

CONTENTS

PREFACE

David Der-wei Wang vii

INTRODUCTION

Carlos Rojas i

PART ONE: THE LIMITS OF TAIWAN LITERATURE

- 1 Representing Taiwan: Shifting Geopolitical Frameworks
Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang 17
- 2 Postmodern or Postcolonial? An Inquiry into Postwar Taiwanese Literary History
Fangming Chen 26
- 3 On the Concept of Taiwan Literature
Xiaobing Tang 51

PART TWO: CULTURAL POLITICS

- 4 The Importance of Being Perverse: China and Taiwan, 1931–1937
Joyce C. H. Liu 93
- 5 "On Our Destitute Dinner Table": *Modern Poetry Quarterly* in the 1950s
Michelle Yeh 113
- 6 The Literary Development of Zhong Lihe and Postcolonial Discourse in Taiwan
Fenghuang Ying 140
- 7 Wang Wenxing's *Backed against the Sea, Parts I and II*: The Meaning of Modernism in Taiwan's Contemporary Literature
Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang 156

PART THREE: HISTORY, TRUTH, AND TEXTUAL ARTIFICE

- 8 The Monster That Is History: Jiang Gui's *A Tale of Modern Monsters*
David Der-wei Wang 181
- 9 Taiwanese Identity and the Crisis of Memory: Post-Chiang Mystery
Yomi Braester 213
- 10 Doubled Configuration: Reading Su Weizhen's Theatricality
Gang Gary Xu 233
- 11 Techniques behind Lies and the Artistry of Truth:
Writing about the Writings of Zhang Dachun
Kim-chu Ng 253

PART FOUR: SPECTRAL TOPOGRAPHIES AND CIRCUITS OF DESIRE

- 12 Travel in Early-Twentieth-Century Asia: On Wu Zhuoliu's "Nanking Journals" and His Notion of Taiwan's Alternative Modernity
Ping-hui Liao 285
- 13 Mapping Identity in a Postcolonial City: Intertextuality and Cultural Hybridity in Zhu Tianxin's *Ancient Capital*
Lingchei Letty Chen 301
- 14 Li Yongping and Spectral Cartography
Carlos Rojas 324
- 15 History, Exchange, and the Object Voice: Reading Li Ang's *The Strange Garden* and *All Sticks Are Welcome in the Censer of Beigang*
Chaoyang Liao 348
- 16 Reenchanting the Image in Global Culture: Reification and Nostalgia in Zhu Tianwen's Fiction
Ban Wang 370

APPENDIX: Chinese Characters for Authors' Names and Titles of Works 389

CONTRIBUTORS 395

INDEX 397

4

The Importance of Being Perverse: China and Taiwan, 1931–1937

Joyce C. H. Liu

In a 1998 conference paper, I proposed to reexamine the two waves of modernism—one in the 1930s, one in the 1940s—in early Taiwan literature.¹ I reevaluated their relation to the Taiwanese modernist movement of the 1950s and suggested that the fact that these two early modernist movements were ignored and forgotten by later Taiwanese literary historians could be attributed to the historical background of the rise of Taiwan new literature as well as to the tradition that that literature maintained in later decades. From the very beginning, Taiwan new literature, under the influence of Chinese new literature and the May Fourth movement, had been imbued with heavy colors of social realism and endowed with the mission to reform society. Repeated debates between nationalistic social realism and the modernist movement, as well as the consequent cleansing and abjection of the avant-garde, show that the return to the social-realist norm has been the imperative in the history of Taiwan literature. I referred to this imperative as the Oedipal syndrome. When I used the Oedipal in dealing with issues in the socius, I was borrowing Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the molar formation, powerfully developed in *Anti-Oedipus*.² That is to say, psychoanalytically, the strong collective desire to organize and normalize all discourses so that they fit into the symbolic order of the nationalistic construction, the social phallus, is analogous to the process of socialization and normalization of an individual. Such a desire to cling to the whole, determined by the social phallus of the time, will consequently shape all literary and cultural identities.

This essay intends to further investigate the Oedipal syndrome in the Taiwanese literary field of the 1930s, with the hope that we can see better the complex interrelations between early Taiwanese modernism and its social context. The early Taiwanese literary field, being organized around a collective norm, has tended to synchronize the twin aims of the avant-garde in the modernist movement (i.e., that of reshaping literary conventions and that of rebuilding society) and redirect them into a social-realist track.³ Within this normalized track, the act of seeking a brighter and more progressive society turned out to be the single cause for both literary activities and social movements. The dual impulses of the “abject” — to purge the unclean or to abandon oneself and become the “deject” — as discussed by Julia Kristeva in her *Powers of Horror* also emerge in this context.⁴ Faced with this totalitarian discursive field, the modernist poet willingly plunges into writing about filth, waste, the violent, and the erotic. This is what Kristeva calls perverse writing, through which the poet maintains his resistance against the system and the norm.

The pervert and the schizophrenic, viewed from the perspective of the literary field, can be seen as embodying the defense mobilized by the libidinal energy to resist the force of organization and normalization and, by implication, Thanatos itself. The resistance, according to Kristeva, is caused by the fear of being “one” for an “other.” In discussing Baudelaire and *Les fleurs du mal*, Kristeva writes: “Perversion . . . proposes its screen of *abject*, fragile films, neither subjects nor objects, where what is signified is fear, the horror of being *one* for an *other*.” Modern writing, according to Kristeva, is closer to “wandering psychosis” than to neurosis, which “imposes on the individual the erotic problem of the socius.”⁵ Thus, the modern writer, the one by whom the abject exists, is an exile, a “*deject* who places (himself), *separates* (himself), *situates* (himself) and therefore strays instead of getting his bearings, desiring, belonging, or refusing.”⁶ Writing, then, is an act to exorcise the perversion and to empty out the filth inside the body. By writing about waste, decay, rot, the obscene, and the demonic, the pervert in language resists the norm and also its own death.

In this essay, I examine the perverse writing employed by the first Taiwanese modernist poet and novelist, Yang Chichang, and discusses its significance, his theories of the “new spirit” and the “new relation,” and his impulsive longing for the writing of horror. In so doing, I first delineate the cultural background of the 1930s, in which I see the clear manifestations of

the Oedipal syndrome, or what Deleuze and Guattari would call the Oedipal neurosis: a strongly organized collective will to strive for the group spirit and for the brighter side of society.

The span of time that I have selected begins with Japan's formal invasion of China in 1931 and ends with the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937.⁷ During this period, a sense of the serious danger that threatened China's subjectivity rose up across the nation. The slogans "national defense literature," "people's revolutionary proletarian literature," "unified front line," and "new life movement" also rapidly emerged.⁸ These are clear expressions of the nationalist urge for the new order and the demand for a strong ethnic identity. The Chinese literary field of the 1930s was, therefore, dominated by an obvious nationalist tone from both the Left and the Right.⁹ In 1932, Shi Zhecun, Mu Shiying, and Du Heng, with the help of Liu Naou, established the literary journal *Xiandai* [Modern] in Shanghai.¹⁰ Facing the forceful organization and total mobilization of the contemporary literary field, the modernist group became the target of attacks from all sides, and a series of debates on its members' apolitical position as the "Free People" and the "Third Kind of People" appeared in various journals.¹¹ The modernist style of writing—the so-called *xinganjuepai*, or new perceptionist movement—was severely criticized, for example, as "the perverse and morbid urban life in the semicolonial region."¹²

In the same year that Japan invaded China, the Japanese colonial government in Taiwan strengthened its military control over the Taiwanese and arrested most of the Taiwanese Communist leaders. The leftist leaders and the ethnic movement advocates shifted their base to literary associations and magazines.¹³ With the rise of Taiwanese nativist consciousness and the organization of the leftist literary associations, the Taiwan new literature movement became the tool of anticolonialism and social realism. *Taiwan xinminbao* [Taiwan new people's news], originally established in Tokyo, started its Chinese edition in Taiwan in 1931. The Taiwan Culture Association, an unofficial leftist organization, was formed in 1932 in Taipei and started two related magazines, *Fu'ermosha* [The Formosan] and *Xianfa budui* [The avant-garde]. In 1934, the Taiwan Literary and Art Union was formed, and Taiwan new literature appeared on the scene in 1935. It was in the context of this political atmosphere and nativist literary discourse that Yang Chichang in 1933 established the short-lived surrealist *Fengche shizhi*, also called *Le moulin*, the first modernist poetry magazine in Taiwanese

literary history. Sharing a parallel destiny with *Xiandai*, which had been established, as we have seen, the previous year, *Fengche shizhi* was severely criticized by the social-realist camp as being decadent and perverse.

Both *Xiandai* and *Fengche shizhi* were reactions against the contemporary totalitarian organization of the nationalist as well as the nativist norm. The editors and writers of both journals were heavily influenced by contemporary Japanese and European modernism. Through reexamining the perverse writings of Yang Chichang, I seek to show that they offer a mode of negative consciousness, an analysis that could help explain similar perverse writings in the modernism of 1950s Taiwan as well as those in 1980s China.

Before I move on to the Taiwanese scene, a brief sketch and reassessment of the studies of 1930s modernism in China will help provide a starting point for discussion. The beginning of the New Era in China in the 1980s, the so-called *xin shiqi*, was accompanied by the rise of modernist literature such as “*menglong* poetry” (a movement combining symbolism with political critique and associated with the journal *Jintian* [Today]) and was followed by a powerful tendency to welcome Western cultures. The same dynamic forces also triggered a wave of rediscovery and reappraisal of the suppressed and long-forgotten modernist literature from the 1920s and 1930s. Dozens of histories of this literature were published in an attempt to correct the view that social-realist literature was the only legitimate trend in modern Chinese literary history.¹⁴ Modernist literature, such as Shanghai’s new perceptionist movement of the 1930s, was brought to the foreground in this new wave of literary historiography.

The studies of the modernist literature of the 1930s convey scholars’ subtle criticism of the monolithic discourse that appeared in China in that decade. It is pointed out that the reason the modernist literature was dismissed and forgotten by Chinese literary historians was that in the 1930s China chose a different path from that of the modernism of the new perceptionist school. This choice—which was framed in terms of either what Zhou Yi termed the culture’s choice or what Chen Houcheng referred to as the choice of history—was to head toward a new order, with a more organized, positive, progressive, correct, and uniform system.¹⁵

Concerning the mainstream discourse’s intolerance of the “Westernized” or heterogeneous elements in literary works, the question is not only, Why did they resent the polymorphous and the perverse? but also, Why did they

desire their own repression with so strong a will? What is required to answer these questions is, as suggested by Deleuze and Guattari, an analysis of “the specific nature of the libidinal investments in the economic and political spheres,” with the hope of explaining why and how, “in the subject who desires, desire can be made to desire its own repression.”¹⁶

The highly organized discursive norm in the Chinese literary field of the 1930s is similar to what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the “molar formation” exercised in the “socius.” They explain the major traits of a molar formation of a “form of gregariousness” (herd instinct) as follows:

They effect a unification, a totalization of the molecular forces through a statistical accumulation obeying the laws of large numbers. This unity can be the biological unity of a species or the structural unity of a socius: ‘an organism, social or living, is composed as a whole, as a global or complete object. It is in relation to this new order that the partial objects of a molecular order appear as a lack, at the same time that the whole itself is said to be lacked by the partial objects.

According to Deleuze and Guattari, the socius is a “body without organs,” and “the races and cultures designate regions on this body—that is, zones of intensities, fields of potentials.”¹⁷ The norm of modern Chinese literary discourse follows the collective desire for the lack, or the phallus, which points to a new order, a more organized, progressive, correct, and uniform system. This highly cathected partial object, the new order, demands that all individual writers strive to serve the phallus, to subject the individual to the organization of the society, to advocate the future utopian nation, to reveal the corruption of the society, and to correct its wrongs.¹⁸ In the powerful momentum of organization, all individuals willingly give up their personal fantasies and desire with vehemence such repression.

It is also within such a highly Oedipal collective neurosis that the fear of the perverse is intensified. Studies appearing in the 1980s show that, in spite of the attempted reappraisal of the Chinese modernism of the 1930s, the repulsion felt toward the abnormal, the decadent, and the perverse in modernist literature remained. Scholars of the 1930s and the 1980s share the same sentiments of fear and resentment. Yan Jiayan, a pioneer in the study of Chinese modernist literature, for example, fully demonstrated in his preface to the *Xinganjuepai xiaoshuo xuan* his severe objection to the “capitalistic” sadistic and perverted pleasure described in Shi Zhecun’s story “Shi Xiu” [Shi Xiu].¹⁹ Shi Jianwei also criticized modernist writers, such as

Mu Shiyong, who, following Freudian theories, present their characters as entirely driven by sexual desire.²⁰

Closely allied with the reservation about the abnormal and the perverse is the urge for writers to join the collective forces of national reformation. Shi Jianwei, for example, has insisted that all literature should “relate the fortune of individuals organically with the revolutionary tides of the time,” “reveal the essential conflicts of the society,” and “advocate the future ideal.”²¹ Such a critical stance echoes the typical leftist discourse of Ah Ying and others in the 1930s, who also demanded that writers should attend to the correct path and serve as the spokespeople of the proletariat.

The norm and the collective cannot tolerate the atomized self who refuses to enter the symbolic structure and who resists having his or her desires stabilized and identity fixed. This atomized self, or what Deleuze and Guattari term the *schizo*, does not belong to any given social order:

The schizo is not revolutionary, but the schizophrenic process—in terms of which the schizo is merely the interruption or the continuation in the void—is the potential for revolution. To those who say that escaping is not courageous, we answer: what is not escape and social investment at the same time? The choice is between one of two poles, the paranoiac counter-escape that motivates all the conformist, reactionary, and fascisizing investments, and the schizophrenic escape convertible into a revolutionary investment.²²

Choosing to be neither a conformist nor a fascist, the artist takes up the schizophrenic process and carries out deterritorialization and reterritorialization through creative work.

If we reexamine the “perverse and morbid” texts of the new perceptionist movement, we realize that it is from this point that these modernist writers actualized their resistance and demonstrated their revolutionary force. Shanghai had been in a peculiar position because, since the nineteenth century, the ownership of its land had been given, piece by piece, to the British, the French, and the Japanese governments; it has, therefore, been called the nation within a nation. In the early decades of the twentieth century, Shanghai witnessed the complex intermixing of multiple cultures, including not only English, French, and Japanese but also diasporic Russians, Jews, Romanians, etc. Leo Ou-fan Lee has pointed to the mixture of heterogeneous cultures of the Tang dynasty as the background in Shi Zhecun’s fiction, observing that the combination of “the ancient exotic color” and the “mod-

ern psychological knowledge” makes it different from classical historical romance. However, such an “intermixing of heterogeneous cultures” perfectly reflects the conditions of Shanghai in the 1930s.²³ In his stories, Shi Zhecun creates the arena for boundary setting or crossing among diverse ethnic groups. The problems of blood origin, loyalty, history, heritage, and the authenticity of or confusion about cultural identity are prominently developed. Likewise, in the rapid montage of street scenes and psychic scenes in the work of Liu Naou and Mu Shiying, there is also an uneasiness of cultural identity in the semicolonial condition in Shanghai.²⁴ Finally, a similar tendency is evident in the perverse writings of Yang Chichang.

In the Taiwanese scene of the the 1930s, Yang Chichang was facing conditions similar to those of the modernist writers in Shanghai at the same time. Yang, who studied Japanese literature at Tokyo University from 1930 to 1931 and wrote exclusively in Japanese, has been repeatedly criticized for his interest in such topics as prostitution and sexuality as well as for what he described in his essay “The Dwindled Candle Flame” [“Zanshoku no honoo”] (1985) as his “decadent” and “demonic” style.²⁵

When we examine the literary discursive trends of the 1930s, we soon realize that Yang was not welcomed by his contemporaries because the second wave [*zai chufa*] of the Taiwan new literature movement was already under way. This second wave was advocated by the Taiwan Culture Association. The theme of the first issue of *Xianfa budui*, the representative magazine of the association, was to investigate “the road of Taiwan new literature.” In 1934, the editorial column of *Xianfa budui* expressed the editorial board’s discontent with the formal experiments practiced by the writers of the time, including such examples as the journals *Nanyin* and *Xiaozhong*, which had “run into a wall” [*peng bi*], remarking that “they fall back into the sensational, sentimental, playful, and even low-class literary act.”²⁶ *Xianfa budui* also clearly stated a desire to organize the dispersed elements and move toward the “authentic” [*bengehua*] path of construction. In this, we can see the internal censorship exercised within the Taiwanese literary field, checking individualized and diverse formal experimentation.

In the early 1920s, the rising Taiwan new literature movement, influenced by the May Fourth movement in China, clearly manifested its revolutionary and military tone. In the first issue of *Taiwan qingnian* [Taiwanese youth], published in 1920 in Tokyo, the editorial column stated that the purpose of

the magazine was to wake up Taiwanese young people to face the cultural movement in the contemporary world: "My respectable young comrade! Come forward, and let's march together!"²⁷ Zhang Wojun, the most forceful advocate of Taiwan new literature, wrote several letters to the magazine in 1924, addressing Taiwanese young people, urging them to try their best to "reform the society" and not continue sleeping. Zhang exclaimed: "Come and fight, and march forward with no pause, and we'll meet our aim one day!"²⁸

The same marching spirit and will to reform were echoed in the poems that appeared in *Xianfa budui* in 1934, for example, the *Xianfa budui* manifesto:

March, the avant-garde!
Let's march in this tense and bright atmosphere.
With the will to soar up high,
With the spirit that knows no limit,
With the steps that follow the path,
March!
March!

.....

The avant-garde moves forward to build a new world. Their blood and flesh are running and hot, awaiting the other troops to come.

Don't hesitate.

Don't doubt.

Come.

Let's assemble at this front line,

Freeze the ocean,

Move the mountain,

Let's start,

Until

The new world of ours is actualized.²⁹

We can clearly see here the strong desire for collective organization behind these lines and the severity hidden within such marching spirit. Deleuze and Guattari describe the "violence" and the "joy" associated with feeling oneself "a wheel in the machine, traversed by flows," and in a position "where one is thus traversed, broken, fucked by the socius."³⁰ The collective mobilization

attracts all individuals' personal desires and leads them toward the national phallus, the new order, and the new world. The will to freeze the ocean, to move the mountain, with the running and the hot blood and the flesh, demonstrates a paranoid fantasy and the desire to obey and submit to the collective force. Following the double impulse within the avant-garde spirit—to change literary conventions and to change the world—*Xianfa budui* found the solution in the military forcefulness of the latter cause.

Such a paranoid fantasy on the part of the *Xianfa budui* writers stands in clear contrast to what Yang Chichang practiced in his poetry and fiction. For him, while the colonial situation was impossible to ignore, that reality nevertheless could not be observed and described directly. Therefore, he used a form of negative description to write about the traumatic experience of the colonized and, in this way, used textual production to put resistance into practice. He was neither willing nor able to pursue the goals of the masses, as was advocated in the *Xianfa budui* manifesto. Instead, he could only stroll about aimlessly like a flaneur, sometimes even closing his eyes as he did so. The poem “The Sunday Stroller” [“Nichiyooshiki no sanposha”] (1933) can stand as a statement of his poetics. He shuts his eyes in order to “see still-life images,” thereby allowing the landscape to develop “through shattered memories,” as if in a dream. Strolling through this dreamscape, the narrator sees:

People laugh, seemingly cheerfully,
Passing through the rainbow-shaped space formed by their laughter, dragging
along their sins. . . .

.....
I stroll along, listening to the voices in the space,
I press my ears onto my body and
Listen to the demonlike voices from within.

In another poem from 1933, “Hallucination” [“Genei”], what he sees is the “gray brain,” the “moronic country,” the “cheerful people,” and the “virulent hallucinations” in the colonized land:

Shattering through the closely sealed windows of mine,
The gray Mephistopheles broke in,
The rhythm of his laughter painted musical notes in my brain.

.....

The awful breath of the night falls.

When will the snowstorm start under this forgotten colonized sky?

The virulent hallucinations emerging from the sneer.

In the course of ordinary life, the poet sees the blizzards and fierce hallucinations that may rise up “under the forgotten colonial skies” as well as the masses who unwittingly but contentedly commit sins and transgressions and “dream in their gray brain matter of the open land of the moronic country.”³¹

In another of Yang’s poems, “The Green Bell-Tower” [“Aojiroi shooroo”] (1933), the narrator finds himself walking through the streets of Tainan, and, amid the sounds of “green reverberations of the tolling of the bell,” the “purplish-green sound waves,” and the “explosive retorts of coverless trucks,” he glimpses “a prostitute who has frozen to death.” In the more recent “Self-Portrait” [“Jigazoo”] (1979), Yang also uses figures of “destruction,” a “romantic city,” a “peaceful morning,” a “desolate world,” and “flickering life” to describe the city of Tainan, while the poet himself remains “buried in refuse.”³²

Yang realized his political position not through a direct manifesto but, rather, through resistance to the organized literary norms of his time and escape into perverse writing. He fully understood the censorship that Taiwanese writers faced during the 1930s and realized that, if he had written directly about reality and fully expressed what he saw and experienced, it would have been impossible to have published his writings. Since he was not content to follow the banal track of his contemporaries and write what other people expected of him, he chose to write in a “perverse way” [*yichangwei*] and revealed in his works the traumatic experience of the Taiwanese people under the colonial system.

Yang’s atomized or schizophrenic style of writing, relying on scattered images, is best illustrated in the poem “Demi Rever,” written in 1934:

The morning absorbs from the violent snowstorms the lights of July.

Wavelike sounds of music, painting, and poetry are like angels’ footsteps.

My musical ideal was the melody of Picasso’s guitar.

The sun sets with the dusk and seashells.

Picasso. Painter of the cross. Thoughts of the flesh. Dreams of the flesh. Ballet
of the flesh.

Decadent white liquid.

An idea that came after the third lighting of the cigar pipe
Entered into a black glove.
Northwesterly wind blows across the windowpane,
As passion breathing out of the pipe turns toward the seashore.
The pollen of dreams remains on the pale forehead, white ribbons of the wind,
The solitary air is unstable.
Sunlight's fallen dream
Is in the music of the dried wooden angel. Green imagery starts to drift. Birds,
fish. Beast, trees, water, and sand. They too become rain. . . .³³

The anarchy of atomized images and the disaggregation of the will to control the text appear similar to what Nietzsche, following Paul Bourget's comments on the decadent style, observed with respect to Wagner: "That life no longer dwells in the whole. The word becomes sovereign and leaps out of the sentence, the sentence reaches out and obscures the meaning of the page, and the page gains life at the expense of the whole—the whole is no longer a whole. But this is the simile of every style of decadence: every time, the anarchy of atoms, disaggregation of the will."³⁴ The abandonment of rational control, the disintegration of form, the resistance to earnest observation of reality, all these things in Yang's writing are very alien to the Chinese and Taiwanese way of thinking. However, it is precisely through this alien form of abandonment and disintegration that Yang managed to probe the depths of reality and of the unconscious, which is so unusual in a Chinese and Taiwanese cultural context.

The depths of reality and the unconscious are also revealed through Yang's obsession with scenes of horror and images of death. Yang suggested that the technique employed by Hukui Keiichi, the artist who illustrated some of his books, constitutes a kind of "negative treatment" that reveals "the dark side of one's consciousness." He also explained that in his fictional piece "The Rosy Skin" ["Bara no hifu"] (1937) he tried to present "the joy of sex through blood": "I attempted to make the blood vomited by the man flow onto the body of the woman. The man caresses her bloody body with his hand, and the woman hides her face in his bosom, like two naked bloody beasts, both enjoying the ecstasy of love." This kind of "strange love" and "cruelty" is, according to Yang, meant to present the "weird beauty and the strange light" of sex so that his works can explore the "perverse state of modern neurosis."³⁵

To be more specific, the perverse and even sadistic obsession with the image of death reveals Yang's perception of reality in the 1930s as a combination of beauty and decay, as is illustrated by the following excerpt from his poem "The Image of the Moon's Death—the Tombstone of a Lady, II" ["Tsuki no shisoo (Jyohime dai nisyoo)"] (1939):

The lustful roses,
The fossil of flowers with the fragrance of the hair,
The snow-white stone statue with the fragrance of the hair.

From within the window we can see the candlesticks.
The secrets of the night,
Flowers, fruits, gems, reptiles. . . .
Ah, the sound of the bugs' wings falling on the images of death.

In the wind of failure,
The ritual of the dancing corpses has just begun.

Such an irrational juxtaposition of beauty and decay betrays a sense of horror in the face of total failure and despair. In "The Butterfly's Thoughts—the Tombstone of a Lady, I" ["Choo no shikoo (Jyohime dai issyoo)"] (1939), beauty and death are also closely linked:

Purple fingers of the death lantern extended underneath its shades,
The butterflies swarm and whiten the place,
The secret of dreams.

Through the deep channel of light,
Exploring the fictive layers of the narrative,
The butterflies crouch on.

The night that is magically transformed,
Is it the thinking of the bloody color?
Into the inscriptions on the tombstone of the woman who betrayed the season,
As numerous as the butterflies' powdered wings.³⁶

In "Tainan qui dort" ["Kowareta machi—Tainan qui dort"] (1936), Yang presents more fully the trauma that he experienced during this period:

Under the attack of pale shock,
The crimson lips uttered a terrible cry.

In the deathlike stillness of the dawn,
The blood-smearred wounds of my body are heating with fever.³⁷

Such a juxtaposition of beauty and death/corruption, or of beauty and the stillness of death, reveals the living conditions of Tainan that Yang was facing—that is, life in death or the life of the living dead.

Perhaps the irrational juxtaposition of the contrary states of life and death, and of beauty and corruption, corresponds to the “new relation” discussed by the surrealist poet Nishiwaki Junzaburo, whom Yang admired greatly. Similar to the “enigma” suggested by Mallarmé or Breton’s “beauty of wonder,” Nishiwaki emphasized the excitement in the discovery of the “new relation,” which is close to the sensation of the “rational mind being attacked.”³⁸ Mallarmé, Bréton, and Nishiwaki all refer to the way in which a poem can combine disparate elements to create a new relation, which is enough to present an overwhelming challenge to formerly fixed concepts. Yang’s new relations are most clearly manifested when he uses an anti-idealized juxtaposition of incommensurate concepts. This process of atomizing and fracturing is a retreat from idealism, together with a loosening of the strictures of the text.

However, I must stress here that the new relation as manifested in Yang’s poetry is meant not merely to shock or depict a wondrous beauty but also to lay bare, through a kind of “negative consciousness” or the “perverse” mode of beauty, the experience of trauma, failure, deception, and despair, an experience made all the more unbearable because it is silenced and imprisoned in the numb cheerfulness of the colonized land.

The most common way in which Yang’s poetry uses a violent and anti-idealized method of bringing together disparate experiential elements is by conjoining themes of decadence and seductive beauty. Alternatively, we could say that the juxtaposition of calm happiness and decadent setback, of beauty and the death and decay that underlie it, and of a static life and the wound that lies beneath it are the keynotes of Yang’s poetry and also constitute the plight in which he found himself as an inhabitant of colonial Tainan. Examples of some of his early poems addressing these themes include “Tainan qui dort” and “The Image of the Moon’s Death.”

When the colonial situation became a state of military conflict, Yang’s poetry began to return to the theme of death with ever-greater frequency.

Therefore, "The Image of the Moon's Death" foregrounds a callous juxtaposition of life and death as well as of death and seductive beauty. The poem includes not only still and solitary images of death but also the "lustful roses" in the cemetery; we not only see the stone statue and the flower fossil but also smell the fragrance of hair permeating both. Similarly, we see not only the withered skeletons of twigs and leaves fluttering in the wind but also the mortal vestiges of deceased flowers, rotten fruits, tarnished gems, and reptiles.

The figure of the butterfly appears frequently in Yang's poetry and functions as a crucial link between the contrasting elements of cohesive beauty and mortal terror. As early as his 1935 "Veins and Butterflies" ["Joomyaku to choo"], butterflies perform an aerial dance over the corpse of a young woman who has committed suicide in a classical manner:

In the dusk, the young woman raises her hand with its protruding veins,
In the forest behind the sanitarium, there is the corpse of a hanging victim,
The pleats and folds of a butterfly-embroidered green skirt are fluttering gently.

Butterflies also dance in the twilight in Tainan, this city that was defeated and effectively destroyed, while the survival of the populace is inscribed in the "defeated land" itself. The people in "Tainan qui dort," can only whistle silently, like a lifeless and hollow conch shell:

The people who sign their names on the defeated land
Whistle silently, empty conch shells
Singing old histories, old lands, houses, and
Trees, all love to meditate sweetly
Autumn leaves fluttering in the dusk!
For the prostitutes singing boat songs,
The sighs of the old homeland are pale and colorless.

In "Pale Song" ["Aozameta uta"], from 1939, butterflies flutter within the morbid thoughts of another suicide victim:

Terrified of the suicide victim's white eyes, they flutter in the music
of the sick leaves.³⁹

In the poem "The Butterfly's Thoughts—the Tombstone of a Lady, I," published in the same year as "Pale Song" and cited above, we glimpse even more clearly the butterflies dancing in the shadows of the death lanterns that il-

illuminate an open grave. They appear to have already learned the secrets of death and life's vacuous adornments: "Through the deep channel of light, / Exploring the fictive layers of the narrative, / The butterflies crouch on."

Living himself in a colonial territory, Yang had to participate in a thorough and compulsory normalization while still maintaining a superficial veneer of calm and happiness. He was similarly confronted with war but powerless to change or avert it. All that remained for him was a pervading sense of failure and desolation, the stubborn fantasies of violence and death and decay that lurk in the interstices between silence and repression, and the systematic terror hidden beneath these insistent fantasies.

In his poetry and fiction, Yang Chichang employs a perverse writing style that resists systematization and organization, making his the first work in modern Taiwan literature to use neurotic perversity as well as a cruel and repulsive beauty as constituent elements. If he had not insisted on this atomizing perversity, refused to enter the literary organizations of the new literature, and refused the assignation of a static identity, then he would not have had access to this perverse dimension that was so rare in early Taiwan literature; nor would he have been able to traverse the surface, textual appearance of cruel and repulsive beauty and probe a deeper liminal zone embedded within a larger symbolic economy.

Yang indicated in "The Dwindled Candle Flame" that the concepts of "pure love, vestigial sentiment, dispassionate purity, and seductive beauty" can come full circle and be transformed into "negligible darkness and shaded obscurity" while also being directly linked to the aforementioned "cruel and repulsive beauty." Furthermore, the transformation of this sort of "negligible darkness" is made possible through its being grounded on the fulcrum of a "ruthless and icy gaze." This is the way in which "those who feel deeply" regard life and death because, "in order to emotionlessly reveal it [life and death], it is necessary to tap into humanity's inherent icy stoicism."⁴⁰

The pleasure that the observer feels while his flesh drips with fresh blood, while being entranced with the decay and seductiveness of death, or while listening carefully to the demonic voices within his own body—all these examples from Yang's poetry illustrate the ways in which he uses perverse scenarios to challenge traditional values. At the same time, they constitute a departure from the organization of forms of human desire under the Oedipus complex. Once the subject enters that organization, he or she can

follow the path of desire and pursue a systematized absolute standard as well as a unified object. Gendered identity, national identification, political orientation, as well as abstract moral standards all become the foundation for a structured desire. Within it, the creation of a distinct "subjectivity" is made possible, together with an identification mechanism inclined toward the superego. The superego demands that the ego reject all the vestigial traces of the primal mother, just as it demands that the self forcibly expel all the impure elements within its own body, in order to complete the process of purification and systematization.

This negative, negating, and demonic style of brutal pleasure and cruel, repulsive beauty that Yang develops constitutes a rare exception in early Chinese and modernist Taiwan literature. Furthermore, the significance of Yang's works lies in how he uses a perverse attitude to extricate and distance himself from the conventional monoglossic discussions of new Taiwan literature and, thereby, to open up new ideological and literary terrain. Seen from this perspective, the figure of the prostitute, which continually reappears in his works between 1933 and 1939, is, therefore, an indirect expression of Taiwan's own prostituted consciousness as a colonized territory.

The topics of sex and prostitution appear frequently in many of Yang's other poems from the period 1933-39. Similarly, in such poems as "Tainan qui dort," "The Green Bell Tower," and "The Image of the Moon's Death," as well as in "The Rosy Skin" (1937), the vocabulary of blood, silence, and death gradually increased during the same general period. This slow process of change in Yang's writing runs parallel to the progress of the war between Japan and China as well as to that of the larger war in which countless Taiwanese young men were drafted to join the battle in Southeast Asia. This vocabulary of distorted emotion reveals the hidden violence as well as the suppressed fear that characterizes these scenes of death.

In order to lead his readers into a fantasy realm exploring the materiality of abstract signifiers and the margins of the human spirit, Yang used a literary strategy grounded, as we have seen him put it in "Demi-rever," in: "Thoughts of the flesh. Dreams of the flesh. Ballet of the flesh." He suggested that readers must transform their cultural identity and escape their ethnic positionality, while also demanding that poetry be removed from reality and be a product of processed reality, opaque language, and the manifestations of a developed subconscious. When we consider these aspects of his literary project, together with his use of surrealistic imagery

and a demonic and seductive atmosphere, we can easily understand why his “demonic works” were repeatedly criticized by the realist literature organizations for, as he reported in “The Dwindled Candle Flame,” their “indulgent beauty,” “decadent beauty,” “demonic beauty,” “repulsive beauty,” “cruel beauty,” and why his mixture of modernist poetics and neurotically perverse writings constituted such a shock to the literary establishment.⁴¹ Finally, we may also understand why the *Mingtan* and *Xianfa budui* publishing houses both failed to include him within the category of *Taiwan* new literature.

Sex and violence, as Georges Bataille discussed in *The Tears of Eroticism*, produce the same mode of intensified pleasure because each can serve as the outlet for a hidden inner fear. Consequently, the compulsive fantasy of extreme pain as well as those of violence and eroticism are strategies used to resist the suppressed horror in the face of death.⁴² The subject of Bataille’s discussion was the writings and paintings Sade and Goya produced during their respective periods of imprisonment: After witnessing the brutality and death of war, Sade was imprisoned for thirty years, while Goya was deaf for the final thirty-six years of his life. Both started their violent writing and painting during their period of imprisonment.

I suggest that whatever the form of imprisonment—be it institutional, physical, or cultural, such as that in which Yang found himself—forced silence in the presence of physical violence and death breeds violence and perversity in expression. *Taiwan* literature of the 1950s and 1960s, especially the writings in the surrealist mode during the first decades after the establishment of martial law in 1950 (e.g., those of Luo Fu), and Chinese literature of the 1980s (e.g., the work of Can Xue) both reveal a close affinity to the perverse writings of Yang Chichang.

NOTES

Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from non-English-language sources are my own.

- 1 See Joyce C. H. Liu, “The Abject of the Avant-Garde in Early Modern *Taiwan* Literature” (paper presented at the conference “Writing *Taiwan*,” Columbia University, 1998). A revised version of this material, developed into two chapters, appeared in my *Guer, nüshen, fumian shuxie: Wenhua fuhao de weizhuangshi yuedu* [Orphan, Goddess, and the writing of the negative: The performance of our symptoms] (Taipei: Lixu, 2000), 152–89, 224–59. The Chinese version of the present essay is also included in this book (see *ibid.*, 190–223).

- 2 See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).
- 3 On the paradoxical nature of the avant-garde, see the discussion in Matei Calinescu, "The Idea of the Avant-Garde," in *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 95-148.
- 4 See Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).
- 5 Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 340, 339.
- 6 Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 8.
- 7 Most literary historians' periodization of the 1930s begins with 1927 and ends with 1930. But Li Helin points out that 1931 is a significant year because of the September Eighteenth Incident (in which the Japanese army blew up a portion of the South Manchuria Railway in Shenyang, blaming the explosion on the Chinese army, and using it as a pretext to invade northeastern China). See Li Helin, *Jinershinian Zhongguo wenyi sichao lun* [Chinese literary trends from the past twenty years] (Shanghai: Shanghai Books, 1995), 261. In his "Wenxue de Shanghai: Yijiusanyi" [Literary Shanghai: 1931], in *Ruhe xiandai, zenyang wenxue* [How modern, what literature] (Taipei: Ryefield, 1998), 269, 278, David Der-wei Wang also suggests that this is the moment at which the focus of the literary movement shifted from the north to the south, from Beijing to Shanghai.
- 8 Compare Li, *Jinershinian Zhongguo wenyi sichao lun*, 261-71.
- 9 The nationalist movement started in 1930 by the rightist literati, such as Wang Ping-ling, Huang Zhenxia, Fan Zhengpo, Yie Qiuyuan, and Zhu Yingpeng, triggered the wave of nationalist literature in the 1930s. The leftists' slogans, such as Zhou Yang's "national defense literature" and Lu Xun's "nationalist revolutionary war literature of the people," shared the same nationalistic spirit. Compare Li Mu, *Sanshi niandai wenyi lun* [On the literary debates of the 1930s] (Taipei: Li Ming, 1972), 61-63.
- 10 Yan Jiayan points out that the novels of the new perceptionist movement (see below) were heavily influenced by contemporary Japanese literature. The new perceptionist movement started in 1928, with the journal *Wuguilieche*, established by Liu Naou. The writers for this journal included Dai Wangshu, Xu Xiachun, Shi Zhichun, Du Heng, Lin Weiyin, and Liu Naou. *Xiandai*, begun in 1932, was supported by the same group of people. See Yan Jiayan, *Zhongguo xiandai xiaoshuo liupaishi* [A history of six schools of modern Chinese fiction] (Beijing: Renmin wenxue, 1989), 125-31.
- 11 The debates on the "Third Kind of People" lasted from 1931 to 1933 and involved Hu Qiuyuan, Su Wen, Qu Qiubai, Zhou Yang, Lu Xun, Feng Xuefeng, Hu Feng, and Chen Wangdao, among others.
- 12 Yan, *Zhongguo xiandai xiaoshuo liupaishi*, 16.

- 13 Shi Shu's articles—e.g., Shi Shu, "Ganjue shijie—sanling niandai Taiwan linglei xiaoshuo" [Ganjue shijie: The alternative Taiwanese novels in the 1930s], in *Liangan wenxue lunji* [Collected papers on literatures from China and Taiwan] (Taipei: Xindi, 1997), 86–101, and "Riju shidai Taiwan xiaoshuo zhong tuifei yishi de qi yuan" [The decadent consciousness in Taiwanese novels in the Japanese period], in *ibid.*, 102–120—are helpful in understanding the situation that the leftist writers of the 1930s were facing. Chen Fangming's *Zuoyi Taiwan* [The leftist Taiwan] (Taipei: Rhyfield, 1998) and *Zhimindi Taiwan: Zuoyi zhengzhi yundong shilun* [Colonial Taiwan: The history of the leftist political movements] (Taipei: Rhyfield, 1998) also provide useful information concerning the Taiwanese leftist movement in the 1920s and 1930s.
- 14 After Yan Jiayan's *Xinganjuepai xiaoshuo xuan* [Anthology of xinganjue fiction] (Beijing: Tenmin wenxue chubanshe, 1985), there emerged dozens of literary histories of modernist literature.
- 15 See Zhou Yi, "Fuguang lüeyingxiao," in *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue yanjiu zongkan* [Collection of modern Chinese literary studies] 3 (1989): 140–49, 148; and Tang Zhengxu and Chen Houcheng, eds., *Ershi shiji Zhongguo wenxue yu xifang xiandai zhuyi sichao* [1920s Chinese literature and Western modernist thought] (Chengdu: Zichuan renmin chubanshe, 1992), 357.
- 16 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 105.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 342, 85.
- 18 On the romantic and individualistic elements in modern Chinese literature, see Leo Ou-fan Lee, "Xiandai Zhongguo wenxue zhongde langman geren zhuyi" [Romantic individualism in modern Chinese literature], in *Xiandaixing de zhuiqiu* [In search of modernity] (Taipei: Rhyfield, 1996), 92.
- 19 "He [Shi] has almost become a completely modernized pervert of the capitalist class. . . . Such theories would lead the literary creation to a very pathetic stage" (Yan, *Xinganjuepai xiaoshuo xuan*, 32–33).
- 20 Shi Jianwei, "Xianshi zhuyi haishi xiandai zhuyi: Shilun xinli fenxi xiaoshuopai de chuanguo qingxiang ji qi lishi jiaoshun" [Realism or modernism: An examination of the creative directions in psychoanalytic fiction together with their historical lessons], *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue yanjiu congkan* [Journal of Chinese modern literature studies] 2 (1985): 51.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 56. Leo Ou-fan Lee also points out that the individual is filled with heated determination to strive for collective goals and to unite with the people and with history. See Lee, "Xiandai Zhongguo wenxue zhongde langman geren zhuyi," 92.
- 22 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 341.
- 23 Lee, "Xiandai Zhongguo wenxue zhongde langman geren zhuyi," 166.
- 24 Compare Peng Xiaoyan, "Langdang tianya: Liu Na'ou yijiuerqi nian riji" [Wandering to the ends of the earth: The Diary of Liu Naou of 1927], *Zhongguo wenzhe yanjiu jikan* 12.3 (1998): 1–39.

- 25 Liu Xingchang, ed., Ye Di et al., trans., *Collected Works of Shuiyingping* (Tainan: Tainan Culture Center, 1995), 240-42.
- 26 Li Nanheng, ed., *Wenxian ziliao xuanji* [Collected documents], *Rujuxia Taiwan xin wenxue* [Taiwanese new literature of the Japanese period], vol. 5 (Taipei: Mingtan, 1979), 150-51; cf. Shi, "Ganjue shijie," and "Riju shidai Taiwan xiaoshuo zhong tuifei yishi de qiyuan."
- 27 Li, ed., *Wenxian ziliao xuanji*, 1-2.
- 28 Zhang Wojun, "A Letter to Taiwanese Young People," in *ibid.*, 57, 56.
- 29 Li, ed., *Wenxian ziliao xuanji*, 146-47.
- 30 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 346-47.
- 31 Liu, ed., *Collected Works*, 81-83, 76-77.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 71.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 97-99.
- 34 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and the Case of Wagner*, trans. Walter Kaufman (New York: Vintage, 1967), 170.
- 35 Liu, ed., *Collected Works*, 241-42.
- 36 *Ibid.*, III-12, 108-10.
- 37 *Ibid.*, 50-52.
- 38 Nishiwaki Junzaburo, *Poetics* (1929), in Du Guoqing, ed. and trans., *Nishiwaki Junzaburo's Poetry and Poetics* (Gaoxung: Chunhui, 1980), 7.
- 39 Liu, ed., *Collected Works of Shuiyingping*, 22, 51-52, 45.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 139, 242.
- 41 *Ibid.*, 242.
- 42 See Georges Bataille, *The Tears of Eros* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1989), 132-33.