



# Urban Migrants &

Chance Encounters in and away from a PM City

《流浪神狗人》 (God Man Dog 陳芯宜)

*Postmodern City Films & Global Flows*



# Outline

1. Global Risk Society
2. Postmodern Urban Films: Chance Encounters and Migrants in a Postmodern city
  - 《流浪神狗人》 *God Man Dog*



# Risk Society

- Society organized in response to Risk
- **Anthony Giddens**: a risk society is "a society increasingly preoccupied with **the future** (and also with safety), which generates the notion of risk"; Expert System = we need to trust
- **Ulrich Beck**: "a systematic way of dealing with **hazards and insecurities** induced and introduced by modernization itself (Beck 1992:21)
- Textbook: human-made, anticipated



# Global Risk Society

- 1. ecological, economic, technological, biochemical, terrorist, informational (examples: See [Global Risk reports](#))
- 2. **3 attitudes** – denial, apathy and transformation
- 3. **3 features** – de-localization, in-calculableness, non-compensability
- → **risk and inequality**: asymmetry between decision makers and those affected
- → **a common world** where each of us share some civil responsibilities.

# 3 Kinds



From outside  
God or Nature

**Threat**  
& Danger

Prediction  
w/ Probability  
Calculus & Insured

Risk in  
Modernity

**Manufactured**  
Dangers

Incalculable, Unpredictable  
& not Insurable

# In terms of Impact

2017—

**Weapon**  
**Extreme**  
**Weather**  
**Water**  
**Natural**  
**Disaster**  
**Climate**  
**Change**

Top 5 Global Risks in Terms of Impact

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
1st	Asset price collapse	Asset price collapse	Asset price collapse	Asset price collapse	Fiscal crises	Major systemic financial failure
2nd	Retrenchment from globalization	Retrenchment from globalization (developed)	Retrenchment from globalization (developed)	Retrenchment from globalization (developed)	Climate change	Water supply crises
3rd	Interstate and civil wars	Slowing Chinese economy (<6%)	Oil and gas price spike	Oil price spikes	Geopolitical conflict	Food shortage crises
4th	Pandemics	Oil and gas price spike	Chronic disease	Chronic disease	Asset price collapse	Chronic fiscal imbalances
5th	Oil price shock	Pandemics	Fiscal crises	Fiscal crises	Extreme energy price volatility	Extreme volatility in energy and agriculture prices
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	
	Major systemic financial failure	Fiscal crises	Water crises	Failure of climate-change mitigation and adaptation	Weapons of mass destruction	
	Water supply crises	Climate change	Rapid and massive spread of infectious diseases	Weapons of mass destruction	Extreme weather events	
	Chronic fiscal imbalances	Water crises	Weapons of mass destruction	Water crises	Water crises	
	Diffusion of weapons of mass destruction	Unemployment and underemployment	Interstate conflict with regional consequences	Large-scale involuntary migration	Major natural disasters	
	Failure of climate-change mitigation and adaptation	Critical information infrastructure breakdown	Failure of climate-change mitigation and adaptation	Severe energy price shock	Failure of climate-change mitigation and adaptation	

■ Economic 
 ■ Environmental 
 ■ Geopolitical 
 ■ Societal 
 ■ Technological

Top 5 Global Risks in Terms of Likelihood

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Breakdown of critical information infrastructure	Asset price collapse	Asset price collapse	Asset price collapse	Storms and cyclones	Severe income disparity
Chronic disease in developed countries	Middle East instability	Slowing Chinese economy (<6%)	Slowing Chinese economy (<6%)	Flooding	Chronic fiscal imbalances
Oil price shock	Failed and failing states	Chronic disease	Chronic disease	Corruption	Rising greenhouse gas emissions
China economic hard landing	Oil and gas price spike	Global governance gaps	Fiscal crises	Biodiversity loss	Cyber attacks
Asset price collapse	Chronic disease, developed world	Retrenchment from globalization (emerging)	Global governance gaps	Climate change	Water supply crises
2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	
Severe income disparity	Income disparity	Interstate conflict with regional consequences	Large-scale involuntary migration	Extreme weather events	
Chronic fiscal imbalances	Extreme weather events	Extreme weather events	Extreme weather events	Large-scale involuntary migration	
Rising greenhouse gas emissions	Unemployment and underemployment	Failure of national governance	Failure of climate-change mitigation and adaptation	Major natural disasters	
Water supply crises	Climate change	State collapse or crisis	Interstate conflict with regional consequences	Large-scale terrorist attacks	
Mismanagement of population ageing	Cyber attacks	High structural unemployment or underemployment	Major natural catastrophes	Massive incident of data fraud/theft	

**In Terms of Likelihood:**  
**Weather**  
**Migration**  
**Natural Disaster**  
**Terrorist Attack**  
**Data Fraud/Theft**



Risks in Taiwan <https://dmap.ncdr.nat.gov.tw/>

# 災害潛勢地圖網站



# The Characters in *God Man Dog*

(1) Hand model Ching (青青) and her architect husband Xiung (阿雄): marriage problem; infant death

(2) Yellow Bull (黃牛角), his wandering gods (神明車), and A-Xian (阿仙 a homeless orphan)

(3) A-Yung (阿勇) and his wife from Yung kang Tribe (台東永康部落),

(4) his daughter Savi & son Abus



# God Man Dog: Accident or Risk?

**Accidents:** Postpartum Depression, Infant Death, Car Accidents, Brother's death

**Manufactured:**

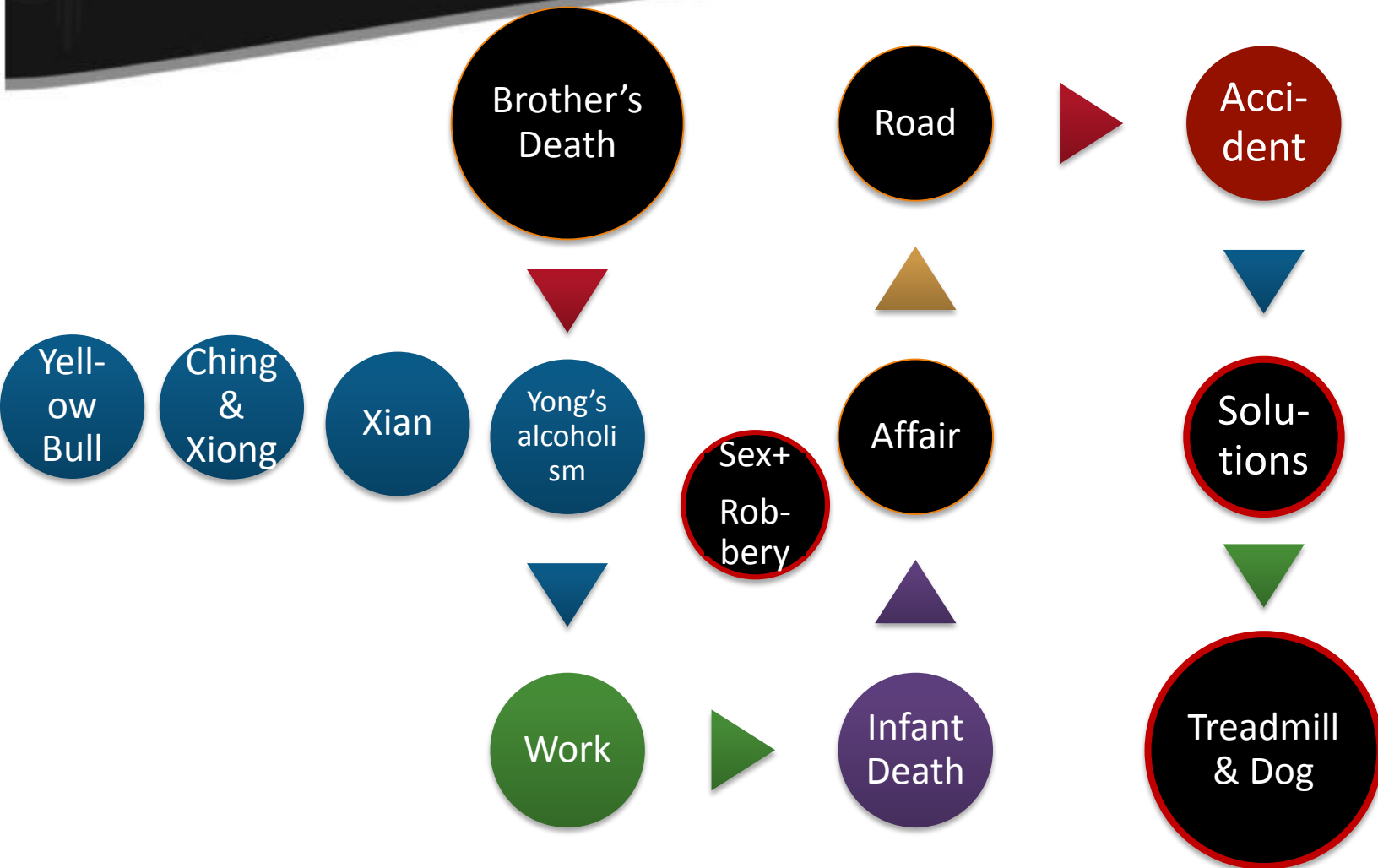
- **hierarchy & gender exploitation** caused by multinational **capitalism**
- **purebred dogs**
- **busy husband**
- **migrants & Homeless' difficulties**





# Accidents &

# Risks





# God Man Dog: Discussion Questions

1. **G5** How does this film present the impact of **globalizing consumer culture**? How does it suggest its hierarchy or system of exploitation?
2. **G2, 7** What are the **problems of each of the four groups of characters**? How do they get their problems **solved**? Is it a matter of **chance, or choice**? (**G2** a. Savi & Friend; b. Ching & Xiong; **G7** c. Yellow Bull & Xian; d. A-Yong)
3. **G1** How do these characters deal with **strangers** (including the runaway Thai laborers) in their experience on the road?
4. **G6** What roles do the **statues and gods** play in this film?
5. **G3** How about **dogs**?
6. **G4** Close analysis of the filmic techniques (for instance, the opening and the closing)



*God Man Dog & Taipei*

**IN META-LOGISTIC SYSTEM, OR  
GLOBAL CAPITALIST SYSTEM**



# Global Commercial Culture & its Hierarchy

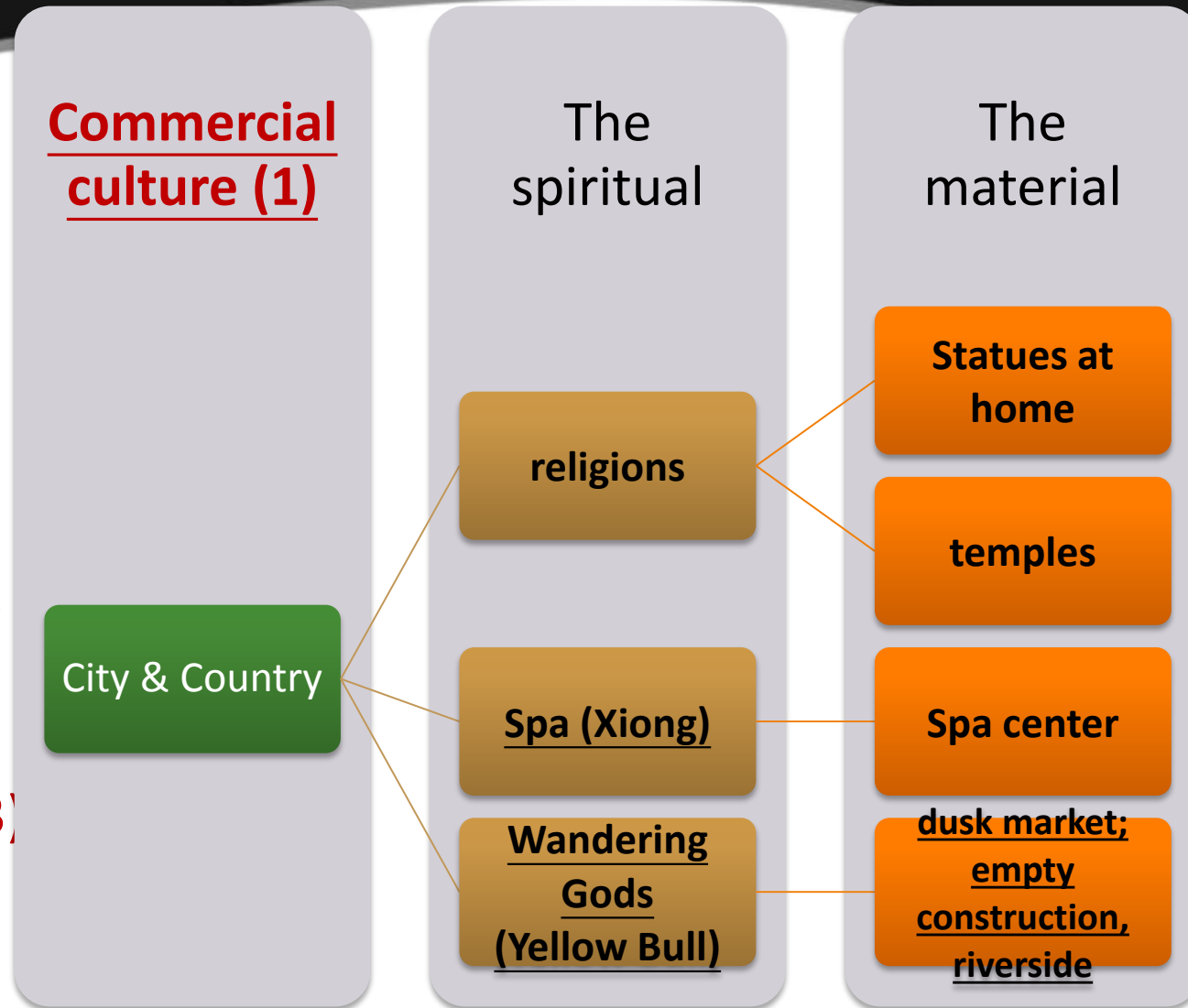
## Commercial Culture

### (2) Advertising industry

- The powerful: bosses & companies
- hand model Ching & leg model
- Aborigines as food/flower truck driver (migrant works)
- Ads, Lucky draw & Eating contest

### Commercial Culture (3)

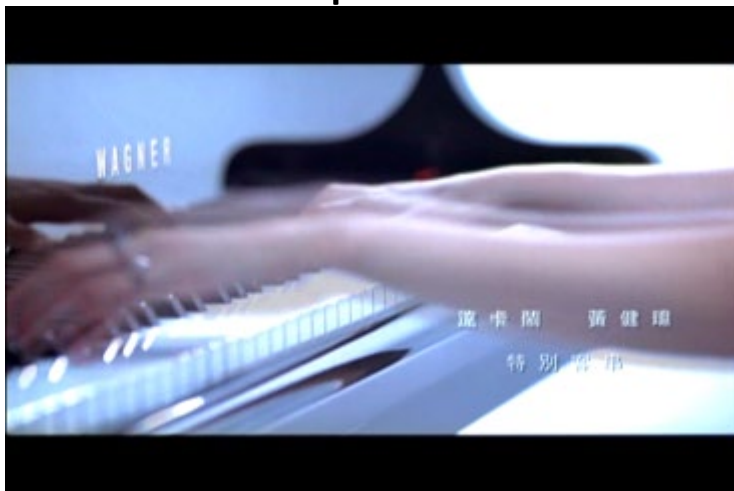
- sex industry (Endo Shihori)
- purebred





# Overall Commodification & Urbanization

- model: fragmentation of women's bodies; e.g. Ching's hand, and Han's (Savi's friend) leg
- truck delivery of produce to Taipei
- Spa center occupying agorigine land for urbanites' spiritual relief...





# Overall Commodification & Urbanization

2. a far-reaching circle (from Taipei to Yungking Triave (永康部落 in Taitong)
  - in the metalogistical space (超物流空間) which transcends the boundaries of cities or nations.
  - “Urbanism is, to a large extent, a vast metalogistics unfolding both **in place and in motion**. Cities are pivotal sites at which the everyday exchanges between **built and unbuilt** environments occur [city and nature]. Yet cities also are where much of what transpires is regarded as **international relations** between different spatially divided economies, governments, and societies.” (Luke 159)



# Overall Commodification: The Ads – Fragmenting human bodies





# Ads : Duplicated Images of Faces





# Two Kinds of “Ads” : Rings and Religion



Religion: more  
later





# The Village Urbanized → Spa Center occupying the sea



納入養生園的規劃中



# Aborigines' Resistance to Housing Removal





# Value System and Resistance in Meta-Logistics

The value differences of the following commodities  
Revealing class differences

- Peach -- 100 a piece, precious for A-Yong; rotten and thrown out in the studio
  - Kila 公仔 – 500 or 6000 a piece
1. Resistance to commodification of homeland (拆遷抗議)
  2. Migrants' survival tactics
    - a. Stealing from the sex clients;
    - b. Selling companies' lucky draw gifts
    - c. Entering eating contests



© The characters' problems

**DISPLACEMENT**

**--PHYSICAL & EMOTIONAL**

# Physically Displaced: Stray dogs and Buddha Statue Car 神明車

- **Stray dogs:** seen in the neighborhood of Ching's apartment building, in the mountains
- **Statues:** forsaken
- **Homeless:** Xian (阿仙 1:11), “a ghost since birth” (沒有家，是幽靈，生下來就死了。)
- **Physically Challenged**





# Emotionally Displaced

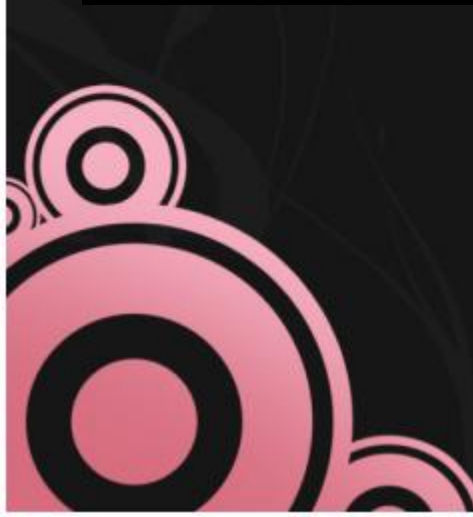
1. A-Xiong busy with his work;
2. Ching – postpartum depression
3. A-Xiong Masturbates to release himself



# Broken Family: Emotionally Displaced Couple

1. Ching –tries to help herself → Infant's sudden death
2. Seek comfort in religion without success → affair → self-injury

- 34:00 infant death



# Broken Family: Alcoholism and Economy

1. A-Yong: alcoholism
2. Savi: forced to go to Taipei to practice kick boxing (散打拳擊)



1:03 Endo Shihori 援交



# Religion as Solutions?

- Ching 青 – 1) converting to a religion which rejects the other gods/statues 2) emotional astray
- Xian 阿仙 – share the peace charms (平安符) with the statues
- Yellow Bull 黃牛角 – 1:10 respecting gods; provides others with lucky charms **–more later**



- Commercial system of connections →

Leaving the City →

Accidents and Possible Dangers →

Communication, Rationalization & Good will

## **LOGIC OF CONNECTIONS**

# Urban Migrants & Chance Encounters



## Global Capitalist System

Physically/  
Emotionally Displaced

Migrant Laborers

Homeless

Benevo-  
lent/  
Respectful

Indifferent

Malignant



# Chance Encounter in Postmodern City Film

- plot development: flows and rapid movements → chance encounters and connections which are transient and non-kinship based
  - connections of good will or mutual support (some even romantic and fantastic) e.g. *Amelie*; *Yellow Bull*
  - Indifferent or unnoticed connections (at the restaurant; via commodities)
  - systemic exploitation, accident, [criminal acts; Lucy]
  - runaway – homeless, or from guilt and labor

# Chance Encounters → Possible Dangers in *God Man Dog*

- ◎ Theft (Yellow Bull), Confused Identities (Yong) & Car Crash (all) → deaths and law suits
- ◎ Rationalization –
  - 1) Ching – facing death; it could have happened to us; 手不過是手 (1:36); needs time for healing
  - 2) Yong --feeling guilty after the lawyer asks him to lie in order to look innocent → seen as a Filipino → caught by the police
  - 3) Yellow Bull : Money owed to the temple = peaches for the kid; earn money later for his artificial limb.
- ◎ Coincidence: gasoline for suicide → gasoline for Yellow Bull's truck
- ◎ None is the final solution to their problems.





# Solutions?

- By chance? With good will?
- OR—facing one’s limitations in order to re-establish one’s self and relations
  1. self – responsibility and lack (Savi & Ching)
  2. limitations— Death and Other (Yong)
  3. Ways of facing the limits – rationalization or “hospitality” (Yellow Bull)



# Expression of Concern



# Expression of Good will at a City's Margin



弟弟，我跟你買全部的泡麵

# Treadmill (跑步機) as lifestyle and something to win & sell





- Showing Concern

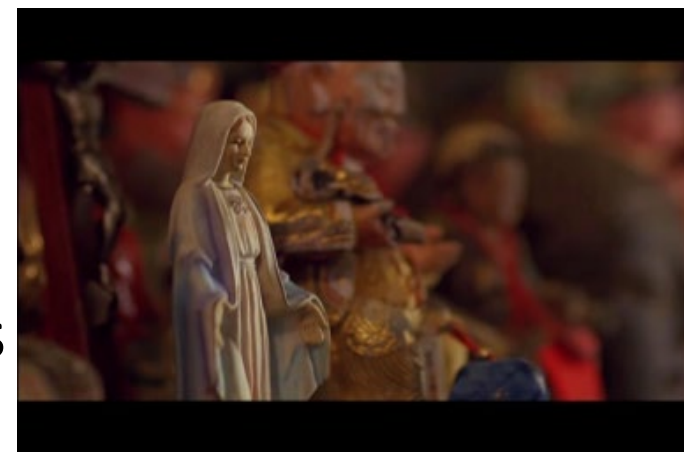
- Opening one's self

## CONNECTIONS IN GOOD WILL



# The Migrants' Good Will

- Migrants– not fully at home
- A-Mei's expression of concern
  - with Ching
  - with Xian
- Xian –sharing charms with
  - Statues,
- 黃牛角
  - “rescuing” and housing crosses statues





# Yellow Bull & Statues



51:03

1:02





# Yellow Bull and Statues of different kinds







# Wandering Gods and Dogs



1:10  
The end





# Globalization & The Face of the Other

- Globalization → non-place
- Taipei Globalized and thus de-localized?
- Migrants and floating signs can be recontextualized –
- **In different networks**; such as the commercial system, that of chance and choice, or meaningful connections and social network
- **Who is the Other in the film? All the migrant workers and Xian and ...**



# Guan-yin's Face as another Face of the Other

- Postmodern Ethics: Face to face with the incomprehensible other, allowing otherness in me, the unspeakable in the speakable
- The face is present in **its refusal to be contained**. In this sense it cannot be comprehended, that is, encompassed. It is neither seen nor touch — for in visual or tactile sensation the identity of the I envelops the alterity of the object.... (Levinas 《Totality and Infinity》 , p194 )

# Quan-ying: Sympathy or Indifference?



CLIP 2-3

46:00



# Reference: 2008台北縣三鶯部落迫遷

(<http://www.cooloud.org.tw/tag/2008%E4%B8%89%E9%B6%AF%E9%83%A8%E8%90%BD%E8%BF%AB%E9%81%B7>)

- A film and a news report: <http://support-sanying.blogspot.com/>
- 看見天堂 Smile  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xdA5xwLouU8&feature=related>



# References

- Luke, Timothy W. "Codes, Collectives, and Commodities: Rethinking Global Cities as Metalogistical Spaces." *Global Cities: Cinema, Architecture, and Urbanism in a Digital Age*. Eds. Louise Krause, and Patrice Petro. Rutgers UP, 2003: 157-74.

