Thinking Life through Cinema 生死愛慾看電影 Louis Lo 3 Oct 2016

Lecture 1: What is Happiness? Thinking life through *That Day, on the Beach* (dir. Edward Yang)

1. A woman’s story

Qing Qing, Jia-Li, Jia-Li’s mother, Jia Li’s college friend

Men’s stories are told through the eye (and narrativized by) Jia Li:

Her brother Jia-Sen, their father, her husband De-Wei, and De-Wei’s college friend and boss Ah-Cai

Does the film take up a feminist position?

2. The narrative is a framed story. How many stories are given? Whose stories? In what way they are framed?

3. The death of the ‘fathers’

The death of Jia-Li’s father

The death of De-Wei: unknown and irrelevant

The death of Jia-Sen: sudden understanding (‘epiphany’) of something important on his dead bed. Touching

Montaigne (1533-1592): ‘To philosophize is to learn to die’

‘Cicero says that to philosophize is nothing else but to prepare for death.’

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Was0Wn8eZGs

4. What is happiness?

5. Existential awareness: absurdity and suicide

Camus: ‘There is but one truly serious philosophical problem and that is suicide’ (*The Myth of Sisyphus* 11).

Throwness, absurdity, freedom

6. Further readings:

*Yi Yi*, dir. Edward Yang.

Jostein Gaarder, *Sophie’s World: A Novel about the History of Philosophy* (Berkley Books, 1995)

Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, trans. Justin O’Brien (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000).

Susan Neiman, *Why Grow Up? Philosophy in Transit* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2014).

李天命: 《存在主義概論》（臺北:臺灣學生書局，1977）

陶國璋:《生命坎陷與現象世界》（香港:中華書局，1995）

Lecture 2: How to grow old happily? Death in Ozu’s *Tokyo Story* (1953) 12 Oct 2016

1. Opening and ending sequences

2. Shukichi’s quotes:

Shukichi: If I had known things would come to this, I’d have been kinder to her.

Hirayama Shukichi: So … this is the end, then (*Kore de oshimai kana*?)

Shukichi: When a daughter marries, it is finished (*oshimai ja*).

3. Railway journeys: Tokyo, Atami, Osaka, Onomichi

4. The mise-en-scène:

- static, keen-level shots

- shooting from 360 degree

- empty shots

- the only exterior tracking shot: the old couple resting on a curb at a temple the day after they come back from the Atami resort.

5. The question of the past

6. Questions:

Is Shige (the older daughter) really selfish?

Is Noriko (widowed daughter-in-law) really selfless (she says she is *zurui* – crafty, trickster)?

Is Keizō (the youngest son) guilt of not being able to see his mother before she dies?

Does Tomo ‘knows’ that she is dying?

Lecture 3: What is love? Alienation in *Le Notte* (1961, dir. Antonioni) 17 Oct 2016

1. Opening sequence: Up and down

2. Lidia’s walking (excursion) in the city

3. Woman’s story: Lidia and Valentina

4. Scale: architecture vs. human beings

5. Alienation:

* C14th:
  + an action of estranging or state of estrangement
    - In relation to a cutting-off or being cut-off from God, or to a breakdown of relations between a man or a group and some received political authority
* C15th:
  + insanity
* C20th:
  + The alienation of formal property
  + The alienation of affection
* Freud on alienation
  + Man is estranged from his essential nature
  + Part of the price paid for civilization
* Hegel and Marx
  + Bourgeois vs the working class
  + The capital mode of production
  + The workers lose both the product of his labour and his sense of his own productive activity, following the expropriation of both by capital
  + Eg. *entfremdung* (estrangement) of persons in competitive labour and production
* Powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, self-estrangement
* The city as a site of alienation:
  + Not in the sense of social alienation but that men is estranged from a real, natural inheritance
* The modern city is
  + made up and arbitrary
  + filled with construction from which something transcendental is felt to be missing
* The city is a cause for anxiety

Other suggested films:

《某種愛的記錄》 (*Cronaca di un amore*) (1950)

「疏離（愛情）三部曲」:

* + 《情事》*L'avventura* (The Adventure, 1960)
  + 《夜》*La notte* (The Night, 1961)
  + 《蝕》 *L'eclisse* (The Eclipse, 1962)

《紅色沙漠》(*Red Desert*, 1964)

《春光乍洩》(*Blow Up*, 1966)

《雲上的日子》*Beyond the Clouds* (1995, w/ dir. Wim Wenders)

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