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## 6 Weak links, literary spaces, and comparative Taiwan

Jing Tsu

Shortly after receiving the first Nobel Prize in Literature ever awarded to a Chinese writer in 2000, Gao Xingjian accepted an invitation to visit Taiwan. It's a place where he had never been. For two weeks, he traveled to the cities of Taipei, Miaoli, Qingshui and Yilan, and held public dialogues with renowned Taiwan writers and critics like Huang Chunming, Li Qiao, and Ye Shitao. Speaking from a position of exile, he found points of resonance with his interlocutors on the island, where a similarly fraught relationship to mainland China persisted for most of the twentieth century. Reflections on the shared experiences of artistry, inhibited freedom, and the often politicized act of writing connected the honorable guest to his hosts. It was a meeting of minds. Beneath the surface, however, things did not feel that simple, and an odd asymmetry was palpable. There was Gao's frank admission that he knew nothing about the works of Ye, or Taiwan literature and history, in contrast to Ye's account of writing under the White Terror during the repressive days of the Nationalist rule, where exile, compared to Gao's better circumstance in France, was a luxury many could not afford.<sup>1</sup>

In the Chinese-language literary system, writers' relations to one another are being reshuffled across time and space. Distant parallels that had not been tested in close quarters are coming into starker contrast in terms of status and capital. While the world platform offers greater visibility, it is also highlighting regional and diasporic differences that have long been sidelined in international and national politics. In the ocean that is the world literary space, intimacy can be uncomfortable. Instead of a writer gaining recognition first at home, then moving up the national ladder, before garnering wider prestige, the successful phenomenon of a Chinese Francophone bilingual writer—in exile from China since 1987—can bring a different kind of pressure to bear. The attention can also be uncomfortable in the other direction, where a writer may find himself having to answer for things other than his writing, as was the case with the announcement of Mo Yan's winning of the Nobel Prize in 2012.

As the world's eyes stay on China in the twenty-first century, more than just China's economy and consumer market are on stage. The compression of the global literary space is opening new doors and backchannels for loosening

and tightening the grip of national literary geographies. Currently, the transformation of modern Chinese literature from its mononationalist tradition into a global system is reshaping core assumptions about what is “Chinese,” “modern,” or even “literary.” While interrogations of Chineseness and modernity have been going on for decades, the relationship of literature to the conditions of literacy—language standardization, dialects and regional speech, alphabetic and logographic orthography, the technologies of writing—is refreshing the conversation with new content. Additional internal horizons and platforms are also opening up. Whether it is Sinophone studies or comparative Taiwan literature, each claim is eager to become its own site of comparisons—and to invite or disinvite old and new alliances. For the first time—and never so evident—global, regional, national, and local interests are simultaneously in play. The subtleties of the exchange between the global Francophone Modernist writer and the local, “native soil” (*bentu*) writers of Taiwan, in this way, bring one such tension into focus: the world audience that confirms the significance of Chinese literature by recognizing Gao’s contribution, on the one hand, and the still mainly local readership to which Taiwan’s native soil literature appeals, on the other. Gao freely styled his writings on the European Modernist tradition, while his Taiwan counterparts molded theirs to the necessities of Nativism, Realism, and Modernism in Taiwan’s mixed post-1949 political landscape. One consequence of the polarity between a Modernist world author and a Nativist Realist writer, Ng Kim-chew observes in a related context, is that the more bound the writer is to the imperatives of his native soil, the more impoverished is his aesthetic imagination and technical mastery.<sup>2</sup> The trade-off seems inevitable.

Apart from hinting at the changing endowment of the Chinese writer in the present literary system, however, Ng’s observation points to a larger shift underway. Chinese literature, like many other literary fields, currently faces the challenge of an expansion in scale, and new kinds of comparisons and relativization are possible as a result. Scale, in this sense, does not only mean a sizing up and down along the nestled local–national–global axis, or growth in geographical coverage. Both conditions are necessary but insufficient for locating the real changing stakes in literary studies. They do not fully explain, for instance, why some writers go global while others are stuck locally, or the emergence of pliable relations that stretch over, intercept, and siphon influence away from the usual nodes of literary capital. The encounter between Gao and his interlocutors in Taiwan makes plain how such redrawn relations are forcing local comparisons in terms of global status. But the process is not merely due to the tectonic shifts that underlie the literary geography in general. Departing from the focus on how large-scale comparisons benefit otherwise far flung lone examples, my discussion explicates these dynamics in terms of the weak; i.e. how margins forge their own margins, thereby strengthening the ground links of large literary systems. In the following, I highlight one such margin, Taiwan, in a dynamic regional triangulation (with Hong Kong and Macau) that is largely unseen on the world stage, and

analyze, at the same time, the proliferation of new internal peripheries in Taiwan literature and how it manages such diversity. What would normally be separately treated as internalist or local, and externalist or transregional accounts, then, works in tandem to animate what I have described elsewhere as “literary governance,” a decentralized but generative process in language-literature systems that is motivated to mobilize around certain visible and less visible thresholds of access, where combinations of affective attachments and institutional or material power are reproduced to ensure the continuation of that access. The first section of this paper accounts for the broader implications of the convergence of different literary scales, while the second and third sections offer a critique of comparative Taiwan literature by focusing on the articulations of small alliances, made in the less endowed corners of the Sinophone world, that are becoming the crucial movers and shakers in an emergent new landscape.

### **The scale question for literary studies**

For those who learned their trade in the study of national literatures or Area Studies, nations, regions, and areas have been the familiar geographical and analytical units. There are, of course, other scales behind which literature can rally, like dialects or cities. Topolects like Wu or Yue have vibrant literary repertoires that cut across county and provincial lines, and one can readily think of literary styles and schools that arose from the urban centers of Shanghai, Beijing, Shenzhen, and Hong Kong. Whether the unit of choice is an area, region, province, city, or continent, literary studies from different corners are currently aiming for a global reach. Much effort has gone into identifying the types and appropriate names for these ventures in recent years, though prioritizing mainly big scales: transnational, hemispheric, world, planetary, any variety of -phone, neocolonial, etc.<sup>3</sup>

Amidst the enthusiastic voices, there have been less happy ones. Objections to the latest resurgence of world literature, for example, take issue with its historical bias, insufficient coverage, or, simply, its use of the world.<sup>4</sup> Sinophone studies, at least in one approach that relies on a close alliance with post-colonial studies, has had to rework itself around the charge of reverse Sino-centrism in its explicit exclusion of mainland China. To be sure, trenchant, though familiar, critiques that were launched against Eurocentrism in the previous decades have not lost their instructive edge, especially because in the process they can also make explicit their own hidden modalities of the same desire. These contentions, carried out on the inherited terrains of the cultural and ethnicity debates of the 1990s, nonetheless, are missing a fundamental change in the global literary landscape. More than anything, it is the implicit restructuring of spatial thinking at the current pace and scale that is changing the face of literary studies.<sup>5</sup>

While the pressure on Comparative Literature in the past three decades has been mainly to pursue greater, ever more distant objects outside of Western

Europe, the rediscovery of intra-area and sub-national fringe and connectors is nudging various national fields to move in different ways. Comparative literary disciplines that pride themselves in thinking outside of the box are not the only ones feeling the pinch. A similar discontent and desire for reinvention also prompt the study of area-based national literatures to make noise in new directions.

Generally speaking, traditional comparisons are being superseded by the wider recognition of connectivity. And who can resist? Old methods, many bemoan, have been on the brink of exhaustion. The lack of new ideas forced comparative studies of literature to new crossroads. From north to south, east to south-east, south to south, south to west, the historical routes of comparison, as one rediscovers, prove more circular than symmetrical, leaving one to quiz over a more complex picture of transculturation and literary influence. This spells a notable change. Though the enthusiastic hunt for interconnectivity in general does not go deep into the dynamics of space and scale that sustain or doom literary encounters, the ongoing impact of the compression of time and space on the movements of languages and literatures is palpable.

Not that anyone should get carried away with the totalizing specter, however. So far, the effects of establishing new correspondences vary, giving some distant voices only slightly better representation, while greatly advancing the interpretive agenda of others.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, reading texts line by line no longer has the aura of the monkish diligence it once had. Instead, a birds-eye view, deep time, or quantitative analyses over long distances mark the new frontier, as all efforts converge on finding the next exit from the silos of nation-based literary studies.

On the one level, then, the receptiveness to upsized literary criticism has been auspicious. The diplomatic sending of goodwill around the globe invites participation from near and far, careful to avoid overbearing cultural centrism, while extending a genuine gesture outwards to others. On another level, however, skepticism and murmurs can still be heard, raising concerns over the prospect of yet another academic incarnation of the object of Europe or America's global conscience.<sup>7</sup> Whether one chooses to grumble or cheer, the world literary picture, in fact, has never looked more pluralist. But with the growth of diversity, so far and wide, one question arises: What does one do with all the examples? There is a palpable need for an appropriate framework that not only accounts for the specific motions of literary contacts, but also provides tools for analyzing the different new platforms that are not the precondition, but the consequence, of their interactions.

Here is where we brush up against an internal limit. In most cases, the givenness of the space that literature inhabits as its cultural, linguistic, and national home continues to constrain the methodological imagination. As ever more ambitious projects of comparison move forward, they are driven by a tautological assumption: The greater the distance, the truer the correlation. That is to say, if you can find a correspondence across great expanses of time and space, then that confirms all the more strongly the validity of what you are trying to establish—the persistence of certain narrative forms, the universality of genre, sentiment, certain modes of subjectivity, the experience of time, etc.

The fetishization of distance—as both cause and effect—has thus produced a conceptual trap. Even if muted, literary studies remain invested in an articulation around intervals of space defined by boundaries, as is evident in the ways in which it still exploits them, over and over again, with one type of transgression or another.<sup>8</sup> Regardless of the scale or speed of expansion, the idea of cohabiting any given literary world remains captive to spatial-centrist views of locations and places.

This internal limit in itself, however, is still not the real problem. For those who might think it has to be all flow or nothing, it is neither practical nor desirable to convince the native soil writers or, more marginal still, Taiwan's aboriginal writers to give up their hard-won geo-literary specificity to partake in a world republic of letters that they can barely experience. Places persist, precisely because they mean something to the people who inhabit them. It is as unlikely to eradicate that affect as it is to evict someone from their home and expect them to go quietly. Large-scale literary enterprises are not any better at suppressing their territorializing impulses, either. Having exhausted the operability of the customary scales of nation- and continent-based analysis, much of literary studies is testing out larger parameters, like the world and the planetary. Given the pervasive logic of uneven structuration, the solution is far from simply making our assumptions known and thereby raising an awareness that will hopefully lead to the extinction of implicitly uneven or asymmetrical practices. The task I propose is to explicitly schematize the different scales on which literature—as an available currency of culture, thought, creative labor, and action—is orchestrated into new contexts of harmony and conflict, and the emerging new scales of contiguity and consequence that this process can, and does, produce. On this view, the literary humanity from below, on the basis of which theories and paradigms compete for precision and persuasion, does not stay mute when examples are being extracted for analysis. They too have to be seen in the available scales of their articulations. Less endowed participants which these articulations take may be emergent, precarious, or aggressive, because they, too, are trying to renew the world picture on their own terms.

I should underscore that this is not an appeal to the rise of a nameless literary multitude by promising their deliverance at some unspecified date. What I propose is both more modest and essential: to give methodological access to track, and to shape, the different platforms of literary activity—criticism, empirical discoveries, alliances, paradigm shifts, institutional recognition—by schematizing how they interrelate and correlate through multiple levels of scales. In this openly dynamic scheme, transparency trumps hedging. There would be many more perspectives offered on the operation of any single scale, so that, for instance, one can no longer hope to break off a piece of Hegel to be dumped in Haiti—as Susan Buck Morss has compellingly shown—or to convert distant literary labor in Southeast Asia into selling points in peddling the theoretical goods of East Asia or North America, without accounting for its own movements of exploitation and gain.<sup>9</sup> In 1877, Hugo Meltzl de Lomnitz,

writing as a German-speaking minority in Transylvania, pictured an equitable system, maintained by checks and balances between native languages and literatures: A Hungarian study of Camoens would thus be written in Portuguese, while a German criticism of Cervantes would be conducted in Spanish.<sup>10</sup> One can well imagine the edifying purpose of reading Taiwanese literature in Min, or writing about Malaysian Chinese literature in Baba Malay—if such scripts systems can be fully devised. While I have elsewhere argued for the important relations between mother tongues and standard languages in driving the current Sinophone system, here I would go even a step further and insist that language is only one critical strand of a multi-layered analysis.<sup>11</sup> It is one among the many possible scales that one can study and mobilize. Scale, to do it justice in real social contexts, is not purely spatial or ideational, wholly conceptual, or exclusively made in praxis. How its efficacy in literary studies is determined depends solely on what pertains to the struggles of the particular literary field, and which scales—created or anticipated—can matter.

To explore this in a more concrete fashion, the next section resituates how different scales of literary intimacy currently stratify Taiwan. This entails two perspectives. The first takes an external comparison by considering the more recent history of how Taiwan literature came to share the same literary cartography as its similarly marginalized neighbors, Hong Kong and Macau. I focus on Macau rather than Hong Kong due to Macau's relative neglect in existing debates.

The second angle takes one of Taiwan's minority languages, Hakka, and its projects of literary anthologization as an example of inner differentiation. These two ways of placing comparative Taiwan in a regional nexus—through means of distancing from within and without—point at the broader challenge of recasting Taiwan as a unit of comparison when the threshold is both internally and externally motivated. These two perspectives aim to outline what a new comparison would have to account for when the terms involved are in motion, exert no absolute advantage over one another, and are at the same time mutually dependent for their own distinction. Instead of hypostatizing a "China" specter to rescue margins that need more than just the encouragement to survive, I examine Taiwan's position within several alliances that have generated its role in recent overseas Sinophone literary history. I refer to the precarity of literary and linguistic resources as the particular challenge faced by the weaker links in a given literary system, in order to elucidate how large literary systems, Sinophone in this case, are in turn dependent on these dynamics.

### **Movers and shakers of the weak: Taiwan–Hong Kong–Macau (Tai–Gang–Ao)**

Taiwan literature is but one of the many faces of Chinese-language literatures. Relatively speaking, it is among the best known off the center. Having risen in stature in recent decades, its early Modernist pioneers such as Bai Xianyong and Chen Yingzhen can be readily found nowadays on the to-read list of

modern Chinese literature in Chinese or translation. It has also been the hosting ground for a number of aspiring Chinese heritage writers from Southeast Asia. The island served as a homestay for student immigrants from Malaysia and Singapore from the 1960s onward, at a time when Cold War tensions ran high and mainland China was closed off to the world under Mao's swing toward a policy of isolation. The Cold War made Taiwan part of a strategic triangulation between nativists, American foreign policymakers, and mainland Nationalists, as has been memorably captured in the fiction of Nativist writers such as Huang Chunming and Wang Zhenhe.

Before the modern period, however, Taiwan was already distinctively shaped by cultural multiplicity. The latter half of the twentieth century notwithstanding, Taiwan has had a mottled past. The first writing system on the island was in romanization, not Chinese characters. It was introduced by the missionaries of the Dutch Reformed Church, who traveled with the Dutch East India Company. After their arrival in 1627, they came into contact with the first indigenous people they encountered on the island, in the village of Sinkan in south-western Taiwan, who spoke a version of Siraya. At the time, there were 25 such Formosan, or indigenous, languages on the island, all of which were spoken only and belonged to the Austronesian language family. After the Dutch were ousted by the Ming dynasty loyalist Zheng Chenggong in 1661, often dated as the beginning of the Chinese's lasting presence on the island, the use of the Roman script continued. By the time the Japanese took over in 1895, with the signing of the Shimonoseki Treaty that concluded the First Sino-Japanese War, the Japanese were still able to record and document these written forms.<sup>12</sup> For almost four centuries, the island has hosted more than a score of indigenous peoples, and undergone several discontinuous foreign presences, Ming Loyalists and other dynastic outlaws, two failed experiments to become the first European-styled Republic in East Asia, and several colonial attempts, one of which is still debated as repatriation.

While Taiwan's distinct history of polyorthography derives from a rich, if battered, history of Dutch, Japanese, and Chinese Nationalist presences, its modern literary history has not explicitly registered the multiple linguistic upheavals that accompanied its political vicissitudes. Through these foreign struggles, tentative local experiments, thwarted attempts at independence, and colonial clashes, the concept of Taiwan has been repeatedly embodied and renewed, especially after 1949. And the stakes extend far beyond the neat polarity of foreign colonial presence vs. Taiwanese autonomy.

For a literary tradition that is still unfamiliar to the world at large, however, Taiwan literature has served as a crucial connecting scale. It constituted one of the first recognized "outsides" to mainland Chinese literature. Its invocation expressed an early interest in the larger Chinese world outside of the People's Republic of China (PRC), an interest that first emerged mainly as an academic creation. The first biennial "Taiwan and Hong Kong Literature Academic Conference" (Taiwan wenxue xueshu yantao hui 台灣文學學術研討會) was held in June 1984 at Jinan and Xiamen Universities in southern

China. By the third meeting, the title was promptly changed to accommodate a larger regional constellation, "Taiwan Hong Kong Macau Jinan Overseas Sinophone Literature." The formal invocation of "world Sinophone literature" (shijie huawen wenxue 世界華文文學) came into being in 1993. It signaled a clear trajectory to increase geographic coverage.<sup>13</sup>

Apart from embodying the growing phenomenon of national-language literary histories that are making claims to a world scale, either through diaspora or some variation of transnationalism, the idea of a "world Sinophone literature" reminds us that calls for the world are less about the world than a deliberate persuasion on what it ought to look like. Hong Kong and Taiwan have been obvious choices in conceptualizing an "outside" to modern mainland Chinese literature. The two islands are the latter's most representative and visible counterpoints. Given the Japanese and Nationalist presence in one and British colonial influence in the other, they are also key sites for rectifying the memory of China's national humiliation from the previous century's Western encroachment. At the same time, literary spatialization hints at the political and social affects that invests space with the significance of locality. The geo-literary designation of "Tai-Gang-Ao"—short for "Taiwan, Hong Kong (Xianggang), Macau (Aomen)"—tracks such a moment of simultaneous alliance and entwinement in the conceptual evolution toward "world Sinophone literature." The three entities are not unfamiliar places. Their obvious commonality is that they all sit on the political and national periphery of mainland China. Significantly, sometimes the order may appear with Taiwan first (Tai-Gang-Ao), or much less frequently, Ao-Gang-Tai. The opening term generally corresponds to whether the reference is being made in Macau, Hong Kong, or Taiwan. But it also indicates something much more than a geographical preference. The three terms are intertwined in scalar terms, as their identities are both reflected and embedded in one another's relation to China and to the outside. Their own relations to one another are not strictly hierarchical, and they do not carry the same status or weight in the Sinophone world. While all three scales have been situated in relation to "China" as a main cultural axis, their motivations are unique. They also each reach out to other historical scales of colonialism and its reverberations. Macau, for instance, intersects the constellation of the Portuguese empire and Lusophone Asia, while Hong Kong carries the valence of the Commonwealth, and Taiwan, Japan's once Greater East Asia. Each experienced a different colonial power with varying consequences. Hong Kong's colonial past under the British came to be absorbed into its own version of cosmopolitan flair and narrative of precariousness. Writers and critics have advanced many benchmark theories and narratives about the "disappearing" or "floating" city, which has cultivated a particular allure surrounding Hong Kong's accidental cosmopolitanism even after its handover back to China in 1997.<sup>14</sup>

The Japanese occupation period in Taiwan, in contrast, has not enjoyed an optimized post-colonial narrative. Questions of betrayal and collaboration have only recently undergone revisionism. Taiwan's political isolation in the

international arena, ironically, more aptly fits a discourse of vanishing. The lack of an aesthetic distance to that traumatizing reality has, one could argue, made the kind of theoretical and aesthetic disengagement Ng described less independent. Finally, when it comes to Macau, the last and third term, the political poignancy is almost wholly absent. Macau's Portuguese presence, in an oddly anticlimactic fashion, has all but dwindled into insignificance, leaving little residue of resistance, trauma, and historical urgency. An afterthought in the triad, it would appear to be, by this measure, the weak link, or the least independent post-colonial form, if measured by the degree of expressed resistance during and after colonial rule.

These three very different scales of Chinese literature first appeared in mutual proximity in the late 1970s, when literature from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macau, and other overseas sites began to appear in mainland literary journals. In March 1979, *Shanghai wenxue* published Nie Hualing's 聶華苓 short story, "Aiguo jiangjuan 愛國獎卷." This marks the first time that an overseas Chinese writer was published in mainland China. Included in the same issue is an introductory essay on the writer. The following month, the journal *Huacheng* published Hong Kong writer Ruan Lang's 阮朗 "Aiqing de fuchong 愛情的俯衝." The same issue featured an essay that examined the Chinese-language literatures of Hong Kong, Macau, and Southeast Asia (Zeng Mingzhi's 曾敏之 "Gang Ao ji Dongnanya hanyu wenxue yipie 港澳及東南亞漢語文學一瞥"). A new comparative horizon was in view. In July, *Dangdai* started a special column on the literature of "Taiwan province," featuring Bai Xianyong's 白先勇 "Yongyuan de Yi Xueyan 永遠的尹雪豔," a short work that became the opening piece in Bai's collection, *Taibeiren*.

The 1980s witnessed important changes. On December 19, 1984, the Joint Sino-British Declaration, signed by Margaret Thatcher and Zhao Ziyang, agreed to end 155 years of British rule, to be formalized in 1997. Almost three years later, but with notably less fanfare and political symbolism, the Joint Declaration on the Question of Macau was signed between the Beijing government and Portugal to officially end the latter's rule on 20 December, 1999. The contrast in the political temperature between the two declarations is hard to miss. So, too, is the qualitative difference in the expressed relationship to the return to China. While a critical tone of the mainland is no stranger to the literary criticism and aesthetics produced in Hong Kong and Taiwan, their adjacent neighbor, Macau, embraces quite a different relationship. Instead of turning to Gang-Tai for inspiration, Macau writers frequently express in their works a palpable desire to be readmitted into the Sinitic world, a desire for cultural repatriation that is distinctly tied to its colonial legacy of hybridity.

Contemporary Macau writer Tao Li's 陶里 short story, "Anwanda fufu de zaoyu 安萬達夫婦的遭遇," for example, gives an apt example.<sup>15</sup> In the narrative, the local-born Macanese protagonist is torn between his Sinitic and Portuguese halves. His distance from both cultures is first introduced as fraught relationships to both his Chinese mother and his wife. In this

domestic setting, we learn that his wife, Maria, is Portuguese. More than he, however, she shows an unusual interest in learning about the Chinese culture. She specifically seeks after two ancient books of Chinese divination that were in his grandfather's collection, a well kept trove that guards the secret knowledge of cosmic origins and future genealogies. When she finally has them in her hands, however, the books ominously open to all blank pages. The withholding of legibility, at this climactic moment, denies the cultural access to a non-insider. It also leaves a fundamental question mark, a non-response, at the place where the source of the drama about belonging was supposedly kept. Maria leaves the protagonist at the end and returns to Portugal. The protagonist suffers a mental breakdown, finally bringing to full psychic expression the intra-racial war that he has been waging against himself.

Up to this final point, the drama had been narrated as the growing alienation between the unhappily married couple. Amidst the trials and tribulations in attempting to overcome their cultural gulf, the protagonist makes a particular reference that maps the privation of love and family directly onto Macau's enfeebled political history. Macau, in this way, still needs the main specter of "China," even if as a negative excuse to sanction self-reproach. The protagonist embraces this inevitable predicament, as he attributes the lack of social and economic momentum in Macau to a failure to keep up with the progress on the mainland. That is why, he explains to himself, his wife was bewitched by unenlightened Chinese superstitions and related practices of divination:

He thought of the series of reforms that were implemented up to the present day in the 1990s. Macau, following mainland China, has made progress upon progress, bringing in new technology along with many new scientific advances. But supernatural powers, the art of *qi*, secret practices of longevity, and Buddhist and spiritualist superstitions still continue to assault a Christian like himself.<sup>16</sup>

China is declared as the main referent here. Macau is mourned for having fallen by the wayside, failing to catch the wave of mainland's prosperity. Macau's failure parallels, and explains away, the protagonist's own failure at marriage. The infelicitous union figures as a casualty in the unfolding of larger global economic and political forces. At the same time, if one were to take the protagonist's mental breakdown seriously as a refusal of integrating self with external reality, then this external factor is insufficient as a primary explanation. Seen from this perspective, Macau's perceived backwardness becomes a refuge for the protagonist. However behind, the former colony's impairment mirrors his own. As it turns out, the impact of superstition is only indirectly related to Macau's failure to modernize. Its assaultive force is unleashed on a much more immediate, personal level. Taking an unexpected turn, the protagonist mentions his faith as Christian. The detail is telling. The

entire reference to China and the assimilationist desire that is expressed as Macau's own serves to displace, in inverse, the absence of his own desire to assimilate. Under constant "assault," the protagonist's faith—and, most importantly, its thematization of his conflicted identity in relation to the local Chinese—is aggressively expressed under the passive guise of Macau's political lethargy. The China specter is a red herring. The more immediate motivation comes from the tension of being Macanese in Macau.

Tao Li's short story is, on the one level, a commentary on just that: the difficulty of reconciling Macanese—who are of Portuguese descent and mixed with local Chinese through marriages—to Macau. It alludes to the familiar tension between exile and outsider, the legitimate national and the displaced post-colonial. On another level, the very guise under which that antagonism can be strategically articulated, while maintaining the primacy of China, points to a discursive pattern to which small, marginal literatures are quick to adapt. In order to be heard, minor literatures perform a certain binarism that is not necessarily immediate to, or indicative of, the internal pressures that drive them to distinguish themselves. By invoking China as the dominant scale of comparison, the protagonist no more expresses deference to Sinocentric hegemony than he believes that Macau is really responsible for his wife's departure. The causal relationship is a stretch. And it is precisely this play on distanciation and proximity between scales of belonging that helps to render Macau literature visible at the threshold of the Sinophone system.

What makes Macau a relevant unit of comparison to Hong Kong or Taiwan is not their mutual referencing or physical proximity. The geo-economic alliance of Tai-Gang-Ao elides the key inner scales of geographies and loci of power that deeply motivate the three terms. Without making this distinction, their concerns can be easily overlooked and reduced to the mere reference of a fixed, dominant Sinocentrism. Thus far, I have not relied on making traditional thematic comparisons between literary texts or the specific authors of Taiwan, Macau, and Hong Kong, because such singular correspondences cannot tell us what larger, institutional, and comparative purposes they implicitly serve. Tao Li's text is instructive, because it expresses local concerns of inter-raciality under the familiar guise of anxiety and antagonism, as they related to an externalized "China." In order to tell a story that is legible, the text has to rely on the invocation of a distant and common source of anxiety, China, in order to voice its own. That it feels compelled to raise the China specter highlights the necessity of multiple addresses as a way of rallying attention to the peripheries.

Without falling into a predictable narrative pattern of post-colonial writing, the narrative thus gets to perform something other than the China script. Macau's identity is accomplished through self-differentiation, a demonstration of its own capacity for diversity, dissent, and difference. This is accomplished by separating out other underprivileged voices—margins from the margin—and displaying Macau's unique racial hybridity as a multicultural resource. The story signals Macau's qualifications for hosting differences by

turning toward its constitutive others. The important gesture of accommodation, rather than hegemonic power, in the current literary world-scale underpins the analytical significance of an otherwise overlooked alliance like Tai-Gang-Ao. What the three geo-literary formations share is not a set of aesthetic concerns or collective memory. A common sense of under-endowment and lack of prestige in the literary world in and beyond the Sinophone system drives them to develop their own scales of literary capital with whatever available means.

Marginality, embodied in this way, expresses a new function. It serves the greater purpose of guaranteeing its own sustainability. Through self-division, margins populate their own liminal space with additional horizons. The different shades of Macau literature do not blend into a single literary identity; they require "Macau" as much as Macau needs the China specter in order to extract a discursive and literary resource from the center-periphery antagonism. The result is an intra-racial scale that intersects a post-colonial scale in relation to a national periphery. The triangulated operations of literary spatialization, in this case, are embedded, contiguous, and overlapping, rather than separate, mutually repelling, and independent. Connectivity, seen in this modified and highly specified way, is not just about intersections and contacts. It is the effect, not the cause, of the ongoing processes of creating intimacy and distance between the various scales of mobilization. This refraction of worlds within worlds, or embedded scalar processes of worlding literature, has hitherto not been systematically accounted for, let alone analyzed. It is striking that, while much has been written about the literary relationships between mainland China and Taiwan, China and Hong Kong, or—to a much less extent—China and Macau, one generally hears the least about the direct and indirect dynamics among these secondary and tertiary sites. The relatively small interest in actually giving an account of what happens *between* the margins reveals an important lacuna. It points to the preference for vilifying known quantities of hegemonies, and the relations they dictate, rather than analytically differentiating among the various start-ups and peripheral alliances that are devising ambiguous and low-end strategies to optimize their often threadbare resource. This includes making alliances with Sinophone studies, which is a transitional rather than shared goal.

In the increasingly overlapping terrains of literary studies, there are no permanent centers. The finer dynamics I discuss are looming large as the new joints and sinew that support the life of large-scale literary systems. From a local angle, their efforts seem isolated, at times short-lived and incompletely carried out. Seen as part of the larger restructuration of world-scale literary spaces, however, they express the disarticulated alliances—incohesive, dynamic, creative, temporary—that are proliferating everywhere. They can appear to be forming a joint literary conglomerate that is currently called Sinophone. Up close, however, they are each more concerned with creating their own distinctions, with local competition with immediate geographic neighbors being the more pressing concern. The current attempt to revitalize

a Singaporean Chinese-language literary history is a case in point.<sup>17</sup> While different loci of Chinese-language literature still tend to base alliances on familiar ideas of commonality, such as race and language, their content and goal have importantly changed. The crucial point is how the traditional tokens of commonality are circulated to recycle old affiliations toward new ends, not to revive former structures of loyalty. More makeshift strategy than natural affinity, these new forms of intimacy aim at maximal return. With a mix of affect and maneuvering, the appeal to concepts of belonging is erecting the new scaffolding of an emergent geo-literary space. To illustrate this, the next and final section examines the recent restoration of the Hakka language in Taiwan through the project of literary anthologization.

### **The guest within: Hakka**

Known to specialists and mostly Chinese readers in the world, Taiwan literature represents an important hub of diversity for some people, and still an offshoot of mainland Chinese literature for others. Recent revisionist accounts of modern Chinese literary history published in mainland China, for instance, continue to omit Taiwan literature from their purview.<sup>18</sup> More internal to Taiwan's literary scale, battles over a Taiwanese literature and language, as part of the larger movement for self-determination and local consciousness, were waged during the twentieth century. Only very recently, however, has the discussion of the right to native soil been extended to the other historical inhabitants of Taiwan. The indigenous, or aboriginal, peoples have become a more visible subject in cultural and literary projects that seek to recover the forgotten voices on the island.

Their emergence, paradoxically, was an unintended consequence. The liberalization and the rising tide of democratization and self-determination in Taiwan in the 1980s opened up the question of ethnic subordination under Han (mainland) dominance in the post-1949 period to public and political debates. The unsettling of Taiwan's identity, importantly, was in fact a political, ethnic scale in the remaking. It broached the subject not only for the Taiwanese who mobilized against mainland Sinocentrism, but also for the other peoples of Taiwan who remained ever invisible under the anti-Sinocentric blanket claim of "Taiwanese." This platform, or scale, became porous to the creation of other scales that both related to and departed from its original motivation. Native soil itself became less a singular distinction than a multiplying factor in the process of pluralization. Its legitimating pretext was transferrable to any said group that occupied a historical and linguistic place in Taiwan's past and present. Through their explicit intersection, these groups form the dynamic matrix of identity scale-making that can be called "Taiwan."

The founding of the Alliance of the Taiwan Aborigines (Taiwan yuanzhu-min quanli cujinhui) in December 1984 was a groundbreaking step. So, too, was the founding in the previous year of the first journal that deals with

urgent social and economic issues that threaten the continual existence of aboriginal groups, *High Mountain Youth* (Gaoshanqing). There was the Aboriginal Land Movement of 1988, led by the representatives of the then recognized nine main aboriginal groups (Ami, Atayal, Bunun, Paiwan, Yami, Saisiat, Tsou, Rukai, and Puyuma), as well as the 1995 protest against the construction of the Majia Dam. The latter, had it been permitted to move forward, would have displaced some of the Paiwan and Rukai communities and endangered the environment. Situated in this matrix, the protest was not simply another instance of identity politics, played out in a Taiwanese or aboriginal key. When disaggregated and schematized into the different social, cultural, linguistic, environmental, and political relations that undergird the contemporary landscape, a single instance of ethnic survival can be significant throughout the differently connected scales of local and global action. Its extension into the various arena of survival and governance—from environmental preservation, linguistic survival, to land rights, literary empowerment, and cultural extinction—serves as a linchpin for interrelated responses. Each contested arena entails a complex scalar structure of its own that further links to other scales and platforms of mobilization. On the one hand, the call for Taiwanese identity challenged a mainland-dominant history. On the other hand, that same challenge can be turned against itself and fragment the meaning of being Taiwanese from the perspective of its inner others.

Though the resulting burst of multiculturalism was unprecedented, diversification is not always a spontaneous process. It can be as inventive as it is historical, motivated to retroactively construct, rather than to uncover, pre-existing differences. No one would argue, for example, the good of ensuring the survival of indigenous languages and literatures. But how does one revive something that has survived through assimilation? Hakka literature, straddling both possibilities, is at once the best represented in Taiwan's literary history and among its most invisible constituents. Many of the most esteemed Taiwan writers throughout the twentieth century are, in fact, of Hakka origin. Lai He's contribution to bringing Taiwan's unique vernacular and its Japanese colonial influence to life in the standard script was a pioneering statement about the beginnings of Taiwanese literature. Yet his posthumous writings left us with quite a different impression from what we see in his accomplishments and recognition as the father of Taiwanese literature. Other renowned Taiwan writers such as Wu Zhuoliu, Long Yingzong, Zhong Lihe, and Zhong Zhaozheng are also Hakka. That fact, however, was seldom advertised during some of the most tumultuous episodes of Taiwan's literary history.

As a minority voice and one of the oldest migratory ethnic groups in the Sinophone world, the Hakka ("guest") community enjoys virtually no continuity of place, but has settled and grown into a recognizable group in Taiwan, among other places in Southeast Asia and southern China. There was no available platform for asserting the cultural rights of Hakka, just as there was none for any other minority group. The greatest struggle for

political and linguistic recognition for most of the twentieth century was staged either between the Japanese and the Chinese, or the mainland Chinese and the Taiwanese. Currently, further rifts exist between first- and second-generation Hakka immigrants to the island. For the latter generation, being Taiwanese seems to be a better fit. Similar neglect and assimilation applies to the Hakka language. It has an oral tradition but, as with other dialects, not its own system of written representation. Next to Hoklo, or Fukienese (Min), Hakka is currently the largest ethnic group in Taiwan, even though Hoklo is greater by threefold. During the important vernacularization movement that was spearheaded by Huang Shihui, Guo Qiusheng and others in the 1920s and 1930s, "Taiwanese" was the only alternative to the Beijing-based vernacular that was discussed with any seriousness. Hakka was absent from the debates.

Under these circumstances, the revival of a distinct Hakka literature in Taiwan entails almost entirely separating out an already well assimilated literary history. This presents an interesting problem. Rather than being able to claim a history of banishment at the margins, which can easily join the familiar platform of rescuing minority literatures from oblivion, Hakka literature has been so well absorbed into the canon of Taiwan literature that its reinvention requires a different strategy.

The "Take Back the Mother Tongue" movement (Huanwo muyu yundong) of 1988, though launched as a Taiwan cultural movement, gave an occasion for taking such a step. Among the issues that were put on the table, the demands for more broadcast programs in Hakka and lifting regulations regarding other dialects were a priority.<sup>19</sup> The struggle for progress is ongoing. Only in April 2011, for example, did lawmakers agree to include Hakka TV, launched in 2003, in the Taiwan Broadcasting System (TBS), thereby making it "a true TV station."<sup>20</sup> Up to this point, Hakka TV had been overseen by the Council for Hakka Affairs and outsourced to TBS.

While Hakkas' struggle for linguistic recognition emerged with that of other minorities such as the aboriginal groups, discussions of which linguistic medium best represents Hakka literature have been far from uniform. As writers rally support to give Hakka literature visibility, the terms of recognition are not always distinguishable from those of concession. Two recent collections of Hakka literature in Taiwan help frame this new dynamism. Both volumes acknowledge, from the outset, the difficulties in producing proper Hakka literature, but arrive at different starting premises. Li Qiao, in an introduction to the 2004 collection of Hakka literature, lists three criteria: 1) the given work has to express something about the Hakka culture, 2) the author is Hakka, and 3) the work should be written in Hakka.<sup>21</sup> These appeals to nativist qualities are strikingly familiar to us, as they are also readily observed in other contexts: Malaysian Chinese Literature, Taiwan Literature, and most movements that promote local consciousness. They all assume some degree of nativism as a basic threshold in literary revitalization. For any literary minorities faced with the task of building prestige from the ground up, nativity offers a minimal resource and protective rhetoric. To



make matters more complicated, Taiwan's wide-ranging linguistic history and colonial policies before, during, and after both Japanese and Nationalist rule have made the three criteria of nativism historically ambiguous enough that it is difficult to avoid facile essentialism.

Prompted by the establishment of the Council for Hakka Affairs by the Executive Administration of the government of Republic of China in 2001, which is invoked in his preface, Li hoped to restore a dying tradition. Hakka's rich descriptive lexicon, intonation, even particular adjectives, adverbs, and verbs, he argued, were becoming a lost heritage. Implicitly submitting to a preservationist discourse of disappearance and extinction, his tone incites the imagination in effectively anxious ways. Li takes advantage of the new political interest in Taiwan to revive, claim, and build a critical mass of diverse minorities.<sup>22</sup> Operating within the bounds of official permissibility, however, Li encourages Hakka cultural restoration without contradicting the terms suggested by the Council itself: "To construct happy, confident and dignified Hakka recognition."<sup>23</sup>

The upbeat formulation is as democratic in tone as it is inviting. The idea of anthologizing and building a special representation of the Hakka tongue within the existing standard script system astutely appeals to the atmosphere of pluralism. Luo Zhaojin, a linguist of Hakka who well understands the material constraints placed on institutionalized languages, holds a different attitude in his preface to a sample reader of Hakka literature that was published three years later in 2007. His remarks frankly suggest that the promotion more accurately reflects the newly modulating scales of literary power than it does the consequence of a cultural or political rhetoric of extinction. The discourse of perishability serves the interest of recruitment in the expanding landscape of new scales and relations of dependency. The ability to cross different scales appears indispensable to the sustainability of any literary system, regardless of where one starts. Luo's comments, as a good example, depend precisely on such an operation:

When we discuss Taiwan literature, we can define it in the following way: So long as the author draws from the thought process of the Taiwanese language (Taiwanhua siwei), including Hoklo, Hakka, indigenous languages, standard Mandarin (the Taiwan variety), and as long as the emotional source of the composition does not depart from Taiwan society and culture, then it can count as Taiwan literature. It doesn't matter whether it's traditional or modern, oral or written, even less written in classical Chinese or the modern vernacular. What would, then, be considered "Hakka literature"? We can similarly say, quite simply, anything that uses Hakka speech as its point of reference or writes and records the life experiences of Hakka society would belong to Hakka literature. As for considerations such as what is the ancestral origin of the author, or what language the author writes in, there is no absolute relation. The emphasis, instead, should fall on the prerequisite that "the

emotional source of the composition does not depart from Hakka society and culture," regardless of whether it is traditional Hakka verse or modern Hakka composition. It also isn't important whether it is narrated in Hakka speak or uses Han characters, let alone old-style verse or modern Hakka vernacular.<sup>24</sup>

Taking Taiwan literature as the model, Luo borrows its definition to set the stage for Hakka literature. Freeing a consideration of Taiwan and Hakka literature from the constraints of language and blood lineage, Luo suggests an open membership, as long as one remains loyal to the "emotional source." Striking here is not the attribution of an intractable affective wellspring of belongingness, but how its invocation fundamentally circumvents the linguistic requirement with which Luo began. More than Li, Luo endorses an implicit assumption of deep nativism, packaged as an intangible form of authenticity. Unlike other outspoken proponents of the Taiwanese language such as Ang Uijin, who treats the materiality of language as a core element, Luo reverts to something both much more distant and intimate at the same time. On the one hand, he builds a sense of precariousness and right to literary survival through the force of an analogy to Taiwan literature's felt vulnerability under the mainland specter. On the other hand, he turns that borrowed sense of vulnerability into something authentic to Hakka literature.

Understanding the modulation between the near and far, the intended parallel between Hakka literature and Taiwan literature, is key. The way in which Taiwan literature is referenced in Luo's passage glides over the fact that Hakka literature, its possibility and mechanism of recognition, are deeply bound with the fact of a Taiwan center. Given these conditions, how a hierarchical relationship can then be finessed into roughly complementary terms to motivate a comparison is pivotal to putting Hakka literature on the map. Comparativism now means implicating incomparable units in one another through the process not of equivalence but of connecting scales. Notions of incommensurability or asymmetry, in other words, lose their analytical utility in this complex landscape, because they still take fixed terms of comparison for granted. It is precisely the absence of the requirement for stable commensurability or symmetry that is freeing the weak links from absolute dependency and immobility.

In fact, that the need for comparison appears feasible or desirable at all is because the terms of engagement have already been suggested by the recognition of mutual dependence between scales. Literatures that were previously assigned to the vertical relations of hierarchy now share coordinates of contiguity without the physical requirement of differentiation or collapse of distance. Whereas distance is generally given as a reason for comparison, it is, instead, the byproduct of the comparative method. For this reason, it is highly instructive that the distance between Taiwan and Hakka literatures, hardly perceptible except to insiders and specialists, is not a result of geographical span but the social materialization of how literary positions are spatialized.

As much as Taiwan has been politically and socially subordinated to a broader Sinocentric system, Hakka literature, in taking after the Taiwan example, helps to reproduce that relation in the less noticeable reaches of the Sinophone system. Just as Taiwan literature defined itself against the ominous, but useful, specter of China, Hakka relied on Taiwan as the horizon of its possible re-emergence.

Without the desire to make Taiwan literature a sphere in its own right, Hakka literature would miss a chance to steer that momentum toward its own advantage. The anthologization of Hakka literature, in this sense, provides a telling example of how to gauge the multiple scales that are involved in the unfolding and expansion of the Sinophone literary system. It makes visible what happens on the ground, in the dynamics between the weak links. We can learn much about literary networks from the members who command relatively feeble social and cultural capital. For this reason, directing one's attention to the developments at the thinner extremities, not just the core density of any literary system, marks an important empirical and methodological shift. Weak links are the indispensable margins of accumulation. Their very emergence and engagement with one another relies on the access of comparativism on different scales. A comparative Taiwan will also have to navigate within these constraints.

## Notes

- 1 For his public exchanges with Ye Shengtao, Peng Ruijin, Huang Chunming, and others, see the transcriptions collected in Gao Xingjian, 1999, *Lun Chuangzuo* [On Creation]. Taipei: Lianjing.
- 2 Ng Kim-chew, 2010, "Minor Sinophone Literature: Diasporic Modernity's Incomplete Journey," in Jing Tsu and David Der-wei Wang, eds, *Global Chinese Literature: Critical Essays*. Boston, MA: Brill, pp. 15–27.
- 3 For a programmatic sampling, see Caroline Levander, 2008, "Hemispheric American Studies: Preliminary Thoughts on Research and Pedagogical Challenges," *Literature Compass* 5(3): 435–457; Ralph Bauer, 2009, "Hemispheric Studies," *PMLA* 124 (1): 234–250; Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih, 2005, *Minor Transnationalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 2003, *Death of a Discipline*. New York: Columbia University Press; David Damrosch, 2003, *What is World Literature?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press; Franco Moretti, 2000, "Conjectures on World Literature," *New Left Review* 1: 54–68; Franco Moretti, 2003, "More Conjectures," *New Left Review* 20: 73–81; Pascale Casanova, 2004, *The World Republic of Letters*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; Wai Chee Dimock, 2006, *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- 4 See, for instance, Christopher Prendergast, ed., 2004, *Debating World Literature*. London and New York: Verso.
- 5 For a dynamic body of literature on scale, as debated by urban geographers and which serves as the background of this discussion, for key texts, see Henri Lefebvre, 1991, *The Production of Space*. Oxford: Blackwell; Doreen Massey, 1995, *Spatial Divisions of Labour: Social Structures and the Geography of Production*. Basingstoke: Macmillan; Neil Smith, 1984, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space*. New York: Blackwell.
- 6 Weary of anything embodying nation-dominant proclivities, several literary critics adopt system and quantitative theories from the biological and social sciences, such as comparative morphology and world-systems theory, to look at literature afresh. Franco Moretti's (2005) *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for Literary History* (London and New York: Verso) uses D'arcy Thompson's work on comparative morphology to pattern literatures across time and space in similar ways. See also Johnathan Goodwin and John Holbo, eds, 2011, *Reading Graphs, Maps, and Trees: Responses to Franco Moretti*. Anderson, SC: Parlor Press.
- 7 Early on, David Damrosch expressed concerns over the "Disneyfication of the globe," well recognizing the inevitable presentist impulse in reducing the potential of a multicultural and multitemporal conception of world literary criticism to a decorative representation of all foreign and other voices. See Damrosch, op. cit., p. 17.
- 8 The works of recent, younger scholars in American literary studies are beginning to experiment with the theories of critical urban studies in bringing into relief the contrapuntal relations between distance and space. These relations are often embedded in literary texts as part of the otherwise narrative function of "setting," which now stands out as having specific space-reliant connotations rather than being equal to familiar analytical categories such as genre and narrative. See Hsuan Hsu, 2010, *Geography and the Production of Space in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Susan Blair, 1998, "Cultural Geography and the Place of the Literary," *American Literary History* 10(3): 544–567. See also Nirvana Tanoukhi, 2008, "The Scale of World Literature," *New Literary History* 39(3): 599–617; Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker, eds, 2005, *Geographies of Modernism: Literatures, Cultures, Spaces*. New York: Routledge. For an exploration of the intersection between geography and literature from the perspective of geographers, see, for example, Douglas C.D. Pocock, 1981, *Humanistic Geography and Literature: Essays on the Experience of Place*. London and Totowa, NJ: Croom Helm and Barnes & Noble.
- 9 Susan Buck-Morss, 2009, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*. Pittsburg, PA: University of Pittsburg Press.
- 10 See Hugo Meltzl de Lomnitz, 1877, "Present Tasks of Comparative Literature," *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum* October: 307–315.
- 11 Jing Tsu, 2010, *Sound and Script in Chinese Diaspora*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard.
- 12 The Siraya language was spoken by several village communities, who were engaged in perpetual feuds with one another and all spoke some variation of Siraya. Siraya became extinct perhaps as early as 1830, and its former speakers—like those of a number of other indigenous languages—now use the southern Chinese dialect Hokkien, the dominant dialect on the island. See Li, Paul Jen-kuei, 2002, "Xin faxian shiwu jian Sinkan wenshu de chubu jiedu [Preliminary interpretations of the 15 recently uncovered Sinkan manuscripts], *Taiwan Historical Research* 9(2): 1–68; Alexander Adelaar, 2011, *Siraya: Retrieving the Phonology, Grammar and Lexicon of a Dormant Formosan Language*. Berlin and Boston, MA: De Gruyter Mouton, pp. 2–16; Chiu, Hsin-hui, 2010, *The Colonial "Civilizing Process" in Dutch Formosa*. Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, pp. 13–32. For a highly accessible account of Taiwan's multiple colonial past, see Tonio Andrade, 2010, *How Taiwan Became Chinese: Dutch, Spanish, and Han Colonization in the Seventeenth Century*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- 13 Wang Jincheng, 2010, "Tai Gang Ao wenxue shi xushu yu Zhongguo dangdai wenxue shi kongjian weidu" [Taiwan–Hong Kong–Macau literary history and the spatial latitude of contemporary Chinese literary history], *Huawen wenxue* [Chinese-Language Literature] 96: 73–78. For a more detailed discussion, see Sau-ling Wong's (2010) interesting essay, "Global Vision and Locatedness: World Literature in Chinese/by Chinese (Shijie huawen/huaren wenxue 世界華文/華人文學)

- from a Chinese Americanist Perspective,” in Jing Tsu and David Der-wei Wang, eds, *Global Chinese Literature: Critical Essays*. Boston, MA and Leiden: Brill.
- 14 See two literary works that are available in English translation and representative of pre- and post-1997, see Xi Xi, 1999, *Marvels of a Floating City*. Trans. Eva Hung, John Dent-Young, and Esther Dent-Young (Hong Kong: Renditions Press); Shi Shuqing, 2008, *City of the Queen*. Trans. Howard Goldblatt, Sylvia Li-Chun Lin. New York: Columbia University Press. See also Dong Qizhang’s *Hong Kong Trilogy*.
- 15 Tao Li, “Anwanda fufu de zaoyu,” in Tao Li, Lin Zhongying, and Zheng Weiming, eds, *Aomen xiandai wenxue zuopin xuan* [Selections from contemporary Macau literature]. Beijing: Zhongguo youyi chubanshe.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 87.
- 17 Cheun Hoe Yow, 2013, “Chinese Diasporas and Their Literature in Chinese,” in Tan Chee-Beng, ed., *Routledge Handbook of the Chinese Diaspora*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 459–474.
- 18 For two such highly regarded accounts of new literary history, see Chen Sihe, 1999, *Zhongguo dangdai wenxue shi jiaocheng* [Teaching curriculum of contemporary Chinese literature]. Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe; Hong Zicheng, 1999, *Zhongguo dangdai wenxue shi* [A literary history of contemporary Chinese literature]. Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe.
- 19 The pressures, however, were not necessarily politically created. Radio stations, for instance, found it less profitable to favor dialects over the standard language and were thus slow to respond.
- 20 Lok-sin Loa, (2011, “Lawmakers Agree on Changes to TV Stations,” 22 April, [www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2011/04/22/2003501408](http://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2011/04/22/2003501408)).
- 21 Li Qiao, ed., 2004, *Taiwan keji wenxue xuanji I: sanwen xinshi* [Selection of Taiwan Hakka Literature, vol. I: Essays and New Poetry]. Xingzhenyuan keji weiyuanhui, p. v.
- 22 See Michael Stainton, 1999, “Aboriginal Self-Government: Taiwan’s Uncompleted Agenda,” in Murray A. Rubenstein ed. *Taiwan: A New History*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, pp. 419–435.
- 23 [www.hakka.gov.tw](http://www.hakka.gov.tw) (accessed on 22 July 2011).
- 24 See Luo’s introduction in Qiu Chunmei, ed., 2007, *Keji wenxue daodu* [A guided reader to Hakka literature]. Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe youxian gongsi, p. 4.
- Chiu, Hsin-hui, 2010, *The Colonial “Civilizing Process” in Dutch Formosa*. Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill.
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## 7 Far-fetched lands

### The Caribbean, Taiwan, and submarine relations

*Li-Chun Hsiao*

The Caribbean and Taiwan appear to be more than oceans apart. Although there are ostensible similarities between the Caribbean and Taiwan, such as their complex colonial histories and insular spaces, these two names usually are not mentioned in the same breath in Western academe, and Caribbean studies scholars are unlikely to cross paths with those who engage in Taiwan studies. Furthermore, for the average reader in either location, they conjure up only vague ideas and stereotypical images of each other mediated by the West. In light of the reception of Caribbean literature in Taiwan, this essay seeks to explore the reasons for and ramifications of such a disconnect between the Caribbean and Taiwan, with an examination of the status of imported knowledge within the Taiwanese context and Taiwan's positioning vis-à-vis the Caribbean in the global system of knowledge production. It argues that what may seem a far-fetched comparison between the two sheds light on Taiwan's potential relations with the Caribbean as well as its relations with the other foreign influences that Taiwan has had to grapple with throughout history in the continual (re)shaping of its collective identity. If Taiwan has had to battle and outwit globalizing tendencies that relegate it to political, cultural, and epistemological insignificance (Shih 2003), then I propose that forging unlikely relations and alliances with other marginalized or dominated groups, countries, and cultures can be an alternative to making Taiwan relevant, even significant, to the rest of the world.

#### Mapping the disconnect

To gain some perspective on the state of Caribbean studies in Taiwan, one has to examine it in the context of the role and development of *waiwenxi* (which nominally means "department of foreign languages and literatures," but is predominantly perceived as an English department)<sup>1</sup> in Taiwan. *Waiwenxi* as a discipline has historically played the part of introducing, translating, and disseminating foreign literature and knowledge to the Taiwanese, often with a progressive gesture of ushering in the latest intellectual trends from Euro-America supposedly for the betterment of local culture. The growing interest in Caribbean literatures and cultures in Taiwan academia is a