Modernism in Modern Poetry of Taiwan, ROC: A Comparative Perspective

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I. Situation

Modernism is a worldwide movement in literature and arts, which is sustained by and in turn affects the whole culture.[1] Its worldwide acceptance, if we take both the West (where Modernism was inaugurated) and the East (where Modernism was adopted) into our perspective, does not merely rely on a global awareness of modernity nor merely on the fast transportation and communication of modern time as one might suspect, but also on the necessity of influence and reception, necessity on both sides, namely, the expansion of Western culture and domination on the side of influence and the urgency of modernization on the side of reception. The *-isms* covered by the blanket term "Modernism" sprouted from economic-political centers of the West, such as Paris, Berlin, New York, and dispersed over the East, where the sense of modernity just became to appear and modernization became an urgency under the impact of Western culture and domination. The *-isms* were originally responses to the modern world, positively or negatively, but became models of modernity when they were received. The cultural environments where the *-isms* took place and the cultural environments where they were received differed from each other and consequently gaps, misunderstandings, transformations, and loss were inevitable.

The dynamic of influence lies in the side of the receiver, and literary reception attends not only to the sources and the influenced works but also their ambience and all the mediations within the reception process,

which, in Weisstein's words, "points in the direction of literary sociology."[2] Indeed, the linguistic-artistic-cultural heritage and determination, the present stage of literature and arts, the group character of literary men, with individual idiosyncrasies, differences, and competition, and above all, the political structure, a significant determinative force in this century – "In our time the destiny of man presents its meaning in political terms," as said by Thomas Mann and quoted by Yeats[3] – all contribute to the dynamic of reception.

Modernism in modern poetry of Taiwan must be traced back to the already modernized poetic tradition in the mainland of China since the *Pai-hua* Movement 白話運動, which was launched in the spirit of Enlightenment and whose immediate aim was to replace classical Chinese with vernacular Chinese, classical literature with vernacular literature, and this vernacular language and literature movement was also echoed in the Japanese colonial Taiwan.[4] To be sure, the interruption of this Mainland tradition which took place when the Government moved to Taiwan must be taken into consideration too. Three interrelated facts should be noted in this diachronic perspective. First, *vers libre* was carried on as the verse form of modern poetry of Taiwan. Second, the symbolist line of Mainland continued in Taiwan through Chi Hsien 紀弦 and Ch'ing Tzu-hao 覃子豪, two migrate poets from Mainland, while other trends or tendencies, socially or humanistically oriented, were interrupted or disfavored. Consequently, the revival of Modernist school in Taiwan in 1956, initiated by Chi Hsien and joined by the majority of the poets of that time, was a significant event and had great influence upon the modern poetry of Taiwan. Third, on the aesthetic front, the *Pai-hua* Movement was to liberate Chinese poetry from its most formalistic, most condensed tradition, and from its exclusiveness. Compared to classical Chinese poetry, the *Pai-hua* poems or new poems of Mainland are in general loose in image, clear in structure, variable in subject matter and easy in understanding – this tendency was particularly pursued by the socially-oriented poets. Yet, a reverse tendency took place in the supposed main trend of Modernists of Taiwan, especially those in the Epoch Poetry Society 創世紀, and they were eventually severely criticized as self-confined, extremely obscure, stiff and dead by Kuan Chieh-ming 關明傑 and T'ang Wên-piao 唐文標 in 1972-73. In fact, the Modernist Period of Taiwan is dated in the present study from the publication of Chi Hsien's poetry magazine, *The Modernist Poetry* 現代詩, in 1953 to Kuan's and T'ang's criticism in 1972-73, for I believed the Modernist Novement in Taiwan had

completed its first wave at that time and was going to change.

The importation of Western theory and poetry to Taiwan continued since Taiwan's return to China in 1945, but this importation was by no means comprehensive nor accurate enough. The introductions and translations were done randomly and casually, and more often than not, done in imperfect hands, and through English or Japanese mediations if the originals were in other European languages than English. These agents' translation style is sometimes obscure and foreign to Chinese language. All these created a mirage of Western theory and poetry. This helped forming a rather subjective, obscure, and superficial reception, and eventually developing Modernism here into the present shape. The Mainland heritage, which includes, notably, Romanticism, Symbolism, Imagism, and Pure Poetry, did not reach Taiwan in its completeness, and the most innovative and provocative *-ism* newly introduced into Taiwan fell upon Surrealism. The importation and reception of French Surrealism could not exempt itself from the mirage character as mentioned above, and Han-liang Chang 張漢良 showed this "mirage" of reception clearly in his study of Surrealism of Taiwan.[5]

For those who grew up under the Japanese colonial reign and education, their baptism of modernism must be through another channel, namely, the mediation of Japanese modernist theory and poetry. As we shall see, this group of poets, the founders of Bamboo Cap Poetry Society 笠, constituted an individual component in the Modernist poetry of Taiwan. Their particularity lies in the Japanese mediation, the language gap, as well as their particular political experience, their Japanese, Taiwanese, and Chinese complex.

Indeed, the *-isms,* the groups, the manifestos, that is to say, those idiosyncrasies of the Modernist movement of the West, apply to the Modernism of Taiwan too. Generally specking, the Modernist Poetry Society founded by Chi Hsien supported all Modernist schools, beginning with French Symbolism, and advocated all poetic experiments as declared in Chi Hsien's most powerful and influential manifesto. The Epoch Poetry Society pursued the implications of surrealism and pure poetry. The Bamboo Cap Poetry Society counted on Japanese Modernism in poetry and advocated a more provincial, realistic approach. The Blue Star Poetry Society 藍星 was founded to oppose Chi Hsien's exaggerated statements, mainly, modern poetry as a transplantation from the West, denunciation of Chinese poetic heritage, and over-emphasis on the so-called reason; the group relaxed in

their pursuit of *-isms* and asked for a respect for Chinese poetic heritage, in spite of Ch'ing Tzu-hao's Symbolist background, Yü Kuang-chung's 余光中 English poetry background, and Lo Men's 羅門 eclecticism.

To define a broad definition of Modernism of Taiwan, which is an attempt of the present paper, must also cover some individual poets who did not belong to any poetry society but did help shaping the modern poetry of Taiwan: I have Yang Mu 楊牧 and Chêng Ch'ou-yü 鄭愁予 in mind in particular. They were writing in the current of modern poetry, but they were notable for "elegancy" of their poetry, which is rather akin to the Chinese mind before the modern impact.

Now, the last and the most significant question involved is how to do with the classical heritage in Modernism or how to do with Modernism in the continuity of Chinese poetry – that is to say, how to deal with the influence/heritage opposition and dialectic. Is modern poetry of Taiwan a complete transplantation from the West as Chi Hsien claimed? Is it possible that this transplanted Modernism be transformed so as to be integrated into the heritage? From the post-structuralist point of view, the problem is: how to develop a discourse where the Chinese heritage and the foreign elements could be structured in the form of Foucault's dispersion in place of the ideal wholeness which has been dimissed as illusional – a dispersion "with its gaps, its discontinuities, its entanglements, its incompatibilities, its replacements, and its substitutions."[6] Lo Fu's 洛夫 apology for his interrupted, obscure syntagmatic structure of his poetry as a modern extension of the classical poetic theory of Yen Yü 嚴羽 of T'ang Dynasty, not an acceptance of the Surrealist automatic writing, and Wai-lim Yip's 葉維廉 tracing the Modernist pure poetry back to the poetic perception and tendency of classical Chinese poetry contribute to the formation of such a discourse. My early paper in which I highlight the technique akin to the German *Neue Sachlichkeit* and its implied objective tendency as I see in both classical Chiness poetry and modern poetry of Taiwan bears the same aim.[7] The above attempts were made in the period when American New Criticism was dominant in Taiwan, and now we become to know again that poetry is, in the last analysis, most impure, perhaps far impurer than what Austin Warren has said,[8] and is bound up with the whole culture; therefore, connections on more aspects between modern poetry and classical poetry should be formulated. The phenomenon of influence and reception is not an already defined fact; it is rather a discourse to be formulated in the historical flux. With all its dialectic, influence and reception is an open

space of contemporaneity, mediation, anf freedom of the will.

II. The *Avant-garde* Front

We may see an *avant-garde* tendency in the announcement of any new era, but this *avant-garde* tendency was greatly intensified in Modernism as a movement. Futurism, Dadaism, Surrealism, and so on are considered as *avant-garde* movements by Hassan, distinguished from Modernism proper. The *avant-garde* movements launched many shocking manifestos and activities to slap on the face of the bourgeois and the traditional values and artistic beliefs behind them, and when this purposeful but destructive energy was spent, the *avant-garde* front left nothing behind but some astonishing memories. On the other hand, Modernism proper began with French Symbolism and when Modernism was over, it left magnificient monuments in the works of Pound, Yeats, T. S. Eliot, and Rilke.[9] Hassan's distinction between the *avant-garde* and Modernism, made in the process of defining his postmodernism, is helpful, but considering that every movement contains an *avant-garde* spirit, especially in the beginning of a movement, I would take the *avant-garde* movements as the forefront of Modernism.

When the Western *avant-garde* movements and ideas were here and there introduced to Taiwan, their rebellious and destructive spirit was rather minimized. They functioned rather as stimulus to motivate poetic experiments, especially on language. It had been a tendency in Futurism, Dadaism, and Surrealism as well, to liberate the language, not only the syntax of Western language, but also the sound shape and the typographical practice. When this experimental and liberating spirit was practiced upon Chinese written characters, which imply a high degree of iconicity in sound, shape, and structure, many exciting and innovative *avant-garde* practices on the poetic pages could be expected, but the endeavors were primarily made along the typographical line – the interiors of Chinese ideograms remained intact. Poetry was said for the eye, not for the ear. The Russian Futurist Kruchonykh's pursuit of the most Russian sound, devoid of any semantic support, except some opague etymological associations, was never attempted by the Modernists of Taiwan.[10] It seems that the liberation of verbal medium as pursued by the Western *avant-garde* was not fully perceived by the Chinese counterpart.

On this experimental, typographical front, Chi Hsien, the founder of the Modernist Poetry Society and magazine, never fell behind. The

typographical variation and arrangement in "I Am Like You" 跟你們一樣 is at the same time free and formalistic – this formalistic beauty, along with its somewhat rational discourse on the content level, defines perhaps what Chi Hsien had in mind when he advocated the aesthetical dimension of reason. Yet, in spite of all this, a lyricism is never lacking in his most modernist poems. Perhaps, looked from behind, Chi's high lighting the rational side implies its opposition, the lyricism – in fact Chi Hsien abandoned his "rationalism" later on and returned to lyricism. This necessary dialectic is beautifully said by T. S. Eliot that "but, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to escape from these things [i.e., personality and emotions.]"[11]

More radical attempts came from Lin Hêng-tai 林亨泰 , whose "sign poems" were monumental in this kind of experiment. Linguistic signs and non-linguistic signs, according to Lin, both signify symbolically, and indeed these two kinds of signs both signify effectively in his sign poems. Although his sign poems fall short of the form of geometry and algebra as Lin once briefly discoursed on sign poems, some kind of abstraction purified from the described event is obtained. What impresses me is the variety of subjects and themes of the sign poems: modern life, pastoral beauty, criticism of city life. All are magically expressed with a Modernist touch. Lin once made reference to the cubist painter and poet Apollinaire and praised his attempt in using phonetic symbols as ideograms in his *Calligrammes;*[12] from a comparative perspective, Lin's sign poems were more or less motivated by Apollinaire's experiment.

Lin Hêng-tai's shaped verse "Landscape No. 1" 風景 No. 1 and "Landscape No. 2" 風景 No. 2 and Pai Ch'iu's 白萩 shape verse "Wanderer" 流浪者 are less radical but more native to Chinese language. These poems are written in the radical form of *verse libre,* without the participation of non-linguistic signs as in Lin's sign poems, nor yielding the poetic form to a sheer typographical *mimesis* as in the English poet George Herbert's "Easter Wings" in the seventeenth century. An essential form and abstract beauty of a farmland, of a seascape, of the solitude of a wanderer, are achieved in the above three poems by typographical iconicity and repetition. Viewed from Jakobson and Lotman's semiotic poetics, the principle underlying *verse libre* and shaped verse in all their variations and liberal attempts is nothing but the principle of equivalence and its attendant principle of semantization of the poetic form.[13]

Another radical experimentation is to push poetry into a mixed media

presentation – the sweeping demonstration fell upon Wai-lim Yip's *Edge of Waking* 醒之邊緣, a small volume of poetry, with a musical record, with eight modern paintings, with a poetic text for performance. It should be noted that modern poetry and modern arts, painting in particular, inspired and reinforced each other in Taiwan as Modernism of the West did – Lo Men and Wai-lim Yip were particularly close with Modernist painters.

III. Modernism: I

The *Avant-garde* experiments and destruction are exciting and beautiful, but they are not something one can repeat and repeat again without losing their power of attraction. They represent a moment of rebellion and experimentalism, a frontier which must be transcended and conquered. Indeed, Modernism outgrew its *Avant-garde* front, manifesting itself as a dialectic return to the great current of Literature, to resume the great tradition of Humanism, after its baptism of *Avant-garde* experimentalism and destruction. Lo Fu's 洛夫 long poem *Death in the Stone Cell* 石室的死亡 and Wai-lim Yip's *Fugue* 賦格 represent the early but most ambitious attempt, in spite of the fact that they are too much burdened with *Avant-garde* experimentalism and its inscribed incommunicability. In scope, in stylistic, in grandeur, in anxiety and temporality, in building up a personal and literary castle, Lo Fu's is comparable to what the High Modernism of the West attempted. In spite of all its merit, what is fatal to Lo Fu's poem is its incommunicability. Or, if the poem communicates, it communicates by means of its stylistics, or better, communicates through its mirage of images – indeed, mirage of images and word strings describes the structure of the poem if the poem implies a structure at all. To be sure, from a communicative perspective, Lo Fu's poem is a case of Lotman's I-I model (the author addressing to the author himself) than a case of the I-He model (the author addressing to the reader), and the I-I model is common to literature in general and modern poetry in particular.[14] Yet, Lo Fu's I-I model goes extreme, that is to say, the coding system with which the author fabricates a message in communicating to himself is too much deviated from the general coding system shared in literary, communicative conventions. We sometimes even wonder how the addressed "I" (the author himself) understands the addressing "I's" (the author's) code and message in those passages which are incomprehensible at all when read against the general code for all its impenetrable disjuncture and secret coding. This radical case

of I-I model is full of psychological interest indeed.

Lo Fu's work was written under the influence of Surrealism and Existentialism according to Lo Fu's answer to my questionnaire,[15] yet what Lo Fu knew of Surrealism is rather in the form of a mirage or in the "broad" sense of Surrealism as Han-liang Chang defined it, so is what he knew of Existentialism, presumingly. From the viewpoint of historical determination, Lo Fu's Surrealist and Existentialist endeavor was destined to be either imitative and borrowed or unfaithful and superficial, because Taiwan at that time did not reach that stage of Capitalism which made Modernism necessary and authentic, not to mention the impossibility of crossing the cultural boundaries between France and China. Now, as far as reception is concerned, ANALOGY constitutes its internal structure, that is to say, the person who receives always understands foreign influences in the mediation of traditions he knew through analogies, and consquently both sides are transformed in such a dialectic of analogy – Lo Fu's fabricated analogy between *Zen* tendency of Yen Yü's theory and the Surrealist magical technique as mentioned above reveals, to some extent, this necessary, analogous structure of reception. Sceptically as it is, literary influences are sometimes just analogies made into influences –analogies detected between the source and the supposed influenced work, once the "contact" is established.

Wai-lim Yip's *Fugue* may be more akin to the model of High Modernism because of its cultural nostalgia and Utopean gesture, which is High Modernist's response to the depraved society and man in the modern time as expressed in Pound, T. S. Eliot, and Yeats. Yip's cultural dimension, compared to that of his Western predecessors, is rather allusive and implicit, whose example *par excellence* falls upon the title poem "Fugue," written at the moment when he intensively studied T. S. Eliot, perhaps translating *Wasteland,* some Pound and St. John Perse in addition.[16] We can see some structural "analogies" between Yip's poem and *Wasteland,* for example, repetition of motif in variance, collage of the past and the present, insertion of songs, superimposition of myth and cultural element – yet I would say, Yip's cultural nostalgia and Utopean gesture is closer to Pound than Eliot. Yip's nostalgia and Utopeanism in "Fugue" is implicitly expressed in the unviolated Nature – erratic breath of earth, patience of trees, silence of mountain – and in his allusions to the moment of plentitude in Chinese history or legendary history: the harmonious reign of the mythical King Shun 舜 is alluded to in Yip's modern rendition of the ancient ballad "Song

of Southerly Wind," 南風歌 supposedly sung by King Shun, where Shun asks the southerly wind to soothe people's woes, to increase people's gains. This cultural nostalgia and Utopeanism is appreciable but remains immobile or even paralyzed because it is not supported by any hard reference to our depraved space in the modern time. Notice that T. S. Eliot's *Wasteland,* in spite of its mythical, a-temporal structure, is fully supported by its social references: the fatigue and consequently the depraved love and sex in the female typist episode, the abortion in the conversation of the bar and the soullessness of London people crossing the bridge, flowing down King William Street, at the dead sound of the final stroke of nine. High Modernism, as presented by Pound, T. S. Eliot, and Yeats, maintained a balance between personal and impersonal, universality and locality, experimentation and convention, obscurity and communicability.

Yip's poetry cannot totally exempt itself from the burden of incommunicability which we find in Lo Fu's long poem, although Yip's situation is better. Some poems, such as "Fugue," "The Inside Window 內窗," and "Dance 舞" may be comprehended in almost their entirety. Some poems subject themselves to understanding if readers do not expect from them a thematic, structural coherence or clarity, and the majority of his poems flash upon our eyes with wonder and absolute sensibility in half-stanzas. By no means should we totally excuse Yip's formidable disjuncture and obscurity nor is there any reason for us to be blind to his pure perception and absolute experience, a pre-naming pre-reasoning world where things are, opened up in those flashing, illuminating half-stanzas, as intimated in my early study of Yip's poetry.[17] Yet, this pure, absolute perception and experience, viewed from behind and from a historical perspective, turns out to be a psychological mechanism for the subject to shy away from reality, to wean the subject from seeing and touching the social reality, which is impure, down to earth, and historically bound. Derrida is right: everything doubles itself.

We therefore ask what intellectual stimulation was available to the Modernists of Taiwan and what social reality could be perceived by our poets. A cheap Existentialism and Freudianism slipped in when Taiwan was in the process of Modernization or Westernization. I use the modifier "cheap" because they were received cheaply: at that time, who knew of Sartre's endeavor to graft the Existential ego upon the Communal consciousness and Freud's moralistic implications of Eros, quilt and conscience in the community of mankind?[18] In retrospect, the transportation and

reception of Existentialism and Freudianism in Modernist poetry of Taiwan is destined to be superficial, rootless, and even paranoiac, even with an adequate, comprehensive understanding of Existentialism and Freudianism, if this transportation and reception is not done with mediation of a social reality – mediations which may innovate, substantiate, and check Existentialism and Freudianism in new local environments. Now the cultural malnutrition coincided with Taiwan's isolation and the fading out of social reality because no intellectual reflection and definition was given to it, adequately. Yü Kuang-chung and Lo Fu once accused each other of high class idleness and anemia paleness of their poetry; for me, this accusation in some way documented the intellectual immobility and social alienation of that time, the time of Modernism of Taiwan.

·It is against the above voidness we can better account for the displaced reality in the Modernists of Taiwan. Ya Hsien 瘂弦 in a great number of his poems of *The Abyss* 深淵 created an Internationalism or Occidentalism, but in names, names of places and persons most related to art and literature. Better, in a group of poems, he succeeded in creating an imaginative Europe; yet we can see that the intellectualism of Western Modernism in such an attempt is replaced by an emotionalism and exoticism. Lo Fu finally decided to present reality in more social and local terms and he did it wonderfully – but this reality is not the reality of Taiwan nor Mainland, but the reality of Saigon (see *Poems of Saigon* 西貢之歌). Lo Men became famous because of his "Fort Mckinley" 麥堅利堡 and the poem is a success indeed – yet, Fort Mckinley of Philippines is to commemorate the American Navy who died in the Pacific area during the Second World War!

Huan Fu's 桓夫 Japanese colonial experience and critical reflection on Chinese traditions and Lo Men's city poetry are therefore more appreciable. The racial discrimination, the ban of Taiwanese language, the flattery of Taiwanese gentry; and consequently, the anger and melancholy of the average Taiwanese, their nostalgia for the fatherland China; and in a leap of time, the critical reflection on the bad side of Chinese tradition and a prayer for the bless from ancestors; all are woven into a group of poems (Section II of *The Sleepless Eye* 不眠的眼), which are exceptional poetic documents indeed. The critical consciousness, the objectivity, the shifting and collaging, a bit of surrealistic imagination, beauty in form and sadness in content, all reflect Huan Fu's indebtedness to the Japanese Modernism, as he indicates in his answer to my questionnaire mentioned above.

A description and criticism of city life is seen in Lo Men's early city

poems, for example, "Death of City" 都市之死," "Five Angles of City Pavilion 都市的五角亭," and "The Death Ceremony of City 都市之死," but it is regretable that we cannot see much local color there. Lo Men became more ambitious in creating in his later city poems a third nature (an open spiritual space) to dissolve the opposition between the first nature (the rural and the natural) and the second nature (the city and the technological), according to his answer to my questionnaire. It seems unfortunately that he fell short of this almost unattainable goal in his practice. More often than not, he moved too quickly into third nature and left little room for the city life to appear, not to mention the process in which the hard reality of second nature dissolves itself into the third one. The attempt in "Driving a Car into Nature 車入自然" is rather satisfactory, where the product of technology and modern culture blends well with Nature dynamically in Lo Men's poetic perception. It is worth noting in passing that while the Futurists emphasize on dynamic and speed as symbol of modernity, Lo Men's speed here dissolves itself into the endless Nature who accepts all. Lo Men's eclecticism in his reception of Western modernist ideas was almost notorious – he just picked up the ideas flowing in the Modernist current for his own purpose. Lo Men's longer and more ambitious poems, such as "The Tower of Death 死亡之塔" and "The Undercurrent of the Nineth Day 第九日的底流," also have a grandeur and seriousness of High Modernism. To conclude this section, allow me to return to the supposed High Modernism of the Epoch poets with which I began the section. Excepting the superficiality, imitativeness, distortion, and loss in the process of reception, and the saturation of cheap Existentialism and Freudianism (Wai-lim Yip's poetry is exempt from this), they rediscovered their own voices in some more authentic, referential occasions and fragments, and their poetry resumed a high degree of communicability – here we see in their brilliant Oriental forms Wai-lim Yip's pure perception and absolute experience, Lo Fu's surrealist symbolism and descriptiveness, and Ya Hsüen's refined emotionalism. From a comparative perspective, these Oriental, authentic voices in such a Modernist flavor may not come out without the baptism of Western Modernism; it is rather the outcome of a dialectic of reception, whose process, I am afraid, may not subject itself to a definite formulation.

IV. Modernism: II

T. S. Eliot is right to emphasize the wide significance of tradition, and

his concept of contemporaneity, which is most essential to the dynamic continuity of tradition, poses yet a great challenge to any movement preceded with a prefix *neo-*, especially from a comparative, Modernist perspective. In what sense and to what degree is a *neo-* poetry contemporaneous with our modern world and under the influence of Western Modernism? Yü Kuang-chung, Yang Mu, and Chêng Ch'ou-yü are at issue now.

Yü Kuang-chung is notable for his neo-classicism, especially in *Wu-lian Youngman* 五陵少年 and *Associations of the Lotus* 蓮的聯想. In my observation, Yü's neo-classicism has two components. We see on the one hand classical gestures, nostalgia, allusions, and quotations from classical Chinese poetry, which make up a Chinese component. On the other hand, we see John Donne's conceit, in a mild form: a bit heterogeneous figures and comparisons, a bit colloquialism, a bit exaggeration, a bit humor and irony, and a bit eroticism, which make up a Western component. It is a "slipping" situation: the Chinese component is in danger of slipping into artificiality while the Western component is in danger of destroying the Chinese neo-classical gesture, especially its elegance. I believe that these two components continued in Yü's later poetry and became more refined and sophisticated. Indeed, Donne's component matured in his famous poem "Double Bed" 雙人床 and this, I think, reaffirms my interpretation of Yü's early Neo-classicism. Notice that with my emphasis on Yü's indebtedness to Donne's Baroque poetry, I do not mean that Yü was cut off from the common heritage accumulated since the birth of Chinese modern poetry, especially the heritage built on English Romanticism and Anglo-American Imagism; and also notice that it is not accidental that Eliot's poetic theory and to some extent Eliot's own poetry is modeled on Donne's discrete sensibility. Meanwile, in a comparative perspective as this, we have to mention, at least in passing, Yü's experiment on percussion music and folksong of America in his *Percussion Music* 敲打樂, which may be considered as most Modernist in Yü's poetry.

Yang Mu and Chêng Ch'ou-yü did not particularly follow any Modernist school; rather, they kept a certain distance from the "transplanted" Modernist movement of Taiwan. Their deep love for classical Chinese poetry must have made some subtle influence upon their poetry, but not in the form of Yü's neo-classicism. Yang Mu suggests that the secret and beauty of Chêng Ch'ou-yü's poetry lies in his mastery of the rhythm of Chinese language, and I think this fits Yang Mu too. To be sure, this is not the secret but here lies the big difference between Yang Mu, Chêng Ch'ou-yü

and the poets mentioned in the previous section. Their poems are not particularly referential nor thematical, but we see more descriptions of local things and sceneries in their airy lyricism.

Their "elegance," for which they were notable, is a wonderful combination of the classical and the romantic sensibility, founded on the soil of classical China, and enriched, by absorbing classical, romantic elements from abroad – the stage for the performance of the elegance is in the main set up upon the soil where they stood, namely, Taiwan, and the soil their spirits sometimes returned or visited, namely, China, although descriptive passages in their poetry are not particularly local and detailed. It seems insignificant to me to differentiate Yang Mu and Chêng Ch'ou-yü from each other in the context of present paper, I would point out that while Yang Mu is more airy and graceful in style, romantic in sensibility, and has more of Taiwan, Chêng Ch'ou-yü is more calm and sublime, more classical, and more of China.

In his answer to my questionnaire, Yang Mu indicates that he more or less has learned from poets of High Modernism, namely, Pound, Yeats, T. S. Eliot, and Rilke, but their influences, if there are, I cannot locate them in any significant sense, or more correctly, in any significant Modernist sense. The formation of Yang Mu and Chêng Ch'ou-yü's "elegance" must be seen in a large perspective. What I would suggest here is that Yang Mu and Chêng Ch'ou-yü were writing in a tradition of elegance which had been nourished in the heritage of Chinese New Poetry or Modern Poetry and suddenly confronted us with this tradition in its exceptional charm, through its baptism of the Modernist atmosphere here in Taiwan.

Surely, we could just simply push Yang Mu and Chêng Ch'ou-yü to the margin of Modernism of Taiwan, but at the same time it is clear that modern world does not wean our mind from all the past, and our mind rather lives in Foucault's archeological paradigm, with the old and the new, with rupture and continuity, with harmony and tension. I share with Hassan's belief that "we are all, I suspect, a little Victorian, Modern, Postmodern, at once,"[19] and Yang Mu and Chêng Ch'ou-yü's poetry and their poetic world remain relevant to our modern time, indexical to a mild type of response and adaptation to the modern world. In fact, the present modern world represents only a transient stage just as any historical period does; what will come in the future, which will be called "modern" by coming generations, remains unknown.

V. Concluding Remarks

In general, the reception of Western Modernism in modern poetry of Taiwan is not a sophisticated one. The foreign elements are rather taken as stimulation and motivation, and their impacts are seen primarily on the level of expression, or simply, techniques. Because of the loss of the cultural-social component in the process of reception, it opened a good possibility of developing the Modernist poetry of Taiwan into one of its own shape, with its own spirit, and with its own maturity, perhaps. Modernists of Taiwan were unable to fill the vacuum when the implied culture and sociality of Western Modernism were not provided; yet, this limitation is rather historically determined. Now this intellectual immobility and social alienation, to draw on Pierre Macherey's theory, is the "unspoken," which determines and undermines from within the "spoken,"[20] that is, all the surfaces and facts in the Modernism of Taiwan.

The spirit of self-containedness and the spirit of experimentalism are high in the Modernism of Taiwan. To be sure, the imitative and immature side cannot be avoided. At their worse, we see poems which are self-prisoned, devoid of content, and even incommunicative. At their best, we see the sophistication of technique, which will significantly contribute to our poetic heritage in the long run. In the middle, we have a modernism of our own, which remains admirable.

My original intention is to raise questions and open up areas of complexity and controversy in this preliminary study of Modernism. Regretfully, I have set up, in the process of my argument, a number of conclusions and enclosures, which, I think, must be re-opened.

Notes

1. Modernism as a worldwide movement in literature and arts is definitely shown in *Modernism: 1890-1930,* edited by Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (new York: Penguin, 1976).
2. Ulrich Weisstein, *Comparative Literature and Literary Theory* (Indiana: Indiana U. Press, 1973), p. 48.
3. W. B. Yeats, "Politics," *Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (New York: Macmillan, 1956), p. 337.
4. For Taiwan's echoing to the *Pai-hua* Movement of Mainland, see Yeh Shih-t'ao 葉石濤, *T'ai-wan wên-hsüeh-shih* 台灣文學史, (Kaohsiung: Wên Hsüeh Ch'ieh, 1987), pp. 19-27.
5. Han-liang Chang 張漢良, "Image/Mirage of Other: Contemporary Chinese Poets' Reception of French Surrealism," *Language/Desire/Genre: Studies in Comparative*

Literature (Taipei: Mason, 1987), pp. 79-96.

6. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 72.
7. Tim-hung Ku 古添洪, "Hsieh-shih hsin-t'ai yü chi-wu shou-fa tê ch'uan-t'ung 寫實心態與即物手法的傳統," *Pi-chiao wên-hsueh/hsien-tai shih* 比較文學／現代詩 (Taipei: Kuo Chia, 1976), pp. 117-26.
8. Robert Warren, "Pure and Impure Poetry," *Critical Theory Since Plato,* ed. by Hazard Adams (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1971), pp. 981-92.
9. Ihab Hassan, "The Question of Postmodernism," *Romanticism, Modernism, Postmodernism,* ed. by Hassan (New Jersey: Associated University Press, 1980), pp. 117-26.
10. See *Modernism: 1890-1930,* p. 265.
11. T. S. Eliot, "Traditional and the Individual Talent," *Critical Theory Since Plato,* p. 787.
12. Lin Heng-tai draws an analogy between Apollinaire's experiment and what Lin sees as Symbolist-Cubist tendency in Chinese poetry in "Chung-kuo-shih tê ch'uan-t'ung 中國詩的傳統," *Hsien Tai Shih* 現代詩, No. 20, 1957, pp. 33-36.
13. See Roman Jakobson, "Concluding Statement: Linguistics and Poetics," *Style in Language,* ed. by Thomas Sebeok (Cambridge-Massachusetts: M. I. T. Press, 1960), pp. 350-77. Jurij Lotman, *The Structure of the Artistic Text,* trans. by Gail Lenhoff and Ronald Vroon (Ann Arbor: U. of Michigan Press, 1977).
14. Jurij Lotman, "Two Models of Communication," *Soviet Semiotics: An Anthology,* ed. and trans. by Daniel Lucid (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U. Press, 1977), pp. 99-101.
15. I recently distributed a questionnaire to the leading poets of the Modernist Period of Taiwan as defined in the present study and the answers from Lo Fu, Lo Men, Yang Mu, Lin Hêng-tai, Huan Fu were received. These answers, with my preliminary analysis, can be seen in *Wên Hsüeh Ch'ieh* 文學界, No. 11, 1987, pp. 85-101.
16. At that time, Wai-lim Yip was working on his M. A. thesis, a study of T. S. Eliot's poetic method. His critical work *Chih-hsu tê sh'eng-ch'ang* 秩序的生長 (Taipei: Chih Wen, 1971) contains a number of articles concerning T. S. Eliot, mentioning St. John Perse and Pound in passing.
17. As to Wai-lim Yip's pure perception and absolute experience of his poetry, see Tim-hung Ku, "Ming-li ch'ien tê shih-ching: Lun Yip Wai-lim shih 名理前的視境：論葉維廉詩," *Pi-chiao wên-hsueh/hsien-tai shih,* pp. 199-220.
18. For instance, in *Satre's Search for a Method,* trans. by Hazel Barnes (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963) and Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents,* ed. and trans. by James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1961).
19. Ihab Hassan, "The Question of Postmodernism," p. 120.
20. Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production,* trans. by Geoffrey Wall (London: Rotledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), pp. 85-88.