

美國文學與台灣：一個政治經濟學觀點
結案報告內容

For a Political Economy of American Literature in Taiwan

This study is aimed at answering a question that has troubled local educators of English majors in Taiwan for a long time: “What can our students benefit from their literary studies when a high percentage of them are not taking it for their profession? the literature taught has featured English and American literature only—with the latter that has a higher visibility in the local book market?” Related questions include pedagogy (“is the literature better approached comparatively with Taiwanese literature or exclusively in textual analysis?”) and global vision (what “global novels” should be taught to English majors in undergraduate programs? How much of the “canon” should be replaced?).

In Taiwan, the importance of English education has been emphasized since 1949 as the small island country under the military threat of China must connect itself to the United States.¹ And in undergraduate curricula, literary training in English and American literatures has been proved useful--until recently--in the cultivation of the sensibility to the ideological work of continental civilizations, especially Europe/Asian division and the United States. Entangled in the contemporary trend of globalization, Taiwan’s English education has re-oriented itself to “think globally,” making a critical turn to the geo-elemental, in particular the oceanic, as a way of escaping the ideological binds of continents or regions: the work done under the rubrics of Asia-Pacific Studies, Atlantic Studies, and Indian Ocean Studies, all of which under the umbrella project entitled “New Literatures in English” are receiving significant levels of state funding in Taiwan. This change of the global vision can be shown in the following three strands of thought in locality: (1) the invention of national history and identity pivoting itself as an “oceanic culture” in opposition to China’s “continental culture,” (2) the highlight of Chinese diaspora (or sojourners) as a way against the traditional Chinese concept of “blood is thicker than water” and (3) the re-discovery of Taiwan’s aboriginal cultures with a purpose to counter the Chinese state policy of assimilation.

The newly rewritten national history puts much emphasis on the early participation of Taiwan in the capitalist world system--from the 17th century when Taiwan was the economical border of Dutch East Indian Company,² followed by the Cheng Cheng-kung regime (1661-1683), the Qing Dynasty (1683-1895), the Japanese occupation (1895-1945) and the Republic of China since 1949. This repositioning of Taiwan is a shift from a government holding the

¹ From 1951 to 1970, U.S. support was indispensable for the survival of the nationalist government on Taiwan; consequently, American culture was the predominant foreign influence on Taiwan’s society during the period. The Mutual Security Act, the Smith-Mundt Act, and the Fulbright Act were the three major instruments of the U.S. Government for conducting cultural diplomacy activities in Taiwan. See Ena Chao, “U.S. Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs in Taiwan (1951-1970).”

² The government held a Formosa Exhibit in 2002-2003 to feature the beginning of Taiwan’s modernisation in the 17th century. The frequent contacts with contemporary sea powers (Spain, Portugal, The Netherlands, Britain, and Japan) made Taiwan the world’s stage. In comparison, China lagged much behind. According to Immanuel Wallerstein, China was the last large region to be incorporated into the world-system in the middle of the 19th century. See his *The End of the World as We Know It: Social Science for the Twenty-First Century*, p. 20.

legitimacy of Chinese history³ to the wishful thinking that Taiwan should have its own supremacy in its claim for national identity. Along with the end of the Cold War as well as the economic success,⁴ the movement for Taiwan's separation from China gained momentum, and the debate over Taiwan identity has caused a commotion. There are mainly two strands in the debate, these can be termed a "Chinese complex" and a "Taiwan awakening." The former insists on the eventual unification of China and Taiwan, while the latter acknowledges and honors Taiwan's Chinese heritage but claims not to be Chinese. This paper is not going to examine the details except to say one thing: exactly because this border consciousness cannot be resolved in the political discourse at this time due to the pressures from China and the United States,⁵ it can only appear in the cultural sphere. So we see the assertion for Taiwan independence expressed in the following facts: the adoption of *tong-yong* pinyin as the Romanization system, adding the word "Taiwan" to our passports, referring to "China" instead of the former term "Mainland," promoting dialects as official languages, changing the designs on currency notes,⁶ altering the national map,⁷ and, particularly, publishing and promoting books on the history of Taiwanese literature as well as dictionaries of Taiwanese history and people.

Looking at what Taiwan might tell us about the future of the nation state in Asia-Pacific area, most observers would say that there is no unidirectional tendency towards dissolution of the nation state. Both China and the United States have used Taiwan in playing out their respective Asian politics, and thus as a means of propping up their own national status in Asia. Taiwan, in this power game between the two big countries, could only make careful moves to obtain space for survival and development. The official strategies concerning national security include "go south" and "connect north"⁸ policies, with an implication that "we are perhaps bad Chinese but can be good Asians—with more democracy". It might not be surprising to find that the first sentence in Melissa Brown's book *Is Taiwan Chinese?* is "At the turn of the twenty-first century, Taiwan is a global hot spot" in her discussion of Taiwan's identity change from an American perspective.

³ A de-colonization project has been started: between 1945 and 1987, Taiwan's government portrayed Taiwan as ethnically Han and nationally Chinese, claiming that it was the lawful government of mainland China, which then was unjustly occupied by the Chinese Communist Party. The Chinese people on the mainland were encouraged to cross over the Taiwan Strait to pay their allegiance.

⁴ The coincidence of the timing with Taiwan's economic boom and the emphasis on avowedly pro-independence goals clarify the close ties between these specific nationalistic practices and the rapid development of small-scale entrepreneurial capitalism in Taiwan. This new proportioning of sovereignty and citizenship has both reflected and affected the questioning of identity that has accompanied Taiwan's drastic political and economic transformation of the last 15 years.

⁵ See Denny Roy's *Taiwan: a Political History* as he writes about the dilemma Taiwan has caused for the two countries: 'The United States and China face the prospect of a war over Taiwan that neither side wants. China is committed to attack Taiwan under certain circumstances, while the United States is committed to defend Taiwan under certain circumstances. For both, failing to fulfill these commitments would likely be more costly politically than honoring them'. (p. 243)

⁶ The currency was changed from political figures to patterns of local plants and animals.

⁷ The map was changed from a vertical to a horizontal axis.

⁸ These policies are aimed at breaking up the diplomatic blockage set by China. The "south" refers to Southeast Asia while the "north" refers to Japan and the United States. See Wen-Chih Lee's 'The Construction of Taiwan's 'Go-South' Worldview: The Vantage Point of Struggle Between Sea Power and Land Power in Asia-Pacific', in *Taiwan and Southeast Asia: Go-South Policy and Vietnamese Brides*, eds. Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao.

The irony is that despite the state's efforts to distance Taiwan from China, there is an increasing trade relationship between the people of both sides. Some scholars describe this as a "reverse migration" (from Taiwan to China) which has never happened before in the history. But the reason for this migration is the same as that in previous migrations: the seeking for economic opportunities.

Teaching English Majors in Taiwan

In this drastic change of the identity shifts, my teaching of students undertaking English majors within their undergraduate degrees also faces new challenges: how do we understand the hegemony of the West, and how do we present Taiwan to a Western eye? These questions used to be set in the framework of "the West and the Rest," with an assumption of the putative unity of the Western democracies, which were most often represented by the United Kingdom, Japan and the United States because of their influence on modern China and Taiwan. On the other hand, the self-image of Taiwan used to be constructed on the premise that Taiwan, in its pursuit of freedom and democracy, was the only place in the world that preserved the core of Chinese civilization. Taiwan's dignity came from the contemporary state ideology that "we are the legitimate heir of China (see: we still use the standardized Chinese characters), though suffering discrimination in the international community, which "recognizes" the Chinese Communist Party, the illegitimate usurper." With the contemporary change of Taiwan's state identity, my teaching switches to focus on the critique of the modern world-system, particularly the American consumerist way of life and its global reach, as well as the pervasive assumption that the West exists as a bounded domain. The students are taught to reflect on their positive relationship with the United States and to problematize ideologically universal ideas such as democracy, individualism, human rights and sovereignty.

This training of critical reason is not easy, as the students usually have to love a culture (and its power) before they decide to master its language. Their attachment to American culture starts so early and hence is so tight that critiquing it is like throwing an egg against a rock—a hopeless battle. After all, the United States sometimes praises Taiwan for making progresses in democracy, leading Taiwan to view other Asian countries (especially China) from a position of being a civilizing influence.⁹

The difficulty of fostering the critical reason of my students also has a lot to do with the institutionalization of American Literature in undergraduate curriculum of English majors. It's been the case that the United States in its literature is studied as an exceptional and isolated entity, and the focus of literary teaching and research is culturalist and local. Over the years the critical approaches may seem shifting-- from biographical studies, New Criticism, feminism, queer theory, postmodernism, Black Studies to the recent Asian American Studies, but the researchers have rarely tried to step outside their own disciplinary

⁹ The most recent example occurred in the 1990s: During the 12-year leadership of Teng-hui Lee (1988-2000), who initiated a series of identity change from "Chinese consciousness" to "Taiwanese consciousness," there was a post-authoritarian socio-political transformation. President Lee implemented a series of programs concerning the new citizenship: more investment in education (especially mother-language and English-language teaching starting from primary education), health services, social welfares, housing provision, and environmental protection. He also extended full voting in presidential election to anyone over the age of 20 and promoted civic-participation rights through the campaign of Integral Community Construction. In 1995 he was invited to Cornell University to give talks, and increased Taiwan's visibility in international media. His influence inside and outside Taiwan earned him a title "Mr. Democracy" and his political reformation was euphemistically called "a silent revolution." In 1994 his administration bought a full page in *Time* Magazine to publicize this idea with the metaphor of a butterfly, symbolizing a metamorphosis of Taiwan.

boundary, even to other Americanists of other disciplines.¹⁰ There was a time in 1970s and early 1980s when comparative literature in Taiwan was playing a dominant role in American literary research, and the critical perspective always began from Chinese literary basis. The most renowned promoter of New Criticism then was Yan Yuan-shu, who founded the Association of Comparative Literature in 1972 with Chu Limin. Both were trained as Americanists in the United States, but assumed their comparatist roles after their return to Taiwan. Under their leadership, there emerged a group of passionate young scholars advocating the idea that there should be a Chinese School of Comparative Literature (比較文學中國學派), with a strong belief that Taiwan can offer an alternative mode of knowledge production in the field of comparative literature. That was the time when the United States accepted a large number of Taiwan's students for post-graduate training, but those who returned still had a kind of "root" consciousness in their relationship with literary studies. As the political climate changed, as described earlier, Yan Yuan-shu chose not to be active in local academics whereas Chu Limin started to gear the research energy toward "purer" or "less troublesome" literary studies. In 1991 he set up the Association of English and American literature (英美文學學會) to avoid the difficult issues of identity shift and interdisciplinary fashion, and the result was the more confined environment for researchers and students. Not long ago, I tried to offer a course entitled "Cultural Diversity and National Identity: Taiwan and Southeast Asia" for English majors in my university. The course was designed as a continuing course of "America and Australia," also under the same theory title "Cultural Diversity and National Identity." To my surprise the new course was declined by the curriculum committee, and the reason was that "the course is not professionally acknowledged." Despite my argument that I had designed the course specifically for English majors based on my rich experience of teaching English literature to them in the same department for six years, I was advised that the course should go to the Center of General Education. The implication was that English majors should have English/American literature for their professional concern despite the political commotion about national identity is happening right outside their classroom and in many other countries.

If the professional training of English majors has become so institutionally confined, it may not be difficult for us to interpret the enthusiasm of local American literary historians in the event of Paul Lauter's tours in Asia to promote a new edition of *Heath Anthology of American Literature*. With an obvious attempt of seeking market opportunities in Asia, the former president of American studies Association came to Taiwan in 2002 to invite Asian perspectives for the new anthology. The local response to this invitation has been mainly positive, in a belief that Taiwan can offer alternative mode of knowledge production in the internationalization of American literary studies.¹¹

Some other critics, however, have argued that the so-called "alternative mode" must be set in the critique of the concept of "Asians" against U.S. unilateral relationships with individual Asian countries, including the "unresolved territory" Taiwan.¹² The fact that very little contact among Asian scholars in this field indicates that the United States has successfully defined knowledge of America, in which its literary historians have done an excellent job of constructing national narratives, unearthing the effects of American studies efforts to produce useful knowledge about, to create representations of, the qualities and the characteristics of American, citizen, identity, and so on. The history shows that American

¹⁰ See Chih-ming Wang's "Asian America in Taiwan," p. 35.

¹¹ See the special issue of *Chung Wai Literary Monthly* "American Literary Studies in Asia" edited by Shan Te-hsing.

¹² A young scholar Chih-ming Wang is one of the critical voices. His paper on Asian America in Taiwan has a very detailed argument of the nature of the local knowledge production. Other critical voices are mainly from Cultural Studies people and this research group is led by Professor Han-ping Chiu.

studies, standing in an important relation to war and migration, set themselves around literature and history in opposition to the increasing power and prestige of the state sponsored social sciences. I believe that the teaching and research of American Literature in Taiwan, before participating in the international play, should begin to reflect upon the history of American studies—both in the United States and in Taiwan--as well as to examine the relations between activities on both sides of this political divide between policy (social sciences) and cultural value (literature and history).¹³

Whiteness Studies and Critical Pedagogy

Another critical perspective of examining U.S. American literary studies is a reflection on the most recent academic trend of race theory--“whiteness studies.” Originally meaning participating in a counterwhiteness whose primary characteristic is its disaffiliation from white supremacist practices, whiteness studies unintentionally benefits its enemies, the new Right, neoconservative, neoliberal and new abolitionist. I want to argue that the new face of American literature introduced into Taiwan, with its political projects such as identity and diaspora in the discussion of Asian (or Chinese) American cultural representations, may actually assert whiteness of its universal, and hence hegemonic, epistemological power. For the past ten years when Chinese American Literature became the hottest area of the literary studies in Taiwan, I have hardly seen any critique from local educators to reflect on their complicity with whiteness in promoting such a subject of research. On the contrary, what I’ve seen is the continual “possessive investment in whiteness” (Lipsitz 1998), which is the strongest form of racialization, contrary to popular beliefs about minority identity politics. In the following section, I will give a brief introduction of the emergence of whiteness as a discourse and how it constructs the image of Asian-Americans from “brown monkeys” to “honorary whites.”

Since the publication of David Roediger’s (1991) book, *The Wages of Whiteness*, there has been a parallel development in the engagement of whiteness studies (McIntosh 1992; Frankenberg 1993, 1997; Ignatiev 1995; Delgado & Stefancic 1997; Lipsitz 1998). Whiteness is now regarded as a critical point of departure in a pedagogy of demystification. Kincheloe et al.’s critically acclaimed collection, *White Reign* (1997), advocates an assault on white privilege by exposing whiteness as a socially constructed signifier and rearticulating it through a “critical pedagogy of whiteness” (Kincheloe & Steinberg 1997: 12; see also McLaren 1995, 1997; Giroux 1997; Fine et al. 1997). Whiteness studies has achieved such momentum and currency, the ever popular journal, *Educational Researcher*, devoted substantial attention to it in the December 2000 issue consisting of critical responses to Rosa Hernandez Sheets’s (2000) book reviews of the “white movement in multicultural education” (Howard 2000; Dilg 2000; McIntyre 2000). Clearly, the issues of globalization and whiteness are critical components of a pedagogy attempting to understand the oppressive structures that distort clear knowledge.

White flexibility works in tandem with capital’s flexibility. They are the hour and minute hands of a clock, so predictable that it should not surprise the critical educator that where find one, the other lurks closely behind. In other words, whiteness is nodal point in the triumvirate with capitalist exploitation and patriarchy; it also has a great flexibility to accommodate the others to become the ubiquitous marker of all that is right. Like finance capital, whiteness becomes more abstract and harder to locate. Whiteness, as a discourse,

¹³ In Taiwan’s case, the Institute for European and American Studies at Academia Sinica also has the same divide—until recently. The way they recruit new researchers has shown a sign of change. But it’s still too early to make comments.

and whites as the subjects of such discourse have had to respond to this ongoing crisis, much like late capitalism, with whiteness studies only its recent challenge. In order to maintain its racial hegemony, whiteness has always had to maintain some senses of flexibility; i.e., like late capital, white domination must work with scope, not scales, of influence, especially in times of crisis. It must accommodate subjects previously marked as Other in order to preserve its group power. In other words, for it to remain dominant, whiteness has to seduce allies, convince them of the advantages of such an alliance, and sometimes be able to forsake immediate advantages for long-term goals of domination. Nowhere is this more pronounced than the literature on the induction of the Irish into the white race. To a lesser extent, one can trace some of the same tendencies in the recent incorporation of Asians into the American racial polity.

In many parts of the United States of America, today's Asian-American student is commonly touted as the "model minority." When discussing race relations, we must keep in mind that this favorable status accorded Asian-Americans is a ploy to discipline their non-white counterparts. Also, it must be noted that although not all Asian-American groups benefit from such status in the same way, such as Hmong or Cambodian refugees, there is a general perception of Asians as the "intelligent minority." Dubbed as "whiz kids," "probationary whites," "honorary whites," or "Asian whites," Asian-Americans have prompted Herrnstein and Murray (1994) to revisit the eugenics debate to find proof of the genetic make-up of Asian intelligence. The authors also make claims on the African lag behind the Asian wonders. Citing a combination of hereditary and environmental factors, Herrnstein and Murray earned their controversy by raising the specters of de Gobineau or Binet. Neither their genetic nor environmental assertions are new. The main controversy surrounds their reaffirmation of the hereditary, essentialist argument about intelligence that many but a few scholars have refuted, dating back to Boas's (2000) study of the problems in more or less biological explanations of race.

For this present study, the Asian-American case is instructive because it exposes the social construction of whiteness and its political consequences. Historically degraded as "brown monkeys," "heathen Chinese," or "pagan," Asian-Americans and their educational ascendancy in the USA now signify their approach toward whiteness. This is not as impossible as it sounds when we keep in mind that certain Southeast Asian groups have already claimed Aryan status based on geographical and linguistic roots (Mazumdar 1989). This should not be confused with the position that Asian-Americans are white, but rather, approaching whiteness. Moreover, it is not necessarily the case that whites think Asian-Americans are white or, for that matter, that the latter consider themselves white. There are too many differences between whites and Asian-Americans to suggest that this is happening, ranging from cultural practices to certain forms of ethnic nationalism. However, this shows again the flexibility of whiteness to incorporate groups into its borders previously thought of as well outside of it. President George W. Bush's multicultural cabinet is a perfect example of the attempt to represent people of color within the confines of color-blind discourse. His cabinet selections are honorary members of the neo-conservative project's inability to confront the race question, let alone the white question. Black and brown masks do not necessarily translate into progressive minds when it comes to racial discourse. Within Marxist debates, the advent of Western or neo-Marxism inaugurated the cultural arm of social analysis. Lukacs, Frankfurt critical theory, and Gramsci emphasized the role of consciousness, subjectivity, and consent to explain what the blind spot of orthodox Marxism neglected. Rejecting both the determinism and teleology of Leninist varieties of historical materialism, neo-Marxism opted for a more variegated and nuanced theory of the social formation. It even engaged bourgeois culture and thought, suggesting that revolutionary theory must come to grips with high culture and art in order to map out the general superstructural features of social life. Likewise, in race theory, whiteness studies may be

called a form of neo-race theory. More orthodox accounts of the racial formation traced white racism's effect on the lives of people of color through studies of slavery, discrimination, and school segregation. By contrast, neo-race theory finds it imperative to peer into the lives and consciousness of the white imaginary in attempts to produce a more complete portrait of global racism and ways to combat it. Recent themes of neo-race theory include white privilege, genesis of the white race, and white abolitionism (Roediger 1991, 1994; McIntosh 1992; Allen 1994, 1997).

This new development in social and educational theory has been extremely productive and provides educators and students a critical vernacular with which to dismantle racist practices and chip away at white supremacist institutions. In our rush to consume such frameworks, bell hooks (1997) warns against neglecting the lessons learned from more orthodox explanations of racism's effect on people of color. Said (1979) says as much in his study of Orientalism whereby the Orient is written into history by the Occident. Simultaneously, the Occident invents itself by inventing its Other.

For English majors in Taiwan, they already adopt white consciousness, but as individuals and not as a group. The abolition of whiteness in my teaching thus has to counter the process. I don't tell them to deny their whiteness because white power is efficiently maintained through strategies of invisibility. They must first name the source of their whiteness and recognize it as fundamental to their development as alienated human beings. For whiteness, as a global formation, is alienating to its subjects and objects. As such, the global formation of whiteness is the target of critique. Abolishing race is mutually dependent with abolishing whiteness (Ignatiev & Garvey 1996b) because the "possessive investment in whiteness" is arguably the strongest form of racialization, contrary to popular beliefs about minority identity politics. In Taiwan as well as the rest of the world, the English-only movement, anti-immigrant nativism, and Western-centric curricular represent white identity politics. It is responsible not only for the racialization of white subjects but also of non-white people. Moreover, a "critical race pedagogy" (Lynn 1999) cannot be guided by a white perspective, which is not to say that it cannot include white experiences as points of departure. Although experiences do not speak for themselves, interpretation always begins with their lived dimensions (Sleeter 1995). Taking its cue from critical race theory, critical race pedagogy does for education what critical race theory accomplishes for law; i.e., the interrogation of racially structured rules for social participation. In sum, the racialized core of knowledge production in schools should combine global studies of whiteness and critical race theories.

A critical pedagogy of whiteness must be dialectical in order to avoid the reductive notion that whiteness is only bad (Giroux 1997) or that white choices are reduced to the double bind of whites as either enemies or allies of students of color. Taken literally, Giroux's suggestion appears to lack historical support since whiteness as a racial category seems nothing but false and oppressive. When whites have articulated their choices through whiteness, the results have been predictable. Taken strategically, critical pedagogy must forge a third space for neo-abolitionist whites as neither enemy nor ally but a concrete subject of struggle, an identity which is "always more than one thing, and never the same thing twice" (Ellsworth 1997: 266). And this new positionality will be guided by non-white discourses. To sum up, there is a difference between white people, white culture, and whiteness. Students would do well to recognize the point that as they work against whiteness, they are undoing the self they know and coming to terms with a reconstructed identity. Like the abolitionists of the 19th century, white subjects of the 21st century (Taiwan's English majors included) commit one of the ultimate acts of humanity: race treason.

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