SELF, NATIONS, AND THE DIASPORA -- RE-READING LIN YUTANG, BAI XIANYONG, AND FRANK CHIN

by

SHUANG SHEN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1998

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in English in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

10/31/97
Date

Chair of Examining Committee

10/31/97
Date

Executive ~~Officer~~

Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract

SELF, NATIONS, AND THE DIASPORA -- RE-READING LIN YUTANG, BAI XIANYONG, AND FRANK CHIN

by

Shuang Shen

Adviser: Professor John Brenkman

Consisting of the case studies of three contemporary Chinese American writers, Lin Yutang (1895-1976), Bai Xianyong (1937-), and Frank Chin (1940-), my dissertation focuses on their self-definitions, their responses to Chinese and American cultural traditions, and particularly their cross-cultural perspectives. By juxtaposing the three writers, I take a revisionist view to the currently available paradigms of Asian studies and Asian American studies. While traditionally, these two fields tend to be mutually exclusive because of certain narrow-minded definitions of cultural tradition or ethnicity, my dissertation argues that an interdisciplinary perspective can better explain the complex interplay of culture and politics in the context of the East-West encounter.

In the introduction, I frame the empirical study of these three writers in relation to the evolving transnational perspective in Asian American studies and its related postcolonial and postmodern theories. I respond to the lack of attention to the Chinese diaspora in Asian American studies while at the same time taking into account of the historical specificity of the Asian American minority discourse.

In the body of my dissertation, I take the three writers beyond the boundary of one

nation and a single cultural tradition. In Chapter One, I analyze a specific form of East-West encounter in the semi-colonial environment of Shanghai in the 1930s. Lin Yutang's perceptions of cultural crossing and national identity were shaped by this specific context and were later carried over to the United States. In Chapter Two, I present Chinese modernism as a form of bi-cultural practice and emphasize that Bai Xianyong's modernist consciousness of exile is directly informed by his experience as an immigrant writer in the United States. In Chapter Three, I challenge Frank Chin's selective adaptation of Chinese cultural legends and classical literature and his anachronistic formulation of Asian American cultural historiography. Although with regard to Asia and Asian culture Chin's attitude shifts from blanket dismissal to romantic acceptance, his creative works betray certain ambivalence in terms of their representations of the Chinese diaspora.

I conclude by calling attention to the heterogeneous and transnational literary past of Asian Americans. Acknowledging this heterogeneity requires that we study racial and cultural hybridization with historical specificity.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my adviser, Professor John Brenkman, for making this project happen. In the past five years I have studied with him, he has made the learning experience pleasurable and worthwhile. I feel privileged to have had Professor Brenkman as my intellectual guide. I am grateful to the other members of my dissertation committee, Professor William Kelly and Professor Neal Tolchin, for their attentive reading, incisive comments, and many useful suggestions for further revision. Many thanks to Professor Leo Ou-fan Lee for recognizing the seed of an idea and encouraging me to develop it and for making it possible to let me try out some immature thoughts at several conferences. The invaluable intellectual exchange that I have had on many levels with my friend Nancy Berke in the past three years has been crucial for the completion of this project. I thank other friends at the CUNY Graduate Center, Page Delano, Cheryl Fish, and David Wolf for reading portions of this dissertation at various stages of completion and for giving me the strength to going on. I am grateful to my friends and colleagues at Queensbourough Community College, Sheena Gillespie, Linda Stanley, and Jean Darcy, for their concern and support. Special thanks to Ken Hao for his love and encouragement. Finally, my greatest obligation is to my parents. Thanks for letting me pursue my dreams and for putting up with my absence for many years.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Asian immigrant literature occupies an ambivalent position in the field of Asian American studies. While a few immigrant authors, such as Carlos Bulosan, have been accepted into the canon, a significant number of others have not gotten much critical attention. In the process of forming a literary canon, Asian American studies reinforces a certain perspective on immigration and does not faithfully represent what the critic Sheng-mei Ma has called "immigrant subjectivity" (422). The Asian American perspective to cross-Pacific journeys comes from a specific political and cultural position. When it is applied to the interpretation of immigrant literature, the complex and multiple cultural and political contexts that inform the production of immigrant literature are somewhat simplified. In this dissertation, I intend to restore the historical heterogeneity of the Asian American imaginary through the study of three Chinese immigrant and Chinese American authors. Before starting this project, I would like to first rethink the critical reception of immigrant literature in Asian American studies as a way of focusing on what we have left out. Let me use Songs of Gold Mountain, a poetry collection written by working-class immigrants in San Francisco Chinatown in the beginning of the twentieth century as an example.

Songs of Gold Mountain was published and circulated among San Francisco Chinatown residents in the 1910s. Although in some major cities in the United States, the early twentieth century witnessed the beginning of the modernist movement, these poems were strikingly "unmodern" in many ways. Most poems adopted a form that originated in a specific Cantonese folk song. Written in a mixture of classical Chinese and vernacular

diction, the poems were not intended to be read by the general English-speaking American audience until Asian American scholars translated them into English in 1980s. The "foreign" qualities of these poems are particularly jarring, and needless to say, they are very different from high modernist American urban literature. In addition to the U. S. context, what is less widely known is the fact that these poems don't fit the profile of "modern" literature, alternatively known as "New Literature," in the Chinese context, either. Chinese modern literature, which technically began with the New Cultural Movement in 1919, advocated using vernacular and "new" diction in literature. Most practitioners of modern literature in the Chinese context took a militant stance against anything "old" and "classic." Even though the legacy of the New Cultural Movement has been re-examined during the past two decades by scholars of modern Chinese literature from many different perspectives, these poems would still not fit easily into the canon. Other sociopolitical reasons aside, the very fact that these poems were written in Cantonese dialect and not mandarin Chinese is significant in determining their marginal position in the modern Chinese literary canon.

I cite Songs of Gold Mountain as an example of how diverse histories can come together in rendering a piece of literature a "marginal" text. Let us now examine the trajectory that Asian American scholars followed in claiming it for the canon. The paradigm of Asian American studies defines ethnicity in relation to the history of exclusion, exploitation, and racism perpetuated against Asians. Read as a historical record of the early Chinese community in San Francisco and presented as a "collective memory" of Chinese Americans, the poems from Songs of Gold Mountain are given a high status in

the minority discourse of Asian American studies. Becoming "canonical," however, does not mean that the poems have automatically stopped looking "foreign" to most of us who have been trained to appreciate literature from certain criteria derived from a particular Western notion of modernity. Although Chinese American critics recognized the sociopolitical significance of Songs of Gold Mountain, their interpretations of these poems were precisely guided by questions that surround the "foreignness" of the poems. Certain road blocks had to be dealt with in the course of reclaiming these poems. For one thing, the immigrants' expressions of "sojourner mentality" raised a question in the critics' mind as to how committed these poets were to the American context. The identification and interpretation of the formalistic materialization of the poets' political consciousness was a related issue to that of "sojourner mentality."

Some of the difficulty of interpreting these poems has to do with how Asia is incorporated into the cultural historiography defined by Asian American scholars. The phrase "from Asian to Asian American," the title of a chapter of Elaine Kim's Asian American Literature, is often used to describe those moments in history when Asian American self-awareness emerged from historical revisions of pre-existing literature. This phrase defines a certain kind of progression in which "Asia" is posited as the "origin" and "Asian American" as the end. It manifests what seems to me a settlement complex: an attempt to construct a canon of Asian American literature based on a particular form of progressive historiography informed by the perspectives on race and ethnicity of the 60s and 70s. However, immigrant literature, including some important works which are closely connected to the history of immigration, such as Songs of Gold Mountain, do not

necessarily fit seamlessly into the progressive historiography. Critical interpretations of Songs of Gold Mountain give it the ambivalent status of a "transitional" stage in Asian American literature: the "original" moment of immigration history should only be replaced by ethnic self-awareness and full participation in the U.S. .

Asian American scholars have adopted several ways to overcome the difficulty in the reading of these immigrant poems. One is to read these poems mainly as historical records of the Chinese community. From this perspective, as Marlon Hom, the editor of the collection Songs of Gold Mountain, argues, the "sojourner mentality" was purely a product of exclusionary immigration policies.[1] Another more complex perspective is offered by the literary critic Sau-ling Wong. She wants us to maintain both "political awareness" and "poetic awareness" while reading these poems. She explains these two terms in the following way:

> "Political awareness" ensures that the labors of the Gold Mountain authors are placed in an appropriate context and receive a careful and historically informed reading, that they are not submitted to arbitrarily imposed standards of excellence derived from traditions in which the poets, because of their emigration and relocation in a new land, did not fully participate. "Poetic awareness," on the other hand, ensures that literary works, with their peculiar formal demands, are not mined deterministically for historical "evidence" to support some versions of Chinese American history, sympathetic or otherwise. (249-50)

While Wong's perspective seems to be sound, the evaluation she gives to these "gold mountain" poems is not much different from the overall ambivalent position that immigrant literature acquires in Asian American historiography. While she gives the immigrant poets credit for creating something new based on their American experience,

---

[1]Marlon Hom's preface to Songs of Gold Mountain.

she also makes what seems to me an apologetic note about the "generic constraints" which limit the possibility for these poets to completely make sense of their "new experience" in America. Wong calls these poets "immigrants *in spite of* themselves (because many of them never intended to settle in the United States), sojourners *in spite of* themselves (because many had made America their permanent home)," and "literary pioneers *in spite of* themselves" (*Politics* 259). She adds, "In light of Gold Mountain poets' indifferent craftsmanship, one might ask to what extent they were prisoners of literary conventions, so that *what* they had to say was constrained by *how* they were allowed to say it by their chosen modes of expression" (253-4). The unsophisticated peasants' background and the generic limitation of classical Chinese poetry, after all, put a limit to the possibility of individualistic expressions of political consciousness.[2]

At a time when Asian American studies is re-thinking its paradigm from a transnational perspective, we might be able to avoid the ambivalence in the definitions of the subject positions of these poets if we situate this immigrant literary text in the context of not just America, but also Asia. In the context of modern Chinese literature, the elevation of an individual voice and the realistic form came much later than the creation of these Gold Mountain poems and did not necessarily represent immigrant sensibility. The flaw of Elaine Kim's argument "from Asian to Asian American" lies in that it does not give space to the discussion of the heterogeneity of Asian cultures in historically specific terms. As I have noticed from Wong's descriptions of two original prefaces to Songs of Gold

---

[2]Sau-ling Wong's essay "Politics and Poetics of Folksong Reading" collected in Sucheng Chan's book Entry Denied.

Mountain, Chinese cultural tradition is the primary context by which these poets negotiated their subject positions. Clearly understanding their poems as a form of folk literature, the preface writers defined their difference by insisting that their poetry be read and interpreted in Cantonese dialect. There are multiple instances in the prefaces that suggest that many literate Chinese immigrants in those days did not perceive Chinese tradition as a monolithic origin, but as a culture that is in itself fraught with divisions of the center and the margin, official language and dialect. The recognition of this diversity provided a space for the poets to justify their creative practice.

Sau-ling Wong's perception of Asian American studies as an "alternative" discipline to Asian studies does not allow for such a space of creativity. As she argues, "what would be considered marginal stuff by the standards of traditional Chinese literature is canonical in Chinese American literature" (259). While the poets still acknowledge the interactive play between regional literature and the so-called "Chinese tradition," Wong engages with Chinese culture on an institutional and abstract level. She translates their claims of cultural specificity to a general reference to Chinese culture as "civilized consciousness" or "the Great Traditions of Cathay," from which these working-class poets are excluded.

The specific institutional structure of Asian American studies in the 70s has also shaped the interpretation of immigrant literature. In the early days of Asian American studies, according to Elaine Kim, "the line between Asian and Asian American [was] crucial to identity formation" of Asian Americans.[3] In the works of writers such as Frank Chin, the opposition between "foreignness" and "home ground" is important for shaping the

---

[3] See Elaine Kim's preface to Charlie Chan Is Dead.

discourse of identity. New developments of Asian American studies in recent years show a tendency to denationalize the field.[4] The cries for heterogeneity, hybridity, and multiplicity are strong in response to the increasingly fluctuating, transitional Asian American community. The diaspora perspective brought by South Asian writers is particularly instrumental in revising the field. In this kind of climate, while many of us look to the future, we should not forget the extremely mixed cultural past that Asian American studies is left with. It seems to me that most immigrant literature, such as Songs of Gold Mountain, bears testimony to this mixed cultural past created by many historical trends overlaying each other.

If we try to tease out these historical trends, then the tropes of heterogeneity and hybridity will not simply be a product of sophisticated theoretical discourse, the influx of new immigrants, or the more pronounced "uprooting" impulse of the younger generation. There were other forms of "sojourner writings" co-existing with the poems of these Chinatown immigrants. There were other groups of Chinese, merchants, students, and intellectuals, living in the United States at the same time as these San Francisco Chinatown poets did. Furthermore, as I will show later on in this introduction, the exclusion of Chinese immigrants starting from the end of the nineteenth century was a significant event not just for immigrants, but in China as well. This historical event fueled nationalist sentiments, inspired utopic imagination, and was directly related to the history of Chinese modernity. Positioned in the nexus of interacting histories, immigrant literature presents a

---

[4]Lisa Lowe (1990) and Shirley Lim (1993) and Sau-ling Wong (1995) have responded to the changing demographics of immigrants as an impetus to enlarge the terrain of Asian American studies.

particularly creative site to challenge pre-existing definitions of both "Chineseness" and "Americanness" in the ways in which we have not been able to identify in our criticism. A revisionist study of immigrant writers is extremely timely for the revisions of Asian American studies.

The case studies of three writers of Chinese descent, Lin Yutang (1895-1976), Bai Xianyong (b. 1937), and Frank Chin (b.1940), which form the core of this dissertation, are meant to envision Asian Americans as a transnational and translingual imaginary community. Two of these writers, Lin Yutang and Bai Xianyong emigrated to the United States after they had become writers in Chinese. Before their immigration, both writers already participated actively in the literary scenes in the Chinese diaspora. In different ways, they also had intricate connections with the West. Neither of them quite fits into the profile of immigrant or immigrant literature described by Asian American scholars. As a writer fluent in English and deeply immersed in traditional Chinese learning, Lin Yutang self-consciously played the role of a spokesperson for China before and after the anti-Japanese war from the 1930s to the 1940s. His English book My Country and My People, which was a cultural history of China, was published in the U.S. in 1939 and won him wide acclaim worldwide. Lin Yutang continued to preach the values of Chinese culture to the West after his emigration to the U.S.. His increasing popularity reinforced his belief in a form of self-defined modernist cosmopolitanism while at the same time encouraging him to take a nationalist position toward Chinese culture. For Lin at least on the surface, being a "sojourner" was never a cause for anxiety; on the contrary, he took great pride in his

ability to embody the "bundle of contrasts" of the East and the West, the traditional and the modern. Although sharing the same kind of affinity toward "Chineseness" as Lin Yutang, Bai Xianyong and other emigre writers from Taiwan had a completely different perception toward both China and the West. Bai Xianyong does not consider himself as an "immigrant", but an "exile" writer. His specific marginal consciousness is very much informed by Western modernist literature. However, the "West" as a cultural signifier is only tangentially touched upon in Bai's writings. He prefers to define his marginality in relation to the center of mainstream Chinese cultural tradition in the 1970s. He chose to write only in Chinese and initially for a small audience in Taiwan. In spite of this marginal position in the English-speaking world, Bai's works were representative of the 70s' generation of "overseas" writers from Taiwan.

These two writers are transnational subjects to the extent that as immigrants, they come into contact with the national cultures of both China and the U.S.. A singular model of the "center" and the "margin" would not work in the descriptions of these two writers, and the binary opposition of the East vs. the West does not apply, either, because "Chineseness," as well as "Americanness," are extremely diversified and hybridized discourses in the modern period. The crucial question with regard to these transnational subjects is how to conceptualize the "overseas" as a critical space in relation to the centers of the nations. There is the Asian American perspective, which I will discuss later on. In addition, the "overseas" is also a critical concern among scholars in Chinese studies, who have often considered this space as an extension of China as a nation. Although efforts have been made to pluralize the meanings of "Chineseness," the imagination of a singular

"homeland" still predominates over most discussions about "overseas" issues. In his article "Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center" (1991), for example, Chinese philosopher Wei-ming Tu argues that "[b]ecause the Chinese diaspora has never lost its homeland, there is no functional equivalent to the cathartic yearning for Jerusalem. Actually the ubiquitous presence of the Chinese state -- its awe-inspiring physical size, its long history, and the numerical weight of its population -- continues to loom large in psychocultural constructs of diaspora Chinese" (16). He therefore proposes to study the "overseas" culture under a general theoretical category which he calls the "cultural China." Constructed in the 1970s, as Tu reminds us in other essays, this critical paradigm assumes a common ancestry and a shared background among "huaren" -- people of Chinese origin rather than "zhongguoren" -- people of China. Inherent in this cultural construction is a political gesture of distancing oneself from the political authority in Taiwan.

There is a specific form of the imagination of the center vs. the margin inherent in Tu's argument. It is different from the Asian American perspective not just in terms of the meanings of the"center" and the "margin," but also with respect to certain fundamental understandings about how culture interacts with the society. Tu's theoretical paradigm "Cultural China" is constructed upon the assumption of Chinese tradition and modernity as shared experiences of which the overseas communities should be a part. This position is explicitly stated in the question that Tu asks about the diaspora: "how could the overseas Chinese help the homeland to modernize"(23). However, this sociopolitical conception of the "overseas" as a unified cultural community organized around a common concern over China is probably too simplistic as a model for the complex transnational cultural

mediation even back in the days of Lin Yutang. The different images that Lin Yutang evokes in the disparate locales of mainland China, Taiwan, and the U.S. reminds us that the reading public is in itself divided in terms of political and cultural perspectives. The consideration of a divided readership, in addition to the shared language of Chinese, is particularly important for us to evaluate the historical position of any Chinese writer who has traveled beyond the national borders. Immigrant authorship forces critics to be transnational and interdisciplinary as well. In Lin's case, his formation of his "overseas" identity has to be traced to the semi-colonial environment of Shanghai in the 1930s. Although Lin was quite aware of the existence of social, racial, and historical stratifications in Shanghai's cultural scene, this awareness did not stop him from concocting a particular brand of cosmopolitanism.

Bai Xianyong's cultural practice taken as a whole deconstructs the monolith of a unified "China" from another angle. The conventional critical reception of Bai Xianyong reinforces a "China-centric" perspective, which presents his cultural practice as a gradual return to nativism and "roots." What this perspective leaves out are the negotiations with both Western and Chinese textuality particularly noticeable in the writer's earlier works. These negotiations open up something similar to what Homi Bhabha has called in another context an "interstitial space," a temporary displacement of the discourse of China's mainstream "May Fourth" tradition and the Western modernist canon. They generate new identities mainly along psychological and cultural lines. Bai's elevation of the private space of homosexuality over the public domain of society, morality, and politics, his interest in the disjunctive identities of individuals that survive drastic political changes, and his

appropriation of Western literary texts in the course of constructing his own version of modernism testify against any assumption of "China" as a holistic "center" against which overseas writers are merely "marginalized."

The minority discourse of Asian America further complicates our conceptualization of the space of the "overseas" by challenging the "West" as a cultural hegenomy from a particular perspective. An important member of the first generation of Asian American writers after the awakening of their racial identity, Chin militantly challenges the assimilationist paradigms which have shaped mainstream American society's understandings of cultural and racial difference. He is particularly concerned with correcting the racial stereotypes of Asian Americans in popular culture and reconstructing a positive identity for Asian Americans. Although Chin's writings primarily reflect the experiences of Asians in the domestic context of the U.S., he implicitly shares a certain perspective with other Asian American writers who have considered the minority discourse of Asian America as part of the anti-imperialist struggles in the third world.

Needless to say, Frank Chin and other Asian American writers in the 70s had a different perception toward the East-West encounter from Lin and Bai. In fact, their differences were so intense that although Lin Yutang also wrote about Chinatown, his works along with other "Chinatown literature" prior to the 70s were dismissed by the editors of the first anthology of Asian American literature Aiiieeeee for being unfaithful to Asian American sensibilities. If we want to understand their differences not in terms of contrast or as one critic has said, "a case of mutual exclusion," then we need to

contextualize Chin's perspective on identity, particularly where it pertains to Asia and Asian culture.

Informed mostly by the domestic context of the U.S., Chin's "third world" perspective tends to present "Asia" as a unified cultural entity. He goes through various stages from completely dismissing immigrant and Chinese literature to embracing a particular understanding of Chinese cultural tradition. In the Aiiieeeee anthology's introduction, Chin and other editors criticize the Orientalist "myth ... that Asian-Americans have maintained cultural integrity as Asians, that there is some strange continuity between the great high culture of a China that has not existed for five hundred years and the American-born Asian" (Chan et. al. 206). Later on, however, Chin cites nothing other than "the culture of five hundred years ago" to give authority to his Chinatown myths. Insisting that the works of Chinese American writers, especially female writers, should be judged according to several Chinese classical texts, Chin champions a monolithic cultural identity that suppresses other forms of difference, particularly gender. Throughout Chin's critical and creative writings, "China" is evoked with conflicting emotions of loss and nostalgia. It is a symbol of an originally "organic identity" which is repeatedly fractured by Orientalist myths, racist stereotypes, and China's own wholesale "Westernization" in the modern period. In an interview, Chin argues that his writings are targeted for readers with the education of a "universal Asian childhood." He claims that

> [n]obody knows enough to understand what I am writing about or from except the immigrants. Immigrants who know Three Kingdoms and The Water Margin have enjoyed my work. There are bilingual puns and little plays on the heroic tradition to let them know exactly what my characters are stupid about. So my ideal audience would be composed of either immigrants fluent in American English and

> history, or, as I would prefer, American born who were knowledgeable about the basic works of a universal Asian childhood (Davis 91).

Here a universalist understanding of cultural hybridity is asserted at the expense of historical cultural-crossings in which Chin himself has to be contextualized. Those of us who have received our education in the different locations of the Chinese diaspora know that we don't share the same curriculum and that there is no "universal Asian childhood."

Although Chin's positions have many limitations that are being exposed from the perspectives of gender, class, and gay and lesbian studies, his writings are provocative exactly because they manifest the double and unstable nature of the discourse of marginality. As a result, his writings lead us to various questions that are still important for contemporary Asian Americans, such as cultural hybridity and the third world context. In this respect, Chin's writings are helpful to illuminate our perspective to the "overseas" as a fluctuating space of cultural creativity.

So far, the criticism of Chin's cultural nationalism has not dealt much with the cross-cultural issues in his works. In a way, both his own works and the works of the feminist writers he attacks can be considered as different forms of hybridized cultural practice. In terms of cross-cultural references, the story of the "no-name" woman and the re-adaptation of "Tang-Ao," a character in a seventeenth-century Chinese novel Flowers in the Mirror, are intrinsic to Kingston's feminist messages, but they are clearly derived from different sources from Chin's works. While Kingston's feminist approach to cultural transaction is much valorized, Chin's approach has generally been ignored or dismissed. As an important writer in the 70s, how should Chin be evaluated in light of the new

theoretical paradigms of hybridity? This question is important, for the lesson we can learn from Chin is that the attempt to unify Asian American cultural practice by guarding a particular version of cultural tradition can only exclude a large number of authors. As identities become more heterogeneous, the prospect that the needs of Chinese American identity can be served by one or two interpretations of a selective number of classical texts -- this is the underpinning of Chin's nationalist revival of traditional culture -- will get increasingly illusory. As cross-cultural practices, the works of both Kingston and Chin have to be contextualized in a specific moment of Asian American history.

Chin's works also push us to rethink about where to position certain significant historical episodes that separate the Asian American experience from that of the "third world." Different experiences of modernity in the Chinese and American contexts might play a significant role in shaping our interpretations of Chinese cultural tradition and the perceptions of the West. Some Chinese American writers and critics consider the modern history and culture of China unrelated to Chinese communities in the West. Although writers like Frank Chin embrace some classical literary texts, they generally ignore the hybrid cultures in the modern context. A few Chinese historians argue that Chinatown culture was "untouched" by the modern experience of China because the most important intellectual figures who initiated China's "New Cultural Movement" were alienated from immigrant communities in the U.S..[5] These historical differences in terms of class and the

---

[5] In his preface to Songs of Gold Mountain, Marlon Hom argues "the 'New Literature' Movement apparently had no effect on the Chinatown literary climate at [the turn of this century], despite the strong emphasis of the Chinatown literati on cultural and ethnic identification with China during the period of rejection in the United States" (37). In his essay "Come All Ye Asian American Writers the Real and the Fake," Chin

experience of modernity could be productive in terms of contextualizing immigrant literature in a global context. They at least remind us that there is no singular modern or postmodern paradigm that can explain the cultural practice of even these three writers. In this dissertation, it seems to me that the postmodernist perspective on historicity and cultural translation is particularly pertinent to considering the connections of these three writers.

Several leading Asian American critics have recently expressed their reservations toward ahistorical glorification of postmodernist border-crossing. They argue that an unconditional valorization of "fluid subjectivity and "cultural world citizenship" will only cause us to lose sight of the figure of the subaltern.[6] I will try to speak to that challenge by engaging with the specific histories of Chinese diaspora's contact with the West in the individual cases of these three cultural figures. Since these histories are different even within the Chinese diaspora, a singular language of colonialism and postcolonialism or a theoretically assumed position of the subaltern, cannot summarize our identities and difference. In fact, when postcolonialist theories travel, they in themselves will have be revised to suit the specific historical context. For example, nationalism as a paradigm presents itself in a particular way in the Chinese context. As historian Presenjit Duara argues, the creation of communities in the modern Chinese context follows a different

---

simplistically criticizes the leaders of the Chinese New Cultural Movement such as Hu Shi for trying to "Christianize China" through the promotion of the autobiographical genre.

[6]See, for example, Sau-ling Wong's article "Denationalization Reconsidered" (1995), particularly its last section where she expresses her reservation about the "denationalization" of Asian American studies.

process from that which has been described by scholars such as Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner. There were also different and competing "nationalist" perspectives, some more individualistic and fluid, others more rigid and institutionalized. Thus, diaspora studies will have to construct its own narrative according to specific histories of cultural-crossing.

The diaspora is the lost story of Asian American studies. My own discovery of a body of literature in Chinese that depicts the significant history of the exclusion of Chinese immigrants from a different perspective from that of immigrants themselves underscores how fragile and selective historical memory can be. Chinese literary historian A Ying labelled these works as "writings against American Exclusion of Chinese Laborers." The novels, poems, and travel logs which he collected and published in an anthology bearing the same title were written around the same time as the first anthology of Songs of Gold Mountain circulated among San Francisco Chinatown residents. They were inspired by a social protest against the Chinese Exclusion Act. This movement, started by Chinatown activists in the U.S., was joined by businessmen, students, and intellectuals in China.[7]

---

[7]Chinese exclusion gained international attention at the turn of century. According to Christian Fritz, the Burlingame Treaty between the U.S. and Qing emperor endorsed the "the inherent and inalienable right of man to change his home and allegiance" and acknowledged "the mutual advantages of the free migration and emigration" of people of both nations "for purposes of curiosity, of trade, or as permanent residents" as early as 1868, and it later became a major obstacle for U.S. Congress to implement exclusion acts (26). 1904 was the year when the terms of the treaty were to be re-newed. Chinatown activists seized this opportunity to plea to the Qing emperor's intervention with America's exclusion of immigrants. The following year, they were joined by supporters in China. The main agenda of this movement was boycotting American products, but as far as the political strategies were concerned, different factions of this movement disputed bitterly

Although many participants were probably concerned more with the exclusion of merchants and students than with laborers, this social movement stirred up national interest in issues related to immigration. Some scholars in Asian American studies have been aware of the existence of this body of literature and have even translated one of the novels; however, no serious efforts have been made to integrate this body of literature into Asian American studies except as socio-historical representations of the exclusion.[8] In fact, written in Chinese and at a critical historical juncture when the modern novelistic form was just beginning to emerge in the literary scene in China, most works that fall into this category cannot be considered as unmediated representations of a social movement.[9] A more challenging question for Asian American scholars and Chinese scholars is the interpretation of the form of political consciousness in this group of literature.

Some Asian American writers and scholars such as Ben Tong and Frank Chin perceive the exclusionary immigration acts and repeated racist ravages of immigrant communities as a historical rupture which erased the Asian American cultural tradition. Contrary to this

---

over whether to fight for the termination of trade treaties between the U.S. and China or to try to eliminate the Exclusion Acts as well. This social movement failed to impact on American policies regarding Chinese immigrants. It did not change the conditions of the lives of immigrants in an essential way mainly because of the lack of political unity.

[8]The English translation of excerpts of a representative work in this category, Ku She Hui (Bitter Society), was published in Amerasia Journal.

[9]Several novels in the category of "anti-exclusion literature" are representative works of the late nineteenth century, when the cultural scene was characterized by the influx of new ideas, many formalistic improvisations, and a deep concern for national identity. Many new novelistic genres, including social satire, science fiction, political novel, and detective novel emerged out of the appropriation of both traditional novels and translated Western novels.

historical perception, the memories of the traumatic historical event of the Chinese Exclusion preserved in these Chinese materials seem to suggest that culture can be appropriated and preserved in different forms in spite of certain traumatic historical experiences. The writers of several novels use the social history of colonialism and immigration as a repository to convey their utopic visions of a new world, which is partially modelled upon the traditional community and partially inspired by what they understood to be the modern West. The hybrid nature of this imagination of the diaspora is historically specific.

These Chinese-language materials force us to contextualize certain theoretical paradigms in Asian American studies. Asian American scholar Ling-chi Wang recently warns students of the Chinese diaspora of the "dual domination" of two paradigms of assimilation and loyalty which have shaped public policies and scholarly discussions respectively in America and China (149). The novels of the late Qing period seem to suggest that these dual paradigms do not always cohere in a seamless manner. In these writings, the writers typically respond to American exclusion of Chinese laborers, the corruption of Qing Dynasty, and the general condition of imperialism by calling for national unification. At the same time, however, they have a relatively liberal attitude toward the role of the overseas community in the project of nation-building and consider this space as more than a simple replica either of traditional China or of the modern West. The unjust treatment of Chinese immigrants constitutes an occasion to voice political idealism and utopic thinking.

We would be able to appreciate the fluid imagination of the diaspora of the late Qing

period if we compare it with a much more rigidly nationalist representation of immigrants during the anti-Japanese War. As some feminist scholars have already argued, war periods, with national interests set as the top priority, often witness a setback for the discussion of other differences, such as gender. Similarly, in the 1930s, as recorded by an English language journal The China Critic published in Shanghai, many Western-trained English-speaking intellectuals had an overtly elitist and nationalist attitude toward immigrants. In reaction to the magazine's weekly coverage of the restrictions of Chinese immigration implemented by foreign countries, anti-Chinese violence, and American films featuring racist stereotypical characters such as Fu Man Chu, some Chinese intellectuals, speaking with sympathy but little understanding of immigration or immigrants' situations, pleaded to the Nationalist Government to summon the dispersed Chinese population to return home. Others more blatantly condemned residents of Chinatown for failing to represent China in a positive way, arguing that "the existence of Chinese people in Chinatown ... does not help the Americans to gain any adequate knowledge of things Chinese".[10] These remarks, along with other articles in this journal, reveal the clear connection of such attitudes toward the overseas Chinese to the intellectuals' search for Chinese cultural identity and the construction of nationalism.

Before studying this diasporic imagination of the late Qing period, we have to contexualize our critical languages of gender and ethnicity that are specific to the American cultural and political context. Although race and ethnicity did exist in the

---

[10]Lo Ch'uan-Fang, "American Dislike for the Chinese" The China Critic, November 1936.

cultural discourses of the late Qing period, agency was not articulated through the language of rights and citizenship. As we can see from Sucheng Chan's book Entry Denied, most Asian American scholars that write about the Chinese Exclusion resort to the theoretical paradigm of citizenship in the context of American politics as a theoretical wedge to break into the monolith of American polity. In the Chinese context, the political situation in the late Qing period was rather convoluted. In several novels, the racial consciousness of "Chineseness" as a collectivity is evoked as a counter force of imperialism. Agency is articulated mostly in the form of an emotional appeal to the audience to participate in the struggles against imperialism. In this respect, this body of literature is quite different from both contemporary Asian American literature and most Western modernist literature in terms of its social function. Furthermore, the issue of agency is related to our interpretation of the novelistic form. In the late Qing period, New Literature, something similar to Western literature, was still very much in the process of formation. These novels about the Chinese diaspora still adopt the traditional episodic form; therefore, the author's subject position cannot be clearly identified from a singular perspective. Still, there are other ways of asserting agency. Unlike Songs of Gold Mountain, the novels typically put more emphasis about the "middle passage" of the Chinese laborers. Ku She Hui (Bitter Society), generally considered to be the most successful piece, is full of vivid descriptions of immigrants' hardship during the trans-Pacific journey. In most cases, these stories of the "middle passage" are dramatically and sentimentally rendered so that they can "elicit tears" from the reader and stimulate the public's enthusiasm in political participation. For as Andrew Nathan and Leo Ou-fan Lee

argue, a distinct characteristic of Chinese culture at the turn of the century is the combination of "critical perceptions of the society" and sentimental revelations of subjective emotions, the latter often used to "justify the author's seriousness of purpose" (383). This connection between private sentimentality and public racial and nationalist consciousness is rather revealing in the anti-exclusion literature as well. Sometimes, this public appeal is made through the help of foreign literature, for example, one of the popular texts of that period, Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin. In the preface to the Chinese version of this novel, the translator Lin Shu shows a tendency to see the predicament of China in the light of the history of slavery in the United States. This intertextual reference reminds us of many first-generation Asian American writers, such as Frank Chin. Lin writes:

> In translating this book, Mr. Wei and I did not strive to describe sorrow for the purpose of eliciting useless tears from readers. It was rather that we had to cry out for the sake of our people because the American continent has severely restricted the immigration of Chinese laborers. A stockade has been erected at the landing place where hundreds of Chinese who have come from afar are locked up. Only after a week do they begin to release one or two people, and some people are not released even after two weeks. This is [like] what is referred to in this book as the 'slave quarters.' Up to the present, letters have never been opened civilized nations, but now these people are opening all the letters of Chinese without exception. Wherever the word "America" is mentioned [in a letter], it is taken to be an offense against the nation and no effort is spared to arrest and deport the person. Therefore I ask, do we Chinese have a nation or not? As we read in George's letter to his friend, a person without a country will be treated like a barbarian even by civilized people. So if in the future we Chinese become materials for slaves, will this not be the basis? (Arkush and Lee 79)

In the above passage, the parallel between the history of slavery in the U.S. context and the exclusion of Chinese laborers is drawn because both incidents are about the subjection of a people in the imperialist condition. The writer of this passage calls for the nation as a

primary agency of liberation; however, there is no clear indication of how much responsibility the individual should adopt as the subject of the nation. Lin Shu, just like most writers of the anti-exclusion literature, conceived political unity in different terms from Anderson's account of the modern nation; therefore, these works have to be understood exclusively on their own terms.[11]

Having laid out this historical and cultural background, I will discuss in particular the diasporic imagination in Huang Jin Shi Jie (The Golden World). Written by a writer who used a pen name "Bi He Guan Zhu Ren" (Master of the Green Lotus Pavilion), The Golden World was serialized in a literary magazine Xiao Shuo Lin (Forest of Fiction) in 1907. A central theme in this novel is national unification, but national unification is not reflected in terms of a consistent definition of "Chinese-ness," but more in the writer's creation of a panoramic picture of Chinese society against the background of the anti-exclusion social movement. The structure of this novel is particularly complex. It includes many different stories about the migration of laborers, merchants, and students to the U.S.

---

[11]An important variation of these novels from our definition of immigrant literature from the perspective of Asian American studies is that not all the writers of "the writings against American exclusion of Chinese laborers" were immigrants. The small number of writers who were immigrants, according to A Ying, were not laborers, but "someone well-acquainted with the lives of Chinese laborers and merchants" (59). The fact that these writers were attracted to the issue of immigration could be explained from different perspectives. Historically, after the first twenty years of the implementation of the Exclusion Act, rampant racism in American immigration policies resulted in a general discrimination against Chinese immigrants including merchants, students, government officials, and women. Thus, the condition of Chinese immigrants in the U.S. once again fueled the ethnic and nationalist sentiments that were awakened by the Opium War in 1848. From a literary historical perspective, novelists of the late Qing period in general had a particularly close affinity to their contemporary reality and had little reservation to voice their opinions about political issues in their essays.

and Cuba. The novel begins with the story of Chen A Jin and Mrs. Chen, a loving young couple residing in the countryside of Canton. Forced to pay off his gambling debts, A Jin agrees to becoming a laborer in Cuba but demands that he bring his wife along with him. In the first third of the book, the writer exposes the harsh living conditions on the slave ship and constant threats of torture and rape. This part ends with the traumatic incident of the molestation of A Jin's wife and the separation of this couple.

Following the descriptions of the separation of A Jin and his wife, the writer portrays a patriotic overseas businessman Jian Wei who has given up his business in New York and decides to participate in the anti-exclusion movement in China and develop national industry. There is still another migrant community who claims to be the descendants of Lu Wang, a prince of the Ming Dynasty, who had chosen to exile to an unnamed island after China was overtaken by Manchurian soldiers approximately three hundred years before this story took place. The structural link between the story of Lu Wang and that of A Jin is the miraculous rescue of A Jin's wife whom everyone has assumed to be dead at the end of the first third of the novel. In order to help Mrs. Chen look for her separated husband, the leader of this island community Zhang Huai Zu and his wife Mrs. Zhang start a long journey to Cuba, the U.S., and England. Being denied entry to Cuba and the U.S., they eventually settle down in England where they attend an engineering school. In addition to these three parallel narratives, there is also the story of a father and son, both traditional literati figures, who are kidnapped by the labor recruiters, thrown onto the slave ship, and thereby have a chance to witness and experience the hardship to which their social class is normally not exposed. Coming from different social backgrounds and having different

experiences of migration, these characters happen to take the same ship back to China, where they discover that they share the same commitment to the anti-exclusion social movement.

Using the ship as an occasion to connect the narratives of various groups of individuals together and not focusing on the story of a particular character as the protagonist must originate in some Chinese pre-modern novels written in the episodic form such as Three Kingdoms. After the May Fourth Movement, this pre-modern genre was pretty much forgotten by writers of "New Literature." Although the critic A Ying endorsed the social significance of "the anti-exclusion literature," he had certain reservations about their forms, arguing that this novel in particular is flawed stylistically for its lack of dramatic tension and focus.

In his descriptions of anti-exclusion meetings, the writer features women and thus preserves a record of how gender issues were treated in the late Qing period. Three types of female characters are described in this novel, all in a sympathetic light. One type is the outspoken female revolutionary represented by Mrs. Zhang; another type is the sentimental housewife represented by Ying You Lan; the third type is the spiritual woman possessing mystical power and yet seemingly unconcerned with social and political issues. This type is represented by Su Yin Hong. At a meeting organized by a women's anti-exclusion organization, a public speech written by Mrs. Zhang is printed and distributed ahead of time among the audience, predominantly female. Mrs. Zhang espouses nationalism from a woman's perspective.

In the eyes of women, who are mothers of citizens, there is no class division

> among their sons... And the more that other people look down and frown upon them, the more deeply mothers cherish and try to protect their sons. For example, if women see a hungry man by the roadside, we tend to help him no matter how much or how little we give. Men, on the other hand, would turn away their eyes and pass by quickly. This example shows that in terms of inter-personal sympathy, women by nature are superior to men" (226).

From this quotation, we can see that the writer of The Golden World apparently considers the equality between genders as a significant aspect of nationalist construction. Through depicting female revolutionary figures such as Mrs. Zhang, he encourages women to participate in political action just as men do and recognizes their special role as "mothers of citizens." Taking into consideration the novel's political purpose of national unification and to a certain extent homogenization, we can probably understand why gender and class differences do not appear to be a predominant concern for the writer. The lack of attention to difference is also revealed in the writer's deliberate choice of not giving names to most revolutionary female characters. They are referred to only by their husbands' last names. A few women that give tearful testimonies of exclusion and detention in front of other women, however, are given names on their own terms.

One of the public female figures is called Ying You Lan. She has traveled to America to search for her husband and her son, both of whom are merchants who left China after the implementation of the Exclusion Act. Upon landing, immigration officials immediately want to send her back, and when she protests that she has immigration documents issued by the American embassy in Hong Kong, she is temporarily detained on Angel Island, waiting for her interview. In the meantime, she learns from an acquaintance that her husband and her son have both committed suicide after they have been ordered to leave

the U.S.. Although You Lan's encounters are much more dramatic than any existing historical record of detention and deportation, in the novel, her testimony has a strong effect on her female audience. "They could not help sympathizing with You Lan especially when comparing her experience to their own, and they all secretly shed tears. All around there was a sniffling sound" (233).

Su Yin Hong, a woman warrior (*Nuu Xia*), whose name is the combination of two well-known warrior figures Yin Niang and Hong Xian. Su Yin Hong has a free spirit and does not like being confined by political commitment or public activities even though she is sympathetic to the anti-exclusion movement. The contrast of Yin Hong and Ying You Lan with female revolutionary figures such as Mrs. Zhang multiplies the novel's perspectives to gender issues. In Mrs. Zhang's eyes, Yin Hong is "escapist" and "behind the time," but this criticism does not prevent her from warmly accepting Yin Hong as a new member of the island, a symbol of an autonomous society where every character in the novel returns in the end. Yin Hong has two pieces of equipment that help her to find her way to this utopia, a paper ship made and blessed by her Taoist master and a map. In a playful manner, the writer suggests the collaboration of traditional mysticism and modernist thinking in the novel's final ending.

The imaginary community prompted by the anti-exclusion protests at the end of the nineteenth century presents the main characters of this novel many possibilities to determine their own identities. The modern nation, particularly the kind that according to the postcolonial scholar Partha Chaterjee wavers between the identification with and

difference from the Western modern nation, is at best one of the many choices.[12] The protagonists are given the flexibility to make their own political decisions about what form the new "golden world" should take place. For example, as a result to his exposure to the lack of unity and the businessmen's destructive behavior in this political movement, Jian Wei decides to give up his original plan and withdraw from this struggle. This detail suggests that the writer remains ambiguous whether the self-identification with the nation of China would be a solution to social problems within the country as well as immigrants' conditions. Unlike the translator Lin Shu who equates exile with the loss of national identity in the passage that I have quoted, the writer of The Golden World considers going away from China as an opportunity to create a new and alternative community that is more advanced in every way than both China and America. As Jian Wei says, the "golden world" is a metaphor of an eternal "colony for fathers and sons, brothers and sisters" that is "ten times superior to contemporary civilized countries" (298).

In striking similarity with Paul Gilroy's description of the nineteenth-century black writer Martin Delany's novel Blake, the ship is an important metaphor in The Golden World. Besides serving as a reminder of the misery of immigrants, it is also the place where broken families are re-united and where the main characters of the novel get acquainted with each other. Thus it symbolizes the shifting and unsettling political coalition of the social movement against American exclusion of Chinese. It is also a metaphor of modern commerce and a structural link that connects the disparate lives of

---

[12]Revising the theory of Benedict Anderson, Partha Chaterjee argues that the third-world nationalism is "posited not on an identity but rather on a difference with he 'modular' forms of the national society propagated by the West." (5)

the individuals in this novel together into what looks like a community. Putting all the images of the ship together, the novelist infuses this symbol with conflicting emotions of place and displacement, despair and hope, disillusionment and fantasy. At the end of the story, everyone returns to Huai Zu's island, where the patriotic Jian Wei decides to join efforts with his practical-minded and Taoist-spirited friend Huai Zu in setting up a shipping company. As a descendent of a political exile of the former dynasty, Huai Zu is a stock character from Chinese classical novels, for example, Liu Bei in Three Kingdoms. The conventional move of these characters is to fight their ancestors' battle to gain back the throne. In this book, however, content with living in isolation from the society, Huai Zu is more like the anonymous protagonist in the traditional tale of the Peach Blossom Garden. Then Huai Zu further violates our expectation by being extremely worldly and possessing his own modern interpretation of "political autonomy." Under his governance, a long standing institution on this island is a school where English, but not Chinese classics, is part of the regular curriculum. Especially interested in adopting the practical knowledge of the West, he also founds a technical school to train sailors and technicians and encourages the women on the island to study in Europe so that they could return to "devote themselves to education in order to reform the vulgar masses and cultivate disciplined citizens" (259). At the end of the novel, we are told that a self-contained society has evolved on the island, equipped with modern industries such as mining, printing, and clothing factories and rich human resources of students of law, politics, business, science, and mechanics. This solution captures the essence of the imagination of the diaspora, a space, which in Paul Gilroy's words, presents "a non-traditional tradition,

an irreducibly modern, ex-centric, unstable, and asymmetrical cultural ensemble that cannot be apprehended through the manichean logic of binary coding" (198).

I perceive the community of Asian Americans as an "unstable and asymmetrical cultural ensemble" similar to that which Gilroy advocates in his book The Black Atlantic. To a large extent, this cultural ensemble is informed by different experiences of modernity unrestricted to the borders of a single nation. Other languages in addition to English are often used as its artistic medium. In this dissertation, I will consider the polemical perspectives to the "overseas" offered by Asian American studies as well as modern Chinese studies. Although both disciplines deal with the issue of identity, the critical reception of these three authors reflect what Gayatri Spivak calls their "institutional subject-positions." While this thesis is not a full-length examination of these positions, I argue that re-thinking these perspectives and bridging their gaps in certain areas is an important step toward constructing a more complete picture of the diaspora.

The purpose of connecting the perspectives of Asian American studies and modern Chinese studies is so that more space can be created for the multiple histories that shape the space of the "overseas", for historical attention to these three authors is the only way for us to avoid presenting the "overseas" only as a discursive formation or as abstract difference. While describing the genealogy of these three case studies, I take into account the fact that these three authors not only have different subject positions, they have different expectations of the social function of literature. Frank Chin expects literature to play a much more direct role in terms of identity formation than the other two writers.

These different perspectives to literature and society are in themselves a part of the literary imagination of the "overseas", which on many levels, is charged with tension, repression, and institutional restriction. At the same time, however, as the novel Golden World reminds us, migrancy and dispersal of the Chinese have been a real and consistent theme in our history since the middle of the nineteenth century. I believe that it is meaningful to utilize this tension in order to cultivate new sites of critical intervention rather than setting up boundaries between one discipline and another.

Chapter One

Lin Yutang and His Bilingual "China"

On his fiftieth birthday in 1945, Lin Yutang (1895-1976) expressed his ambition in a Chinese couplet: "Straddle over Eastern and Western cultures; Comment on the literature in the universe." While this couplet characteristically captures the self-complacency of this greatly mystified cultural figure in mainland China, Taiwan, and the U.S., it is to a certain extent factual considering Lin's great achievements in bilingual writings. After his first English book My Country and My People (1936) was reprinted seven times within a short period of four months in the U.S., Lin enjoyed increasing popularity among American readers until his retirement in 1966. He was a prolific writer, producing forty works in four decades, thirty-six of them in English and published in the U.S.. His works cover a wide range of genres: ethnographic history, translation, novel and essay collections. Although many were adopted as textbooks, Lin's readership was not limited to academe. His success, translated into monetary terms,[1] ensured the relative stability and security to which many immigrants aspire.

Lin's prestige is established through his bilingual competence and his ability to move between Chinese and Western cultures. However, in the contemporary critical context where various forms of local identities of race, class and gender have introduced new awareness of cultural and social differentiations, we are bound to have many questions

---

[1] An example of Lin's success is given by Lin's biographer and daughter. According to Lin Taiyi, Lin was able to draw an income of $36,000 from publishing his works in 1938, enough to support his family in New York's upper East side and subsidize his extended family back in China.

regarding Lin's cosmopolitanism. For example, what cultural privilege enables Lin to transcend the usual experience of dislocation and displacement frequently depicted in immigrants' writings? How does the sense of cultural privilege shape Lin's representations of China? As a recognized Chinese expert in America, Lin Yutang confronts the contemporary scholar interested in cross-cultural issues as, in James Clifford's terms, "a disconcertingly hybrid 'native' met at the ends of the earth" ("Traveling Cultures" 97), "disconcerting" for the many roles he ascribed to himself in China and America. Clifford's descriptions of such a figure fits Lin Yutang rather well: he is "an insider as well as outsider," a "native informant" and at the same time an "interlocutor," a writer who is guided by his own "ethnographic proclivities" as he is made to "speak for" certain cultural knowledge (97). Not only is Lin's self-identity worth investigating, but the critical reception of Lin raises the bigger question of what role the cultural translator plays in the construction of national cultures. In the study of modern Chinese history and literature, translation is looked upon from a utilitarian perspective, and the cultural translator's identity is evaluated against binary standards of the progressive vs. the regressive, the modernist vs. the traditionalist, the completely Westernized vs. the essentially Chinese. Thus, in the past several decades in mainland China, Lin's reception has always been subject to changing political climates and alternately characterized as either regressively Westernized or essentially enlightened. Interpretations of this bilingual Chinese writer in the U.S., on the other hand, have been tainted by Orientalist attitudes and assimilationist ideology. While certain groups of American readers portrayed Lin as a mythic figure and accepted him as the "venerable sage" from the Orient, others readers, such as many Asian

American scholars and writers, denounced him for his representation of the "assimilated" Chinese. According to those Asian American writers involved in the compilation of Aiiieeeee, the first anthology of Asian American literature, Lin "consciously set out to become American ... in the stereotypical sense of the good, loyal, obedient, passive, law-abiding, cultured sense of the word" (Chan et. al. 199).

I will engage in the criticism of the canon of Asian American literature as defined in 1970s later on in this chapter and in Chapter Three. However, I argue that the critics both in the American and Chinese contexts have informed us less about Lin Yutang than Lin can tell us about the extremely "messy" cross-cultural context and the complex process of transmitting cultural knowledge. This chapter does not intend to portray Lin as a successful model of cultural crossing. I argue, rather, that Lin's bilingual practice bears testimony to the "historical taintedness" of cultural translation and the translator in the disparate cultural and political contexts of China and the U.S. In this chapter, I will examine the politics of reading Lin's works in each of these critical contexts as I consider Lin's search for a unified Chinese cultural identity. This way of reading emphasizes the process of translation, mediation, and contention between the East and the West, and the interactions of many forms of local identities with cosmopolitanism in the diaspora.

I argue that the interaction of Chinese intellectuals in exile with both the homeland and the West is more dynamic than Rey Chow has described in Writing Diaspora (1993). Chow states that

> [t]he space of "third world" intellectuals in diaspora is a space that is removed from the "ground" of earlier struggles that were still tied to the "native land." Physical alienation, however, can mean precisely the intensification and

> aestheticization of the values of "minority" positions that had developed in the earlier struggles and that have now, in "third world" intellectuals' actual circumstances in the West, become defunct. The unself-reflexive sponsorship of "third world" culture, including "third world" women's culture, becomes a mask that conceals the hegenomy of these intellectuals over those who are stuck at home. (118)

If we trace the trajectory of Lin's ambiguous self-positioning in his bilingual writings in Shanghai, his English novel Moment in Peking and Chinatown Family, we have to admit that contrary to Chow's statement, the physical circumstances of being "removed from the native land" constantly challenge Lin to re-configure his relationship with the nation, the West, tradition, modernity, and immigrant community. These active interactions with pre-existing models of identity are more dynamic than the term "isolation" can summarize. At the same time, Lin's popularity in the West and different locales of the Chinese diaspora also defy the strict binary opposition between the "first world" and the "third world."

I situate Lin's self-definitions in the context of Chinese modernity. His cosmopolitanism can be traced to his belief in modernity as a universal paradigm. In his preface to On the Wisdom of America (1948), for instance, Lin defines his subject position in relation to the modernity of America, arguing that "[i]n looking at American as well as at Chinese thought, I have always felt myself a 'modern' [man], sharing the modern man's problems and pleasures of discoveries. Wherever I say 'we,' I mean 'we moderns'" (xv.). However, the Chinese perspective and the identity of the "modern" man do not fit with each other as seamlessly as Lin Yutang suggests. Taking Lin's writings from the 1930s to the 1960s as a whole, we can discover consistent attempts on the part of Lin to reconcile his two self-identifications as the "modern man" and the "Chinese expert." Reconciliation

is found on most occasions by utilizing the privilege of the translator, re-defining tradition, and attributing new meanings to originally conflicting cultural terms. For example, Lin defends the value of Chinese "tradition" in terms of its complementary position vis-a-vis the materialism of American modernity. According to Lin, Chinese tradition provides the West with a "healthy" and "humanist" outlook on life, the kind of spiritual therapy that "modern" America needs.[2] He emphasizes that American materialism needs Oriental "wisdom," "the quality of mind which gives us a sense of confidence in this all-round view of life both as fact and as ideal, which is confirmed by all of us who find that we have to live." (105)

While trying to smooth over the disjunction caused by radical social transformations from tradition to modernity, Lin resorts to this psychosocial rhetoric to maintain a coherent self-identity. It seems to me that his emphasis on a "healthy" and upbeat attitude toward life paradoxically betrays the underlying "dis-ease" that the American historian T. J. Lears associates with the modern selfhood and its need for "a therapeutic world view."[3]

---

[2]Lin Yutang shows a great deal of concern about the problem of materialism in modern culture and apparently considers Eastern philosophy as a solution to this problem. He identifies with the criticism of modernity given by some American thinkers, such as Henry Adams; however, he thinks that all American philosophers are implicated within the same materialistic paradigm. He writes in Wisdom of America, "Henry Adams is the case of a fine intellect searching heaven and earth for a unified system of beliefs and failing to find it. The materialistically limited conception of the nineteenth century made it impossible for him to arrive at anything but despair" (100).

[3]In No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920 (1981), T. J. Lears links modernism's desire for spirituality with its desire for knowledge about the "other." He writes, "By the 1880s, a wide variety of remedies for nervousness had begun to appear. Many advisors simply exhorted Americans to cultivate relaxation and repose, to learn from 'Oriental people, the inhabitants of the tropics, and the colored people generally.'" (53)

In the specific case of Lin, the cause of this "dis-ease" has to be found in the modern Chinese context where the "modern" doubly implicates the "new" as well as the "foreign." As I will show from my reading of a cultural journal The China Critic, in which Lin participated actively, colonialism was a significant context that shaped the cultural perspectives of Chinese intellectuals in Shanghai in the 1930s. Among the concerns generated by the modern discourse are the demand for cultural authenticity and racial integrity. Therefore, Lin Yutang's most influential work My Country and My People (1935) can be read as an attempt to categorize Chinese culture through creating multitudinous divisions between youth and old age, innocence and sophistication, masculinity and femininity, spirituality and materialism, family and the nation. All the way through this process, the Western context played a significant role in Lin's definition of the nation and national culture.

. The interaction of the self with national history and identity goes both ways in Lin's writings. At the beginning of My Country and My People, for example, while Lin gives an authorial voice to the nation's identity, the language with which he defines his own subject position as the "true" cultural translator trades on the integrity and authority of the nation. However, the overlapping of the self and the nation is not entirely seamless in Lin's writings. As a cultural translator, Lin seems to be extremely unconcerned with the faithfulness of his translations with the original English and Chinese terms. His interpretations of Chinese history and philosophy in My Country and My People and other works is to a large extent influenced by his own aesthetic ideas. The impossibility of separating aesthetics and politics reminds us that Lin's self-identity has to be explained in

relation to modern Chinese literature, the genealogy of Lin's aesthetic views, and the condition of the diaspora. Lin's identity is shaped as much as by cultural privilege as by cultural dislocation. His works, especially those written and published outside China, follow a pattern of self-referentiality. In the historical and philosophical works written after his emigration to the U.S., certain notions of identity and difference in My Country and My People are repeated. Although his fictional narratives are set in various locations such as Peking, New York's Chinatown, and Singapore, they seem to illustrate similar cultural ideas. This pattern of repetition suggests that writing has a function of giving modern cross-cultural subject order and coherence which are lacking in the real life and social condition of the diaspora.[4]

In this chapter, I will situate Lin Yutang and his works within the diaspora's condition of multiple languages, diverse audience, and the interaction of different histories. By examining the readings of Lin Yutang by American, Asian American, and mainland Chinese critics, I offer a more complex picture of cross-cultural reading than the limited paradigms of Orientalism and nationalism. I go on to situate the bilingual writer and his English writings within the specific context of Shanghai in the 1930s, where intellectuals were contemplating traditional and modern cultures in an ambivalent attempt to place themselves within the East and the West. I argue that the nationalist perspective of My

[4] T. J. Lears describes the "modern" selfhood in these words: "By the end of the nineteenth century, the self seemed neither independent, nor unified, nor fully conscious, but rather interdependent, divided, and subject to the play of unconscious or inherited impulses" (38). Lears is addressing specifically American culture at the turn of the century, but based on my study of The China Critic, it seems that certain parallels can be drawn between America in the end of 1930s and Shanghai of 1930s, especially in terms of the sense of weightlessness and the search for a unified selfhood.

Country and My People emerges through Lin's re-interpretation of Chinese culture along racial and gender lines. Lin's repeated experiments with new genres mark the negotiation of the bilingual writer with the dichotomies of tradition and modernity, East and West.

I. Reading Lin Yutang: "How Particular Cultures Can Be Emplotted in Other People's Tales"

From the 1930s to the 1960s, the collaboration of Orientalism and nationalism controlled the critical reception and interpretation of Lin's writings. The myth of Lin Yutang as someone who could transmit the complex cultural knowledge about China with un-mediated "lucidity" and "simplicity" was erected as early as 1936 with the publication of his first book in English My Country and My People. In his review of Lin's My Country and My People, M. H. Bro writes that "[a]lthough the author appears in the chapter headings to cover the whole range of human interest, it is not his complexity that astounds one. It is his simplicity." (Christian Century 6 Nov. 1935, qtd. in Book Review Digest 1935, 602) While Lin derived his own interpretations of "simplicity" and other terms with which he defined Chinese racial identity, such as China's "power of resistance," its "negative strength" and "mysterious vitality," American critics in general ignored the aesthetic twist of these terms and interpreted them literally. As a result, Lin's book was accepted as "the clearest and most interesting dissection and synthesis of China past and present" (Fanny Butcher, Chicago Daily Tribune, 21 September 1935, qtd. in Book Review Digest 1935, 602). Several critics characterized the style of Lin's writing using terms such as "suave temper," "civilized" style, "charm" and "humor," but more than one American reader admitted to being "a little bewildered by the seeming inconsistency" of

the author's conclusion (Saturday Review, 29 February 1936, qtd. in Book Review Digest 1936, 594). By my reading, the conclusion is in fact one of the most significant moments in this book when Lin seems to realize the distance between his idealist construction of China with the social reality of national disintegration before the Japanese invasion. At this point, his tone changes from playful to critical, and his style also conveys a sense of urgency when he openly addresses the corruptions in the Chinese political system and calls for a strong leader in the times of national crisis.

Once the myth of Lin Yutang was erected, Lin's other literary endeavors were viewed in a similar light. If Lin's style is unconventional according to Western conceptions of literature, the critics would ignore these stylistic inconsistencies and accept the writer and his works based on the assumption that Lin provided an authentic representation of China. When Moment in Peking was published in 1939, the novel's critical reception in the West betrayed more of an ethnographic interest in China and Chinese subject matters than aesthetic interest in the novel itself. W. H. Auden was the only critic who attempted to evaluate the novel from a stylistic point of view, but his criterion of literature was primarily Western. He wrote:"Moment in Peking seems to me to fall between two stools: read as a novel it fails to satisfy our curiosity about individuals; read as history one would like to know more details about Chinese life in general, about political ideas, social manners and actual historical events." (New Republic 6 December 1939, qtd. in Book Review Digest, 1939, 595) Despite his ambivalence in accepting Lin's novel as a work of literature and instead of trying to figure out its stylistic difference, Auden highly recommended Lin's book to the readers, saying "I hope that this book will be widely read

.... Written with grace and charm, it carries one along, and within the limits imposed by the form, it manages to say a good deal about a civilization which ranks besides that of France as the highest pattern of social life yet achieved by men" (595). Two other reviewers, Olda Owens and Katherine Woods, also admitted the incongruity of Lin's novel with Western generic classifications, but they both circumvented this difficulty by concentrating on the subject matter of the novel. Reinforcing the dualistic separation of style and content, these reviewers further mystified the writer Lin Yutang. As Olda Owens wrote, "the book is Lin Yutang ... [who is] not an extraordinary, but a unique Chinese. He is a patriot, but he is also an integrated human being who can tell about his own people, in a foreign language and with perfect detachment. His candor and intellectual honesty are such that everything he says is completely intelligible to his Western friends" (Boston Evening Transcript, Book Review. 18 November 1939, qtd in Book Review Digest 1939 594).

These observations by Lin's American critics bring to mind a parallel situation in 1970s in which Maxine Hong Kingston's highly successful book The Woman Warrior confused American publishers and critics as to whether it should be read as an autobiography or fiction. Kingston's angry protest about the misreadings of her work suggest that there is no objective and consistent point of view toward authors of Asian origin.[5] Although Lin Yutang was accepted as a spokesperson of Chinese civilization, when his novel portrays the lives of Chinese immigrants Chinatown Family (1948), we can see that it does not take

---

[5] See Maxine Hong Kingston's article "Cultural Mis-readings by American Reviewers" in Asian and Western Writers in Dialogue: New Cultural Identities.

too much stretching to switch from glorifying Chinese civilization to denigrating immigrants. The exotic and inscrutable Orient and the "perfectly intelligible" China do not form logical contradictions to each other. I agree with Homi Bhabha's argument that the point of our critical intervention "should shift from the ready recognition of images as positive or negative, to an understanding of the processes of subjectification made possible (and plausible) through stereotypical discourse" ("The Other Question" 67). The critical reception of Chinatown Family makes the trajectory of subjectification more clear as this novel establishes certain critical affinity between Lin and other immigrant writers and Asian American writers. When Chinatown Family was published, the once "glorious Chinese civilization" became the "alien background" and the "attractive strangeness" of the immigrants. Lin's novel was characterized as a "quiet, consciously naive story of the Fongs grappling as a family with their handicap, of alien background and their other limitations, clinging loyally to the tested virtues of an old culture while they adjust, tentatively, to a new [one]."[6] The same rhetoric of colonialism that simultaneously affirms Eurocentric humanity and stresses Chinese immigrants' alien background was applied to Lin Yutang's novel three decades before the publication of Woman Warrior and Kingston's criticism of her critics. As Richard Sullivan wrote in The New York Times regarding Lin's Chinatown Family,

> There is a bright and moving quality in these people; in their Chinatown background and in their ways and attitudes there is often an attractive strangeness. Yet the reality makes this strangeness only a shine on the surface. For underneath the Fongs were not so much Chinese or Sino-Americans as they are ... human

[6]Florence Haxton Bullock, "When East and West Do Meet" in New York Herald Tribune Book Review, 28 November 1948.

> beings. And it is their humanity, so warm and common and compelling, which gives to the novel its fascination and strength" (10 October 1948, qtd. in Book Review Digest 1948 503).

I mention this history of the critical reception of Lin Yutang in the United States not for the purpose of constructing an "authentic" reading of Lin Yutang and his works. Rather, I argue that this history of reception is useful especially when it is read intertextually with the reception of Lin Yutang in the Chinese diaspora. Theoretically, a study of Lin Yutang and the social context of China would complement in a significant way Edward Said's paradigm of Orientalism, for according to Aijaz Ahmed, the reception of Western textualiaty would enable us to see "third-world" intellectuals as agents of mediation between the East and the West. Ahmed writes,

> A notable feature of Orientalism is that it examines the history of Western textualities about the non-West quite in isolation from how these textualities might have been received, accepted, modified, challenged, overthrown or reproduced by the intelligentsia of the colonized countries: not as an undifferentiated mass but as situated social agents impelled by our own conflicts, contradictions, distinct social and political locations, of class, gender, region, religious affiliations, and so on -- hence a peculiar disjunction in the architecture of the book. (In Theory, 172)

Lin's My Country and My People is a project that seeks to mark clear boundaries of Chinese cultural identity from the West by re-evoking Chinese tradition as a counter-discourse to modern culture. As a response to imperialism, My Country and My People and the novel Moment in Peking strongly articulate nationalist sentiments. However, completely subscribing to the prospects of social progress, leftist Chinese critics in the 1930s had a different version of national identity. Lin Yutang's cultural project was dismissed as conservative. A representative figure of these critics, Hu Feng for example, dismissed both figures of the East and the West in Lin's writings and paraphrased Lin's

cultural agenda in the following way:

> the theme we are concerned about is not (how big) his (Lin Yutang's) achievements (are) in linguistics and phonetics, whether he has made useful contribution to Chinese scholarship, or whether he has had any accomplishment in foreign literature and teaching. What we want to illustrate (in this article) is what it means for a progressive intellectual to change his way of "dealing with the society" ("Chu Shi") and how we should evaluate objectively his cultural criticism and literary views (606).

On the eve of the Japanese invasion, leftist critics also demanded that writers commit their works to the immediate political goal of national salvation and represent those aspects of "national spirit" that were uplifting to the spirit of the nation. Sentimental novels or even social satires were deemed unacceptable for this "special period" in Chinese history. Therefore, written during the Sino-Chinese War and dedicated to the "brave soldiers," Lin's English work Moment in Peking (1938) which also contains overt nationalist messages at the beginning and in the end of the book was not warmly accepted when it was translated and published in Chinese. Lin's novel depicts the lives of two wealthy families in China against a vast historical background of more than thirty years. Lin significantly departed from the guidelines of nationalistic realism by focusing primarily on the lives of self-sufficient intellectuals and wealthy merchants; its style which was reminiscent of the novellas pre-dating the New Cultural Movement also contributed to its "regressiveness."

Nationalism that constructs its authority by speaking on behalf of the nation erases many forms of differentiation that are suggestive of alternative histories and identities. In Moment in Peking written after Lin emigrated to the U.S., the writer's precarious relationship with the Chinese nation and its project of modernity is implicitly stated in his

appropriation of the premodern narrative style of the Chinese classical work Dream of the Red Chambers. After Lin became disillusioned with leftist politics and social revolutions after 1926, he gradually alienated himself from mainstream Modern Chinese literature and its representative figures such as Lu Xun. He did not show much interest in writing novels until after he emigrated to the U.S.. My reading of Moment in Peking later on in this chapter intends to situate Lin and his works in the context of Chinese modern culture. Where does this experimental style put Lin in the historiography of the nation? To answer this question requires that we take such categories as "realism" and "nationalism" as historically contested concepts, not as fixed categories.

Indian postcolonial scholar Sara Suleri's book The Rhetoric of English India begins by reconfiguring the divide between colonial and postcolonial India. Eloquently paraphrasing her study as an illustration of how "particular cultures can be emplotted in other people's tales," Suleri revises the historiography so that instead of reading India's history in terms of the apocalyptic "end" or "beginning" of the empire, Suleri chooses to interpret the colonial encounter at its "temporal conditions," stressing along the way the perplexities generated by this encounter (12-13). Lin Yutang would provide a good case study for the "pragmatics of cultural difference" in the Chinese context. However, in order for us to understand the active cross-cultural interactions emblematized by this historical figure, we should stop ourselves from too quickly determining whether the outcome of Lin's experiment was a success or failure. In contemporary China, the critical discussion of this subject tends to be subsumed by a presumed goal of modernization and an essentialist interpretation of Chinese tradition. Consequently, the study of cultural difference seldom

addresses the issue of self-identity or the postcolonial context. Two articles on Lin Yutang written by contemporary Chinese literary scholar Chen Pinyuan can be taken as an example of this perspective. Collected in his book On the Collision of Eastern and Western Cultures (1985), Chen's articles erase the specificities of Lin Yutang and the 1930's cultural context and replace them with an unquestionable acceptance of modernity as the mission for the nation. Chen identifies two important themes that run through the entire history of modern China: "how to enlarge the revolutionary spirit of the May-Fourth" on the one hand and "how to inherit useful resources of Chinese culture" on the other. However, if we take a historical perspective to Lin Yutang, then these themes are not immutable, because how to assess Chinese modernity and its legacy are still open questions for debate.

From a sociopolitical perspective, what is the significance of writing in both English and Chinese, writing about China to readers not necessarily acquainted with Chinese history? When the case of Lin Yutang was opened in an entirely different context by Asian American critics in 1970s, this was the question that guided their investigation. Earlier on, reviewers of Lin's novel Chinatown Family had understood the novel as a portrayal the melting-pot myth of America and confirmation of Chinese immigrants as a model minority. Instead of accounting for the assimilationist ideology that informed this kind of reading, Asian American scholars simply wrote intellectual immigrants such as Lin Yutang out of the historiography of Asian America, declaring them as "fake" and "assimilationist" in the preface to Aiiieeeee (1979). Simplistically reinforcing a dualistic separation of Chinese and American nationalities, the Aiiieeeee editors in fact did not address the central issue raised

in Lin's book -- the positive value of Chinese culture in the process of Americanization. Rather, the Aiiieeeee editors are more concerned with rectifying the negative stereotypes about Asians in American media. In addition to their obsession with stereotypes, the editors also express a strong sense of longing toward an "organic" sense of identity which they consider to be lacking in the history of immigration and in Asian American culture. For the Aiiieeeee editors, the primal scene of immigration is identified as settlement not migration; thus they deride travel writings as a site of voyeurism, ventriloquism, and the reproduction of cultural stereotypes. "The travel format, going from one nation to another, became ... an interior journey from one culture to another. Thus, the form that evolved into the Chinatown book reinforced and clearly articulated today's popular notion of being an Asian American. The concept of the dual personality, of going from one culture to another, emerged" (200). In fact, the nostalgic longing for "an organic sense of identity" articulated by these Asian American writers paradoxically suggests the very impossibility of setting Asian American historiography completely apart from the national histories of both Asia and America. Lin Yutang needs to be brought back rather than dismissed in order to illuminate the complexities of articulating identity and difference in this context.

II. "Shanghai Cosmopolitanism" and Figures of the "West"

Born in a village close to China's entry port in South Fukien province in 1895, Lin Yutang was exposed to the West through encountering American steamships and French sailors in his childhood. Lin's father was a Presbyterian minister. Although he did not know a word of English and had little knowledge about world geography, he decided that

his son should be educated in Western universities in places like London and Berlin. In 1911, as a first step toward realizing this ambition, Lin Yutang was sent to St. John's University, the most Americanized university in Shanghai, to be trained as a minister. After being exposed to the "New Culture" of the early twenties, however, Lin Yutang rebelled against the family's plan for his future and renounced Christianity. After his graduation, Lin taught English and Western literature in Beijing for a few years and then went abroad to pursue a doctoral degree in Chinese linguistics at Harvard and the University of Leipzig. He went back to China in 1923 and continued to teach English at Beijing University, where he became involved in the student movement against the corrupt warlords in Beijing.[7] Because he supported the activists even after the authorities of Beijing massacred several hundred students in 1926, Lin was on the government's blacklist and had to flee from the city.

Affiliated with the progressive literary group called "Yu Shi" while he was in Beijing, Lin published many political treatises in support of student activities. After he left Beijing and became disillusioned with radical social movements,[8] however, English began to play

---

[7]Besides direct exposure to Western cultures, Lin Yutang was influenced by Chinese intellectuals such as Hu Shi, who suggested that he study Chinese linguistics in Europe to "re-discover" the value of Chinese culture. Lin's friendship with Lu Xun and Zhou Zuo Ren, Lu Xun's brother, who were the organizers of the progressive literary group called "Yu Si," influenced his radical political position in the 1920s. In 1926, after several hundred students were murdered during a anti-government protest, Lin wrote several essays commemorating the martyrs of this revolution. He not only exposed the brutality of the Beijing warlords for ordering this massacre in these essays, but also criticized the intellectuals' hesitation to support the students and their compromise with the government.

[8]Following a period of disillusionment and loneliness, Lin Yutang learned to look at revolution with detachment, sometimes even from an aesthetic perspective. In the

an increasingly important role in his life. In the unique environment of Shanghai where Lin Yutang lived for several years in the 1930s following a brief sojourn in Fukien, English and Western education no longer implied political radicalism as it had a decade before. If during the May Fourth Period, being pro-West was tantamount to being "modern" and progressive, this equation could not be easily drawn in the 30s. Shanghai was also special in that because of its status as colony and an entry port, the fusion of the East and the West produced not a simple imitation of Western "modern" society, but an environment that was neither traditional nor modern, neither entirely Chinese nor entirely Western. Shanghai's English readership consisted of foreign residents as well as Chinese college students. Lin was frequently invited to speak to different gatherings in English, such as the Peace Group from Oxford University, the McTyeier Women's School, Shanghai Y Men's Club, and the Liberal Cosmopolitan Club in Shanghai. There were also a number of English publications in Shanghai, one of which, Tien Tsia, was founded by Lin Yutang and his three friends in 1935. Lin was also a regular contributor to a journal called The China Critic, where most of his speeches, essays, and humorous sketches were published in a column called "The Little Critic." Some of these English essays were later translated, footnoted, and prefaced possibly by himself and published in two Chinese collections, Da Huang Ji and Wo de Hua.

---

preface to Jian Fu Ji, a collection of essays written during his revolutionary years, Lin Yutang spoke about revolution as a cause "unfit for the time" (Bu he shi yi). Although he continued to maintain a critical posture toward the government of the "peaceful times," he no longer considered revolution to be a viable solution to social change. Lin Yutang recalled his own revolutionary writings in the same way that he appreciated "a good souvenir obtained during a trip to the countryside." He ironically entitled his collection with the poetic phrase "Jian Fu Ji," a term which describes the gentle passing of a breeze.

For many Chinese writers of the 1930s, the city of Shanghai was an inspiration in itself for innovative literary experimentation. As a symbol of modernity that was unrivaled in its excess and extreme, Shanghai as a subject of literary representation demanded new linguistic means and media to convey its special cultural atmosphere. Writers resorted to modernism, Freudianism, or traditional Chinese novelistic devices to tell the tales of Shanghai, and in spite of their varieties, all of these writings shared the common characteristic of stylistic inventiveness. Mu Shi Ying's "Shanghai Fox Trot" for example employs a repetitive syntax to imitate the rhythm of dance music. His portrayal of the decadent yet monotonous lives of concubines and prostitutes in this novel was inspired by cinematic devices.

Through writing in English, Lin Yutang joins other modernist writers in Shanghai in their search for the language to represent modernity. Like Mu Shi Ying, he touches upon Shanghai's moral laxity and sensual stimulation, but he is more interested in the diverse cultures that made Shanghai into a unique "modern" city. For Lin, Shanghai is "terrible in her strange mixture of eastern and western vulgarity, in her superficial refinements, in her naked and unmasked worship of Mammon, in her emptiness, commonness, and bad taste" (The Little Critic 216). Its culture is represented negatively by those "denaturalized women, dehumanized coolies, devitalized newspapers, decapitalized banks, and denationalized creatures." Because his English essays were addressed to mixed audience, Lin alludes to Shanghai's reality of colonialism more directly than many other modernist writers of his time. However, concerned with a holistic tradition, Lin's critique of colonialism incomplete. Shanghai for Lin is an ambivalent trope symbolizing a cultural

failure to be denigrated because of its colonialism and at the same time designating a cultural site to glorify national integrity in spite of the reality of colonialism. While Lin's essays take Shanghai's cultural hybridity as the subject, he continuously extrapolates the metaphors of this specific location and relates them to his general representations of the Chinese national character. As he argues in "The Chinese People,"

> If I were a world tourist passing through Shanghai, I would not hesitate to tell you that the Chinese are a great people. To be great is to be misunderstood. When we call a man great, we mean by it our inability to understand him. Here is a Chinaman, a washerman, perhaps, or a rickshaw coolie, whose face is not particularly inspiring, and whom many white people would not think twice before kicking, and yet he represents a people that has somehow dragged on for four thousand years without seeming much the worse for it, a feat which neither the glorious Romans nor the illustrious Greeks were able to accomplish. (The Little Critic 20)

Lin's critique of Shanghai's modernity comes from a self-conscious Romanticist perspective which he directly attributes to Nietzsche but is more strongly reminiscent of Lin's contemporary Lu Xun. In an essay entitled "Zarathustra," Lin calls for the revival of romanticist vigor to counteract the superficial "gaiety" of the city's modern atmosphere and invigorate the impotent modern critic. Through the voice of Zarathustra, Lin announces "[t]here is no fire that burneth and destroyeth without giving warmth and sputter, and there is no sun that scorcheth without giving life to the creation" (The Little Critic 227). However, this essay's highly experimental style and its numerous archaic linguistic usages suggest the writer's self-conscious realization of the impromptu nature of Romantic criticism. Lin Yutang likes to try out different stylistic devices to mimic the strange mixture of nationalities, cultures, and races in Shanghai. In his English essay "A Hymn to Shanghai," for example, he inserts Chinese words into an English sentence: "One

thinketh of thy successful, pien-pien-bellied merchants, and forgeteth whether they are Italian, French, Russian, English or Chinese." "Pien-pien" describes vividly the posture of a pot-bellied and pompous merchant. Stylistic devices of this kind demand the reader's bilingual competence to achieve their effect.

Lin constantly changes his style depending on the subjects of his essay. When he writes about Nanking and expresses his nostalgia for the mythic pre-modern culture represented by the "magic charm of a semi-medieval city," he uses a lucid and elegant style that reminds us of John Ruskin. This stylistic choice seemed to have been consciously adopted, for not only Lin's descriptions of the majestic tombs of the Ming Dynasty bear certain similarities to the "stones of Venice" in Ruskin, but as Lin guides his reader along through these tombs, he implicitly suggests Ruskin's influence by stating that these tombs for him were like "nineteenth-century relics."

Although the experiments of these avant-garde modernist writers were interrupted by the Japanese invasion in 1937, they shaped the intellectuals' outlook on national identity and the "new culture." Examining how "culture" was defined by a group of intellectuals affiliated with The China Critic, the English journal to which Lin was a regular contributor, we can clearly see that demands for some form of authenticity arose out of, not in spite of, the mixed cultural environment of Shanghai. The China Critic sets an important stage for Lin Yutang in several ways: firstly, the editors of The China Critic shared Lin Yutang's self-perception as the mediator between the East and the West. They wanted to introduce China to foreigners and at the same time introduce the West to China. Secondly, since this journal was published in Shanghai, the everyday life of this treaty-port

and its identity presented a site for the negotiation of cultural and racial differences. The city to a large extent cultivated the highly experimental style of Lin Yutang's modernist English essays. Thirdly, as "returned students" from the West and self-proclaimed "enlightened intellectuals," the editors and most contributors perceived writing about cultural difference as a way of establishing self-identity. Their self-doubt and self-criticism as cross-cultural intellectuals can offer another dimension to Lin Yutang's uplifting self-image in a useful way.

Naming their journal "The China Critic, the Only Chinese Edited English journal" in 1928, intellectuals who founded this journal were careful to chart out a thin margin of their special brand of cultural nationalism that was clearly distinguished both from the official nationalism endorsed by KMT (The Nationalist Party) and the so-called militant "anti-foreignness" in popular culture.[9] For these critics, upholding "the Chinese point of view" did not preclude the integration of the West into Chinese culture. In an editorial entitled "What We Believe" on January 1, 1931, the editors declared that achieving "international understanding" was the lofty objective of this magazine. They attacked

---

[9]In a rare account of the background of The China Critic, one of its co-founders, S. F. Durham Chen, describes the objectives of the editors as explicitly nationalist, "The next year (1928), following the Tsinan Incident which Mr. Tsai King-shih, our special commissioner of Foreign Affairs, was brutally murdered by the Japanese, a group of our friends in Shanghai, including Chen Chi-jen, a Missouri-trained journalist, who was later to become the Managing Editor of the Hankow Herald, Chu Shao-ping, the energetic secretary of Shanghai YMCA, Kwei Chung-shu, another brilliant journalist and practicing lawyer, D .K. Lieu, a distinguished economist and one of our teachers at Tsing Hua, Y. Lewis Mason, an enterprising businessman, and me, started an English weekly to present the Chinese point of view on current affairs. We named the newly founded periodical 'The China Critic with Kwei as Editor-in-Chief. Each week every one of us contributed an article or two on topics of current interest."

various forms of "militant" nationalism and the so-called "diehard anti-foreignness" that existed in Shanghai's cultural circle and claimed that the "twain of the East and the West" could be brought together only through "mutual understanding." For them, "mutual understanding" implied "re-evaluat[ing] our own institutions and ideals from the western point of view" as well as "examin[ing] critically western civilization and culture from the Chinese point of view." In the same article, the editors commented on the language of the magazine -- English. English was not a means to address only foreigners; on the contrary, a large circulation of the magazine was expected by the editors, especially among Chinese college undergraduates. This expectation was fulfilled to a certain extent, for according to Pearl Buck's recollection, The China Critic was quite influential among foreigners and Chinese intellectuals in Shanghai. ("Preface to With Love and Irony" xi)

Indeed, what is the real "Chinese point of view" and who gets to define it? Through their investigations of these questions, the editors expressed their wish to re-examine Western culture and re-categorize Chinese culture in order to avoid forms of cultural hybridity. In "What is Chinese Culture?" (September 13, 1928), the editors questioned how "purely Chinese" some intricate social conventions really were. They argued implicitly that many cultural conventions such as paper coins and incense burning that used to be considered indigenous might in fact be "cultural hybrids." "As we must avoid cultural hybridity, and as culture is an essential factor of racial and national existence," the editors proposed to the readers, "we should have a clear notion as to what our culture is" (306). At the same time that Chinese traditional culture was being examined for its "purity" by the editors, the "West" also ceased to be a homogenous cultural entity. In many articles,

the "spirituality" of the West was examined in relation to the colonial realities in Shanghai and other third-world countries. In a similar way, binary oppositions handed down from earlier generations between the East and the West, such as materiality vs. spirituality, strength vs. weakness, were beginning to be interrogated by the editors of The China Critic. In an article entitled "Dr. Hu Shih and the 'Spiritual West'" (Jan. 30, 1930), the editors challenged Hu Shih' idealistic interpretations of Western civilization by alluding to the colonial realities in China, Africa, and India. They wrote, "Dr. Hu is doubtless aware of the history of imperialism and the exploitation of the history of India, Africa, and even China by the ruthless traders of the West.... A civilization that has enriched itself at the expense of other human beings can hardly be truly spiritual" (100). A few paragraphs later, the writers criticized the American government for enforcing exclusionist laws onto Chinese and Filipino immigrants. In opposition to Hu Shih's totalistic Westernization, the editors proposed to understand Western culture from a critical point of view before integrating it into Chinese culture. Rather than "swallow[ing] (Western civilization) line and hook," the editors suggested "reviv[ing] the best of our civilization and assimilat[ing] the best that is in Western civilization" (100).

These intellectuals' efforts of "reviv[ing] the best of our civilization" could be easily interpreted as "traditionalist" and dismissed as "regressive." Their mild criticism toward the West could hardly be said to have formed a real counter-force against the tendency of Westernization or the actual presence of colonial powers in Shanghai. However, although they were embedded in the same cultural dichotomies with which Chinese intellectuals since the turn of the century tried to understand the "West," these intellectuals did try to

articulate their different historical positions. In an article examining the achievements of Liang Chi-chao and the characteristics of his age, writer L. T. Chen roughly outlined China's different reactions toward the West in three different periods: at the turn of the century, in the May Fourth Period, and in the late 1920s (Jan. 1, 1931). According to Chen, the first period looked at the West with "admiration for its materialistic achievements"; the second period "appreciat[ed] Western civilization as distinct in materialistic achievements;" the third period witnessed the beginning of "the actual assimilation of Western culture" ("Liang Chi-chao and His Age" 100). Identifying "assimilation" and "cultural construction" as the spirit of the "new" age, the editors, however, resorted to the same rhetoric of evolution to describe cultural changes. While they identify "sluggishness" and "conservatism" as the "backward" traits of the Chinese, they suggest "deep-rooted and justly cherished social values" can be used as "resources" for "our re-construction" (July 31, 1930). The editors believed in the "cultural evolution" from which a "healthy" Chinese mentality was to be "naturally born" rather than "artificially created"

While these intellectuals promoted a liberal integration of Western culture into China in theory, they could not accept just any form of cultural and racial integration.[10] The

---

[10]The limitation of the editors' liberal perspective can be attributed to the fact that these intellectuals were mainly interested in traditional literati culture and high modernist culture. As part of their effort to force the integration of the East and the West, in the November 13, 1930 issue of The China Critic, the editors proposed to found a liberal cosmopolitan club in Shanghai to be made up of "men who are citizens of the world and can come together to thrash out some of the problems confronting mankind as a whole." Their proposal received enthusiastic support from the readers of The China Critic. A week later, according to the editors' report, "[a]pplications for membership have come in from different classes, college presidents, professors, men of letters, journalists, poets, judges,

actual cultural and racial crossings in Shanghai's popular culture were denigrated by the editors as "poor imitations of the West," and colonialism was condemned mainly for its moral laxity and its contamination of the Chinese working class. Nationalism's inevitable double standard toward cultural integration is due to the dangerous close-ness of the "modern" to both the "new" and the "foreign." In Chinese, there are two different translations of the word "modern:" "xian-dian" and "muo-deng." While the first translation, based on the meaning of the English word, conveys a sense of cultural and spiritual uplift, the second translation, based on the transcription of the sound, is in most cases derogatory, often used to characterize bad and unauthentic imitations of the West. While the editors promoted strongly for the higher form of "modern," they also had to confront its double -- the "modern" in its lower case. "Muo-deng," a word that merely transcribes the sound of the original and loses much of its meaning, reminds us of what Homi Bhabha calls the "mimicry" of Western modernity in the colony. The editors saw an urgent need to distinguish between the two forms in order to guarantee a successful "cultural reconstruction." In an article entitled "Nude Models and Public Morals," the writers told the story of three naked Russian women who "ha[d] been appearing at La Reviera, a cheap open air cinema located near the corner of Rue des Soeurs and Avenue Foch in the French Concession" (July 31, 1931). Following a realistic description of the setting and atmosphere in which this performance took place, the editors wrote, "[t]he

---

and public functionaries" (November 20, 1930). Toward the end of this report, the editors restated the "non-political, non-nationalistic, and non-partisan" position of this club. The bonding of such an "international fellowship" together was the common interest in "intellectual issues."

climax, of course, came in the last act. Our 'artiste' appeared first with her back towards the audience. She carried a large piece of black silk over her back and, to our greatest surprise, we found her still in possession of a shred of decency when we discovered a mask on her face quite contrary to the advertisement which guaranteed that nothing would be worn" (724-5). Claiming that they "would not describe what [they] actually saw," the editors reassured the reader in playful language that "for once a cinema advertisement was actually truthful with the exception of the mask" (725). The naturalistic descriptions of the setting that indicate the writer's own voyeuristic interest in this show is accompanied by harsh judgements against the Chinese press for issuing a "bold advertisement" "in bold type" and in a language that "could be intelligible to the coolies." Regarding other events of a similar nature, the Chinese who participated in these "corrupt" cultural activities were more harshly condemned than Westerners. In a story about a so-called "nudist movement" in Hong Kong on November 17, 1932, the editors wrote that "although three quarters of the membership of the [nudist] society are non-Chinese, it is only the Chinese who have taken to actual nude bathing. The westerners are more bashful and prudish...whereas the Chinese are truly enthusiastic, particularly Chinese girls" (1210).

The editors and the foreign contributors to this magazine both recognized that in spite of its cultural and racial mixture, Shanghai in the 1930s was not authentically Western, either. Its lack of a definite identity disrupted conventional norms of self-representation and demanded that the intellectuals re-define themselves in relation to their contemporary historical period and the unique cultural environment. On July 20, 1933, writer T.K.C. (full-name unknown) raised the question of "who are the true Chinese?" in the column

"The Little Critic." Portraying Westernized intellectuals as the "Brahmins of Chinese society," T. K. C. vividly depicted their polarized cultural identities. These intellectuals, according to the writer, could "converse with foreigners in their native tongue," "bathe[d] ordinarily three or four times a week," and "d[id] not smell nearly as bad as the rickshaw coolies," but at the same time, they harped upon the "permanent value" of Chinese culture more strongly than anyone else. In another article by a writer who portrayed himself as a "[h]eathen, adrift, homeless, a man without a country... whom the tides of time have case ashore on the Bund of Shanghai" (Jan 10, 1929), this writer addressed his isolation from common Chinese people as well as the unacceptance of the West. He wrote, "[F]ull of contradictions is my soul... For I am a child of the West, and the West knoweth it not. Among the extra-territorial foreigners, do I see more of my heathen brothers, whom I understand and who understand me better than my own celestial brothers" (945).

Shanghai in the 1930s also disrupted the sense of "organic sense of identity" of its foreign residents. Projecting their fear and anxiety of entering the "heart of darkness" onto the representation of the city, some foreign contributors of The China Critic named the distorted mentality of colonialism "Shanghai vices"(May 29, 1930), the colonial mentality "Shanghai mind." For West Houghton, an English business man, coming to this "huge slum" of Shanghai engenders the fear of losing self-identity and becoming "oblivious" (June 4, 1932). The colony can transform the Englishman, for according to Houghton, "the English of London, and the English of Shanghai are so different as to almost defy identity" (538). Another foreign traveller, Lothar Brieger, who depicted himself "a refugee, art expert, and writer," tried to navigate the city's alien environment in a

lighthearted manner until he was confronted with the grim pictures of death. Brieger projected his sense of uncertainty onto his perception of China's future: "a peevish face grey of centuries of age and embryonic important limbs, past life, passing in corruption, trying to translate itself in striking with chalk in an unknown future."("Shanghai Impressions" July 6, 1939)

For most contemporary scholars and even those intellectuals involved with The China Critic, Shanghai's mixture and its cosmopolitanism affected only a selective group of people within a limited space, and for a short period of time. Even within the history of The China Critic its self-indulgent discussions of culture were partially discontinued and side-tracked into more immediate political concerns during the Sino-Japanese War. However, Shanghai in 1930s is still a significant moment for it shaped the ways in which intellectuals understood the "new-ness" of modern culture and the national identity of China.

III. Defining the Self and the Nation

Lin's involvement with The China Critic established his reputation as a bilingual and bicultural writer, which enabled him to carry on the discussions of identity and difference into a different critical context -- the representation of China to American readers. In 1935, Lin accepted Pearl Buck's proposal to write a book about China in English and to be published in the U.S..[11] Rigorously rehashing and adapting his already formulated ideas

---

[11] Pearl Buck played a critical role in encouraging Lin Yutang to write about China for American readers. In the early 30s, Pearl Buck read many English essays that Lin wrote for The China Critic and knew him as a reputable bilingual scholar. In her preface to Lin's My Country and My People, Pearl Buck spoke very highly of Lin, considering him among the few Chinese intellectuals who were not "lost in the confusion of the times,"

in other essays into the new structure of My Country and My People, Lin finished this ambitious project that attempts to summarize the entire Chinese history, China's national characters, its racial temperaments, aesthetics, and the Chinese way of life within a matter of months. In this book, Lin re-interprets the Chinese cultural "tradition" in terms of a series of complementary opposition to what was understood to be the spirit of the West: science vs. art; analytical thinking vs. simple mind; reason vs. intuition; the desire of aggression vs. the satisfaction of a peaceful life; democracy vs. the lack of social consciousness, and masculinity vs. the "feminine mind," etc. While Lin essentializes both Chinese tradition and its difference to the West, the tropes of ambivalence that consistently surface during the cultural translator's negotiations with national histories and Western knowledge lead us to ask, as the postcolonial scholar Homi Bhabha does, "whether the emergence of a national perspective -- of an elite or subaltern nature -- within a culture of social contestation, can ever articulate its 'representative' authority in that fullness of narrative time, and that visual synchrony of the sign that Bakhtin proposes" ("DessiNation" 295).

Reading My Country and My People within the framework of representation as well as within the historical continuum of the search for modern identity, I want to trace the

---

"humorous enough to see life as it is," "keen enough to understand their own civilization as well as others," and "wise enough to choose what is native to them and therefore truly their own" (xi). Pearl Buck's own novels about China, on the other hand, impressed Lin and other liberal Chinese intellectuals with her humanistic appeal and sympathy toward under-class laborers and peasants. Lin accepted Pearl Buck's proposal and finished the book within a matter of months. Owing to Pearl Buck's promotion, My Country and My People had instant success in the U. S. after its publication. Portraying Lin Yutang as a "venerable sage" of the Orient, the reviewers repeatedly cited Buck to confirm the authenticity of Lin's portrayals of China and Chinese culture.

process by which the "nation" is created through re-interpreting and re-classifying the Chinese tradition into categories of race and gender. Lin's national discourse is also a highly individualized narrative. It begins with the speaker's romanticized self-identification with "Chinese-ness;" it is sustained by the author's aesthetic interpretations of Chinese culture, and ends on a personal note of anxiety and disillusionment in face of the elusive transformations in Chinese society and the threats of disintegration brought by the Japanese invasion. While traversing across different domains of cultural signification of the self, the nation, the inter-national, Lin reveals the conflicts between the ideal and the real, aesthetics and society, tradition and the modern times, that repeatedly undermine Lin's attempt to speak of Chinese identity as a continuous and holistic entity. Lin's style is characterized as "suave" and "civilized" by American readers and is further associated with the "mental strength and endurance" of an ancient civilization; however, some American reviewers also noticed the chaos and formlessness that lurk in the background of the narrative's seemingly placid surface (Emmet Kennedy, The New York Times Book Review 8 December 1935, qtd in Book Review Digest 1935, 602). Carl Van Doren considers these tropes of formlessness as a flaw, arguing that "[t]he style is not invariably flawless ... The temper is not invariably suave. Now and then the writer ... shows a momentary sharp edge of his irritation and resentment at what Europe and America have done to China, and at Europeans and American misunderstandings of the Chinese character" (New York Herald Tribune Books, 22 September 1935, qtd in Book Review Digest 1935, 602). On the contrary, I read them as a struggle on the part of the writer to reconcile the conflicts between the East and the West, modernity and tradition.

The narrative structure of My Country and My People is similar to what James Clifford has called a "biographical allegory," in which the writer edits cultural texts to make them conform to the formalist demands of a coherent story of a "life," in this case, the "life" of a nation and of the writer ("On Ethnographic Allegory" 106). Evoking metaphors of natural growth, such as spring and autumn, and stages of human development, such as childhood and old age, to describe the historical changes in Chinese society, Lin shows how these "lives" are pulled together by the narrative structure into a coherent unity. The speaker's life story becomes part of this national construction. For the purpose of authorizing (author-ize) his narrative of the nation, Lin constructs a story of the speaker that establishes his authority as someone who belongs to the nation and has the cultural competence to understand it and speak on behalf of it. In the prologue, Lin defines such a speaker as the "true" interpreter of "China," distinguished from both Western sinologists and traditional Chinese experts by his bilingual and bicultural competence. This definition is already ambiguous, for by linking the interpretation of the West into Chinese with the interpretation of China into English, Lin simultaneously underwrites and erases the different social implications of these two kinds of cultural practice and situates the interpreter in the midst of this disjunction. Therefore, the speaker's cross-cultural knowledge and bilingual competence cannot always guarantee that he can transcend social and cultural differences; on the contrary, the "true" interpreter is divided between "reason" and "heart," the objective "critical appraisal" of China and an unconditional "real appreciation" toward China, his sense of "shame" and "pride," the figures of the "West" and his "Chinese-ness." The modern Western-trained Chinese

intellectual is torn between "a conflict of loyalties belonging to different poles, a loyalty to old China ... and a loyalty to open-eyed wisdom" (My Country and My People 13) "[S]ometimes his clan-pride gets the better of him, and between proper pride and mere reactionism there is only a thin margin, and sometimes his instinct of shame gets the better of him, and between a sincere desire for reform and a mere shallow modernity... there is also only a very thin margin. To escape that is indeed a delicate task" (13).

Although Lin clearly articulates the dilemma of the modern intellectual who is lured by the ethnographic imperative as much as by his national consciousness, he consistently tries to remove the individual's intervention in the narrative by pressing his precarious self-positioning into service to justify a unique perspective from which the "truth" about China is revealed. In his defense against the criticism of Chinese critics who accused him of "selling out the country and the people" after the Chinese version of My Country and My People was published, for example, Lin argues that his representation of China reveals a "simple truth," a "truth" that "can never be proved" and "can only be hinted at," and that "[t]ruth is truth and will overcome clever human opinion" (xiii). Here, Lin's self-defense is quickly turned into a strategy of self-fashioning; the self borrows validity from his interpretation of the nation. The "simple truth" told by the cultural translator, as we are told, can appeal to the "simple common sense" of Chinese people, "common" in the sense of "down to earth" as well as "universal." The "simple common sense" is further essentialized into a cultural characteristic "for which ancient China was so distinguished, but which is so rare today" (xiv.). Through these devices, Lin consistently extrapolates locality into tropes of universality. In this book, Lin addresses China in singular terms as

an "individual," the "common man;" the relationship between different ethnic groups in China as one that strengthens or destroys the "brotherhood" of "man."

Speaking on behalf the nation is therefore a form of cultural ventriloquism that substitutes the self for other forms of collective symbols such as the tradition and the people. This substitution has to be constructed; it takes a detour which "returns" the speaker to his "natural" point of identification. In the prologue, Lin's descriptions of spiritual transformation of the Western-trained intellectual is tinged with the rhetoric of romantic mysticism. Setting up the Oriental" innocence" and "simplicity" in opposition to the "clever games" of the West, Lin repeatedly emphasizes the prelapsarian appeal of the tradition and Chinese identity.[12] He depicts the intellectual as a traveller who "explored the beauties and glories of the West" and is simultaneously enchanted by "the echo of age-old folk songs and pastoral lyrics of the Orient." Self-identification as Chinese is achieved through mirroring himself in the portrait of the speaker's father. He willingly corrects his Western manners and sheds his Western attire.

In the prologue, Lin already evokes a series of dichotomic metaphors to posit the mysterious "Chinese-ness" of the speaker as a difference to the West: blood vs. skin, reasoning vs. feeling, family vs. nation. These numerous metaphors that enable the transference between the self and the nation on a textual level can also undermine the authority of Lin's discourse on the nation. Anchoring the representativeness of his book

---

[12]In "On Ethnographic Allegory," James Clifford argues that "[f]or a readership caught up in the post-Darwinian bourgeois experience of time -- a linear, relentless progress leading nowhere certain and permitting no pause or cyclic return, the cultural islands out of time ... described by many ethnographers have a persistent appeal" (111). "China" as constructed by Lin resembles such an ethnographic cultural island.

upon the authority of the individual defeats the book's ostensible purpose of speaking on behalf of a culture and a people as a homogeneous entity. Furthermore, the emergence of the national perspective is closely tied to translation as a performative act. Only by utilizing the translator's privilege is Lin able to construct a "Chinese pictureque" that "gave shape to the experience and understanding of objective people"(Mitchell, 21). By means of translation, Lin transforms the abstract and metaphoric aspects of Chinese culture into concrete visual images and guides his reader through this art gallery by his "isolated gaze." Lin argues that "Chinese thought ... always remains on the periphery of the visual world" (83). To illustrate this point, he translates twelve critical terms into English and de-emphasizes their metaphoric implications. In literary criticism, according to Lin, "watching a fire across the river" implied the "detachment of style;" "dragon-flies skimming the water surface" suggested the "lightness of touch;" "painting a dragon and dotting its eyes" was "bringing out the salient point."

Translation sets Lin in dialogue simultaneously with the "West" and with Chinese tradition as they are understood from his perspective. While Lin remains committed to the social ideals promised by the modern age as most enlightened Chinese intellectuals are, he also has to encounter the cultural, racial and gender differentiations -- the "other" within the very notion of modernity. As with other editors of The China Critic, "East" and "West" cannot be demarcated in their conceptualizations of Chinese culture both in terms of the cultural environment and their educational background, and this lack of clear boundaries propels the intellectual to create an indefinite number of categories to contain the messiness of culture. Lin repeatedly laments the lack of cultural authenticity as one of

the "ugly features in the period of transition" and culture's failure to reproduce either the "tradition" or the West. "Progress is fun, but progress is painful. More than that, progress is always ugly. With the profound upheaval that is going on in Young China's mind we have lost a sense of gravity in thought ... The task of adjustment between the old and the new is usually too much for the ordinary man, and the modern Chinese thought is characterized by an extreme immaturity of thinking, fickleness of temper and shallowness of ideas" (280). Imitation is a greater evil than the industrialization of the modern age in itself. Lin writes, "The spirit of man in industrial age is ugly anyway, and the spirit of man in China, throwing overboard all that is best and finest in a mad rush for things Western without the Western tradition, is uglier still to look at" (354).

Race thus becomes a convenient concept to re-assert the authority of an authentic cultural tradition. In this book, Lin borrows a series of nineteenth-century racial rhetoric both to describe China's differences and to confirm its unity and continuity. His racialization of culture bears similarities and differences with the racial discourse in the West. While Lin is indebted to the Darwinist categorization of races, he reinterprets the evolutionary scale to argue that the social inferiority of "primitive" people does not necessarily mean "uncivilized" or "culturally inferior." Supplying a "cultural"/aesthetic"connotation to "race," Lin emphasizes that the "primitive" race has "a prolonged Childhood" and that China is "culturally old" but "racially young." Although Lin is aware of power inequalities in the very notion of race, he favors racial integration to racial segregation and considers it as a way of self-strengthening. Lin recognizes that age renders one weak and helpless, arguing that "[t]he brief sketch of the general constitution

and physical condition of the Chinese people shows, not that they have entirely escaped the effects of long civilized living, but they have developed traits which render them helpless at the hands of a fresher and more warlike race" (28). But at the same time, he is convinced that China can "ward[...] off" its enemies, because it has always "profited from them by the infusion of new blood." "The loss of the pristine vigor" is thus connected with "racial stamina and power for resistance." Parallels can be found between the ways in which Western racial discourse was adapted by W. E. B. Du Bois and by Lin Yutang. Both of them do not transcend the racial discourse; however, both invert the Western racial arrangement for the purpose of defending the superiority of their own groups. While Du Bois argues that black people have a special moral message to deliver to other races, Lin Yutang gives a cultural/aesthetic interpretation to race. By so doing, he preserves the cultural superiority of the nation and at the same time leaves the future open for development and modernization.

The racial analysis of China is not entirely Lin's invention. Many resources in Lin's book are drawn from a long-standing racial discourse that according to Frank Dikotter, could be traced to China's pre-modern period. How much China's racial discourse of China affected intellectuals' understanding of Chinese modernity is yet to be studied in depth; however, Lin Yutang's book makes us aware of a different form of affinity between humanistic ideas and of modern science from that which informed the May Fourth generation of intellectuals. By the 1920s, according to Dikotter, "the discourse of race was theorized at the academic level and popularized by the congshu (pamphlets) series" (140). Zhang Ziping, a Japanese-educated mineralogist turned novelist, wrote several

books on geography and evolution in which he discussed skin color and hair (Dikotter 140). Lin's discussions of racial and aesthetic connotations of hair and skin suggests that he could have read Zhang's pamphlet that was widely circulated in China. In general, My Country and My People contains many allusions to scientific documents that can inform the development of social history. For example, Lin cites the study of a Doctor J. S. Lee on the "periodic recurrence of internecine wars in China" and reproduces his diagrams to illustrate the relationship of war and the characteristics of a certain historical period. Based on these diagrams, Lin warns his readers that China would be subjugated by a "foreign race" in the near future. These cross-disciplinary references are provocative for re-thinking the negotiations of Chinese intellectuals of different generations with modern sciences in order to define Chinese modernity.

Lin's representations of "China" also consists of a new interpretation of gender. Before Lin wrote My Country and My People, he had taken a progressive stance toward the "women's issue" that was characteristic of enlightened intellectuals in China. In a play based on an episode of the classical Confucian document "Lun Yu," (The Analects) that Lin wrote in the 1920s, he revised the image of Queen Nan Zi into the figure of a "new woman" whose wit and intelligence far surpassed that of Confucius. When this play was put on stage by the students of a girls' high school in the hometown of Confucius, the local elites and descendants of Confucius were greatly offended. The playwright Lin Yutang and the president of the girls' high school were reported to the Commission of Education under the charge of sacrilege. Although this incident ended in the president's resignation, it significantly enhanced Lin's liberal reputation among Chinese intellectuals. In My Country

and My People, however, Lin's support for "women's liberation" is less overt and his support for certain sex-biased cultural rituals such as footbinding and concubinage have been criticized as a conservative and feudalist backlash. It seems to me, however, that Lin's re-interpretations of gender difference means more than a new form of conservatism; it is closely tied to his imagination of the modern nation.

Discussing with the female students at McTyeire School in Shanghai in 1930 about "marriage and careers for women," Lin alerted these women students of the social and economic inequality of the real world, arguing "[t]he only institution in which women do not have to compete against men is marriage. While women preside over the world within marriage; men preside over the world outside a marriage. Such is the current economic system" (The Little Critic 42). At the same time that Lin relegates women into a separate sphere -- the "home" as opposed to the "world," he also suggests that power struggles within the home is comparable to those in the world. The competition among concubines for their husbands' favor in traditional Chinese families, for example was no different from the "gold-diggers" in the "modern" business world; therefore, because the "home" and the "world" are set on equal ground, women's social inequality is dismissed by Lin as a non-issue. Power is divided between men and women in the same way that it is divided between China and the West. "In the home the woman rules.... There are many Empress Dowagers in China still, politically or in common households. The home is the throne from which she makes appointments for mayors or decides the professions of her grandsons." (My Country and My People 145) The defense of women's rights at home is thus turned into a defense for the Chinese way of life as if there were only one acceptable life style.

Lin wrote in My Country and My People, "[t]he more one knows Chinese life, the more one realizes that the so-called suppression of women is an Occidental criticism that somehow is not borne out by a closer knowledge of Chinese life" (145).

Gender thus becomes formative toward Lin's discussions of Chinese cultural authenticity. In his definition of the Chinese "feminine ideal," gender further becomes an important marker of the difference between China and the West. Evoking terms such as masculinity and femininity to describe social and cultural differences, Lin argues that the Chinese mind is "akin to the feminine mind" for its lack of abstract thinking. "Women have a surer instinct than men, and the Chinese have it more than other people" (80).

Lin's discussions of Chinese culture not only perpetuates the image of the nation as a woman, but applies gender distinctions to aesthetic appreciation. In this book, if men and women are divided in terms of the "world" and the "home," the former is also the realm of free imagination and artistic appreciation. According to Lin, gender plays a significant role in forming Chinese artistic sensibilities. "The seclusion of women has ... a very definite influence over our ideal of beauty, out ideal of womanhood, the education of our daughters, and the forms of love and courtship in China" (149). Women and women's dresses are formative of Chinese sexuality, "nature" as an important artistic concept, and the "sensuous origin" of Chinese art. He wrote that "the Chinese libido is there, only dressed in a different expression. Women's dress is not designed to reveal the body of the human form but to simulate nature. A Western artist may see, through the use of his sensuous imagination, a female nude in the rising sea waves, while a Chinese sees in the draperies of the Goddess of Mercy the sea waves themselves. The whole rhythm of a

woman's form is modelled after the graceful rhythm of the weeping willows, which accounts for her intentionally dropping shoulders. ... Such poetic expressions are by no means absent in the West, but the whole spirit of Chinese art, and the pattern of Chinese women's dress in particular, justify the taking of such expressions seriously" (150). While these remarks seemingly liberate women from their state of social seclusion, women are in fact placed in a new artistic sphere whose boundaries are drawn by the gaze of the "modern" intellectual. If the affirmation of female sexuality puts China on an equal ground with the rest world, as Lin argues, "Eros, who rules the world, rules China also," it is also up to the modern intellectual to devise control mechanisms in order to prevent sexuality from going overboard. The figure of the woman is not just treated as an immutable index of the nation; it acquires special importance in the transitional modern age. The figure of women has to be evoked again and again even though actual changes have happened regarding women's social position. Lin wrote, "From bound feet to one-piece bathing suit is indeed a far cry, and these changes, superficial as they seem, are nevertheless profound. For life is made up of such superficialities, and by altering them, we alter the whole outlook of life" (170). Sexuality in the figure of women is both desired and threatening to the male interpreter; therefore, women have to be urged to remain "true" to the "nation" so as not to "desexualize" it. "The artificial restraint and over-sexualization of woman under Confucianism must give place to a more human view, and can no longer come back. The danger is rather of desexualization and the total loss of the womanly woman. The idea of women trying to ape men in their manners is in itself a sign of women's bondage. Let women be proud of their own sex, for only in the fulfillment of their sex and its grave

responsibilities will they be truly great. Compared with the Western women, the modern mature Chinese women are still perhaps more poised and dignified, but they lack, on the other hand, the spontaneity and spirit of independence of their Western sisters. Perhaps it is in their blood, but if so, let it be as it is, for only by being true to their race can they be great also" (171). If as Lin Yutang argues, over-sexualization vs. desexualization corresponded to Western woman vs. Chinese woman, and further the West vs. China, where do Chinese men fit into this configuration? Throughout his narrative, Lin carefully conceals the figure of the male artist whose gaze unveils the Chinese woman as he directs us to different aspects of Chinese life. Towards the end, however, the increasing racialization and genderization of such a perspective puts the male cultural interpreter himself back into the uneasy position in which he is torn by the "conflicting loyalties" toward the West or the East. His commitment to the West's "open-eyed wisdom" cannot provide a solution to cultural and racial conflicts or a smooth transition from the tradition to modernity.

IV. Genres in Cross-cultural Representation

In the West, Lin Yutang's English book was accepted as a realistic and authentic representation of the nation and its culture. However, even though authenticity was a big concern among Chinese intellectuals in the 30s, Lin Yutang had an ambivalent relationship to the aesthetics and social ideals of realism as practiced by other writers in modern China. This ambivalence can only be detected by looking at Lin's experimentation with various genres as a way of forging alternative identities in the complex cultural politics of the 30s. Through the revival of "Xiao Pin Wen," an essay form practiced by intellectuals in the late

Ming Dynasty, Lin advocated for "getting close to life while remaining distanced from politic" and explicitly counteracted the ideology represented by Chinese realist writers. However, emphasizing an unmediated representation of life "at a specific moment" and free expression of feelings, Lin shows his commitment to the social ideals of modernization and enlightenment that inspired Chinese realist writers as well. Although he suggested an entirely different set of solutions to the conflicts of art and society, tradition and modernity, the realist linear chronology and its capability to visualize historical changes appealed to Lin Yutang especially after he left the country. His first novel Moment in Peking is modeled upon the Chinese classical novel Dream of the Red Chamber, but his adaptation of the original classical work and his representation of modern Chinese history both reflect the influence of an essentially mimetic conception. If we problematize conventional definitions of realism that assume that realism is an unmediated reflection of an "already-made" social environment or a flattened representation of a certain political ideology, and if we agree with Amy Kaplan that realism is more "imperative" and a "problem" to represent the "real" in the modern social setting where "reality itself began to seem problematic, something to be sought rather than merely lived" (The Social Construction of American Realism 9), Lin's experimentation of genres shall mean more to us than a simple "withdrawal from reality," as the Chinese critic Hu Feng argued in 1934. His repeated evocations of classical works do not and are probably not meant to reproduce the mystic aura of the pre-modern life; on the contrary, they suggest to me the ambiguous self-placement of the bilingual writing within the linear conception from tradition to modernity.

Lin's fascination with the "real" has another cross-cultural dimension. Written mostly in English and addressing both Chinese and American readers, Lin actively played the role of the "true interpreter of China" in many of his works. His novels such as Moment in Peking contain numerous passages whose ostensible function seems to be merely footnoting Chinese culture. However, the demand for the "real" and the "authentic" did not just control the production of these works, but their critical reception as well. Several American readers of Moment in Peking expressed their fascination toward the revelations of the "quintessence of Chinese life" in this novel, and one of them characterized it as "vivid vignettes of the Central State ... which are not merely vivid, but authentic as well" (Florence Ayscough, The Saturday Review of Literature, 18 November 1939, qtd. in Book Review Digest 1939, 595). Responding to Lin's detailed descriptions of Chinese culture, The New York Times critic Katherine Woods commented that this novel is "so Chinese as to read almost like a translation" (19 November 1939, qtd. in Book Review Digest 1939, 595). Based on what kind of textual authority did these passages enter Lin's works? And to what extent does Lin's emphasis on the "real" paradoxically produce the kind of mysticism that envelops both "China" and Lin himself in critical reception? Lin does not offer easy answers to these questions; on the contrary, because of his disagreement and affinities with the realist paradigm in general, and Chinese realist writers in specific, he carries the problematic of representing the "real" of China to a transnational context.

The realist paradigm and its puzzling ambiguity of the "self" and the "other" are also drawing attention from scholars who explore the area of cross-cultural representation.

Edward Said and Homi Bhabha both argue that there is an inherent linkage between the West's desire for and suppression of the Oriental "other" and the realist paradigm. Said writes in Orientalism that "[p]hilosophically ... the kind of language, thought, and vision that I have been calling Orientalism very generally is a form of radical realism; anyone employing Orientalism, which is the habit for dealing with questions, objects, qualities, and regions deemed Oriental, will designate, name, point to, fix what he is talking or thinking about with a word or phrase, which then is considered either to have acquired, or simply to be, reality" (72). At the same time, coming from the postcolonial Indian perspective, scholars such as Aijaz Ahmad and Sara Suleri enlarged the limited paradigm of Said's Orientalism to a more general reflection on how to represent the "real" of the Orient, the Orient in history and in everyday life. In her reading of the theoretical exchange between Frederic Jameson and Aijaz Ahmad, Suleri raises the provocative question of what kind of reading of the "real" can provide an adequate theoretical alternative to alteristic allegorization of the "third world" and how to "evoke the crucial context of historical specificity" while resisting "the seductive overdetermination of fact"(The Rhetoric of English India 13-14). While bringing themselves to face the challenge of the writing of the "real," these critics also see the limitations of realism. As Suleri argues, conventional realism "chooses to remain too precariously parochial to recognize the bounty that is surly its to give" ("Women Skin Deep" 250). I find their observations provocative and helpful in understanding both the new possibilities and limitations of Lin's bilingual writings.

Less so in "Xiao Pin Wen," the novelistic form as understood and practiced by Lin Yutang emphasizes the coherence of selfhood and a singular perspective. Because of this

emphasis, Lin's novels contain more than they expose the disjunction and ambivalence that representations of "China" engender in the cross-cultural context. However, Lin's sensitivity toward new genres suggests his recognition of the inherent tensions of writing in English about China in the transnational context of the diaspora. His writings simultaneously convey to me a sense of "newness" and reveal a pattern of continuity and repetition. What is the sustaining appeal of novelty? Why does Lin Yutang bring himself back to the same set of cultural ideas and social concerns? The conflicting imperatives to experiment and repeat make sense to us only if we examine Lin's writings in Chinese and in English, those written in China and abroad, holistically. It seems to me that the ambivalent self-placements between tradition and modernity, the East and the West can already be found when he advocated for "Xiao Pin Wen" and humorous literature in Shanghai in the 1930s. "Xiao Pin Wen" is an initial step that enables him to simultaneously express his fascination and commitment to progress and modernity and lament over the loss of authenticity in modern culture. "Xiao Pin Wen's" individualist and aesthetic treatments of social issues is also related to his eventual failure to recognize and articulate the sensibilities of Chinese immigrants.

Although starting out as a criticism of realism and the rigidly prescribed progressive ideology it embodies, Lin Yutang's writings both in Chinese and in English reiterate the realist's concerns with the self and the other, aesthetics and society, history and fiction. While he was the editor of Lun Yun ("The Analects Fortnightly"), Lin advocated for reviving "Xiao Pin Wen" and claimed that its ostensible purpose was to "remain distanced from politics." In fact, contrary to this claim, Lin's advocation of "Xiao Pin Wen" is both

an attempt to come into direct contact with classical Chinese culture and a criticism of the didactic literature licensed by the Nationalist government and advocated by Marxist scholars. "Xiao Pin Wen" counteracts what Lin considers to be a manifestation of an "unhealthy" mentality. By "getting close to life," "Xiao Pin Wen"contains an "uplifting" ("Xiang Shang") spirit comparable to Romanticism and Humanism in the West. From Lin's formulations, we can see that Lin has significantly changed the generic meaning of "Xiao Pin Wen". Down-playing the original pejorative connotations of "frivolousness" or "insignificance" of the word "Xiao Pin" ("small crafts"), Lin endorses the freedom to "express one's feelings" and the possibility of communicating with his readers in an unmediated manner. Linking this classical Chinese literary form with the "familiar essay" in English literature, such as Virginia Wolfe's "A Room of Own," Lin underscores the humanistic ideals of the essay.

Both as an idea and in practice, Lin's "Xiao Pin Wen" is a cultural hybrid of Chinese and Western genres. Even when he assumes a humorous and lighthearted tone in his essays, his rhetoric shows his enchantment by the prospects enlightenment and modernization that many Chinese realist writers expressed in their writings. Although Lin's "Xiao Pin Wen" had a large readership during the 1930s, both Lin Yutang and the leftist realist writers did not want to acknowledge the social functions of this genre. Cherishing these essays as his "own world." Lin Yutang argues that "Xiao Pin Wen's" choice of "insignificant matters" as their objects of representation "make [my writings] considerably different from those self-promoting literature (Jinshi wenzhang)." In fact, "Xiao Pin Wen's" communication between the writer and the reader is not entirely "unmediated." In

his essays, Lin's freely blends classical Chinese, modern Chinese, and English and switches from one language to another with considerable deftness. He constantly alludes to classical documents in China and the West, but he grants himself a great deal of freedom in his interpretations of the classical and Western terminology, and he never documents his sources as most Chinese scholars would do. His style, according to Lin Yutang, reflects the "natural" state of being and constitutes "an essential part of life."

The essence of "Xiao Pin Wen" is what Lin calls "the philosophy of life," which Lin elaborates in My Country and My People. This philosophy blends social ideals with aesthetics and treats real life and an aesthetic perspective on life as one category. In My Country and My People, the word "life" carries many different meanings such as "the aesthetic resignation to the private world," the "humanistic" social ideal of life, an "uplifting national spirit," or the essence of "Chinese life." "Life's" concentration on the present and its philosophical implication of the Taoist acceptance of the present bring the "authentic" ideals that belong to the tradition closer to the "unauthentic" manifestations in modern life; its spirituality provides the basis for authenticity in modern times. In the last chapter of My Country and My People, Lin Yutang speaks of "life" in terms of a "heathenish devotion to the life of the present," a faith and "test." Lin argues that only when we embrace "life" as an ideal can we face the elusive changes in real life. "It was that instinctive trust in life that gave us a robust common sense in looking at life's kaleidoscopic changes" (346). This perspective on life seems to be coming from a realistic orientation, but at the same time it also contains a moral imperative and a spiritual purpose, for as Lin argues, "For the Chinese the end of life lies not in life after death... nor

in Nirvana ... nor in the satisfaction of accomplishments ... nor yet in progress for progress' sake. The true end ... lies in the enjoyment of a simple life" (346).

As the Chinese scholar Chen Pinyuan argues, the conflicting connotations of "life" are brought together by Lin's commitment to Taoist philosophy. If so, the concept of "nature" in Taoist philosophy is especially helpful for Lin to "naturalize" the rapid social and cultural changes that occurred since the beginning of this century. Lin's philosophy of life allows him to represent both the everyday-ness of Chinese life and life as experienced in history. His choice of the novel as the form of national representation after he came to the U.S. is not an accidental one. Timothy Brennan's analysis of the social genesis of the European novel can throw light on affinities between the novelistic form and nation as a cultural construction.[13] If as Brennan argues, the rise of the novel parallels the breaking-down of "a closed system with its accompanying universal language" (55), then it can be said that Lin Yutang's novel not only objectifies the threat of social disintegration before the Japanese invasion, but also attempts to "assemble the fragments of national life and give them a final shape" (Brennan, 61). The "composite" form of the novel attracts Lin Yutang immensely. According to Lin's biography by his daughter, Lin decided that his own novel had to have "complex characters," depict "grand scenes," and encompass a "large scope" from the very beginning(Lin Tai-yi 153). Dubbed "the Chinese novel," Lin's first novel Moment in Peking clearly expresses the author's nationalist sentiments, but when this novel was translated into Chinese, it was considered to be "politically incorrect"

---

[13]Brennan, Timothy. "The National Longing for Form" in Nation and Narration, Homi Bhabha ed. New York, Routeledge, 1990: 44-70.

by leftist writers and critics in China. The leftist nationalist critics demanded that writers represent only those "uplifting" aspects of our national spirit, and Lin's novel, in spite of its extremely didactic and "uplifting" ending, is too dangerously close to the sentimental novellas of "talented young men and pretty young women" that appeared in the time predating the "New" modern Chinese literature. Lin, however, clearly identifies the relevance of his novel to contemporary political events, especially the Sino-Japanese War that began in 1937, the year in which this novel was written. When he was criticized for lacking social consciousness, Lin responded in the following words: "As a sojourner overseas, how could I think of killing time by telling stories about 'talented young men and pretty young ladies?' My only intention is to entice the reader with [sentimental] stories of young men and women so as to lead them to the bloody battle scenes [in defense of the country]." (Lin Taiyi 45)

Moment in Peking depicts the lives of two wealthy Chinese families against a vast historical background of more than three decades. This story begins and ends at important historical junctures of the Boxer Movement and the Sino-Japanese War, and both seem to support Lin's nationalist sentiments explicitly expressed in the above sentences. However, these sentences do not explain why instead of going to European or American novels, Lin chooses the Chinese classical novel Dream of the Red Chamber as the model for his work. What is the attraction of the classical novel for Lin? Chinese critics in 1930s interpreted this generic choice as a regressive gesture, signifying Lin's withdrawal from the front-line of progressive politics. It seems to me, however, that Lin's modern anachronism needs to be interpreted within the cross-cultural context. In many moments of this novel, Lin

consciously plays the role of the interpreter of Chinese customs, rituals, and folklore, and a good portion of his vocabulary is based on literal translations from Chinese even when English equivalents do exist. More importantly, these passages are presented at the expense of the flow of Lin's fictional narrative; their existence makes critics such as W. H. Auden wonder whether his book is a fiction or a history. It seems to me that the model of the classical novel Dream of the Red Chamber facilitates these passages entering the text by supplying a sense of structural unity that is more indigenous to Chinese novels. The Chinese translation of Lin's English novel does not strike me as incoherent at all. The traditional story-teller provides Lin with the authority to move easily from fictionality to reality; it allows him to change roles from an omniscient narrator to a subjective commentator. According to Prusek, the speaker in traditional novels that derives his authority from the oral tradition often freely blends his own thoughts, observations, comments into fictional story-telling. In Moment in Peking, therefore, story-telling and cultural commentary do not form any conflict. The encyclopedic scope of Dream of the Red Chamber provides Lin with a convenient "cultural platform" to tell the stories of more than fifty men and women and at the same time discuss Chinese poetry and poetics, relate anecdotes about cultural practices and political figures, and analyze actual historical events.[14]

---

[14]In The Lyrical and the Epic: Studies of Modern Chinese literature, Prusek identifies a conflict between the lyric and the epic in modern Chinese literature. He argues that this freedom of the traditional story-teller often proves to be a limitation for the modern realists, "he [the modern narrator] could not move freely to the scenes of action or into the heroes' minds and describe things through their eyes, perception and experience" (46). In the case of Lin Yutang, it seems that the two are blended together with no conflict.

Although Lin borrows the model of Dreams of the Red Chamber, by my reading, Lin's adaptation of this classical work is almost too literal to reproduce its mystic aura. Not only do his discussions of Chinese culture, history, and politics clearly bear the stamp of his own perspective and his contemporary age, but the extremely close proximity between the fictional narrative and characters in Moment in Peking and those in Dream of the Red Chamber makes the former read like a mechanical imitation of the latter. More importantly, these adaptations of the classical novel are packaged in a synchronic chronology of the realist form, with no narrative digressions whatsoever even to depict the characters' psychological movements. Another important element of Dreams of the Red Chamber that is missing from Moment in Peking is dreams. Due to this lack of psychological or mythical depth, Lin's characterization especially of several important female characters seems rather flat; it tends to become reproductions of certain social types: the devoted wife, the competent homemaker, the talented woman poet, and the modern open-minded woman.

In Lin's modern imitation of the classical novel, what takes the place of fate or karma in terms of its predominance over human beings is history. Throughout the realistic portrayals of characters, Lin allows them to witness or participate in the unfolding of real historical events. For instance, members of the Yao family are made to verbally represent different sides in the New Culture debate at the end of 1910s. Setting up a meeting between his fictional characters and the real cultural figure Gu Hong-ming, Lin allows them to engage in a long discussion about the proper behavior of modern women. The detail of the death of Mulan's daughter during the students' demonstration against the

warlord authorities in Beijing is apparently drawn from Lin's own experience and his friendship with two female students who participated in this demonstration. These intersections of the "real" history with the fictional story-line blur the boundary of history and fiction and assign a new role for the individual as an illustrator of history. Through manipulating the range and focus of his depictions, Lin creates the illusion that history is not just a background, a canvas on which the lives of the characters are depicted; history not only occupies a more significant position in the novel than individuals, but because of the individuals' participation, it becomes alive.

According to Lin, illustrating history through the lives of fictional characters serves the nationalistic purpose of constructing "an epic story [which] was being lived by these people of China" (Moment in Peking 813). As Bahktin argues, reconstructing the "epic past" requires that it be "walled off from all subsequent times by an impenetrable boundary" and "preserved and revealed only in the form of national tradition"("Epic and Novel" 16) The novel, on the other hand, takes "contemporary reality" as its subject, and even when the past is related, it is done through "the contemporary point of view and value orientation" (28-9). Bakhtin's formulation helps us understand Lin's modern adaptations of the classical work Dream of the Red Chamber. While the verisimilitude of the classical work with his own adds authenticity to his story, the "past" is not meant to and cannot completely be brought back. The imitation of Dream of the Red Chamber manifests what Bahktin has called "an intense spirit of inquiry" and "a utopian fantasy." "Nothing is left of the distant epic image of the absolute past; the entire world and everything sacred in it is offered to us without any distancing at all, in a zone of crude

contact, where we can grab at everything with our own hands" (26). Lin wants to convey exactly the sense of familiarity and intimacy of the past. He does this by filling the gaps of historical changes with vivid and picturesque details and by creating spectacles. His novel focuses on scenes and ceremonies, such as weddings and funerals. Characters are fixated to a place; they are the embodiments of a living tradition. In a symbolic sentence, Lin Yutang tells us that the main character Mulan is "a child of Peking. She had grown up there and had drunk in all the richness of life of the city which enveloped its inhabitants like a great mother soft toward all children's requests, fulfilling their whims and desires, or like a thousand-year-old tree in which the insects making their home in one branch did not know what the insects in the other branch were doing" (Moment in Peking 172). Because historical changes are complemented by detailed descriptions of specific people at specific moments, and because time is thus stretched out in space, Lin creates an illusion of what Bahktin has called the "fullness of the present" (30). Lin's novel can thus address simultaneously all of us who are distanced and alienated from the past including modern and Western readers and satisfy our demands for authenticity.

Moment in Peking is thus a metaphor of the diaspora, "a utopian eruption of space into the linear temporal order" (Gilroy 198). The national space is both distanced and re-created purely through the artistic imagination. There are many descriptions of place in Lin's novel. For example, his descriptions of Peking both bring to mind the "Grand-View-Garden" in Dream of the Red Chamber and is clearly distinguished from the classical work. Peking as depicted by Lin does not command the same mystical presence as the "garden" of the pre-modern times. Its resilience and stability paradoxically mirror the

conditions of the present in which "time and the world have lost their completeness as a whole" (Bahktin, 30). Lin writes, "The true inheritors of Peking's ancient culture have proved themselves superior to all attacks of modernism; as their forefathers had lived, so they are living now. ... [I]n old Peking, the moment and eternity are one. What are centuries elsewhere are but short moments in Peking, spanning the generation from grandfather to grandson, carrying on the same tradition of living. For Peking can wait and grows old and yet never grows old. Conquered many times, it has ever conquered its conquerors, and adapted and modified them to its own way of living" (Moment in Peking 742-3). In these sentences, Lin articulates a special consciousness of time that is anchored on the moment, incorporates the past, and opens onto eternity. What connects a single moment and eternity is nothing but the realistic device of typicality. This specific "moment in Peking" is made to transcend its temporal and geographic locality mainly because of its representativeness, which transforms "tradition into a useable past" (Brennan 50).

I argue that the collaboration of the traditional novel and the realist form in Moment in Peking helps the writer secure a coherent selfhood and cope with a transnational context that is neither monolithic nor monolingual. Then what about journeys? What about the historical process of immigration and the actual immigrants' community that inhabit in the transnational space? If the realist's social concern with the present allows Lin to boldly carry the dialogue of Chinese tradition with modern conceptualizations into a different location -- America, its utopian core also help him to turns materials from real life into allegories of social cohesiveness and cultural rootedness. In his novel Chinatown Family (1948), a novel that explores the meanings of "Chinese-ness" in New York's Chinatown,

Lin turns Chinatown into an allegorical testing ground for the "values" of Chinese culture in the modern world. Although this novel reiterates Lin's criticism of modern society's materialism that increasingly becomes a focus of his writings after he immigrated to the U.S., his insistence that Chinese culture is essentially spiritual determines his failure to locate the Chinese overseas community within the social stratifications and cultural hierarchies under the modern condition. In spite of the portrayals of the meager material life of this Chinese laundrymen's family, Lin Yutang's focus in this novel is on the redemptive power of the immigrants' commitment to traditional Chinese family values and their Confucian ideal of scholarship and education in face of the traumas of displacement and dislocation.

A story of a Chinese laundryman Tom Fong, Sr. and his three sons Loy, Freddie, and Tom, Jr. Chinatown Family specifically focuses on the different life paths chosen by the younger generation and their attitudes toward Americanization. In the preface to Aiiieeeee, Frank Chin and other critics group Lin's novel with Leong Gor Yun in Chinatown Inside Out (1936) and No-yong Park's Chinaman's Chance (1940) and dismiss all of them as "fake" representations of Chinatown life. In fact, Lin's novel is not an exposure of the corruptions of the political system in Chinatown as is Chinatown Inside Out, nor does Lin hold a favorable attitude toward assimilation and upward mobility as does the author of Chinaman's Chance. Lin's conceptualization of immigration is in fact rather predicable if we know his earlier writings. This saga of immigration is glorified by Lin because it testifies the power and stability of Chinese culture. Lin is not completely unaware of the historical facts of Chinese exclusion or the racist treatments of Chinese

immigrants on the West coast. Throughout the 1920s and the 1930s, there were numerous stories in The China Critic about the policies regarding Chinese immigrants in South Asia and the Americas. However, these specific aspects of the history of Chinese immigrants are continuously pushed into the background. Lin writes, "On and on the villagers' sons came, and the immigration officials were merely obstacles placed in the path of men determined to achieve success with patience and persistence" (7). In his spatial conceptualization, Lin shows that the East and the West coasts collapse in the minds of the younger generation. New York's Chinatown, across the "fabled Pacific," is a synonym for America, that is diametrically opposite to "China":

> [S]ince the children had known anything, their father had been in New York. The fact that New York was not Old Gold Mountain did not make any difference -- across the fabled Pacific, the two points merged in the distance. There were village legends that the Chinese were mobbed, robbed, killed, and many were driven out of the West Coast, and it was a family legend that their father, Tom Fong, Sr., had escaped to the East Coast after some thrilling adventures. But that was long ago; these stories always sounded like pirate tales. The fact remained that Tom Fong, Sr., survived, and that, year after year, he and other villagers' sons continued to send gold dollars home to support parents, brothers, and wives and to send their nephews to school. It was a story of survival; it was success; it was struggle triumphant. (7)

Lin thus constructs the immigrant community based on his already formulated national model. The Chinese community in New York is unified around a mythic figure Old Tuck, who after encountering and surviving anti-Chinese violence in California, led a group of Chinese workers across America to New York. As a respected leader of Chinatown, Old Tuck settles Tong fights, maintains order and self-governance within the Chinese community, and speaks at important social functions such as weddings and birthday parties. The function of this figure is not just limited within the community of immigrants;

he is also the cultural and political link between the immigrants and the politics in mainland China. We are told that owing to his open support to the Nationalist revolution in 1911, Old Tuck is invited by Sun Yet-Sen to fill an important position in the Nationalist Government, but because of Tuck's commitment to Taoism, he adamantly refuses to be involved in politics. A legendary hero as well as a self-taught intellectual and philosopher, Old Tuck combines strength with wisdom; he is "known for his physical prowess, but by the time he reached New York he was a cunning, wise old man, as if he had read the three thousand years of Chinese history" (81). Tuck's rich life experience alone is not enough for maintaining his "Chinese-ness;" he is also an eager student, making "himself study ancient Chinese at the age of thirty-five" (81). Old Tuck thus becomes Lin's wise Taoist philosopher with a nationalistic twist, preaching to a group of Chinese immigrants "the immortality of the spirit and the race."

From Lin's Chinese "Xiao Pin Wen," we can already detect the tendency of combining life with learning, social ideals with aesthetics. Here, Lin articulates in even clearer terms that the identity of "Chinese" is a result of both heritage and learning, nature and nurture. Lin is as skeptical toward formal school education as Leong Gor Yun, the author of Chinatown Inside Out, who observes that "[v]ery little is accomplished by these schools (Chinese schools in Chinatowns). It is not only the reluctance of the children to attend, but fatigue, which defeats the purpose of the school" (114). In Lin's novel, romantic sentimentality is a very important element in the bildungsroman of the young Tom Fong, their third son. Tom, who grows up in Chinatown and doesn't know much Chinese, has to be brought to the realization of his Chinese identity through a romantic involvement with

Elsie, the teacher at the Chinese school in Chinatown. A devoted daughter who is deeply concerned about the fate of her family in war-torn China of the middle of 1930s, the figure of Elsie is just another instance of Lin Yutang's gendered imagination of the nation. The liaison between Elsie and Tom is pressed into service to represent the mysterious connection between immigrants and their homeland. Elsie's attraction to Tom is portrayed as on the one hand platonic and on the other hand intuitive, romantic as well as ideological. When Tom first meets Elsie, his passion for her is aroused "like hearing exotic music that he had known and forgotten, had hidden somewhere deep in his being, and now he heard it and recognized it as something belonging to other lands, other times. He was seized emotionally, by he did not know what" (157). The same metaphor of exotic music occurs in the preface of My Country and My People to depict the bilingual translator's spiritual affinity with the nation. Indeed, Tom Fong, Jr.. is in many ways the personification of the bilingual translator himself, who easily incorporates his knowledge of the West into a vision of Chinese identity. Chinatown Family thus reveals the process by which the intellectual in exile works his way back into the "center" of the national culture.

Tom's brother Fred Fong is a foil to intensify the righteousness of the character Tom and reinforce the moral authority of family structure. Fred in Chinatown Family reminds us of another Fred, the protagonist of Frank Chin's play The Year of the Dragon. Depicted with compassion and sympathy, Fred in Chin's play is an angered tour guide of Chinatown, whose is critical toward both the disintegration of the Chinatown community and America's exploitation and appropriation of Chinese culture. In Lin's novel, Fred is only

the representative of a bad case of Americanization. Although Lin does not completely rule out Western knowledge, he is simultaneously concerned with establishing the legitimacy of Chinese culture as a political agenda. Therefore, the curriculum of young Tom Fong consists of both canonical American texts and Chinese texts. He cites The Declaration of Independence that he learns in school and integrates in an unquestioning way the spirit of individualism. At the same time, he is also told to learn Lao Tzu by heart.

As a salesman and the writer of a Chinese pamphlet that gives practical advice for self-adjustment to the American way of life, Fred is presented as an example of someone corrupted by American commercialism. Even his facial features become increasingly un-Chinese. "Yiko's face oozed a kind of animal energy. His cheeks were well filled, his nostrils extended, and his lips were thick, revealing his gums when he talked. His hair was thick and black, glistening with lanolin. His chest muscles bulged under his shirt" (70). Fred's sexual desires for a Chinese entertainer Sing Toy adds onto his sins and results in his condemnation by the Chinese community. As we can see from My Country and My People, sexuality is a contending site of "foreign-ness" with "Chinese-ness." Because this demarcation is dangerously blurred by Sing Toy who shows up in the night-club like a "China-doll" wrapped in "an American evening dress," she eventually becomes the villain that causes Fred's downfall. When her affair with Fred's American colleague Sandy Bull is discovered, Fred's American dream is also completely shattered. Towards the end of the novel, Fred returns to the family divorced and de-sexualized.

In Chinatown Family, the boundaries of the male-centered family are secured at the expense of women and sexuality. Male sexuality consistently has to be romanticized and

elevated into a nationalist sentiment. A different treatment of nationality and sexuality can be found in Louis Chu's Eat a Bowl of Tea that depicts a Chinatown of a slightly later historical period. Situating the narrative within the same intersection of nationality and sexuality, Chu shows how identification with the values of the Chinese community and masculinity can be contradictory and undermine each other's fulfillment. In Chinatown Family, Lin's continuous attempt to juggle with disparate historicities of China and the U.S. seems to be submerged by his clearer demarcations between the "traditional" and the "modern," the "spiritual" and the "materialistic," the "Chinese" and the "American." The Chinese community in America as depicted by Lin is self-contained and self-sufficient. Tom Fong, Jr.'s eventual self-identification does not empower him as an individual; it merely re-instates his position within the family.

Lin's cultural project from his Shanghai era to his emigration to the United States was a long, active and complex process in which cultural differences between the East and the West, the dichotomy of tradition and modernity, were employed as signs to create the identities of the self and the community. This cultural project comes from the perspective of someone who had deep immersion in both Western and Chinese cultures and was able to establish for himself the privileged status as a cultural translator. Apparently Lin's cultural privilege was not necessarily shared by everyone in the Chinese community. More importantly, however, it is the intention of this chapter to point out that in spite of Lin's essentially liberal outlook and hybrid cosmopolitanism, there are still quite a few "blind spots" in his cultural vision, such as with regard to gender and class issues. Lin's cultural

project is by no means complete and perfect, and therefore, any attempt to erect him as a cultural myth of one sort or another would render reductive readings of the processes of cultural negotiation.

Chapter Two

Bai Xianyong: Immigration, Exile Mentality, and Chinese Modernism

I. Multiple Forms of Displacement and Multiple Sites of Exile

In 1964, one year after Bai Xianyong immigrated to the U.S. and was enrolled in University of Iowa's writers' workshop, he wrote four short stories in Chinese entitled "Death in Chicago," "Up to the Skyscraper," "One Day in Pleasantville," and "Hong Kong 1960," and published them in a journal called Modern Literature, which had been founded in 1960 by Bai himself along with his classmates in the English Department of Taiwan University. Three of these four stories are about immigrant experience and are set against the background of American cities and suburbs; one of them, as is suggestive from the title "Hong Kong 1960," deals with the political turmoil in the Chinese diaspora and expresses a different feeling of displacement from the immigrant consciousness manifested in the three other stories. Written at a critical juncture in the writer's immigration experience, these four stories provide an important record of the formation of Bai Xianyong as a modern Chinese writer with a unique exile sensibility.[1] The degrees of modernism reflected in these four stories, however one defines the term "modernism," are uneven and hard to summarize. "Hong Kong 1960" is written in what one critic considers to be the "high

---

[1]While still in Taiwan, Bai and his classmates, many of whom also became writers and critics, shared a deep affinity with modernist writers such as James Joyce and D. H. Lawrence. As critic Leo Lee later argues, they interpreted modernism as "a strategy to rebel against social conventions" and as "a revolution in consciousness" (Mingxing Kafei Guan 241). After Bai immigrated to the U.S., however, he not only made a deliberate choice to write only in Chinese, but also gradually adopted a style that betrays the influence of classical Chinese drama and fiction. This stylistic trajectory has enabled many critics to label Bai Xianyong as an essentially "Chinese" writer.

modernist style," for it is characterized by fragmented narrative, stream of consciousness, rich symbolism, and unique to the modern Chinese context, "Westernized syntax" (Yuan Lianjun 63). By contrast, the other three short stories are less experimental when examined by this standard. Although in all four stories, gender and sexuality are intertwined with the representation of exile experience, the theme of sexuality alone is represented in diverse ways. Sometimes, the writer's homosexual orientation is treated implicitly; other times, it is directly stated. Overall, if we read these four stories as fictional records of the exile experience initially encountered by the author, then we can quickly conclude that Bai's writings are quite different from conventional immigrant literature in that no clear "center" and "margin" can be discerned from his works. A general sense of displacement permeates these four short stories, but none of these fictional narratives is targeted toward a specific social institution, nor is there a clear definition of a cultural "home".

In an article entitled "The Wandering Chinese: the Theme of Exile in Taiwan Fiction" published one year after these four stories were written, the writer Bai Xianyong uses the term "exile" to describe the multiple forms of displacement as a gay writer, as a second-generation mainlander who grew up in Taiwan, and as an immigrant writer residing in the United States. Bai prefers to generalize these different forms of displacement in terms of an "exile mentality," a term that betrays the influence of Western modernist literature of Henry James and James Joyce. Yet, his short stories are not just based on the exile of people of his generation, but also on what he heard about his father's generation's experiences of emigrating from mainland China to Taiwan. That's why after doing four

stories which deal with immigrant experience in the United States, Bai started composing stories about what he considered to be a "more important" subject matter, the experiences of mainland Chinese who because of the defeat of the Nationalist Party, lived in exile in Taiwan. He wrote fourteen stories collectively entitled Tales of Taipei Characters (also known as Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream). Afterwards, he wrote some more stories about immigrant experience, which are later collected into a small book entitled New Yorkers. Bai's most significant work, a novel entitled Crystal Boys, is about the gay community in Taiwan. Taking into account of the variety subject matter, the numerous allusions to specific histories of mainland China and Taiwan that appear in his writings, and the depictions of immigrant experience of a specific class and cultural background, and the equally heavy influence of Chinese and Western literatures, we can only conclude that Bai's writings is best described as diaspora literature, with its characteristics of multiplicity, heterogeneity, and discontinuity.

It is important to recognize that certain locales and particular histories loom larger in Bai's imagination than others. The history of the defeat of the Nationalist Party and its retreat to Taiwan in 1949, for example, is a predominant theme in the writer's narrative of exile. In the article on the theme of exile in Taiwan literature, Bai characterizes the second-generation mainlanders who grew up in Taiwan such as himself as those who "have been dislocated, banished from their homeland and condemned, like their fathers, to live estranged on an unfamiliar shore" (207). In this self-representation, "the homeland" refers to mainland China, and "the unfamiliar shore" refers to Taiwan. The American scene or Hong Kong, both of which also shaped the writer's exile consciousness, conveniently

disappear from the picture.

This elision conveniently opens the door for what later becomes a "China-centric" cultural perspective which is shared to different degrees by other "overseas" writers from Taiwan of a similar background as Bai. The perception of Chinese culture as a continuum and the nostalgic longing for a certain cultural center lie at the core of many discussions of "overseas literature." Chen Ruosi, a classmate of Bai Xianyong, once said that "overseas" literature forms a genre of its own because of its common subject matter which "revolve[s] around China, Chinese people, and Chinese things" (13). Culture, as described by Chen in her preface to a study of Chinese overseas nativism, is as "unerasable as a birthmark." According to Chen, Chinese American writers, who might not share the same educational background as herself or other writers from Taiwan, are still under the influence of Chinese culture. Looking retrospectively at the works of herself and her contemporary writers from Taiwan in 1993, Chen said that

> Chinese people who are born and raised overseas are also deeply influenced by Chinese culture. Many writers do not realize this, and often proudly proclaim that they are free of 'homeward longing' and don't need to carry the cross of four thousand years of Chinese history on their backs. ... However, in reality, though they may not be seeking their roots, they cannot cut the umbilical cord of culture. (16)

Although Chen ascribes unambiguous significance to culture per se, her argument strangely has little explanatory power for the interaction of culture and politics in the context of the diaspora. For one thing, she does not distinguish among the different locales which comprise the "overseas," i.e., Taiwan, Hong Kong, Chinatowns in the U.S., or South and Southeast Asia. Place or locality are conveniently eliminated from the

interpretation of the literary text. At the same time, culture and history are essentialized into a mythic concept.

Bai Xianyong himself portrays his immigration experience in a sentimental light as a nationalist "return" to home and tradition. In an interview with an editor of the Hong Kong edition of Playboy magazine, later reprinted in his collection of essays The Sixth Finger, he argues that his immigration experiences in the U.S. is significant only as far as it forced him to change his cultural position from embracing the Western modernist canon to rediscovering the Chinese tradition. Bai says,"The most important change that happened to me after I immigrated to the U.S. was my re-discovery of Chinese traditional culture. When I was in Taiwan, I was deeply influenced by Western modernism. At that time, we promoted modernist literature, and I also writing in a modernist style. However, after I came to the West, I deliberately searched for traditional culture. My thoughts and feelings can be considered as the mixture of Western modernist and Chinese traditional cultures" (The Sixth Finger 269). He does not describe in any realistic sense how the U.S. context has shaped his consciousness of exile or facilitated the "return"; however, the above statements are significant in that they point out that the participation in modernist movements, whether in mainland China or in Taiwan, implies to a certain extent the adoption of a hybrid cultural identity. This can also be testified by the case of Lin Yutang as I have argued in Chapter One. Then what is the appropriate context to situate the cultural hybridization of Chinese modernist practice in the specific context of the "overseas" literature?

In the critical reception of Bai Xianyong as a Chinese modernist writer, the influence of

Western literature is often considered as a significant factor. However, the interpretation of modernism, Chinese or Western, as given by critics of Bai Xianyong, have so far been informed only by a handful of canonical writers in the West and been restricted to a purely formalistic perspective. As a result, the cultural significance of immigration remains unnoticed. For years, critics of Bai Xianyong have unanimously favored Bai's short story collection Taipei Characters more than New Yorkers, a collection of stories about immigrant experience. For most of them, Taipei Characters represents a more mature phase of Bai's writing career, and is artistically more accomplished than Bai's stories about immigrants. Critic Joseph Lau, himself an immigrant scholar from Taiwan and a classmate of Bai Xianyong's finds that the stories in New Yorkers are much more melodramatic than those in Taipei Characters ("Introduction" 4).Drawing our attention to the question of the impact of immigration on Bai's writings, Lau writes, "All the stories in Bai's Taipei Characters were written in the United States. However, the important characters in the stories of Taipei Characters are unanimously aged men or women who belong to the writer's parents' generation. These stories can be considered as talk stories. At the same time, the writer's own experience of living in exile in the U.S. also helps him maintain a certain critical distance from his characters; it allows him to dissect the psychological movements of the characters as calmly as a physician in front of the operating table. ... [On the other hand, w]hen Bai Xianyong wrote the stories in New Yorkers, he must have felt the 'pain that cuts to the skin.' The critical distance disappears, and what makes it worse is that he himself becomes involved in his writings. Whether he likes it or not, he has already turned himself into a New Yorker" ("Introduction" 8). It is clear from these remarks that

Lau's own literary taste is shaped by the Western high modernist notions of disinterestedness and objectivity. The stories in New Yorkers are in a way "talk stories," just as those in Taipei Characters. In the criticism of ethnic literature, talk stories have become an important area for the negotiations of cultural identities. Lau's remark paradoxically raises my interest in what older generations of critics of Bai Xianyong have left out, namely, Bai's personal narratives of the immigrant experience. I will discuss some stories from the collections New Yorkers in detail later in this chapter.

In order to faithfully represent the exile experience of this Chinese writer from Taiwan, it is important to take into account the multiple forms of dislocation and multiple textual sites where this dislocation is imagined. To me, the identity of this writer is articulated through what I would consider a discourse of love. Constructed from a psychoanalytical perspective, Bai's discourse of love is primarily about sexuality, but at the same time, it is broad enough to include cultural and national concerns of the writer. Highlighting the discourse of love, I emphasize the interplay of the considerations of sexuality and culture throughout Bai's writings. Bai Xianyong's representation of sexuality goes through different stages: the overt articulations of gay sexuality in his early writings, the representations of emasculated men in his stories about immigrant experiences, portrayals of women and the elevation of femininity in the stories in Taipei Characters, and finally, a panoramic view of a gay underground community in Crystal Boys. Gay identity never becomes a formulated narrative in Bai Xianyong's writings. There is little historical evidence of Bai Xianyong's participation in gay and lesbian politics either in the U. S. or in the Chinese diaspora. However, he openly defends gay sexuality several times by claiming

that it is "natural" and that it is "historically grounded." Thus, Bai's sexual politics needs to be understood in his own terms. In Bai's interview in Playboy magazine, he expresses his opposition to the Gay Rights Movement, but at the same time, he also proposes a gay identity that is "beyond the divisions of culture, race, religion, class, or historical distance" (289). Origin and home are important concerns in Bai's writings, and he often resorts to the romanticist celebration of nature to convey a vision of home. While Bai's romanticism temporarily opens up a space of freedom within the sexual and social hierarchies, it also reveals a universalizing and generalizing tendency that does not seem to be aimed at a singular social problem.

II. Sexuality and Culture as Competing and Interacting Discourses

In the story "Up to the Skyscraper" (1964), the main character Mei Bao is a student from Hong Kong who comes to the U.S. to attend college. Growing up in a motherless family, Mei Bao has an especially strong attachment to her elder sister Mei Lun, who is a music student in New York. The story is told from a psychological perspective that is sympathetic to Mei Bao, who betrays a seemingly naive yet implicitly sexual attachment to her sister Mei Lun:

> 'Listen, younger sister. You are not young any more. If I keep on spoiling you like this, how are you going to stand firmly on your own feet in the future?'
>
> Sister likes to be daunting with her big theories. Mei Bao does not want to listen. She can hear her heart beat growing faster whenever she is scared like this. She refuses to get up from the floor, and holding tightly on her sister's calf and looking up to the youthful and handsome face of Mei Lun, Mei Bao has to stop herself from uttering a cry from the bottom of her heart: Sister, I love you. Sister always thinks of Mei Bao as a silly little girl; in fact, Mei Bao knows everything. She knows about her love for her sister, so intense that sometimes it makes her heart ache. (Lonely Seventeen 241)

Before she comes to New York, Mei Bao dreams of all the wonderful things that she could do with her sister, including most importantly, spending the night alone with her on the Empire State Building, "the tallest skyscraper in the world" (243). However, when she finally meets her sister , she finds to her disappointment that Mei Lun is only interested in entertaining her male friends and making her own marriage plans. In Mei Bao's eyes, Mei Lun is hopelessly contaminated by America's materialism. She has given up her career as a pianist; her language is spiced with English words, and all she cares to talk about is pretty dresses and her wealthy life with her fiance.

Mei Bao is turned away not just by her sister's coldness, but also by her disillusionment in New York and America. She has planned to be no different from a regular visitor. She has come to enjoy of the sights of Times Square and Fifth Avenue and admire "the pinnacle of America's materialistic civilization." However, contrary to her expectations, the emotional entanglement with her sister has left her unable to find an appropriate perspective from which to read the city. When she stands on top of the Empire State Building and looks down at New York, she feels as if "she were looking at another planet in the solar system through a telescope in an observatory." "She has totally lost the sense of distance and space. All she sees in front of her are clusters of light balls, shaking and twirling in an endless sea of darkness" (252). This story portrays Mei Bao's experience of coming to the United States as a progression from innocence to experience. The ending of the story resonates a nostalgic longing for the lost innocence of girlhood as Mei Bao angrily cries in the darkness, "I don't want to grow up."

Throughout the story, the contrast between Mei Bao and Mei Lun, which structures

Mei Bao's emotional response to New York and America, is obvious: Mei Bao is short, fat, and dependent; Mei Lun, on the other hand, is pretty, flirtatious, and successful. Mei Bao's sense of displacement is enhanced by Mei Lun's cultural permeability and easy Americanization. As in other stories in the book New Yorkers, the sexual overtones of this story can hardly be ignored, and it confirms Sau-ling Wong's argument that in immigrant literature, "sexuality is represented as far more than a physical fact; rather, it constitutes one of the primary terms through which one's ethnic identity is understood, experienced, and structured" (113). However, the question is: how should we understand the sexuality of Mei Bao? A heterosexual perspective presumes the difference between men and women as the sexual norm; in this story, however, Mei Bao's rude awakening occurs only by being juxtaposed against another female character, her more socially adept sister. Contrary to Sau-ling Wong's arguments, Bai's contemplations both of sexuality and of cultural identity do not follow the binary pattern of self and the other.[2] If we read Bai's earlier stories where homosexuality is more explicitly expressed, we can almost argue that

---

[2]Sau-ling Wong's article "Ethnicizing Gender: An Exploration of Sexuality as Sign in Chinese Immigrant Literature" (1992), from which I have taken the above quotation inspired me to think about the convergence between sexuality and ethnicity in Bai Xianyong's works. Deliberately writing against the stereotype of the emasculated Asian men, Wong focuses mainly on the portrayals of male sexuality in the three short stories by immigrant writers from Taiwan: Yi Li, Cao Youfang, and Bai Xianyong. In this article, Wong argues mainly that the politics of sexuality and race assumes a different shape in immigrant literature and the literature by American-born Asian writers. She writes that "whereas white ideology characterizes Asians as one of the ethnic Others, Chinese immigrant literature operates on the assumption that the other is American" (119).Although Wong's article inherently suggests a venue that would potentially disrupt the self-contained structure of an essential Chinese identity, especially where it is applied to the reading of "overseas" literature, her consideration of gender based on a heterosexual model inevitably misfires in the case of the gay writer Bai Xianyong.

Bai's sentimental representation of the attachment between two female characters in this story is a continuation of his concern with homosexuality.

As can be seen from the earlier stories by Bai Xianyong, the discourse on sexuality, romantic love, and innocence as an aesthetic ideal is always entangled with his cultural discourse.[3] Through examining "Youth" (1961) and "The Dream of the Moon" (1960), both written before the writer immigrated to the United States, we can get a clear picture of the construction of homoerotic love as an aesthetic ideal and the intersecting languages of sexuality and cultural difference. Written in an allegorical manner that reminds us of Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray, the story "Youth" can be read as a small-scale, mainly aesthetic investigation of beauty and sexuality through the display of male bodies. Its main character is an old painter who tries to capture his fleeting youth through depicting a naked teenage model. In order to imitate the looks of the young man, the painter paints his face and covers up his wrinkles with layers of body cream, thus creating a caricature of himself that reminds us of the old, loathsome portrait of Dorian Gray at the end of Wilde's novel. However, different from in The Picture of Dorian Grey, ideal beauty can never be conveyed, even in art. The more the painter tries to "capture," the more hopeless his struggle becomes. His desire for the younger model becomes a desperate

---

[3]Judith Butler makes a similar argument in her article on Nella Larsen's Passing. While Butler employs the Freudian model of ego and super-ego to analyze the patterns of repression in Larsen's novel, she is also interested in "what social relations compose the domain of the symbolic." In her analysis of Passing, she shows that the social relations of race and gender can converge with each other. I agree with Butler's argument about the interpellated social relations that form the symbolic; however in my consideration of gender and cultural identity in Bai Xianyong's works, I also take into account that gender and culture have different formations especially in the cross-cultural context.

game of loss. "He wants to appear young, at least on this day, which he has been waiting for years ever since the first grey hair appeared on his head. He has expected to feel this desire to paint and capture" (170). "He wants to mix a color with a tone that is as tender and shiny as sunlight dancing on the grass tips" (171). Failing to capture beauty through the artistic medium of painting, he only manages to create a picture of ugliness out of himself, ironically with his painting entitled "youth" lying next to him.

As a parable, the structure of this story is constructed based on the binary opposition between youth and old age, beauty and ugliness, art and life. It seems to me that this allegory of love is not constructed solely upon a Western model or a Chinese model. Although its story-line reminds us of a series of Western literary texts, it also departs significantly from any of them.[4] For example, Eve Sedgewick argues that in Dorian Gray, the binarism of Greek vs. Christian ideals of beauty is a significant trope that speaks men's desires for men's bodies (140). Obviously, Bai adheres to neither Christian nor Greek culture strictly in the construction of his aesthetic ideal, even though at one point in the story, the protagonist identifies his teenage model as "Adonis."

In another story "The Dream of the Moon," the writer takes his idealistic representation of sexual love into the bicultural context. The story contrasts a pleasant homoerotic love with unpleasant heterosexual affair as remembered by an elderly doctor in Taiwan. The doctor's homoerotic love with a teenage friend resonates the same

---

[4]In his introduction to the collection of Bai Xianyong's early works entitled "The Lonely Age of Seventeen," Bai Xianyong's most enthusiastic advocate and critic C. T. Hsia calls our attention to the similarity between the story of "Youth" and Shakespeare's poem "Venice and Adonis."

romanticist longing for youth and beauty as in the story "Youth." By contrast, the only heterosexual experience that he had in a brothel in India where he served as an army doctor, is portrayed as unclean, animalistic, and grotesque. The writer employs a distinctly racial language to enhance the contrasting sensations of homosexual and heterosexual relationships. Bai writes,

> When he wakes up at night, he finds himself in the arms of an Indian prostitute. Outside is the round and flat moon, its flesh-hued light slowly climbs into the room and illuminates the woman. She sleeps with her mouth open, baring her teeth while she snores, and her body shines with blackness. Her sagging breasts droop heavily onto his chest, and he could smell an intense odor emitting from her armpit and her hair. (65)

This remark can be rightly judged as a textual instance of ethnocentrism; however, before we impose this judgement as a definitive statement about this story, we might want to step back and examine it amidst the deployment of other cultural signifiers in the text. Unlike in "Youth," in this story, gay sensibility is articulated by constructing contrasting images of the female and male bodies. Homoerotic love is painted in an idealistic light; it is natural, dream-like, and borderless. Heterosexual experience, on the other hand, is constrained to naturalistic details. Homoerotic love enables the protagonist to transgress the boundaries of body and achieve the state of perfect harmony with nature. As Bai writes

> While he is holding the fragile and tiny body of the boy, he feels that the two of them are so close, leaning so perfectly against each other that one could be merged into another's body ... It seems to him that the surrounding lake, mountains, and forests have all merged together and floating upward. The moon, full and big, sinks low into the bottom of the lake. Everywhere is quite, and he could hear a few pine nuts falling off the tree to the ground. (64)

By contrast, defined in a naturalistic light, the protagonist's heterosexual encounter seems much more restricted to the materiality of the body. Thus, the grotesque details of the

prostitute's body are meant to contrast and enhance the idealistic unity conveyed by homoerotic desire.

As we can tell from these two early stories by Bai Xianyong, the dichotomized imaginary world of beauty vs. ugliness, civilization vs. barbarity was already pretty much in place before Bai's emigration to the United States. In "Hong Kong 1960" (1964), the first story written in the United States, the same dichotomy is used to represent figures of cultural and racial hybridity, and although hybrid bodies remain to be polarized against pure forms, the writer's attitude toward hybridity is less judgmental. "Hong Kong 1960" was written one year after the writer emigrated to the United States; however, he deliberately chose to set this story against the background of Hong Kong, a city that was uniquely situated in the political geography of the Chinese diaspora. According to Bai's biographer, before he came to study in the U.S., he spent some time in Hong Kong, where he was exposed to the cruelty of the Cultural Revolution in mainland China through the refugees that escaped to Hong Kong. This experience had a great impact on Bai's political affiliation after he came to the U.S.. It to a certain extent informed his resistance toward any version of cultural leftism, a popular trend in American academe.

The influence of the Cultural Revolution in mainland China on the writer's exile mentality can be clearly seen through the two existing versions of the story "Hong Kong 1960," one in Chinese; the other in English. The English version was translated by the writer himself and published in an American journal in 1965, one year after the story was written. In this version, the writer added a few more paragraphs which more overtly relate the female protagonist's exile status with the modern history of mainland China. As the

former wife of a defeated Nationalist Party general, the protagonist Lician is identified as "the last Ladyship of the Chinese Hierarchy." Her despair of never being able to go back to Shanghai thus acquires some contemporary resonance against the background of the Cultural Revolution. Through the voice of Lician's lover, the writer says, "Yes, yes, the last ladyship of the Chinese hierarchy. But my dear, they don't want ladies. They'll make you put on a pair of pants and shovel manure in the stables. Ladies. Poisonous residue of the bourgeoisie" (365, English translation).

These clear allusions to Chinese historical events have led some critics to read this story as an allegory of the nation of China. However, I want to stay away from this over-generalizing conclusion and situate the story more specifically within the context of Hong Kong. The city of Hong Kong by itself evokes ambivalent feelings in the protagonist, for it simultaneously signifies chaos and regulation, freedom and restriction. Invaded by rampant sexuality, plague, and a severe draught simultaneously, it exudes a decadent, fin-de-siecle sentiment. It is "a pearl of the East" that is "shrivelling up inch by inch in the deep blue Pacific" (364). As a cultural "waste-land," the city is figuratively described as a physical body stricken by disease and infection. Bai writes in his story,

> The sirens of the prowl cars had swept away all the humming noises and lingered in the air like swishing whips. Yes, Lician thought, in a moment they'll throw whole bunches of dirty-faced ragged-clothed refugees like rabid mongrels into the prowl cars and drive them across the New Borders back to China to be devoured by the plague. These superfluous yellow bodies. For the sake of our safety, the Governor of Hong Kong said, we must close our door to these dangerous people. Yet each day the refugees crawl across the barbed wire and flood into Hong Kong like swarms of black ants. (367)

The racial overtone in this passage can hardly be ignored; however, it is also important to

see that this attempt of racialization does not immediately translate into any form of national imagination, for Lician is simultaneously cynical of the City Council's attempt to maintain order as she is disgusted by spiritual impurity. The City Council is ridiculed as an agency that keeps its moral control through brainwashing its residents. "Fifty-three found infected with cholera, the Hong Kong Daily said, unlicensed peddlers severely punished. Quarantine stands. Injections. Lord, everywhere reek of lime and disinfectants" (365). Thus, while the protagonist Lician does not identify with the chaotic and racially mixed urban scene in Hong Kong, her own position is dangerously ambiguous.

Lician's deep implication in this contaminated environment is further conveyed by the detail of her illicit love affair with an opium addict who comes from a lower social class than Lician herself. Like the city of Hong Kong whose identity is undefined, their love has a transgressive nature undefined in any social terms. Even though Hong Kong's chaotic milieu offers Lician a fleeting moment of sexual freedom, Lician herself appears to be unconvinced about their love and her thoughts are still deeply entrenched in the feudalist hierarchy from which she supposedly is escaping. As a former general's wife, Lician used to live a luxurious life with "orderlies and two black Cadillacs." Yet when she is involved in an affair with "an opium-eater who hides in an attic at Hong Kong Square," she has to convince herself, as she is reminded by her lover, that "we are all equal, I mean *in bed*" (364). Lician experiences a deep conflict in terms of her affiliation with her aristocratic yet sexually impoverished past. She wants to rebel against her social position; however, she cannot completely dismiss the voice of a feudal lord who keeps reminding her that "she has to abide by the tradition;" As she ambivalently indulges in "the greatest liberty" that

Hong Kong offers, she cannot help admire the freedom of a prostitute that she observes from her bedroom window, "a mongrel of Chinese, Portuguese, and English." The image of the "other" ironically fulfills the fantasy of liberation that is both attractive and dangerous from Lician's point of view.

In a daring way, this story suggests the possibility of identification across the social boundary of class and gender. As in "Up to the Skyscraper," the subject position of the protagonist Lician is constructed homo-sexually through the act of mirroring with another female character. The prostitute's freedom forms a sharp contrast to Lician's situation of "being stuck." "Through the window, Lician saw a woman on the balcony grappling with a sailor. The neon light shone bright on her scaly yellow gown. The woman leaned half way out from the balustrade, laughing wantonly. ... Her shrill giggles pierced through the discordant chorus of the night market" (364). But at the same time, the wanton sexuality represented by this prostitute bespeaks Lician's fear of disease. The writer describes the prostitute in the following words: "She wriggled violently, thrust out her arms, and sank into a slump in the sailor's arms. A syphilitic, they said. Used to be a stinking leper, they said. A mongrel of Chinese, Portuguese and English. She's a sea girl of Hong Kong Square. A fine hussy" (364).

Since the story is told from a psychological perspective that shifts quickly from one character to another, it remains unclear who is the reference of "they" and what are "their" genders. My guess is that even though Lician might not share the voyeuristic pleasure of men toward a sex object, she probably agrees to a certain extent the moral judgement "they" have toward her. Still, it is possible that the writer is suggesting a certain degree of

sympathy between Lician and the sick and dirty prostitute, especially because we are told that Lician's affair with her opium addict lover is merely another form of imprisonment. He addresses her as "Big Sister" and adores her in a fetishistic manner. "All I want is *you*, he cooed with a brazen smile. His voice smacked of sugar. I want your soft white hands, your smooth hair scented with Soir de Paris" (363). However, this bold declaration of love is hardly comforting to Lician. In her own mind, she conjures up an image of her own dismembered body to suggest her desperate situation of being trapped in love. "She looked at herself. She saw her limbs lying limply about her as if they had been cut off from her torso. She felt paralyzed, her bones all fallen apart" (362). In a way, Lician's lover is portrayed more as her guardian than as a partner in the process of liberation. His role as a censurer is similar to that of Freud's super-ego, "constantly on the alert, investigating the thoughts going on in her mind" (363). Furthermore, this relationship is depicted as "two prisoners handcuffed together," which makes it clear that this story can be read as a fantasmatic construction of gay sexuality. In her examination of Lacan's psychological theory of the symbolic, Judith Butler maintains that by regulating heterosexual difference as the norm, the symbolic or the fantasm is already riven through by the interdictions of the homophobic society. She says,

> The very logic of repudiation which governs and destabilizes the assumption of sex ... presupposes a heterosexual rationality that relegates homosexual possibility to the transient domain of the imaginary. Homosexuality is not fully repudiated, because it is entertained, but it will always remain 'entertainment,' cast as the figure of the symbolic's 'failure' to constitute its sexed objects fully or finally, but also and always a subordinate rebellion with no power to rearticulate the terms of the governing law. (Bodies that matter, 111)

Butler's emphasis on compulsory heterosexuality in psychoanalysis might help to explain

why the free love of Lician is hardly celebrated in this story. However, from another perspective, although the image of the handcuffed prisoners conveys a meaning of enclosure, in the psychological space, it might very well be a space where homosexuality can be preserved and "entertained." Thus, this picture of imprisonment paradoxically connotes both oppression and comfort. This speculation can be supported by the ending of the story. At the end of the story, the tone of imprisonment is softened as the image of prison is transformed into a different image of sleep. Being stuck both in the physical space of Hong Kong and in the subjective space of her psychosis, the protagonist finds a momentary solace in her sleep. "A moment of drowsiness seized Lician. Her eyelids began to sink slowly" (369). This solace is not only momentary, but also subjective, for even in her sleep, she is still conscious of "the watchful eyes of the man staring at her unseeingly, as if they were penetrating into the abyss of her unrestful mind" (369).

As I have argued previously in this section, homosexual love is always intertwined with considerations of cultural difference and national identity. Similarly, the story's numerous cultural and historical signifiers suggest that the oppression experienced by Lician could be traced to a multiplicity of sources: the traditional social hierarchy, heterosexual relationships, as well as the histories of both Taiwan and mainland China from which the protagonist feels alienated.[5] Placed within the nexus of cultural, historical, and sexual differentiations, the protagonist has little space to construct any single narrative of identity

---

[5]In her book Modernism and the Nativist Resistance, Sung-sheng Chang refutes C. T. Hsia's assertion that modernist writers from Taiwan in general cherish "a respect for tradition and a conservative temperament." She maintains that "the relative conservatism and moderate political stance of Taiwan Modernists, ... do not prevent them from radically protesting against the hegemonic cultural forms of Chinese society" (100).

or social action. Wavering between the uncertainty of the future and the hopelessness of the present, the protagonist hardly offers us any comforting prescription of liberation. In the end of the story, Lician's lover offers "to lead [her] to the inferno." "We'll go through all kinds of ordeals together. ... Come, you sinner, let me hold your hand and we'll go down to the inferno for our *precious* moment of intimacy" (368).[6] It is important to recognize that for Chinese modernist writers such as Bai Xianyong, this individually experienced disillusionment can become a powerful imperative to search for new forms of affinity. Bai's politics of dislocation starts without a well-defined objective.

III. "Death in Chicago:" the Death of the Western Textuality

According to Bai's memoir, the first few years of his living in the U.S. were mostly spent on reading volumes of Western classics, devouring English books on writing, and more importantly, studying modern Chinese literature. Since the political atmosphere of the 1960s Taiwan did not permit students to read leftist literature or discuss certain topics about modern Chinese history, a crucial aspect of Bai's education after he came to the U.S. consisted of teaching himself modern history. Among the historical materials that he discovered after coming to the U.S., Bai recalls a movie he saw at the Little Carnegie Hall in New York, which gives a vivid representation of the Nanjing massacre and the bombing of Chongqing, two major tragic events during the Sino-Japanese war. The movie was made by a foreign filmmaker, Bai writes; however, it infused him with strong nationalist sentiments, for it transformed history from "abstract concepts" to the visual representation

---

[6]In the English translation, the writer adds a few words "for our *precious* moment of intimacy," whose meaning is not conveyed in the original Chinese version.

of "ravaged, molested, cut, and burned human bodies strewn upon the blackened soil of China" (Wang Jinmin, 105). Around the same time in the mid 1960s, Bai wrote several short stories about the experience of immigrants like himself in the United States. The nationalist sentiments conveyed by the above remark are highly pronounced in these stories. The protagonist of "Death in Chicago," the first story that he wrote after he came to the United States is named Wu Hanhung, which literally means "the soul of China." Curiously, though, although most critics endorse Bai Xianyong for his Chinese identity and for what they have considered to be a form of traditionalism in Bai's writings, few of them give any attention to these immigrant stories.

This neglect is likely to be caused by many reasons. As I have mentioned previously, Joseph Lau's remark in his preface to Bai Xianyong's collection New Yorkers indicates that the evaluation of Bai as a modern Chinese writer is based on Lau's perception of modernism from a canonical Western point of view. In contrast, the live experience of immigration is considered to be secondary in the formation of the writer's exile mentality. At the same time, other critics of Bai Xianyong, such as the renowned Chinese scholar C. T. Hsia, tend to embrace Bai's so-called "Chinese sentiments" from an ideological perspective. For example, in his preface to Bai Xianyong's Tales of Taipei Characters, a later collection of Bai's short stories widely acclaimed for its artistic sophistication and philosophical depth, Hsia argues that "[the] profound love [of modernist writers from Taiwan] for their mother country has imbued in them a respect for tradition and a conservative temperament" (1969, qtd. by Sung-cheng Chan, 293). Disregarding the complex political context of Western modernism, Hsia simplistically sets up Chinese

modernism in opposition to the completely different literary trend in the West. He argues that these writers from Taiwan "are deeply disturbed by the tragic outcome of the radical rebellions of youths of their parents' generation ... and not likely to take any fancy in the utopian ideals of a socialist revolution" (293). The connections between certain perceptions of the "West" and particular definitions of "Chineseness" need some re-thinking in order to take account of the experience of marginalization and dislocation into the reading of Bai's stories.

The immigrant stories in Bai's short story collection New Yorkers are significant precisely in that they preserve an important record of the writer's negotiations with the "West" as a text and foreshadow the more drastic shift the writer later makes from Western modernist to traditional Chinese aesthetics. In making this argument, I don't read the writer's appropriation of classical Chinese literature simply as a form of paying "respect for tradition" (Hsia). On the contrary, the stories in both New Yorkers and Tales of Taipei Characters are products of the writer's bicultural sensibility. Many stories in these two collections were written around the same time, and as I will show later on in this chapter, several of them can be read inter-textually in terms of plot and style. Thus, the variations in style and theme between the stories in these two collections should in itself be considered as a signal of the writer's conscious attempt to shape his cultural identity.

As we can see from the remark which I quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Bai's nativist sentiments are often articulated in a highly personal and sentimental tone. In fact, I will argue through reading closely several stories in New Yorkers and Tales of Taipei Characters that sentimentality is gradually transformed by the writer into a language of

identity. Bai's sentimental discourse of love can be traced to both Chinese traditional aesthetics conveyed by such classical literary works as Dream of the Red Chamber and The Peony Pavilion, as well as Western psychoanalytical theories, particularly useful for representing homosexual orientation. The word "love" is in itself a translated phrase, for it has multiple connotations of sexuality, nationalism, and several equivalent Chinese terms, "Ching" (emotion) and "Nie" (doom or fate). This word structures a linear progression from loss to redemption of cultural and sexual identities in Bai's writings. I will use several important works to signal the transitional moments in this process.

Bai's sentimental discourse on love should first be traced to his early stories such as "The Dream of the Moon" and "Youth," where homosexuality is explored in a highly parabolic style. However, "love" gradually acquires more complex cultural and social connotations in correspondence to the accumulation of the writer's exilic experiences. In almost all the stories in New Yorkers and Tales of Taipei Characters, homoeroticism is not articulated explicitly, but rather through implicit representations of illicit heterosexual relations or repressed masculinity, or by a philosophical consideration of love as a transgressive act. In Bai's writings, as I will show through my close reading of Bai's novel Crystal Boys, the word "love" gradually acquires a more universalist appeal. As a language of identity, it is eventually constructed into an allegorical discourse that supposedly bridges the violent disjunction between art and society, social and cultural differences, Western modernity and Chinese tradition. It is thus important for us not to consider the representations of sexuality, society, and culture in an isolated manner as separate discourses.

"Death in Chicago," one of the early stories written in the United States, sets the writer's sentimental portrayals of love in the context of Western textuality. By using the word "textuality," I am alluding not just to the fact that the writer learned about the West through studying modernist literature before his immigration of the U.S., but also in a more general sense to the writer's tendency of reading and interpreting the American scene as a text, an aesthetic image that has a strong symbolic resonance. "Death in Chicago" portrays a graduate student of English literature at the University of Chicago who goes into a phase of depression after his graduation and eventually takes his own life. In this symbolic story, the identity crisis of the protagonist is dramatically represented in terms of the conflict of two sets of symbols, pertaining to the "West" and to "China."

First, images taken from T. S. Eliot's poem "The Waste Land" form a significant element of the Western textuality. In the middle of the story, when the protagonist Wu Hanhung receives a letter that tells him about his mother's death, he is in the middle of preparing for his comprehensive exam, and his book happens to be turned to a page of "The Waste Land." The first few lines draw his attention:

> April is the cruelest month, breeding
> Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
> Memory and desire, stirring
> Dull roots with spring rain.
> Winter kept us warm, covering
> Earth in forgettable snow

At the moment of the protagonist's emotional crisis, these few lines from Eliot's poem convey an ironic sense of coldness and detachment in spite of the modifications Bai has made in his translation of these lines. When the writer includes these six lines into his

story, he deliberately allows a stronger sense of lyricism to come through the translation. The word "forgettable" in the last line of the quotation is replaced with a Chinese term which literally means "forgetting sorrow." This "mis-translated" section of Eliot's "Waste Land" serves the purpose of conveying the writer's romanticist concerns with origin and nature, which are repeatedly articulated in many short stories written before his emigration to the U.S..

Later on in the story, another image of the "West" is constructed through the picture of Western classics that line up along the walls of Wu's basement apartment. Just like Eliot's poem, these classics are "dead" books for Wu, because they don't address his emotional needs, and their colorful images are utterly incongruent with the bleak living environment of the protagonist. "For six years, he has imprisoned himself behind the wall of Western classics out of a strong curiosity for knowledge. He has filled in the abyss with time and labor. Wu Hanhung shudders at the thought. Those books that are tightly packed to fit into the bookshelf all of a sudden metamorphose into colorful corpses and fill the room with the stench of death" (7).

If high modernist culture imported from the West is pronounced dead because the protagonist has lost faith in his high-minded pursuit of knowledge, the real world only proves to be another form of death, for even though America is a fantasy land of material wealth and vague promises of sexual pleasure, the protagonist, taking a voyeuristic perspective toward this world, does not attempt to situate himself within the institutional structure of American society. The city of Chicago is portrayed from a distant perspective through a set of tropes of foreignness and alienation. Consequently, although race is

registered in this story, it remains to be a category that is vaguely functional in the social context. Wu Hanhung often misreads race simply as color. As he looks out the window of his basement apartment, he sees the colorful legs of women, which stir up his desire and reminds him of his sexually deprived life as a graduate student. Later on, the writer uses a similar kind of racially coded language as in his earlier story "The Dream of the Moon" to describe the encounter of the protagonist with a prostitute in a night club in downtown Chicago. When the protagonist wanders into a night club, he sees a black female performer with "an immense body and huge arms," "singing a song which conveys her deep sorrow and primitivist vigor" (9). Simultaneously attracted and repelled by the foreignness of the scene, Wu later allows himself to be led by a white prostitute named Rona into her apartment, where instead of finding the sexual pleasure as he is promised, he is appalled by the sight of the aging ugliness and artificiality of her body. "Rona turns around and pulls off the bright red wig that has covered her head like a carpet. Underneath is some sparse brown-colored hair that is her own. All of a sudden, Rona turns into a woman of at least forty or fifty years old, with bright red cheeks and hazy blue eyeshadows. Her white teeth are glaring through her bright red lips" (15). These various images of female bodies suggest that if the West as textual knowledge has lost its appeal for this student of English literature, the West as a social and sexual body also challenges the integrity of the protagonist's identity.

This description of the woman's body bears some resemblance with Frank Chin's portrayal of Tempest Storm in his story "The Sons of Chan" even though cultural signifiers such as "whiteness" and "blackness" do not hold the same connotations for Bai

Xianyong as for Chin. In both cases, the female body is a sight of the grotesque which threatens the masculinity of the protagonist. However, for Bai Xianyong, lost masculinity does not automatically constitute a sight of recovery of ethnic identity. In fact, as we can see from another story in New Yorkers, entitled "Excursion to Fire Island," masculinity, especially when its overshadowed by strong female characters, is often represented in an ironic and even satiric light. On the contrary, certain romantic ideals of love, which are expressed through depictions of homoerotic relations in stories such as "Youth" and "Dream of the Moon," are now conveyed by female characters in several stories in New Yorkers, such as Mei Bao in "Up to the Skyscrapers." It seems that for some reason, the writer's interest in masculinity is replaced by his obsession with female sexuality or femininity in the short stories written after Bai's emigration to the United States. Contrary to the assertion of Frank Chin and several other Asian American writers and critics, I don't interpret this shift in focus as evidence of the so-called "emasculation" of Asian men in the American scene. Rather, I argue that the depictions of femininity or the seemingly "emasculated" Asian male betray the writer's veiled desire for homosexual love.

As I have argued previously in the context of Bai's earlier story "The Dream of the Moon," the image of the "other" in the figure of the Indian prostitute is constructed to express the hidden homoerotic desire of the male protagonist and convey an ideal version of love.[7] By contrast, "Death in Chicago" contains a more complex representation of the

---

[7]In Modernism and Nativist Resistance, Sung-sheng Chang sets Bai Xianyong's elevation of sentimentality and his appropriation of classical drama in the context of neo-Confucianism. She argues that his "indulgence in melodramatic sentimentality and their occasional lewd descriptions are typically implied criticism of the excessively ascetic tendencies of the dominant Neo-Confuianist moralism, including the repression of innate

racial "other" because of the writer's actual encounter with the West. Whether the figure of the "other" is characterized in a positive or negative light, whether it is portrayed as spontaneous and intuitive, or grotesque and animalistic, the "other" is posited in direct opposition to "home," conceived both in cultural and spiritual terms. The employment of the "other" reinforces the underlying affinity between images of primitivism and Western modernist artists' nostalgic longing for origin and home as Marianna Torgovnick argues in her book Gone Primitive.

There are two different images of the West in this story: one constructed out of book knowledge, such as images drawn from T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land;" the other constructed from the protagonist's perspective. It includes street scenes, night clubs, and images of the white prostitute and the black female performer. Trying to organize his live experience according to his book knowledge of the West, the writer portrays the "West" blanketly as a text, at best a picturesque, which the protagonist only vaguely understands in spite of his immersion in Western texts. The acknowledgement of ignorance is equivalent to the pronouncement of the protagonist, whose intellectual identity is mainly defined by his faith in knowledge. Thus, in spite of his grandiose name "the soul of China," the protagonist's Chineseness remains an empty signifier.

We can try to think about the relationship between the picturesque of the West and the lost identity along the lines of Paul de Man's revision of conflict between symbol and allegory in Romanticist poetry in his essay "The Rhetoric of Temporality." De Man argues in this essay that the conflict between symbol and allegory is not that between subject and

---

feeling and natural desires" (95).

object, but that between "a conception of the self seen in its authentically temporary predicament and a defensive strategy that tries to hide from this negative self-knowledge" (208). De Man further remarks that "the secularized allegory of the early romantics thus necessarily contains the negative moment which in Rousseau is that of renunciation, in Wordsworth that of the loss of self in death and in error" (207).

It seems to me that instead of being a form of positive designation, the name of the protagonist, "the soul of China," can be considered as a form of "negative self-knowledge." This "negative" self-identification is first conveyed by his job application letter. "Wu Hanhung, Chinese, thirty-two years old, Ph.D. in English, graduate of the University of Chicago on June 1, 1960." Later on, these words flash into his mind before he dies "as if they were curse words." "He could not help continuing with this introduction: Died in Chicago on June 2, 1960 in Lake Michigan." Literally killing himself both in symbolic language and in real life, Wu's death can be read both as renunciation and a passive resistance toward the "West."

Thus, I read "Death in Chicago" as a story about pain and mourning. While the writer can be easily accused of failing to establish the individual as any form of social agency, I argue that this "flaw" is grounded in his conception of writing and its relationship with pain. "Death in Chicago" was written during the first year after the writer came to the United States. In this year, as the writer recalls in an autobiographical essay, the pain of losing his mother and the displacement of immigration "have left him completely unable to write." In order to gain perspective over pain and continue to write, the writer chooses to assume a Buddhist, and what might seem to be a fatalistic, perspective toward life. He

writes in an autobiographical essay, "It was the first time that I encountered death and realized its irresistible power. From this experience, I understood the 'Grand Limit' of human life and the fact that fate cannot be altered by human will" (102). That winter was spent in Chicago, where the natural scenery taught him to understand this valuable lesson of death and forced him to grow from innocence to experience. For the writer, experience does not naturally equip him with a critical perspective about society; on the other hand, the word "experience" is interpreted according to the Chinese context as a form of understanding and reconciliation between the individual and the environment.

III. "Chineseness" as a Discourse of Love: from Marginality to Allegorization

In an interview, Bai Xianyong recalls that when he first immigrated to the U. S., he was interested in depicting the experiences of overseas students in the U.S., but after writing a few stories, he changed his mind and decided that "Taipei characters" were more important. He did not come back to the theme of immigrant experience until he had finished writing all fourteen stories later collected in Tales of Taipei Characters (Mingxing Kafei Guan 294). Many questions can be asked about this remark. For example, how does Taiwan as an imaginary setting shape the writer's exile mentality? Is America, or the Western symbolic, permanently displaced in Bai's writings, or is it only temporarily repressed? In order to answer these questions, we have to read Bai's works not just in the context of exile as defined by himself, but also within the complex interacting histories of the Chinese diaspora.

In his essay "The Wandering Chinese: The Theme of Exile in Taiwan Fiction" (1964), the writer attempts to situate himself and other "emigre writers of the second generation"

in the contemporary political and cultural contexts of Taiwan. This article gives a concise definition of exile mentality, but because the writer is eager to define the status of exile vis-a-vis a certain cultural "center," there are inherent contradictions and ambivalence in his remarks particularly in terms of the historical position that he ascribes to modernist writers and his perception on their relationship with Taiwan. Setting the younger writers such as himself against an earlier generation of writers who "migrated" to Taiwan with the [Nationalist] government, Bai argues that the strength of the younger generation derives from their willingness to accept the "loss" of the mainland and to "dig deep into the darker side of life in Taiwan" (207). Older writers are "still dizzy from the shattering blow they suffered from the mainland, and yet too timid to depart from the optimistic view of the official myth," Bai writes in a critical tone, "they [the older generation] lacked the necessary perspective and courage to explore their new situation in all its complexity. To accept their banishment as permanent was beyond endurance" (206). Their literature, as a result, was both "incapacitated by nostalgia" and "unrealistic."

Ironically, although Bai vaguely acknowledges the unique sensibility of modernist writers from Taiwan at the beginning of the essay, he later erases the difference of modernist literature in Taiwan by insisting on interpreting it allegorically and writing it back into the well-established "May Fourth Tradition". This ambivalence is reflected in his reading of Nieh Hua-ling's Mulberry and Peach. After applauding the psychological realism of Nieh's novel, Bai Xianyong reminds us that one of its chapters, which presents a chronotropic image of an attic in Taipei, can be read as a symbol of "the island of Taiwan, with its claustrophobia and temporal disjunction," and furthermore, Bai argues that in

creating the fragmented world of the schizophrenic, Nieh Hua-ling tries to present an allegory of "the fate of modern China in all its tragic complexity" (211). The series of parallels that Bai draws between the sign of the attic, the symbol of the Taiwan island, and the allegory of China, can inform us about the trajectory of identification of the writer. Consciously employing marginality as a sign, the same trajectory is also operative in the writer's creative works.

As language of identity, the discourse of love plays in an important function of bridging the temporal disjunction, spatial dislocation, the limitations of modernist representation, which I have highlighted in the above paragraphs. This discourse is a bi-cultural product, heavily informed by both traditional Chinese romantic concepts "Ching" (emotion/feeling) and "Nie" (fate/doom) and Western psychoanalytic theory. Using the discourse of love as the language of identity, Bai constantly reminds us that in his stories, as Lacanian psychoanalytical theory would tell us, the act of love is predicated upon a loss, and recovery has to take the form of the return of the repressed; however, differing from most psychoanalytic theories, Bai portrays not just the loss of dispersed individuals, but also that of a collectivity. Therefore, love is oftentimes not just an individualistic discourse on sexuality; it contains a particular historical vision of the author. Love can be used as a coded language for the progression of time and history, because deriving from the Buddhist and Taoist philosophy, it maintains continuity within temporal disjunction. In Chinese classical romantic literature, represented by Dream of the Red Chamber and The Peony Pavilion, the myth of love is connected with "fate" or in a more negative way, "retribution." Owing to this connection, stories of love can bring back the past not in a

dialectical manner, but as a predetermined existence. As such, romantic stories can represent the existence of the past in the present as an organic unity.[8]

Let's examine how Bai combines an individualistic discourse of sexuality with a historiographic narrative by taking a close look at his story "Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream." In classical romantic literature, femininity is elevated above masculinity in terms of cultural value. In Bai's stories as well, female characters, in most cases prostitutes and courtesans, occupy the position of the protagonist of the story, and as survivors, they appear to be premonitary characters that supply the link between the past and the present. The protagonist of "Wandering in the Garden, Waking in a Dream," Madame Ch'ien, is given such a role. As the wife of a high-ranking Nationalist Party army officer General Ch'ien, Madame Ch'ien is the witness and survivor of the national history of defeat and migration. Through remembering in a nostalgic tone an unrequited love affair with General Ch'ien's assistant, she becomes the mediator between the past and the present,

Love, especially that of a sexual nature, cannot exist within the strictures of the hierarchical society in which Madame Ch'ien lives. Coming from the background of a

---

[8]With the help of Leo Ou-fan Lee's article on the interactions between literary modernism and political modernity and on decadence in Chinese modern literature, we can further think about Bai's rhetoric of love in the context of what Lee considers to be "anti-modern" sentiments in modern Chinese literature. According to Lee, since the culture of modernity is predicated upon an enchantment of the new, there is inevitably an inherent ambivalence cause by the uncertainly of future. Lee uses the works of one female writer Zhang Ailing as an example to show how romantic love stories can be used as a counter-narrative to modernity and social progress. It can be argued that Bai Xianyong follows the same tradition established by Zhang Ailing of using romance as a genre of negotiating individual identities in the modern times.

former singsong girl, the protagonist's identity is relatively undefined in the upper-class society. She wavers between her stage name "Bluefield Jade" and her title "Madame Ch'ien." Her true desire for a man of her own age has to be repressed if she wants to retain her social status. In this story, sexual desire is spoken of as a form of retribution or fatality. The realization of her sexual desire can only occur in the realm of the imaginary represented by the internal monologue of the protagonist, such as the one in the following episode:

> After all, how could she possibly lay the blame on him? She had entered the thing with her eyes open. When he married her he'd been frank with her, told her clearly that only after he'd heard her in 'Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream' had it occurred to him to take her as the companion of her old age. Well, wasn't it just the way her sister Red-red Rose had put it? Ch'en P'eng-chih might as well be her granddaddy! What else could she have expected? It had been fulfilled after all, that ironclad prophecy made by their shih-niang, the blind woman who was their Master's wife at the Terrace of the Captured Moon. ... As if that weren't enough, shih-niang, blind as she was, had to go and take hold of her wrist and feel the bone, blinking her sightless eyes and adding with a sigh: worldly glory, wealth, and position -- you shall enjoy them all, Bluefield Jade. Only it's a pity you've got one bone in you that's not quite right. It is just your retribution from a previous life. (157-8)

As we can see from the above quotation, the conception of love as retribution serves the double function of repression and liberation. While this conception cannot help the protagonist to change her actual social standing, it paradoxically preserves true love if only in fantasy and memory. In the story, the scene of sexuality is played in the protagonist's imagination in a surrealistic style:

> his white horse galloped through the birch groves like a hare darting about among stalks of wheat. The sun beat down on the horses' backs sending up steaming white smoke. One white. One black. The two horses were sweating. His body was stained with the odor of horse sweat pungent to the nostrils. His eyebrows turned dark green, his eyes smoldered like two balls of dark fire, beads of sweat came

running down his forehead to his flushed cheeks (167-8).

As we can see from the above quotation and the structure of the story, the construction of fantasy would not be possible without resorting to certain Western stylistic techniques, such as the stream of consciousness and fragmented narrative. Therefore, contrary to the claims of many critics of Bai Xianyong, to me, this story conveys the writer's bicultural sensibility. This fantasy is constructed along the temporal scheme of the narrative. It is not purely spatial or linear, but chronotropic, for the occasion of the banquet is absolutely necessary to realize the temporal scheme of the narrative. Two banquets are depicted in this story, both of which signify moments of loss for the protagonist. One banquet takes place before Madame Ch'ien moved to Taiwan when she discovers that her lover has secretly betrayed her to flirt with her rival; the other is held in Taipei, where Madame Ch'ien has not only already lost her love, but also forsaken most material pleasures and power. The two banquets conveniently weave the protagonist's personal history with national history. This connection can be taken both ways. On the one hand, it establishes the authority of the protagonist as a marginalized individual both on personal and national levels; on the other hand, it turns the individual into a symbol of the nation.

It seems that in spite of the nostalgic and fatalistic overtone of the story, the writer's portrayal of desire is extremely provocative and explicit in this story. The construction of the mental picture of Madam Ch'ien betrays the influence of Western modernism as well as the Chinese classical drama The Peony Pavilion. As a performer especially good at a traditional art form the Kun opera, Bluefield Jade is often invited to play the role of the heroine in The Peony Pavilion. In a particular scene of the play, called "Wandering in the

Garden, Waking from a Dream," the heroine Tu the Beauteous Maid has a sexual encounter with a young scholar Liu Mengmei in her dream. The song of Tu the Beauteous Maid is a lament of the dreamt sexuality after she is awakened: "This joyous time/ this fairest scene/ yet heaven grants me not" (164). This song from The Peony Pavilion therefore gives her an additional voice to articulate as well as make sense of her unfulfilled desire.

Appropriating both traditional Chinese culture and Western modernism, the writer successfully constructs an image of an individual that sustains the violent temporal disjunction and spatial dislocation. It is significant that in many stories in Taipei Characters, the individuals that are given the unique role as survivor and witness of history are mostly female characters with a checkered past as prostitute, concubine, or courtesan. They are given such an important role partly because their social status is ambivalently defined.[9] As transgressors of social class, these female characters often enjoy more sexual freedom than most upper-class women normally can. Therefore, making these female characters into agents of history, Bai Xianyong betrays an intuitive understanding and criticism of the oppression of feudalist social hierarchy. However, it is also important to

---

[9] "Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream" was written in 1966, two years after "Hong Kong 1960" was published. The two stories resemble each other both in story-line and style, but "Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream" is less suggestive in terms of class difference and homosexual orientation than "Hong Kong 1960." In "Hong Kong 1960," as I have argued in my previous discussion, through the possible identification of the female protagonist with the nameless prostitute, the writer implicitly creates a site where the strictly defined hierarchical structure is disrupted and the norm of heterosexuality is violated. Therefore, love is ambiguous and dangerous, because it is more closely connected with lust, and can be homosexual in essence. In "Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream," love is set within a realistic setting of an upper-class banquet. As such, the protagonist's sensibility is more refined but clearly heterosexual.

recognize that Bai usually endows these characters with little self-knowledge. As a result, when the representation of love and sexuality is taken out of the upper-class cultural context, as in some stories from Taipei Characters, the female characters seem to be burdened by the cyclical progression of history instead of being able to use history for the purpose of self-liberation. It seems to me that in stories that deal with the theme of love in the context of even more marginalized characters than Madame Ch'ien, who barely survive the hardships of migration, the writer betrays a stronger tendency to elevate the symbol of love into an allegory of history, regardless of the participation of the individual characters. As a result, the possibility for these characters to change their fate is foreclosed. As Paul de Man tells us, allegory differs from symbol in that it is constituted only in "the repetition of a previous sign with which it can never coincide," thus "designating a distance [between the sign and] its origin." (207). In Bai Xianyong's stories, the degrees of control that the female characters have over their fate are unevenly distributed among women of high social-stature and those that are completely helpless. While there are characters like Madame Ch'ien, who have some awareness of their fate, other less fortunate characters, are integrated into an allegorical structure without being able to find a personal standpoint of identification for themselves. The personal tragedy of these characters often makes them into spectacles rather than agents of history.

We can take a closer look at how this allegory is constructed through reading Bai Xianyong's short story "Love's Lone Flower." In this story, we can detect a clear pattern of progression from signs of "dark fate" ("pale triangular face","swaying, fragile body") to the symbol of history as a form of atonement and to the allegory of motherhood.

Motherhood conveys a kind of love that is self-sacrificial and unconditional, particularly to the less fortunate prostitute Peach Blossom. This story is about a prostitute who is driven to insanity and death by her own pre-determined personal history of incest and violence. Told from the perspective of a first-person character that quietly sympathizes with Peach Blossom, the writer, however, sets Peach Blossom upon a journey of self-destruction and blames fate for her eventual death. As the writer tells us,

> The instant Peach Blossom finished singing, a bald, stubby Japanese snared her by the waist and sat her down on his lap. He forced a cup of wine down her throat first thing; when she finished he poured another and pushed her on the next guest for a drinking bout. Peach blossom didn't put up any fight. She lifted her cup and gulped the wine down in one long breath. Then she wiped away the drops in the corner of her mouth with the back of her hand, looked at the guest, and gave him a smile. I saw that shadow of a smile float across her small, pale, triangular face -- sadder than weeping it was. I'd never seen a winehouse girl allow herself to be pushed around so easily. (105)

Peach Blossom's passive acceptance of sexual abuse is explained in a somewhat determinist manner as "her lot." This explanation, in terms of narrative structure, allows the reader to peep into Peach Blossom's past and establishes a correlation between daughter and mother. Peach Blossom describes her mother as "a mad woman," a dark figure who is chained to the pigsty like an animal. When Peach Blossom tries to feed her, she "[dashes] the bowl to the ground, ... and reached out her claws and in one swoop grabbed me, and before I could make a sound her teeth were already sinking into my throat." (107). In the end, when Peach Blossom can no longer endure the sexual abuse of Yama, she replicates the violence that she has experienced in her past by killing Yama with a flatiron. Her image thus turns into a similar one to that of her mother. "Thump, thump, thump, one blow after another -- her long hair flying, her mouth wide open, shrieking like

a wildcat gone mad" (113).

Homosexuality is implicitly suggested through the speaker, a motherly figure and a confidant of Peach Blossom. Her love toward Peach Blossom is not just a form of sisterhood, but something close to sexual desire. As a survivor who has had her own loss, the speaker is very sensitive to the sufferings of the other "winegirls" and subconsciously takes on the role of their guardian, especially to a former girl, Baby Five. "Once Baby Five and I made a wish: in days to come, when we saved up enough money, we'd buy a house, live together, and make it our home. We even said we were going to redeem a little virgin singsong girl and bring her up as our own" (107). After Baby Five commits suicide, the speaker temporarily finds her replacement in Peach Blossom. "I still had to sell those two emerald jade bracelets to raise enough money to buy the little apartment on Kinhwa Street. I did it all for Peach Blossom's sake" (103).The almost exact correspondence between the fate of Baby Five and Peach Blossom, between Peach Blossom's mother and herself, weaves a cyclical historiography in which the individuals are hopelessly trapped. However, this historiography still has different connotations for different individuals in the story even though "fate" is inescapable for every character in this story. For example, the speaker "I" has more power over interpretation than the helpless Peach Blossom. It is the first person "I" that is organizing the narrative and making the connections between love as a sign and history as a symbol. Thus, cyclical historiography does not totally preclude the question of inclusion and exclusion based the knowledge one has about one's fate. It seems that the more self-awareness one has of one's marginality, the more likely this character is to survive violent historical changes.

Compared to "Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream," "Love's Lone Flower" has a more distinctly socio-realistic story-line. In Bai's novel Crystal Boys, he continues his reflection on the center and the margin by extending the definitions of love into the social domain. This story portrays a group of homeless boys who make a living through enduring the sexual exploitation of men of a much older generation. Although this novel ostensibly foregrounds the figure of the outcast, I would argue that its real concern lies with the construction of a Utopian "home" which is sustained by a particular form of patronage and love. The marginalization of the younger characters in this novel does not threaten patriarchal social order; on the other hand, because marginalization has been turned into a modernist trope, it justifies the slippage of historically specific experiences of displacement into romantic narratives about cultural homes.

As the translator Howard Goldblatt tells us at the beginning of the novel, "crystal boy" is the term that is used in Taiwan to refer to the gay community. However, it is also helpful to know the original Chinese title, "Nie Zi," literally meaning "the sons of 'nie'," in order to see the connection between the novel and this writer's discourse on love. "Nie" has the connotation of pre-determination, abandonment, and the status of social outcast. In this novel, this term is used to glorify the gay community that lives on the margin of the society.

On the textual level, drawing marginal characters into home requires the binary opposition between the inside and the outside and a consistent perspective that guides the reader from the outside to the inside. We can get a glimpse of how this perspective works through looking at the image of the Cozy Nest, a tavern owned by Chief Chang, the host

and leader of the vagabond gay community. The writer introduces us to Cozy Nest with the following words:

> There were mainly taverns and restaurants on Lane 125 of Nanking East Road. Phoenix City, a Cantonese restaurant, was located at the entrance to the lane, with a sit-down restaurant upstairs and a food-to-go section downstairs. The display window was filled with glistening brown chickens and ducks hanging from hooks. Next door was the Plum Garden, a Japanese restaurant with dark red paper lanterns as big as watermelons handing above the doorway. Next came a Korean barbecue called Alilang, which was directly opposite the Golden Angel, a Western restaurant with fat little winged cherubs floating above the glass door. The lane came to life when night fell. Neon signs lit it up from one end to the other, and the fragrance of barbecued meat filled the air. There were lots of pushcarts that sold lichees, longans, dried squid, even one where you could buy little roasted sparrows that were laid out in rows beside a wok. People crowded the lane, which was closed to car traffic at night. Our new tavern, the Cozy Nest, was tucked away in a corner of this bustling lane where, unless you were one of us, you would walk past it without noticing. There were no sign out front, and the front door was just to the left of the Golden Angel, so narrow that only one person could walk through it at a time. Once you were inside you walked down some steps under a single lamp that gave off a light so faint you had to hold on to the bannister as you groped your way along. When you reached the bottom of the steps you turned right. Two glass doors slid open automatically, and there you were -- the Cozy Nest. (204)

In this elaborate description of the surroundings of the Cozy Nest, which looks very much like a typical street scene in many cities of Taiwan, South China, or even the ethnic Chinese neighborhoods in the United States, we can see the arrangement of a number of signifiers, such as lightness vs. darkness, the crowd vs. the individual, arranged according to the spatial opposition of the outside vs. the inside. The description of this setting shows the influence of social realism, which makes the novel rather different from Bai's earlier works. In "The Dream of the Moon," for example, the idealistic portrayal of homoeroticism is achieved through juxtaposing two different sexual encounters of the protagonist. Since these two sexual encounters took place at different times and in

different locations, the only thread that ties them together is the consciousness of the protagonist. In contrast to the subjective representation of gay sensibility in his early writings, the writer seems to be more concerned with mobilizing the marginal characters into a community in this novel. The "inside" of the Cozy Nest is closely and carefully wrought. "Since it was a basement, there were no windows, and the temperature inside was controlled by air conditioning" (205). In "The Dream of the Moon," the beauty of homoerotic relations is portrayed in a naturalistic light; it conveys a sense of harmony by which the self transcends its boundary to incorporate the other, and human life merges with the natural environment. In the novel Crystal Boys, however, nature is culturalized when it re-appears as the image of a fence that separates the gay community from the rest of the world. In the first scene of the novel that describes a corner of the New Park, the writer writes: "The fringes of our territory are planted with all sorts of tropical trees: green coral, breadfruit, palms so old their drooping fronds nearly touch the ground, and, of course, the stand of old coconut trees alongside the road that wave their heads in exasperation the day long. It's as though our kingdom were surrounded and hidden by a tightly woven fence -- cut off from the outside world, isolated for the time being" (17).

The culture that defines this gay community is rooted in the writer's romantic discourse of love with certain revisions. In this story, love is expansive and cosmopolitan in that it can reach out to encompass different races, classes, and cultures. Like in "Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream," this constructed culture of love has an origin in traditional Chinese love stories, but it is further re-written to suit the inter-national and cross-racial context. Romantic gay culture in this novel is best represented through the

myth of the Phoenix Boy and the Dragon Prince, which as the writer tells us, is widely circulated among the younger members of the community. Phoenix Boy is the son of a mute girl and has grown up in an orphanage. Dragon Prince, on the other hand, is the son of a high-ranking government official, who has disowned him after discovering his gay identity. In spite of their class difference, their intense love echoes the classic romance Dream of the Red Chamber. As told by Grandpa Guo, a patron of the homeless boys, Phoenix Boy comes to him one day and says, "I have to leave him. If I don't, he's going to reduce me o a pile of ashes. When I ask him what he wants, he says, I want that heart of yours. I tell him I was born without one. So he says, Then I'll give you mine. Honest, I'm really afraid that one day he's going to rip that thing right out of his chest and stuff it into mine" (80). While this detail obviously betrays the inspiration of Dream of the Red Chamber, the connections between the "nest" as home, the "heart" as the nest of human emotions, must be a new interpretation by the author. Their romance ends with Phoenix Boy's death because he is too wild to "stay in his nest like a good little fledgling" (79), and although Dragon Prince is acquitted for the murder owing to the influence of his powerful father, he also has to leave his home and become a wanderer in the United States.

Dragon Prince, whose real name is Wang Kuilong, returns to Taipei years later to re-join the gay community. In his exile experiences, he regains the feeling of love by taking care of homeless boys from different ethnic backgrounds in New York, particularly a Puerto Rican boy named Carlos. One day, after taking Carlos into his apartment and undressing him, Wang discovers a wound on his chest that is shaped exactly like a heart. "His pale, scrawny chest was covered with angry welts running in all directions, each of

them as thick as a finger, all black and red, and converging in the center of the chest, like spokes, where there was a large infected area. It was all red and swollen, and oozing pus" (106). A wound like this not only awakens Wang's buried feelings for his dead lover and his sense of guilt but also helps him to reconcile with his family, particularly his dead father. Conceding to the feudal order of father and son as well as to the social authority of power, Wang confesses to his father's old friend that the image of his father still looms large in his imagination even after he has been exiled to the U.S.. He says, "I hid myself in America for ten years, drifting under a different name, all because of one thing Father said. ... Just as I was leaving, he said to me, 'I forbid you to come back as long as I'm alive!' There was no room for argument" (255).

In fact, although this gay community is supposed to be self-sufficient and isolated from the rest of the society, it is not truly marginal because its patrons reach out not only to different classes of the society of Taiwan but to the space of the overseas. Symbolic father figures are absolutely important for the structure of this gay community. Chief Yang, the owner of the Cozy Nest, is the most widely acknowledged father of this community. His job is to search homes for the "young birds." Another member of the community Little Jade is sponsored by another father figure for a trip to Japan to search for his lost father, where he finds similar places to the New Park in Taipei. "Tokyo's birds of youth are really something. They flirt up and down the streets without worrying about the police. In the bars they dance with each other and kiss, anything they feel like. There's a New Park in Shinjuku, too, called Gyoens. It's at least ten times bigger than New Park, and the birds of youth that hang out there play a lot wilder game of hide-and-seek than we do," Little Jade

tells us in a letter (318). In these representations, the travelers, such as Little Jade and Wang Kuilong, have overcome the intense displacement that has haunted characters such as Wu Hanhung in "Death in Chicago" and play the ostensible role of teacher and informant. The conflict with the mainstream society is pushed to the background; as a result, the marginality of this community seems to be in most cases self-enforced and self-contained. In fact, this culture of marginality cannot convey the consciousness of the marginal because of the lack of specificity and its overt. universalist appeal. As the writer speaks frankly in an interview with the editor of Playboy magazine, this novel is meant to portray not just homosexuality or the social problem of juvenile delinquency, but also Chinese patriarchal society, particularly from anthropological, cultural, and psychological perspectives (283). While this remark sounds inclusive in terms of different forms of marginality, the question of whether a single narrative of identity can be constructed to address all these forms of marginality still remains unanswered.

Chapter Three

Frank Chin: Histories, Identity Politics, and Cultural Translation

Frank Chin's short story "Sons of Charlie Chan" provides a good point of entry to examine the rhetoric of race, culture, and gender in Chin's writings. Collected in The Chinaman Pacific & Frisco R. R. Co. (1988), this story draws upon the well-known Hollywood movie series that feature Charlie Chan, the wise but clumsy Chinese detective. In Chin's story, the protagonist identifies himself as one of the many "numbered sons" of Charlie Chan and claims to be the monstrous product of the Hollywood industry. While he goes into details about a journey to Las Vegas in search for a childhood sex idol, this character, who is almost the writer's alter-ego, conveys the mixed feelings of anger, bitterness, and self-loathing. This symbolic journey that is supposed to rescue the protagonist from his desperate situation of ghettoization and emasculation is apparently constructed according to Chin's critical reflections of Asian American history and identity.

I am particularly interested in Chin's descriptions of two female figures in this story. One is Tempest Storm, a white stripper whose pictures are posted on the streets of Las Vegas, and who has represented beauty and sexuality for the protagonist since childhood; the other is an immigrant woman from Shanghai, with whom the protagonist gets acquainted in the subway and eventually has a brief sexual relationship. Through representing the protagonist's alienation from these two women, the writer shows that race, gender, and culture differences are all significant in the construction of the protagonist's subjectivity. Tempest Storm, for example, is presented as a quintessential product of the white-washed entertainment culture of Las Vegas. Depicting this

environment from a surrealistic distance, the writer conveys a picture of the casino as that of "life-in-death." The sexually appealing body of Tempest Storm, the glimmer of old men's metallic suits, the reflection of people's sweaty oily skin, old women's white teeth, and the ceiling light like "a dark bloody slime" form a paradoxically glamorous and deadening world in which the protagonist is fatally trapped. Tempest Storm is the "other" in both racial and gender terms; with her "ghostly flesh" and "vampire" looks, she is "other-worldly" and life-threatening.

What critic Jeannie Chiu has identified as an Asian American gothic theme can be detected in Chin's description of Janet.[1] She is "ghostly" in another sense. Different from Tempest Storm's brightly lit and superficially glamorous casino world, Janet lives in a slum which is illuminated only by candles and traffic lights. She contrasts to Tempest Storm's youthful sexuality by being "old living thing," "a living fossil," with a body like "a prehistoric swamp." In terms of their levels of modernity, the opposition between these two female characters is pronounced: Janet has "a pre-electric mind," whereas the protagonist, his father Charlie Chan, and the entertainer Tempest Storm, are centrally located in America's postmodernist popular culture, represented by the movie houses and the neon-lit casinos. The protagonist's own relationship with modern film and television technology is ambivalent. Alluding to the myth of Frankenstein, the protagonist presents himself as a demonic offspring of modern experimentation. In the first scene of the story,

---

[1]In her article "Uncanny Doubles: Nationalism and Repression in Frank Chin's 'Railroad Standard Time'", Jeannie Chiu reads Frank Chin's short story in the American gothic literary tradition. She argues that by portraying the white-washed mainstream society as "uncanny," Frank Chin situates the ethnic subject in a position of ambivalence vis-a-vis mainstream American society and Chinatown.

the protagonist is shown to be using his naked body to connect wires and transmit electricity into the radio in a hotel room above some neon signs. "I'd lie there jiggling electricity like Frankenstein's spareparts patchwork monster being raised from the dead jiggled electricity, and stare at pictures of the Shanghai Low's Chinatown fan dancer showing everything but nipple and the El Rey Theater's Tempest Storm half naked in newspaper ads" (133). This allusion to Frankenstein suggests that like the artificially created monster who is abandoned by his father, the protagonist of this story also sees himself as someone abandoned by his "movie father" Charlie Chan and the entire white-washed entertainment culture.

The writer's concentration on male sexuality as an exclusive site to negotiate racial identity is a perspective shared by quite a few Asian American writers, especially those who participated in the edition of the first anthology of Asian American literature called Aiiieeeee. Feminist scholars, such as King-kok Cheung and Elaine Kim, later challenged their definition of Asian American identity by calling attention to the sexist overtones of Chin and other male writers. Taking a feminist perspective, we can see that neither Tempest Storm nor Janet is given any positive characterization or individualistic development. Both of them are literally, in the words of Elaine Kim, "an obstacle to or vehicle for male sexual empowerment" ("Such Opposite Creatures," 76). In many ways, this story is a quintessential example of what Elaine Kim considers to be the "phallogocentric definition of Asian American identity" from which women and their difference are excluded (78).

The feminist criticism of Frank Chin was one of a series of efforts that have made

Frank Chin into a public figure in Asian American studies. As an important member of the first generation of Asian American writers, Chin played a crucial role in shaping the anti-assimilationist militant stance of Asian American culture of the 1960s and 1970s. He was the first Asian American playwright whose works were produced in "legitimate" theater and shown on national television (Wei, 67). However, the limitations of his perspective were quickly exposed in a series of debates Chin engaged with other Asian American writers, such as Maxine Hong Kingston and Frank Ching over the representation of immigrants and women. After Asian American scholars joined in these debates, the identity politics of the Aiiieeeee group have engendered many critical debates, such as nationalism and women, identity vs. difference, singularity vs. heterogeneity of Asian American studies. Although Chin's critics in general respond more strongly toward the polemics embodied by him and might not have completely done justice to his works, the cultural debates that Chin's writings have engendered since the 70s have been instrumental in shaping this field.

However, critics of Chin's creative works have so far ignored to consider one aspect of his literature, that is, his cross-cultural perspective and how this perspective has informed Chin's perception of Asian American cultural historiography. In her preface to Charlie Chan Is Dead, a recent anthology of Asian American literature, Kim describes the changes in Asian American studies particularly in terms of a revised understanding of cultural crossing. She writes, "the lines between Asian and Asian American, so crucial to identity formations in the past, are increasingly blurred: transportation to and communication with Asia is no longer daunting, resulting in new crossovers and

intersections and different kinds of material and cultural distances today" (xi). In fact, "cross overs" to Asia are not new phenomena. We should not forget some "old" forms of "cross over" attempted by Chin and other writers of the 60s and 70s out of concern with "third-world" politics. Although not obvious at first sight, Chin's perspective toward Asian American identity is formulated not just in terms of the U.S. domestic context, but also in conjunction with a particular imagination of the "world," more specifically, the opposition between the "third world" and the "first world." Janet from Chin's story "Sons of Chan" can be considered as a "third world" figure whose "cross over" to the U.S. is portrayed as both problematic and disturbing. On a polemical level, she also embodies the dilemma in Chin's own theoretical "cross over" from the U.S. domestic context to Asia and his ambivalent conception of the Asian American historiography vis-a-vis its cultural past. The position of the Asian American subject in the cross-cultural and transnational context demands detailed investigation, because if Asian American studies as a discipline should consider as its task to address what some critics have defined as the "material and cultural differences" that separate Asian Americans from Asians today, then it is important for us to rethink the critical paradigms of the "third world" created by the first generation of Asian American writers.

The intersection of Orientalism with sexism has been noted by Rey Chow in her critique of the Italian director Bernado Bertolucci's film "The Last Emperor" (Writing Diaspora). Like Bertolucci, Chin constructs the cross-cultural gaze of the Chinese American male subject through creating a "feminine spectacle," a scene of desire and repression; however unlike Bertolucci, Chin's understanding of Asia comes from the

perspective of a member of a minority group in the U.S. and translates into a particular form of anachronistic historiography. In Chin's work, the relationship with cultural tradition is ambivalent, for the past is brought back not to explain or reinstate the present, but to haunt the individual who lives in the present. In the story "Sons of Chan," for example, Janet cannot be easily assimilated into American culture due to her ancientness, archaicness, particularly glaring in contrast to the ultra-modernist cultural milieu of Las Vegas. Seen from the perspective of Charlie Chan's Number One son, Janet is as old as a mummy. "If I could get into her soft dry pouches and bags, crawl around inside with a nose for old times, Egyptian old days and China of the dynasties, I'd smell, I'm sure, the ghost of wines that had been spilled at pagan orgies and find bones and the hum of laughter at old jokes" (146). Compared to Tempest Storm, Janet is timeless in a different way. While Tempest Storm represents the eternally self-renewing image of popular culture, Janet is trapped in some pre-historic time. She"speaks the ancient language of ghosts" and has "no language in common" with the iconic product of Hollywood culture, Charlie Chan's Number One Son. She is what Homi Bhabha has called "the colonial nonsense," signifying "an anxious contradictory place between the human and the not-human, sense and non-sense" ("Articulating the Archaic" 125). As "colonial nonsense," Janet is to be distinguished from the Asian American men's angry cry "aiiieeeee," for while "aiiieeeee" is a play on racial stereotype and the voice of some Asian American male writers, Janet's difference is never given a voice, although it can never be diluted. Her daughter, as Chin tells us, retains half of the qualities of the "ancient Chinese woman," while the other half of her is becoming a "white American, blond, well-manicured, keno-

dealing, Las Vegas lush" (151). Therefore, Janet, in particular, embodies the anachronism in the core of Chin's historiography of Asian American culture. Although Chin attempts to transform a handful of Chinese classical novels into the "real" Chinese American cultural legacy, Chin's writings are always haunted by this figure of temporal disjunction that is grounded in the diasporic condition of the Chinese American community.

Disagreeing with Elaine Kim's arguments, I don't read Janet simply as "objectifications" of masculinity and an "opposite creature" to male protagonists created by Asian American male writers ("Such Opposite Creatures" 68). Both the inability of Janet to cross over to the American scene and the writer's own theoretical attempt to revive the past and cross over to Asia cannot be totally summarized by the binary terms of "self" and "other." What is more interesting is a critical evaluation of the trajectories by which these "cross overs" did or did not take place in Chin's writings. In this story, the protagonist's complex psychology of alienation and abandonment enables him to share some affinity with Janet, the immigrant woman equally displaced although in different ways in America's modern culture. This affinity is never developed into bonding; however, exactly because this character is not seamlessly integrated into Chin's cultural system, she exposes the ambivalence in the writer's eventual nationalist glorification of the heroic Chinese cultural tradition.

The depiction of Janet reminds us of the ambivalent Asian American cultural historiography constructed by Chin and other editors of Aiiieeeee. In 1979 when the first edition of Aiiieeeee was published, the editors defined their cultural identity by parodying American popular culture's misrepresentation of Asians. They claimed to have "got[ten]

their China and Japan from the radio, off the silver screen, from television, out of comic books, from the pushers of a white American culture that pictured the yellow man as something that when wounded, sad, or angry, or swearing, or wondering whined, shouted, or screamed 'aiiieeeee!'" ("Introduction," 197) However, in the new and expanded edition of Aiiieeeee, Frank Chin significantly modifies his previous arguments and embraces a supposedly stable cultural identity that is informed by a handful of classical Chinese texts of the fifteenth century. How can we account for these contradictory arguments? Considering the prominent role Chin has played in Asian American cultural politics, it is important to answer this question in order to fully understand the trajectory of his politics.

If we connect the image of Janet with Chin's translation of Asia and Asian culture, then Janet becomes the ambivalent sign of cultural difference. As such, she raises a series of questions with regard to the act of translation in the context of Asian American studies. So far, this topic has not been sufficiently discussed in this field. I see Janet as an enigmatic figure in Chin's cultural politics. Here I want to emphasize the difference between Janet and Tempest Storm, which can be roughly described as the difference between image and voice. In this story, while Tempest Storm conveys a sight of detached beauty that arouses and alienates the sexuality of the protagonist, Janet's image is not sexually pleasing at all. What stands out about this character is her "language of ghosts" which the protagonist of the story claims to be not comprehending. He "hated them being kind the only way they knew how, flattering me with the China they found all over me" (154), and he claims to be "no one's Chinese daddy" and to come from "a China no Chinese from China comes from" (154). To properly endorse her difference would require

the expertise of a special kind of translator, and the protagonist of this story is certainly not capable of this task. If we take into consideration the many tropes of ghostliness in this story, the word "ghost" is in itself used as a translated term, for it has double meanings created by disparate linguistic and cultural contexts. To someone who is familiar with the racial language of America, Tempest Storm's "ghostliness" is articulated in racial terms in reference to the white-washed popular culture in Las Vegas. On the other hand, Janet's "ghostliness" is closer to the meaning of the Chinese term "ghost." In the Cantonese-speaking Chinese community, as is also evidenced in Maxine Hong Kingston's The Woman Warrior, the word "ghost" refers not only to foreigners but also to the spirits of the dead and a buried and usually unpleasant historical experience. The protagonist of the story negotiates with these two different kinds of "ghostliness;" in doing so, he constantly reminds us of the dual heritage which the Asian American subject is handed with from both American and Asian contexts. Although because of certain limitations especially in terms of his gender perspective, Chin cannot always do justice to these bicultural female characters, his literary works can be read as historical record of the double consciousness of Asian American writers.

As Jeanne Chiu points out in her article on Chin's short story "Railroad Standard Time," the female characters are tropes not only for gender difference, but also of cultural definition. Chiu considers Asian women, particularly the mother figure in "Railroad Standard Time", as "the uncanny markers of Chinatown's marginalization" (104). She writes, "While Chin constructs a heroic Asian American identity as prototypically masculine, his ambivalent focus on the narrator's mother emblematizes the double impulse

to disavow and affirm Chinese American culture" (105). In this chapter, I would like to extend Chiu's provocative argument to the consideration of Chin's theoretical and creative attempts of giving a voice to the Chinese American cultural community. Bringing a playwright's sensitivity toward oral language to his consideration of Asian American cultural identity, Chin wrote in an influential essay "Back Talk" about the language of Asian American writers:

> We have no street language to flaunt and strut the way the blacks and Chicanos do. They have a positive, self-defined linguistic identity that can be offended and wronged. We don't. With us, it's dangerous to say anything, dangerous to talk because every time you open your mouth you run the risk of being corrected. The tongue-tying notion that everything out of your mouth is mimickry [*sic*] has been built in our psychology in our seven generations here. (3)

In retrospect, what is ironic about this argument is that although Chin attempts to sharply delineate what he would consider as a "positive, self-defined linguistic identity" from mimicry, his early writings, especially the plays The Year of the Dragon and Chickencoop Chinaman, are filled with tropes of doubleness similar to what postcolonial scholars such as Homi Bhabha would later consider to be "mimicry." Chin's works show that mimicry is far from being an inferior imitation of the original language; it can be a powerful subversive mode of speech. However, in addition to using mimicry to subvert mainstream American society's representation of Chinese Americans, I argue that Chin's works contain another kind of cultural and linguistic mixing, that is, the rewriting and appropriation of certain classical Chinese literary texts. This form of rewriting is mainly for the purpose of establishing continuity and constructing a positive version of a cultural tradition. Ironically, contrary to Chin's expectations, the cultural history created by this rewriting is

far from linear and continuous; its anachronistic core is only representative of the diasporic condition of Asian Americans. Chin's cultural project captures the complexity of the history of the Chinese diaspora in a faithful way although his prescription for identity is problematic in more than one way. In addition to creating a particular pattern of inclusion and exclusion in his imaginary community, Chin also refrains from seeing Asian American writers such as himself as implicated in the culture and history of the third world. While he uses Chinese traditional culture to create a useable past for Asian Americans, he tends to lose perspective on the heterogeneity of Chinese culture and its tradition. Without this insight, he can only tautologically guard his own self-defined distinction of the "real" vs. the "fake" Chinese American tradition.

Therefore, I describe Chin's search for a stable Asian American cultural identity in terms of two parallel processes of fixating gender differences into a heterosexual male vs. female dichotomy and prescribing a rigid formula for cultural hybridization. Gender and cultural perspectives reinforce and intersect with each other in Chin's works, for both in his critical and creative writings, women are marginalized characters and used as the testing case for his overall agenda that focuses on defining an anti-assimiationalist, historically-rooted, Chinese American cultural tradition. In his long essay entitled "Come All Ye Asian American Writers Real or Fake," female writers in particular, such as Maxine Hong Kingston and Amy Tan, are scrutinized against the so-called "real" Asian American cultural tradition. In his play and several short stories, women are markers of cultural difference measured against the standard of assimilation. For example, while one woman from The Year of the Dragon, Hyacinth Eng, is portrayed as unable to sustain a self-

identity because of her Christian educational background, the other woman China Mama, is portrayed as completely foreign. Women's impossibility to "cross over" to another culture without losing their self-identity forms a sharp contrast with the male writer's romanticist appropriation of traditional Chinese culture into the Chinese American context.

I feel that the cultural basis of Chin's nationalist politics, i.e. his rapid shift from alienation to romanticization of Asian culture, his iconoclastic/romanticist historiography of Asian American culture, and the tropes of translation, have remained unassessed by critics in spite of the attention given to this writer and his works. On a polemical level, this neglect might end up making "cross over" seem too easy, creating a false impression that "crossing over" is only a new phenomenon, and thereby losing the historical perspective to Asian American culture within a transnational context. In some critical studies of female writers such as Maxine Hong Kingston and Amy Tan, for example, there seems to be a tendency to glorify the attempts made by the woman writer to radically "re-shape her ancestral past" and establish a seamless bond between the Chinese mother and the Chinese American daughter. The works of both King-kok Cheung and Elaine Kim suffer to a certain extent from this feminist version of romanticization with regard to the transnational context. In King-kok Cheung's essay "'Don't Tell,' Imposed Silences in The Color Purple and The Woman Warrior," she argues than Kingston's re-interpretation of the legend of Ts'ai Yen (Cai Wen Ji) overcomes "the traditional and ethnocentric" notions in the classical text and dramatizes "interethnic harmony." As an example of over-stressing the bonding between Chinese mother and Chinese American daughter, I am referring to Elaine

Kim's article "Such Opposite Creatures" (1990), where she argues that "The Joy Luck Club is the story of how women's lives flow through each other," and that "[t]he lines between 'Chinese,' 'America,' and 'Chinese American' are blurred" (83). The cultural argument made by Chin in his novel Donald Duk bears uncanny similarity to these remarks.

1. Marginality, Father Tongue, and Mother Tongue

Although Chin's concern with an Asian American voice is shared by other writers of his time, in retrospect, his complaint about the "lack of a positive, self-defined linguistic identity" of Asian American writers is not necessarily truthful to his own creative practice, let alone that of other writers. The marginalization of Asian Americans in itself inspires a different kind of language. The protagonist of Kingston's Woman Warrior, for example, lives in exactly the double bind of voice and voicelessness: when she was young, her mother cut the frenum of her tongue with a razor blade with the paradoxical intention of training her to speak in multiple tongues. In Chin's case, the linguistic profiles of the protagonists of his plays The Year of the Dragon and Chickencoop Chinaman can hardly be considered as "mimicking" or imitative as interpreted by Chin. In The Year of the Dragon in particular, the loud-speaking protagonist Fred Eng present a linguistic profile similar to that of a trickster, someone who signifies upon dominant modes of speech. At the same time, my attention is also drawn to other characters in this play and their interactions with Fred Eng. It seems to me that besides "mimicking" mainstream society's representations of Asian Americans, Chin's play also contains other speech acts, which in turn present a picture of a Chinatown family as a multilingual and cross-cultural social

unit.

Mimicry as a mode of speaking is closely connected with the awareness of marginalization. According to Lacan's definition, as paraphrased by and applied to the colonial condition by Homi Bhabha, mimicry is the process by which the colonial subject is reproduced partially, as in the rhetorical figure of metonymy, thus creating the situation of "almost but not quite." In Chin's play The Year of the Dragon, one of the main characters, the eloquent middle-aged Chinatown tour guide Fred Eng, uses the technique of mimicry both to re-create the stereotypical mode of representation of Chinatown by mainstream American society and to challenge the validity of these stereotypes. He puts a spin to the language of stereotype by adding excessive details, sometimes even making it sound poetic, so that stereotypes no longer appear to be normal, but rather as figures of speech, an artificial creation. In one of Fred's monologues, for example, Chin plays with certain Chinese cultural elements fetishized by American culture such as Kung Fu shows and herbal medicine brew and turns fetishism into a mockery: "You've seen the medicinal chicken cure impotence in males;/ The quick Kung Fu spit hit a brick and break it in two. / The Chickencoop Chinaman make whooppee in a birdcage./ The highbinder squint at tits./ The sidewinder caress a shoe. / And lots of silk butt paddlefooted fools dance the willies for a dime. / You've seen the fan tan and got a nickel shine / From a Chinaman albino the color of Spam" (113). While Eng satisfies the tourists' voyeuristic interest in Chinatown, he also skillfully taps into their fear of the unknown, thus turning a seemingly pleasant and harmless adventure to an ethnic community within the American city into a dangerous expedition into the heart of darkness. As Fred says to his customers, "And now your eyes

are inwards on your innards. / You're hungry, folks. / Hungry! And afraid to eat anything here. / I know the feeling ... Bad feeling..." (113).

Mimicry, as I have described above, is a powerful subversive mode of speech; however, there are other speech acts in this play, such as the appropriation of Cantonese and pidgin English. Although China Mama's Cantonese and Wing Eng's pidgin English are intended to make these characters look ridiculous, I still consider Chin's appropriation of these other languages as meaningful speech acts because certain purposes of communication are achieved in this appropriation.

Mimicry as a poststructural figure is not adequate to describe the power relations within the Chinese American family where the marginalized character Fred Eng defines his identity. To illustrate this point, I will need to engage on a deeper level with Homi Bhabha's theoretical definition of "mimicry" in his article "Of Mimicry and Man". In this article, Bhabha identifies mimicry's subversive use of the stereotype in terms of "splitting." Since mimicry works similarly as the psychological figure of "fetish" in that it re-creates the object in part, it "mimes the forms of authority [of the object] at the point of which it deauthorizes them," by splitting the representation from the object, the name from the thing. Such splitting [alienation] has the effect of containing two attitudes towards external reality: "one takes reality into consideration while the other disavows it and replaces it by a product of desire that repeats, rearticulates 'reality' as mimicry" (91). Mimicry thus stages the scene of colonial power that reasserts its authority through contradictory articulations of reality and desire.

Bhabha's interpretation of mimicry as the scene of a colonial power play has to be

revised to suit the specific historical context of Asian American literature. Bhabha predicts the collapse of the colonial power by revealing its irrational and uncontrollable core: mimicry is an "interdictory" discourse, supported by colonial political and administrative institutions; it works through "a disavowal that denies the differences of the other but produces in its stead forms of authority and multiple belief that alienate the assumptions of 'civil' discourse" (91). While this remark highlights the ambivalence of the colonial authority, it underestimates the cultural iconoclastic position and revolutionary vigor of many Asian American writers of the 1970s. As William Wei reminds us in his book Asian American Movement, many activists in the 60s and 70s were inspired by African American nationalism as well as Maoism. Thus, it is only natural for Chin to highlight the militancy of his male protagonists. The loud-speaking, rebellious Asian American protagonists in Chin's creative works normally don't have the patience to wait for the "furious" and "uncontrollable" "ruse of desire" to drain the strength of racism and colonialism. Chin channels the desire of colonization in another direction towards naming the "reality" that is opened up by the splitting of colonial mimicry, which he anchors upon a certain version of Asian American cultural tradition. Therefore, Bhabha's analysis of colonial mimicry cannot fully address the problematic in the literary practice of Frank Chin, because Bhabha does not go as far as considering the stage at which mimicry is transformed into a somewhat stable cultural identity. While Bhabha draws our attention to the other reality that colonial "mimicry" has to take into consideration, his theoretical consideration of mimicry is a bit decontextualized in the historical context of the Asian American Movement.

In The Year of the Dragon, the smart-talking tour guide Fred Eng plays the double

role of exposing Chinatown's ghettoization from mainstream society and representing the Chinese community. While he exposes the tourists' perspective that exploits Chinatown as a commodity, Fred also has to establish himself as the authority figure in the community. Fred defines his double role in his opening monologue: "So tonight, I'm gonna take ya where I eat, 'The Imperial Silver Jade Empress.' ... I figure you folks who come to me after dark really want to know....You wanter see the Chinaman albino the color of Spam, and the sights only Chinatown's topguide can show ya. I might show'em to ya tonight" (71). This manner of speaking reveals that while mimicry might be an effective strategy to deconstruct the authority of colonial discourse, another form of authority created by the privileged position of the tour guide remains in Eng's speech. He explains, "But you're my last tour of the day, folks. And on my last tour of the day, no hooey. I like to let my hair down. Drop the phony accent. And be me. Just me. / I figure once a day, I have got to be me." (71). For Fred, establishing a linguistic self-identity means that he needs to come to terms with all sorts of different Englishes, the mother and father tongues of his father. These include the pidgin English of his father, the fluent but empty language of his mother, and the Cantonese of China Mama. His difficulty, to use the term of the anthropologist Vincent Crapanzano, is the "Hermes' dilemma," i.e. the difficulty of facing "the foreign-ness of the language" and at the same time forced to "communicate the very foreignness which his interpretations deny" (52). The dilemma, according to Vincent Crapanzano, is the inevitable condition in which anthropologists conduct their work, for anthropology as a social science has to bear the weight of scientific truth and "rationality:" "His texts assume a truth that speaks for itself -- a whole truth that needs no rhetorical support. His

words are transparent" (52). Chin's protagonist Fred Eng does not yearn for this kind of objectivity. Conscious of his own paradoxical position of being a son and the man of the house, he chooses a solution of selectively communicating with some lingoes of the Chinese American community, mainly that of the father. In the meantime, the "foreignness" of other languages is preserved and in turn challenge Fred's authority as a translator. The Year of the Dragon thus points to the existence of a larger cross-cultural and multi-lingual context that first-generation Asian American writers such as Frank Chin just begin to notice and understand.

The various languages used by different members of the Eng family are not "foreign" in the same way, and don't have the same degree of translatability, either. The language of the father, Wing Eng, for example, has more accessibility for English speakers than the language of China Mama, his first wife. Although Wing speaks broken English, his language requires minimal translation to the audience, because most of the words he uses are different from standard English only in pronunciation and grammar. Even when he speaks Cantonese, Wing's language still remains meaningful to other members of his family, who turn around to translate his language to an English-speaking audience. Wing's language is given more respect because it stands for the secret language of the family and the Chinatown community. When he speaks to his Caucasian son-in-law Ross, for example, Wing uses Cantonese, which Ross barely understands, but his daughter Mattie can understand him perfectly even though she does not speak much Cantonese, either. In spite of the vast differences in cultural values, the degree of communication in this Chinatown family cannot be under-estimated. As Fred explains later: "You see, ... my

father has this unique Chinatown condition. He don't understand anything a white man says, even when he seems to. You can say anything to him, and he won't understand. Now if I repeat word for word, just like you said it in English ... no translating at all ... he'll understand me" (94).

Fred approaches the secrecy of his father's language with admiration even though he can sometimes be a victim of the linguistic policing enforced by his father. In spite of his interest and talent in writing, Fred has been repeatedly discouraged from pursuing his dream of becoming a writer because his father disapproves of his "Meck[ing] funny dah Chinee" and "talking crazy nevvah grown up" (137). Insecure in his own linguistic identity, Wing asks Fred to write his speech in English and then hands it over to Ross to correct it. Although Fred resents his father's unreasonable demand for loyalty and distrust in him, as the eldest son in the family, he knows that he is considered to be the legitimate heir of the household. Before the Chinese New Year parade, Wing Eng hands Fred a document written in Chinese that contains the rules of their household set down by his own father before he left China. Fred fully comprehends the symbolic importance of this gesture even though he is not much interested in the content of the document. As the heir to the authority figure of the family, he further assumes the responsibility for his mother and younger brother and demands that they should be given the permission to leave Chinatown. According to Walter Benjamin, the translation process aims to convey the "intended effect" of the original language and uncover the "echo of true language" in the original (76). In this sense, Fred can be considered a good translator for his father's language, not necessarily because he speaks pidgin English, but because he yearns for a

particular form of "father tongue" that speaks to him. As he says to his father, "All I want is for you to give me something I want and not to be ashamed of me for once" (138). He perceives himself as the intended audience of his father's speech, acknowledging in the meantime their differences in cultural value and language. After his father dies, Fred says, "I know that speech was for me. You don't know how bad I wanted you to make that speech, because I knew it was for me. I wouldn't understood a fucking word, but I'd have been so proud" (140).

Accepting the father's authority as the spokesperson of Chinatown does not mean that Fred allows the father's language to take over. In fact, one of the key issues of the conflict between the feudalist Chinese patriarch and his American-born individualist son revolves around who has more authority to speak for Chinatown. During an intense debate between the father and the son, which tragically causes Wing's death, Wing's language becomes increasingly incomprehensible and unreasonable. To re-affirm his position as the head of the household, he can only utter in hysterical anger some isolated words put together by a loose syntax, such as "You my son!" "No maw argument." In contrast to his father's irrational rage is Fred's own story narrated eloquently in perfect English. At this juncture, as the stage direction suggests, the actor who plays Fred should deliver his speech in an unremitting manner, completely ignoring the interference of other characters in the play. This indicates the moment when Fred manages to "out-talk" his father by smothering the "father tongue" with his own words, Fred turns himself into a trickster figure who signifies on the "Chinatown condition" of ghettoization and isolation from mainstream English. Translating his father's colonial mentality into a postcolonial rebellion, Fred modifies the

feudalistic pidgin-English "father tongue" into a modernist expression of irrationality, an utterance that is quite similar to the colonialist subject Kurtz' cry in "The Heart of Darkness," -- "Horror, Horror." In his stage direction, Chin shows Fred to "reach the end of language" and "do something loud in some kind of awful pissed off wounded animal language" (142). Fred appropriates the "foreignness" of his father's language into his own language of marginality, the speech of a tour guide.

As the translation between the father and the son goes on, the languages of the women in the Eng family are considered to be completely devoid of self-identity, thus not worth emulating for the second-generation Asian Americans. This negative portrayal of women's language can be traced to Chin's gender bias as well as to his negative perception of cultural hybridity. In fact, hybridity and femininity are often linked together in Chin's writings. Bilingual competence, as Chin repeatedly argues in his critical essays in 1970s and 80s, is not necessarily a "great asset" for Asian Americans. On the contrary, as Chin points out in his essay "Where I'm Coming from" (1976), perceiving Asian American identity as blending "the best of the East and the best of the West" can only create "mythological psychoneurotic schizophrenia" for Asian Americans. In the play "The Year of the Dragon," Fred's American-born, Christian-educated mother, Hyacinth Eng, is symptomatic of this notion of biculturalism. Although she is fluent in both English and Chinese and believes that being able to blend two "completely incompatible cultures is a great asset," Hyacinth is timid, confused, and incapable of using language to defend herself in face of the male authority in her family. She is constantly humiliated for her imperfection in both languages. When the "real Chinese" China Mama shows up in the

family, Wing Eng instructs her to teach Hyacinth Chinese.

Chin's unsympathetic perception of women's language also extends to Fred's unwillingness and inability to translate China Mama's language in this play. Speaking only Cantonese, China Mama, the first wife of Wing Eng who has been left in China and separated from her husband for decades, is the truly bilingual character in the play who relies on an interpreter to make herself understood to the audience, yet in most cases, the English translation of her words are put in parentheses and presumably not read aloud in the theatrical production. As a result, China Mama often appears to be the most exotic of all the characters on stage. The minute she shows up, she turns a somewhat sacred moment of family reunion and ancestor worship during the Chinese New Year Celebrations into a farce. China Mama and her son Fred talk past each other because of the language barriers between them. When China Mama tries to affirm her position in the household by speaking to Fred in Cantonese "I am your mother," Fred not only fails to understand her, but also responds with a nonsensical sentence "You are an apple." Worse than her husband Wing Eng, the foreignness of this character cannot be integrated into the English-speaking world. Thus, she stands as an outsider not only to mainstream American society, but also to the already Americanized Chinese immigrant family. She becomes a victim to Wing Eng's selfish intention of wanting to see the family unified before he dies.

On the other hand, the inscrutability of China Mama paradoxically makes the conceited Fred look funny. It forces him to expose his inherent gendered perspective and cultural nationalism. At the beginning of Act Two, Fred tries to teach China Mama the English first-person pronoun "I," a word which he finds crucial to the definition of Chinese

American subjectivity. "You know how the tourists tell I'm Chinese? No first person pronouns," Fred says to China Mama (114). In order to revert to this stereotypical perception, he emphasizes that first person pronouns are "glistening in my natural talk like stars" (115). However, in his attempt to educate China Mama to become a "citizen," he quickly finds out that there is no equivalent in China Mama's vocabulary to this English first person pronoun. China Mama often confuses the first-person pronoun with the number one or another English word "eye," which has been taught to her by Fred's American-born Chinese mother Hyacinth. This linguistic replacement exposes the limitation of Fred's individualism and his marginalization in a linguistic world run by women. In a suggestive detail, when Fred teaches China Mama to name herself, she takes Fred's instruction "I! ... is you" literally and points to Fred as the referent of the first-person pronoun "I." While this inability to identify the proper reference of the first-person pronoun betrays the playwright Frank Chin's limitation to convey female subjectivity, this detail could also suggest that the "foreign-ness" of China Mama refuses to be appropriated by the translator. In fact, Fred cannot impose his interpretation of the first person pronoun "I" onto China Mama, because for China Mama, the reference of the first person "I" is fluid. "I" can be herself, her son Fred, or the number one. Insisting on establishing a singular correspondence between the signifier "I" and the signified, Fred, on the other hand, is able to represent his own subjectivity only by dismissing the ambiguity embodied by the figure of the "foreign." He says to China Mama "Your language is foreign and ugly to me, so how come you're my mother? ... You're just another tourist wanting me to be Chinese, China Mama." According to the structuralist theorist Emile Benveniste, a

fundamental difference between first and second-person pronouns and third-person pronouns lies in that "I," "you," and "we" are indexical and relate to the context of utterance, while "he," "she," and "they" refer to an antecedent and relate to the textual context. At this juncture, while attempting to translate China Mama's "foreignness" into something that makes sense, Fred changes his reference to China Mama from second-person "you" to the third-person "a tourist," thus taking this character out of the context of utterance (in this case, a direct dialogue with her) and placing her into the textual context, the pre-existing framework as (mis)perceived through the lens of mainstream American society.

Through investigating the interactions of Fred Eng with the languages of an earlier generation of Chinese immigrants, I have attempted to point out that the constructed cultural position of marginality cannot fully guarantee the construction of a new linguistic and cultural identity, the mission undertaken by Chin in the wake of Asian American consciousness. Being on the margins of Chinatown and of mainstream American society has enabled Fred Eng to expose racist and stereotypical representations of the Chinese American community; at the same time, however, Fred also constructs his cultural identity by drawing on an extremely small and often gender-biased selection of cultural resources, clearly favoring the languages that readily denote masculinity and authority as defined in the Western sense.

In his later works, Chin directly borrows from Chinese-language literature and folklore to construct a "useable past" for Chinese Americans. In his story "The Only Real Day" (1988), for example, this borrowing is situated in the context of a psychological depiction

of the culturally and socially displaced Chinatown residents. Although Chin seems to be engaging with Chinese culture more deeply in this story than Fred does in The Year of the Dragon, this story is more restrictive in terms of cross-cultural translation. Several sections of The Year of the Dragon are multilingual and the different voices of the characters are conveyed. "The Only Real Day" by contrast is written in idiomatic American English even though its main character Yuen is an old immigrant who does not care to learn or speak English at all. The garrulous and multiple voices of Chinatown are silenced; symbolically, they are contained by a surrealistic portrayal of a deadening scene in a Chinese restaurant at the beginning of the story. The writer depicts this world in the following way: "Already the men in the room full of fish tanks were speaking loudly, shouting when they laughed, throwing the sound of their voices loud against the spongy atmosphere of fish pumps and warm-water aquarium. Yuen enjoyed the room when it was loud and blunt. The fishtanks and gulping and chortling pumps sopped up the sound of the clickety clickety of the games and kept the voices, no matter how loud, inside" (42). In contrast to the loudness of the restaurant is the deadening silence in Yuen's life. Yuen himself does not have a voice. Alienated by the rest of the Chinatown community who tries to catch up with the community's rapid speed of Americanization, Yuen often feels "paralyzed speechless in a wheelchair." The pain of being handicapped in speech is further enhanced when Rose's son Dirigible retorts him in "badly spoken and bungled Chinese" that "he had no right," "that he was not Yuen's son," "that this was not China" (46). It is in this context of severe linguistic restriction that Yuen conducts his education to Dirigible, whose name he cannot even pronounce. At the same time, Dirigible's friendship with Yuen

is also of a nostalgic and sentimental nature. After Yuen commits suicide, Dirigible "tried to work a tear loose. He felt he should. Tears not only for Yuen, but also for himself, because Yuen had been *his*" (78).

In this story, a nostalgic perception of cultural legacy is the only source of empowerment for Yuen. Yuen is portrayed as someone who belongs to the past, while his friend Jimmy and his boss Rose live in the present. As much as they try to convince Yuen that "Chinatown's not like that [the old time] anymore. Everything's orderly and businesslike now" (62), Yuen refuses to cope with the change, because from his perspective, reality is mundane and humiliating. Living in Chinatown for most of his life, he feels that he has earned a right not to be fingerprinted and photographed at the police station, as requested by a letter of the immigration office. However, as much as he tries to appear dignified and behave like a father figure in front of Dirigible, he is constantly made to face his powerlessness and impotence in real life. For example, when talking to his best friend, he indulges in sexual fantasies for white women, but in reality, he is knocked over by the white waitress in the restaurant and hurts his head. In this context of psychological displacement, heroes in Chinese history such as the one hundred and eight outlaws depicted in the classical Chinese novel The Water Margin and the words of the philosopher and military strategist Sun Zi become his sole solace and replace the "undignified" real self with the "idealized" and "heroic" self (Fiona Cho, 58). When he receives the letter from the immigration office, he remembers Sun Zi's words to "fight, [when] [i]n death ground." (71). He imagines that showing up in the police station for fingerprint and photograph is a heroic encounter with his enemies, but he quickly finds out

that the reality of going through "the mills of the system" is far less glorified than he has imagined (73). To add to his disappointment in himself, Yuen also manages to make himself look stupid in front of Dirigible. When he and Dirigible walk into the building, a heavy-set white government officer by accident walks into them and makes them fall on the ground, with "their legs all tangled" and "falling together in a soft crash" (72). This fall is not only ugly and humiliating for Yuen, it further emblematizes the inequality between Yuen and the police on the levels of race, power, and sheer physical strength. Coming out of the police station, Yuen feels that "[a]ll his old age shook and fattened up the veins in his hand" (75).

Yuen's psychological need for a mythic tradition of heroism is made possible by his access to certain textual knowledge of Chinese culture; however, like Fred in The Year of the Dragon, Yuen selects only those archetypes from classical literature that denote physical strength and masculine power. His re-telling of these literary stories favors transparency although his voice is much mediated through that of the narrator. When he reads Dirigible stories from Chinese comic books, he uses, as the writer tells us, a kind of "Cantonese babytalk." However, as if the accuracy of Yuen's voice is unimportant, the writer uses only idiomatic English to replace Yuen's Cantonese. He writes, "Yuen took him inside and bought an expensive set of paperbound Chinese funnybooks that looked like little books and came in a box. Yuen opened up one of the books to the pictures and chuckled, delighted. 'See, here?' He snatched at the tale of the 108 outlaw heroes of legendary Leongshan Marsh in curt, chugging Cantonese babytalk the boy might understand" (66). Yuen never questions the textuality of these stories, because for him,

they evoke his memories of childhood: "*Sam Gawk Yun Yee, Sir Woo Jun,* I memorize 'em all. All the boys like to see who know more. Then you see them in the opera, and ..." (67). Yuen thus embodies the nostalgia for a cultural past that does not speak to him directly. This nostalgic sentiments are then translated into Chin's romanticist endorsement of a coherent Chinese American cultural tradition.

II. Cultural Nationalism as a Project of Translation

Reading hybridity back into Chin's cultural agenda is not an easy task, because in most of his critical essays, hybridity is dismissed as a negative identity for Asian Americans. In their introduction to the first anthology of Asian American literature, for example, Chin and the other editors severely criticize the notions of "dual personality" and "the either-or mentality" for fragmenting the identity of Asian Americans. According to these writers, the myth of Asian Americans as the blending of "the best of the East and the best of the West" and the pressure imposed by the society on them to choose "either" American "or" Asian identities have directly resulted in "the destruction of an organic sense of identity, the complete psychological and cultural subjugation of the Asian-American". However, this article also alludes to a larger cultural context of cross-racial and cross-cultural (mis)representations and a long history of literature about Chinatown.[2] If we take into consideration this body of works which the Aiiieeeee editors dismissed as unauthentic, then hybridity as a cultural and racial figure probably cannot be easily

---

[2]I am alluding to the editors' reference to preceding generations of Asian writers who wrote about Chinatown and other Asian American communities. Their dismissal of pre-existing Chinatown literature is totalistic and often lacks the support of close historical scrutiny.

dismissed from Asian American history. In his criticism of the racial stereotype Charlie Chan, Chin himself acknowledges that it is a product of a particular form of the imagination of racial and cultural hybridity specific to the U.S. context. Chin's allusions to this figure reveals his consciousness of the tropes of hybridity in American culture and its negative effect on Asian Americans. Associating the figure of Charlie Chan and his creator Earl Derr Biggers with what he calls "the going from culture to culture formula," Chin reads Biggers' novels in the following terms:

> The travel format, going from one nation to another, became, in Biggers' immensely popular Charlie Chan novels, an interior journey from one culture to another. Thus, the form that evolved into the Chinatown book reinforced and clearly articulated today's popular notion of being an Asian-American. The concept of the dual personality, of going from one culture to another, emerged. ("Introduction" 200)

In his parodic representation of Charlie Chan in his short story "Sons of Chan," Chin's further associates the global context of colonialism with the American domestic context of racism. In this story, the character Charlie Chan's Number One Son symbolizes an archetypical and stereotypical product of the Hollywood movie industry. Chin traces the creation of this character first to Hollywood's melodramatic representations of the Second World War and American intervention in East Asia. He writes, assuming the voice of Charlie Chan's Number One Son, "My life as a Hollywood specimen Chinaman began early. I played the part of abandoned and orphaned Chinese babies, crying my heart out in smoking ruins, and became known in the industry for my wail being sent out over the sound of exploding Japanese bombs to jerk out tears.... I see a China Shanghai night breaking apart with Japanese bombs falling from biplanes putt in the sky" (134). From

Chin's perspective, this colonialist figure of China as a helpless baby waiting for the rescue of American army is part of the racist cultural heritage which the Asian American protagonist is forced to internalize. In a language that resonates with that of Frantz Fanon, Chin says that Charlie Chan is "a white man badly disguised as a Chinaman." "He would show me face-to-face what we looked like to whites, just how far whites had seen into our faces before they couldn't see any more." (132).

However, while Chin shows that colonialism partially informs the Asian American subject position, he does not intend to further investigate the culture of the "third world". As a result, his cultural agenda has many contradictions both within the domestic context of the U.S. and the global context of cross-cultural representation. For example, if Charlie Chan stands for a bad example of "traveling culture," how do we account for the fact that Chin's own understanding of Chinese culture is in many cases inaccurate, ahistorical, and totalistic? Can "the ancient Earl Derr Biggers mumbo jumbo formula" sufficiently be corrected by reviving a selective number of Chinese classics? Or fundamentally, if Chin's own works can be read as hybrid cultural products, how should he be positioned vis-a-vis the historical uses of the notion of hybridity in both modern American and Chinese contexts? Chin's writings do not seem to provide ready answers to these questions. Chin recognizes Charlie Chan as a negative figure of hybridity. In "Sons of Chan," he further negates this stereotype by highlighting the suppressed ethnic and sexual perspective contained in this original cultural narrative; however, this strategy is not enough to produce a self-recognition of Asian American writers implicated in the complex hybridized histories of the East and the West.

What starts as a form of cultural iconoclasm can lead to an ahistorical and essentialist cultural position. I would like to illustrate this argument by first pointing out the logical inconsistence in Chin's cultural arguments. As we remember, in the introduction to the first anthology of Asian American literature Aiiieeeee (1979), Chin and other editors are adamantly against judging Asian American writers as Asians by claiming that it is a "myth ... that Asian-Americans have maintained cultural integrity as Asians, that there is some strange continuity between the great high culture of a China that has not existed for five hundred years and the American-born Asian" (Chan et. al. 206). But looking through his later critical essays, from "This Is Not an Autobiography" to his introduction to The Big Aiiieeeee, we can detect a growing tendency of assuming exactly this mythic continuity and using it to judge the works of other Asian American writers. In Chin's much-publicized criticism of Maxine Hong Kingston, he attacks Kingston for "faking" the cultural tradition and being "absent of anything real." As an example, Chin draws our attention to Kingston's adaptations of the stories of Hua Mu Lan and Yue Fei when Kingston tries to depict the image of a woman warrior with words written on her back in The Woman Warrior. However, from Chin's novel Donald Duk, we can see that Chin has taken just as much liberty to reinterpret the fictional character Guan Gong (Kuan Kung). For different purposes, both Kingston and Chin create American myths out of Chinese cultural materials. This fact alone suggests that cultural translation is a much more complex phenomenon that cannot be regulated by the binary opposition of the "real" and the "fake."

Ironically, Chin's recent essay "Uncle Frank's Fakebook of Fairy Tales for Asian

American Moms and Dads" glorifies the use of the fakebook and "faking" as a characteristic of oral literature. He writes:

> The storytellers used fakebooks. Every story was paraphrased in word and pictures. The basic shapes and the essential facts and famous quotes of every story were crunched and boiled down to the bare bones. The storyteller used his fakebook, as a musician uses a fakebook. The musician has a chart for every song in any key. The storyteller has a chart for every story and a strategy for storytelling to every kind of audience, on every kind of day or night. ... The themes, the plots, the character types the moral and ethical ideals of the fairy tales and stories we tell here, become more adult, more detailed, more complex and more refined in later literature. (75)

Although this interpretation of Chinese folk culture is not flawed in itself, Chin ignores the fact that the examples he provides are drawn from written sources, such as classical novels such as The Water Margin and Three Kingdoms, which are in themselves open to multiple interpretations. How literally folk storytellers adhere to these written texts is a historical question that Chin chooses not to get into; on the other hand, he is interested only in superimposing his glorified interpretation of the social function of folk culture upon a totalistic perception of Chinese history. He presents folk culture as if it were the only immutable literary trend that has survived the dislocation of war, political movements, and immigration.

Feminist critics have rightly taken Chin to task for his male-centered perspective on identity and culture. If we situate gender criticism in the cross-culture context, then we shall find that Chin's reading of Chinese classical literature betrays a certain kind of gender-blindness that is slightly different from his initial masculinist perspective on

identity.[3] While his earlier works tend to portray Asian Americans as passive victims of racism, his later works show a tendency of glorifying the romantic tradition of Chinese culture, thus bypassing any critical consideration of women's subjectivity. For example, when refuting Kingston's feminist adaptation of the Chinese classical poem "Hua Mu Lan," Chin proposes to read this poem as a celebration of romantic love and war in his preface to The Big Aiiieeeee. In his article "Uncle Frank's Fake Book of Fairy Tales for Asian American Moms and Dads," Chin appropriates the character Hua Mu Lan into his framework of traditional heroic literature, thus relegating Kingston's feminist concerns under the rubric of the East-West opposition. He argues that in contrast to Western fairy tales which depict women as "victims" and waiting "to be discovered and rescued by a dominant male authority," Chinese folklore depicts women as "a real soldier," "a mistress of martial arts" (85). While this perspective elevates the East and the traditional woman, it once again subsumes women into his nationalist definition of Chinese American culture.

The attempts made by Chin to have a handful of classical Chinese texts inform directly the identity of Asian American need to be situated within the historical context of Asian American imaginary. Focusing on what he defines as "the introjection of Asia in the American imaginary," critic David Polumbo-Liu argues that the historical perceptions of Asians in America have been multiply determined by both the image of the "traditional Asia" and the existence of Asian Americans as a racial minority. He writes that "what has

---

[3]Chin sees Charlie Chan primarily as "the fat, inscrutable, flowery but flub-tongued effeminate little detective." In his short story "The Sons of Chan," he makes an explicit statement that "[i]n the twenties when Charlie Chan came into being, the Chinese in America pop culture was a sex joke" (135). These evidence clearly expose Chin's gendered perspective on Asian American identity.

most deeply informed U.S. actions toward Asians in America has been an image of Asians *not* 'in' Asia or the United States, but of the often contradictory predications of 'Asia' *in transit*, which draw on both images of 'traditional Asia' and incipient forms of an Asian American ontology" ("The Bitter Tea of General Yen" 763). It seems to me that Chin's cultural position can be considered as a reaction toward the contradictions embodied in "Asia in transit" as a discursive cultural/racial formation. Wavering between an initial iconoclastic cultural position of dismissing both Asia and America and his later romanticist embracing of a handful of Chinese classics, Chin beckons the strength of the culture of the "third world," but at the same time, he is unwilling to get into the nexus of cultural politics in China and other third-world countries. Underlying his glorification of the folk cultural elements in Chinese traditional literature is a universalist endorsement of "subaltern" cultures without investigating the specific forms of social and cultural stratification in the specific histories of the "third world". Some questions which Polumbo-Liu has raised to help us re-think the relationship between Asian American studies and its conception of the third world can be aptly applied to sharpen our revisionist perspective to Chin: "How should Asian Americanists address the critique of 'Third World intellectuals'?... Do we see ourselves as removed from, or implicated within the problematic of subalternity? There is to be sure, a correlate relationship between the cultural and institutional politics of postcolonialism and U.S. minority discourse; the problem is ascertaining the particular material histories that may interfere with this correlation" ("Theory and the Subject of Asian American Studies" 62).

To describe the "material histories" that might (dis)connect the so-called "third-world"

from the minority discourse in the U.S., we need to examine historically existing tropes of hybridity in both cultural contexts. Situating the notion of hybridity within the history of American nationalism and the exclusion of Asian immigrants in the 1920s, Polumbo-Liu reminds us that the racially hybrid body carried a negative connotation that threatened the purity of the nation. In the light of this argument, we can read The House Without a Key (1925), the first novel by Earl Derr Biggers as a work that taps into the culture's fear of hybridity and simultaneously manipulates this fear to create mysterious atmosphere befitting the detective novel genre. Set against the racially mixed milieu of Honolulu, the novel features the protagonist John Quincy who comes from Boston and is the key witness of a murder. At one moment of the narrative, Quincy falls into the trap of the bad guys and agrees to go into an ethnic working-class neighborhood of Honolulu, where by accident he bumps into the murderer. In his desperate attempt to escape, Quincy is lost in alleys that "have no names, no sidewalks, no beginning and no end" and in houses that are completely "out of alignment" (122). His disorientation is enhanced by the very fact that this neighborhood is culturally mixed. As Biggers writes,

> John Quincy felt he had wandered into a futurist drawing. As he paused he heard the whine and clatter of Chinese music, the clicking of a typewriter, the rasp of a cheap phonograph playing American jazz, the distant scream of an auto horn, a child wailing Japanese lamentations. Footsteps in the yard beyond the fence roused him, and he fled. (122)

John Quincy's Bostonian cultural background is set in sharp contrast to the alien-looking neighborhood and the group of "red-haired" sailors that are pursuing him. In fact, the physical combat between Quincy and his pursuers is staged as a duel of cultures. Quincy "tackled in the approved manner of Soldiers' Field, Cambridge, Massachusetts," the writer

tells us, and this struggle ends with a relieved statement from the narrator that "culture prevailed."

Biggers' representation of culture and cultural difference is skin-deep, but this is where inter-racial identities are negotiated. When John Quincy first meets Charlie Chan, Chan's silk dress, his house full of porcelain, and the chess games he plays with his son, although very elegant, all convey to Quincy a deep sense of "a gulf between himself and Charlie Chan." However, Chan is ultimately a good guy not because he sometimes wears a police uniform, which makes Quincy feel comfortable because Chan "looks American," but also because he is willing to fit in. As Polumbo-Liu has pointed out, immigrants were often distinguished between the "acceptable" and the "unacceptable" kind by their ability to adjust to the national interests of the United States in the 1920s. By a similar logic, Chan is distinguished from the other foreigners in this novel because he tries hard to emulate the culture of the elite. Quincy thinks of Chan as "a student of English," someone who "dragged his words painfully from the poets" and who "was careful to use nothing that savored of 'pidgin.'" Thus, although Chan's Eastern traits don't go beyond decorum or manners, he is a crucial figure in the writer's overall scheme of creating a hybrid culture.

Cultural and racial hybridization assumed a different form in the modern Chinese context, and because Chin is eager to search for a coherent cultural identity, his criticism of modern Chinese culture are often misfired.[4] Clearly favoring certain traditional texts,

---

[4]An example of Chin's blanket dismissal of modern Chinese literature can be found in the following remark: "The autobiography is not a Chinese form. Dr. Sun Yat Sen's revolutionaries of 1911 wanted more than an end to dynastic imperial government. They wanted to Europeanize China. The literary leaders wanted even more than that. They wanted to Christianize China through new Chinese writing." (11) This argument is not

Chin dismisses modern Chinese culture, particularly the inherent hybridization of the East and the West as mostly unauthentic. This perspective also explains why in the historical conception of Asian American literature, he fails to make an inter-generational connections with the intellectuals from the Chinese modern context such as Lin Yutang. In his criticism of the autobiographical genre, for example, Chin dismisses this genre's significance because he does not consider it as "a Chinese form" ("Come All Ye Asian American Writers" 11). Writing autobiography is the same as religious conversion, Chin argues, so in his mind, the Chinese intellectuals who attempted to introduce the autobiographic form into Chinese literature, represented by Hu Shi, is but an accomplice to "Christianizing China."

When Chin interprets traditional Chinese culture, he often leaves out the concrete contents of cultural materials and searches for a single cultural form, something that he calls the "Chinese subconscious." Whether it is the philosophy of Sun Zi or the fictional narrative Three Kingdoms, for Chin, these cultural texts of diverse natures contain a "[f]orm" that "has a nature all its own." "Form is governed by certain universal laws. The instinct for form will automatically apply the lessons learned from one form, say boxing, to any problem affecting your nervous system, from literature to politics to war" ("This is Not an Autobiography," 111). Supported by this cultural essentialist perception of classical texts, Chin establishes a continuity of the culture of several thousand years ago with the conditions of Chinese in America.

Compelling as it might sound, this cultural historiography does not leave much room

---

only ungrounded in historical reality, but betrays Chin's enchantment for tradition.

for adaptation or interpretation. As Chin argues, the preservation of traditional culture is through recitation and memorization, thus, re-enacting the same classical cultural texts alone would enable Chinese Americans to forge a unified identity. Furthermore, reading several critical essays together enables us to detect a tendency of further narrowing his focus onto a single cultural trend and at the same time mystifying it as if it were immutable in history. Chin also ignores the important question of how these classics are repeatedly re-interpreted and applied to different social contexts throughout history. Without answering this question, Chin can only understand cultural history in terms of the static preservation of a few works and passive processes of "memorization, recitation, and internalization." This reading paradoxically shuts live experience out of the door, and inherently contradicts with his promotion of folk culture. For example, he describes the significance of Confucius' The Analects in the following words:

> Thus, to merely understand and to be properly awestruck by the big picture of Confucius' wisdom and art in The Analects, the Chinese say, one has to memorize The Analects in childhood and to recite them every day. The discoveries of meaning are so profound and so precisely phrased that they can be made only at certain stages in one's life, only after one has experienced so much life, and, sometimes, not before one has experienced so much life. Every day throughout your adult life, a verse of Confucius will light up your mind and make sense of everything that's happened since the day you were born. They say that if one lives to a ripe old age, say forty-eight and beyond, The Analects really turn on" ("Come All Ye Asian American Writers," 36).

I am pointing out the flaws of Chin's perceptions of Chinese culture not just to correct certain "misreadings," but more importantly to underline the importance of understanding the self-implication in the hybridized context of the East and the West. Although in his early writings, Chin still retains some awareness of a constructed and anti-essentialist

cultural position, this position paradoxically provides the poetic license to extrapolate cultural texts out of their historical contexts and essentialize these materials into a singular cultural tradition.

IV. Donald Duk: Asian American Historiography and the Culture of the Chinese Diaspora

Chin's representation of culturally hybrid characters undergo a significant change from his earlier works to the recent novel Donald Duk (1991). In his short stories and plays, those characters that look or sound Asian are often portrayed as funny, stupid, and unattractive, particularly if they are female. Among the many examples of characters of this type, we just have to remember the mostly Cantonese-speaking China Mama in The Year of the Dragon, the character whose major function is to offer comic relief in the play. A succinct summary of figures of racial and cultural hybrid is also given in the short story "The Sons of Chan," where referring to the twelve-year-old daughter of Janet, Chin describes her as "half ancient Chinese woman trapped inside a petrified girl deflowered by a soldier who never came back to Shanghai and half white American, blond, well-manicured, keno-dealing, Las Vegas lush" (153). Twisted, unstable, and charmless, all these characters are portrayed as survivors of a cultural ravage that leaves the immigrant community with only misrepresentation and negative stereotypes of themselves.

Chin's negative attitudes toward cultural hybridity dissipate almost completely in his most recent novel Donald Duk. The ability to blend the East with the West is no longer considered to be a privilege reserved for upper-class immigrants. On the contrary, it is played out in the characterization of King Duk, an ordinary chef in a Chinese restaurant in Chinatown. King is the father of the novel's protagonist Donald Duk and a leader of the

Chinatown community, but he is not at all as authoritarian and detestably ethnocentric as Wing Eng the father of Fred Eng in Year of the Dragon. When Donald asks for American food, King "never complains or stops smiling" because as the writer tells us, he can cook American, French, Italian, and Spanish food just as well as Chinese. In this novel, food is an important symbol of innovative cultural hybridity, and King is not only a master of cooking, but also a theorist of culinary art, who loves to talk about "the difference between pure French cooking and the French-with-the-Chinese-twist cooking he does" (9). In Donald's eyes, Dad is above the mundane level of daily life. He is called a "cosmic chef," and when he cooks, he is like "a hawk above the clouds." "His hands and arms disappear into the steam with bamboo brushes" while "playing the music out of live food and dried food" (67). King's recipe for an extravagant "meatless" New Year's dinner for his family is the ultimate testimony of King's ingenuity and cosmopolitanism: "Fettuccine Alfredo with shark's fin. Poached fish in sauces made with fruit and vegetables. Olives on toast that taste like rare thousand-dollar caviar. Chocolate, bananas, yellow chili peppers, red chili oil and coconut milk go into one sauce over shredded chicken and crabmeat to be eaten rolled up in hot rice paper pancakes with shredded lettuce, green onions and a dab of plum sauce" (64).

Food is not the only cultural product which Chin is able to find a way of blending. In Donald Duk, he constructs a fantastical collage of cultures drawn from various sources, covering a wide spectrum of both contemporary and historical aspects of Chinese American culture. He weaves the descriptions of everyday life of residents of Chinatown, Chinese New Year rituals, the Cantonese opera and the dragon dance into a historical

narrative focused on the history of the construction of the Central Pacific Railroad in the end of the nineteenth century. While this novel reflects Chin's consistent position in regard to the polemical issues of identity politics, Chinese American history and cultural tradition, his ambitious effort to represent a community that has a distinct cultural and history has many underlying contradictions within itself. Since Chin's cultural representations are always intricately connected with his politics of identity, we need to consider the novel in its entirety in order to evaluate Chin's cultural agenda.

Chin considers the official history of the construction of the Central Pacific Railroad a prototypical example of the erasure of Chinese American laborers from mainstream American history. He attempts to correct this historical misrepresentation by overlaying narratives of the heroic tradition upon existing historical accounts, thus challenging the distinction between objective historical knowledge and cultural myths. His new and alternative history is further brought into relation with the identity crisis of Donald Duk, a twelve-year-old Chinese American boy whose name ironically resonates with the Disney cartoon character Donald Duck. To stay close to history, Chin uses the real names of the leaders of the Central Pacific Railroad Company, and cites mostly historically verifiable details, such as the event of Chinese workers setting a world record for laying ten miles of railroad track. He is attentive even to some descriptions of the weather in the Sierra Mountains during a track-laying competition. On top of these historical accounts, Chin inserts elements of "Chinese-ness," drawn from either the daily life of Chinatown or Chinese literary sources. One significant amendment to mainstream history is Chin's creation of the character Kwan the Chinese foreman, a heroic leader of Chinese

construction workers created after the historical hero Guan Gong (Kwan Kung) in a Chinese classical novel Three Kingdoms. Partially following the original fictional descriptions of this character, Chin portrays Kwan the foreman as a giant figure with a red face who talks loud and plays chess. He is brave, combative, and talented. He dares to challenge Charles Crocker, the superintendent of Central Pacific Railroad verbally by ordering him to get off his horse when speaking to Kwan and other Chinese workers. His role is highly symbolic. In addition to leading the railroad workers in a competition against the Irish workers hired by Union Pacific Company, Kwan is also directly involved in a historical battle over the representation of Chinese worker's contribution to the railroad construction. He suggests that all workers carve their names on a pine tie as a historical testimony to their contribution to the railroad. However, Crocker of the Central Pacific Railroad and the Casement Brothers of the Union Pacific Railroad conspire, in spite of their competition, to have this special tie removed and replace it with one that has their names on it.

All these efforts of re-writing the history of the construction of the railroad are supposed to have a didactic effect on the growth of young Donald Duk. As the novel begins, the Duks' family are getting ready to celebrate the Chinese New Year. Turning twelve in the new year, young Donald is about to experience an important rite of passage, for as Chin is well aware and explicitly states in this novel, twelve years make a full cycle in the Chinese zodiac system. However, going to a private school in America and growing up on mainstream popular culture, Donald is completely oblivious of both the history of Chinese Americans and Chinese culture. Ironically, only through the "bad dreams" that he

has during the New Year season can Donald find out about the "real" history in which he is also a participant. In one of his dreams, for example, Donald overhears Crocker promising the owner of the railroad company T. C. Durant that at the Last Spike Ceremony, no "heathens" would be allowed to be present, so that this historical moment will be preserved as a record of "white men," "white dreams," and "white brains" (131). He thus learns that the history books that he can find in the library and the education he receives at school are all part of a giant conspiracy against the Chinese. With the help of other elderly characters in the novel and the spirit of the deity figure Guan Gong, he finally gains the strength and courage to convey his visions to the class and correct his teacher's stereotypical representations of the Chinese.

Thus, this novel draws immediate connections between individual development and the community of Chinatown as a self-sufficient, historically informed, and culturally distinct (and hybridized in a unique way) social unit. Chin's representation of the culture of this community is carefully choreographed. His selection of "shreds and patches" of Chinese culture to illustrate the "heroic tradition" reveals a preference for folk, oral, and under-represented culture. In the words King Duk quoting from a Confucian motto, Chin's novel is intended to"[r]estore ways that have been abandoned and recover knowledge that has been lost." However, from a historical perspective, the political legitimacy of this imaginary community is established in a somewhat tautological manner: on the one hand, Chin enables the contemporary Chinese American culture to infiltrate into the historical episode of exploitation and misrepresentation of the Chinese railroad workers; on the other hand, he tries to elevate the culture into a myth by use of this history. From the

writer's perspective, both history and culture constitute the "lost knowledge;" it is the writer's "mandate of heaven" to restore both kinds of knowledge.

Skillfully using dream and fantasy as an overall structure that organizes the representations of a variety of subjects of different natures, Chin merges the historical site of the railroad construction and contemporary Chinatown together. In Donald's dreams, the construction of the railroad carries the same ritualistic significance as the New Year celebrations that occur outside Donald's dream. "The life around every wagon [of the Chinese construction workers] looks like the life inside a house with all the walls gone" (26), Chin tells us. This remark establishes a ground of familiarity for Donald to identify with these workers. It also facilitates a series of transplantations of Chinese culture to the construction site in the Sierra Mountains in spite of the time difference of more than a century. The construction workers are portrayed as having "deem sum" (a kind of Cantonese pastry) and "juk" (Cantonese porridge) just as many Chinese on a daily basis. Other familiar landmarks in Chinatown, such as the herbalists, kungfu shows, and dragon dance also appear the site of the railroad construction. The dragon dance in particular is the most important cultural fixture that testifies what Gellner considers to be the "pre-existing, historically inherited proliferations of culture or cultural wealth" of nationalist construction (69). In Donald's dream, a dragon dance goes on simultaneously as the track-laying competition between Chinese and Irish workers. Donald is instructed by Kwan to join the dragon dance and "fight with the staff" while grown-up railroad workers use rails and spikes to compete against their Irish counterparts. The "lunging and twisting," "lurching and arching" of the lion's body parallels the slow but smooth extension of the

railroad. This juxtaposition achieves multiple purposes: while it personalizes the historical narrative, it further endorses the nationalist overtones of both the dragon dance and the competition. The racial implication of dragon can hardly be missed.

Chin seems to have constructed a fine system that enables history to speak directly to contemporary politics of identity; however, on closer look, the historical narrative in this novel cannot totally bear the weight of the complexity of contemporary cultural politics. For one thing, Chin's representation of the racial conflicts in the end of the nineteenth century is significantly more simplified than most historical accounts. We would then have to ask the question of whether it is possible for us to correct the flaws of written history and rescue the figures of subalternity without historical attentiveness to the discursive formation of power and hegenomy. With regard to the construction of the railroad, Chin's race and class perspectives are not directly informed by the historical context. If we examine several existing historical accounts of the same period, it is clear that the ethnic and class perspectives are discursively formulated among a myriad of other social narratives, such as nationalism. According to the account given by Asian American historian Ronald Takaki, the Last Spike Ceremony, a significant episode in the long history of the railroad construction, was given nationalist endorsement by the contemporary historians. Certain detailed procedures of this ceremony, such as connecting telegraphs wires to one of the spikes and a silver-plated sledge so that the whole country could share the exciting moment of the completion of the railroad, were designed for the purpose of bringing the nation together. While nationalism endorsed the participation of workers from different racial backgrounds, its intention was to establish the priority of

white Americans as the leading force of this historical task. As one journalist reported from the site of the Last Spike Ceremony, "Here, near the center of the American Continent, were the united efforts of representatives of the continents of Europe, Asia, and America -- America directing and controlling" (Takaki, 87).

While Chin is correct about the historical elision of Chinese workers particularly in children's literature,[5] racial conflicts are staged mostly in a direct and linear fashion as between Chinese workers and Irish workers, the owners of the railroad and Chinese workers led by Kwan the foreman. This historical perspective foregrounds the individual as the maker of history and emphasizes the role of conflicts in the formation of an individual's ethical identity. In Chin's novel, the intricate cultural and racial networks of representation are subsumed under an overall structure of a Bildungsroman of Donald Duk. Playing out history in his dreams, Donald is given the privileged position of being the only legitimate interpreter of history. His growth undergoes several stages of enlightenment and discovery corresponding to the ritualistic rigidity of the New York celebration in Chinatown. At the beginning of the novel, when Donald looks down at Chinatown from the rooftop of a three-story building, all he sees of Chinatown is darkness. Later on, Donald gradually recognizes many interesting people and artists who have lived in Chinatown for generations. This narrative culminates in the Cantonese opera performance and the dragon dance on the fifteenth day of the Chinese New Year, in which

---

[5]The celebration of this historical event as a great national achievement is in juvenile literature targeted for young readers. At least in one book of juvenile literature entitled "Ten Mile Day and the Building of the Transcontinental Railroad" (1993), the names of the eight Irish workers nicknamed "ironmen" are recorded while Chinese workers are addressed only in collective terms.

Donald is no longer a passive observer, but joins in the shows. This linear structure of Donald's growth intends not so much to record the culture of the community as to construct an ideal version of a community sustained by a cultural tradition that is "always already there."

As I have argued in previous sections in this chapter, the context of the "third world" is significant in shaping Chin's perspective on Chinese American identity. In this novel, the affinity between Chinese Americans as a status of minority in the U.S. and the "third world" context is established in the writer's description of the Cantonese opera. Cantonese opera, a regional theater originating from Canton, is presented as a folk cultural tradition that survives the ravages of war, racism, and the historical displacement of immigration just like the much glorified folk story-telling tradition. Courageous Chinese American men, such as King Duk, are portrayed not just as the passive audience of Cantonese opera; they play a crucial role in saving this art form from historical extinction. While this perspective on cross-cultural transmission is not entirely implausible, the emphasis of Chin's narrative is placed not on the process of this cultural transmission, but on an attempt to further elevate King into a mythic character. King is not only a "cosmic" chef but also a sincere culture preserver. He sneaks back into Canton, China at the age of fourteen to learn Cantonese opera from a famous master. When this popular cultural form is banned in King's hometown Canton during the Cultural Revolution, King uses his influence to help transplant it into the Chinatown of the U.S.. King has a religious devotion to Cantonese opera, especially to the warrior Kwan Kung that he ritualistically plays during Chinese New Year. When preparing for this role, King rigorously follows the

rules of "no sex, no meat, no talk, no company" (67), not because he is intimidated by the spirit of Kwan Kung, but as he says, "Kwan Kung is always played right, or not at all" (69). After days of self-purification followed up by an elaborate ceremony of worship on the night of the performance, King becomes the personification of Kwan Kung . "He keeps his eyes down. He is alone in his dressing room, surrounded by the pieces of his costume and the pads and braces he must put on first. ... He looks into the mirror and sees Kwan Kung. 'It's been a long time,' Dad says" (169).

The parallel between King Duk and his role in Cantonese opera, and between Kwan Kung as a cultural myth, as a historical hero, and a theatrical production, form a symbolic system that is not restricted to Chinatown, but extends into the Chinese diaspora. This cultural lineage is intentional as well as political. Another example of a cultural activity of Chinatown that also exists in the Chinese diaspora can be found in Chin's description of a simple finger counting game. After the Cantonese opera performance, King Duk and other members of the cast hold a banquet in which they play a simple finger-counting game among themselves. This game, in which two players compete by trying to guess the total number of fingers that both of them throw out, is a common form of entertainment mostly played by men throughout the Chinese diaspora. Although Chin is very much aware of the universal significance of this cultural symbol, he is more concerned about representing this game as a symbol of the Chinese American community that descends from an original history of immigration. He writes, "Dad wins a round and Uncle Donald, the loser, has to drink a shot of Scotch and chant on, numbers, fingers, winning, losing in the same rhythm as the opera, as the dragon, as the lions, as the loud engines of the boat to Angel Island"

(172).

Since Chin's representation of Chinatown contains certain elements that are universal to Chinese culture, then where does Chin position Chinese Americans as a minority group in the U.S. vis-a-vis other diasporic Chinese communities in Asia or a more universalist category of the East? Chin does not answer this question directly in this novel. His focus on food, cultural rituals, and regional theater seem to betray an interest in regional folk culture, as distinguished from the textual history in which intellectual immigrant writers such as Lin Yutang and Bai Xianyong engage to negotiate their identity choices. In fact, Chin seems to be particularly concerned with the distinction between Chinese folk culture and Western high culture. As sociologist Pierre Bourdieu argues, a distinctive feature of popular culture against high culture is its resolute refusal of any distance between the aesthetic and everyday (Fiske, 126). In this particular performance described by Chin, the distance is completely erased. From a conventional point of view, this performance which features King Duk as the leading actor is not like an artistic event at all, for the players and their performance are not automatically the center of attention as in most theatrical performances, rather they are only a part of traditional celebration of the Chinese New Year and daily life. According to Chin's description, the Cantonese opera performance is going on simultaneously as the dragon dance, and as the audience are drawn to participate in both activities, the distinctions between the star and the audience become blurred. For some Chinatown residents, the opera is no reason for acting differently from in everyday life. At the theater, "[c]hildren sit on the stairs leading up to the stage and fall asleep while the band crashes cars and planes. On the auditorium floor, a father walks up and down the

raked aisle, rocking and patting his baby, while onstage a woman in white and red makeup and fancy hair sings the sound of mating electrical charges" (171). For visitors from outside this community, such as the Azalea family who are friends of the Duks, the atmosphere in the theater is intolerable and inappropriate for artistic performance. "When are they going to quiet down so they can listen," he asks. "'Go on and talk as loud as you want,' Mom says, 'That's the fun. Everyone does it.' She smiles. 'I understand the audience better than the opera anyway'" (171).

However, if popular culture such as the lion-dance, the Cantonese opera, and the finger-counting game have survived the violent disrupture of immigration, what is the historical process of translation, preservation, and transmission? Can this transnational process be described without the Asian American subject simultaneously implicating himself not just in the politics of representation in the U.S. context but also that of the "third world"? If so, what position should be given to the social history of immigration and the construction of the railroad in the end of the nineteenth century which distinguishes the Chinese American experience from that of the "third world" and also of newer immigrants? Should it still be considered as the original moment of Chinese American identity? Chin's novel raises these crucial polemical questions in regard to the representation of Chinese Americans from a historical perspective as well as in terms of contemporary politics.

Critic John Fiske argues in Understanding Popular Culture, "[t]here can be no popular dominant culture, for popular culture is formed always in reaction to, and never as part of, the forces of domination" (43). In this novel, Chin's attempt to trace the "forces of

domination" back to the monumental history of the construction of the railroad as the myth of origin of Chinese American culture, seems to suggest that this history, and this history alone, can directly inform the identity of the Chinese American youngsters such as Donald Duk. His narrative of the emergence of the Chinese American subject is constructed from top down through a point of view that is heavily mediated by a smart but domineering narrator. Connections between cultural signifiers drawn from different cultural canons and belonging to different historical periods are made by a singular "creative, fanciful, and positively inventive" mind (Gellner, 56). By using his imagination, the writer justifies his specific version of identity from a cultural and aesthetic point of view. Donald himself has little input in shaping the cultural narrative. At one point in the novel, the black clouds over the Sierra Mountains are associated with the face of Kwan Kung, and the thunders become the sound of galloping horses of the 108 outlaws from The Water Margin. Although Donald himself is supposed to be unacquainted with these Chinese texts, he not only recognizes Kwan Kung immediately, but he quickly draws a connection of the red-faced deity with the pictures and statues in Chinese restaurants in Chinatown, and furthermore, Cantonese opera. Donald is more like a transcriber than a translator because his dreams are already so well-wrought that they need little interpretation. Donald is left with little authority to construct his own identity. As one of the youngest member and a newcomer of the construction crew, he merely follows the instructions of the Chinese foreman Kwan. Carried over into real life, Kwan as the leader of the workers and the teacher of Donald is similar to the role that the father King Duk plays in real life. Both of them educate the Chinese American youngster by their

charismatic appearance and by citing even higher authority figures, such as Confucius. Both leave little space for Donald to make free associations of his own. Chin manages to portray the Chinese American community as a hybrid cultural milieu, filled with intriguing Chinese rituals and colorful displays of regional and folk culture; however, instead of breaking the monolith of essentialist historical representation, hybridity is turned into a cultural lesson whose sole function is to educate the younger generation of Chinese Americans.

Conclusion

This project started with my empirical observation of the co-existing signifiers of the East and the West in the works of Lin Yutang, Bai Xianyong, and Frank Chin. I assumed, logically, it seemed, that the reference to the "cross-cultural" context would make these writers "cross-cultural" as well, but I quickly found out that it was not an easy task to describe with historical specificity what Mary Louise Pratt calls the "contact zones" of two cultures through the lens of these three authors. Many questions came up and had to be addressed in the individual context of each writer. For example, how does each of them imagine the "world" and "home"? What moral or political imperatives have forced them to study another culture? To what extent are the writers' narratives of identity and community informed by the social and historical contexts of the U.S. and the Chinese diaspora? And finally, where do the "grand narratives" of modernity, culture tradition, Orientalism, and postcolonialism come into play in my descriptions of these writers?

The discussions of these three writers in the preceding chapters contain my answers to these questions; however, I think it is necessary to address these writers as a group in order to clarify my general theoretical approach. Based on my reading experience of the works of Lin, Bai, and Chin, I would like to emphasize in the conclusion that cross-cultural works should be read cross-culturally. By that, I am referring to my attempt to enlarge the scope of Asian American studies to include the space of the so-called "third world." In more specific terms, with respect to Lin and Bai, I have found that the perspectives of race, gender, and class which have shaped the theoretical terrain of ethnic studies, need to be reconsidered in conjunction with modern Chinese history as

understood by these writers, for although these two authors are aware of the patterns of social stratification described by these perspectives, this awareness has not stopped them from constructing "grand narratives" of their own with regard to modernization and cultural tradition. What has to be factored in when considering these three authors together is the different social contexts of the United States and the Chinese diaspora as well as different expectations that these authors hold toward literature and its relationship with society. All these forms of differentiation suggest that it is extremely difficult to think about the Asian American cultural community as a uniform group organized, as some writers and critics would claim, by the equal share of its members in a particular cultural tradition. Ironically, all three writers have made that assumption to varying degrees.

Although I began this project by criticizing Asian American studies' simplistic reading of immigrant literature, this project is not about positing the perspective of Asian American studies against that of modern Chinese studies. However, Chin's case, when juxtaposed with Lin and Bai, raises the important question of Asian American cultural historiography, a topic that so far has not been addressed sufficiently by ethnic scholars. In his novel Donald Duk, Chin tries to present Chinatown as a historically informed, sub-cultural, and uniquely hybridized community. However, this significant attempt to document the culture of Chinatown is skewed in more than one way by the writer's totalizing perceptions of Chinese culture and entire Asia. Similar simplistic attempts of organizing the community based on a cultural agenda can be observed in the cases of Lin and Bai as well. Thus, arguing against the culturally iconoclastic perspective offered by Chin and other editors of Aiiieeeee, my project claims as its purpose to rethink on a

transnational scale the relationship between the cultural politics of a particular moment and the extremely heterogenous cultural past, to which cultural politics often claims to recover or abandon. (The cases of Lin and Bai testify that their past is not purely American or Chinese, but already hybridized). While acknowledging cultural politics as a significant part of literary history, I would also like to remind my readers not to fall into the trap of certain romanticized categories of "origin," "tradition," and the "nation." Historical construction is supposed to be unsettling. In a way, the process of re-reading these three authors has allowed me to experience on a much smaller scale the vexing feeling often accompanied with the process of deconstruction and historicizing. Although the process of re-reading is finished, I find that these three authors have raised more questions than they have given answers. In the following pages, I would like to formulate these questions in somewhat theoretical terms, so that other scholars in Asian American and modern Chinese studies can join in the discussion.

I. Hybridity and the Global Context

My discussions of the three writers are contextualized loosely against the background of the East-West encounter. Foregrounding the role of the writers' subject positions in constructing narratives that help them make sense of this global event and position themselves in this context, I realize that in each of the three cases the space for identity has been searched in historical terms with regard to the past and in cross-cultural terms with regard to the "foreign." For example, Lin's public image of "true interpreter of China" in the U.S. has to be traced back to the other image of him as the Western-trained enlightened intellectual in China. The cultural milieu of Shanghai in the 1930s reflects both

regional characteristic of so-called "semi-colonialism" and the nation-wide concerns with enlightenment and modernity. As we can see from the literature in an English language journal edited mostly by Chinese intellectuals from 1928 to 1945, colonialism was one of the central concerns of modernist intellectuals such as Lin Yutang, but at the same time, instead of taking a militant anti-West perspective, many intellectuals, including Lin Yutang, advocated for a more proper form of appropriation of the West conducive to what they considered to be the "authentic" Chinese tradition.[1] Hence, Lin Yutang's English-language cultural nationalist project My Country and My People. In this book, Lin justified his impartiality as the "true interpreter" of China by confessing his double loyalty to both the Enlightenment ideal and Chinese tradition. These two terms can be perceived as conflictual or even mutually exclusive in other contexts, such as in the cases of Bai Xianyong and Frank Chin; however, as many other Western-trained intellectuals of his time, Lin was enamored by the prospect of modernity as a universal concept; yet at the same time, he had a strong urge to re-establish an authentic cultural tradition. His English work My Country and My People was published shortly after the outbreak of the anti-Japanese war. The desperate need to mobilize the masses further complicated the ambivalent relationship between modernism and nationalism. Lin's English representation of China in this book and his subsequent novel Moment in Peking quickly became one of the several competing forms of nationalism during the war. In the U.S. context, Lin's

---

[1]This argument seems to confirm Shu-mei Shih's remark that "the absence of a tight-fitting structure [in Shanghai in 1930s] also afforded Chinese intellectuals ideological, political, and cultural options beyond the typical Manichean choices of anticolonial nationalism or antinationalist collaboration" (939).

English works gained enormous popularity partly because of the positive image of China during the war. This popularity enabled Lin to continue to produce works of literature, philosophy, and history and live up to his reputation of the "self-made" spokesperson for China. Lin's English works generally take a universalistic as well as China-specific cultural position. The flaw in this position, as it seems to me, is obviously exposed when he ventures out to deal with the ontology of Chinese immigrants in this country in the novel Chinatown Family. While Lin attempts to represent the specific history of immigration and its situation in the U.S., he reveals the tendency of pressing the history of immigration into service to demonstrate the unity and strength of China as a nation.

While Lin Yutang's bilingual background and culturally privileged position contributed to his permeability between the East and the West, a similar kind of education created a rather different profile of identity in the case of Bai Xianyong. Bai's cross-cultural project is grounded in a strong sense of alienation from the mainstream modern Chinese tradition initiated by the May Fourth Movement as well as the feeling of displacement in the West. Although Bai uses a sentimental rhetoric to describe his cultural belonging, his trajectory to re-align himself and his contemporary writers from Taiwan with the much glorified literary tradition of the May Fourth should not be taken for granted as a natural "return" to cultural roots; rather, as I have argued in the second chapter, his discourse of love to a certain extent particularizes culture to the specific locales of New York, Chicago, Taipei, and Hong Kong. Selectively appropriating from both classical Chinese literature and modernist expressions of sexuality, this discourse also favors the private over the public, the individual over the collective. It is initially used as a strategy to represent the culturally

and sexually displaced individual, but later on, it also contributes to a nativist definition of culture. This discourse posits a privileged individual as the spokesperson of history while at the same time defining a self-conscious position of marginality. When this position of marginality is used as an exclusive perspective to consider the overall social structure, as in the novel Crystal Boys, it suppresses some of the other sites of oppression depicted in Bai's earlier works.

In spite of his insistence on an exclusively American identity of Asian Americans, the cultural agenda of Frank Chin is played out on a cross-cultural context as well. If we trace Frank Chin's representation of Asia and Asian culture, we can detect the progression from self-conscious alienation to romanticist appropriation. In contrast to Lin's grand-scale generalizations of Chinese culture and Bai's individualist marginal position, the issue of community comes up in Chin's works. Chin's changing perceptions toward Chinese culture is in sync with his ambivalent position vis-a-vis the Chinese American community. Like the protagonist of his play The Year of the Dragon, the Asian American intellectual depicted by Chin is doubly alienated both in mainstream American society and in the immigrant family. Therefore, when reconstructing a "heroic" cultural tradition, Chin goes overboard to presume a mystified linear version of continuity between a small number of classical Chinese novels and the history of immigrant labor in the U.S.. Feminist critics have taken Chin to task for further displacing femininity in his discourse. It is also important to point out that Chin's romanticist re-creation of tradition leaves little room for readers to investigate other existing forms of hybridity of the East and the West in immigrant communities in the U.S., particularly those that have been informed by the historical

experience of modernity in the Chinese diaspora. Chin's own perception of Asia is split: he sees Asia partially as the "third world" marginalized by the "first world," and partially as the cultural "home" whose selective resources can be invigorating. Neither perception can do justice to the increasingly heterogenous Chinese community in this country.

Probably because among the three writers, Frank Chin most consciously participates in the politics of representation, his writings exemplify most clearly what Robert Young has described as the "double logic" of hybridization: hybridization as a form of homogenization and as a form of subversion (25). In fact, in all three cases, if we take a cross-cultural and historical perspective, we shall find that the forces of homogenization and subversion are distributed unevenly with regard to American and Chinese cultural contexts. Take Chin as an example. In his work Donald Duk, he takes a radically constructivist position toward official history of the Chinese workers' construction of the railroad. He subverts written history by inserting fantastical elements of Chinese culture. In this way, he contests the boundary between myth and history. However, with regard to the Chinese cultural context, Chin shows that the cultural myths are passed down to the next generation in a patrilineal fashion for a well-defined didactic purpose. Little space is left to contest the constructed "objective" perspective of the father figure, or to introduce other historically informed forms of hybridization. That's why while Chin starts with a "constructivist" cultural position, he ends up guarding a singular "essentialist" interpretation of tradition.

The uneven pull in hybrid cultural practice to re-create a certain "center" should remind us that we should take hybridity as a problematic, rather than as a solution or

unifying principle for a particular academic discipline. There are certain themes that link these writers together, for example, their imagination of exile and home, and their perceptions of culture for the purpose of constructing identity and community. At the same time, however, fundamental conceptual differences exist among three case studies, such as what counts as culture and tradition and how literature's social function is to be materialized. I argue that these perspectival differences are in themselves the condition of heterogeneity in the diaspora. It is something that academic disciplines such as Asian American studies and modern Chinese studies would inevitably have to come to terms if we try to take literary studies beyond the model of the nation-state.

II. Linguistic Hybridity and the Problem of Translation

Bakhtin's theory of linguistic hybridization in novelistic discourse might enable us to think about appropriation in the specific terms that relates to literature. Bakhtin locates the creative possibility of literary discourse within the moment when literature appropriates social language that is already divided in itself. He argues in his essay "Discourse of the Novel" that the intentionality of a discourse should be understood not just in terms of its "normative unity," but also in terms of its inherent division. He writes, "Actual social life and historical becoming create within an abstractly unitary national language a multitude of concrete worlds, a multitude of bonded verbal-ideological and social belief systems; within these various systems (identitical in the abstract) are elements of language filled with various semantic and axiological content and each with its own different sound" (288). Literature parodies social heteroglot and in doing so, it creates a "common plane" by which the different world views represented by social dialects are juxtaposed and

compete against each other.

Bakhtin's description of the novel as a heteroglossic discourse might seems to be a straightforward study of the form of literature at first sight; in fact, his discussions of the novelistic form are more complex particularly in that he takes into account the limitation of appropriation in its process. Describing writing in terms of "populating it with [one's] own intentions" or "making it one's own," Bakhtin tells us that "not all words for just anyone submit equally easily to this appropriation, to this seizure and transformation into private property: many words stubbornly resist, others remain alien, sound foreign in the mouth of the one who appropriated them and who now speaks them; they cannot be assimilated into his context and fall out of it; it is as if they put themselves in quotation marks against the will of the speaker" (294). This view towards literature suggests that although the novel is an "intentionally" and "artistically organized" system, the novelistic form is not necessarily fixed or immutable. Bakhtin's description of the production of heteroglossia reminds us to read the novel as in itself a site of contention. The author of the heteroglossic discourse of the novel has to navigate in the intersection between the alien and the home, the self and the other as he puts the social languages into an artistic form. He is not totally immune to restrictions and possibilities of existing social dialects. The prose writer "speaks, as it were, through language, a language that has somehow more or less materialized, become objectivized, that he merely ventriloquates" (Bakhtin, 299).

Bakhtin's description of the production of literary language which highlights the moments of translation, formal experimentation, and the uses of innovative speech acts

can be helpful to us to think about how to describe "translated identity." As my descriptions in the preceding chapters have shown, the awareness of historical and personal displacement is to a certain extent manifested in terms of endless and nervous adjustments in language and form. In more specific terms, in the case of Lin, literary genre almost becomes an exclusive site for the writer to negotiate allegiance and difference vis-a-vis China and the West. Lin's interest in bringing back a specific essay genre "Xiao Pen Wen" of the pre-modern era to the modern context of 1930s is a cultural statement targeted toward modernity and cultural tradition. His highly experimental English essays, some of which were re-writings of his own Chinese essays, reflected the mixed audience Lin tried to address and the degree of freedom as well as limitation in the cultural milieu of Shanghai. His novel Moment in Peking takes up the aesthetics of the classical novel Dreams of the Red Chamber and at the same time shows the influence of the social realist novel, in particular the Bildungsroman theme. In Bai's case, this negotiation takes place more on the level of syntax, perspective, and language. Although this negotiation conveys a sense of "resolution" in his novel Crystal Boys, the fragmented syntax in his short story "Hong Kong 1960," the naturalistic/romanticist style in his short stories about immigrant experience preserve a record of ambivalence and anxiety and multiple sites of identity. The conventional linear genealogy of an "overseas" Chinese writer's glorious return to "roots" and "home" does not hold true, for it helps erase these meaningful experimentations. A convincing illustration of the damage of this romantic China-centric discourse is testified in the canonization of one of Bai's short story collection Taipei Characters while completely leaving out his immigrant stories in New Yorkers.

Bai can be considered as a representative of the generation of writers from Taiwan, and he has to a certain formulated the consciousness of the "overseas" literature. Examining Bai's literary and critical writings, however, I was brought to light that the modern Chinese literary historiography defined by Bai in his many critical essays and interviews given in Taiwan, does not faithfully represent his own literary practice. For example, his exploration of the theme of exile in the literature by writers from Taiwan consistently shows an attempt to write himself back into the so-called "May Fourth tradition" and at the same time marks many detours into subjectivity or psychological symbolism. In his other essays, Bai speaks about the literary historiography in polarized terms between the so-called "social consciousness" and the "literary form", between "utilitarianism" and pure aestheticism. Consequently, the so-called "overseas" perspective becomes either the polarized "other" or one and the same with the national perspective. This perspective often does not convey the translated identity of the author.

Lin Yutang and Bai Xianyong have utilized the extremely tenuous, vulnerable, yet potentially creative cultural locale called the "overseas." What is interesting about Frank Chin is that although he does not consciously engage in a dialogue with modern Chinese literary history, his translated identity is constructed not just in relation to mainstream American culture, but also Chinese culture. Just like in the case of Bai Xianyong, Chin's theory with regard to marginality, cultural translation, and Asian American identity does not totally describe the process of his cultural practice. In his earlier works, such as the play The Year of the Dragon, the voices of several figures of the "foreign" are still preserved and incorporated in the overall psychological depiction of Chinatown as an

alienating space. The gradual mobilization of Chin's cultural nationalism seems to parallel the loss of these "foreign" voices. Chin's discourse becomes increasingly monologic rather than heteroglossic. Although Chinese culture is much glorified in his critical essays, his creative works mark the gradual disappearance of any other perspective except for that of the narrator.

Thus, the considerations of linguistic, stylistic, cultural, and historical translation are extremely important for us to conceptualize the geography of the Chinese diaspora and its diversity. Frank Chin's attempt to police the development of literature by regulating the practice of other literary genres, such as autobiography, and through looking for a "Chinese" form can offer us a negative reminder that no singular form should be epitomized as the only legitimate style of representing the self and the community.

III. Historicity and Dispersion.

In his book Rescuing History from the Nation, historian Prasenjit Duara attempts to locate the "dispersion" of history in the context of Chinese nationalist imagination. Contradicting Benedict Anderson's theory that modern nationalist imagination takes place by creating homogenous self-awareness as subject of the nation, Duara suggests that community building in India and China involves a deliberate appropriation of historically existing models. This means that the modern nation is only one of the many competing forms of political alliance. This process of nation formation is completed not just through defining oneself as the subject of the nation according to Anderson, but also by mobilizing the boundaries of community and constructing what Duara calls the narrative of "closure," made up of the linear dimension of "descent" and a horizontal differentiation of "dissent"

(Duara, 66). The significance of Duara's theory lies in that by linking modern nation-building with existing frameworks of social identification, he suggests that many forms of community can exist at the same time. If that is the case, then instead of examining Chinese history according to a pre-defined model of nationhood, we can keep our eyes open to various forms of collective identification and as Duara suggests, attend to "the moment and mode of appropriation of a dispersed history and its reconstitution," in the process of creating a particular form of collective identification (78). Inherent in his revisionist thinking of the nation is a meaningful conceptualization of the past and its connection with the present. Duara suggests while history preserves the past in its materiality, we should also consider the process of the making of history and try to consider the past "in its proper dispersion."

Following the lead of Duara's argument, I suggest that we can read the three narratives about community presented by Lin Yutang, Bai Xianyong, and Frank Chin in their novels Chinatown Family, Crystal Boys, and Donald Duk as historical and competing "narratives of closure." In all three narratives, certain forms of the historical past are preserved and translated into the individual context of the present. In each case, this translation involves singling out a particular trend of the past and thereby creating a particular pattern of inclusion and exclusion. In my readings of these three novels, I will emphasize the cross-cultural context, in which these three novels are situated, and its effect of pushing for the exposure of what Duara has called the "bifurcation" of collective history.

As narratives about "home," the three novels use the "natural" family as the basic model of community, but at the same time, they all go beyond the representation of an

individual family and contain certain cultural agendas. Lin Yutang's Chinatown Family was written ten years later than the publication of My Country and My People. Although in essence it is consistent with Lin's theory on China's national characters and cultural spirit, this novel has an independent value of its own, for it contains a new appropriation of the history of immigration and is set in the working class neighborhood of New York's Chinatown. The heroic spirit of the Fong family to survive in a foreign land is intensified by the history of the persecution of Chinese immigrants, which Lin probably had read about in English language journals in Shanghai in 1930s. Lin glorifies the survivor Tom Fong, Sr., the patriarchal leader of the family, for manifesting a "spirit of patience and persistence." In My Country and My People, as we remember, patience and persistence are among the much celebrated national characters of Chinese culture. Lin had argued in My Country and My People, which was written right after the imperialist conquest of Japan over China, that China still retained "racial stamina and power for resistance" even though it has lost its "pristine vigor." The new context of Chinatown both follows the overall script of national characters and forces the writer to make further modifications to his philosophical and cultural discussions. One of these changes can be detected in the novel's emphasis on learning and education and the Bildungsroman structure of the novel, for learning is an important strategy to mobilize the already existing discourse of national character and solidify the boundary of the overseas Chinese community. It is in the process of constructing this narrative of closure that the limitations of the author's subject position are revealed.

The community leader, Old Tuck, is a heroic character who has led a group of

immigrants to travel across the continent of the U.S. and is respected by the residents of Chinatown. In spite of his high status, however, the writer tells us that Old Tuck is not a traditional scholar, as are most characters of Lin's other novel Moment in Peking. He is a sincere student of Chinese culture and has taught himself to read classical Chinese at the age of thirty-five and conducts his daily behavior "as if he had read the three thousand years of Chinese history" (81). For the younger generation, such as Tom Fong, the textbook is bicultural. Like the immigrant protagonist of Anzia Yezierska's story "America and I," Tom Fong's idealistic perception of America is sustained by his innovative reinterpretions of certain fundamental American texts, such as "The Declaration of Independence." At the same time, however, while American culture is supposed to teach Tom the concepts of individual rights and freedom, Tom's education would not be complete without Chinese lessons, particularly Taoist philosophy. Thus, Tom Fong discovers the Taoist text in a romantic relationship with Elsie, the Chinese teacher in Chinatown.

In this novel, Lin's celebration of Taoist philosophy is connected with his recognition of the fluctuating political situations in post-war America, particularly with regard to America's foreign policies toward China. Taoist philosophy, Lin seems to suggest in this novel, is an important means of maintaining a complete self-identity in moments of political turmoil. Lin's belief in Taoism brings him in affinity with the so-called "common man." When Tom Fong., Sr. dies in a tragic car accident, Lin writes in a parabolic style, "How does the common sparrow multiply and spread and flourish everywhere? How has it lived so near to men unharmed and yet has become the most numerous species in this

world? Because its feathers are gray, because it does not contend and is unnoticed of men" (149). However, Lin's endorsement of the value of the "common man" is contradictory to his emphasis on the importance of learning, for learning as represented by Lin is not a natural process; it is the deliberate process of forging a narrative of identity based on one particular trend of traditional culture. The writer's subjective urge to maintain a consistent identity is shown through the many adjustments that are made to his cultural philosophy. The writer not only replaces the Chinese cultural texts with bicultural ones, but also changes the traditional pedagogy into a relatively "modern" and individual-oriented teaching method. Tom's romance with Elsie, for example, supposedly awakens the dormant Chinese consciousness in him and enables him to bond with the nation on an intuitive and personal level.

Through employing pre-existing cultural texts, the writer makes "Chineseness" into a pedagogy, something that needs to be preserved and reinforced through learning. It can be argued that the textual reinforcement is materialized through binary opposition between "naturalism" and "culturalism." Set against the background of the working-class immigrant family, this intention more accurately reflects the point of view of the omniscient narrator than the so-called "lowly man." Furthermore, the boundaries of Chinatown are intensified by contrasting those who have learned and those who have not. The second brother Fred, for example, who has chosen a non-traditional profession of a salesman, is portrayed as power hungry and is gradually corrupted by the commercialism outside Chinatown. Even his physical features become increasingly foreign looking. Apparently, Lin's imaginary Chinatown is constructed to ward off certain "foreign" influences in spite of the writer's

public image of the cosmopolitan "modern" man.

Bai's Crystal Boys takes the theme of romance a step further by integrating literary modernism's interest in symbolism and psychoanalysis into the representation of sexuality. Whereas marginality is defined in terms of traditional culture, class, and geographic location in Lin's case, sexual orientation seems to be the primary category that frames Bai's consciousness of marginality and exile. The imaginary community depicted in Crystal Boys is not fixed to any particular location. As Bai argues in one interview, the novel's symbolic representation of the New Park can be easily transplanted to Tokyo or the United States. This guise of "worldliness" however, does not completely erase the traces of cultural and social boundaries in the course of constructing the community.

I have mentioned in Chapter Three that Bai's gay politics is constructed based on an idea of equality. In fact, the notion of equality goes beyond the realm of gender politics. I read Bai's novel Crystal Boys as an imagined community constructed on the basis of love to illustrate the notion of equality as a social ideal. The novel is about a group of characters that share the common background of homelessness by their homosexual orientation. In spite of the exploitative relationship that could differentiate them from one another, the writer suggests that love is a binding force that unites them. Considering the many levels of cultural signifier in this novel, love acts as a totalizing discourse that transforms a primarily sexual discourse into a social humanitarian philosophy targeted toward certain social problems of poverty, juvenile delinquency, power, and social authority.

How does love manage to establish a community on the presumption of commonality

and universality? The mutual recognition of pain is crucial in this process. Take the relationship between the speaker A Qing and one of the major characters Wang Kuilong as an example. In his youth, Wang's love towards another young man nicknamed Phoenix Boy has led to murder and exile. After years of wandering in the U.S., however, Wang has learned to love in a way that cures rather than afflicts pain. His passion of love arises out of the recognition of pain as the basis of communication across class, race, and the geographic boundaries of nation. As the writer suggests in the following description, Wang Kuilong's identification with A Qing occurs in the moment of turning him into a spectacle of pain.

> "Give me another chance to take care of you." He was pleading with me in the dark. He wondered how I could have the same kind of eyes, eyes filled with such pain they seemed about to pop out of their sockets (109).

A Qing, however, resists the paternalistic resonance in Wang Kuilong's confession of love. Unlike Wang Kuilong, A Qing comes from a poor soldier's family and has lived a shiftless life that leaves him vulnerable to abuse ever since he leaves his family. He says,

> During the more than three months of wandering alone, never knowing where my next meal was coming from, when nights and days had been turned upside down, on more than one occasion I'd awakened in the middle of the night in some low-class hotel behind the train station, or in some stranger's bed in a filthy, sweltering inn in Wanhua, once even on the steps of the museum in front of the park, and in that first waking moment had felt a longing for some place I could call my own. But every time someone wanted to keep me, I always found an excuse to slip away. (109)

However, although the writer seems to recognize the difference between A Qing and Wang Kuilong, A Qing's perspective is not made responsible to shape the novelistic narrative; consequently, his ambivalence becomes a transparent conduit to articulate the

illusory prospect of freedom. His subjectivity is not liberated to define his agency over the structure of the community or his own life. Therefore, although as I have argued in Chapter Three, Bai's discourse of love, which fuses Chinese classical romanticism with the writer's sentiments of exile, contains a relatively liberal attitude toward difference, paternal lineage precedes all other kinds of social relationships in the definition of tradition..

This novel's utopian appeal is articulated through the portrayal of the bond between father and son on the basis of common suffering. The negative effect of this kind of utopianism lies in that it not only erases any other form of difference, for example, sexuality, but also reinstates the power of the father. The gay community is sustained by wealthy and influential patrons, such as Papa Fu, a retired army officer who shields the younger generation of wanderers from his own experience of losing his gay son to death. His pain deeply touches A Qing and forces him to reconcile in his mind with his own father who has abandoned him. Papa Fu says, "All you kids know how to do is be resentful of your fathers, but have you ever thought about how much your fathers have suffered because of you, or how deeply?" (264) The emotional entanglements between the father and the son disguises and displaces other forms of inequality, which could potentially threaten the unity of this community. For example, with the help of patrilinear relationships, primitivist characters are portrayed as non-threatening; consequently cultural difference becomes subsumed under the category of patriarchal social order. The character referred to as "the primitive A Xiong" with "muscles like tempered steel" and "huge hands ... as powerful as the paws of a bear" is accepted by the community after he is tamed and adopted by Chief Yang. At another moment in the novel, primitivism is disposed into the

psychological and aesthetic category. It is presented as a "natural" emotion which is only vaguely homosexual. At the funeral of Papa Fu, Wang Kuilong, who like the son of Papa Fu, has been expelled from the family by his own father, "fell to his knees ... like a wounded animal, his agonizing death cry shattering the night calm as it rose to heaven from a deep, dark cave" (307). This emotional moment does not just indicate the reconciliation of the rebellious son with the father; it further betrays the fact that the writer's naturalistic romanticism evolves only around the authority of the father.

In the case of Frank Chin, the picture of the community seems to be also constructed upon the singularity in terms of cultural tradition. Donald Duk has the polemical purpose of reviving the "counter-memory" of mainstream history. As a main character of his novel Donald Duk says, quoting from Confucius, it is important to "restore ways that have been abandoned and recover knowledge that has been lost." However, what "lost" historical knowledge should be restored and in what form seems to remain more as a question than a solution.

Chin traces the "lost knowledge" both in terms of the construction of the railroad and the popular culture of Chinatown in a fantastical structure that parallels dream with reality. The boundary between contemporary life and historical knowledge is completely broken down. In his dream, Donald sees Chinese railroad workers conducting their daily activities just as in contemporary Chinatown. There are Cantonese foods, the customary festivities of the dragon dance and kungfu shows, and even the usual business functions such as the Chinese herbalist store at the construction site of the railroad. The transfiguration of Kwan Kung, the deity figure that appears in many Chinese restaurants, into the Chinese foreman

Kwan for the railroad workers also suggests the penetration of the present into the past. Blending dream with reality in a surrealistic style, Frank Chin seems to be more overtly aggressive than Lin Yutang and Bai Xianyong in challenging the boundaries of what constitutes "real" and "historical" knowledge. However, this challenge takes a perspective that too quickly endorses a particular form of recovery of the past from a transparent perspective of the present. Like the other two writers, Chin chooses very selectively from the extremely heterogeneous culture of the Chinese immigrant community in the U.S.. As Asian American feminist critics have argued, Chin singles out the masculinist "heroic" culture as the only acceptable tradition of Chinese American community. In addition to this feminist perspective, what also seems problematic to me is that Chin's glorifications of Cantonese folk culture and the local heroes of Chinatown dissuades the reader from investigating the rich inter-textuality of everyday life in terms of regionality and the intersection with written culture. The character Kwan Kung that has inspired many writings of Frank Chin, is more than a deity figure worshipped by many overseas Chinese in contemporary everyday life; he is also a historical figure dramatically recreated in the classical novel The Three Kingdoms. The translation between this historical source to the everyday life of Chinatown must be rather complex, and Chin's novel does not encourage us to look into this issue.

These three versions of community seem to pose the notion of transnational historicity as a problematic. I have tried to phrase this problematic by breaking it down into a series of questions: how should we trace our lineage without closing up the site of displacement that we start with? In the process of cultural translation, where do "other histories" come

in? And, how can we avoid suppressing other forms of displacement with our singular narratives of oppression, victimization, and identity?[2] Although these three case studies pertain to an earlier episode of Asian American history, these questions are by no means obsolete. Colleen Lye's recent study of the transmutation of a canonical Asian American text M. Butterfly within a different national situation Singapore is at least one of the reminders that there is no guarantee for an absolutely "radical" reading when literary texts travel. Lye's article, entitled "M. Butterfly and the Rhetoric of Anti-essentialism" (1995), argues that complex transnational politics tends to be replaced by certain decontextualized and simplified gender perceptions when a text like M. Butterfly travels. Therefore, the case studies of these three historical figures can at least help situate our contemporary multicultural and ethnic literature and politics within a historical perspective.

---

[2]All three novels bear the uncanny similarity of preferring patrilineal transmission as the core of tradition. As a consequence, active participation in the establishment of meaningful connections between the cultural past and contemporary politics of identity is reserved as a privilege for men. In a way, Lin Yutang's case is particularly useful as a reminder of the implication of "women's issues" in the process of creating Chinese modernity. Like other modern Chinese intellectuals, Lin's position toward women's issue is inconsistent from his earlier to later works. Militant against feudalism in the 1920s, Lin took a liberal stance toward women's issue. His play "Confucius Meets Nancy," for example, ridicules the clumsy patriarchal figure Confucius and portrays the Westernized and sexually provocative "liberated" woman Queen Nan Zi in a positive light. However, as Lin becomes more overtly concerned with the binarism of modernity and tradition, he gradually adopts a more conservative position towards women's issues. As his world enlarges, female characters and the symbolic representation of femininity increasingly become a property of home. The notion of historicity as dispersion is very much necessary to bring to public the figure of femininity.

List of Works Cited

Ahmed, Aijaz. In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures. London: Verso, 1992.

Arkush, R. David and Leo Ou-fan Lee. Land Without Ghosts. Berkeley: U of California P, 1989.

A Ying ed. Fan Mei Hua Gong Jin Yue Wen Xue Ji (Anthology of Writings against American Exclusion of Chinese Laborors). Beijing: Zhong Hua Shu Ju, 1960.

Bakhtin, M. M. The Dialogic Imagination. Austin: U of Texas P, 1981.

Bai Xianyong (Pai, Hsien-Yung). Crystal Boys. Trans. Howard Goldblatt. San Francisco: Gay Sunshine Press, 1990.

---. Diliuzhi Shouzhi. (The Sixth Finger) Hong Kong: Huahan Wenhua Shiye Gongsi, 1988.

---. "Hong Kong 1960." Literature: East and West. IX, 4 (1965): 362-369.

---. Jimo de Shiqisui. (Lonely Seventeen) Taipei: Yuanching Chupanshe, 1976.

---. Mingxing Kafei Guan. (The Star Cafe: Collected Essays of Bai Xianyong). Taipei: Huangguan Chupanshe, 1987.

---. Nuyue Ke. (New Yorkers) Hong Kong: Wenxing Xunkang, 1975.

---. Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream: Tales of Taipei Characters. Trans. Bai Xianyong and Patia Yasin. Bloomington: Indiana U P, 1982.

---. "The Wandering Chinese: The Theme of Exile in Taiwan Fiction." Iowa Review. 7.2-3 (1976): 205-212.

Benjamin, Walter. Illuminations: Essays and Reflections. New York: Schocken Books, 1968.

Bhabha, Homi. The Location of Cultures. London: Routeledge,1994.

---, ed. Nation and Narration. London: Routledge, 1990.

Bi He Guan Zhu Ren. "Huang Jin Shi Jie." (The Golden World) Huang Jin Shi Jie, Ku She Hui. (The Golden World, Bitter Society) Ed. Mao Defu. Zheng Zhou: Zhong Zhou Chu Ban She, 1985.

Biggers, Earl Derr. Charlie Chan Carries On. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1930.

Brennan, Timothy. "The National Longing for Form." Nation and Narration. Ed. Homi Bhabha. London: Routledge, 1990. 44-70.

Butler, Judith. Bodies that Matter. New York: Routledge, 1993.

Chan, Jeffrey et. al. "An Introduction to Chinese-American and Japanese-American Literatures." Three American Literatures. Ed. Houston Baker. New York, MLA, 1982.

---. The Big Aiiieeeee. New York: Meridian, 1991.

Chan, Sucheng, ed. Entry Denied: Exclusion and the Chinese Community in America, 1882-1943. Philadelphia: Temple U P, 1991.

Chang, Sung-sheng Yvonne. Modernism and the Nativist Resistance. Durham: Duke U P, 1993.

Chatterjee, Partha. The Nation and Its Fragments. Princeton, Princeton U P, 1993.

Chen, Pinyuan. Zai Dongxifan Wenhua Zhuangji Zhong. (On the Collision between Eastern and Western Cultures) Hangzhou: Zhejiang Wenyi Chubanshe, 1987.

Chen, Ruosi. "Prologue: Chinese Overseas Writers and Nativism" Nativism Overseas: Contemporary Chinese Women Writers. Ed. Hsin-sheng C. Kao. Albany: State U of New York, 1993.

Cheung, King-kok. "Don't Tell: Imposed Silences in The Color Purple and The Woman Warrior." PMLA 103 (1988): 162-74.

---. "The Woman Warrior verus The Chinaman Pacific: Must a Chinese American Critic Choose between Feminism and Heroism?" Conflicts in Feminism. Eds. Marianne Hirsch and Evelyn Fox Keller. New York: Routledge, 1990: 234-251.

Chin, Frank. "Back Talk." Counterpoint: Perspectives on Asian America. Ed. Emma Gee et al., Los Angeles: Asian American Studies Center, U of California, 1976.

---. The Chickencoop Chinaman and The Year of the Dragon. Seattle: U of Washington P, 1981.

---. Chinaman Pacific and Frisco R. R. Co. Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 1988.

---. "Come All Ye Asian American Writers the Real and the Fake." The Big Aiiieeeee Ed. Jeffery Paul Chan, et. al. New York, Meridian, 1991.

---. Donald Duk. Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 1991.

---. "Food for All His Dead." Asian American Authors. Ed. Kai-yu Hsu. New York: Houghton Mifflon Company, 1972.

---. "Interview: Roland Winters." Amerasia Journal 2 (Fall 1973): 3-25.

---. "Racist Love." Seeing through Shuck. Ed. Richard Kostelanetz. New York: Ballantine, 1972.

---. "This Is Not an Autobiography." Genre 18 (1985): 109-130.

---. "Where I'm Coming from." Bridge: an Asian American Perspective 4.3 (1976): 28-29.

Chin, Frank and Frank Ching. "Who's Afraid of Frank Chin, or Is It Ching?" Bridge: an Asian American Perspective 2.2 (1972): 29-34.

Chin, Frank, et. al. "Uncle Frank's Fakebook of Fairy Tales for Asian American Moms and Dads." Amerasia Journal 18.2 (1992): 69-87.

The China Critic: the Only Chinese Owned and Edited in English Weekly. Shanghai. May 31, 1928 - Dec. 27, 1945.

Chiu, Jeannie. "Uncanny Doubles: Nationalism and Repression in Frank Chin's 'Railroad Standard Time'." Critical Mass 1.1. (Fall 1993): 93-107.

Cho, Fiona. "Daddy, I Don't Know What You're Talking." Critical Mass 1.1 (Fall 1993): 57-62.

Chow, Rey. Writing Diaspora. Bloomington: Indiana U P, 1993.

Chua, Cheng Lok. "Gold Mountain: Chinese Versions of the American Dream in Lin Yutang, Louis Chu, and Maxine Hong Kingston." Ethnic Groups 4 (1982): 33-59.

Clifford, James. "Traveling Cultures" Cultural Studies. Ed.Lawrence Grossberg, et. al. New York: Routeledge, 1992. 96-116.

---. "On Ethnographic Allegory." Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography. Ed. James Clifford, et. al. Berkeley: U of California P, 1989. 98-121

Crapanzano, Vincent. "Hermes' Delimma: The Masking of Subversion in Ethnographic Description." Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography. Ed. James Clifford, et. al. Berkeley: U of California P, 1989. 51-76.

Davis, Robert Murry. "Frank Chin: An Interview with Robert Murry Davis." Amerasia 14.2 (1988): 81-95.

De Man, Paul. Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism. Second Edition. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1971.

Dikotter, Frank. The Discourse of Race in Modern China. Stanford: Stanford U P, 1992.

Duara, Prasenjit. Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995.

Gellner, Ernest. Nations and Nationalism. Ithaca: Cornell U P, 1983.

Gilroy, Paul. The Black Atlantic. Cambridge: Harvard U P, 1993.

Gilroy, Paul. "Cultural Studies and Ethnic Absolutism." Cultural Studies. Ed. Paula Treichler, et al. New York: Routledge, 1992: 331-360.

Hom, Marlon K, ed. Songs of Gold Mountain. Berkeley: U of California P, 1987.

Hom, Marlon K. "A Case of Mutual Exclusion: Portrayals by Immigrant and American-born Chinese of Each Other in Literature." Amerasia Journal 11.2 (1984): 29-45.

Hsia, C. T. A History of Modern Chinese Fiction. New Haven:Yale U P, 1971.

Hu, Shih and Lin Yutang. China's Own Critic: a Selection of Essays. Peiping: China United Press, 1931.

Hu, Feng. "Lin Yutang Lun" (On Lin Yutang) Zhongguo Xinwenxue Daxi. (Anthology of New Chinese Literature) Vol. 1. Shanghai: Wenyi Chubanshe, 1987.

James, Mertice M. and Dorothy Brown, eds. The Book Review Digest. New York: H. W. Wilson Company, 1935.

Kaplan, Amy. The Social Construction of American Realism. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1988.

Kim, Elaine H. Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context. Philadelphia: Temple U P, 1983.

Kim, Elaine. "'Such Opposite Creatures': Men and Women in Asian American Literature." Michigan Quarterly Review Winter (1990): 68-93.

---. "Preface" Charlie Chan Is Dead. Ed. Jessica Hagedorn. New York: Penguin Books, 1993.

Kingston, Maxine Hong. "Cultural Misreadings by American Reviewers." Asian and Western Writers in Dialogue: New Cultural Identities. Ed. Guy Amirthanayagam. London: Macmillan., 1982: 55-65.

Lears, T. J. No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformatio of American Culture. New York: Pantheon Books, 1981.

Lee, Leo Ou-fan and Andrew Nathan. "The Beginnings of Mass Culture: Journalism and Fiction in the Late Ch'ing and Beyond." Popular Culture in Late Imperial China. Ed. David Johnson, et. al. Berkeley: U of California P, 1985.

Lee, Leo Ou-fan. "On the Margins of the Chinese Discourse: Some Personal Thoughts on the Cultural Meanings of the Periphery." Daedalus 120 (1991): 207-226.

---. "In Search of Modernity: Some Reflections on a New Mode of Consciousness in Twentieth-Century Chinese History and Literature." Eds. Paul Cohen, et. al. Ideas Across Cultures: Essays on Chinese Thought in Honor of Benjamin I. Schwartz. Cambridge: Harvard U P, 1990: 109-35.

Lim, Shirley Geok-lin. "Assaying the Gold: Or, Contesting the Ground of Asian American literature." New Literary History 24 (1993): 147-169.

--- and Amy Ling, eds. Reading the Literatures of Asian America. Philadelphia: Temple U P, 1992.

Lin, Yutang. Chinatown Family. New York: John Day, 1948.

---. Moment in Peking. New York: John Day, 1939.

---. My Country and My People. New York: John Day, 1935.

---. "Confucius Saw Nancy" and Essays about Nothing. Shanghai, Commercial Press, 1937.

---. Jian Fu Ji. (The Passing of a Breeze) Shanghai: Shanghai Shudian Chuban, 1983.

---. Wo de Hua. (My Words) Shanghai: Shanghai Shudian Chuban, 1987.

---. The Little Critic: Essays, Satires, Sketches on China. Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1939.

---. With Love and Irony. New York: John Day, 1940.

Li, David Leiwei. "The Production of Chinese American Tradition: Displacing American Orientalist Discourse." Reading the Literatures of Asian America. Eds. Shirley Geok-lin Lim and Amy Ling. Philadelphia: Temple U P, 1992: 319-331.

Lin, Taiyi. Lin Yu Tang Zhuan (Lin Yutang's Biography). Taipei, Lian Jin Publishing Co., 1990.

Liu, Lydia H. "Translingual Practice: The Discourse of Individualism between China and the West." Positions 1 (1993): 160-193.

Lowe,Lisa. "Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Marking Asian American Differences." Diaspora 1.1 (1991): 24-66.

Lye, Colleen. "M. Butterfly and the Rhetoric of Antiessentialism: Minority Discourse in an International Frame." Ed. David Polumbo-Liu. The Ethnic Canon: Histories, Institutions, and Interventions. U of Minnesota P, 1995: 260-289.

McDonald, Dorothy Ritsuko. "An Introduction to Frank Chin's The Chickencoop Chinaman and The Year of the Dragon." Three American Literatures. Ed. Houston Baker. New York: MLA, 1982.

Nandy, Ashis. The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism. London: Oxford U P, 1989.

Niranjana, Tejaswini. Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism and the Colonial Context. Los Angeles: U of California P, 1992.

Polumbo-Liu, David. "The Bitter Tea of Frank Capra." Positions. 3.3 (Winter 1995): 759-89.

---. "Theory and the Subject of Asian American Studies." Amerasia Journal. 21.1,2 (1995): 55-65.

Prusek, Jaroslav. The Lyrical and the Epic: Studies of Modern Chinese Literature. Ed. Leo Ou-fan Lee. Bloomington: Indiana U P, 1980.

Said, Edward. Orientalism. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.

---. The World, the Text, and the Critic. Cambridge: Harvard U P, 1983.

Shih, Shu-mei. "Gender, Race, and Semicolonialism: Liu Na'ou's Urban Shanghai Landscape." The Journal of Asian Studies. 55.4 (November 1996): 934-56.

Suleri, Sara. The Rhetoric of English India. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992.

Takaki, Ronald. Strangers from a Different Shore. New York: Penguin, 1989.

Tian Yi Publishing Company, ed. Lin Yu Tang Zhuan Ji Zi Liao (Biographical Materials on Lin Yutang). 4 vols. Taipei, Tian Yi Publishing Co.,

Torgovnick, Mariannna. Gone Primitive: Savage Intellects, Modern Lives. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990.

Tu, Wei-ming. "Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center." Daedalus 120 (1991): 12-32.

Wang, Jinmin. Bai Xianyong Zhuan. (Bai Xianyong: A Biography). Hong Kong: Huahan Wenhua Shiye Gongsi, 1992.

Wang, L. Ling-chi. "The Structure of Dual Domination: Toward a Paradigm for the Study of the Chinese Diaspora in the United States." Amerasia Journal. 21.1&2 (1995): 149-169.

Wang, Ling-chi. "Roots and Changing Identity of the Chinese in the U.S.." Daedalus 120 (1991):181-206.

Wei, William. The Asian American Movement. Philadelphia: Temple U P, 1993.

Wong, Sau-ling. "The Politics and Poetics of Folksong Reading: Literary Portrayals of Life under Exclusion." Entry Denied. Ed. Sucheng Chan. Philadelphia, Temple U P, 1991.

---. "Denationalization Reconsidered: Asian American Cultural Criticism at a Theoretical Crossroads." Amerasia Journal. 21.1&2 (1995): 1-27.

---. "Ethnicizing Gender: An Exploration of Sexuality as Sign in Chinese Immigrant Literature." Reading the Literatures of Asian America. Ed. Shirley Geok-lin Lim, et. al. Philadephia, Temple U P, 1992. 111-129.

Yuan, Lianzhun. Bai Xianyong Lun. (Bai Xianyong: A Study) Taipei: Erya Chubanshe, 1991.

Young, Robert. Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race. London: Routledge, 1995.