

# 現代與後現代的都市景觀

## -以楊德昌和泰第的電影為例-

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### 摘要

本研究以法國的泰第導演和台灣的楊德昌導演為主題，在現代和後現代的都市景觀裡，根據都市區位和社會涵構，描述其轉型和經驗。在泰第的電影中，明確的以「我的叔叔」以及「遊戲時光」二片詮釋現代都市景觀的轉型和經驗。他的電影亦暗指了懷舊與辯證的論述。再者，楊德昌獲得公元兩千年坎城影展最佳導演的電影「一一」，架構一種真誠的氛圍和深刻的認知，反映了當代台北市的都市景觀，電影裡的多重和多樣的社會網絡和日常生活，是後現代都市現象的徵兆。本研究利用時間性做為主要論述架構依現代和後現代來探討這三部電影中社會和空間的轉型，並驗證這種歷史時間架構在幫助瞭解都市轉型的可能性。在當代交錯複雜的都市空間中，本研究的目的也在釐清經常被誤解的與城市景觀相關的現代和後現代議題，而選擇這三部電影的原因則在於其對城市景觀轉型的可讀性。此外，楊德昌導演的另一部電影「恐怖份子」也對台北市都市景觀和社會的轉型做了深刻的紀錄和分析，雖然在此不加論述，但對同類研究很具參考價值。再者，其他導演的電影也常觸及城市景觀中現代性和後現代性的關聯議題，其中較特殊者如蔡明亮的「洞」，或許在現代性和後現代性之外，又呈現了吊詭和曖昧的空間議題，也是同類研究的另一切入點。

關鍵字：現代性、後現代性、都市化、城市景觀

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## Modern and Postmodern Cityscapes – The Tempo-Spatial Practices of Tati and Yang's Films<sup>1</sup> –

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### Abstract

The study focuses on two film directors, Jacques Tati of French and Edward Yang of Taiwan, as well as their specific films which depict urban transformations and experiences. We might classify them separately, according to their geographical and social context, as modern and postmodern styles. Tati's films, especially for *My Uncle* and *Play Time*, show clear intention in interpreting the transformation of modern cityscape and imposition of modernity on our daily life. His films imply both nostalgic sensation and dialectic criticism. On the other hand, Edward Yang's film *A One and a Two*, which won Best Director at Cannes Award in 2000, sports a sincere aura and contemplating perception reflecting on contemporary urban landscape of Taipei city. Its filming of multilayered and diversified social network of everyday life symptomizes a postmodern urban phenomenon. Based on the temporal division of modern and postmodern as discursive framework, the study looks into the social and spatial transformation of the aforementioned three films. It also attests the possibility in employing the temporal framework to help understand urban transformation. On the other hand, the study tries to clarify the often-confused modern and postmodern issues concerning cityscape. The reason of choosing the three films lies on their lucid readability in terms of the transformation of cityscape.

**Keywords :** modernity, post-modernity, urbanization, cityscape

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## I. Introduction

Since the late nineteenth century, film has provided a theoretical and technical laboratory for the definition of modernism. (Vidler, 1993: 45) Incorporating time to space, the vision of film is the modernist art of spatial representation. In the cinematic scenes, the street and cityscape provide inexhaustible subjects for the conception of modernity. In the same article, Vidler considered Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Representation" as a first step in the constitution of the filmic as the modern critical aesthetic. Following this light, we would like to quote some of Benjamin's words to emphasize the rationale of choosing film as material to investigate the transformation of modern and postmodern cityscapes:

*By close-ups of the things around us, by focusing on hidden details of familiar objects, by exploring commonplace milieus under the ingenious guidance of the camera, the film, on the one hand, extends our comprehension of the necessities which rule our lives; on the other hand, it manages to assure us of an immense and unexpected field of action. Our taverns and our metropolitan streets, our offices and furnished rooms, our railroad stations and our factories appeared to have us locked up hopelessly. Then came the film and burst this prison-world asunder by the dynamite of the tenth of a second, so that now, in the midst of its far-flung ruins and debris, we calmly and adventurously go traveling. With the close-up, space expands; with slow motion, movement is extended....An unconsciously penetrated space is substituted for a space consciously explored by man....The camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses. (Ibid., 53)*

The elongated quotation not only provides the rationale for connecting film with city, but demonstrates the potential to use cinema as an instrument to further explore the cityscape. This "unconscious penetrated space" is the cinematic advantage to provide other visions and perspectives in looking into modern cityscapes, and later post-modern one. Moreover, this "unconscious penetrated space" will be used to explain and interpret the transformational cityscape, as well as its social and spatial connotations.

The study approximates modernity and post-modernity by specific references. Here the modernity is referred by, firstly, the notion of David Harvey's compression of time and space. In his essay "*Time-space Compression and the Rise of Modernism as a Cultural Force*," (Harvey, 1990: 260-283) Harvey argued that new ways of viewing space and motion began to be thought out and applied to the production of urban space. For example, in 1913, the first radio signal was sent around the world from the Eiffel tower, thus emphasizing the capacity to collapse space into the simultaneity of an instant in universal



public time. In the same year, Ford set up his assembly line. He fragmented tasks and distributed them in space to maximize efficiency. He also showed that time could be speed-up by virtue of the control established through organizing and fragmenting the spatial order of production. This notion will be attested in the discussion of *My Uncle*. Besides, Harvey stated that the more unified the space, the more important the qualities of the fragmentations become for social identity and action. For Tati's film *Playtime*, this notion might imply the intention of Hulot's final destruction of the restaurant scene. Furthermore, Harvey emphasized that the global capital flow placed strong emphasis upon the specific qualities of spaces to which the capital might be attracted. The shrinkage of space implies a heightened sense of awareness of what makes a place special. This identification of the importance of place can be noticed in Hulot's living community in *My Uncle*. Secondly, notions from Lefebvre could also be valuable for discursive purpose. The French cultural theorist once quoted Baudelaire and stated that the "modern" is in particular the ephemeral, the fleeting and often indefinable. He clarified Baudelaire's and Marx's "modernity" with the same insightful concept. For Baudelaire, modernity is temporal, instantaneous phenomena, and it has mysterious connection with the external. Modernity is the shifting image of an immobile eternity. For Marx, the modernity is defined by separations, divisions and multiple dualities. The modernity is the conflicts between private and public, between the specific and the general, between the nature and man, between everyday life and higher authorities. (Lefebvre, 1995:170-173) Additionally, Lefebvre pointed out that abstraction and discontinuity as two indispensable qualities of modernity. These two traits will also be confirmed in later discussion of cinematic representation. Thirdly, the study would like mention architectural theorist Heynen's specific notion on modern architecture. In the book *Architecture and Modernity*, she connects modernity with progress: politics, economics, and culture are all united under the banner of progress, which is seen as harmonious and continuous. In this light, she considers architect Le Corbusier as a typical one who possesses this viewpoint and quotes his statement: 'A great epoch has begun. There exists a new spirit. There exists a mass of work conceived in the new spirit; it is to be met with particularly in industrial production...' (Heynen, 1999: 13) This new spirit will be elaborated on the discussion of Tati's films. However, by preliminary selection from various notions concerning the study's specific purpose, the study will use these three notions as modern reference to look into the spatial and social transformation in the urban areas of the discussed films.

With the same token, the study chooses three essential postmodern notions acting as the basic reference for further discussion. Firstly, the cultural theorist Jean Baudrillard's notion of "Simulacra and Simulations" (Brooker, 1992:151-162) is especially resourceful in media and cinematic study. This notion tries to clarify the difference of representation and simulation, as well as the relation between



image and reality. In Yang's film, which shows strong dialectic between image and reality, this notion plays a critical role, especially on the transition from signs which dissimulate something to signs which dissimulate that there is nothing. On the other hand, "when the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning." (Ibid., 153) This connotation also looms on Yang's film from time to time. Secondly, Fredric Jameson's notion on "Postmodernism and Consumer Society" (Brooker, 1992:163-179) could be useful in terms of its social and cultural clarification. He had mentioned a specific mode of nostalgia film. In this mode, the nostalgia film could be set in past, present or future, as long as it seeks to reawaken a sense of the past associated with some particular objects. Jameson's main concerns also include postmodernism and the city, as well as the aesthetic of consumer society. All these conceptions are subtly connected with Yang's film. Thirdly, Lyotard's "Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?" (Brooker, 1992:139-150) could provide another valuable notion in that it erases the credibility of "metanarratives" and emphasizes the individual or heterogeneous experiences. He considers that the postmodern would be that, in the modern, puts forward the unrepresentable in presentation itself; that searches for new presentations to impart a stronger sense of the unrepresentable. Lyotard also points out that the artists are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what will have been done, and searching for the feeling of sublime which makes the unrepresentable felt. Finally, postmodernism is not modernism at its end but in the budding state, and most of the arguments stated here could be tested in Yang's film.

To make a preliminary conclude, there is a subtle connection between modernism and postmodernism. On the other hand, many of the postmodern contexts seem to emerge from arguments in Northern America against the modernist legacy of art and architecture (Docker, 1994:143). Postmodernism possesses the characters of indeterminacy, contradiction, difference and heterogeneity. The perpetual implicative and narrative possibilities of heterogeneous texts create a postmodern world filled with selected fragments and reconstructed partial wholeness. In terms of urban representation, *Learning from Las Vegas* is one of the most popular works to investigate the cultural and spatial configuration of postmodernism (Venturi, et al., 1977). The book argues that the modernist architects reject the "very heterogeneity of our society," they desire to control, purify and rein. The modern architect's obsessions are represented by Tati's films. These obsessions are against Las Vegas's intertextuality, inclusiveness and multiplicity (Docker, 1994:88). Basically, the main characters of postmodern city are heterogeneity and multiplicity which make impressive marks in Yang's film.



## II. The Precondition

The scenes of *my uncle* are depicted in a narrative continuum: Hulot's own residence and his sister's house represent pre-modernity and modernity relatively. The factory where Hulot goes to work in *My Uncle* pursues a kind of industrial efficiency, producing plastic things in a tedious and repetitive space. For a moment Hulot breaks the routine and brings pleasure to his fellow workers, but is soon fired and the order restored. On the contrary, when Hulot returns to his own residence, the aura of the neighborhood is cozy and warm. The nearby market works in a simple and hearty way. Hulot's living unit on the top of an old house oozes a comfortable atmosphere of everyday life. This daily fun and resolution are also showed by school boys' plays after school. When Hulot follows school boys' traces and involves in their games, he seems to create an action bridging the social gap between pre-modernity and modernity. The spatial and social practices of this kind may help us regain psychological balance during the ruthless process toward modernity.

The film *My Uncle* cover two well-defined temporalities. The cozy community of Hulot's living place symbolizes a pre-modern temporality with spatial intimacy and social interaction; the living style in plush mansion owned by Hulot's sister possesses a modern temporality with a passion on order and efficiency. Hulot seems comfortable in traditional community but uneasy in modern mansion. He represents the transient figure living in two different temporalities. The disorientation and disjunction caused by the process of modernity explain his various unfitting behaviors in the modern mansion and the factory. The pre-modern cityscape, represented by Hulot's community, has its own traditional market and tavern where people keep sincere and warm relationship. In this village-like cityscape, people have a sense of belonging and clear identity.

To further argue the temporal specificity of pre-modern society in *My Uncle*, we would like to point out the quality of improvisation in Hulot's character. In *My Uncle*, this quality is demonstrated in his make-shift behaviors, such as wrongly fixing the fish fountain in modern mansion and accidentally producing sausage-like plastic tubes in the factory. These spontaneous deeds often cause confusion and disorder which the modern society tries to avoid. Hulot's improvisational actions and awkward conditions imply his pre-modern mentality while living in a modern cityscape.

## III. Tati and the Modern Cityscape

Because the modernity creates a disjunction of spaces and causes the discontinuity of spatial memory, the omnipresent theme of searching for the essence of modernity and regaining the sense of



space would lead us into Tati's film *Playtime*. *Playtime* reminds us of Le Corbusier's architectural modernism. In 1922, he designed a *Plan for a Contemporary City of Three Million Inhabitants*. He attempted to point out the planning issues afflicting modern city by using conceptual terms, and he made four axioms: 1. town centers must be made less congested; 2. town centers must be more densely built up; 3. means of transport must be increased; 4. there must be an increase in open spaces (Jenger, 1996:49). Several scenes in *Playtime* suit these categories: the carousel-like traffic circle fits the axiom of increasing the means of transport; the scene of sleek high-rises fits the condition of densely building up of town center; and the wide sidewalks reflect less-congested town center. Moreover, various drawings and models done by Le Corbusier strengthen the connection between Tati's cinematography and Le Corbusier's architectural concepts. To further depict these two artists' affinity for particular themes of modern urban experience, Lee Hilliker uses *The Charter of Athens's*<sup>2</sup> four functional categories—habitation、leisure、travail and circulation—as comparative elements. These four functions also help define the entire body of Tati's film career, which overlapped the time-period of the great social and spatial change in France after World War II (Hilliker, 2002:318-319). Following this viewpoint, the 1958's *My Uncle* showed the burgeoning car culture as a main player, and Tati's beginning to take a close look at urban Paris. Later, the 1967's *Playtime* focused exclusively on the contemporary urban environment, in a time when official policy in Paris conversed to modernism along the concepts developed by Le Corbusier and the Bauhaus architects.

*Playtime* may be considered as one of the most essential films connected to the context of modernity. The symbolic and semiotic elements are ubiquitous. Early in the film, Tati challenges our perception of the typology of modern buildings by staging a space of air terminal which we misguidedly perceive as a hallway of hospital. This scenario carries a message that our perception of spatial identification seems to need updating occasionally. Another remarkable scene in *Playtime* is Hulot's finding himself in an area full of identical office cubicles. As Hilliker argues:

*... forms part of a seamless architectural whole that segues from airport to workplace to dwelling to leisure space without a break and with little differentiation between structure... This sense of wholeness, of the ensemble, was in fact an integral component of new architecture in Paris during the 1960s, when modernism became the official style of the city... (Ibid., 323)*

This argument is related to five of the film's main scenes: the TV box-like dwelling units, the same

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<sup>2</sup> The Chart of Athens was resulted from the fourth meeting of CIAM (International Congress of Modern Architecture), which was founded in 1928 as an organization devoted to studying and promoting the influence of contemporary architecture, and was composed of architects, planners, theorists, and artists concerned with urban questions. The fourth meeting was held in Athens and it was mainly dominated by Le Corbusier.



tourist posters for different places, the identical working cubicles, the airport terminal and the restaurant. These scenes also correspond with the four functional categories in *the Charter of Athens*, and they blend into a seamless modern context of uniformity, repetition and transparency. On the other hand, Tati's films suggest that the relationship between industrial technology and modern life is difficult to sustain in modern cityscape. This notion is disclosed in the revised ending of the film, in which the modern high-rises are taken away because they actually are temporary stage settings. When these tabula masks disappear, a historical house with the hue of everyday life reveals itself. The connotation of this nostalgic scenario is further demonstrated by Hulot's striding into that house. Here we notice the solidity of memory and history; otherwise we only see historical structures, such as Eiffel Tower, Arc de Triomphe and Place de la Concorde, in various reflections of glass windows.

Purposefully Tati frustrates our conventional notions of time and space, therefore Hulot often breaks up narrative continuum by playing spontaneous events. This interruption of modern world's rhythm seems to make the return of traditional temporality possible. Nevertheless, Hulot also processes a wandering nature of leisure as Baudelaire's "flaneur" does. Thus the character of Hulot acts as a mirror to reflect the true nature of modernism, which requires precise tempo-spatial scheme to fulfill its modern agenda.

The socio-spatial practice of *Playtime* could be further investigated by looking at the reduction of spatial and social experience to a totalizing environment of modern technology and consumerism. In *My Uncle*, Tati mocked the infatuation of the new French class with the way of "modern" life. Yet at the time *My Uncle* was filmed the postwar transforms in everyday life had not yet been well integrated. The different sentimentalities between modern environment and old-fashioned neighborhood like where Hulot lives were evident. In *Playtime*, such binary distinction disappeared and Tati completely focused his view on the grand new world of urbanized modernization:

In fact, the decade between the making of *My Uncle* and *Playtime* was decisive in transforming French from an insular, agrarian, and empire-oriented society into an urban, industrial, and decolonized nation... Paris was permanently reshaped...Between 1954 and 1974, 24 percent of the buildable surface of the city was subjected to demolition and redevelopment...in the name of urban renewal. The transformation of postwar Paris into "neo-bourgeois space" entailed a whole new...city and suburb, social modernization and ethnic segregation...By 1969 the *grands ensembles* that sprang up around the periphery, built by a technocratic Gaullist regime and notorious for their shoddy construction, lack of amenities, and "morbid geometrism," housed one-sixth of the inhabitants of greater Paris region... (Ockman, 2000:182-183)

The quotation attests the socio-spatial transformation during Tati's two main films, as well as the





situation that political, social and spatial aspects often entangle together and form a polemic tapestry of modernity construction. However, Tati's celluloid tries to show that there might be some way to free from this social routine and banality, which are represented by the multiplication and proliferation of identical spatial types. The seemingly impossible possibility is led by comic flaneur figure of Hulot, and the prescription is to let spontaneity and 'play' rule the day. Hulot and his kind often do their routine in unintended ways and take them out of their normal context. In *My Uncle*, Hulot accompanies his nephew doing unstructured plays. In *Playtime*, Hulot's unintended behaviors in the party scene make constructed social world falling apart. These unstructured actions and unintended behaviors may have potential to cause socio-spatial metamorphosis. This metamorphosis of modernity can be noticed when Hulot shatters the restaurant's walls. The action causes the breakdown of class exclusion and marks a utopian hue of equality in shared enjoyment.

To summarize, we would like to go back to Heynen's main argument on the new spirit of progress which is elaborated in the first section. This kind of new spirit is also subtly depicted in *My Uncle*, with the slick modern house and efficient factory. Later, the same spirit of progress dominates almost every scene of *Playtime*. The film's cityscape and architecture are closely related to Le Corbusier's perspective of modern city, and it may be one of the most elaborated films in depicting and staging the new form of modern city and its architecture. This notion of progress has direct connection with the transformation of spatial performance and cityscape. In the case of *playtime*, some tourist destinations such as the Eiffel Tower, the Arc de Triomphe and the Place de la Concorde only appear in various reflections of glass windows. It may imply that those old landmarks are affected by modern transformation and have to redefine its role under the banner of progress, and this concept of progress acts as the foundation of the following notions: in Harvey's case, the compression of time and space is one of the most essential ideas affecting modern cityscape; in *My Uncle*, the tempo-spatial compression is symptomized by the lifestyle of modern villa and working condition of the factory; in *Playtime*, the same compressing phenomenon is represented by the staged modern cityscape and the purposeful routine of tourists. All the three notions result from the optimistic thinking of progress

Moreover, Harvey emphasizes that the modern thinking fragments tasks and distributes them in space to maximize efficiency. This is attested both by the factory scene of *My Uncle* and the office cubicles of *Playtime*. Harvey also states that the more unified the space, the more important the qualities of the fragmentations become for social identity and action. It is possible that Tati creates the character of Hulot to justify this notion because he often behaves outside unified space and exposed the fragmentation of society. Hulot is a critical character to destabilize the progressive myth of modernity. Since the globalization placed strong emphasis upon the specific qualities of spaces, the idiosyncratic



character of Hulot and his nostalgic living environment have been highly valued.

Finally, we would like to mention Lefebvre's notion about abstraction and discontinuity as two indispensable qualities of modernity. The modern architecture and cityscape, exemplified by the modern villa in *My Uncle* and city scenes of *Playtime*, are self-evidently abstraction. As for the discontinuity, it can be seen from the different life style of Hulot and his sister in *My Uncle*, and sensed from almost all the Hulot's unfitting behaviors in *My Uncle* and *Playtime*. This discontinuity is also a discontinuity of mindset. It could cause Hulot's unpredicted actions of disorientation. Lefebvre also mentions that the modernity causes conflicts between private and public, as well as between everyday life and higher authorities. In both films, Hulot is the perfect embodiment of these conflicts. In the restaurant scene of *Playtime*, Hulot gradually deconstructs the entertainment place of modernity, and ends with a kind of social integration and unexpected freedom for every participant. Here the director seems to point out the conflicts mentioned by Lefebvre and suggest a fantasy-like resolution.

#### IV. Yang and the Postmodern Cityscape

This section focuses on Yang's feature film *A One and a Two* (2000). In the peak of his creative years, Yang worked out this insightful film concerning our general human condition and social transformation. It provides a possibility to explore the essence of postmodern social structures and spatial metamorphosis. The film's tone, like the poetic title of an essay written by Stan Lai, is of "luminosity in the darkness." (Lai, 2008:3) Lai, Yang's friend and himself a director, states that:

Even when the urban Asian landscape mushroomed out of frame, enveloping everything in its soulless haze, even with the human soul reduced to a dot in the blur, the flicker remained, a diminishing but irreplaceable speck in the waste...The medium of film is a composite of light, shadows and darkness in motion. The films of Edward Yang have always been about darkness and light. An overwhelming darkness; a frail but passionate light.

This statement is a sensational brief of *A One and a Two*, especially for its specific social milieu and spatial landscape. In the context of spatial transformation and cinematic representation, the study would like to add one of architect Steven Holl's design concepts to further argue Yang's cinematic representation. In Holl's essay "Question of Perception- Phenomenology of Architecture," he writes that:

*We must consider space, light, color, geometry, detail, and material as an experiential continuum...and ultimately we cannot readily break perception into a simple collection of geometries, activities, and sensations... A complex interlocking of time, light, material, and detail creates the 'whole' of cinema wherein we can no longer distinguish individual elements.* (Holl, 1994:45-46)



Holl's "whole" is a multiple one directed toward our perception of both cinema and architecture. This sensation of experiential continuum, which is implied on the creation of a permeating aura of wholeness induced by different vectors, is omnipresent in *A One and a Two*. The film's narrative structure creates a specific nostalgia zone for its cinematography, in which city's socio-spatial transformations are brought to our recognition. Its multiple themes and distinctive characters make it a forerunner of postmodern aesthetic, under which Taipei's contemporary cityscape formed, represented and experienced.

*A One and a Two* opens with a scene of wedding party spreading out amid serene greenery, following a tremendous density of incidents and episodes happens during a comparatively short time period. The combination and permutation of events and individuals are staged on contemporary Taipei city. In terms of spatial representation, the multiplicity of people, themes and incidents invoke ideas related to architectural theorist Tschumi's statement on the design of Parc de la Villette (Tschumi, 1987). In the project, Tschumi employs point, line and surface as the elements of spatial formation, and event, movement and space as different ingredients to create a new combination of urban experience. His main intention seems to lie on the interactions between people and those elements. This urban design device is analogous to Yang's cinematic presentation for they both are about spatial implications and new possibilities of social interpretations. The spatial devices which Yang employs are manifold and meticulous. Taking Ting Ting and Fatty's dating scene as example, it takes place under elevated motorway, and Fatty's deceitful voice-over accompanies the red traffic light turning to green. A drama of teenagers' romance resonates our general experiences with a hue of contemporary urban life. On the other cut, we follow Ting Ting's gaze from the balcony of a high-floored apartment to Lili's mother, framed by a window and talking into a mobile, and to the bird view of Taipei cityscape, ending with Lili and Fatty's dating scene under the elevated motorway. The floating of camera, the possibility of storytelling, and the contemporary cityscape mix into a reflection of our daily life, with all the possibilities of social interactions. The use of specific spatial devices as backdrop to emphasize the character's emotion and social condition is obvious everywhere in the film. The change of cityscape and spatial setting, such as the interior and furniture, reveal the director's perception of people and society, which subtly floats through this poetic film.

One of the film's postmodern traits is double coding, which means to allow ambiguity and irony. (Hutcheon, 1986:192) The name of the protagonist's son, Yang Yang, could be the director's reflection of budding artistic talent; Ting Ting is both the sweetheart of her family and the explorer for her new social role; Lili is a multiple-faced femme fatale; Min Min lives a dutiful life without fulfilling her own wish. This naming of characters parallels cinematic devices such as the overlapping of two different



story lines: the voice-over of NJ and his girlfriend in Tokyo's setting is used as backdrop of Ting Ting's dating with Fatty in Taipei; the contemporary Japanese park scenes accompany the nostalgic voice-over of NJ; and Ota's on-site piano playing mixes with his conversation with NJ. All these scenes act as stages to reflect specific themes of different story lines. This double coding, sometime with surreal aura, could also be sensed by Yang Yang's infatuation with the girl. The enemy-in-public and lover-in-private gradually embed in Yang Yang's mind and reach to a climax as he plunges into swimming pool. Moreover, Yang Yang's watching goddess-like profile of the girl in a dark room with artificial thunder light might also be a double coding scene of the femme fatale, who possesses both the image of an innocent girl and the temple of thunder light.

Another postmodern trait of redefining memory and nostalgia is also evident. NJ's eating in a spontaneous street place with collages, surrounding by brick structure and traditional street furniture, might reflect old way of life and doing business. The banquet setting in Grand Palace Hotel, decorated with traditional textiles and patterns, is anticipating a traditional wedding event. But the pregnant bride and the disturbance caused by A-Di's long-time girlfriend upset the traditional setting. One of the most poetic memories is created by the walking together of Ting Ting and Lili framed by elegant trees. This harmonious scene is later deconstructed by Lili, Tang Tang and Fatty's complicated relationships. The notion of redefining memory, especially the modernism memory highlighted by Tati's identical office boxes and residential units in *Playtime*, is emphasized by showing contemporary urban box-like office buildings floating through Tokyo's cityscape. The significance of temporality and spatiality of postmodern cityscape is well depicted.

Furthermore, the improvisation of the formation of contemporary Taipei urban places are delicately staged. Besides the above-mentioned street eating place, the space under the elevated motorway becomes main location for teenagers' love stories. Sequence of plots happens under the elevated motorway according to processing time, and that makes this awkward site an essential public place. Another space possesses similar importance is the elevator-front of the apartment. People chat, meet, kiss, hide and exchange information in front of it. These busy social activities make it main communicative place of all these urbanite. Shortly, *A One and a Two* could be interpreted as a postmodern film, set on a postmodern cityscape, telling postmodern sensation and social transformation. Many of the film's merits lie on the recapture of themes and emotions from the socio-spatial transformation of Taipei's speeding urbanization, and the interpretation of its hybrid culture such as Taipei's adoption of American-style chain stores while still preserving some traditional values.

Likewise, the film's starting of a wedding and ending of a funeral in the same locale, and the



"complexity and contradiction"<sup>3</sup> of these kinds of scenes imply the intention of a well-devised grand film. Yang's contemporary narratives, with cunning flashback of modern era and fragmentary retrospect of postmodern scenarios, not only create memories of the past, but offer a promising perspective for the future. In some ways, there even is a hue of postmodern "nostalgia for the present" (Jameson, 1991:279) floating through his works.

To sum up, the aforementioned three postmodern notions by Baudrillard, Jameson and Lyotard will be attested again. In Yang's film, the 'simulacrum' from Baudrillard's notion plays a critical role. For example, there are flickering cityscapes at night or their reflections on glasses accompanying people who think or talk to each other. The flowing nightscape is proximate to the image of simulacrum because it seems to dissimulate both something and nothing. Take Baudrillard's notion as reference, Yang's depiction of nightscape is more like the simulation but representation, because it seems to reflect the image but reality. In other words, Yang's depiction of nightscape is dreamlike, weightless and perpetually flowing. Moreover, Yang's film oozes out a special feeling of nostalgia, which could be sensed from many staging details such as the spatial aura of wedding banquet, accidental reunion with old girl friend and the family members' compassion toward each other. The culmination of this kind of nostalgia can be seen in the scene of grandmother's coma, where every family member has to talk to her. This representation of emotion and nostalgia is deeply implanted in people's minds and showed up in unconscious manners. It also attests Baudrillard's idea that "when the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning." As for Jameson's notion on postmodernism and consumer society, he had mentioned a kind of film with nostalgia mode. This kind of film is a particular practice of pastiche, which Jameson recognizes as blank parody, parody that has lost its sense of humor. In this sense, *A One and a Two* is a film with nostalgia mode since its emotional representation and social appropriateness seem to imitate a specific era which happened in Taipei's past. In some particular moments, the audience could even encounter a sense of déjà vu. Besides, Jameson concerns postmodernism and city in that our perceptual equipment cannot match the mutation in built space. In *A One and a Two*, the family of the protagonist lives in an apartment building, where the normal communication of everyday life is often taken in the small area in front of the elevator. This kind of situation has been, according to Jameson, "a mutation in the object, unaccompanied as yet by any equivalent mutation in the subject." Jameson's another crucial statement is about the aesthetic of

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<sup>3</sup> Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture is considered one of the most important architectural literatures on the topic of postmodernism. The book is written by Robert Venturi and published by The Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1966. The main concepts of the book such as double-functioning element, contradiction juxtaposed, and the obligation toward the difficult whole might help to depict Yang's cinematic works.



consumer society. He believes that the emergence of postmodernism is closely related to the emergence of late, consumer or multinational capitalism. Our contemporary social system has begun to lose its capacity to retain its own past, has begun to live in a perpetual present and in a perpetual change that obliterates traditions. In this light, *A One and a Two* possesses a standpoint that it precisely depicts the loss of tradition such as in the cases of dying grandmother and disoriented mother, as well as the protagonist's impossibility to go back to his old lover. Finally, Lyotard's notion of discarding metanarratives and emphasizing individual and heterogeneous experiences can be evidently noticed in *A One and a Two*. All the family members of the protagonist own their own different lives and pursuit various goals. Although the protagonist tries to stick on traditional value, he still runs into a temptation to go back to his old lover. The wife of the protagonist is confused with her job and everyday life, and chooses to go to retreating temple for cultivation. The daughter comes across her first love experience and becomes more mature after that. The son develops his artistic talent by means of camera and encountering his first femme fatale. There is a multiple value system and the individual is given the freedom to development different life style. Moreover, Lyotard considers that the postmodern would be that, in modern, puts forward the unrepresentable. In *A One and a Two*, when the protagonist decides that he will not leave the family for old lover, he makes a difficult decision that may imply an insightful understanding of life. This is a situation that makes the unrepresentable (in the film, it could be the ambiguous and uncanny feeling that the protagonist feels) felt, and, take Lyotard's words as reference, Yang is "working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what will have been done."

## V. Conclusion: The Nexus of Spatiality and Temporality

The study uses six critical thinkers' notions about modernity and postmordernity as backdrop to show how Yang and Tati's films can be used as vivid examples to catch the insight of the social-spatial transformation of cities.

The main result has been elaborated in previous two sections. In this final section, we would like to point out that to present the urban transformation by films, the main ingredients are time and space, as well as the "event," which is similar to plots and storylines. With specific time and space as backdrop, the "event," or incident, is where the cinema expresses its critical thinking and, in the case of studied three films, shows the tremendous transformation on cityscapes. The "event" is the nexus of spatiality and temporality. Both Yang and Tati use it in their specific ways to suit specific purposes.

In fact, Yang's *A One and a Two* is packed with incidents, which are those emotional events taking place in daily life. This superb ensemble not only covers a family's important events such as marriage,



birth and death but also other events of daily life. The relationship between daily-life's temporality and cityscape's spatiality has been stated in Henri Lefebvre's essay "See from the Window:"

...*With its diverse spaces affected by diverse temporalities...* (Lefebvre, 1996: 224)

On the other hand, Yang's tempo-spatial practice has strong sociologist's precision. In *A One and a Two*, wedding, birth and death are intertwined with courtship rituals, mid-life crises, coping with the failures of relatives and friends and regretting lost opportunities (Rayns, 2001:53-54). This overlapping, juxtaposition and superimposing of events are complementary with socio-spatial transformation of cityscapes. To further look into the essence of event in cinematic performance, we would like to quote architect Bernard Tschumi's statement in "Spaces and Events:"

...*the inevitable "mediatization" of architectural activity... cinematic devices replace conventional description. Architecture becomes the discourse of events as much as the discourse of spaces...And we gradually increases the complexity by introducing literary parallels and sequences of events.* (Tschumi, 1996:149)

In Tati's *Playtime*, the modernist reconstructs the city; in Yang's *A One and a Two*, the postmodernist concepts of intertextuality, multiple reading and dual coding reassemble the fragmentary social and spatial tapestries into an allegorical story of redemption and salvation. In both Tati and Yang's films, new codes of assembling events are places in new urban situation, which is evident on new social landscape. Modernism and Postmodernism could be a dialectic and interrelated continuum, where the multiplicity of tempo-spatial themes submerges in the vortex of human being's everyday existence.

Additionally, this comparative study could be a cross-cultural investigation aimed at finding out narrative and interpretative possibilities between Western and Eastern cinematic performances. In some ways, Yang uses *A One and a Two* to reject modern orthodoxy which is represented and criticized by Tati's films. This orthodoxy is often attacked for its reduction to minimalist in formal operations. On the other hand, Yang's work is enriched by its multiple reading and dual coding with the connotation of intertextuality. This intertextuality dissolves modern thinking into postmodern context and creates a cinematic scene of hybridization. The unfolding of postmodern scenarios in Taipei's spatial context reveals an anxiety in finding temporal continuity in Taipei's cityscape. The disjunction of everyday existence and historical memory could be one of the main reasons causing family members' disassociation in *A One and a Two*. This polemic viewpoint may encourage people to rethink the possibility of connecting space and time together. The postmodern issues such as the fragmentation of social network and family experience could engender an urgent need to reconsider the essence of our everyday existence, and reconstruct our living place as a nexus of spatiality and temporality.

The argument of cinema as a form of social practice and spatial representation is symptomized by



its content of tempo-spatial transformation affecting on the people and cityscape. The nexus of time and space is attested by the micro-history of Hulot's personal legend in Tati's *My Uncle* and *Playtime*, as well as NJ's family in Yang's *A One and a Two*. While cinema is based on a context of social experience, it explicitly shows the connection between the geography of place and the transformation of time. As characters move through the city, they experience the urban topography formed by a spatially organized social network. Cinema creates a tangible vision of reality through various scenarios and provides a channel leading to a perception of tempo-spatial representation, thus improving our fragmentary knowledge of cityscapes. This nexus of spatiality and temporality could be a cinematic mapping of social and spatial practices. It goes beyond Kevin Lynch's mapping method (Lynch, 1960) which pays attention to the perception of physical environment, and has close relation to Fredric Jameson's aesthetic of cognitive mapping (Jameson, 1990) which has profound social concern.





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