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A NEW LITERARY HISTORY

DAVID DER-WEI WANG &
CARLOS ROJAS, EDITORS

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PREFACE

David Der-wei Wang

Literature from Taiwan occupies one of the most contested zones in the mapping of modernity and modernization on Chinese culture. Two hundred miles southeast of mainland China, and sparsely populated before the sixteenth century, the island had traditionally been regarded as being located on the margins of Chinese politics and humanities. It would, nevertheless, serve as an unlikely pathway through which China entered a succession of global modernities. Between the sixteenth century and the late nineteenth, when China was undergoing a final dynastic cycle and settling into an increasingly confused stagnation, the island had already diverged onto a fateful path of its own. It was alternately inhabited or dominated by ruthless pirates, scheming exiles, venturesome settlers, and Ming loyalists followed by Qing pacifiers, to say nothing of Dutch and Spanish colonizers. In 1895, as a result of the Chinese defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War, Taiwan was ceded to Japan. Over the next five decades, the island became Japan's most treasured colony and a testing ground for Japanese cultural and political assimilation. In 1945, at the end of the Second Sino-Japanese War, Taiwan was returned to China; but then, reverting to its traditional role, Taiwan became the refuge of the Nationalist government after the Chinese Communists took over the mainland in 1949.

Thanks to these experiences, modern Taiwan literature is rich in conflicting legacies, impulses, and ideological forces. In many ways, it surpasses the mainland tradition when one pays attention to such matters as theoretical complexity and polemical intensity. Taiwan literature was first forced into its "modern" existence at the beginning of the twentieth century when Japan initiated its colonial regime. The next five decades were to see, in both writing and reading, strenuous conflict and compromise between colonial discourse and indigenous consciousness; between modern viewpoints achieved via Japanese mediation and revolutionary thoughts brought back from China; between fascination with the novelty of a colonizer's culture and loyalty to Chinese tradition. Taiwan was both "the Island of Beauty,"

or Formosa, as early foreign explorers saw it, and “the Orphan of Asia,” as viewed by Wu Zhuoliu, the pioneer of post-1945 Taiwan literature. So Taiwan literature came to illuminate an entire array of modern issues, ranging from postcolonial critique to oppositional cultural politics, from hybrid modernity to the circulation of cross-cultural capital—issues that continue to concern us today.

The year 1949 was, nevertheless, the greatest watershed in Taiwan’s literary and cultural experience of modernity. This island on the margins of China was suddenly thrust into the focus of Chinese political antagonism, and the “Orphan of Asia” found itself drafted into the vanguard of international anticommunism. The subsequent history of the twentieth century would only compound Taiwan’s changeable but always precarious world position, and literature would again contribute to, or be conditioned by, ongoing geopolitics. There would be no escape from issues like the dislocation of nationhood or the bifurcation of native soil or from modern intellectual maladies like identity angst and cultural ambivalence. And, despite Nationalist hegemony, Taiwan literature of the 1950s was already nurturing a generation of alternative voices. When the modernist poetry movement was launched in 1956, a recalcitrant and innovative discourse was established, however falteringly, in defiance of the mandate to produce anti-Communist literature. This modernism would prevail throughout the 1960s, meanwhile giving rise to an equally powerful dialogic counterpart—Taiwanese nativism.

Critics from both the Left and the Right, then and now, denigrate the modernist literature of 1960s Taiwan as selfish indulgence in personal nihilism or existentialism—and, most unforgivably, as disengagement from the current crisis. Looking back, these charges very well summarize the merits of the movement. Remarkable in a time of stifling political oppression and ideological fanaticism, the modernist movement in Taiwan, together with the subsequent rise of nativism, should be hailed for what it was: an unexpected achievement, particularly because it filled the void in mainland literature resulting from incessant political turmoil and the suppression of all independent experimentation.

Taiwan literature underwent a no less remarkable metamorphosis during the 1970s and the 1980s. The death of Chiang Kai-shek in 1975 triggered a cluster of important cultural and political events, starting with the highly politicized debate between nativism and modernism, and culminating in

the recognition by the United States of mainland China in 1979 and the government's crackdown on mass demonstrations for independence in the same year. Faced with the rise of the indigenous movement on the island and the reentry of China onto the stage of world politics, Taiwanese writers had to rethink their position by answering certain questions: How could they address their Chinese experience when another China had emerged to reclaim its cultural and literary authenticity? How could they inscribe a new literary subjectivity at both domestic and international levels, in opposition to the one sanctioned by the Nationalist discourse? How could they find a poetics, somehow beyond the existing one of nativism versus modernism, through which to represent these challenges?

These questions propelled Taiwanese literati to explore and write about Taiwan with a new range of tactics. Taboos were challenged and totems renegotiated. Issues arising from public and private spheres interplayed with unprecedented vigor. In the hands of writers such as Wang Wenxing and Li Yongping, a new iconoclasm was accomplished, in terms not only of conceptual radicalism but also of literal acts of graphic desecration. The search for, or disavowal of, the "authenticity" of the Chinese language proved to be a catalyst igniting further contestation. Nationalist myth could be deciphered as mere magical realism; Taiwan's colonial experience could induce self-mocking laughter. Gender, ethnic identity, sexuality, nationalism, environmentalism, diaspora, and expatriatism, among all too many isms, briefly engaged writers and readers, so compellingly that, in many cases, when the spasm of writing and reading came to an end, decisive political action followed. Finally, the lifting after forty years of martial law in 1987, followed by the boom of the media market and increasingly active cultural and commercial exchange across the Taiwan Straits, presaged the advent of a *fin de siècle* ecology.

When beheld from the perspective of comparative world literature, modern Taiwan literature is one of a select few examples that have experienced so much volatility and produced such a cornucopia of literary innovations. It is ironic that, in the English-speaking world, so much has been written about the hegemonic disasters of mainland cultural history, yet so little about the multifarious sociopolitical, cultural, and literary dynamics of Taiwan. Geopolitics, of course, has been a factor in the eclipse of the Taiwanese literary experience. But perhaps it is more attributable to the fact that we English speakers have yet to think about modernism with a truly polyphonic and

multi-topographic mind-set, one that is prepared to recognize forms of modernity that have no precedent in European experience. To talk about the opening up of Chinese literature in this, the new century, one must genuinely believe that Chinese writers have always been capable of complex and even contradictory thoughts, lifestyles, and textual representations and understand that the dissemination of words can no more be regulated by prescribed theories than the dissemination of power can be regulated by imposed boundaries.

This volume represents the first comprehensive survey in English of modern Taiwan literature since the end of the Second Sino-Japanese War. Its sixteen essays represent sixteen entryways into the complex network of this literature from 1945 to the present. Instead of formulating the issues and movements as a singular progressive line, the essays cross-reference one another in light of different government policies, communal tastes, and artistic trends. Together, they bring forward a complex chronology corresponding to a multifaceted Taiwanese cultural and political modernity. They collectively embrace four critical objectives: first, to critique the methodological frameworks that have constituted Taiwanese literary studies to date; second, to depict the enunciative endeavors, ranging from ideological treatises to avant-garde experiments, that have informed the discourse of Taiwanese cultural politics; third, to renegotiate time, temporality, and memory in the formation of the history of literary Taiwan; and, fourth, to observe the cartographic coordinates and spatial representations that have given form to the imaginary communities of Taiwan.

We hope that this volume will demonstrate that modern Taiwan literature has compounded volatile political and cultural circumstances into the generation of an actively circulating creative power. As a corollary, we believe that, if Chinese literature of the new century has renewed our sense of historicity, it has done so precisely through an innovative reconfiguration of history by means unanticipated among earlier writers and readers, not through a fulfillment of long-prophesied duties and achievements. *Writing Taiwan*, therefore, represents not merely a way to call attention to a Chinese literary terra incognita; writing Taiwan is a way of rewriting China.

INTRODUCTION

Carlos Rojas

Like many scholarly anthologies, this volume has its origins in a very specific point in time and space: an academic conference entitled “Writing Taiwan: Strategies of Representation” held at Columbia University in New York City from April 30 to May 2, 1998. Bringing together not only scholars of Taiwan literature but also prominent Taiwanese authors, including Zhang Dachun, Li Ang, and Ping Lu, this conference provided an occasion both to cast a retrospective glance back on the field of Taiwanese literary studies and to look forward to what future directions that field might take. At the same time, however, the spatiotemporal ground of the field of Taiwan literature itself was precisely one of the issues interrogated most energetically that weekend. What are the geographic and historical bounds of Taiwan literature? What are the cultural and political implications of any strategy that seeks to “write” those bounds? How might historical and geographic indeterminacies have left traces in the literary works themselves? Accordingly, the essays in this volume not only contain discussions of specific Taiwanese authors, works, and literary occasions from the 1930s to the present but also reflect in various ways on the question of what it means to use *Taiwan literature* as an analytic category in the first place.

The concept of *Taiwan literature* is itself grounded on something of a paradox. In an age in which literatures continue, by and large, to be defined, however awkwardly, by their national origin, the category Taiwan literature is located in an ambiguous epistemological hinterland. To begin with, it is grounded on a political fiction, but one that insistently and emphatically undercuts its own foundation. Furthermore, having spent half of the twentieth century as a Japanese colony and the other half in an umbilical, although highly self-conflicted, relation with the Chinese motherland, “Taiwan” effectively stands in the position of a (redoubled) colonial subject, mimicking the “imperial masters” in a way that defamiliarizes and challenges the ontological legitimacy of the category the nation-state itself. To put it another way, a recurrent concern throughout much of twentieth-century Taiwan litera-

ture is that of collective identity and cultural genealogy, as both individual authors and entire movements have alternately embraced and positioned themselves in opposition to China and Japan—with the result not only that “Taiwan” is in a supplemental, parasitic position with respect to its more hegemonic neighbors but, furthermore, that its own ambiguous status helps illuminate the constructedness of the naturalized category the nation-state that it mimics.

On the one hand, it is certainly true that, in the twentieth century, and particularly the latter half, Taiwan constituted a fairly autonomous literary community, in that many Taiwanese authors were directly or indirectly in communication with each other, while much “leftist” literature from the mainland (including the work of such canonical figures as Lu Xun and Mao Dun) was systematically proscribed. On the other hand, the diversity of the writers and the varieties of both textual form and subject matter that collectively make up the category Taiwan literature is enough to undermine all but the weakest claims to comparative homogeneity. A sense of this inherent diversity can be gained by considering the range of individual authors treated in this volume, a range that includes such figures as Yang Chichang, who studied Japanese literature in Tokyo in the early 1930s and did all his own poetic and fictional writing in Japanese; Li Yongping, who is an ethnic Chinese born in Malaysia and educated in Taiwan and the United States; and Liu Daren, who was born in mainland China and now holds a United Nations passport after having been effectively exiled from Taiwan in the 1970s on account of his political activism (see the essays by Joyce C. H. Liu, Carlos Rojas, and Yomi Braester, respectively). Despite the fact that Yang, Li, and Liu are all conventionally recognized as “Taiwanese” writers, there is no single necessary and sufficient condition that can serve to ground this common identity.

This volume seeks to explore and question not only the geographic bounds of Taiwan literature but also the chronological ones. Paralleling the fuzzy topographic boundaries of “Taiwan,” the literary subject matter considered here is also poised uneasily under the chronological rubric of *modern* Taiwan literature. At its simplest, this designation simply draws attention to the empirical fact that all the authors and works date from the twentieth century. However, this chronological convenience occludes a deep-rooted schism within the concept of the modern itself. In the early-twentieth-century period, aesthetic modernism was introduced into China and Taiwan

as an artistic and literary movement with a clear European genealogy. The embrace of the modern, therefore, came to involve a dual assertion of a break with the feudal fetters of traditional culture and a fascination with Western alterity. In the Taiwanese context, however, literary modernism also has a rather more specific significance as a movement that rose to visibility during the 1960s and is frequently contrasted with the cultural nostalgia of the nativist movement that followed it in the 1970s. At their extremes, modernism and nativism represent two very different attitudes toward how to yoke cultural-political concerns to aesthetic ones, and many of the essays in this volume draw on this terminological convenience even as they seek to critically interrogate the conventional understandings of these designations themselves (see, e.g., the essays by Fangming Chen, Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang, and Michelle Yeh).

Finally, the chronological indeterminacy of Taiwanese aesthetic modernism is further underscored by the ambiguous implications of its post-1960s legacy. Its original fascination with rarefied aesthetic concerns largely fell out of fashion during the 1970s and after, but modernism did not disappear from the map entirely, and several prominent writers, such as Wang Wenxing and Li Yongping (discussed in detail in the chapters by Chang and Rojas, respectively), continued to labor well into the late 1990s on vast literary projects that reflect no small degree of modernist influence. Read today, Wang's and Li's modernist works strike the reader as singularly anachronistic, as nostalgic returns to the forward-looking tendencies of an earlier era. This systematic untimeliness is particularly ironic in the case of the modernist movement since modernism had always (at least in theory) prided itself on its historical "timeliness," even as the movements in Taiwan were, in part, themselves explicitly or implicitly modeled on the precedent of a European modernism that had already largely run its course.

In short, one might say that this volume as a whole is premised on an attitude of what Gayatri Spivak has labeled, in another context, *strategic essentialism*. That is to say, the essays tactically resurrect a series of conceptual categories (that of Taiwan literature itself, but also the panoply of internal chronological and thematic categories into which Taiwan literature may be divided) for academic, social, or quasi-political purposes, even after the epistemological validity of those categories has been brought into question. Alternatively, we could paraphrase Xiaobing Tang when, in his essay, he suggests that we embrace the term Taiwan literature precisely because

of its inherent semantic “ambiguity,” which refuses to reduce the plurality of Taiwan literature to a specific set of necessary and sufficient conditions (geographic, linguistic, ethnic, or other).

This antifoundational approach to Taiwan literature is also reflected in the title of the volume as a whole: *Writing Taiwan*, which is an imperfect translation of the Chinese phrase (and title of the original conference) *Wenxue Taiwan*. The latter phrase is itself a precise syntactic inversion of the term conventionally used to designate Taiwan literature (or Taiwanese literature): *Taiwan wenxue*. In titling this book, we have used the inverse construction as a reminder that the category Taiwan literature is never a straightforward given but is continually being reconstituted through the act of *writing* itself. For us, literature is not a transparent window into a preexisting sociocultural space (e.g., “Taiwan”); rather, it functions as a multiangled prism through which that same sociocultural space is refracted and contested. Similarly, the act of scholarly inquiry is never limited to mining the depths of preexisting orders of knowledge but necessarily participates in the construction and shaping of those same epistemological categories. In short, the expression *Writing Taiwan* stands as a useful reminder that “Taiwan” itself, as a social/cultural/political entity, is not a self-evident, preexisting category but a discursive and political construct that is continually being constituted and contested through a multifaceted process of “writing,” literary or otherwise. Our goal in this volume, therefore, is to use readings of a handful of prominent authors and literary phenomena to explore some of the issues involved in reading Taiwan literature and in “writing” Taiwan.

This volume is divided thematically into four interrelated parts. While the preceding considerations of the methodological and epistemological issues involved in the very act of writing about Taiwan literature color and inform all the essays, they are addressed most directly in the three essays in part 1. In part 2, the focus shifts from these sorts of meta-analytic issues to a consideration of the sociocultural grounds from which various specific traditions, genres, and literary movements sprang. The structure of the latter half of the volume then takes the provisional chronotope of modern Taiwan literature and breaks it down into its individual components of *chronos* and *topos*, or time and space. Specifically, part 3 turns to the twin themes of history and memory, together with the erasures and lacunae on which they are necessarily grounded. The essays in part 4 consider how the themes of

geography, cartographic representation, and spatial/psychic circulation are developed and challenged in the works of a number of Taiwanese authors. Within these broad thematic groupings, each part draws on a broad range of perspectives and theoretical approaches as well as on material from a variety of historical periods.

Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang opens the volume with a short position paper reflecting on the analytic strategies implicit in the act of “writing Taiwan” itself. Echoing Edward Said’s well-known postulate concerning the inherent impossibility of a purely “objective” pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, Chang presents a critical survey of the twentieth-century genealogy of the analytic category Taiwan literature and details how it has been perpetually intertwined with “other” sociopolitical considerations. Like Said, Chang concludes that a recognition of such imbrications of political and scholarly tendencies is not a justification for abandoning the object of scholarly inquiry altogether but a demand for more careful and self-critical awareness of the practical ramifications and implications of one’s research.

Fangming Chen is one of the most prolific and influential Taiwan-based scholars working on the topic of Taiwan literature, and his essay engages more specifically with the question of historical periodization that has been so prevalent both in broad surveys of Taiwanese literary history and in more detailed engagements with specific authors or works. Chen critiques the widespread tendency in Taiwanese literary studies to force literary works into boilerplate analytic categories based on what are perceived to have been the general thematic and stylistic tendencies (e.g., nativism, modernism) of the decade in which they happened to have been composed. This periodizing critique intersects with another line of argument in Chen’s essay, concerning the relevance of the label postmodernism to contemporary Taiwanese literary and cultural production. The engagement with the concept postmodernism is highly ironic here as it not only is a historical category par excellence but also implicitly brings into question the validity of the sorts of historical grand narratives on which such categories are premised. Chen, for his part, contends that the application of the concept postmodernism to contemporary Taiwan literature amounts to a form of epistemological imperialism because it effectively ignores the historical, social, and cultural specificities out of which that literature has arisen. He argues, in short, that the contemporary burgeoning of counterhegemonic literary trends is more properly viewed in the context of Taiwan’s emergence from under the long

shadow of colonialism, rather than as a mere reprise of the West's earlier brush with postmodernism.

In the following essay, Xiaobing Tang similarly presents a critical overview of recent discussions of Taiwan literature from the past several decades. Tang addresses many of the same scholars and critics as does Fangming Chen and even takes issue with the unacknowledged nativist subtext of some of Chen's own earlier writings on the subject (suggesting that Chen silently reduces the category Taiwan literature to include only the rather more narrow subsection of works that conform to his own nativist sociopolitical sympathies). Tang is reluctant to end his essay with an overarching summary that would function as a new objective orthodoxy in place of the earlier scholarly interventions that he has critiqued and, instead, settles for a rather more modest conclusion, which, appropriately enough, is also intimately concerned with the problem of translation. Specifically, he addresses the issue of the preferred English translation of the Chinese term *Taiwan wenxue*. Of the two syntactic possibilities, Taiwanese literature and Taiwan literature, Tang notes that the former contains the seeds of a range of potential specific readings (e.g., literature *in* the "Taiwanese" dialect, or *by* native "Taiwanese" writers, etc.), each of which problematically forecloses a range of other potential interpretations. Instead, Tang supports the latter translation, precisely because of the ambiguity implicit in its syntax.

Whereas the essays in part 1 seek to interrogate the textual and paratextual components of Taiwan literature as a literary, academic, and sociopolitical field, those in part 2 deploy a similar array of methodological paradigms to analyze several of the individual genres, movements, and groups that collectively constitute Taiwan literature. These essays seek to interrogate the assumed sacrosanctity of literary production by exploring its inevitable complicity with cultural and political concerns. Each takes as its primary subject a literary movement or cultural phenomenon—to a greater or lesser extent, the category modernism—rather than focusing exclusively on a single author or literary work. In particular, each of the four essays engages, to a greater or lesser extent, with the category modernism. More, perhaps, than any other aesthetic movement, modernism is characterized by a paradoxical combination of engagement with and detachment from the historical conditions under which it emerged. As its name suggests, it sees itself as being rooted in the modern, the present, the here and now, and is typically presented as being a reflection of but also a response to the profound

social, technological, and aesthetic transformations to which the modern period has given rise. At the same time, however, modernism's historical self-identity is premised on a paradoxical perspective rooted in the future perfect, whereby the contemporary observer vicariously assumes the backward-looking perspective of imagined future observers.

In the first essay of this part, Joyce C. H. Liu considers the “perverse” writings of Yang Chichang, “the first Taiwanese modernist poet and novelist,” and specifically attends to their position in relation to a cluster of modernist debates in Taiwan during the 1930s. The historical context of these debates is interesting because, while they anticipate the 1960s Taiwanese modernist movement by several decades, they nevertheless coincide with one of the more prominent modernist movements in mainland China: Shanghai new perceptionism. Liu posits that, when Yang Chichang's work is regarded in its wider historical context, its apparently decadent and perverse components can be viewed in terms of the psychoanalytic category the abject, itself a displaced expression of a counterhegemonic challenge to a “totalitarian discursive field.”

In her essay, Michelle Yeh echoes Fangming Chen's earlier point regarding the inherent limitations of the stylistic categories into which conventional periodizations typically divide the heterogeneous terrain of Taiwan literature. Specifically, Yeh uses the 1950s journal *Modern Poetry Quarterly* as a prism through which to critically reexamine the relation between 1960s modernism and 1970s nativism. In so doing, she draws on Bourdieu's notions of the habitus and the cultural field and seeks to map out the precise ways in which the modernist cultural field was conditioned, thematically and institutionally, by the journal. In particular, she explores how, in the face of stark economic adversity, the poets associated with it adeptly manipulated complex flows of various forms of capital—not only conventional economic capital but also cultural and symbolic capital—in their quest for societal legitimacy. One of the more intriguing subtexts of Yeh's essay involves how the pages of the *Modern Poetry Quarterly* came, in effect, to function as a limited public sphere, wherein like-minded individuals were able to exchange thoughts on aesthetic, cultural, and social issues.

Like Michelle Yeh, Fenghuang Ying looks back to the 1950s for a new perspective on the later, and more visible, literary movements. Specifically, Ying examines how the posthumous literary legacy of the author Zhong Lihe, largely unappreciated during his own lifetime, became a potent touch-

stone against which a wide variety of subsequent writers attempted to define themselves. During the 1960s and 1970s, nativist critics found in Zhong's works a convenient foil for their own process of self-definition. Fenghuang Ying herself adroitly combines a consideration of Zhong's own writings with a parallel consideration of his status as a symbolic coin of exchange in subsequent literary debates. In this way, Ying effectively picks up Fangming Chen's critical reading of the historical and stylistic categories of modernism and nativism and extends that critique to a consideration of the sociocultural conditions out of which those sorts of stylistic identification arose.

In the final essay in the part, Yvonne Chang completes this round of modernist reflections by turning to the recent work of Wang Wenxing, who, in a postmodern era in which traditional modernism is arguably already largely passé, has continued to labor diligently on his twenty-two-year Joycean opus, *Backed against the Sea*, a two-part work notable as much for its prodigious literary ambition as for its apparent historical untimeliness. Rather than merely presenting a straightforward reading of the work, Chang uses the novel as a means by which to reconsider the sociocultural status of Taiwanese literary modernism itself. She begins with the premise that, despite the modernists' ostensible concerns with rarefied, aesthetic issues, a more complete consideration of the significance of the Taiwanese modernist movement must address the fact that its authors were "reacting against a politically instituted, conservative dominant culture." She proceeds to juxtapose a consideration of the sociopolitical underpinnings of Taiwanese literary modernism with a reading of how comparable sociocultural issues are played out within the fictional frame of the novel itself. Chang's approach is, therefore, grounded on the seemingly paradoxical strategy of delinking a consideration of modernism as a cultural and institutional category from an exclusive focus on the contents of modernist works themselves while conducting a close reading of the actual *content* of one of its most prominent works.

Part 3 turns to the issue of time itself and specifically to the themes of history and memory in Taiwan literature. Questions that the various essays seek to address include: How do history and personal memory figure in literature? How do literary works anticipate their own historicity? And what are the relations between historical amnesia and fictional artifice? Of particular interest here are the process of mediation between personal memory and historical memorialization as well as the epistemological aporias inherent in each. Andreas Huyssen has suggested that the recent fascination

with memory and memorialization in European and American culture is intimately related to a widespread sociocultural anxiety posed by the threat of amnesia: “Whether it is a paradox or a dialectic, the spread of amnesia in our culture is matched by a relentless fascination with memory and the past.”¹ In the Taiwanese context, we may postulate that the fascination with history and memory is being played out against not only the backdrop of what David Harvey describes as the “space-time conflation” inherent in postmodernism but also against stark political controls, during much of the twentieth century, over what forms those historical narratives would be permitted to take.²

The part opens with David Der-wei Wang’s essay on the figure of history in Jiang Gui’s novel *A Tale of Modern Monsters*, published in English translation under the title *The Whirlwind*. Wang begins by observing that the title of this mid-twentieth-century novel was inspired by that of a late Ming novel about bureaucratic corruption, then presents an etymological examination of the term for monster used, drawing attention to the fact that this word, *taowu*, also literally means “history.” Like Eileen Chang’s roughly contemporary *Red Earth*, *A Tale of Modern Monsters* is an anti-Communist work that proved disturbing precisely insofar as it exceeded, and challenged, the ideological boundaries within which it was originally intended to exist. Wang is particularly interested in how the novel underscores the odd paradox inherent in the orthodox, time-honored strategy of using the evils of the past to help improve the present. For Wang, Jiang’s novel testifies to the degree to which this strategy of evoking historical monsters for the sake of exorcising them necessarily also achieves the opposite effect, breathing new life into the monster of history. That is to say, even as one seeks to dismember the monster of history and lay it to rest, one is always re-membering and reconstituting this historical monstrosity in the process of recalling it.

In the following chapter, Yomi Braester turns from the issue of history to that of personal memory and specifically considers how the genre of the postmodern mystery novel is developed by the writers Chen Yingzhen and Liu Daren. Braester argues that these two authors, both politically persecuted under the Chiang regime, use in their novels variations of a *Rashōmon* structure (one in which the reader is presented with various competing versions of the same incident, with no single interpretation being granted epistemological priority over the others). Unlike conventional mysteries, which gradually guide the reader along a path of discovery, these “post-Chiang”

mysteries instead, Braester argues, foreground moments of silence and indeterminacy. More than any single criminal act, what they are ultimately bearing witness to is an entire system of “law” grounded in a long-imposed silence and a “chronic manipulation of memory that [have] maimed writers’ capacity to bear witness.”

Gang Gary Xu looks, in the following essay, at the trope of theatricality as it is developed on several different levels in the work of the contemporary female novelist Su Weizhen. He argues that Su not only employs explicit metaphors of theatricality in her writing but also uses her fiction to explore some of the deeper ontological issues occasioned by the notion of theatrical performance itself. For example, he examines how the doubled protagonist, Chenmian, in Su’s novel *The Island of Silence* can be seen as a figure for the working out of the phenomenon of psychological splitting inherent in theatrical performance; alternatively, the doubling can also be read as a symptom of the personal trauma that she has undergone: “When the burden of the traumatic memory is no longer bearable, the psychopathic splitting or the multiple-personality disorder produces the second Chenmian.”

In his influential exposition of speech act theory, J. R. Searle famously bracketed “parasitic” forms of performative utterances, such as those said by an actor on the stage, and outright lies on the grounds that they deliberately flaunt the felicity conditions on which conventional discourse is premised.³ Xu’s essay on Su Weizhen explores the epistemological and ontological implications of this domain of theatricality; Kim-chu Ng similarly grapples, in the following essay on Zhang Dachun, with the ontological and ethical implications of Zhang’s reliance on mendacity in his prolific and eclectic fictional output. Ng argues that Zhang’s narrative strategy and ontological premises ultimately fail to break out of the metatextual trap that his literary project sets for itself: it remains grounded at the level of mere language play and, consequently, fails to engage in a more substantive way with tangible social and ethical issues outside the text. Zhang, Ng concludes, ultimately remains imprisoned within what we might call his own apartment building of language—bringing together Ng’s discussion of Fredric Jameson’s notion of the prison-house of language and the title of Zhang’s own short story “Guided Tour of an Apartment Complex.”

The interest in temporality developed in part 3 is paralleled, in part 4, by an attention to tropes of spatiality. This part brings together essays on travel literature (Ping-hui Liao) and the metaphors of spatial representa-

tion (Rojas, Chen) and essays attentive to the transnational flows of capital and commodities (Ban Wang and Chen) and the psychic flows of object relations (Chaoyang Liao). A recurrent theme in all the essays is how the spatial integrity of Taiwan as a body politic, as well as of the embodied subject, is repeatedly challenged by these sorts of fluidity while it is simultaneously subjected to an imaginary reinvestment at the level of psychic and political fantasy.

Taiwan's twentieth-century identity as a distinct geographic entity is inseparable from considerations of its relation to mainland China and Japan. Accordingly, it is appropriate that this final part on spatial imaginations begins with an essay by Ping-hui Liao presenting a close reading of a series of early-twentieth-century travel writings in which the Taiwanese author Wu Zhuoliu recalls his eighteen-month trip to mainland China, a series that is in intertextual dialogue with an influential tradition of Japanese travel writings. Liao suggests that these texts illustrate Wu's complex attitudes toward imagined identity, affinity, and rejection, played out against the triangulated national space of colonial Taiwan, Japan, and mainland China.

Lingchei Letty Chen picks up this twin theme of travel and geography as she considers the way in which metaphors of mapping are deployed in Zhu Tianxin's novel *Ancient Capital*. In particular, she describes how Zhu Tianxin occasionally invokes the figure of the female body as a cartographic representation of the island of Taiwan. Furthermore, just as Wu Zhuoliu's text is in dialogue with Akutagawa Ryunosuke's *Travels in China*, Zhu Tianxin's *Ancient Capital* is similarly in a dialogue with Kawabata Yasunari's novel about Kyoto, *The Old Capital*. More specifically, Chen unpacks a dense intertextual web in Zhu Tianxin's work wherein the representation of Taipei is, in effect, haunted by the spectral presence of the Japanese city of Kyoto.

Carlos Rojas picks up a similar cartographic fascination as an entry point into the fiction of another prominent contemporary writer, the Malaysia-born author Li Yongping. Rojas argues that Li uses the figure of a Taipei road map as a trope for Taiwan's chiasmatic maturational relation with the Chinese mainland. Underlying this textual fascination with cartographic boundaries, he suggests, is a salient anxiety about the cultural and epistemological status of geographic boundaries themselves.

In the following essay, Chaoyang Liao addresses the relation between object relations and voice in two of Li Ang's most recent works, *The Strange Garden* and *All Sticks Are Welcome in the Censer of Beigang*. Exploring the re-

lation between the roles of the voice and the gaze, Liao examines the way in which these works comment on the significance of object relations and psychic circulation in a postmodern social space, suggesting that “the circularity of exchange” may serve as “a viable way to survive and transcend psychic and historical trauma.” Specifically, he begins with a consideration of how two of the stories from Li’s recent controversial collection *All Sticks* focus on the status of the voice and the gaze, respectively; he connects this with her early novel, *The Strange Garden*, which, he suggests, presents a “sphere of reciprocity where . . . gaze and voice engage in free exchange.” Liao’s piece combines an informed and nuanced discussion of psychoanalytic theory with a provocative exploration of how psychoanalysis can be brought to bear on the relation between the fictional text and the historico-political environment that both produced and, ultimately, contains it.

In the final essay, Ban Wang examines the ways in which Zhu Tianwen’s works reflect the changing status of visual imagery within postmodern culture. This essay constitutes a convenient bookend to the collection because its stress on *global* flows of commodity and capital reiterates the anxiety about the specificity of “Taiwan” as a heuristic chronotope. Ban Wang essentially inverts Benjamin’s well-known postulate about the loss of the “aura” in an age increasingly dominated by modern technologies of mechanical reproduction, arguing instead that the postmodern culture of virtual imagery has produced a space within which the aura can, in effect, be nostalgically reinvested with affect. This rereading of the postmodern reappearance of the Benjaminian aura can also be brought to bear on the concept of national and ethnic identity. It is conventional wisdom that transnational flows of capital, commodities, and cultures have the potential to challenge the integrity of autonomous nations and their respective societies and cultures, threatening to reduce everything to the lowest common cultural denominator. However, works such as Zhu Tianwen’s point to how it might be possible to theorize the reconsolidation of local specificities. This reappearance of different forms of localized identity within a postmodern, and postnational, context invites us to critically reconsider the concept of national identity itself.

The contributors to this volume represent scholars based in Taiwan (Pinghui Liao, Chaoyang Liao, Joyce C. H. Liu, Fangming Chen, and Fenghuang Ying), scholars from Taiwan currently based in the United States (Sungsheng Yvonne Chang, David Der-wei Wang, Lingchei Letty Chen, and Mi-

chelle Yeh), mainlanders currently based in the United States (Ban Wang, Xiaobing Tang, Gang Gary Xu), and scholars of American, European, and Middle Eastern descent based in the United States (Yomi Braester and Carlos Rojas) as well as a Malaysian-Chinese critic currently based in Taiwan (Kim-chu Ng). Collectively, this diverse panoply of voices seeks to both contest and defamiliarize conventional assumptions about the nature of Taiwan literature even as it attempts to provide the basis for a new mapping of this variegated terrain. Although the various essays gathered here represent a heterogeneous array of perspectives and positions that would defy straightforward summary, one quality that they all share is that they resist the reading of Taiwan literature through the lens of preestablished conceptual templates, favoring instead a hermeneutical strategy comparable to what Michel de Certeau describes as “walking in the city,” whereby “practitioners of the city” are literally walkers “whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban ‘text’ they write without being able to read it. . . . The networks of these moving, intersecting writings compose a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces.”⁴ The present volume sets us on a similar walk through the urban forest of modern Taiwan literature, the bounds and configurations of which are produced and contested through the act of reading itself.

Another recurrent theme shared by many of the essays in this volume involves an inversion of the conventional category Taiwan literature, where the determining factor becomes not so much the ostensible “Taiwan-ness” of the fictional literature as the “literariness” of the political fiction of “Taiwan” itself. Furthermore, to the extent that the category Taiwan literature is based on a political fiction, it simultaneously gains additional cogency from the deep-rooted conviction in Chinese culture, dating back at least to the nineteenth century, that the fates of fiction and politics are themselves intimately intertwined. Reformist writers such as Liang Qichao and Lu Xun insisted that fiction was in a unique position to revive the fortunes of the ailing Chinese nation by speaking directly to the spirits of the masses. In the twentieth century, discussions of Taiwan fiction have similarly been closely bound up with considerations of the political fiction of “Taiwan” as a sociocultural category.

As Xiaobing Tang observes in his essay, any attempt to concretize the bounds of Taiwan literature will inevitably delimit that category in a politically significant manner. Should one look to the sociocultural background of

the authors, the language or dialect in which the literature was written, the ideological subtext vis-à-vis Taiwanese culture and identity? Yvonne Chang points out that the act of delimiting the category Taiwan literature will necessarily involve a process of “bracketing,” whereby certain authors and texts are set aside as inconvenient supplements to the overall model. For instance, a nativist approach to Taiwan literature will tend to bracket the contributions of mainland émigrés as being somehow not wholly “authentic.” Rather than propose a fixed and bounded definition of Taiwan literature, therefore, we instead prefer to approach it as a “minor literature,” as Deleuze and Guattari describe in another context the attempt to carve out a distinctive and oppositional literary field from within the confines of a more hegemonic linguistic space.⁵

To the extent that this deliberately eclectic volume has a unifying theme, it would probably be to suggest a return to, and a reconsideration of, Taiwan literature in light of a logic of doubled supplementarity. On the one hand, Taiwan literature (however this may be understood) has historically been seen as an awkward supplement to either Japanese or Chinese literature, and this liminal status has allowed it to be used as a foil against which to buttress the imagined integrity of those other national literatures. On the other hand, Taiwan literature’s gradual emergence as an autonomous and recognizable category has, in turn, relied on a parallel strategy of bracketing an array of awkward supplements of its own: those works, authors, or genres that cannot be completely excluded but that also do not fit comfortably within the grand narrative that Taiwan literature (and its exponents) seeks to establish for itself.

NOTES

- 1 Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 254.
- 2 David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (New York: Blackwell, 1989).
- 3 Searle is discussed in Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc.* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988).
- 4 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 93.
- 5 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

THE LIMITS OF TAIWAN LITERATURE

WITH THE APRIL 17, 1895, signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki at the end of the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–95), China's Qing dynasty ceded the island of Taiwan to Japan. Taiwan quickly became a key element in Japan's imperialist plans to develop an East Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere, and the Japanese consequently invested considerable resources in building up the island's physical infrastructure, strengthening its education system, and pursuing a process of assimilation. This process of colonization was ratcheted to a new level in 1937 during the Second Sino-Japanese War, whereupon Governor-General Hasegawa Kiyoshi instituted the *kōminka* policy, which sought to fashion Taiwan's residents into loyal (Japanese) imperial subjects by abolishing the Chinese-language sections of newspapers, substituting Japanese names for Chinese ones, and recruiting Taiwanese to serve in the Japanese military. Taiwan remained a Japanese colony until Japan's defeat at the end of World War II, when the Allies agreed in October 25, 1945, to return the island to China, now under the control of Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Party. While many of Taiwan's residents initially welcomed the departure of the Japanese, the repressive and autocratic Nationalist regime under Commander Chen Yi quickly chilled their enthusiasm for the new regime. In early 1947, a series of popular protests known as the February Twenty-eighth Incident briefly allowed native Taiwanese to regain political control of the island, but these efforts were quickly squashed by a military crackdown resulting in the executions of thousands of Taiwanese, including many of Taiwan's intellectual elite.

Following their defeat by the Communists in 1949, the Nationalists retreated to Taiwan, where they hoped to set up a temporary base while they waited for an opportunity to regain control over the Chinese mainland. Although originally conceived as a temporary political exigency, this situation quickly developed into an intractable status quo, both Beijing and Taipei insisting that theirs was the legitimate authority over a unified China (including the "province" of Taiwan). Initially, the international community

PART ONE

generally sided with the Nationalists in Taiwan, maintaining diplomatic relations with the Republic of China (Taiwan) rather than with the People's Republic of China (mainland China), and allowing Taiwan to represent "China" in such international venues as the Olympics and the United Nations Security Council. In the 1970s, Taiwan experienced a series of diplomatic setbacks, beginning with the loss of its UN Security Council seat to China in 1971, followed by the termination of formal diplomatic relations with many of its former allies, including the United States. At the same time, however, it experienced a period of rapid economic growth during the 1970s and 1980s, fueled in particular by manufacturing and exports. Martial law was finally lifted in September 1987, thereby legalizing oppositional political parties, lifting implicit restrictions on cultural production, and facilitating a critical reexamination of Taiwan's history under the Japanese and the Nationalists.

The preceding historical narrative provides not only the context within which modern Taiwan literature has itself been written but also the framework for the primary analytic models for interpreting and making sense of it. For instance, Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang identifies in her essay three basic analytic models that characterized Taiwanese studies during the early postwar period (e.g., Taiwan as the "surrogate China," for foreign scholars unable, for political and practical reasons, to study and research in mainland China) and suggests that since the 1980s a number of more nuanced approaches have emerged, approaches that encourage, for instance, the inclusion of Japanese-language work from the pre-1949 period. In the following essay, Fangming Chen considers the way in which different analytic models might affect our understanding of the increasingly eclectic nature of Taiwan literature since the 1980s, as martial law was gradually loosened and finally lifted altogether in 1987. In particular, Chen is critical of the tendency to describe this literature as postmodern, arguing that this designation merely transplants Western categories onto Taiwan and that, instead, this literature is more accurately described as postcolonial, in reference to Taiwan's having spent most of the twentieth century under the colonial control of, first, the Japanese and, then, the Chinese Nationalists. It was also in the 1980s that a series of energetic debates emerged over the nature and limits of the discipline of Taiwanese literary studies itself. As Xiaobing Tang discusses in his essay, these debates were informed by parallel considerations of the nature of Taiwan, its relation with its own colonial history, and its position within a greater Chinese and East Asian cultural sphere.

1

Representing Taiwan: Shifting Geopolitical Frameworks

Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang

What strikes me most about the title of the conference, “Writing Taiwan: Strategies of Representation,” is the word *strategies*. Why strategies? It is true that the word can be interpreted in different ways: as interventionist theoretical lingo as well as the basis of the more conventional rhetorical strategies of literary representation (which is actually a focus of the conference’s last panel). But, in a more fundamental sense, strategies are employed to achieve goals. And the participants here do appear to share a common goal: to reexamine and, ultimately, to advance the strategies of representing Taiwan to the outside world through literary scholarship and translations. Whether we consciously acknowledge it or not, there is an inevitable political subtext to all efforts at representing Taiwan today. On the one hand, the country is strenuously struggling to “expand its international living space” (to borrow a phrase used in another context by Thomas Gold).¹ On the other hand, greater penetration of global capitalism in the post-Cold War era has hiked the stakes of symbolic wars. As these factors have come increasingly to determine the condition of possibility for culturally representing Taiwan—whether through the publication of literary anthologies or various other ways of showcasing its creative products at film festivals, book fairs, and arts exhibits—strategies *are* important.

But let us refrain from critiquing such commercial activities of cultural brokerage from the moral high ground of either Marxist or liberal-humanist theories. Instead, I would like to urge that we keep in mind the political and economic subtexts of our own activities while examining the strategies of representing Taiwan at another—not necessarily higher but different—level: the academic level.

Whereas less oriented toward immediate, tangible goals, academe is certainly not a disinterested cultural space. After Said, who could be adamant enough to maintain that the acquisition of knowledge, and, for that matter, any type of intellectual activity, is inherently innocent? Not to mention the fact that political and economic interests everywhere have direct bearings on the institutional distribution of resources. Nonetheless, the processes, rather than the results, are more highly valued in scholarly researches, which in turn are governed by conceptual frameworks that scholars internalize via different channels in their personal lives and academic training. After a series of rapid shifts in theoretical paradigms in the last two decades, new critical models are now being applied to, and experimented with in, the study of Taiwanese literature, as the essays in the present volume undoubtedly testify. To fully appreciate the significance of this moment and the promise that it holds for the enhancement of the quality of our work, it is, perhaps, useful to take a brief retrospective look at the analytic models that have previously dominated research activities on Taiwan in the American academy.

Owing to the exceedingly institutionalized nature of scholarly fields in this country, there seem to be only a limited number of viable analytic models that prevail at any given time. In the early postwar years, the most prevalent model in Taiwanese studies was one that regarded Taiwan as “the other China.” Conceived within the Cold War ideological frame, this approach clearly echoed such political conceptual pairs as “Red China versus Free China” and implied a perceived rivalry between two divergent paths along which the Third World countries pursued modernization: the capitalist, liberal-democratic and the socialist-Communist. Even today, such a binary mode of thinking remains popular among certain scholars. Lucien Pye, for example, faults China’s political authorities for stigmatizing individuals in China’s coastal regions, Taiwan, and Hong Kong who have successfully “modernized” themselves.² And the following argument from the late John King Fairbank similarly betrays a preoccupation with the liberal/radical ideological split in the aftermath of the May Fourth movement that culminated in the Communist/Nationalist war: after the Korean War, history has given the Nationalists a second chance; this allowed the Sino-liberals who went to Taiwan with the Nationalists to bring to fruition their gradualist reform program, aborted in 1949 when the majority of the Chinese people opted for the radical route of revolution.³ Ultimately, such scholars have striven to answer such hypothetical historical questions as the following:

What would have happened to China without the Communist Revolution? The research value of Taiwan is, thus, seen as resting squarely on the fact that it has traveled “the road not taken”—that being from the point of view of socialist China, of course.

The second model treated Taiwan as a “surrogate China,” an approach engendered by practical circumstances. Shut out by the Bamboo Curtain, an entire generation of Chinese anthropologists—including such eminent scholars as William Skinner and Arthur Wolf—have conducted their fieldwork in Taiwan as a substitute for “China proper.”⁴ Since the anthropologists focus on cultural markers that distinguish the Chinese people as a “we group” and cultural sediments take a long time to form, the civilizational temporal frame tends to be inclusive. Taiwan is the “part” from which one can presumably infer theoretical conclusions about the “whole,” which is China.

The third model can be labeled the case study model, adopted mostly by social scientists. With their disciplines’ predominantly modernist orientation, social scientists perceive Taiwan as one political entity on the rapidly transforming globe or simply as a geographic unit that has attracted the world’s attention by virtue of its alleged “miracles” in recent decades. In this model, Taiwan’s relation with China is neither asserted nor denied; its research value resides in its status either as a newly industrialized economy in East Asia or as a former Leninist state undergoing democratic transformation.⁵

If, in the case study model, the “China question” has been temporarily suspended, there is yet another, more problematic type of suspension in literary studies pertaining to Taiwan. This is a practice that I would like to label with a special term, *bracketing*. Bracketing refers to what a scholar does to evade or defer the proper treatment of certain crucial aspects of the research subject without adequate justification. Through bracketing, the scholar treats Taiwan nominally as “part of China” but, in fact, does not fully address the issue with historical contextualization, aside from acknowledging the legitimacy of this relation within its overall referential framework.⁶ And this is what we have encountered in numerous topic-centered anthologies and collections of critical essays that juxtapose works on China and Taiwan under the category *Chinese* without addressing their crucial differences in the postwar era. Scholarship of this sort must not be dismissed as merely the product of unusual political circumstances. For bracketing takes place

not only as a direct result of political constraints or ideological hang-ups but also as a habit, when scholars acquiesce to implicit institutional demands. While bracketing appears to be a psychological trait found in broader categories of intellectual life under authoritarian regimes, for the moment it suffices to say that this dubious practice is deeply entrenched in the entire structure of the scholarly institution. Rather than the individual's professional integrity, therefore, what interests me most is the kind of mechanisms that serve to ensure the popular acceptance and seeming normality of some distorted scholarly practices, such as the near-complete neglect of modern Taiwan literature written in Japanese during the martial law period. The high status habitually associated with questions concerning East-West literary relations qualifies as one such mechanism as it shapes people's scholarly agenda and diverts their attention, in a preemptive manner, from crucial aspects of modern Chinese/Taiwanese literary history.

In recent years, most of the once-dominant analytic models mentioned above have to varying degrees been rendered obsolete by new historical developments as well as new intellectual trends in academe. As the Cold War ended, Taiwan as "the other China" lost much of its research appeal. The world is now eagerly observing how postsocialist China handles its own capitalist experiment, and the renewed interest in the "alternative form of Chinese modernization" at least partially accounts for the sudden boom in studies of Shanghai and the city's treaty port past. In the meantime, as China progressively opens itself up, a substitute is no longer needed for empirical research. As the Taiwanese nationalists in the post-martial law period take to task the Nationalist government's Sinocentric cultural narrative, some anthropologists of the younger generation have also reverted to a revisionist approach to the Taiwan question. After all, treating Taiwan as a specimen of Chinese folk culture is predicated on the problematic assumption that divergent courses of modernization have not meaningfully affected cultural practices, including religious rituals, in an everyday sense. By contrast, the modernist approach of the social scientists fares better in the post-Cold War milieu. Yet, adhering to the concept of the modern nation-state as the primary point of reference, this approach tends to fall short of satisfactorily dealing with the phenomenon of globalization, which is undeniably exerting a significant impact on Chinese societies in the "Greater China" sphere, including Taiwan.

It would be an understatement to say that changes in studies of Taiwanese literature have also been dramatic. Within Taiwan itself, the lifting of martial law and the ascending nativist imperative have compelled scholars to stop bracketing the stigmatized prewar period of modern Taiwanese literary history, in which some of its best works were written in the Japanese language. Whereas even as late as the mid-1980s the term *Taiwan wenxue* [Taiwan literature]—used without qualification—was still regarded as a political liability, we are now witnessing concerted efforts at institutionalizing Taiwanese literary studies, with the Academia Sinica taking a valiant lead in the most recent years.⁷ In the United States, the field has been given a boost by the participation of younger scholars whose point of origin is the People's Republic of China (PRC), who have brought with them fresh perspectives as well as ambitious intellectual agendas.⁸ It is, therefore, not hard to imagine that, for everyone engaged in this exciting enterprise, the thorny, unresolved issue of referential frame—the temporal, spatial, and ethnic referential frames pertinent to literary historiography—has emerged as more urgent and more crucially relevant than ever.

Once the Japanese period is brought into the picture, the origin of modern Taiwan literature must be traced back to the mid-1920s. And it becomes evident that, since the May Fourth movement, none of the political and artistic trends on the Chinese mainland have affected literary developments in Taiwan in a direct, concurrent manner. With a seventy-odd-year history of its own, modern Taiwan literature inevitably fits awkwardly in the limited space of a single chapter, an appendix, or a few passing remarks inserted in books on modern Chinese literature. On the other hand, however, even if the aspired-to status of *national literature* were established for Taiwan literature, it still cannot be comprehended as an isolated phenomenon, without being situated in larger geopolitical referential frames. While such frames are, undoubtedly, multiple, in practice some are always privileged over others. For Taiwan-based literary scholars, many of the tacitly acknowledged, officially sanctioned referential frames have all of a sudden become problematic in the post-martial law period. In addition, the perceived relations between *self* and *other* have shifted violently and drastically from period to period in the tumultuous years of modern Taiwanese history. More specifically, the complex history of Taiwan has made several competing referential frames equally available to construct such perceptions. One can align with the Chinese in the PRC and take the West as the *other* on the basis of ethnic

and civilizational histories. One can cling to the Cold War self-positioning as a member of the anti-Communist camp and regard the PRC as the *other*. Or one can try to restore ties with Japan, the former colonizer—ties that have been revamped through business partnerships in recent decades—by more openly acknowledging the positive legacy of a colonial modernity. These realities help explain why many literary scholars in Taiwan display such a vital concern with questions of history and identity, to the extent of bypassing immediately relevant questions regarding literature and aesthetics. This will probably remain the case in the field of Taiwanese literary studies in the foreseeable future.

One must, however, also take heed of the fact that highly institutionalized scholarly activities have their own brand of “politics of referential frames,” the deployment of which inevitably compounds the issues of history and identity. In a broad sense, the struggle to effectively challenge referential frames that are taken for granted in dominant ideologies—patriarchal, Eurocentric, or heterosexual—lies at the heart of various recently popularized intellectual trends, trends that have significantly altered our visions of life, supplying us with a new intellectual agenda. At the top of that agenda is to treat the history of previously marginalized and repressed groups—be they ethnic minorities, women, or colonized people—as a legitimate frame of reference in scholarly research.

Scholars of Taiwan literature have ardently responded to such intellectual inspirations and adopted them as conceptual frameworks for their own inquiries with more or less critical discernment. New theoretical frameworks, such as those generated by postmodernist, postcolonialist, and feminist discourses, are, of course, never treated merely as conceptual tools. They provide the necessary symbolic capital that scholars need to empower themselves in the increasingly globalized academic field everywhere. Some scholars have apparently used them for the purpose of advancing an old—usually political—cause that has been a very high priority for them personally. Others have employed them as new means of evading the question of history and, thus, inadvertently regressed to the practice of bracketing. An interesting question, therefore, is how we ourselves envision the hierarchy of different historical referential frames and whether we can justify our own use of new theoretical frameworks with intellectual integrity.

Also worth mentioning is the fact that some emerging scholarly trends in the general field of Chinese studies seem to have a strong potential to fur-

ther galvanize the politics of referential frames for Taiwanese literary studies and lead it in welcome directions. The discourse on “colonial/alternative modernity,” for instance, distinguishes itself from postcolonialist theories that originated with scholars from former Western colonies and takes East Asian history of the last century and a half as its spatial and temporal referential frame.⁹ This is likely to encourage inter-Asia comparative perspectives, rather than perpetuating the currently predominant approach to Taiwan literature that still privileges “China” in various ways. A comparison between Taiwan and South Korea, for example, with their shared experience of Japanese colonization and American-assisted postwar authoritarianism, could be extremely illuminating.

Or, as the globalization phenomenon challenges former concepts of boundaries, studies of worldwide trends and movements that involve ethnic Chinese in various groupings are already seeking to radically redefine “what China is.”¹⁰ There are scholars both within and outside Taiwan who have been toying with the provocative but still quite elusive concept post-national imagination.¹¹ It is certainly not the case that the institution of the modern nation has already been “posited” in any empirical sense; rather, the national imaginary has so frequently been carried beyond and across the geographic national boundaries that the question of national identity is rendered immensely more complex.

As a matter of fact, there exists an intricate link between the questions, What is China? and, What is Taiwan? in that both typically evoke ideologically constructed conceptual images. One highly intriguing phenomenon is that an important legacy of the postwar Nationalist regime’s claim of Taiwan as “China”—legitimized by its United Nations seat until 1972—is its entitlement of Taiwanese residents as citizens of a nation-state. To treat their community as anything less than a nation is demeaning and psychologically unacceptable—not only to the militant Taiwanese nationalists but also to many others at a subconscious level. Opposing arguments over the entity’s proper title (“Republic of China”? “Republic of Taiwan”?) are, thus, built on the same epistemic foundation.

Overall, such reconceptualizations promise to free scholars of Taiwan literature from the ideological hold of older referential frames, thus enabling us to move beyond the China/Taiwan deadlock in a narrowly politicized sense. But there is also danger: the possibility that a new and trendy intellectual agenda will lure us away from the foundational tasks of interpreting lit-

erary texts and analyzing literary culture produced by specific historical circumstances. The abysmal gaps in knowledge created in the underdeveloped field of Taiwanese literary studies by the long-standing practice of bracketing would, then, remain unfilled.

Undoubtedly, the specific academic field (as defined by Pierre Bourdieu) and institutional framework within which we situate ourselves and from which we derive our evaluative standards play determinative roles in shaping our scholarly discourses. It is, therefore, not surprising that scholars of Taiwan literature in the United States and those in Taiwan often have very different research objectives and methodological preferences. Moreover, locked into a rigid regional identity, scholars of Taiwan literature in the United States often complain that they are being ghettoized. In an age in which theories, not to mention scholars themselves, travel not only with round-trip tickets but also with memberships in frequent-flier programs, this situation is definitely undergoing dramatic changes. One unique feature of this conference is that we are all learning to speak to different, multiple audiences. This factor will, predictably, exert a substantial impact on our future research agendas. And what is even more encouraging is that, with its focus on the interpretation of literary texts, this conference simultaneously performs the function of reconsolidating a community that has literature as the primary content of its shared interest. At a time when the disciplinary identity of literary studies has become precarious in the American academy, we can be reassured of the validity of literature as a research category, with the emphatic reminder that it is necessarily embedded within larger frames of reference.

NOTES

- 1 Thomas Gold, keynote address to the Gateway Conference, University of Texas, Austin, April 1998.
- 2 See Lucien Pye, "How China's Nationalism Was Shanghaied," in Jonathan Unger, ed., *Chinese Nationalism* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1996), 86–112.
- 3 See John K. Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution: 1800–1985* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986).
- 4 It may still be fresh in the memory of many of us that brochures for grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the Social Science Research Council used to contain statements like the following: "Taiwan and Hong Kong are acceptable sites for research projects on China if the applicant is denied access to the mainland."

- 5 It is true that Thomas Gold's *State and Society in the Taiwan Miracle* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1986) still considers Taiwan's economic success an "alternative form of Chinese modernization" (xi). Yet, as the book explicitly contrasts Taiwan's political-economic performance with that of Latin American countries and, thus, situates it within a global context, the work serves as a good example of the case study approach. This approach has, apparently, gained popularity among scholars interested in contemporary Taiwan in recent years. In his "Cultural Policy on Postwar Taiwan" (in Stevan Harrell and Huang Chun-chieh, eds., *Cultural Change in Postwar Taiwan* [Boulder: Westview, 1994]), Edwin Winckler, e.g., accentuates the uniqueness of Taiwan by repeatedly referring to it as "a place like Taiwan."
- 6 I would offer my own *Modernism and the Nativist Resistance: Contemporary Chinese Fiction from Taiwan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993) as an example of this approach. Another interesting illustration of the practice of bracketing is found in "Postmodernism and China," ed. Arif Dirlik and Zhang Xudong, *boundary 2*, special issue, 24.3 (fall 1997). The editors' suggestion in their introduction that "Chinese postmodernism" is also postrevolutionary and post-socialist, apparently not applicable to "postmodernisms" found in other Chinese societies, undermines their seemingly well-intentioned efforts to include two essays on postmodern discourse and practice in Taiwan. They have taken special pains in announcing that the collection focuses for the most part on the People's Republic. Yet to do so without giving an adequate account of what falls outside this specified scope—the different historical context behind the two articles on Taiwan—fits well what I would designate as *bracketing*.
- 7 See Sung-sheng Y. Chang, "Beyond Cultural and National Identities: Current Re-Evaluations of the *Kominka* Literature from Taiwan's Japanese Period," *Journal of Modern Literature in Chinese* 1.1 (July 1997): 75–107.
- 8 Xiaobing Tang's "On the Concept of Taiwan Literature" (chapter 3 in this volume) serves as a good example: it attempts to examine the debate on Taiwanese literature with reference to the incomplete Chinese project of modernity as well as the varied and variable legacy of the May Fourth intellectual movement.
- 9 See, e.g., Tani E. Barlow, ed., *Formations of Colonial Modernity in East Asia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).
- 10 Examples are studies of the Chinese diaspora and of "Chinese transnationalism." For the latter, see *Ungrounded Empire: The Cultural Politics of Modern Chinese Transnationalism*, ed. Ahwa Ong and Donald Nonini (New York: Routledge, 1997); and *Spaces of Their Own: Women's Public Sphere in Transnational China*, ed. Mayfair Yang (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). See also the articles in "Modern Chinese Literary and Cultural Studies in the Age of Theory: Reimagining a Field," ed. Rey Chow, *boundary 2*, special issue, 25.3 (fall 1998).
- 11 See Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

2

Postmodern or Postcolonial? An Inquiry into Postwar Taiwanese Literary History

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Literary history must always be considered in the context of the societal conditions that gave rise both to the literary works and to their authors. Accordingly, any explanation or evaluation of postwar Taiwanese literary history should also be placed within the context of Taiwan's historical development. It was not until the 1980s that discussions of Taiwanese literary history were finally able to receive relatively broad consideration. This is easily understandable, especially given that, after the lifting of martial law in 1987, Taiwanese society began to witness two phenomena: a rise in economic productivity and a comparable rise in cultural productivity. The content of Taiwan literature similarly enjoyed an expansion in both quality and quantity. At the same time, however, this period also gave rise to a sharp increase in discussions and polemics regarding the concept and characteristics of that literature.

The literary impulses hidden within society had already been subject to forty years of severe institutional repression, and, after the lifting of martial law, they flowed out with newfound vigor. The authoritarian rule, shaped by a single-value system, had previously demanded that literary workers bow to the ideological mold of institutional conformity. However, this does not imply that there did not exist any dissenting voices in Taiwanese society, just as a momentary lapse of attention does not necessarily entail a total loss of memory. After the lifting of martial law, all the subject matter previously classified as ideologically forbidden under the previous regime was freely used for literary creation. The large-scale appearance in Taiwan of nationalist literature, indigenous literature, "military-compound" [*juancun*] litera-

ture, feminist literature, gay literature, and ecological literature not only stood as testimony to the arrival of an intellectually pluralistic era but also pointed to an imminent, rich harvest of literary works.

With such a multifaceted literary scene, the question of the characteristics of Taiwan literature quickly became an important point of contention within academe. Many authors simultaneously and independently became openly critical of the existing authoritarian political regime. For instance, whereas an important goal of nationalist literature in Taiwan was the ultimate overthrow of the Han chauvinists who had held power for so long, a central theme in the newly emerging literature from Taiwan's indigenous peoples was a complete rejection of Han-chauvinist prejudices. Similarly, the appearance of military-compound literature was characterized by an increasing concern with the growing bias toward wealth and seniority. One of the primary tasks of feminist literature involved the unveiling and critique of the arrogance and brutality of male chauvinism, just as the critique of heterosexist prejudice was one of the important objectives of gay literature. In sum, the general direction of virtually all writers during this period, regardless of the specific literary form they were using, was characterized by a fundamental act of decentering. Precisely because it possessed these characteristics, Taiwan literature from the 1980s to the present has often been classified under the general rubric of postmodernism.

However, the concept of postmodern literature did not originate within Taiwanese society itself; it is purely an import from the West, specifically from the United States. The rise of postmodern literature in the West has its own specific historical conditions and socioeconomic foundations. Whether this precipitously borrowed concept is really appropriate as a description of the thought and position of Taiwanese writers must await more detailed study in the future. The purpose of this essay is merely to indicate that contemporary Taiwan literature developed out of specific sociohistorical conditions that are themselves intimately bound up with the entirety of Taiwan's colonial history. The character of Taiwan's recent history derives not only from the period of Japanese occupation but also from the political authoritarianism of the postwar period. If we wish to discuss the culturally pluralistic character of contemporary literature, it is necessary to locate that literature within this sociohistorical context.

From the perspective of Taiwan's colonial history, the literature created in the then-prevailing society should be considered colonial literature. If this

view has any merit, then the current literary scene can only with difficulty be described as having postmodern characteristics. Instead, it would probably be more appropriate to use the term *postcolonial* to describe the flourishing Taiwan literature in the 1980s. The key issue here is whether Taiwan's postwar literary development constitutes the rise of its postmodern literature or, instead, represents the continued evolution of its postcolonial literature.

POSTWAR OR RECOLONIZED?

Taiwan literature can be seen as a typical product of a colonial society. During the entire course of its development, there was an unstable oppositional relation between the political center and the social periphery. The rulers located at the center would invariably seek to control the Taiwanese authors located at the margins. Similarly, Taiwanese writers would frequently draw on a variety of different literary genres to contest the authority of the ruling powers. This kind of historical progression could not help but make Taiwan literature an arena in which diverse political forces vied for power. Ever since the period of Japanese occupation, the authors standing in the position of the colonized have continuously struggled to define Taiwan literature while also attempting to articulate a periodizing explanation for Taiwanese literary history. Japanese scholars have adopted the notion of the “imperial gaze” while also relying on the discourse of the “extension of the interior” to explain Taiwan literature, designating it as a “literature of the outlying regions.”¹ This description refers to those literary works produced by Japanese authors residing in Taiwan, but it significantly does not include those works produced by (ethnically Chinese) Taiwanese authors.

If, during the period of Japanese occupation, the works by native Taiwanese authors could not even be elevated to the level of “literature of the outlying regions,” their marginal character can well be imagined. On the other hand, scholars from the People's Republic of China have tended to regard Taiwan literature from a centrist perspective and have used the description “a branch of Chinese literature” as the basis of their historical explanation.² Native Taiwanese authors, because of differences in historical perspective and political position, opened a polarizing war of words during the 1980s, leaving modern Taiwanese literary history with even more to be explained.³ Within such a broad and complicated contestation of historical perspectives, the study of literary history becomes a risky endeavor. No matter how rich

and multifaceted this controversy might be, it remains an incontrovertible fact that Taiwan literature is marked by a distinctly colonial character.

I once ventured the following formulation: “The popular literature of the 1920s, the leftist literature of the 1930s, the *kōminka* [imperialization] literature of the 1940s, the anti-Communist literature of the 1950s, the modernist literature of the 1960s, the nativist literature of the 1970s, and the recognition literature of the 1980s—each represents the literary style of its respective historical period.”⁴ This kind of historical periodization and labeling is actually only a rhetorical convenience. It can attend only to the main stylistic tendencies of each historical era and is, consequently, unable to take into account more marginal literary events. This approach not only entails dividing history into different periods but also postulates a figurative “rupture” between one period and the next, making it difficult to identify the characteristics that link successive periods together.⁵ Simply dividing the historical spectrum into decades is clearly premised on an inherently arbitrary unit of temporal segmentation. Therefore, if we aspire to complete accuracy, we must bring literature into dialogue with political, economic, societal, and other relevant dimensions of the human experience; only then will it be possible to produce a truly representative explanation.

Even if we were to set aside the question of the precise durations of the various historical periods, we would still be left with the undeniable fact that, after 1945, Taiwan literature was characterized by anti-Communist, modernist, and nativist tendencies. Literary scholarship has accepted virtually unanimously the use of these various categories to demarcate the literary styles of their respective historical periods.⁶ However, if we rely merely on these sorts of terms, it will be difficult to grapple effectively with the overarching continuity of Taiwan’s literary history, and, instead, we will tend to see it as a process of sporadic and uneven development. Therefore, it is certainly worth attempting to establish a relatively stable historical perspective from which to summarize and evaluate the entire development of Taiwan literature.

During the period of Japanese occupation, Taiwan could be considered a colonial society. The kinds of new literary movements to which such societies gave birth cannot be equated with the literary movements of an ordinary society. A Han-chauvinist perspective will obviously overlook many of the complexities inherent in the actual content of that literature. Similarly, if one uses Han chauvinism to summarize the literature from the Japanese

occupation to the postwar period, this would have the effect of painstakingly erasing from that tradition the true character of Taiwanese society.⁷ Is it possible that, after the departure of the Japanese, the colonial quality of that tradition simply disappeared without a trace? Or that, after the arrival of the Nationalist government, the earlier colonial wounds were all suddenly healed? The most difficult period of Taiwanese literary history to understand is that between the end of the War of the Pacific (World War II) in 1945 and the February Twenty-eighth Incident of 1947 (the slaughter of thousands of Taiwanese by Chiang Kai-shek's Chinese troops and the beginning of martial law). Virtually all scholars have seen it as a moment of absolute rupture. It is as if the Taiwanese authors from the period of Japanese occupation had followed the Japanese warlords' surrender and abruptly declared that they were going to simply disappear and then, after the Nationalist government took control of Taiwan, immediately reappeared and made a new beginning. Nevertheless, realistically speaking, Taiwanese writers located at the interstices of these two eras would not necessarily have undergone any significant change at the level of ideology and spirit.

As is well-known, during the War of the Pacific Japan forcibly implemented the policy of imperialization, or *kōminka*, which took a devastating toll on the souls of Taiwanese authors. Even authors with very well-developed critical faculties, such as Yang Kui and Lü Heruo, ended up producing propagandistic works for the *kōminka* movement. When that powerful Japanese nationalism overrode Taiwanese society, the colonial authors simply lost their ability to resist.⁸ *Kōminka* literature produced, within the perspective of Taiwanese literary history, a challenge to national self-recognition as well as perplexity at the level of ethnic identity. Therefore, these developments simply cannot be evaluated from the perspective of Chinese nationalism. Nevertheless, it must be asked whether the uncertainty and confusion experienced by Taiwanese writers after the end of the War of the Pacific can be neatly isolated from developments during the wartime period.

When the Nationalist government arrived in Taiwan in 1945, it forcefully brought Chinese nationalism. In order to suppress the traces of Japanese Pan-Asianism that remained in Taiwan, in 1946 the Nationalist government issued an official proclamation forbidding the use of Japanese, less than a decade after the Japanese warlords' inverse proclamation, in 1937, forbidding the use of Chinese. With the change in times came a change in the characteristics of the government. Those authors remaining in Taiwan had no alterna-

tive but to adapt to two different linguistic systems, and, furthermore, they also had to adapt to the different sets of nationalist ideologies lying behind each of those systems. The Nationalist government used military might to promote its Chinese nationalist ideology, replete with violence and intimidation. This fact is reflected not only in government structure, such as that constructed by the Taiwan Provincial Administrative Executive Office, but also in the discriminatory attitude toward indigenous Taiwanese that was implicit in the decrees regarding the use of the Chinese language issued by the government. The February Twenty-eighth Incident could be described as a tragedy resulting from cultural difference, and, as such, it clearly revealed the colonial quality of the Nationalist government. In Taiwan's colonial history (e.g., during the Dutch period in the seventeenth century), foreign rulers were extraordinary in their use of methods of extreme violence to suppress the initiatives of Taiwanese citizens.⁹

The introduction of Chinese nationalism into Taiwan can be seen as a fictional and even factional dissemination. In particular, the Nationalist government's raising of the Nationalist flag constituted a welcome to only those literary works favorable to its own position, while those authors who were critical of the political orthodoxy were vigorously excluded. For instance, the government rigorously suppressed the works of the May Fourth author Lu Xun and did not allow them to circulate in Taiwan at all.¹⁰ This censorship testifies to the fact that the Nationalist government's "nationalism" was actually a divisive political ideal, based on considerations of what was advantageous to the "part," rather than what was actually best for the "whole" national populace itself. Taiwanese writers experienced no less suppression and humiliation under the Nationalists than under the Japanese *kōminka* regime. Apart from purely national distinctions between Japan and China, there is ultimately no significant difference between the legacy of Japanese warlordism and the language policy of and the cultural movements supported by the Chinese Nationalist government.

Therefore, from the perspective of literary history, the period following 1945 has been designated as postwar. This, however, merely points to a neutral and objective fact and cannot touch on the darkness of the inner world of the Taiwanese authors themselves. Moreover, it is even less able to address the predicament of the social environment in which these authors actually found themselves. The Japanese scholar Ozaki Hideki once remarked that literary development from 1937 to 1945 was characterized by "Taiwan litera-

ture [being in a] decisive battle.”¹¹ If we can use the term *decisive battle* here, then why must it be used only to describe the military situation during this period, instead of embracing the inner pain and struggle of the Taiwanese authors themselves as well? Their spiritual decisive battle unfortunately lay in having to choose between resistance and submission to the powerful Nationalist government.¹² This sort of stark choice at the spiritual level did not end with the conclusion of the war. Instead, when Japanese Pan-Asianism was replaced by Chinese Nationalism as Taiwan’s ruling regime, Taiwanese authors’ intellectual confusion and the contradictions with which they were faced could not be encompassed by the simple term *postwar*. In reality, what they faced was a *recolonized era*.

Using the term *recolonized era* to replace *postwar era*, it becomes possible to characterize fairly accurately Taiwanese society after 1945. Not only does recolonized era allow us to relate back to the *kōminka* period following the War of the Pacific, but, at the same time, it also allows us to look forward to the post-1950 period during which anti-Communist literature reached its height. More specifically, past explanations have tended to use the historical fact of the Japanese surrender to mark a figurative turning point in Taiwanese literary history. As a result, authors who came of age during the war period, such as Lü Heruo, Zhang Wenhuan, and Long Yingzong, and the younger generation, including such figures as Wu Zhuoliu, Zhong Lihe, Zhong Zhaozheng, and Ye Shitao, have been effectively divided into two distinct groups.¹³ Their dejection during the war, together with their disappearance during the period of Nationalist recovery, can, therefore, be seen as an extension of essentially the same sentiment. Yang Kui’s execution, Zhang Wenhuan’s imprisonment, Wu Xinrong’s being placed under surveillance, Lü Heruo’s involvement with a guerrilla group, Zhu Dianren’s assassination—these examples are sufficient to demonstrate the peril of Taiwanese authors during the period of recolonization. In his commentary on Lü Heruo’s and Zhu Dianren’s literary careers, Zhang Henghao posed the following problem:

They were both truthful recorders and thinkers with respect to the colonial period, even though they had never actually participated in the social resistance activities. But what seems really curious is that, when Japanese ruling power was replaced, in the postwar period, by Chen Yi’s political control, Lü and Zhu both coincidentally made the same choice. At the point at which their respective liter-