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閱讀文學與文化研究之文本性(2/3)

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一、中文摘要

學術界有關文本性的探討向來不少，而有關各種文本的個別分析也不在少數，但文本性與現代性的結合研究似乎尚待系統化地予以補強。具體而言，二十世紀後半葉，文本性本身的演變，及其演變與社會文化的辯證關係，以致於對學術體制的影響，這些都是值得研究的議題。用簡化、粗疏的說法列舉扼要言之，新批評時期論文本之有機且富張力與曖昧的結構；俄國形式主義側重文學語言如何透過「突顯」(foregrounding)的機制，以與日常用語有所區隔；結構主義試圖尋找普世卻沉潛不露的結構原則；後結構主義則著眼與社會型態互動的無意識結構……等等。它們都可說是文本性不同面貌的呈現，且彼此間亦互有牽連、傳承，然而毫無疑問地，它們的內涵各不相同，並與個別的社會文化情境有著密切的辯證關係。這些議題都有待澄清。

無獨有偶的，文本性的嬗變與英美文學研究暨教學領域之體制 (institution) 兩者相互牽連。至於何者為因，何者是果，則待有系統的研究 (Godzich 有關 emergent literature 與 field，及 Raymond Williams 有關 dominant、residual 與 emergent 的見解都可供參考援用)。(註：此部份取自第一年計畫之期中報告以便彰顯第二年研究之延續性。)

關鍵詞

文本性、外文文學研究、陌生人、對等原理、符碼

Abstract

Whereas the first year's (2001-2002) research gives a comprehensive treatment of literary research methodologies in the context of foreign language research and teaching in

Taiwan, it leaves a major question unanswered: Who uses which methods and how? I have already done some preliminary work in the area of the stranger's discourse (please see the attachment) by way of highlighting epistemological and linguistic problematics in one's reading of the world/text. A stranger's reading—or, an estranged reading—will eventually become the focus of this research. Russian Formalism treats literariness as the core of literature, a feature which inevitably involves defamiliarization in text as well as in reading.

One of the easiest ways to tackle textuality is Jakobson's equivalence principle. And indeed when applied to well-structured poetic forms—such as the Chinese Regulated Verse or sonnets in English—Jakobson's method clearly works well. Tu Fu's "Autumn Meditation" or Shakespeare's sonnets, for example, lend themselves to a paradigmatic reading which in turn generates connotative reverberations that cannot be achieved through explicit, syntagmatic unfolding. Nonetheless, paradigmatic reading must not be subsumed under the equivalence principle. Kao Yiu-kung and Mei Tzu-ling have rightly pointed out for example the function of allusions in Tang poetry by invoking history in

a homophoric manner, thereby exceeding the confines of equivalence principle. Barthes further calls our attention to the structuration, rather than the structure, of text and introduces us to a series of codes at work underlying a story of Poe's. All readings are, therefore, intertextual readings. The idea appears to coincide with the method of the structuralist study of myth proposed by Lévi-Strauss. In it individual stories are paraphrased in a schematic manner before being "superimposed" upon one another to foreground what he calls the analogous relations of gross constituent units that have something to do with the mankind's concern with its origin and the taboo of incest.

As such, reading inside a text amounts to reading what lies outside a text. However, there are clearly degrees of difference when it comes to reading in or out. A poetic text clearly calls for a different path of reading from that in negotiating a fictional or, say, a mythical text. And in Taiwan's current context, methods in Cultural Studies clearly deserve special attention. The discipline has generally been known to spurn textual reading. On the other hand, if textual reading is understood to lend itself to various paths as proposed above, then the discipline may have

something to gain in dealing with, among others, texts to do with popular or consumer culture, cinema, etc.

Keywords

textuality, foreign language literary studies,
stranger

二、緣由與目的

西方 20 世紀之文學學術體制歷經幾個階段相互更迭交替，不同時期各自展現風貌不同的盛況。就以美國為例，50 年代之前正是國家文學當道，繼而 70 年代比較文學崛起，以迄 90 年代文化研究盛極一時，其演化的軌跡與文本性的消長亦復關係密切。以往新批評獨崇文本，超越歷史與社會，但好景不長，約莫半世紀後，文本性竟落得遭受若干文化研究學者的輕視，甚至排斥。也正因如此，文本性亟需搭配文學研究與教學的體制，作有系統的探研。

本計畫分三年進行，擬從理論、歷史與個案等面向探討文本性的轉化，並將國內與英美之演化作一評比，希望藉此彰顯英美文學研究與教學之歷史、現況以及未來將如何自我定位、如何尋得著力點之道。

三、研究內容

專題研究計畫第二年之研究工作內容，主要在承續第一年的研究工作與部分成果。第一年從台灣教學的歷史與體制討論方法與文學的關聯（成果請見〈方法論還剩些什麼？〉，張漢良編著，《方法：文學的路》[臺北：台大出版中心，2002]：319-342），討論內容包括：現代性與思考模式、學域與方法論、文學學域、英美／外文文學的四個次領域、閱讀新興文化。論文基本上從外緣的角度切入，對方法、方法論作一個簡單的整理，並加以落實，驗證台灣外文文學研究的若干現象，並希望從中理出問題意識。研究過程中另外滋生了一個問題：誰來使用什麼方法--或問一個比較屬於常識性的問題：誰來閱讀？而閱讀又分兩個層次：讀者閱讀作品，以及作品（包括人物、敘述觀點或作者）閱讀其可能世界。關於這方面的探討，筆者曾經有專文討論陌生人如何身處本土的問題（亦即身為在地人但卻自感格格不入，甚至以陌生人自居的認同問題），前年亦曾撰寫論文（曾於中研院歐美所研討會〔"Transculturalism: An International Conference," 12-13 July 2001〕宣讀，敬請詳見文後附件），討論放逐所引發有關認識論以及語言本質的系列問題。這個問題探討切入的角度與方法及文本性初看似無必然關聯，但終究會觸及文學研究的問題核心，亦即：陌生（stranger's/estranged）的閱讀（有別於

社會約定俗成、主體互涉的認識論)。俄國形式主義把陌生化視為文學語言最核心的本質，但有陌生的文本，是否表示也有陌生的閱讀？兩者之間顯然有相當的關聯，不過這個問題不妨等這個計畫的第三年再來處理比較妥當。也就是說，目前第二年這個階段，更加迫切需要釐清的毋寧是文本性的問題。

探討文本性最好的出發點無疑是雅克慎 (Roman Jakobson) 所謂的「詩化功能」(poetic function)。具體而言，詩化的語言把對等原則由選擇軸投射到合併軸。這種語言特質，或閱讀模式，用在形式工整的詩體上，的確令人感到得心應手，甚至有「手到擒來」的感覺，而新批評之所以能把詩當為與外界隔絕，甚至自成一格而自具有機功能，其所採取類似的分析方法，極可能與此不無關係。也正因如此，中英文學中的主流詩體，如律詩與十四行詩，莫不充分顯現對等原理的痕跡，例如杜甫的〈秋興〉或莎士比亞的十四行詩 (抑是葉慈的〈麗達與天鵝〉)，均能透過對等原理的閱讀方法達到淋漓盡致，充分展現內在的詩趣。透過這種縱向聯想 (paradigmatic connotation) 所產生的詩趣蘊藉著特有之文化，甚至無意識的意涵在內，其內容精采多姿，甚至縹緲難意，所表達者恐非彰顯於外之以句法結構的橫向運作所能比擬。即便如此，縱向聯想呈顯的詩趣，亦未可見得能以機械的對等原理完全涵蓋。高友工與梅祖麟即以唐詩為例，證明典故的語

義 (註：有異於語法) 內涵，而藉由典故的開展，不但能把經驗與歷史貫注到當下的世界，而且還可以「以過去透視現在 (現在並不獨立存在)」(〈唐詩的隱喻與典故〉，周英雄、鄭樹森編，《結構主義的理論與實踐》，[臺北：黎明，1980]，pp. 89-90)。換句話說，對等原理並不盡然有效地解釋詩化文本，詩往往另有所指，而詩除了有 cataphoric 與 anaphoric 後指與前指的功能之外，它也另具 homophoric 的外指作用，故而詩趣也者，乃在詩行之外另有所指。倘以葉慈的〈麗達與天鵝〉為例，其中的若干冠詞 "the" 固然前指 ("the thighs") 或後指 ("the great wings")，但這首詩的能量極大部份無疑與希臘神話相關，與希臘神話中人神結合的迷思密切相關 (H.G. Widdowson, Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature (London: Longman, 1975), pp. 7-26.)。

羅蘭巴特 (Roland Barthes) 認為閱讀的主要功能不在文本的解讀 (explication)，而在釐清文本的結構化 (structuration)。因此他閱讀愛倫坡 (Edgar Allen Poe) 的 "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar"，重點不在開展人在垂危之際能否接受催眠，以及催眠的後果，而是此一情節背後一系列的符碼 (code)，包括科學、敘述、傳播、前後 (chronological)、文化、知識等，它們相互牽掣，製造了一個令人欲信還疑的詭異 (uncanny) 認識論場域。換句話說，巴特雖然逐句、逐段閱讀，

但重點顯然不求解讀文意，而是要披露文本底下、文本之外各種後設的符碼，而文本互涉 (intertextual) 的觀念也就成了文本閱讀不可或缺的一環了 (”Textual Analysis of a Tale of Poe,” Marshall Blonsky, ed., On Signs [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U Press, 1985], pp. 84-97.)。表面上，雖然這種橫向閱讀，有異於縱向之對等閱讀，然細較兩者，似有異曲同工之處，與高友工、梅祖麟的典故讀法，也可說是不謀而合。李維史陀 (Claude Lévi-Strauss) 處理神話使用的縱向閱讀，不僅把個別文本作相當大幅度的後設改寫，爾後更加以排比作欄狀處理。以伊狄帕斯神話為例，所有這類文本均萬變不離其宗，不外乎：一、太重親情；二、忽略親情；三、人類屠殺妖魔，企圖否認自己生自土地；四、人類天生殘缺，表示土生起源之不容否認。而經過讀者強勢的閱讀之後，這四基項，又稱關係束 (bundles of relation) 或 gross constituent units，它們相互之間又再形成所謂不延續的類比 (discontinuous analogy) (“Structural Study of Myth,” Structural Anthropology [New York: Basic Books, 1963], pp. 206-231)。

總而言之，儘管文本的開放性殆無疑義，然閱讀文本之內緣亦即閱讀文本之外緣，兩者無法一刀兩斷而決然地割裂。這種一刀兩刃的閱讀法，施諸詩、小說文本固然可行，放諸神話問題也不大 (結構主義的神話研究已證實此點)，但終極的問題是，文化

研究處理文本，是否仍可循此途徑？文化研究之所以捨棄傳統文本分析，與後者的自我局限不無關聯，也與之缺乏著力點有高度相關 (即文本分析恐落於隔靴搔癢而無法盡顯文本與社會形構互動的情況)。不過，就另一方面言之，假使文本性能作上述的多元處理，層層剝絲抽繭，那麼文化研究的文本 (如大眾文化、消費文化、電影等)，似乎也大可循此路線加以處理。

四、結論

目前研究進度或許稍有落後，然早先曾著有十九世紀傳播科技與大眾文化互動的論文，並具體討論史托克 (Briam Stoker) 的《吸血鬼》 (Dracula)，迄今已有論文稿兩篇 (〈吸血與打字: 大眾與科技文化的吊詭〉與 “On Blood-thirstiness: From Myth to Technology”)，只要再從事方法的後設思考，應可如期完成此第二部份的研究。

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The Voyage Out: Transcultural Eavan Boland and Chu Tien-hsin

Ying-hsiung Chou

I wanted to convey not just a place, but the sort of bodily knowledge I got from place (Boland in Schmidt).

Exile, like memory, may be a place of hope and delusion. But there are rules of light there and principles of darkness, something like a tunnel, in fact. The further you go in, the less you see, the more you know your location by a brute absence of destination (Boland 1996:46-47).

I. Transculturalism and Others

A discussion of transculturalism is hardly complete without some knowledge of some of the related concepts that involve an individual, or a group of individuals, leaving his/their native land for one reason or another. It would actually be more useful if these different concepts are examined in the context of overall critical configurations of the age. Take for example the imperial exile; it is clearly a part of modernist avant-gardism. By contrast, such ideas as diaspora, nomadism or transmigration are not unrelated to postcolonial identity politics. In the current context, it would be beneficial to ask how transculturalism – or, for that matter, transculturation and transculturality -- differs from other paradigms as a third-world reading that may possibly shed new lights on how minority discourse can be decoded.

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man comes readily to mind in discussions of

exile. In ancient times, exile is offered to a convicted person in exchange for imprisonment or even death sentence. In other words, a sovereign penal system is balanced against an individual citizen's autonomous choice, however limited it is. The basic idea of exile in a solitary and alien land remains more or less intact down to this day. And yet its original political meaning is all but lost. What is at stake in present-day exile is not so much the physical removal to an alien context as the drastic representational strategies behind the very act of departure. To borrow a current phraseology, modern exile is a form of resistance politics against the establishment.

While exile is seen as a highly individualistic and wilful act, its timing and setting do merit our attention. Exile doesn't just take place any place anytime. There must be, to begin with, a dominant structure that is regarded as highly repressive. Conversely, the individual in question must be fairly anti-social, or simply eccentric. And what is also featured is the exile's fascination with the destined land, its way of life out there, or simply its language that is regarded as appealing. In either case – the native land being inhospitable vs. the alien land being appealing – what is of particular interest in one's examination shouldn't be the time and place of exile but the process, or the technicality, of a conscientious act. The psychological mechanisms underneath an intellectual exile's mind seem to be of special interest. Take an avant-garde exile for example; it has been quite rightly pointed out that modern exile is often related to some sort of a high modernist anxiety triggered by imperialist domination. In Joyce's case, on the surface one would have thought the colonial situation was so repressive that an artist in good conscience could not but opt for exile. And yet upon closer examination, the domestic tension in the Dublin community itself was actually more than sufficient to force a freedom seeker to want to take off for a new location where he could hope to devise his own maze. And it is perhaps useful, too, to look into how artistic exile actually does something to the land and the way of life left behind by the exile. Stephen's departing remark about the uncreated conscience of his nation is a good example. Eavan Boland, the poet we

shall be taking up in the following pages, has this to say about Joyce's exile:

“I understand him (James Joyce). . .as an unswerving artist who left his country so as to find that part of it which would have remained hidden if he had stayed. Who gave a dignity and permanence to the local by removing it from the manipulations of the historic. Who became an Irish writer by renouncing all previous definitions of the term which did not accord with his conscience and purpose” (Boland 1998: 18).

Seen in this light, the voyage out should not be seen as sheer escapism. Rather, it's a positive move to forge something that is yet to be in the land an exile leaves behind. There is invariably something strategic about the exit.

Diaspora, on the other hand, often denotes a collective dispersal to a foreign land(s) with a distinct possibility of never being able to return. In most cases, unlike exile, diaspora is not exactly a matter of voluntary choice -- the Jewish diaspora being a typical example. Rather, the emphasis in diaspora involves the anxiety of choosing a new geography as well as an identity (Barkan and Shelton). But whereas diaspora connotes choice of a new geography and identity, the more current ideas of nomadism and migrancy suggest constant movement and crossing of borders without so much as arriving or, for that matter, departing. In this new dynamics of transiency, what is particularly worth noting is not restricted to unceasing physical movement. Rather it has something to do with learning and unlearning, arrival and departure, translation and displacement (Chang). Recent discussions generally focus on the condition of existence as well as a habit of thinking or a structure of feeling in a migrant mode. In other words, the affective dimension of border crossing tends to receive closer scrutiny. Representational strategies are precisely what the affects of postcolonial migrancy are all about (Chang 4).

Transculturalism is commonly used in health care, psychiatry and education, to denote a special cultural-oriented approach towards minority groups. It requires reading a subject in the context of his alien backgrounds. That is to say, in reading the other, some sort of border crossing is involved. Thus it has more to do with the incorporation of the minoritarian (Bhaba) in the doctor's/educator's treatment from a dominant position. On the other hand, if we see transculturalism in the context of globalization, it is possible to treat the relationships (e.g. between the doctor and his patient) in a reversed manner by investigating how the dominated is counter-appropriated in a specific socio-cultural situation.

Historically, the term "transculturation" was coined in the 1940s by the Cuban sociologist Fernando Ortiz in a pioneering study of Afro-Cuban culture. (It was not until much later, in the 1970s to be exact, when the Uruguayan critic Angel Rama brought the term into literary studies.) When it was first taken up, the aim was to correct the reductionist readings of bicultural interface in terms of either acculturation or deculturation (or of diffusion or rejection). The concept of directed culture changes taking place as a result of pressures from a dominant or a metropolis culture is generally looked at as suspect in this transcultural paradigm (Pratt). Pratt further talks about the idea of a contact zone as a social space where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other. These contacts are often asymmetrical, say, between domination and subordination – like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today (Pratt 4).

II. Alien Subject

There are different modes of resistance when it comes to fighting off a dominating presence, in terms of a colonial force or, in a more general sense, the repressive regime of a tradition. The myth of a nation has often been invoked as a means of differentiating oneself from a colonial presence. The Celtic Revival in

Ireland, for example, invokes a mythic past that is thought of as far superior to the British. Yeats's "Countess Kathleen" and "Cathleen Ni Houlihan" are but two obvious examples to highlight not only the mythic power of the nation in its dealing with the colonizers; in fact, the two plays are intriguing in their foregrounding of the protagonists' ability to influence their countrymen in their nation-building projects. As it turns out, the old lady is actually a favorite character in the Irish tradition to denote Irish sovereignty. There is as it were a collective will to power when it comes to the use of the poor old lady. So much so that that Eavan Boland (1944-) takes exception to it as something reductionist. To her, Yeats's poor old ladies with mythic auras leave something to be desired. By comparison, in the first chapter of Ulysses, Joyce has the old milk woman interact with other characters in the chapter: "Old and secret she had entered from a morning world, maybe a messenger" (14). It is a great relief to Boland that the milk woman is now seen as "a wandering crone, lowly form of an immortal serving her conqueror and her gay betrayer, their common cuckquean, a messenger from the secret morning" (Lawrence 18). What really matters is not to equate a woman with nation, thereby reducing her to a symbol, or even worse an object. She should instead be empowered as a full-fledged subject. Elsewhere in her discussion of "The Blackbirds," by Francis Ledwidge, Boland calls our attention to the poet's "attempt to make the feminine stand in for the national," thereby simplifying the old woman out of existence (Boland 1996:142-3). Whereas the blackbirds inspire and lead an existence of their own inside and outside the poem, the woman is nothing but "a diagram," or "a dehumanized ornament" — "When her speaking part finishes, she goes out of the piece and out of our memory" (Boland 1996:143).

III. The Absent Daughter

The absent father appears extensively in myth and is often examined in terms of the family romance. The axis of reading has all along been from the son to his father.

In what follows, I shall try to give an alternative reading by focusing on the daughter trying to locate her missing parents (e.g. Boland's grandmother and Chu's father). They are, in Boland's words, not available, and a voyage must therefore be made, thereby running risks and encountering mishaps on the way. As the missing relatives are not readily available, the journey must be made to a land of the other – Hades (Boland) or the outer space (Chu), for example. To cross cultural borders and reach the land of the other, different strategies must be devised. On the surface, it's the parents that are absent, rather than the daughter, but paradoxically the daughter herself discovers she is not there in person to begin with. Upon looking back at her owned lived world – often in the past – she suddenly realizes that she is absent, not only from a dominant tradition (e.g. being silent in history), but also from herself (e.g. her alienated past as well as her true indignant self).

IV. Boland the Absent Daughter

At the turn of the last century one of the favorite literary motifs often had something to do with intensified tension between self and society. A young artist often would find himself at odds with society, even in total alienation. In defiance against bourgeois values, he would even find it necessary to go into exile. This centrifugal force (expelling a subject from his native environs) apart, there is also something centripetal in the cosmopolitan nature of modernism. That is to say, apart from being fed up with one's motherland (cf. Ireland as old sow that eats its young), there is an appeal in what may be termed a commonwealth of the bohemian that appeals to avant-garde artists (e.g. Zurich as a base of Irish nationalism). A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man specifically details all the options available to Stephen at one stage or another before he makes up his mind to leave his country “to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my nation” (Joyce 1992:275-76). To accentuate his defiance, Joyce indulges in a luxuriance of language, to the point of becoming

dialogic or even polyglot in his last work, Finnegans Wake. Beckett, by contrast, proceeds by dryness and sobriety, resulting in a willed poverty (Deleuze & Guattari 19). “Endgame,” for instance, highlights Beckett’s negation of life in a common sense of the word. The father living in a trash can are referred to as “accursed progenitor” and “accursed fornicator,” and the play ends with machines (i.e. the alarm clock) predominating over what is left of life principles.

With Joyce and Beckett as their predecessors, contemporary Irish writers find themselves in an awkward situation. While Patrick Kavanagh reacts against the culturalist practice of Yeats, Boland finds it necessary to take a different approach. Virginia Woolf in A Room of One’s Own complains about the silence of women in history. To Boland, too, women are without a voice of their own in official history. The 19th-century bardic Ireland is not a country she could easily identify with. She thus continues to have a dialogue, even a quarrel with that patriarchal tradition (Boland in Schmidt). But if one is not careful, trying to retrace one’s past without take some precautions may result in complete silence: “The way to the past is never smooth. For a woman poet it can be especially tortuous. Every step towards an origin is also an advance towards a silence” (Boland 1996: 23-24). She goes on to point out how women have all along been treated as nothing but objects of poetry. What is needed is a move to re-take the initiatives in a position of the subject. To her, “it’s where they (the womenpoets) are in their work, what impasse or forward movement is there, that makes the difference” (Boland in Schmidt).

To Boland, Joyce poses a different kind of anxiety of influence. His presence is everywhere in Dublin, and yet it is not something she could readily relate to. He is, in her words, unavailable to her. Joyce’s unorthodox practices notwithstanding, he still belongs to a tradition that doesn’t really accommodate her. In fact, Boland is confronted with an irrelevant past, as it were, and hence an uncertain future. She says, “My poetry begins for me where certainty ends” (Boland in Schmidt). She

feels the need to incorporate the bodily — perhaps having something to do with the influence of Adrienne Rich.

When it comes to the family, Boland's approach is typically feminine. She devotes quite a bit of her quest to the primeval mother-daughter relationship. In "Lava Cameo" (a profile cut on a volcanic rock), Boland tries to reconstruct an image of her grandmother, who led an ordinary life and died at the age of 31. By resorting to her counter-memory (vis-à-vis history) by means of an autobiographical statement, Boland challenges official history and reasserts women's life in matriarchal terms, with special reference to women's anonymous fate and their sufferings. Object Lessons devotes quite a bit of its space to her grandmother's last days at the National Maternity Hospital, but what Boland is trying to come to grips with is women's history beyond their control and yet must be revisited and reinvented (Boland 1996:5). To my mind, the revisit and reinvention amount to a journey out. Boland sets out on a journey of her own in quest of her childhood. And all she finds in her childhood (from 5 to 14 years of age) is a history of not belonging to a place or a language – of being deprived of the dialect and nuances of belonging. . . "like a daughter in a legend, I had been somewhere else" ("The Beauty of Ordinary Things"). Object Lessons as well as many of Boland's poems actually deals with adolescent alienation in national terms – i.e. of not being able to come to terms with the two alien places she grew up in, London and New York.

If the past must be revisited and reinvented time and again, the future is equally uncertain. "Pomegranate," for example, rehearses the myth of Ceres and Persephone at an everyday level, and focuses on the plight of a middle-aged woman eyeing her daughter leading an increasingly independent life away from her. The daughter's independence actually says something about women's self-knowledge that is almost post-Edenic. The daughter could have come home for the family reunion without any complications. And yet, she chose to eat a pomegranate seed – "[She] reached/out a

hand and plucked a pomegranate” (In a Time of Violence). Her excuse is that she is simply hungry (for what, we’ve not been told), as all daughters would be despite their full awareness of the mythic (and tragic) consequences of the act (i.e. the cyclical decay of nature as a punishment for eating the fruit). The rift between mother and daughter will always be there. The rift could simply be physical; time passes and the earlier communion cannot be continued forever just as nature running its own course without being able to reverse itself. To give another example, “Daughter,” bemoans the loss of a favorite poplar tree in the garden that has just been cut down with chain saws. In an almost fantastic turn of events, she sees summers as having been injured, and out of them runs a nymph-like child who would not look at her. The mother-daughter rift can also be psychological: “Daughters can not only grow up, but away.” (“Daughters”). The mother holds up her hand to shield her eyes from the evening sun. Her concern is with her daughter, but it is disheartening to find the daughter indifferent to her and “with her back turned to me” (“The Making of an Irish Goddess,” Outside History 38). Whichever way one may look at kinship ties, retrospectively or prospectively, a woman feels alienated. Confronted with a fault line of time, as it were, she is stranded at the present, with no prospect of returning to the past or, for that matter, projecting unto a future. Women are “outside history,” to borrow a favorite expression of the poet’s. “And no way now to know what happened then – / none at all – unless, of course you improvise” (“The Black Lace Fan My Mother Gave Me,” Outside History 19).

Boland makes a distinction between songs and poetry. In her childhood, she was given a sense of the nation without knowing what it was all about. “Ireland was my nation before it was once again my country.” That nation was “a session of images: of defeats and sacrifices, of individual defiances offstage. The songs enhanced the images, and the images reinforced the songs” (Boland 1996:129). The trouble with them is that they were merely simplifications. And it took her years to shake off those presences before she escaped. She fled into what one could perhaps

call the domestic. In a reversed kind of family romance, as it were, she worked through the details, often domestic one, for the sake of restoring women to a status of the subject rather than the object of poetry — and, to an extent, life itself. After all, she sees her work not as poetry about experience but experience itself (Boland 1996:131). When in England, she discovered that the same things called gardens and fields were given some fragrant and unfamiliar names such as copses, orchards or meadows (Boland 1996: 45). “Lacking an idiom, I had lacked a place” (Boland 1996:77). (Of course, writing is a matter of creating or repossessing a place.) When she used an older usage, “I amn’t taking the bus,” she was reminded she wasn’t in Ireland now (Boland 1996: 46). Under such circumstances, one would expect her to return to her motherland, and yet we are told very specifically of her decision not to take a simplistic decision. “My nation displaced/into old dactyls,/oaths made by animal tallows/of the candle. . . No I won’t go back./My roots are brutal” (“Mise Eire,” Outside History 78).

V. Chu the Absent Daughter

Whereas Leo Ou-fan Lee sets his sight on the dilemma, and tension between romantic and realist tendencies in Chinese modernism, Rey Chow in her Women and Chinese Modernity approaches the same issue from a different perspective. By focusing on the Mandarin Duck and Butterfly School of writing and its outgrowth, she calls our attention to a second route of modernism that manifests itself most prominently in the writing of Aileen Chang. Chang’s influence is substantial in a number of major contemporary authors (e.g. Pai Hsien-yung, Shi Shu-ching and Chu Tien-wen) in Taiwan, but what is of particular interest is to see how her bearings are brought up to date in the contemporary socio-cultural context. Chu Tien-hsin (1958-) seems to serve as a perfect test case in our examination of the feminine modernity in contemporary Taiwan. Elsewhere I’ve dealt with Chu’s career as a modernist writer, from her earlier realist phase concentrating on the bildungsroman of a young medical

doctor in “Shi-yi shi-wang (Different times, different worlds),” who ironically falls in secret love with an artist whose free spirit is untimely terminated by cancer (周 1999). But even at this early stage of her career realism was already taken with a grain of salt. The political turn of events in Taiwan in the late 80s and early 90s further pushed her in a direction of alienation as she embarked on a search for the voice of the other. “Gu Du (Ancient capital),” for example, explores the limits of the other by having the protagonist, “you,” going to various spatial and temporal extremes. Spatially, the protagonist’s itinerary includes not only Taiwan but also Japan. In terms of time, the present-day Taipei is made to dovetail with the pre-colonial period of the Qing Dynasty, and a rhythm of return is willed into being, as it were, with the introduction of sections of the well-known utopian piece of Tao Yuan-ming’s “Tao-hua Yuan ji (Encounter at the Peach Blossom Spring)”(Chou 2000). Already the writer’s disillusionment with the status quo and her fascination with the other had become increasingly obvious. And the story ends with the protagonist breaking down in tears after she passes as a Japanese tourist touring her own city. At the end of her imaginary, and schizophrenic trip to the land of the other in her own native city (as the protagonist goes under the disguise of a Japanese tourist and tasks the tour earnestly before it ends), she is inevitably confronted with the inescapable reality of here and now. Critics wondered then what would happen to her writing next, given her intense love-hate relations with society. Her father’s death provided an answer of sorts as she breaks with the present and reaches out for the totally other in death.

In her latest collection, 《漫遊者》 (The wanderer)(2000)even the writer’s very *raison d’être* seems to be in doubt in the first place. And in her own words, her father’s death further plunges her into a weightless condition. She realizes for the first time that she used to justify her existence before his death by constantly challenging him. She was in short what he was not, regardless of whether she really meant it to be that way or not.

It so turned out that I existed, knew where I was and who I was, without wandering around, “without will, without gravitation,” all by virtue of constant challenges to my father. (『原來，我一直靠不斷的挑戰父親，才有自己，才知道自己在哪裏，才知道自己是什麼，才不致「無意志、無重力」的漂移著。』 [《漫遊者 27》])。

Now that the father is gone, she has lost her orientation and she had no alternative but to go on a quest for that ordinary ground of being. The quest takes the form of a wandering on an almost transcendental level. As the journey unfolds, the quest actually evolves into some form of a pilgrimage. The protagonist in “Yin-he tie-dao” (Rainbow railway) prefaces her pilgrimage with a description of the philistine practices of the islanders (e.g. indifference to each other and massive destruction of the environment) before she sets out (Chu 2000:101-29). At the outset of the journey, the protagonist turns herself into a nomad in search of, among other things, the Rosetta Stone. (The stone provides clues to the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics that had remained undeciphered for over a thousand years [108]). But, as we all know, the real object of her quest is undoubtedly herself that has all along lay hidden from her own consciousness. In a significant turn of the narrative, the pilgrim eventually returns to southern Taiwan of her bygone days when she was barely six – very much like Boland, who returns systematically to her overseas and childhood days. In either case, she decides she must be on her own for no tourist guidebooks makes any mention of the places she plans to be; nor does she speak any of the natives languages used in the countries in question (113).¹ In fact, she longs for her childhood days when she is illiterate and everything remains undifferentiated. But as it turns out, things are not exactly as straightforward. Coming from a family of a Mandarin-speaking father and a Hakka mother, her first encounter in southern Taiwan

¹ Compare these with the tour in *Gu Du*, where she has a guidebook (albeit it outdated, being of the imperial Japanese period) and knows the language (even though she refuses to speak it).

(where presumably the nativist sentiments are especially strong) along with an alien tongue (presumably Southern Fukkien, spoken by the majority of islanders) gives her nothing short of a shock of recognition. In fact, it is not only the language that is alien; the entire country is new to her (115). She has become in short a stranger in her own country, a theme taken up time and again in many other recent stories of Chu's.

VI. Reading Transculturalism

The two writers undertake journeys abroad either voluntarily or involuntarily. Boland left Ireland at the age of 5 and did not return until she was 14 as she moved with her diplomat father first to London and then to New York. In contrast to Dublin suburbia where she later returned to and led a married life, tidbits of her life in the two metropolises arouse in her an awareness of difference. It first dawned upon her that she was no English Alice after all, and that her expressions were not altogether idiomatic by the English standard. Even by the time when she was seventeen and back in Dublin, she was embarrassed by her silence. She confessed: "There was a peculiar indignity for me in the silence of my childhood. Not only had it lacked words; it had lacked a name. . . .Lacking an idiom, I had lacked a place" (Boland 1996: 77.) To make up for the lack later, Boland reexamined her childhood with great intensity and self-reflexivity. We are literally shown her confronting her former self, with all its surrounding visual details:

I see myself there, more than I do in other places. My first retrospective glance shows me one of the important rooms of my life. One quick look is enough to take in the wide half curve of its shape – the bay in the distance, the eucalyptus leaves and myself bent over a single book. (Boland 1996: 73)

And the intense retrospection eventually took him to the vital issues of language and

nation.

I draw up a chair, I sit down opposite her (Boland the child). I begin to talk — no, to harangue her. Why, I say, do you do it? Why do you go back to that attic flat, night after night, to write in forms explored and sealed by Englishmen hundreds of years ago? You are Irish. You are a woman. Why do you keep these things at the periphery of the poem? Why do you not move them to the center, where they belong (Boland 1996:132)?

As mentioned previously, Chu's shock of recognition comes from her realization of the prevalence of a language, as way as a way of life, in southern Taiwan that is unavailable to her. This sense of alienation from one's native land exists not only at a linguistic level. The island with its textures and smells – rather than sight and sound – needs to be recaptured. And “Xiong-ya-li zhi shui(Eau de Hungary)” (1997) details the protagonist's tour of the past with special emphasis on the sensory perceptions of the island's physical features. To her, a sense of identification – or, for that matter, that of self-alienation – depends to a great extent on her relations with sensory details. In a sense, such identification takes place at an intense and even fundamentalist level. And anything short of such an intimate marriage simply will not do. That is why her sense of repulsion becomes so strong once she discovers that her identification with the island is questioned (allegedly by the equally fundamentalist nativists). She and her husband attend a mass political rally to call for the ousting of the corrupt KMT and to show their support for political reforms. To their shocking surprise, they are nonetheless given a cold shoulder. “Mainlanders go home,” they are told. The shock is such that for days the protagonist is troubled by a body odor that will not go away. Chu's reaction, as a consequence, is much more dramatic than Boland's. Chu has in effect evolved from her earlier realist practice to a host of almost surreal strategies involving sensory perceptions (i.e. coming to grips with the world in, say, olfactory and tactile terms). And her earlier 3rd-person point

of view changed later to an almost hallmark use of “you” when referring to the protagonist. This shifted point of view clearly has the advantage of a tour de force by buttonholing the reader (i.e. you or me) and thereby forcing us to go through some of the most bizarre encounters in her journey. The schizophrenic and hybrid bends in Gu Du became even more extensive in her latest journey stories written after her father’s death. Unlike Boland’s agnostic stance towards patriarchalism, Chu seems to have fallen into the trap of the family romance. Her father’s departure from this world plunges her into a weightless condition and sends her on her voyage out into the void. The journey’s end invariably finds the protagonist – and in turn you (i.e. me, the reader) — in a world of the dead.

In both writers, subject and object are made to merge so as to increase the intensity of reflexivity. Boland approaches her former self and conducts a face-to-face interrogation with a view to learning more about the life of an overseas child in an alien environment. Chu chooses to identify a common ground of subject and object in the person “you.” The reader has as a result very little choice but to go along in a voyage very much at the disposal of the writer. Either way, reading either Boland or Chu makes it necessary to cross cultural borders in the sense of forfeiting our comfortable positions and trying on new identities we have hitherto not experienced.