *Desperation*, for example, directed by Zhou Xiaowen in the Xian studios, a thriller whose sheer physical violence takes second place to no equivalent Western product, is a peculiar process whereby the signs and identifying marks of all specific named cities have been systematically removed, in order thereby to foreground the generically urban. It would be too simple and functional to impute this particular stylistic motivation (whose implementation must, as one can imagine, be very complex indeed) to marketing strategies alone and an attention to a potentially international public; or rather, it would be crucial to affirm such base, external motivation, such determination by the extra-aesthetic, as realities in the object-world that ultimately, at some wider level of analysis, always rejoin the subject (and the formal and aesthetic) in unexpected internal ways. In this case, surely, the

problems of the market in situations of dependency always somehow rejoin the logic of the collective imaginary and the positioning of that Other to whom cultural and aesthetic production is then also implicitly addressed.

Here what seems initially clear is that the marks of the socio-economic system must be removed: the consumer of entertainment in the overseas communities must not be distracted by politics, that is to say, by the reminders of a socialist economy in the PRC. The high-tech espresso bars and bullet trains of *Desperation* thus dutifully construct a world of contemporary industrial production and consumption beyond all ideological struggle. Meanwhile, by the same token, the identifying marks of the mainland cities must also be excised, since few viewers of this product will be likely to imagine that Xian, say, or Tientsin are located somewhere in the 'free world'; they must therefore not be allowed to ask themselves such questions, or to begin to identify the city in question in the first place.

It is interesting to compare such neutralization and de-identification procedures – a kind of representational laundering of ideologically marked contents – with those I have elsewhere[4] described at work in Western (or, perhaps even more specifically, in US) postmodern films in which, however, it is not the locale but rather the time period which is generalized. In *The Grifters*, for example, a Stephen Frears movie version of Jim Thompson's novel about the 1950s, pains have been taken to remove the markers of 1991–contemporaneity from the Los Angeles–San Diego–Phoenix axis in which the story is played out. Leaving aside all the other problems involved in transferring Thompson's plot to the Reagan-Bush era, the impulse can surely also be identified as the (not altogether successful) attempt to create a time-free indeterminate nostalgia zone for the thriller narrative in which unpleasant reminders of contemporary social – and thereby political – issues and contradictions have been removed.[5] Thus, a postmodern aesthetic – which at its most vibrant aims at the ideal or Platonic reconstruction of some eternal 30s or 40s art-deco Miami in a film noir beyond historical time itself (as in my earlier example of Kazden's *Body Heat*) – can be socially retraced to its class and ideological roots in a form of collective cultural repression (in the literal sense of an exclusion from consciousness of painful or disturbing material); and it can in this sense be juxtaposed with a specifically Second-World form of aesthetic repression (removing the marks of socialism as a system).

Both are in any case relatively distinct from the packaging of specifically Third-World international or festival films in national, cultural and one is tempted to say, tourist-friendly ways, in which it is the fact of a brand-new locale and unprecedented national provenance that is stressed and marketed. As Peter Wollen has observed, what are henceforth termed 'new waves' are fresh entries of this kind into the

international market. I won't belabor at any great length the interesting theoretical issue of whether Taiwan is to be counted as a Third-World country: if you think the label means Southern-Tier poverty, then it is clearly inappropriate, if not worse; but if it merely affirms something as structural and descriptive as the non-adherence to what is left of the socialist bloc, coupled with the constitutive distance from one of the three great capital centers of the 'new world order' (Japan, Europe, the USA), then it may be less misleading.

In any case, the Taiwanese 'new wave' has tended to mark its images as specific to the island, in ways quite distinct from the PRC evocation of landscape. The city is also focused differently here (and *Terrorizer* will be an index of its richness and possibilities), for the obvious reasons that Taipei does not possess the profile or the historical resonance and associations of the great traditional mainland cities, nor is it that all-encompassing closed urban space of a virtual city-state like Hong Kong. Still its dominance has effectively transformed the natural countryside into a kind of extended suburban space, one in which the survival of more traditional agricultural villages is nonetheless sublated and somehow modified by their linked association on an intricate web and map of electric trains that lead into the capital. The image of these small suburban trains indeed has in the camerawork of Hou Hsaio-hsien's films become a virtual new wave logo, particularly in his beautiful *Dust in the Wind* (1986), in which the very shot of the empty station and the sound of the train in the distance end up articulating the narrative and standing as signs or shorthand for mutations in the Event. The commuter train here includes the landscape and is open to it, in that utterly unlike the high-speed projectiles that propel the narrative forward in *Desperation* (or in such precursors as Kurosawa's 1962 *High and Low*). The palpable interweavings of the social (no longer, in the late capitalist world system, characterizable as provincial), which are both expressed and signified by this system of recurrent imagery and then peculiarly overdetermined by such intertextuality as the casting of Hou Hsaio-hsien himself as the protagonist in Edward Yang's *Taipei Story* (1985); along with the material itself, which with the political opening of liberalization begins to evolve towards such ambitious historical chronicles as Hou's *City of Sadness* (1989) and Edward Yang's *A Brighter Summer Day* (1991) – all this makes of Taiwanese new wave films a kind of linked cycle more satisfying for the viewer than any national cinema I know (save perhaps the French productions of the 20s and 30s).

From this cycle, *Terrorizer* stands out starkly as uncharacteristic. Sharing none of the potential sentimentalism of the nativist films, its visual elegance has frequently been characterized as cold, as one would characterize a glassy surface that repels identification. Yet *Taipei Story* combined fashion-plate visuality with pathos, and its

hero – played, as I have said, by Hou Hsaio-hsien – was a non-intellectual, fumbling his way, in the manner of American populism, through a series of odd jobs and reversals of fortune. What marks off *Terrorizer* is not even the class status of its characters, who are now, as we shall see, professionals and lumpens, but rather the now archaic modernity of its theme: art versus life, the novel and reality, mimesis and irony. The co-protagonist indeed is a writer with a writer's block (Chou Yufen), who is freed up by an anonymous phone call denouncing her husband's adulterous affairs, at which point she sits down to write a prize-winning novella about this situation (which has no basis in fact), leaving him in the process. Under other circumstances, the situation whereby the possibility of attributing guilt to the husband suddenly grants independence to the wife would offer interesting material for interpretation. But Chou Yufen's story is only one of the film's four distinct plot strands, the alternation of which, I would argue, leaves no distance for reflection of this kind, for interpretive rumination, particularly of this motivational-psychoanalytic type. What does stand out, rather, is the old-fashioned reflexivity of the theme, the residual modernism of the now familiar mystery of the imitation of art by life and the correspondence of the novel to the aleatory realities of the real world outside. The embodiment of the theme around the writing of literature and the pathos of the precarious role of the literary 'creator' strikes a regressive note within a film of this decidedly contemporary stamp (none of the chronological laundering and neutralization of nostalgia film here), produced in the age of the simulacrum and of the dominance of technological media (in Taiwan, as elsewhere, the aesthetically ambitious now want to become great film-makers rather than great novelists). This anachronism of Literature and its once interesting reflexive paradoxes – foregrounded and as it were quoted here, in the midst of the other plot lines we shall be examining in a moment – is what makes *Terrorizer* relatively conspicuous within contemporary Third-World production, where there are plenty of intellectuals and even writers, but perhaps somewhat less 'modernism' in this Western sense.

André Gide's *Counterfeiters* (1925) is the very prototype of this older classic modernist text, whose protagonist, Edouard, keeps a journal within the novel about the novel – called 'The Counterfeiters' – which he is writing but will perhaps never finish (unlike Gide, who was then able to publish, under separate cover, the journal he himself also kept while writing and actually finishing his own novel of the same name). Edward Yang does not seem to have made a separate film about the making of *Terrorizer* (although Godard did so, after completing his film *Passion*, as we shall see in a subsequent chapter). At any rate, the archetypal scene in Gide's intricate novel (or *roman*, a term he reserved for a form that marked the confluence of a number of stories, plot lines, or *récits*, and used only once in his own work,

for this book) is the moment in which, during a discussion of the novelist's theories about the ways in which contemporary intellectuals counterfeit social and spiritual values, another character flings a 'real' counterfeit coin upon the table, suggesting that the referent itself might interest him as well. But theories about counterfeiting are more interesting to this protagonist than the reality (which belongs in fact to another of the novel's multiple plot strands), and Edouard is thus himself ironically dispatched along with the other hapless characters about whom he has himself ironized. More significantly, in a move that has traditionally seemed canonical for high modernism generally, the very theme of counterfeit value is thereby itself ironized and left to float in mid-air and mid-reference, passing slowly in all its optionality from the status of a social comment or critique into that of sheer aesthetic decoration and back again.

One's sense is that modernist constructs of this kind cannot be filmed. It is a proposition that could be tested against three very different candidates. Jean Renoir's *La Règle du jeu* (1939), for example, has its author inside it as well (the director playing the meddling and matchmaking – 'authorial' – character of Octave), along with multiple plot lines and artificial mechanisms 'en abysme'. The social content on which Renoir's bravura formal operation is performed is certainly very different from Gide's, turning as it does on an aristocracy of blood, culture and merit, and posing questions about heroism and about authentic love. But if this reflexive form constitutively includes a rift between form and content, the shift in period and social class, or in ideological preoccupation, should not make any fundamental difference. More relevant, perhaps, is the glacial distance of *La Règle du jeu* from even those characters about which it seems to be sentimentalizing – a gulf seemingly too broad to be spanned by Gidean (or indeed Jamesean) irony, at least in a situation in which the terms are of two distinct modes of being (since the familiar sentimental complacent relationship of viewer to character is staged by way of the visual image; whereas the judgment takes place somewhere else, in a non-visual, non-filmic mind). Quite distinct from this is the interpenetration of empathy and otherness enabled and indeed encouraged by narrative language in the point-of-view ironies of high literary modernism.

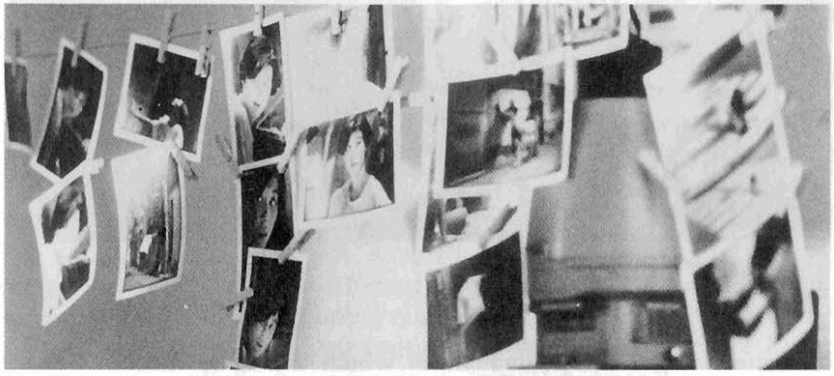
Meanwhile, Nabokov's coy and mannered version of these games does not work on film either: Fassbinder's version of *Despair* (1979), whatever its other considerable merits, is absurdly – perhaps even pointedly – unfaithful to the novel in this respect, since in the reading we are persuaded of a virtual physical identity between the narrator and his double which is instantly dispelled by the latter's first appearance on screen. The very different reflexivity of Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), however, in which the place of the novelist and language is taken by the apparatus itself, yields a stream

La Règle du jeu

of visual images the equivalent of which would surely not be the introspective complacencies of a Gide, but rather the *Sachlichkeit* of a Dos Passos or a Döblin (experimental objectivities whose fit with the medium of language time has itself rendered questionable).

We must conclude, then, that the media sharply diverge in their capacity for what, to use a properly Gidean term, we may call complicity with the fictional characters themselves; and that, whatever fascination and self-identification, unconscious mimesis, mirror-stage jubilation by proxy, we are capable of developing in the presence of the images of movie actors, it can have little enough to do with the games high modernist writers played with the expanding and contracting distance available within the reading of the fictional sentence.

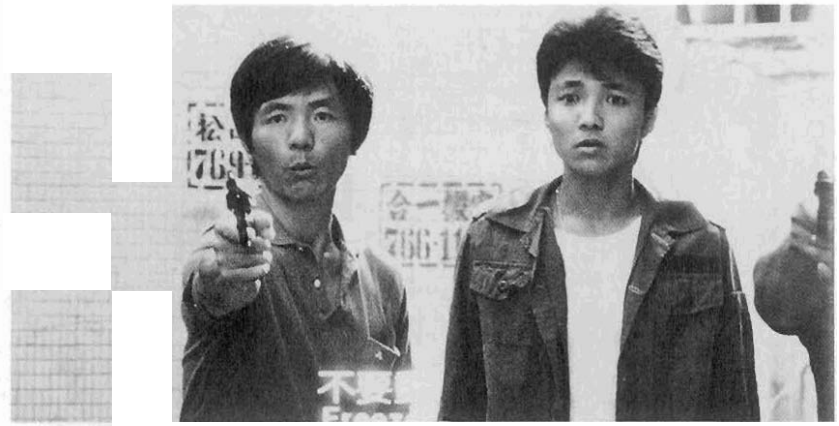
It is something that can be said the other way round, in terms of judgment rather than of empathy, and shown by means of a famous chapter in *The Counterfeiters* (Part II, chapter vii), in which an ostentatiously omniscient narrator now, after the fashion of the eighteenth-century novel, pretends to pass his fictional characters in review and to acknowledge their weaknesses and defects: 'Edouard annoyed me more than once, and even made me indignant. ... Lady Griffith quite impressed me in the beginning, but I quickly realized the mistake I was making. ... Vincent interested me more ...' and so on. One never quite believed it for a moment; yet it may seem in retrospect that Gide succeeded in fooling us with this ruse, and in encouraging a habit of



Terrorizer

judgment in the reader by virtue of annoying us with his own. Such judgment tends to ratify a certain moral or personal commitment to these characters on the reader's part. 'Liking' them is certainly not the word for it (although Gide takes pains to make sure we dislike some of them); but some minimal willingness to compare the temperatures within this or that point of view, this or that subjectivity, is involved.

Nothing of the sort in *Terrorizer*, whose characters are all signally lacking in any of the secret merits that might encourage our complicity. Nor are they, however, antipathetic, something that might be easier to achieve but which Yang does not really manage even for the Eurasian girl (who on some accounts seems to have been for him the eponymous villain of the piece). At least in my opinion, they are neither likeable nor dramatically evil, but rather mildly, and secretly, repulsive. The self-pity of the protagonist, Li Li-chung,, the doctor (and husband of the writer already mentioned) is not enhanced by his betrayal of a colleague (let alone his massive obtuseness about his wife's unhappiness). Chou Yufen herself, meanwhile, is so narcissistically unhappy (and so complacent in her subsequent moment of happiness and triumph) as to make it very easy to separate out any

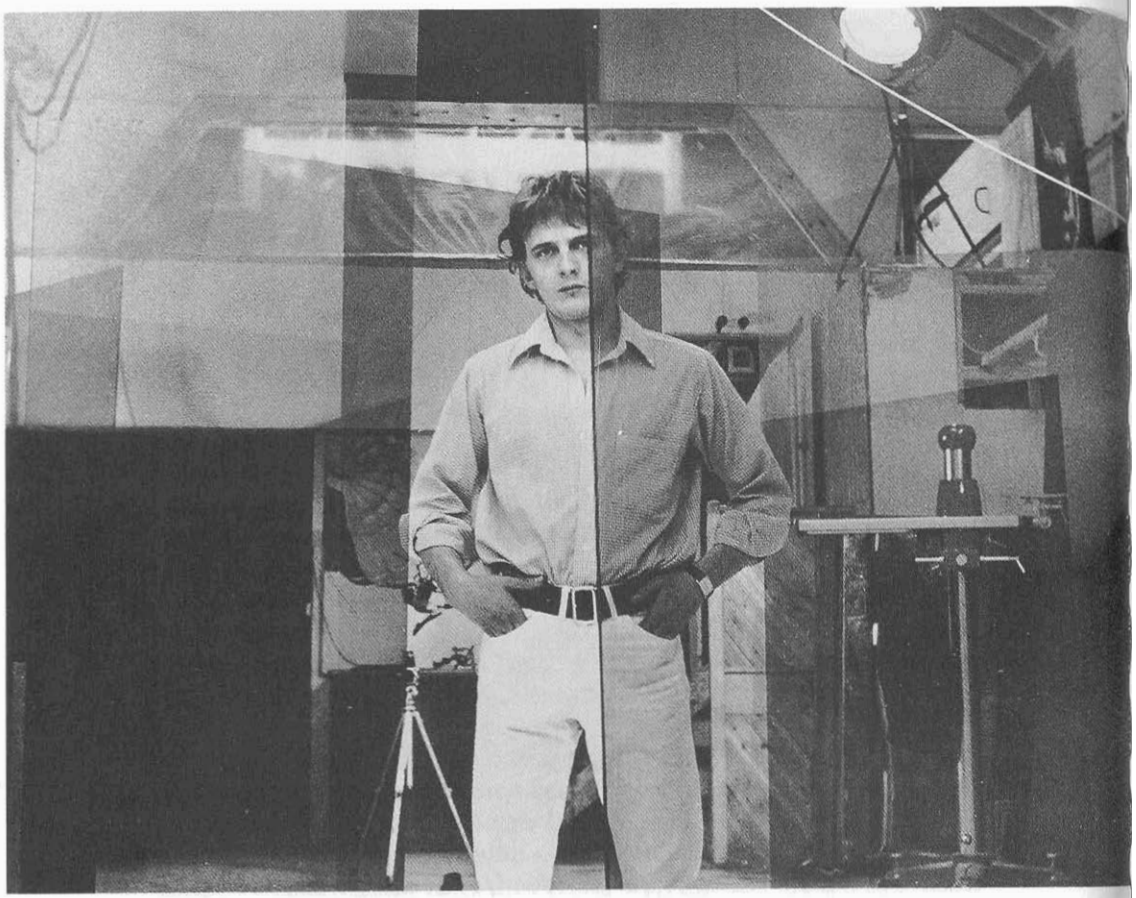


Terrorizer

feelings one may have about her victimization as a woman from one's judgment of her own personality as such. Nor do the protagonists of the other plot strands fare much better. The young photographer with whom the film opens (paparazzo-like, he is trying to get some action shots of a shoot-out between drug dealers and the police) is surely as self-centered an idle rich youth as one would like, not quite as repulsive as the hero of *Blow-Up*, but only because he doesn't have to make a living out of it in the first place. Meanwhile his immediate target (the fleeing Eurasian girl, nicknamed the White Chick, and initially mixed up with the criminal elements in question) offers yet another version of self-centered ego-indulgence and narcissistic indifference to the outside world, even leaving aside her criminal nastiness and the well-nigh impersonal ferocity with which she fights for her existence in a world of rich and stupid, corrupt johns and gulls. Her mother, floating alcoholically in her memories of the 1950s night life among American servicemen, is not much better in her own way; and the bureaucrats are appropriately repellent and the underworld flora and fauna unromantic and bestially uninteresting. To say that the policeman (the doctor's childhood friend) comes off best is only to register the fact that we learn least about him, and that, of all the things people do in this movie, being tired out, lying in a hot tub, doing some drinking, and listening to a 'younger brother's' complaints or boasts, are the least calculated to arouse antipathy.

To be sure, at the end of the chapter mentioned above, Gide also tosses all his characters in the trash-can:

> 'If ever I find myself inventing another story, I will only allow into it tempered characters, whom life makes sharper, rather than blunting their edge. Laura, Douviers, La Pérouse, Azais ... what am I doing with people like this?'



Blow-Up

Yet it is the very standard of judgment that allows Gide to say so which is lacking in Edward Yang's film, for reasons historical and social, rather than cultural or personal, reasons ultimately rooted in the differences between the modern period and our own.

In that separation of form and content I have already evoked, Gide's 'novel' also formally exploits and organizes a social and personal content given in advance and somehow contingent, dependent on the vicissitudes of the writer's own life and background. Clearly enough, all the varied forms of a high modernist abstraction must in one way or another confront this particular contingent seam, which is necessary for some minimal content in the first place (the last sparse image residue of the Mallarmean vase or curtains blowing). It is an open question whether authenticity consists in acknowledging such contingency and allowing it to persist within the work as such, like a foreign body, or in attempting a symbolic recuperation whereby

at some higher level it again becomes 'motivated' (in all the Russian Formalist senses) and thus meaningful or post-contingent. In the event Gide does both, attempting to endow his homosexuality with symbolic meaning, while the fact of his social background in French Protestantism is mainly taken as a given and a contingent starting-point. In *The Counterfeiters*, for example, with its multivocal and collective formal vocation, Gide is obliged to draw on the French Protestant background far more extensively than in the individual *récits*, in which the problem of the individual destiny and the individual choice fairly well ensures a 'motivation' of the initial situation in terms of this or that meaning (whether 'hedonistic', as in *L'Immoraliste*, or 'ascetic', as in *La Porte étroite*). In retrospect, the Gide of *The Counterfeiters* may instructively be reread as an ethnic novelist, for whom 'French Protestantism', uniquely in French society, has something of the enclave and subcultural dynamics we associate with ethnicity in the United States. The residues of a relatively prim and pietistic moralizing in the judgments of the omniscient narrator are then overdetermined by this particular social content: in some deeper ideological sense, Gide remains a Christian novelist, whose attention is above all focused on matters of character (in the moral sense of what can manifest rectitude and steadfastness, or on the other hand weakness and irresolution). From Weber all the way down to David Riesman's 'inner-direction', then, these matters of characterology are social in their causes as well as in their effects. If they reinforce the emergent ethos of capitalism or later on the spirit of the entrepreneurial moment, such moralizing categories also remain intimately bound up with a particular stage of social development, from which their judgments cannot be separated.

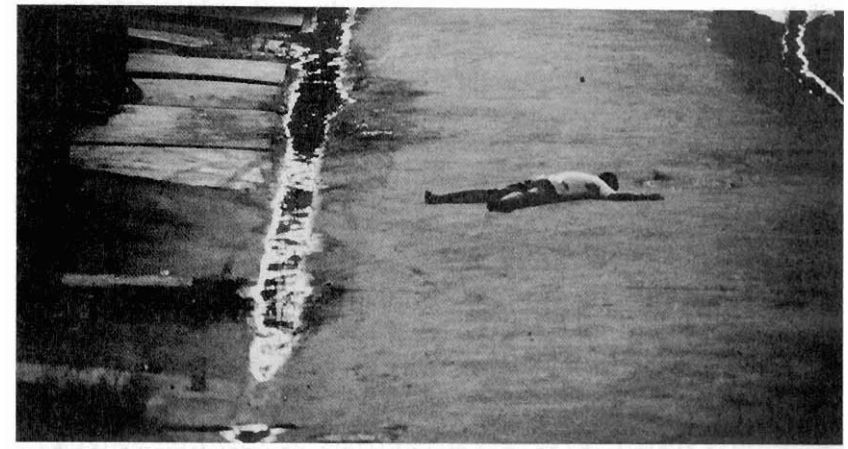
This is clearest for categories of evil or of moral weakness and corruption. Gide can still produce a diagnosis of the social condition

Terrorizer

and identify forces for social evil: in the irresponsible and corrupt Cocteau-figure of Edouard's rival novelist Passavant, and even more starkly in those genuine nihilists for whom Passavant is a kind of façade and who operate by way of genuine crime ('real' counterfeiting) and an atmosphere not unlike the kind of anarchism and terrorism indicated by Conrad in works like *The Secret Agent*. But this Manichaean and apocalyptic view of social disintegration is much less convincing in the radical Gide than in conservative and right-wing authors. Moral weakness, susceptibility to evil influences, corruptibility, the failure of nerve or the sapping of moral fibre – these judgments are here more plausible, but seem applicable to almost everyone, from the corrupt grande bourgeoisie on the side of social order all the way to the various prototypes of youth. Edouard's second nephew Olivier is thus momentarily seduced by Passavant, while the latter's older brother Vincent is irredeemably corrupted by the fashionable novelist and his partner Lady Griffith, whom Vincent murders in a tropical drama of madness and self-destruction which we only glimpse fitfully between the lines.

It is enough to juxtapose these figures with the characters of *Terrorizer* to see that in postmodern times, in the international urban society of late capitalism, such moral judgments are irrelevant or at least inoperative (to use a once fashionable corporate word). Gidean moralism, and the monitory portraits of evil and corruption it enables, can have little to do with the maimed figures of the Taiwanese film, if only because it presupposes what the various poststructuralisms most often call the 'centered subject', the old inner-directed ego of the modern period. In a postmodern universe, after the so-called 'death of the subject', or at least after the end of the 'ideology of the subject' as such, it follows that nobody is evil exactly any longer or at least that evil is no longer the word for it. In this film, the Eurasian girl and her pimp are dangerous and violent (we witness, for example, the – not unjustified – murder of one of her clients), but given the context of urban capitalism, they are surely not much worse than anybody else. Indeed, I would argue that within the prodigious expansion of the concept of rationality in our contemporary post-natural society (taking rationality in the Habermasian sense of what you can understand or argue for), the traditional opposite numbers of this concept – the irrational, madness, and even evil itself – have become increasingly implausible or unfunctional. The occult revival, the taste for demonology, strike one as a desperate or nostalgic attempt to pump life back into these moral conceptions, which remain as quaint and inappropriate in the post-contemporary period as Victorian bustles at a disco.

But already in *The Counterfeiters* crime and violence had begun to secure a somewhat different narrative function from that of moralizing judgments. In a system of parallel narrative strands, indeed,



Terrorizer

violence and crime tend to mark an 'ultimately determining instance' in which the various plots come together in an explosive climax. But this is narrative rather than ontological logic, so to speak, and bears less on the ultimate meaning and interpretation of the events in question than on their visibility and their eruption as symptoms to be read. So the police investigation of counterfeiting and vice ('crimes roses') continues throughout the surface unfolding of the final sections of the novel, but the conspiracy finds its surface inscription in the related schoolboy prank in which the student Boris shoots himself in front of his class and under his grandfather's eyes. In *Terrorizer*, meanwhile, the criminal incident – the shoot-out – stands at the starting-point of the intrigue, as what accidentally links a group of destinies together – in particular, it is the occasion that lets the young photographer glimpse the Eurasian girl (whom he photographs). In film, however, crosscutting can just as plausibly connect these plot strands with others, merely contiguous, with which they have not yet concretely intersected. Thus the doctor drives to work through traffic which contains both the police vans going the other way and the ambulance that carries the wounded girl to treatment: it is a connection the camera makes for us long before the effects show up in the doctor's own life. Here at any rate violence has come to be associated with narrative rather than with ethical categories, and is a matter of closure or of the interrelationship of strands and episodes rather than of judgment and evaluation.

We have not yet, however, identified the positive term in Gide's moralism, a term which knows an equally instructive evolution and displacement in the postmodern period. This positive term surely has to do with youth, equally an emphasis in *Terrorizer*, although its omnipresence as a theme in media culture means that it need no

longer be a marked term. The accompanying ethical conceptions of character and characterological weakness (as well as Gide's own characteristic staging of pederasty as a pedagogical matter) make it clear that it is the residual Goethean value of *Bildung* or 'formation' which is here foregrounded, in a novel whose polyphony excludes the older *Bildungsroman* form as such. It is in the light of the residual concerns of *Bildung* alone that the Gidean attention to weakness and corrupting influences can be properly understood. The juxtaposition with *Terrorizer*, however, makes it clear that, despite the omnipresence of the category of the generation here as everywhere else in postmodern global urban culture, categories of *Bildung* or pedagogy, ideals of character formation, are now peculiarly inappropriate. Education manuals of the type of the *Cortegiano* or the *Mirror for Princes* might well be imagined for the world system of late capitalism, but they would surely bear little resemblance to the traditional models. Meanwhile, the very notion of reinventing a form of Goethean *Bildung* consistent with the age of Andy Warhol or MTV is problematical, to say the least. Our *Wilhelm Meister* is called *Falsche Bewegung*; and current debates about pedagogy and the humanities in the superstate give some idea, by way of their very aimlessness and the utter vacuousness of any intellectual content, of the difficulties involved in papering over 'the reification of consciousness in late capitalism', and indeed in reconciling the ravages left by the triumph of 'cynical reason' and commercial media or corporate culture with any of the canonical or traditional moral and educational paradigms.

What has come to replace this kind of characterological focus is instead, as *Terrorizer* shows, a displacement from the ethical and the pedagogical-formative towards the psychological as allegory or symptom of the mutilation of individual subjects by the system itself. It is an allegory that finds its most intense embodiment in the situations in this film of women, whose centrality can be measured against their relatively secondary position in Gide's *Counterfeiters*. There, Laura and Lady Griffith clearly mark the extremes of passive victimization and manipulative domination, respectively; and in retrospect Gide's sense of the crippling effects of bourgeois marriage is as vivid and as critical as any of his more dramatic protests in the name of youth (which were in any case also accompanied by a denunciation of the bourgeois family). But, as we shall see in more detail below, in *Terrorizer* it is the women's destinies – the situations of emprisonment of Chou Yufen and the Eurasian girl – which are paradigmatic, and that of the hapless Li Li-chung which is merely reactive. It is a historical difference or modification which can perhaps best be characterized by a shift in the object of the sociocultural critique. In both periods, that of the first classical feminism around World War I, of social democracy and the suffragette movement, of Shaw and Virginia Woolf, as well as that of the 'second

wave' of feminism from the late 60s onwards, attention to specific forms of injustice or oppression is articulated with a larger project of social change. But in the first period, which was still Gide's, it is in terms of a specifically bourgeois culture of the family and of middle-class Victorian hypocrisy and puritanism that both feminism and socialism are staged. In our own postmodern world there is no longer a bourgeois or class-specific culture to be indicted, but rather a system-specific phenomenon: the various forms which reification and commodification and the corporate standardizations of media society imprint on human subjectivity and existential experience. This is the sense in which *Terrorizer*'s characters – and most particularly the film's women characters – dramatize the maiming of the subject in late capitalism, or, in terms of the language of the centered subject referred to earlier, indict something like the failure of the subject under the new system to constitute itself in the first place.

Yet all this merely characterizes the variable content organized by a form about which one wants principally to know how it will then itself be historically modified by modifications in the social raw material which is its enabling pretext. For the Gidean project – the novel as a multiplicity of plot strands – presumably survives and persists in *Terrorizer*, with this further difference (of degree, rather than of kind): namely, that the urban framework is here intensified and becomes something like the primary message of the narrative form itself. Yet in its earliest forms (as in the Byzantine novel), the providential plot, based on the coincidental interweaving of multiple destinies, was not particularly urban in its spatial requirements. The following authorial complaint by Manzoni is indeed a standard trope of the form well up to the end of the nineteenth century:

> More than once I have seen a nice, bright little boy – somewhat too bright, to tell the truth, but showing every sign of intending to turn out a good citizen – doing his best, as evening falls, to round up his little herd of guinea-pigs, which have been running free all day in the garden. He would like to get them all trotting into the pen together; but that's hopeless. One breaks away to the right, and while the small swineherd runs after him to chase him back with the others, another one – or two, or three – dash off to the left – or all over the place. After a little impatience he adapts himself to their methods, and begins by pushing inside those who happen to be nearest to the pen, and then goes to fetch the others, singly, or two or three at a time, as best he can. We have to play much the same game with our characters. We managed to get Lucia under cover, and ran off after Don Rodrigo; and now we must drop him and catch up with Renzo, who is right out of sight.[6]

If the urban comes to predominate, it is because the inns and high roads in which the protagonists of the older novel met by accident and rectified their mistaken identities necessarily required such characters to be travellers with destinies of a specific type – exiles, runaways, pursued or pursuer – so that the plot itself is thereby always moulded according to a distinct sub-genre or narrative type. The city frees up all this: its chance meetings and coincidence allow for a far greater variety of character-destinies, and thereby a web of relationships that can be spread out and unfolded in a dazzling array of distinct ideological effects. Gide's novel – surely one of the great bravura performances of all narrative literature, the first 150 pages of which can only be compared, for the breathless momentum with which it catches and drops its characters along the way and sets its stage, with the analogous opening gambits of *Heart of Midlothian* or *Lord Jim* – must properly be assigned to a specific historical trans-European generic context I am tempted to identify (anachronistically) as the Edwardian SMS or novel of synchronous monadic simultaneity. (It is instructive, besides its strong form in books like Forster's *Howards End*, to add in Virginia Woolf on the one hand and *Ulysses* on the other, both of which look different when they are read as work in a pre-existing formal project, namely, that of uniting the classical closed plot with the spatial multiplicity of the new industrial city.)

Gide's novel outtrumps these in its manipulation of representational levels. The *mises en abysme* of the related novels enumerated above necessarily had to pass through the needle's eye of gossip or the orally transmitted anecdote, the eavesdropping omniscience of third parties and the pathos of missed encounters that might have changed everything. Gide's narrative now includes the journal as an inner-worldly object which, opened up and read by our initial hero, Bernard (something of a false start, this young man, who solves his problems and ceases to interest the narrator), now allows the past to enter like a fourth dimension within an absolute unity of time, from which the ineptitude of the psychological flashback is rigorously excluded for formal and aesthetic reasons. I would be willing to argue that we do not like to shift textual levels, and are most reluctant to shift reading gears in order to scan interpolated texts and lengthy quotations inserted like a foreign body into unrelated discourse. How Gide's interpolation, which spans three chapters and some fifty pages, negotiates this particular reef is then a crucial issue, although the remarkable timing with which Gide deploys it and knows when to break it off is as much a matter of tact as anything else. That longer reading was, however, prepared by a briefer rereading of his own journal by Edouard himself, on the boat-train returning to Paris. That his own voice – that of a major, if not the principal, protagonist – prolongs the second installment of the journal read by Bernard is surely not without its relationship to the smoothness of the transition,

the relatively painless immersion in the newer textual level. Emerging from it, however, is the matter of the great narrative peripeties: guilty interruptions, eavesdropping behind doors followed by dramatic entries – the stuff of melodrama which can here exceptionally be reinvented, in a non-melodramatic way, on the occasion of multi-levelled textual reflexivity. Meanwhile, once the deeper conspiratorial network is laid in place that unites all these destinies without the full knowledge of any single one of them, the more conventional chance meetings, accounts of yet further chance meetings, forecasts, projected trajectories through the city that are bound to cross other pathways we already know of, along with the finding of abandoned notes and the overhearing of secret instructions – all these well-worn devices now serve to lift and rotate the gleaming polyhedron of the new form before our eyes in ways that confirm it as a unified object and exhibit the unforeseeable glitter of its unexpected facets.

It will have thereby become clear that however film expects to achieve analogous effects, it cannot do so simply by finding and matching simple filmic equivalents to these textual ones of reading and its inner analogues. The reason has already been indicated in passing, and it is not a consequence of the deficiencies of film as a medium but rather of its superiority to narrative language in any number of representational ways. Winner loses: what makes up the plenitude of the filmic image at any instant in its narrative trajectory also secures in advance, without any supplementary work, the sheer fact of transition. The novel, and language itself – the fundamental property of which is lack and a deployment of essentially absent objects – had to do a great deal of energetic footwork to crosswire its plots in a plausible yet properly unexpected manner. Mesmerized by the shift to a new series of filmic images, no less full and absorbing than the preceding ones, the viewer of film is only feebly tempted to raise the ever fainter question of the motivation for such transitions. Difference here in the visual and in film only too effortlessly relates: but form has to be felt as the solution to an intractable form-problem. Indeed, Eisenstein's theory and practice of montage can be instructively estranged and reread, not as a solution to certain already existing problems of filmic narration, but as a stubborn attempt to produce the problems as such in all their aesthetic and ontological severity – problems for which his own conception of montage was then only too ready and willing to provide a henceforth satisfying 'solution'.

Terrorizer achieves, or reinvents, something of this by way of unique temporal overlaps that reach their climax at the end of the film, like vibrations separated from each other in time that gradually become simultaneous. The overlaps are then fastened together, one does not want to say with Lacanian tacking nails exactly, but by recurrent leitmotifs for which this term, redolent of Wagner or Thomas Mann, is also a little too modernist-traditional; let's call these,

themselves remain ignorant) and then trumping it with the auto-reflexivity characteristic of the modernist period as one of its obsessive thematic and formal mannerisms. For the Eurasian girl in her literal confinement (the mother locks her in when she goes out at night to work) begins to make phone calls with greater and greater abandon, picking names out of the phone book and inventing nasty stories to tell the unknown people who pick up on the other end. Presumably, for Edward Yang, this media equivalent of the poison-pen letter (dear to the classical English detective story and a kind of symbol of what most unerringly undermines the calm of tribal or village social relations) entitles her to the eponymous characterization more strongly than anything associated with garden-variety prostitution or murder. It marks a peculiar intensity of *ressentiment* which is surely not unrelated to her socially marginal status and to the exclusion of half-breeds from traditional Chinese society (as from most other traditional societies). In the present context, however, it is just as significant that the genes mark the presence of American servicemen and the American empire in this hitherto Japanese colony, only recently recolonized by the mainland KMT. That side of colonization has been extensively dramatized by Hou Hsaio-hsien, particularly in *A City of Sadness*, while the US's residual effects have been more openly registered in Edward Yang's work, particularly in the recent, and significantly titled (after Elvis), *A Brighter Summer Day*.

One of these venomous, but anonymous, fictional shafts strikes the writer Chou Yufen, who thinks she has learned about her husband's adulteries, and feels herself thereby all the more empowered to go about her own independent life. Indeed, as in a peculiarly reversible toxin, this one also liberates her from her writer's block and sets her working again. Finally, the interrupted phone call had advised her, for further information, to visit an address which is none other than the murder apartment. Here, as we know, the photographer has now taken up abode, and here the White Chick will also slowly make her way, since she still has the key and is feverish and desperate after the catastrophic outcome of her attempt at free-lance prostitution (undertaken when her leg is healed and she can finally escape her mother's jail sentence).

What kicks these interesting coincidences up another level into a more reflexive kind of story-telling discourse – as I have already indicated, their equivalents can be traced all the way back to the Greek novel, via *Tom Jones* and any number of other classical adventure or picaresque texts – is obviously the redoubling of the narrative in written form, *en abysme*, as my references to Gide will already have begun to foretell. The reader will indeed scarcely be surprised to learn that the story Chou Yufen has finally been freed to write is a kind of modified alternate world in which her husband has an affair

with someone not terribly unlike the White Chick herself, and in which a wife, who is a writer, is thereby freed to write another story, one which in real life wins her a prize and catapults her onto the cultural page of the major newspapers, not to speak of the television screen. But this puts a very different face on narrative coincidence, which it now refashions, as from over a great distance, into patterns and shapes as abstract as the traces of mound-builders' culture seen from a satellite or the Himalayas seen from the moon. From an intention to reunite and reassemble, which can at best be attributed to Providence (when such a concept is available), the narrative intersections become reformed into demiurgic games played by the aesthetic great Other of Romantic Irony (aesthetics now here, for the moderns as well as the Romantics, coming to replace fate, chance, and ethics). Equally clearly, however, this quintessentially modernist turn and flavor is all the more identifiable as such because it brings into the postmodern context an old-fashioned note, which can be charming or jarring indifferently, depending on whether the ambitions of modern form bring some relief from postmodern frivolity, or on the other hand, whether the implacable ideological stress of the modern on the aestheticality of life and on the implicit but inescapable role of the individual genius are now felt by us to be relatively intolerable. (Later on, however, I will show that yet a third reading or interpretation of *Terrorizer* is conceivable, which can be called on to dispel the modernist appearance in its turn and reaffirm the film's post-contemporaneous relevance, if not exactly its postmodernity.)

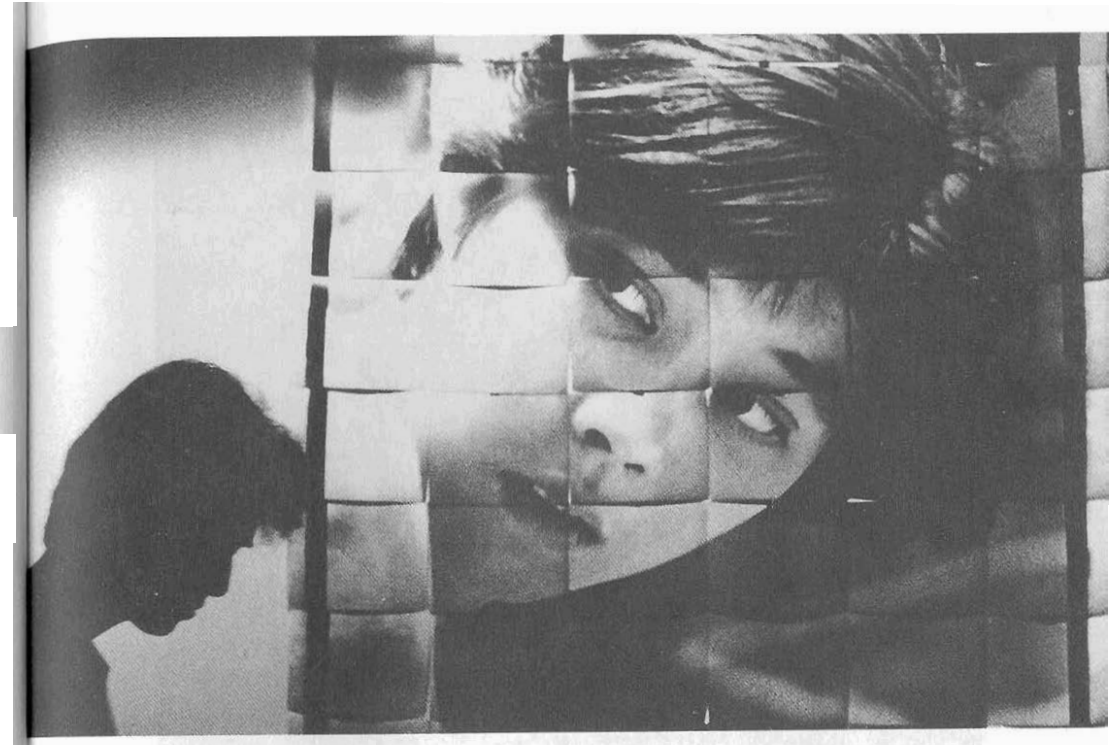
Even if for a moment we retain the modernist framework that Chou Yufen's novella establishes, it should be added that its transmission by way of the medium of film seriously problematizes the modernist effects that should accompany it, or at the very least renders them optional in what we will later on see to be a postmodern way. Nothing is more alien to this particular film, indeed, than the mystical-modernist overtones of the theme of inspiration from without, as when, in Cocteau's film of the same name, Orpheus copies down his poetry from enigmatic messages transmitted over the car radio like Resistance code broadcasts ('les carottes sont cuites, trois fois!') Nor is the book itself (of which, in its previous incarnation, we have only heard a few vapid samples of nature lyricism) anything like an *I Ching*, which, as in Dick's *Man in the High Castle*, one consults for forecasts of individual and collective history alike. For one thing it is not clear who in the film has actually read this prize-winning production: the photographer and the girlfriend (with whom he is eventually reunited) hear about it on television and then read a summary in the newspaper. As for her most important reader (or so one would have thought), the husband doesn't read in the first place – something of an index to his general mentality, as the following snatch of dialogue suggests:

Hospital Director (with some suspicion): What does your wife do exactly? What are these things she writes anyway?
Li Li-chung (evasively): Oh, I don't know. I don't read novels.

The novel thereby comes before us, not as an object or an alternate world or narrative, but rather as a peculiarly disembodied effect, with all the reality and objectivity of sheer appearance. It is Error made real and become flesh; it is, as it were, the image-for-the-other, the simulacrum or at least someone else's simulacrum, since the viewer never apprehends it directly but only by way of the judgments of the other characters (in this case the photographer, who recognizes the writer's picture as his mysterious visitor and suddenly grasps all this as the machinations of his equally mysterious Eurasian acquaintance). If now, however, we reposition this particular effect within what we might as well call the Hansen-Bordwell hypothesis,[8] writing at once takes on the status of one medium among others, competing for power and prestige with the more modern technologies of photography, of sound transmission (here the telephone, although more normally the radio), and finally of film itself. It should be evident that though Yang's movie camera retains the ultimate priority over all the other media – if only by virtue of the fact that they are necessarily represented within it – it nonetheless plays fair, and endows each of them with a specific power not ordinarily thought to be consistent with cinema as such.

For photography within film seems to retain what Benjamin might have called an archaic aura, a dimly threatening primitive power, as when stills of the murder victims silently circulate among the police team, who thereby *see* and are present in ways denied the movie-goer

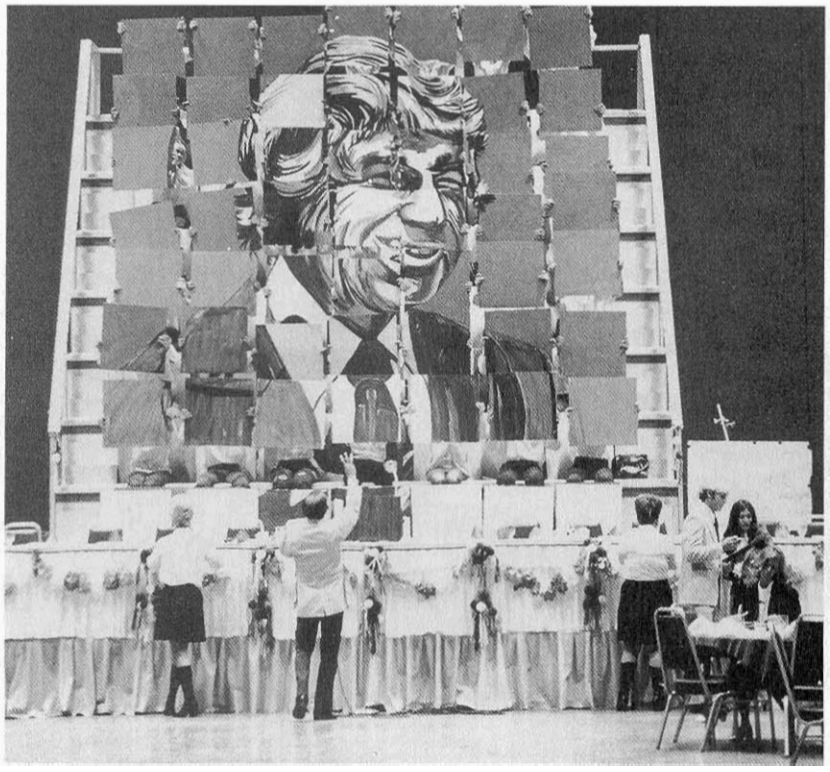
Orphée



Terrorizer

even when the still is flashed on the screen for us in passing. In *Terrorizer*, to be sure, the photographer proves to be an idle rich youth with a hobby, and the emphasis is placed as much on the cash-value of his various cameras as on the quality of his images – save for the one mesmerizing shot of the White Chick peering fearfully around a corner, unaware that she is in the process of being seen and recorded. This is then the magnified image, three times greater than life and developed in segments of glossy prints, that will greet her eyes as she returns to the murder room: an allegory of film itself? Perhaps: but if so, only because, like the punctum in the fatal photographs in Antonioni's *Blow-up*, and unlike Rimbaud's magical flowers or Lacan's signifiers, this one does not look back at you. Here the wind that blows through the great trees in Antonioni's park only mildly lifts and ruffles the segments of the portrait.. Photography's prestige here is to be equal to the simulacrum and more interesting than the reality, but otherwise little more than a way of killing time.[9]

Perhaps we need to drive a wedge more dramatically between the senses after the great synaesthesias of the modern period, and to restore some of the liberating freshness and horror of the auditory image in a society that has become one immense collection of visual spectacles.[10] Is this then finally perhaps the deeper meaning of the



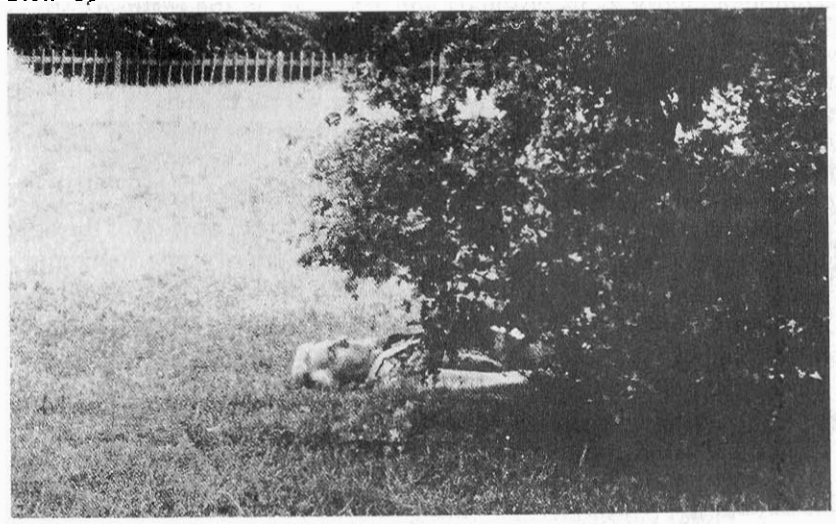
The Parallax View

sequence whereby *Blow-up*'s postmodern sequels – De Palma's *Blow Out* (1981) and Coppola's *The Conversation* (1974) – transfer the visible clue to the realm of sound: the unconscious, Utopian longing to be awakened from the spell of images, and to be awakened by sounds as piercing as shots or whispers? The White Chick is at any rate a good deal more threatening on the phone than in her image; and the spider's nest of anonymous phone calls all over the city has rarely offered so vivid a figure for urban simultaneity, but also for the misery of confinement and powerlessness. Like Stalin or Hitler in their offices, it is hard to tell supreme power from house arrest; and something of the mystery of the definitive embodiment of psychic resources in technology – what was human reality like before the telephone, before the photograph, before the mirror? – is here recovered from the forgetfulness into which the triumph of these media plunges Being itself. But telephonic relief also returns us to the specific form of organization of this particular city, as we shall see in conclusion.

As for literature, it surely fares least well of all modes we have come to recognize as mediatic. Wrong on all counts, a vehicle for narcissism and self-pity, and for the shabby pride of commercialized prizes, it is a pitiful cultural alibi in the destiny of this most ancient of all literate civilizations on its way to televisuality like everybody else. Significantly, here alone television rears its garish competing likenesses. In this rivalry between the arts and media (which film is in any case slated to win in advance), it is important that the small screen humiliate high culture, but not enter into too distracting a juxtaposition with film, whose brilliant capacities are here so extraordinarily rehearsed. (In the era of video, someone once remarked, film recovers that aura which Benjamin had denied it in the era of its undisputed technological mastery. Is this not to say that there is something slightly old-fashioned today about the exercise of bravura cinematography, which is here in any case, as I've already observed, an icy mastery?)

All of which marks something like the content of the form; and it is important, in my opinion, to be clear about the competing interpretations that force their way through even to this level and persist in their struggle for it. The features we have just evoked, which reach their thematic climax with the novella and its relationship to a world already structured by the other media, can all be read in conjunction as a vivid contemporary replay of that modern-romantic topos of art and life, fiction and reality, the dream world, illusion and what it transfigures. Indeed, *Terrorizer* would helpfully bring all that up to date and place such topics back on a post-contemporary agenda. Yet such a reading turns the film back into a set of conceptual 'themes' or meanings, into a vehicle for certain thoughts or reflections, or for a kind of philosophy of life – rather old-fashioned commodities in the

Blow-Up



universal sway of positivism and 'cynical reason', and of the 'end' of just such 'ideologies'. To this technocratization of philosophy then corresponds the transformation of the genres into the media, along with the emergence of readings such as the one alternately sketched above (in which the deeper subject of the film allegedly consists in its articulated rivalry with competing media). It is a Gestalt alternation we will observe on other levels (and in particular on that of the 'form of the content'), about which it is perhaps most productive to use it for a degree of historical self-knowledge, and to observe the plausibility with which each option comes before us. The deeper 'meaning' of the film, in that case, would not lie in either interpretation but in our hesitation between both.

As for the psychic content of the work, that constructed effect – that 'unspeakable' narrative or filmic 'sentence' whereby a structure of synchronous monadic simultaneities seems to demand embodiment in someone's experience, if only in that of God himself – is now, with the final looping of the knots, ever more suggestively passed off as this or that subjective experience. The shock we may attribute to the Eurasian girl is just such a formal 'objective correlative': for it releases the multitudinous occult traditions of the *Doppelgänger* and its putative terrors – myself striding forth to meet me at midday! – at the same time that it mobilizes a whole contemporary philosophy of the Look (from Sartre on down) and endows me with an external being that is alien to me, but to which I am also condemned. The association of these motifs with narrative – and not only with narrative, but with a reflexive positing of narrative, in which, in writers like Gide, it is less important to produce a plot than to produce the Idea of plot itself, as an object in its own right that, absent totality, gradually disengages itself from all its local manifestations and hovers above the completed work as its visionary mirror-image in the realm of objective spirit – now has the advantage of dispelling philosophical or theosophic connotations. For the experience is as simple as it is unsettling: others have been thinking about me whose existences I was not even aware of! At the level of urban simultaneities on which we now find ourselves, this – what are you doing with my picture? – is a virtual *cogito*, the punctual other end of all those mutually exclusive synchronicities. It is a paradox that will then, from now until the final image, continue to be turned inside out ceaselessly like Benjamin's famous socks.[11] Its sharpness is intensified by Chou Yufen's blissful ignorance of the origins in other, unknown people of the story she believes to be autographical; while Li Li-chung's knowledge (the photographer 'puts him in the picture' and shows him the photos) is as numbing a form of distraction as his other worries and as unproductive, leading to what may be called externalized or 'foreclosed'[12] impersonal hallucinations, rather than to any shocked presentiment of unexpected worlds beyond his own.

Terrorizer

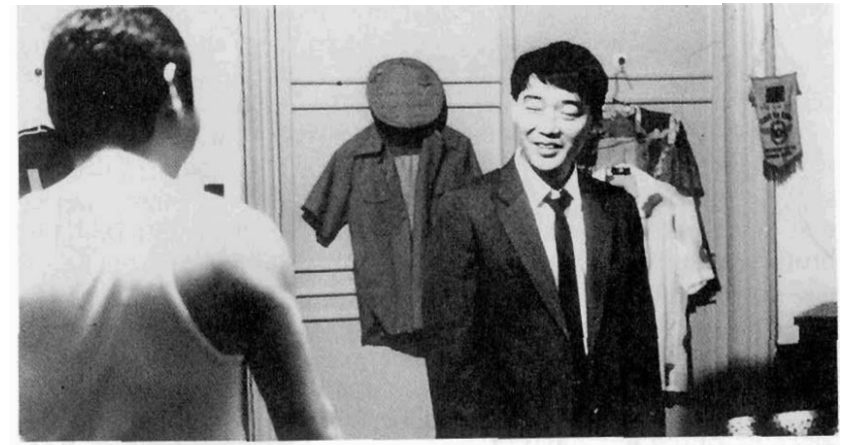
It is to be sure about Li Li-chung's experience and about his psyche that *Terrorizer* raises the most durable questions. In this polyvocal film without a hero, nonetheless a certain priority seems to be afforded gradually to this figure, whose destiny promises to hold the key to interpretation most reliably as the action draws to a close. But it may be a broken promise: to be sure, Li Li-chung loses out on his promotion, as we might have guessed; and as we know, he loses his wife as well. In both cases he tries aimlessly to salvage the situation, with clumsy efforts that confirm our initial impression of this character as the quintessential loser – something we can tell virtually from his very first appearance, doing exercises on his balcony (although I would be hard put to say why or how). I've suggested that we can have little personal sympathy for him (a remark about which there can be nothing 'personal', since it also holds for all the other characters as well). Yet his destiny can awaken a certain impersonal sadness, and it is this which marks, I believe, the allegorical investment in the figure of Li Li-chung who, more than any of the other characters (the traditional policeman, the Western-style modernist writer, specimens of a timeless *jeunesse dorée*, lumpens who have their equivalent in every urban center on the globe), can best serve as evidence for an unconscious (and collective) meditation on dependency, that is to say, on the positioning of the national entity within the new world system of late capitalism.

As a technocrat and a bureaucratized professional indeed, Li Li-chung is well-placed to offer figuration to the 'national allegory'[13] of a post-Third-World country that can never really join the First World (in the sense of capital export and of becoming a new center of the world system, its destiny conceivable only as a structural satellite of Japan or the US). His 'brilliant career' is significantly accompanied, not by dramatic and tragic failures, but by prospects which, even if

successful, are not likely to modify the dreariness of his current prosperity in any marked qualitative way. One does not, in other words, foresee a more gratifying continuation of his marriage, nor, if the other bureaucrats are any indication, would the coveted promotion be likely to transform him, in a thunder-clap, in his very being. This – the joylessness of good fortune in the global bureaucratic system – is perhaps the new face of a dependency most often dramatized in terms of tendential impoverishment and the 'development of underdevelopment'. This is, as it were, the gentrified dimension of a postmodernity whose flip side is neo-poverty and 'homelessness' and a whole new attitude towards urban space also registered in this film in original ways.

From the class standpoint indeed, in a developing or underdeveloped country, the fate of the petty bourgeoisie (in this stage, a new petty bourgeoisie or professional-managerial segment of bureaucrats and formerly independent professionals) seems to be more generally emblematic of the fate of the nation or the collectivity, at least in the popular imagination. Balzac, who wrote in a roughly comparable period of France's development, often projects his petty bourgeois figures in this way, as allegories of the national misery. It is as though the rich and successful (in our time, multinational success stories) are lucky in some private and non-generalizable way; while the poor – particularly agricultural and manual workers – are already universally exploited anyway and can scarcely be allegorical of anything save of the perennity of class struggle itself. In some situations, to be sure, *lumpens* – as in the picaros of the Spanish Golden Age – can also be allegorical of the nation; while the sadness we have attributed to the figure of Li Li-chung can be thought to include all the mixed feelings attributable to the developing Third World. He could not be allegorical of Taiwan exactly as such, for there are many other unique determinants of that special situation that are omitted from his story, but it may at least be permitted to see his fate as a figural acting out of fantasies about the limits to Taiwanese development in a world system. What such an interpretation does to the potential universality of such a narrative, and in particular to its relevance for and reception by First-World audiences, will be the topic of a concluding reflection.

But it would be a mistake to assimilate 'national allegory' in this new postmodern sense to the traditional or stereotypical view of this structure as a supremely static and mechanical one, in which cut-and-dried meanings are paired off one by one with equally cut-and-dried features or aspects of the narrative situation and its components. There is in post-contemporary allegory a kind of inner self-transcending dynamic for which even the older word 'reflexive' is too weak. It is rather a self-regulating transformation of such organisms under their own momentum, in which initial figures are ceaselessly and dialectically modified by virtue of the very fact that in them the



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problem of representation is itself already thematized, and must therefore produce and re-produce itself in a variety of new guises and levels.

So here the seemingly colorless drama of Li Li-chung develops in unforeseeably dramatic ways which would seem to have little enough to do with the revelation of the story within a story, the anonymous interventions and self-reflexive modernist and conspiratorial rewritings, that were the burden of his wife's narrative line. Those come only to compound the doctor's general confusion and to separate him, in his dejection, even more completely from real life. There follows what is surely one of the most astonishing scenes in recent cinema, in which Li Li-chung revisits his childhood friend the policeman and makes a remarkable announcement. Beaming with joy, he explains that he has finally won his promotion; and that he has also been able to come to terms successfully with his wife's departure and to realize that he is better off without her; that he is a happy man at last – successful, at peace with himself, fulfilled. The gestural and physiognomic euphoria with which these falsehoods are conveyed transcends the usual signs or tics of mendacity or simple lying (if only because we can see no point to the deception, so that our own confusion washes back over the effect to intensify it). It is difficult to convey the terrible joy, the radiantly false happiness, that streams in effulgence from the ghastly smile of a character who has rarely smiled before and with whom we have come to associate the furrowed brow of an essentially plodding man meeting his difficulties with uniform perplexity and without skill. The heightened expression, not registered in close-up, is projected off the screen in a way only comparable (although the content is altogether different) to that supreme *oeillade* in *Mr Arkadin* (Welles, 1955), in which the zoom shot of the bearded

Welles' sharp return look shows that he knows, and that he knows we know, and so forth: *supreme* being indeed the climactic word one wants for this kind of thing in which the event pulls itself up by its own pigtail onto a higher, formally transcendent level.

As for Li Li-chung's 'supreme' happiness, however, modernist readings can still be imagined for it, as in the Nietzschean-fictional suggestion that under certain circumstances the acting out of alternative, unrealized possibilities – sealed by my celebration with the 'elder brother,' the ritual of festive eating and drinking, enjoyment of my new esteem, having lived up to expectations at last – might be as satisfying, perhaps more fully satisfying, than the reality. The interpretation in terms of life and art would here continue to find corroboration and plausibility, but should be complemented by its own alternative possibility in a reading of what I will only for convenience's sake call a relatively more postmodern type. After all, in retrospect, one of the fundamental signs and symptoms of an impending change in our mode of thinking consisted in the increasing dissatisfaction with what I have elsewhere called the 'depth model'[14] – in this case, the opposition between life and fiction modelled roughly on some notion of a reality behind or opposed to an appearance. What took the place of that appearance-and-reality model was something variously characterized in terms of textuality or of practices, a conception of the succession of various surfaces none of which was somehow metaphysically or ontologically privileged over the other. But that Li Li-chung's fictional or unreal alternate life can also be seen and read in this second way a remarkable series of multiple and mutually exclusive *dénouements* will now show.

For in another early-morning sequence, after their late-night celebration, the husband-physician awakens in the policeman's house and removes the sleeping man's revolver; assassinates the hospital director on his way to work; and then, breaking into his wife's lover's apartment, shoots the latter in gruesome execution style. Unable to

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do the same for his wife, he stations himself instead in the crowded downtown area in which we have seen the White Chick pick up her victims, and waits for her, presumably because he has seen her photograph and has decided to hold her responsible for all his troubles. But by now we know that both of these hitherto absolutely unrelated characters are very dangerous indeed. The final plot loop, whether involving sexual intercourse or murder, is a putative climax of great tension and instability, whose narrative satisfactions, even granting the tying up of the last remaining threads, are no longer clear. But now time runs more swiftly: the policeman wakes suddenly; the pimp who in classical fashion follows the couple down the hotel corridor unexpectedly finds himself locked out of the room; the police come pounding down the hall; and at the same moment we observe the protagonist characteristically, preparatory to anything else, begin to wash his hands extensively one final time. But this time the motif has been activated: the liquid splashing out of the faucet coincides with the splintering of the hotel-room door as the police break in. What results however is the splattering of blood and brain tissue over a different wall, in a different space, as Li Li-chung shoots himself in the early morning in the bathhouse of his friend's building; at which point the wife suddenly wakes up in her lover's flat, staring with wide eyes at an unidentified premonition.

It will have been obvious, from all the conventional aesthetic signals we well as from whatever vantage-point common sense itself decides to take the thing, that the preceding sequence was a fantasy or wish-fulfillment of some kind. Nor do I mean to argue against the obvious; but rather, to urge the return of a certain indecidability to the sequence itself, whose remarkable loop – the water faucet reappearing with all the portentous formal significance of Freud's *Nach-*

träglichkeit (retroactivation or 'deferred action', the childhood trauma activated by puberty) – arrests us in its own right by its striking narrative temporality, without our being able to determine the presence of any specific content or message. It is rather a kind of prestidigitation in which we watch the abstract fillip of the form itself, and are thereby distracted from the content, and in particular released from the tiresome (realistic) obligation of deciding whether it is supposed to be real or just another dream sequence.

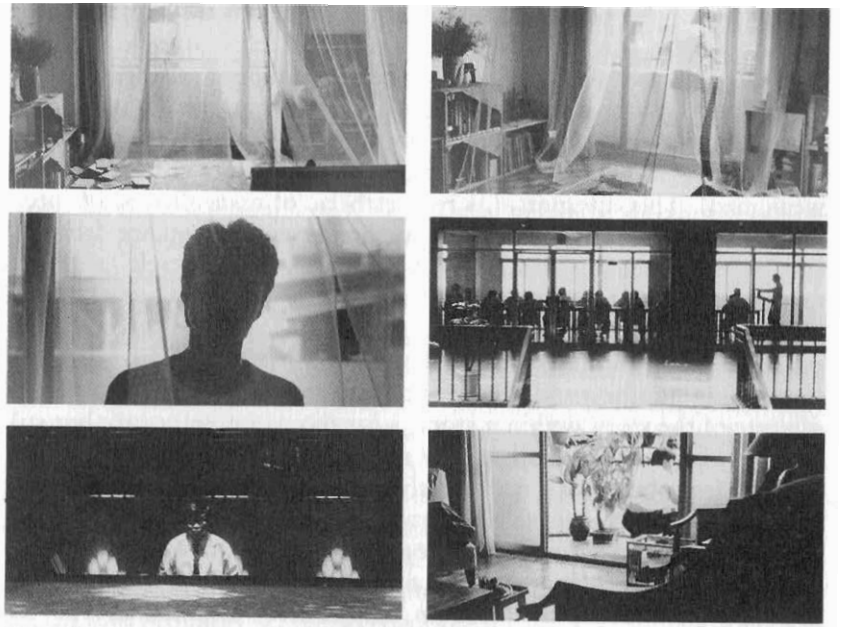
Indeed, this multiple ending is in my opinion very delicately balanced, carefully arranged so that such decisions can be eluded, if not avoided altogether. Its skillfulness cannot really be appreciated unless we are willing to acknowledge how tiresome the interpolation form of the flash-back or the fantasy has become in recent years. They were staples of the older cinema, and knew a kind of Indian Summer in the era of film noir, immediately after World War II (and immediately before the wide screen, the end of Hollywood, and the senescence of realism itself). The framed narrative has always carried the message of fate, of sealed destinies, of events now gone irredeemably into the past. The interpolated filmic (and less often, literary) daydream also probably served to reinforce the sense of imprisonment in a current situation; indeed, if Bierce's 'Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge' (filmed by Robert Enrico, 1962) can be taken as the fusion and synthesis of both, their symbolic value – in the instants before a capital execution – becomes dramatically explicit. Stylized revivals of the technique – as in Gilliam's *Brazil* (1985) – would seem even more explicitly to enlist the unreal interpolated narrative segment in order to drive home the collective imprisonment of a *1984*-type society. But for post-contemporary viewers, the traditional frame, which asks us to leave the present, to which predictably we will return only at the end of the film – as, for example, in *Le Jour se lève* (Marcel Carné, 1939) – is evidently irritating in direct proportion to our systemic commitment to a postmodern present; while the Hollywood fantasy narrative vainly tries to substitute alternate reality satisfactions in ways that make us equally impatient.

The alternate endings of *Terrorizer*, however, do not require heavy subjectification. The film is over too fast, and its polyphony, the multiplicity of protagonists, leave it entangled with their destinies in ways impossible to sort out (our last view of the Eurasian girl is *within* the fantasy-sequence, for example, which thereby continues to carry a certain informational authority). Meanwhile, if it was fantasy, the embarrassing question arises insistently as to whose fantasy it will finally have been? The argument can indeed equally forcefully be made[15] that it is Chou Yufen's fantasy rather than the husband's daydream filled with passionate exhalations of revenge (as we have seen, he is not a particularly passionate character, while the details of the White Chick's modus operandi cannot have been known to him

either). What this marks is the modernist interpretive temptation, the urge to tie up the threads by locking it all back into identifiable subjectivities and points of view. The 'postmodern' alternative that immediately proposes itself is then clearly what springs into view when subjects are abolished as meaningful categories (or if you prefer, when the hold of philosophies of the subject are significantly weakened). This alternative is the aesthetic of textuality or of interminable segmentation, in which we are at equal distance from all successive sequences, and the whole begins to offer itself as an immense set of variations or recombinations, as in the *nouveau roman* or Robbe-Grillet's accompanying filmic production. But this temptation has been carefully conjured as well. If a certain period aestheticism clung to the modernist (and Gidean) theme of the *mise en abysme* of the story within a story, a far more contemporary but still relatively archaic 60s aestheticism surely informs this kind of permutational free play, and it is evidently not at all the note we wished for in conclusion to this particular film.

What we must admire, therefore, is the way in which the filmmaker has arranged for these two powerful interpretive temptations – the modern and the postmodern, subjectivity and textuality – to neutralize each other, to hold each other in one long suspension in such a way that the film can exploit and draw on the benefits of both, without having to commit itself to either as some definitive reading, or as some definitive formal and stylistic category. Besides Edward Yang's evident personal mastery, the possibility of this kind of mutually reinforcing suspension may owe something to the situation of Third-World cinema itself, in traditions in which neither modernist nor postmodern impulses are internally generated, so that both arrive in the field of production with a certain chronological simultaneity in full post-war modernization. *Terrorizer* thereby enjoys the freedom of a certain distance from both, the advantages of which, indeed, it has been the burden of this chapter to explore.

But in conclusion it is worth taking this alternation and co-existence of readings and competing interpretations even further, and attempting to appreciate the way everything changes if, for the masculine pathos of Li Li-chung's story, we substitute the rather different drama of the women figures as the film's fundamental center of gravity. To see this as a film about women's destinies – whether it can be argued to be a properly feminist film I cannot judge – is to assert a certain postmodernity about it, to the degree that the women's situations here are grasped and articulated as fundamentally spatial. The male figures – doctor and photographer alike – are wrapped up in their temporal destinies. Success or failure still hang over them like the category of the future itself, some immense moon that can still make you happy or miserable. Meanwhile, as males, they are spatially more mobile, and can also console themselves with public areas,



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whether the police station, the hospital or the streets themselves.

But the women's spaces are essentially spaces of confinement: the one form of public space open to the novelist is the television screen itself, scarcely a space to stretch or relax in. Archetypal here is, of course, the confinement of the Eurasian girl, locked up in her mother's apartment, as though it were not bad enough to be condemned to crutches. Indeed, even more intolerable for this adolescent is the way in which, in the apartment, she is imprisoned in her mother's 50s' past, a past in which the mother is herself equally imprisoned, to the tune of 'Smoke Gets in Your Eyes'. Our significant first view of the girl had been her desperate escape from the confinement of the murder apartment; while, equally significant, her time of greatest physical mobility is a frustrating night-long bus ride back and forth across Taipei in a feverish state of exhaustion and collapse. Nor does it, finally, seem inappropriate to observe that her principal work-place, as it were, is not a public one, as with the men, but rather the quintessential anonymous hotel room, always the same, in which the self-same drama of theft, violence and blackmail is played out over and over again.

But this is not a unique situation in this particular film, as witness the photographer's girlfriend, equally imprisoned in something which remains *his* room and *his* apartment, even after he removes his pictures, the blowing curtains sealing off this now abandoned space from the street and the out-of-doors in what is a virtual minor leitmotif.

Nor is it clear that the writer's far more sumptuous apartment is any less constricting: 'my world is shrinking', she literally tells her former lover. The semi-traditional rugs and furniture are to be sure wonderful occasions for catching the change of light, one of the fundamental concerns of this intensely visual and photographic film. Meanwhile, the bathroom, in which notoriously her doctor-husband washes his hands on his return from work, is suffused with a yellow glow virtually marked out as his symbolic color. (We meet it again in a stunning sequence in the hospital as he mounts the stairs into a sea of yellow light; it may therefore be taken as an essentially artificial color, associated with modernization.) But the far more open and airlit space of the rest of the apartment, associated with Chou Yufen – a kind of yuppie or professional space, not unrelated to the even more expensive family villa of the young photographer (with pool and maid) – is not a great deal more positive. It is a kind of dead space, filled with elegant unused furniture which is there primarily to be turned into images. And from it, just as clearly as the Eurasian girl from her locked apartment, Chou Yufen is equally necessarily driven to escape.

That modernism is temporal and postmodernism spatial has often been affirmed, while the spatiality of *Terrorizer* and its images is inescapable. But I would like to insist on a unique feature of the spatiality of this film: the insistent relationship it establishes between the individual space and the city as a whole. The women's dramas are thus spatial, not only because they are somehow postmodern (although the characterization of postmodernity in terms of the new social movements in general and of feminism in particular is a widespread one), but also and above all because they are urban, and even more because they are articulated within this particular city.

Terrorizer is indeed very much a film about urban space in general, and offers something like an anthology of enclosed dwellings, whether apartments or individual rooms. It is these that predominate, and that are reconfirmed by the punctuation of an occasional street scene which always tends to return us to the aerial perspective, the view from above, the glance down from the balcony, and thus implicitly the confinement to the apartment on the upper storey. The zero degree of this dwelling space would then be constituted by the murder room, as it is sealed off into darkness by the photographer: the act thereby betraying the essential characteristic of all these dwelling spaces, which function as cubicles that open onto the city and the street in one way or another, and which are somehow incomplete and spatially parasitic upon it. Only the hotel room of the Eurasian girl is somehow buried away in space, beyond the city somewhere; while the underworld, redolent of the 'mystères' of the classical nineteenth-century cities and melodramas, finds itself here reduced to a housing unit that gets repaired and repainted and only coincidentally re-

rented to someone who remembers what happened in it.

Taipei is thus mapped and configured as a superimposed set of boxed dwelling spaces in which the characters are all in one way or another confined. The film thereby acknowledges what seems to distinguish it from both traditional and modern Chinese cities on the mainland, as well as from the cultural and historical styles of other cities in East Asia – a rapid construction of buildings along both sides of great linear arteries which are somehow its central formal category. The apartments do not imply the formal centrality of a single building to which they belong (as belatedly and extraordinarily in Perec's novel *La vie: mode d'emploi*, about an apartment house). Nor do they offer the kind of panorama one experiences in Jesus Diaz' film, *Lejania*: interiors into which Miami is projected by way of home movies and videotapes; a roof-top from which Havana as a whole is viewed spread out around us; and finally the real streets into which the protagonist, on the point of asphyxiation, manages to escape (but in this Second-World film, the streets are still a genuinely public space, the space of the collective social project).

The dominant First-World experience of the post-contemporary city is surely that of gentrification, and of dead monuments about which it is no longer clear that they can be called public, but which are just as surely no longer private either; while what lies outside the gentrified zones is coming to be acknowledged as a new Third-World space within the First-World city. As for properly Third-World urban representations, all that can be conjectured as a minimal generalization is perhaps the now conventional form of the peasant as witness, the narrative point of view of the villager seeing the metropolis for the first time.

None of which seems to me comparable to this inscription of Taipei, which is also, as has already been observed, dialectically distinct from Hou Hsaio-hsien's images of the Taiwanese countryside. A foreigner and an outsider may be permitted to wonder whether this way of looking at urban experience does not have something to do with the 'representation of totality' of a small island which is also a non-national nation state. The enclosed spaces in their range and variety thereby figure or embody the unevenness or inequality of the world system: from the most *traditional* kind of space – paradoxically or not, that is the barracks apartment of the policeman (and it cannot be without significance that the protagonist, after washing his hands in so many modern and anonymous Western-style bathrooms, should kill himself in what is a very traditional-looking hot bath and hot-tub-sauna type area) – all the way to the *national* space of the hospital, the *multinational* space of the publisher's office (the media, surely of a global range, now housed in a great glass high-rise) and what I am tempted to call the equally *transnational* anonymity of the hotel corridor with its identical bedrooms.

The allegorical comment being made here on Taipei itself is one that engages a kind of Third-World situation we have rarely until now included in that (rather traditional) category: namely, the developing Third World or the newly industrializing First-World tier of the Third World or Pacific Rim (excluding Japan). Taiwan is somehow within the world system as its citizens are in their city boxes: prosperity and constriction all at once; the loss of nature (which is only observed twice, in a park close-up, and in the policeman's backyard, if one excludes the manicured pool and lawn of the student's villa); the failure of the classically urban to constitute itself standing in some intimate relationship and counterpoint to the failure of the classical psychic subject to constitute itself. What is grand and exhilarating, light itself, the hours of the day, is nonetheless here embedded in the routine of the city and locked into the pores of its stone or smeared on its glass: light also being postmodern, and a mere adjunct to the making of reproducible images.

I want to conclude by stressing the point that in the postmodern, the relations between universal and particular, if they persist at all, must be conceived in an utterly different way from those that obtained in previous social formations, and just as surely from what characterized the modern moment of our own. For the local – we used to say, in a more modernist or modernizing language, the provincial – meaning I have found in this work from a 'semi-peripheral' country is precisely not local in any traditional sense, but is rather what makes this work universal in its aesthetic value (to use an equally old-fashioned language). It is because in late capitalism and in its world system even the center is marginalized that powerful expressions of the marginally uneven and the unevenly developed issuing from a recent experience of capitalism are often more intense and powerful, more expressive, and above all more deeply symptomatic and meaningful than anything the enfeebled center still finds itself able to say.

Notes

1. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982.
2. It is safe to say that Hou Hsiao-hsien is Taiwan's leading film-maker today, and the first – after the liberalization of 1987, when for the first time the history of Taiwan since World War II could publicly be discussed – to launch into the construction of an ambitious historical epic, *A City of Sadness* (1979). His social material – drawn from youth and the countryside – is quite distinct from that of Edward Yang, and the spirit of his fine works – a kind of populist pathos or sentimentalism – is also distinctive (see below).
3. Renata Salecl has described such nationalisms (at work in the Yugoslavian context) in terms of a most suggestive Lacanian analysis, in her 'Struggle for

Hegemony in Post-Socialist Yugoslavia', in Ernesto Laclau (ed.), *On Identity* (London: Verso, forthcoming).

4. See, for further on this, my *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), pp. 20–1.
5. I am indebted to Michael Denning for the observation that the Italian setting of *Godfather III* finds its deeper function in allowing Coppola to avoid issues of race and drugs which would have fatally reimposed themselves within the frame of the superstate itself.
6. Alessandro Manzoni, *The Betrothed*, translated by Bruce Penman (London: Penguin, 1972), pp. 223–4.
7. This is the moment to express my gratitude to Shu-chen Chiang for her commentary on an earlier version of this chapter, and for the indispensable information about the Taiwanese setting of the film, and the local or vernacular connotations of some of its features. I have also benefited greatly from the chance to read Yingjin Zhang's 'The Idyllic Country and the (Post) modern City: Cinematic Configurations of Family in *Osmanthus Alley* and *Terrorizer*', (forthcoming in Wimal Disanayake (ed.), *The Family in Third World Film Today*).
8. See above, Part One, note 19.
9. Clearly, this treatment demands comparison with the role and function of the deaf-and-dumb photographer in *A City of Sadness*: he is the youngest son, something like an excluded witness, and, with his equally excluded Japanese wife, our most privileged 'point of view'. For that very reason, in Hou Hsaio-hsien's film, this character would seem to provide the technical means for estrangement in its classic, Russian-Formalist, sense (such as, for example, the child's point of view in Ambrose Bierce's 'Chickamauga').
10. Proust's pages on the telephone are to be found in *Le Côté de Guermantes, Part I* (Editions de la Pléiade, 1988), Vol. II, pp. 431–6; this technological mediation is immediately followed by an ocular inspection of Marcel's dying grandmother conveyed in terms of the technology of photography pp. 438–9. In 'Modernism and Repetition: Kafka's Literary Technologies', *Journal of the Kafka Society of America* 1990, pp. 59–63, James Robeston draws our attention to Kafka's representation of the telephone in the posthumously published sketch, 'Der Nachbar', valuably suggesting that we reckon it back into Benjamin's forms of technological reproduction as well; but see also *his* version – 'Der Telefon' – in *Berliner Kindheit, Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981) vol. IV, pp. 242–3).
11. In his 'Berlin Childhood' (*Gesammelte Schriften*, p. 284, in 'Schränke'), translated as a separate unit in Shierry Weber Nicholson's English version of the Paris edition:

    > The first cabinet that opened when I wanted it to was the bureau. I had only to pull on the knob and the door clicked open for me. Among the underclothing stored there was the thing that made the bureau an adventure. I had to make a path to the farthest corner; there I found my stockings piled, rolled up in the old-fashioned way. Each pair looked like a small pouch. Nothing gave me more pleasure than plunging my hand as deep as possible into the inside of that pouch. I did not do so for the sake of the warmth. It was 'The Dowry', which I held in my hand in the rolled-up interior, that drew me into its depths. When I had got my hand around it and confirmed my possession of the soft woollen mass to the best of my ability, the second part of the game, which brought the revelation, began. For now I began working 'The Dowry' out of its woollen pouch. I drew it closer and closer to me until the amazing event occurred: I had extricated 'The Dowry', but 'The Pouch' in which it had lain no longer existed. I could not test this process often enough. It taught me that form and content, the veil and what it hides, are one and the same. It led me to extricate the truth from literature as cautiously as the child's hand brought the stocking out of 'The Pouch'.

    And see also sentences like this: 'Methodological relationship between the metaphysical investigation and the historical one: a stocking turned inside out' (*Gesammelte Schriften* vol. I, p. 918).
12. Lacan uses the term 'forclusion' for the way in which, in psychosis, where language or the Symbolic Order is not available to organize such impulses, the sufferer's thoughts return as it were from the outside, in the form of disembodied voices, for example. (See 'On a question preliminary to any treatment of psychoses', in *Ecrits* (Paris: Seuil, 1967).)
13. See again Introduction, note 1.
14. See *Postmodernism*, p. 12ff.
15. I am grateful to Tang Xiao-bing for this suggestion.