

Commentary

Queer Theory and Politics in Taiwan: The Cultural Translation and (Re)Production of Queerness in and beyond Taiwan Lesbian/Gay/Queer Activism

Liang-ya Liou

Professor, Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures,
National Taiwan University

ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to discuss queer theory and politics in Taiwan in terms of cultural translation, production and reproduction. For this end, I will focus on issues such as gay/lesbian/queer movements, translating queer theory, naming, queer activists' co-operation with the media and popular culture, queer literature, queer activists' connection with postmodernism and postcolonialism, and queer studies in the academy. I argue that, as one of the key theories flourishing in Taiwan's cultural and academic scene in the 1990s, queer theory has helped transform the public discourse on sexuality and gender. To have queer theory and gay/lesbian theory translated to Taiwan almost at the same time is to contribute to gay-positive awareness with more resourceful tactics, to generate a carnivalesquely gay-friendly atmosphere, to address the differences within lesbians and gays, and to even break down the homosexual/heterosexual divide almost from the beginning. By connecting with the media, popular culture, and postmodernism, queer politics has succeeded in presenting itself as at once the avant-garde and the most progressive and trendy at the cultural front. But queer politics also finds the need to connect with postcolonialism by tracing the history of local gay/lesbian/queer communities and cultivating new ones, and by thinking about the transnational politics of translation. The translation of queer theory is always already indiginized for the specific needs of the lesbian/gay/queer movements in Taiwan in the 1990s. And the success of the lesbian/gay/queer movements within a very short time is indicative not only of the dynamic, pluralist cultural atmosphere right after the lifting of the martial law in 1987, but also of the resourcefulness of the activists in cultural production of queerness.

Keywords : queer theory, queer politics, gay/lesbian/queer movement, translation, naming, queer literature, postmodernism, postcolonialism

酷兒理論與政治在台灣的狀況： 台灣同志/酷兒運動之中與之外酷兒的文化翻譯和（再）生產

劉亮雅

國立臺灣大學外國語文學系教授

摘要

本文試圖從文化翻譯、生產與再生產的角度探討酷兒理論與政治在台灣的狀況。我專注於下列議題：同志/酷兒運動、翻譯酷兒理論、命名、酷兒運動者與媒體及通俗文化的合作、酷兒文學、酷兒運動者與後現代及後殖民的關聯、學院裡的酷兒研究。我認為，酷兒理論乃九〇年代學界與文化界最熱門的理論之一，有助於改造有關情慾與性別的公共論述。酷兒理論與女/男同性戀理論幾乎同時翻譯到台灣，遂採取更隨機應變的策略來促進同性戀意識，生產嘉年華式的對同性戀友善的氛圍，探討女/男同性戀內部的差異，乃至於幾乎從一開始就打破同性戀/異性戀的二分。酷兒政治藉由勾連媒體、通俗文化與後現代，而成功地自我塑造為前衛、進步又趕時髦。但酷兒政治又需要回溯本土同志/酷兒社群的歷史、培養新的本土同志/酷兒社群，並思考翻譯的跨國政治，藉此而與後殖民有所勾連。翻譯酷兒理論總已是因應九〇年代台灣同志/酷兒運動的特定需求而在地化了。台灣同志/酷兒運動在很短時間內開花結果，不僅彰顯 1987 年解嚴之後充滿動力、多元的文化氣氛，也顯示運動者在酷兒文化生產上的靈巧多謀。

關鍵詞：酷兒理論、酷兒政治、同志/酷兒運動、翻譯、命名、酷兒文學、後現代、後殖民

**Queer Theory and Politics in Taiwan:
The Cultural Translation and (Re)Production of Queerness in
and beyond Taiwan Lesbian/Gay/Queer Activism**

Liang-ya Liou

This paper seeks to discuss queer theory and politics¹ in Taiwan in terms of cultural translation, production, and reproduction. For this end but far from trying to be exhaustive, I will focus on issues such as gay/lesbian/queer movements, translating queer theory, naming, queer activists' co-operation with the media and popular culture, queer literature, queer activists' connection with postmodernism and postcolonialism, and queer studies in the academy. First I will begin with a brief history of the social context that makes possible the rise of queer theory and politics in Taiwan. The 1990s saw Taiwan thriving on social movements and radical theories in the academy, when the lifting of the martial law in 1987 released democratizing energies and the economic growth since the early eighties had helped produce a consumer society. The opposition party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), was legalized in 1986 and sought to challenge the authoritarian one-party rule of Kuomintang (KMT), or the Chinese Nationalist Party, partly by means of nativist mobilization. Ever since 1949, when fleeing with its army to Taiwan after losing the Chinese Civil War to the Communists, the Nationalist Chinese government had instilled an anti-Communist ideology together with a harsh repression of political and cultural dissidence and a belief that the KMT will one day take back mainland China from the Chinese Communist Party. However, China-centered

¹ The definition of "queer" is far from fixed, even in the West. Queerness connotes same-sex desire and/or the blurring of gender or sexual categories. Queer politics tends to be subversive by destabilizing the binary oppositions between men and women, between homosexual and heterosexual. Judith Butler, the leading queer theorist in the West, seeks to challenge the compulsory order of sex/gender/desire by showing that the traditional gender and sexual categories are products of discourse rather than given realities (1990). While queers include lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transvestites, transsexuals, and other unorthodox heterosexuals, Butler's queer theory, by recourse to poststructuralist and postmodern theories, also critiques identities *per se* and the identity politics of lesbian and gay movement in particular by demonstrating that identities such as lesbians and gays are constraining constructions (1991: 13-19).

policies had setbacks as Communist China superseded the Republic of China and took its seat at the United Nations in 1971, which virtually turned Taiwan into an international pariah. After the Formosa Incident in 1979 and the subsequent trials, the efforts at democratization and nativist resistance nonetheless gathered momentum. Then, as the native-born President Lee Teng-hui succeeded the late President Chiang Ching-kuo in 1990, there was under way a gradual shift from pro-unification (or China-centeredness) to pro-independence (or Taiwan-centeredness) as far as Taiwan's political identity was concerned. The establishment of DDP, the lifting of the martial law, and the lifting of the ban on the founding of new newspapers in 1988 all point to the loosening up of political and cultural regulation of speech. On the other hand, the island basked in economic boom since the early eighties, accompanied by continuing urbanization and industrialization. It was a time of affluence and stability that also called for more open and pluralist cultures. Starting with the mid-eighties, the return of a number of First-World trained scholars, many of whom having a Ph. D. degree in English or Comparative literature, helped stir up radical thinking. As Liao Ping-hui observes, there was "an unconscious desire in Taiwan in the late 1980s to hope to understand the burgeoning social imaginary of Taiwan through correlative Western frameworks" (Liao 2000: 92). Social movements such as the Indigenous people's movement, the university students' movement, the feminist movement, and the environmental movement quickly flourished before and/or after 1987. Postmodernism was hot in the air following the visit of Fredric Jameson in 1986, while poststructuralism, postcolonial theory, new Marxism, feminist theory, and gay/lesbian/queer theory were welcomed in the academy since the early 1990s.

Gay/lesbian/queer subcultures already existed in Taiwan before 1990 in unisex communities such as Taiwanese opera troupes, gay bars, *T-bars*,² Taipei's New Park, certain hotels, etc., though they remained largely invisible to the public. Chi Chia-wei was probably the only gay-rights activist prior to 1990, but his activism was limited to HIV/AIDS prevention. Another important gay figure was the well-acclaimed writer Pai Hsien-yung, whose roman-à-clef novel *Nieh-tze* (Crystal Boys) portrays the underworld of homosexual prostitutes in Taipei's New Park and has been sensational ever since its publication in 1983. Though Pai, who taught at the University of

² "*T-bar*" means "tomboy bar." *T* is generally seen as similar to butch-lesbian.

California at Santa Barbara and who came out in 1994, was not a gay rights activist, the novel can be seen as pioneering gay/queer movements in Taiwan in that it presented a local homosexual subculture at a time when the Ideological State Apparatuses denied the existence of homosexuality in the society (see Liou 2003:195, 192-93). It is a novel that many invoked and reread in lesbian/gay/queer activism in the 1990s.

Pai also authored a number of short stories about same-sex desire in the 1970s and early 1980s, and while during the period there were other writers like Lin huai-min, Chu T'ien-hsin, and Li Ang who penned fiction with a gay, or lesbian, or queer theme, Pai remained the focus of critical attention. The enduring popularity of *Nieh-tze* (Crystal Boys) anticipated that of Chu T'ien-wen's gay novel *Huang-jen shou-chi* (Notes of a Desolate Man) and Chiu Miao-chin's lesbian novel *Eu-yu shou-chi* (Notes of the Crocodile) a decade later as well as the emergence of a lot of other queer-themed fiction in the 1990s. Transnational flow of cultural commodities with lesbian/gay/queer themes also contributed to the public's gradual exposure to such themes since the early 1980s, as queer-themed popular and art movies and MTVs made in the West, Japan, and Hong Kong have been in circulation. In the 1990s as Taiwan-produced queer films obtained internationally acclaimed film awards and as more queer films were released, it sometimes sparked heated debates between defenders and detractors.³ One may say that the media, aware of transnational flow, had welcomed lesbian/gay/queer issues especially after the rise of the movements. The media supported gay-related art and literature, awarding many prestigious literary prizes such as the China Times Novel Prize and the United Daily News Short-story Prize and Novella Prize to queer-themed novels, novellas, and short stories in the 1990s.⁴

³ Ang Lee's *Hsi-yan* (The Wedding Banquet) won the Golden Bear in Berlin in 1993 and Tsai Ming-liang first won the Golden Lion Award for *Ai-ch'ing wan-sueh* (Vive L'Amour) in Venice in 1994 and three years later the Special Jury Prize in Berlin for *Ho-liu* (The River). Other queer films include Micky Chen's documentary *Mei-li shao-nien* (Beautiful Youth) (1998) and Li Hsiang-ru's lesbian documentary *Er-yi* (2,1) (1999). Fran Martin notes that "the official cultural policy of the KMT government in the 1990s increasingly, if always ambivalently, embraced a liberal sexual politics" and that the enthusiastic official support for Ang Lee's *Hsi-yan* (The Wedding Banquet) was an example (2003: 14). On the other hand, controversies arose in the reception of Tsai Ming-liang's *Ho-liu* (The River) and Micky Chen's documentary *Mei-li shao-nien* (Beautiful Youth) due to their queer themes.

⁴ Chu T'ien-wen's *Huang-jen shou-chi* (Notes of a Desolate Man) won the 1994 China Times Million-Dollar Novel Prize and Chiu Miao-chin's *Eu-yu shou-chi* (Notes of the Crocodile) the 1995 China Times Honorary Novel Prize. Tsao Li-chuan won the 1991 United Daily News

Lesbian and gay rights activism quickly flourished in the early 1990s when spurred on by the sudden introduction into Taiwan of lesbian/gay/queer theory and politics. This sudden introduction had a lot to do with the democratization ensuing the lifting of martial law in 1987, which allowed for a rethinking on issues of gender and sexuality. Lesbian and gay theory and politics were brought into Taiwan with an almost twenty-year temporal gap from their Western counterparts, and just a year or two ahead of the introduction of queer theory and politics. Lesbian and queer movements started out as branches within the feminist movement when the activists, unable to fully come out, joined the women's movement to secretly promote gay-positive consciousness, and they indeed succeeded in obtaining support from within the movement in the earlier stage. The first lesbian social and activist group "Wo-men chi chian" (Between Us)⁵ was founded in 1990 and the first gay activist organization, "Tai-ta nan-tong-hsing-lien wen-t'i yen-chiu-she"⁶ (Gay Chat), a gay student society at National Taiwan University, was formed in 1993, while the first sign of an emerging queer movement took shape in the "Ku-er chuan-hao" (Queer Special Issue) of the journal *Tao-yu pian-yuan* (The Isle Margin) in 1994 with Chi Ta-wei and Hung Ling as guest editors. Queer commentary, however, had already appeared earlier in Liang Nung-gung's book *Ku'ai-kan yu liang-hsing ch'a-yi* (Pleasure and Sexual Difference) (1989) and Chang Hsiao-hung's *Ho-hsien-tai/nu-jen* (Postmodernism/Woman) (1993).⁷ The gay movement kept a lower profile since not all the activists were or could disguise themselves as feminists. Since gay/lesbian/queer theory and politics were introduced into Taiwan at about the same time, the trajectories of the three movements are quite different from those in the West. Whereas the queer

Short-Story Prize for "T'ung-nu chi wu" (Maiden Dance) and the 1996 *Unitas* Novella Prize for "Kuan-yu t'a te pai-fa chi ch'i-t'a" (Regarding Her White Hair and Other Matters). Chi Ta-wei won the 1995 United Daily News Novella Prize for "Mo" (The Membrane) and Ling Yen the 1991 Independence Evening News Million-dollar Novel for *Shi-sheng hua-mei* (The Silent Thrush).

⁵ This name comes from the title of Diane Kury's 1983 lesbian-themed movie *Entre Nous*. Starring Miou-Miou and Isabelle Huppert, the film portrays two young, married women as developing love relationship in desperate situations in postwar Lyon, France.

⁶ The Chinese name means "National Taiwan University Gay Issues Studies Society."

⁷ Liang is a Hong-Kong-based film critic who is hardly known in Taiwan except for this book, whereas Chang is pioneering in introducing Western queer theory and applying it to Western literary texts in her next two books *Hsing-pieh yueh-chieh* (Gender Crossing) (1994) and *Yu-wang hsin ti-t'u* (Queer Desire, Gender, and Sexuality) (1997).

movement in the West was built on the success of the identity politics of the gay and lesbian movements, Taiwan gay, lesbian, and queer movements proceeded simultaneously with some of the activists working for more than one movement. Thus, the relationship between queer politics and gay/lesbian politics is quite different from that in the West. Fran Martin aptly observes that this “uncanny simultaneity” “suggests that the journey of lesbian, gay, and queer politics and theory follows the familiar pattern of disjuncture that Arjun Appadurai has argued characterizes cultural flow more generally in the era of globalization” (2003a: 17).

This simultaneity carries some cultural significance. Firstly, while the queer movement in the West leveled its critique more on the gay and lesbian movements than on the sexual politics of mainstream society, its counterpart in Taiwan shifted the stress for the simple reason that lesbian/gay identity politics had yet to take root. At a time when most lesbians and gays could not even come out due to the overwhelming constraints of traditional family structure, few could stand up to claim their right. Although activism could still be engaged without individual coming out, as was the case in 1992 in which the coalition of lesbian/queer movements succeeded in forcing a TTV’s⁸ reporter to apologize for a homophobic news report in 1992, it posed some problem. In a public hearing on the human rights of gays and lesbians at the Legislative Yuan in 1993, for instance, self-declaring heterosexuals were commissioned by the lesbian and gay groups to speak for them and were troubled by the ethical problem of representation (Chu Wei-ch’eng 2000: 9-10). Similarly, in a series of protest against the Taipei Municipal government’s decision to convert Taipei’s New Park into the 2-2-8 Memorial Park in 1996,⁹ the “Tong-chi kong-chian hsing-tong chan-hsien” (Gay/Lesbian/Queer Space Action Front) adopted the so-called “collective coming out” strategy by donning masks in their parades. While the strategy, which underscores the collective identity of gays, lesbians, and queers

⁸ Taiwan Television Broadcasting Company was at that time one of the three TV channels in Taiwan.

⁹ In a way the conflict can be seen as having been an unfortunate clash between Taiwanese nationalism and the gay/lesbian/queer movement. Whereas the conversion represented a belated official recognition of the traumatic history related to the 2-2-8 Incident in 1947, and a commemoration of those killed as a result of it, it also symbolically erased the memories of the park as a space of male homosexual public sex in the past. Though the decision was not overturned, the protests successfully revived public memories and showed gay/lesbian/queer solidarity.

without resort to individual coming out, invited criticism as to whether or not it would really contribute to gay-right activism,¹⁰ it enabled the activists to take on queerness by making it uncertain about the identity behind the masks. One can even say that, given the difficulty of coming out, queer politics became an especially enabling means for promoting gay-positive consciousness in Taiwan. Activists who practiced lesbianism or male homosexuality often took queerness (read: bisexuals or non-orthodox heterosexuals who either have had heterosexual relationship before or keep open their future sexual object-choice) as camouflage for their identity in either the feminist movement or the media in order to elude confrontation with homophobia and heterosexism in person. This probably led Huang Tao-ming to argue that, for him in 1994, “queer,” “gay,” and “lesbian,” were all synonyms of “homosexual” (Huang Ch’u-hsiung 59). Some claimed that the strategy of “collective coming out” is at least a necessary tactic to challenge the mainstream society and achieve an early-stage success in activism.

On the other hand, Taiwan queer movement is sometimes seen less as such than as playful poststructuralist politics advocated by the elite such as Chang Hsiao-hung in the academy and the media. This playful elitism tapped into the niche in the Taiwan cultural politics that respected First-World trained scholars coming back with the most advanced theories. In the early 1990s when cultural pluralism was in the air, Chang, with her Ph. D. degree in English from Michigan University at Ann Arbor, quickly captivated the media and her classes in Taiwan University by advocating the progressiveness of queer theory and politics. She became a spokeswoman for gender crossing and same-sex desire in the media. Most importantly, she disseminated queer theory from the stance of a feminist who practiced heterosexuality, hence her immunity from censorship. She then mobilized her popularity in the media to challenge the largely homophobic academy. She started a playful writing style that was adopted by many of her followers including Chi Ta-wei and Hung Ling, a playfulness that manifested itself in idiosyncratic postmodern verbal play and a deliberate queering of public

¹⁰ While Chang Hsiao-hung is positive that the strategy was enabling in stressing the gay/lesbian/queer subjectivity (1996b), Lin Hsien-hsiu and Antonia Chao criticize the strategy as making it harder for the public to affirm gays, lesbians, and queers. Masking, argue Lin and Chao, seems to subject gays, lesbians, and queers to the social order which does not want to see them except in heterosexual masks (Martin 1998: 133).

figures and cultural politics. Her and her followers' trademark practices of verbal play were the proliferation of homonyms, which made ample use of the homonyms of the Chinese characters, and the use of slashes or other strange punctuations, both of which helped stress the queer reading through a chain of signifiers and the fluidity of desire. In so doing they flaunted queerness in the public space as an intellectual game, if not as a cultural commodity. The "Piao-shuan tong-chi shi-ta meng-chung-ch'ing-jen" (Queer Top Ten Icons), an activity in 1996 in which queer activists publicized in a carnivalesque spirit the top ten icons chosen by gays, lesbians, and queers, deliberately played up to the media and popular culture by including in the icons famous and presumably heterosexual pop singers and politicians (Chang Hsiao-hung 1996b; see also Chao 2000 : 244). Such co-operation with the culture industry has the double effects of both debilitating queer movement as such by making it co-opted by the mainstream culture and disseminating queerness to the general public so as to change the social imaginary. As a consequence, some lesbian, gay, and queer activists regard the queer politics in the media ambivalently. Moreover, as I have written elsewhere, "the medias' interest in queers sometimes creates tension between queers and lesbians/gays, when the former seem more 'advanced' and 'fashionable' than the latter. Some lesbians and gays are anxious that their sexual identities are dismissed as being unimportant before they are even asserted, and that there is scant attention paid to lesbian and gay subculture, much less to make connection with lesbian and gay circles off the university campus" (Liou 2004b: 138).

Not so flamboyant as Chang were other academics like Liou Liang-ya, Antonia Chao, Ding Nai-fei, Chu Wei-ch'eng, Amie Parry, and Chang Ai-chu, who also got their Ph. D. degree in the first world, taught queer theory, and published lesbian/gay/queer studies in academic journals. Together with Chang, they made queer studies institutionalized in the academy. Another important figure is Josephine Ho, a sexual liberationist feminist who, as founder and director of the Sexuality/Difference Center of National Central University, has helped promote lesbian/gay/queer studies by organizing annual conferences on sexuality for several years since 1996 as well as by inviting to Taiwan leading US scholars of queer theory such as Cindy Patton and Eve Sedgwick for lecture or teaching.

Queer theory and politics were certainly not confined to the media and the academy. But the media and the academy gave “queerness” a space quite unthinkable in the past. Queer activism also flourished in many lesbian/gay/queer or feminist grassroots newsletters and cultural criticism journals as well as on the lesbian/gay/queer Bulletin Board System sites on the Internet, which became important media for the reproduction of local lesbian/gay/queer subculture, especially for the younger generations. Through the anonymity of information technology and its free accessibility to university students, the lesbian/gay/queer websites helped to spread gay-positive consciousness among young students and into parts of the island distant from the big cities. Chi Ta-wei and Hung Ling were two prominent queer activists who were engaged in cultivating queer readers through publishing queer fiction and commentary. Chi argues in 1997 that given the subversive and defiant nature of queer politics, it is easier to practice it in literature than by other means (1997b: 15). For while in challenging the homosexual/heterosexual divide and attending to the differences that do not fit in with the umbrella terms of lesbians and gays (such as bisexuals, transvestites, and transsexuals) queerness refuses to be clearly defined, it can best be conveyed through fictional representations. Chi characterizes queer literature as presenting the mutability and performance of identity (such as through discovering that one is neither man nor woman, neither human nor monster), erotic fluidity, and critiques on the politics of sexuality in mainstream society; and he cites the works of himself, Hung Ling, and Chiu Miao-chin as examples (1997b: 13-15). In so doing, Chi stresses the important role queer literature plays in the queer movement. The science fiction stories written by Chi and Hung¹¹ serve to both project an imaginary world where queer desire is outrageously prevalent and implicitly critique forms of discrimination and persecution that queers encounter in reality. Chiu Miao-chin’s *Eu-yu shou-chi* (Notes of the Crocodile), which is set in Taipei in the early 1990s, is also queer in that the lesbian protagonist has the funny name *La-tze*,¹² is a *T*-lesbian who struggles for her being neither man

¹¹ See for example the stories in Chi Ta-wei’s short story collection *Kan-kuan shi-chieh* (Queer Senses) (1995) and novella “Mo” (The Membrane) (1996) and Hung Ling’s short story collections *Chi-chieh Yi-sho* (Beast) (1995) and *Yi-tuan hsi-hsieh-kuei lieh-chuan* (Chronicles of Heretic Vampires) (1995).

¹² While *La-tze* may be an abbreviation of a phonetic transliteration of “lesbian,” it is a neologism in Chinese that can literally mean “the person who pulls.”

nor woman, neither human nor monster, and takes on the persona of a crocodile in a series of campy performance (see Liou 1998e; 2004).¹³ Although Chiu, like Pai Hsien-yung, was never an activist, the novel was so well received by lesbian/gay/queer subcultures that some lesbians called themselves *La-tze*, while some used “Crocodile” as a nickname for lesbian/gay/queer. Apart from Chi, Hung, and Chiu, Chen Shueh is also a queer writer, as Fran Martin points out (Martin 2003a; 2003b). For Chen also politicizes desire by presenting transgressive same-sex sexuality; Chen often puts her characters through dreams or trance-states, which serve as parables of spiritual journey in quest of sexual or gender identity (Liou 1998d: 91-98; see also Martin 2003b: 119-40).¹⁴

Apart from Chi Ta-wei, Hung Ling, Chen Shueh, and the academics, other queer activists include Cheng Mei-li, Chien Chia-hsin, Chang Chuan-fen, Hu Shu-wen, Ni Chia-jen, Wang Ping, Yeh Te-hsuan, Lai Cheng-che, Shieh Pei-chuan, Huang Tao-ming, Dan Tang-mo, and Chang Chih-wei, even though some of them preferred to see themselves as lesbian or gay activists. Cheng Mei-li, for instance, in her study of the lesbian social group ““Wo-men chí chian” (Between Us) concludes that, by using a poststructuralist approach, she postulates that, instead of having a fixed essence, identification and subjectivity are in an ongoing process of

¹³ Like her western counterpart “butch,” *T* is often looked upon as queer due to her masculinity and sexual identity. See my discussion of the gender trouble of *La-tze* in “Ai-yu hsing-pieh yu shu-hsieh: Chiu Miao-chin te nu-tong-hsing-lien hsiao-shuo” (Eroticism, Gender, and Writing: Chiu Miao-chin’s Lesbian Fictions) (Liou 1998e: 113-26). As for using the persona of a crocodile and the performances, as I have written elsewhere:

Using the crocodile as a figure of the lesbian is obviously to evoke the monster-figure once again, since in Taiwanese culture the crocodile is often viewed as hideous and revolting. Nevertheless, the allusions to the cartoon crocodile in the logo of Lacoste and a plastic toy crocodile destabilize the cultural signification of the crocodile by associating it with something as cute and adorable as the Pocket Monster. Such destabilization is accompanied by a series of the Crocodile’s theatrical performances, which present her as both in the closet (in a private space without an audience) and out of it (faced with the implied reader); she seems to be both seen and not really seen. This ambiguity about her (in)visibility constitutes the most paradoxical aspect of her relationship with the public space. These ambiguous, flirtatious, and mocking performances are queer performativity, through which *La-tze*/the Crocodile turns identity-related shame and melancholia into self-empowering parody and satire. (Liou 2004a: 177)

¹⁴ See for example Chen Shueh’s short story collections *Eu-nu* (*Evil Woman*) (1995) and *Meng-you yi-chiu-chiu-ssu* (*Sleepwalking in 1994*) (1996).

construction that depends on the subject's own historical practice and investment in discourses (202). Significantly, most of the activists were university or graduate students from such prestigious universities as National Taiwan University, Tsing-hua University, and Central University, who used feminist or lesbian or gay study groups on and off the university campus for networking and building up their activism. Most of them often presented papers in conferences on sexuality organized by Chang Hsiao-hung or Josephine Ho. Moreover, most of them wrote a master's thesis¹⁵ or a book on gay/lesbian/queer issues or literature and helped establish the gay/lesbian/queer scholarship in Taiwan. Some, like Chang Chih-wei, also became an academic later.

The development of gay/lesbian/queer activism has to do with that of feminist activism. As I have pointed out earlier, the feminist movement was the major source of support for the gay/lesbian/queer movements at their earlier stage. Tension between lesbian/queer feminists and mainstream feminists, however, appeared throughout 1995 in debates in lesbian and feminist journals pertaining to the civil law of marriage. While some mainstream feminists lobbied for an amendment to the Constitution that includes same-sex behavior as one condition for petitioning for divorce, some lesbian/queer feminists criticized the amendment for not including the legalization of gay marriage. The failure to put gay marriage on feminist agenda for the reform of marriage law stirred up debates within lesbian/gay/queer movements and probably made the writer Hsu Yo-sheng's public marriage ceremony with his long-term gay partner Gray Harriman all the more celebrated in the lesbian/gay/queer communities. Around 1995-96 a new coalition between the lesbian/queer movements and the gay movement in Taiwan was formed, which made these movements somehow stand out and seize a lot of media attention away from the feminist movement. In 1996 the "Tong-chi kong-chian hsing-tong chan-hsien" (Gay/Lesbian/Queer Space Action Front) launched a series of protests against the Taipei municipal government's decision to convert Taipei's New Park into the 2-2-8 Memorial Park. Though the decision was not overturned, the protests were successful enough to aggravate the conflict between lesbian/queer feminists and mainstream feminists. Thus, when the activists sought to come out and raise

¹⁵ Chang Chih-wei wrote a dissertation on queer literature and was the first one who earned a Ph. D. in Taiwan by doing queer studies.

gay-rights issues within the feminist movement, mainstream feminists, who feared that they might dominate the direction of the movement, snubbed them. Moreover, mainstream feminists' anti-prostitution stance made them oppose the instances of prostitution accompanied by the gay/queer cruising in and around the park. This stance also clashed with the sexual liberationist feminists' call for the rights of sex workers in 1997. As a consequence, while some lesbian (and gay) rights activists stayed within mainstream feminism, some split off into a separate organization, and some inclined toward sexual liberationist feminism, which in turn intensified the competition between sexual liberationist feminism and mainstream feminism, triggering highly complicated debates on gender and sexuality. The influence of mainstream feminists remained strong, nevertheless, as can be seen in the prevalent, though sometimes unstated, stress on egalitarian sexual relationship among the activists.¹⁶ Thus while gay/lesbian/queer movements were quite divided on the issue of commercial sex, even some of the activists in coalition with sexual liberationist feminists remained ambivalent: they both supported the rights of prostitutes and saw the exploitation and objectification of prostitution. And although sexual liberationists were supportive of lesbian/gay/queer movements, when activists like Ning YinBin (pseudonym K'a Wei-po) sought to co-op queer theory by equating it with sexual liberationist theory,¹⁷ few queer activists really agreed with him.

Ning's pretext for collapsing the differences between queers and sexual minorities was that, given Taiwan's "sex negative" context, "queers need to change the sexual culture completely" in order to nurture a gay positive environment (236). This self-serving strategy is, however, problematic in terms of translation. Interestingly, Ning raised the question of translating "queer" at the beginning of his essay by arguing that, since there is no Chinese equivalent for "queer," its many Chinese translations depend for their adequacy on the purpose of translation (231). While it is misleading of Ning to deliberately confuse the concepts of "queers" and "sexual minorities" in

¹⁶ Sexual liberationist feminists, on the other hand, abhor any discussion of egalitarian sexual relationships, labeling it as a sign of either "political correctness" or "lesbian feminism." To some extent, sexual liberationist feminists would rather dismiss or even drop feminism in celebrating the self-empowering of the sexual minorities.

¹⁷ Ning borrows his model from Gayle Rubin's in "Thinking Sex." Rubin argues in the interests of sexual minorities and calls for the demolition of the sexual hierarchy that marginalizes sexual minorities as perverted.

explicating the neologism *ku-er*, it is necessary at this juncture to discuss the translation of “queer” and “lesbian/gay” and the naming of *tong-chi* in regard to the theoretical questions they raise. Antonia Chao is right in pointing out that the translators of queer theory and politics tend to be creators of new cultural meanings as well (2000: 241). Chi in his 1997 introduction to the anthology *Ku-er ch’i-shi-lu* (Queer Archipelago) shows his awareness that translation is always a reproduction or re-articulation of meanings, given that cultural translation between different social contexts makes it impossible to find equivalents (1997b: 10-11). Reflecting on the translation of “queer” into *ku-er*, a phonetic transliteration of “queer,” that he and Hung Ling first used in the local journal *Tao-yu pian-yuan* (The Isle Margin) in 1994, he acknowledges that *ku-er* can hardly be equated with “queer.” For whereas “queer” in the English and American context signifies an appropriation of a once highly derogatory word, *ku-er* carries no such meaning; instead, it is a newly coined word carrying the connotation of “cool” and “stylish” (see Chi 1997b: 10). *Ku-er* is so fancy and outlandish that it almost becomes a floating signifier after it turns into a cultural fad, which is in tune with the carnivalesque spirit with which the queer movement wants to be associated. Thus *ku-er*, as a translation of “queer,” serves both as a code word to avoid censorship and an empowering self-renaming. It is only after *ku-er* was in widespread circulation that more adequate translations like *kueai-tai* (meaning “freak”) and *pian-tai* (meaning “pervert”) came into use to suggest the original context of the use of “queer.” Reflecting on the translation politics right after the publication of the “Queer” special issue in 1994, Chang Chuan-fen envisions a time when Taiwan lesbian/gay/queer movements can totally change the material condition of lesbians, gays, and queers in Taiwan so that people can have a new image of the term *kueai-tai* (or “freak”) in the same way as “queer” has new implications in the West (Huang Ch’u-hsiung: 56). Granted, Chi argues that any translation of “queer” takes on meanings in the local context, that *ku-er* is a cultural hybrid that is inspired by “queer” but generates new meanings in Taiwan (1997b: 11). *Ku-er* as a translation, then, is used with self-conscious discussions of the (in)adequacy of the translation and the transnational queer politics involved.

Significantly, both Chi’s and Ning’s articles (collected in the same anthology) seek to explicate the neologism *ku-er*, although for different purposes. Confusing “sexual minorities” and “queers,” Ning not only shifts

the focus by replacing “queers” with “sexual minorities,” but underlines practices of sexual perversion in his version of queerness. Antonia Chao, who sides with him, also attacks what she calls the “sanitization” or “de-sexualization” of dominant lesbian/queer discourse, or what she sees as a version of queerness that flirts with queer desire without dealing with actual sexual practices (2000: 245-47). Chao is, however, highly reductive in making such a generalization: a lot of lesbian/queer discourse is far from being “de-sexualized.” Another problem is that valorizing practices of sexual perversion is establishing a norm that displaces other forms of queerness. Who can say that queerness is only a matter of sexual practice rather than a matter of sexual desire or fantasy? In comparison, Chi’s theorizing of queerness seems more balanced. His definition of queerness ranges from fluid sexual desire, gender ambiguity, diversified sexualities and genders, to critiques of mainstream sexual politics (1997b: 13-15).

Apart from *ku-er*, *tong-chi* is sometimes used to translate “queer.” By all accounts, it was Lin Yi-hua, a Hong Kong-based film critic, who first used *tong-chi* in Taiwan in 1992 to translate “queer” in the “Queer Cinema” section of the annual Golden Horse International Film Festival held in Taipei. But its use in Taiwan mostly designates “gay and lesbian.” Whether referring to “queer” or “gay and lesbian,” however, *tong-chi* is not really an equivalent of either. For *tong-chi* originally means “comrade” by both the Chinese Nationalist Party and the Chinese Communist Party. Lin’s appropriation of the political identity is a call for solidarity in the emerging gay/lesbian/queer movements. He even playfully appropriates the deathbed words of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the National Father of the Republic of China, for gay/lesbian/queer activism¹⁸: “The revolution has not yet succeeded; the comrades must keep on struggling.” Although in Taiwan many use *tong-chi* as a positive political identity to replace the older, pathologized term *tong-hsing-lien*, which is a literal translation of the sexological term “homosexual,” *tong-chi* is different from “gay and lesbian” in that it is not a gendered term. Moreover, compared with “gay” in the Western context, *tong-chi* stresses solidarity but sheds “gayness,” though within the movement it may also be seen as a playful masking that jibes at the stiffness associated

¹⁸ Chang Chuan-fen relishes this appropriation as queering Sun Yat-sen’s nation-building efforts (Huang Chu-hsiung: 55).

with the word “comrade.”¹⁹ *Tong-chi* then becomes a code word or a double-voiced word that is in wider circulation than *tong-hsing-lien*, and sometimes the word also means “queer.”

The “uncanny simultaneity” of lesbian/gay and queer movements inevitably brings into play a lot of new terms. In fact, the activists celebrated the proliferation of translations as well as seductive and defiant neologisms or appropriation of words, in order to nurture a gay, carnivalesque atmosphere that was in sharp contrast to the reality of homophobia and heterosexism which made even coming out difficult. We may say that such a relish in verbal pleasure is a strategic avoidance at the earlier stage of confrontation with social oppression and a tactic of buying time; without knowing what *ku-er* or *tong-chi* or “queer” means exactly, the public might be induced in using them and benefiting the movements. Thus queer theory and politics in Taiwan are probably most interesting when it comes to cultural translation and reproduction. The fact that most of the activists are university or graduate students perhaps helps explain their resourcefulness and ingenuity in cultural reproduction. Translations of “lesbian” include *nu-tong-chi* (which means “female *tong-chi*”), *tong-nu* (which means literally “same woman”), *lei-su-bien* (which is a transliteration of “lesbian”), and *La-tze* (coming from the nickname of the protagonist of *Eu-yu shou-chi* (Notes of the Crocodile)²⁰), all of which are used to differentiate from the more pathologized sexual term *nu-tong-hsing-lien* (which means “female homosexual”). Like *ku-er*, *lei-su-bien* is a transliteration that evokes different connotations than “lesbian.” There are even two homonyms of *lei-su-bien*, one of which literally means “the laced hem,” the other “the laced whip” (or “lace and whip”). Hung Ling, who mints the latter neologism, explains jokingly that since for her “lesbian” means a female queer, covering terms such as *La-tze*, dyke, tomboy, and femme, that are used in the subculture, her translation is intended to convey the sense of sharpness, elegance, and delicacy associated with “lesbian” (Chi 1997a: 59). Likewise, “camp” has two translations: one is a Minnan term *gay-hsien* (or *chia-hsien* in mandarin), which means “affected,” while the other *gang-pu* is a neologism that is a phonetic transliteration of “camp,” which literally means “daring to be an

¹⁹ The Hong Kong Chinese gay men probably appropriated the term “comrade” in the 1980s to jibe at the communists who would soon take over Hong Kong in 1997.

²⁰ Please see my earlier discussion of the name in note 12.

exhibitionist.” “To bring out,” too, has two translations: one is *huan-chu*, which means “to call forth,” and the other a Minnan term *cam-hsing* (or *chien-cheng* in mandarin), which means “to bring together.” The use of Minnan terms in translation is obviously an attempt to connect the queer movement with nativist resistance. There are other neologisms such as *fa-yao* (which means “to show one’s monstrosity” or “to manifest one’s queer beauty”), deriving from *yao-yen* (which means “monsters’ words”) that is the title of a special issue in *Tao-yu pian-yuan* (The Isle Margin).²¹ All these new words show playful self-renaming, if not self-proliferation; the “queering” of words like *tong-chi* (“comrade”) and English abbreviations such as CD (appropriating “compact disc” for “cross-dresser”) also suggests a carnivalesque appropriation.

Aside from translations of English terms, translating queer theory also raises questions as to how to evaluate local lesbian, gay, and queer subcultures, how stable are local lesbian and gay identities, and whether local lesbian identities like *T* and *P’o* are the equivalents of butch and femme. According to Cheng Mei-li, before the term *nu-tong-chi* was created, most of the lesbians who were influenced by feminism named themselves “lesbian,” whereas those who frequented *T*-bars called themselves *T* or *P’o* (107). While *T* is an abbreviation for “tomboy,” *P’o* is a Chinese character that means “wife” or “old lady.” Thus, although *T-P’o* seems like a counterpart of “butch-femme,” it is neither a translation nor a derivation of it. Rather, the *T-P’o* role-play is a product of the commercial culture of *T*-bars in Taipei, and the *T-P’o* performativity shows the hybridity of American, Japanese, Chinese, and local Minnan cultural elements (see Chao 2001). Both Antonia Chao’s and Cheng Mei-li’s study indicate that the *T*-identity was formed in the pubs of the 1960s, under the aegis of American GI culture during the Cold War period when the US armed forces were stationed in Taipei, and that the *T* and *P’o* role-playing did not come into existence until 1985, when the first *T*-bar was founded. For the frequenters, *T*-bars offer a space for female same-sex sexuality and for cultivating the *T*-identity. *T*-lesbians are encouraged to display exaggerated masculinity by competing with each other in *T*-bars. Cheng notes the sharp cultural difference between the lesbian social group “Wo-men chi chian” (Between Us) and the *T-P’o* community based in *T*-bars as residing in the fact that the former is feminist,

²¹ The guest editors for this special issue are Wang Ping and Ding Nai-fei.

non-commercial, more educated, and with more cultural capital. Instead of the *T-P'o* stylized role-play, *pu-fen* (which means “not differentiating” and connotes both an egalitarian relationship of the lesbian couple and a more neutral gender behavior) is more popular among the “Wo-men chi chian” (Between Us) members. Likewise, according to Chien Chia-hsin’s study, lesbian communities on university campuses are greatly shaped by the lesbian/gay/queer movements and the feminist movement. Some of Cheng’s and Chien’s informants feel uncomfortable with the *T*-lesbians’ exaggerated masculinity and the *T-P'o*’s apparent duplication of heterosexuality in *T*-bars. On the other hand, Chien finds that, rather than a uniform *pu-fen* coupling, the university lesbians adopt a mixed style, or a redefined *T-P'o* role-playing. Distinguishing *T-P'o* role-playing in terms of gender behavior, power relationship, and gender role in sexual intercourse, Chien remarks that university lesbians are composed of a spectrum of at least twenty-four types of *T-P'o* role-playing, with the extreme masculine and feminine types characteristic of *T*-bars constituting only two of them; the spectrum also includes two types of *pu-fen* and a type that may change her role from *T* to *P'o* or *P'o* to *T*, depending on the love object she meets (Chien 94-95). With the redefined *T-P'o* role-playing in this new, diversified lesbian community, even the *T-P'o* dichotomy that is normative in *T*-bars cannot be essentialized. Antonia Chao attacks Cheng and Chien for privileging feminist or university lesbians who are influenced by Western feminist lesbianism over those who practice “authentic” *T-P'o* role-playing in *T*-bars (Chao 2000: 248-9). For Chao this carries a bourgeois value judgment over that of the lower class. While Chao may be right about the class difference between *T*-bar and feminist (and/or university) lesbian subcultures, it should be noted that she also deliberately ignores the issue of sexism involved in the *T-P'o* relationship in *T*-bars by displacing it onto the issue of social class. In alignment with sexual liberationists, she abhors feminist critique of power and violence²² in the *T-P'o* relationship in *T*-bars. Moreover, she fails to recognize the need for other lesbians—whether or not on the university campus--to create a non-commercial and more diversified subculture of their own.

On the other hand, unlike Judith Butler, who challenges the North American lesbian and feminist identity politics by addressing her butch

²² See note 16.

“queerness,” the *T-P’o* communities in *T-bars* have had no interest in either the feminist or the *tong-chi* movement. But in the public culture shaped mostly by the media, which has both a voyeurish interest in *T-bars* and concerns with the *tong-chi* movement, the lesbian may just as often be associated with the *T* of *T-bars* as with the feminist lesbian. Thus while Butler develops her queer theory out of her marginal position as a butch vis-a-vis the mainstream American feminist and/or lesbian identity, the situation here is quite different. Both the *T-P’o* community in *T-bars* and the feminist lesbian community are “queer,” the former in the sense that the woman-loving masculine *T* is neither a transsexual nor a man and that some of the *P’o*-lesbians are bisexual, and the latter in the sense that some of its members have had heterosexual relationships before and recognize the constructedness of sexual identities. It is noteworthy that, given the homophobia and heterosexism in Taiwan, any lesbian identity may be deemed “queer” by the mainstream society. Cheng Mei-li designates *nu-tong-chi* as a term encompassing *T-P’o*, *pu-fen*, and “lesbian” (107) to suggest the diversity of life-styles among the lesbian communities. Lesbian identities take on more queerness as some *T*-lesbians turn into transsexuals, and as some *nu-tong-chi*--including *T-P’o*, *pu-fen*, and “lesbian”--have had heterosexual relationship before and may keep their sexual choice open, due to compulsory heterosexuality. Cheng’s study shows how the family systems oppress lesbians most immediately and persistently: nearly all of her informants, who are aged from 25 to 47, have to fight the pressure of entering into heterosexual marriages and one third of them have been married before becoming aware of their same-sex desire.

In the case of gay studies, Huang Tao-ming traces the history of the nicknames and stigmas of the male homosexual identity, sex, and community that have appeared in the media in the 1970s and 1980s in order to intervene in the social imaginary. He not only applies queer theory to confront those pathologized terms and teases out the way the homophobic fantasy associated with them breaks down the homosexual/heterosexual divide, but he also suggests that the derogatory names indicate the influence of diverse cultures in the interpellation of a stigmatized male homosexuality. While *tong-hsing-lien* is a pathologized translation of the sexological term “homosexuality,” he argues, the term *tuang-hsiu-pee* is derived from an anecdote of male same-sex behavior in ancient Chinese literature and literally

means “the tendency to cut off sleeves,” and the term *jen-yao*, which literally means “man-monster,” first appears in an ancient Chinese historical record to refer to transvestites. Unlike *tuang-hsiu-pee* and *jen-yao*, the term *p'o-li* (literally meaning “glass”) is first used by local gangsters in the 1950s and refers to the buttocks, hence a synecdoche for anal sex. In the usage of *tong-hsing-lien* and *tuang-hsiu-pee*, Huang observes that homosexuality is constructed as something contagious or something in which people will indulge themselves, while in the usage of *jen-yao* and *p'o-li*, he notes the conflation between homosexuality and gender inversion. The association of homosexuality with gender inversion makes the former take on queerness, even though that also becomes a traditional stereotyping of homosexuality. The idea of homosexuality as contagious also suggests the fluidity of desire.

Whereas Huang critiques these terms as discursively instrumental to the production of a guilt-ridden homosexual image before the law, Lai Cheng-che’s study of Taipei’s New Park traces the historical changes in the cruising itineraries of the gay community since the early 1950s in relation to the changes of the spatial contours of the park as well as the influence on the cruising in the park by the founding of gay bars and hotels in the 1960s and gay saunas in the 1980s. Through interviews, Lai reconstructs the heterogeneous gay subculture by analyzing the differences in ethnicity, race, age, occupation, social class, and sexual practice in the gay community. Writing in protest against the Taipei Municipal government’s decision to convert the park into the 2-2-8 Memorial Park in 1996, Lai underscores how state power has been inscribed in both the spatial deployment and architecture in the park, and how individual *nan-tong-chi* have resisted it by appropriating the space for their own use. The convenience and mobility of anonymous sex turns the park into a homosexual underworld in the heart of Taipei. And yet like the *T-P'o* community in *T-bars*, the New Park’s gay community is not interested in activism; given the diversity of the gay population, Lai’s informants may not even know one another.

Overall, Lai’s study may have encompassed too long a span of time and relied too much on one or two informants for the reconstruction of earlier periods. Still, Lai’s research can be seen together with the studies of Cheng Mei-li, Antonia Chao, Chien Chia-hsin, and Huang Tao-ming as attempts to trace and evaluate the histories of local lesbian and gay communities, which always include a queer population, whether or not they treat it. As with the

case of lesbian identities, any gay identity may be regarded as “queer” by dominant society, while a more specifically male queer population includes practitioners in bisexuality, transvestitism, transsexualism, and S/M. Though Lai does not problematize the gay identity from the perspective of queer theory, some of his informants may have had heterosexual relationship while some may be bisexual or transvestite. Lai’s as well as the others’ studies ground queer politics in the history of local gay/lesbian/queer communities it cannot do without.

Lai’s study also represents the university students’ effort to connect with the gay community in the park since the activism of the “Tong-chi kong-chian hsing-tong chan-hsien” (Gay/Lesbian/Queer Space Action Front) in 1996. Tension, however, exists among different subcultures due to the differences in social class and sexual practice. The feminist lesbians’ uneasiness with the *T-P’o* subculture in *T-bars*, which I discussed earlier, is a case in point. Chi Ta-wei, too, observes that the young activists, feeling the lack of a gay or lesbian subculture with which they could identify themselves in 1995, used the Internet to connect with individual gays, lesbians, and queers, in order to create a new subculture (Chi 1995). Even in the Internet discussions the differences within the gay/lesbian/queer population were great. Chi notes that in 1995 the conservatives and liberals were often in the majority, while the radicals were silenced in the heated debates (Chi 1995: 158-9). This may no longer be the case now. The Internet also contributes to the mobilization of gay/lesbian/queer communities. Thus, before the first Gay Pride March in Taiwan in 2003, conferences on gay/lesbian/queer topics with a gay-positive appeal often drew a great number of self-declaring lesbians, gays, and queers due to the mobilization through the Internet.

I have mentioned earlier that the queer movement in the media is often seen as playful elitism characterized by postmodern verbal play and a poststructuralist critique of identity. Some queer activists are indeed affiliated with postmodernism by deliberately associating queerness with postmodern de-centeredness, hybridity, anti-foundation, heterogeneity, fluidity, and performativity. Thus, all the neologisms and appropriations of words that the queer activists relish are supposed to project an avant-garde image that is both subversive and seductive. It is as if, equipped with their cultural capital, they can fight homophobia and heterosexism on their own terms, with the verbal play projecting a utopia where queer desire is

ubiquitous and queer politics embraced by the avant-garde or the most progressive people in society. They flirt with the media, popular culture, and consumerism in the belief that in the late-capitalist world they can only intervene in and subvert the social imaginary through making their presence felt in that way. This tactic indicates a desire to achieve goals within the shortest time and proves to be exceedingly successful in transforming the public discourses on sexuality. That Chi Ta-wai and Hung Ling, the two most prominent writers of queer-themed literature, use sci-fi, metafiction, and, in the case of Hung Ling, vampire fiction in their writing carves out a postnational, postmodern, generation XXX's image of queerness in public culture. Both the fluid, transgressive (and sometimes deliberately perverted) sexuality and mutations of identity in which their fiction abounds are meant to shock the ordinary reader by challenging the latter's notion of fixed heterosexual and homosexual identities and sensibility on the issue of sexuality (see Liou 1998b, 1998c).

Take Chi Ta-wai's sci-fi short story "Shi" (Eclipse) for example. The story portrays how a gay man metamorphoses into an insect, which is then eaten by his gay twin brother, who is also the narrator. The story ridicules homophobia by imagining a world where, instead of homosexuals, insect-eaters are discriminated against. The narrator's eating of insects brings about the eclipse. Chi is obviously playing on words since the Chinese character for "eclipse" is composed of the two characters "eat" and "insect." But eating insects also implies anal sex; the eclipse then is celebrated since it subverts the normative order represented by the sun. Moreover, the story is hilariously grotesque in portraying how the twin brothers' adopted parent, a gay man too, eats so much spaghetti that he turns into a big mama without undergoing the sex-change operation which he had intended, and how when he falls to his death his body is like a dish of tapanyaki scrambled eggs with tomato so that for a whole month the mourning narrator dares not scramble eggs together with mayonnaise (see Liou 1998b: 51-52; Liou 2001b: 95; Chu Wei-ch'eng 2005: 178). If Chi's postmodernism is characterized by verbal play, burlesque, and carnivalesque celebration of physical grotesqueness, Hung Ling's is marked by indulgence in the fantasy world of genre fiction (including sci-fi, romance, Gothic, and fantasy), black humor, and queer, flamboyant characterization. For instance, Hung Ling's sci-fi short story "Shou-nan" (The Beast's Catastrophe) portrays

a female vampire's encounter with a female freak in a T-bar in Tokyo after a nuclear war in the Twenty-first Century. The freak is turned into such because of the war and, in order not to turn into a beast, she seeks to kill the vampire and take in the latter's energy. What she does not know is that the vampire, who has fallen in love with her, knows her intention all along but is willing to sacrifice her life since she has been smitten with guilt over not having died with her former lover, a Scottish princess in the Thirteenth Century. She then waits to be penetrated by the freak. Apart from the somewhat soap-opera-like sentimental romance that ends in tragedy, the story highlights sadomasochistic erotic dynamics and images that are probably drawn from Japanese teen-girls' cartoons, not to mention that the figures of vampire, freak, and beast defiantly evoke queerness. The characters are depicted as having the outfits, trappings, expressions, and gestures of a masquerade, so that the romance is charged with sadomasochistic eroticism and queer, showy beauty. At the same time, both the sentimental romance and the characterization are deliberately flat and stylized (see Liou 1998d: 100-102; Liou 1998c). Postmodernism, then, allows Hung and Chi to indulge in either black humor or burlesque in conveying a rebellious, seductively light-hearted queerness. It is noteworthy that the neverland of their sci-fi world is very often deliberately stripped of local references, which makes it sound postnational or even foreign to the reader.

On the other hand, queer activists also seek to connect with postcolonialism. This stems partly from their awareness of the foreignness of queer theory and the importance of the politics of location in thinking about the global flow, and partly from their efforts to produce gay/lesbian/queer communities. While the neologisms and appropriation of words can be seen as re-articulations of queer theory in the local context, it is also interesting that Minnan terms are used to translate "camp" and "bring out." Earlier I have mentioned that this signals efforts on the part of the queer activists to connect with the nativist resistance. And this probably also signifies a reconciliation after the lesbian/gay/queer movements' clash with Taiwanese nationalism over the conversion of Taipei's New Park into the 2-2-8 Memorial Park. But prior to that incident, Chi Ta-wei seemed to have either been inspired by the nativist challenge to Chinese colonialism or sought negotiation with postcolonialism so that he defended lesbian and gay identities by drawing on

Chiu Kuei-fen's notions of decolonization (1998: 138-9).²³ He argues that the subjectivity of lesbians and gays is just as unquestionable as that of Taiwan. On the part of the nativists, it is also noteworthy that the first Taiwanese novel with a heavily lesbian element, *Shi-sheng hua-mei* (The Silent Thrush), by Ling Yen, which depicts life among a Taiwanese opera troupe, was published by the nativist *Tze-li Wan-pao* (Independence Evening News) in 1990 and won the newspaper's Million-Dollar Novel Prize in 1991. After the gay/lesbian/queer activists' clash with the nativists in 1996, both Cheng Mei-li and Huang Tao-ming appropriate the postcolonial scholar Benedict Anderson's notion of the "imagined community," which is often cited by postcolonial scholars in Taiwan, to address the construction of a lesbian (for Cheng) and a gay (for Huang) community respectively (Cheng 119, Huang 111).²⁴ While postcolonial ideas are useful for the construction of lesbian and gay identity, they are also enabling in helping the queer activists to find their bearings. Rather than simply a slavish translation of Western queer theory and politics, the activists and theorists adapt and indigenize them for the specific local context. Chi Ta-wei, in editing the first queer reader, uses the English title "Queer Archipelago" in reference to the geographic contours of Taiwan and states that *ku-er* as a cultural hybrid is engaged in both writing a local history of queerness and having an ongoing dialogue with queerness from abroad (Chi 1997b: 18, 11).

As for queer studies in the academy, aside from anthropological studies and sociological studies that I have discussed above, literary studies are also important in promoting same-sex desire, critiquing the institutions of compulsory heterosexuality and family, exploring the strategies of activism, and cultivating the queer readers. While Chang Hsiao-hung's literary studies focused mainly on English and American texts and pioneered queer studies in

²³ Chiu's paper "Discovering Taiwan" was first presented at a conference in 1992 and published in the *Chung-wai Literary Journal* in 1993, while Chi's paper was first presented at a conference in 1995. For Chi, the crocodile in Chiu Miao-chin's *Eu-yu shou-chi* (Notes of the Crocodile) (1994) is a trope for stigmatized lesbian and gay identities. Concerning Chiu Miao-chin's satiric use of this trope, Chi remarks that "'Discovering the crocodile' is just as ridiculous as 'discovering the New World' or 'discovering Taiwan,' since the 'discovered object' had already existed as the 'subject,' had indeed existed absolutely without relying on external forces" (1998: 142).

²⁴ Fran Martin, too, adapts Benedict Anderson's idea to argue that, through the reception and interpretation of literature with gay, lesbian, or queer themes, there is "a kind of 'imagined community' of queer readers that developed a strong understanding of itself as such during the 1990s" (2003a: 6).

Taiwan, Liou Liang-ya endeavored to establish a Taiwan lesbian/gay/queer literary canon in her two books *Yu-wang keng-yi-shi* (Engendering Dissident Desires) (1998) and *Ch'ing-se Shi-chi-mo* (Gender, Sexuality, and the *Fin de Siecle*) (2001).²⁵ Liou argues that, due to its nuanced portrayals of the lives of gays, lesbians, and queers, particularly in regard to affect and subject formation, fiction with such themes can often unravel issues that queer activism does not address. In her studies on Chiu Miao-chin's complicated *Eu-yu shou-chi* (Notes of the Crocodile), for instance, she discusses how the protagonist's self-loathing stems from the trauma she had suffered from growing up as T-lesbian—hence it can serve as a critique on the politics of sexuality in mainstream society--and how the self-loathing combined with her sexist attitudes toward her lover leads to a most painful love relationship (Liou 1998e; Liou 2004a). That the protagonist's hilarious satire on the heterosexist society's homophobic voyeurism eventually leads to her melancholia and suicide, argues Liou, constitutes a powerful critique on the system (1998e). Liou's analysis of a variety of lesbian couples in Taiwanese fiction since 1975 deals with the T-P'o and pu-fen relationships in and beyond T-bars, university campus, and feminist groups, in terms of subject formation, self-perception, and power relations (Liou 2001c). Chang Chih-wei's sophisticated queer reading of Chu T'ien-wen's *Huang-jen shou-chi* (Notes of a Desolate Man) shows the proliferation of meanings in the textual cross-pollination that transgresses even the closeted gay narrator's

²⁵ Most of the articles in the books were first published in journals. Among those which are cited in the bibliography, "K'u-yi te yu-wang mi-kung: p'ing Chi Ta-wei te *Kan-kuan shi-chieh*" (A Labyrinth of Queer Desire: Chi Ta-wei's *Queer Senses*) was first published in *Chung-wai Literary Monthly* 24.9 (Feb 1996): 131-38; "Hung Ling te Chi-chieh yi-sho yu Yi-tuan hsi-hsieh-kuei lieh-chuan chung te ch'ing-yu yu hsing-pieh" (Sexuality and Gender in Hung Ling's *Beast and Chronicles of Heretic Vampires*) in *Chung-wai Literary Monthly* 25.1 (June 1996): 26-38; "Chiu-ling nien-tai Tai-wan nu-tong-hsing-lien hsiao-shuo—yi Chiu Miao-chin Chen Shueh Hung Ling wei li" (Taiwanese Lesbian Fiction in the 1990s: The Instances of Chiu Miao-chin, Chen Shueh, and Hung Ling) in *Chung-wai Literary Monthly* 26.2 (July 1997): 115-29; "Ai-yu hsing-pieh yu shu-hsieh: Chiu Miao-chin te nu-tong-hsing-lien hsiao-shuo" (Eroticism, Gender, and Writing: Chiu Miao-chin's Lesbian Fictions) in *Chung-wai Literary Monthly* 26.3 (Aug. 1997): 8-30. My paper "Pien-yuan fa-sheng: chieh-yan yi-lai te Tai-wan tong-chi hsiao-shuo" (Voicing from the Margin: Taiwanese *Tong-chi* Fiction since 1987) was first presented in the conference on "Chieh-yan yi-lai te Tai-wan wen-shueh" (Taiwanese Literature since 1987) in 2000 and first published in *Chieh-yan yi-lai te Tai-wan wen-shueh kuo-chi shueh-shu yan-t'ao-hueh luen-wen-chi* (Proceedings: the Conference on Taiwanese Literature since 1987)(Taipei: Wan-chuan Lo, 2000), 117-42.

conservative thoughts. And Yeh Te-shuan in his study of *Nieh-tze* (Crystal Boys) precedes Cheng Mei-li in pointing out that familialism is the primary institution that oppresses lesbians, gays, and queers in Taiwan since it perpetuates homophobia and heterosexism. In their article on the lesbian novel *Ni-nu* (A Bad Daughter) by Tu Hsiu-lan, Ding Nai-fei and Liu Jen-peng critique the traditional poetics of reticence as used by the dominant society to condemn and silence lesbianism. Generally speaking, since the mid-1990s, queer literary studies have clustered around three texts: *Nieh-tze* (Crystal Boys), *Huang-jen shou-chi* (Notes of a Desolate Man), and *Eu-yu shou-chi* (Notes of the Crocodile), so that these texts are established not only as the classics of Taiwanese gay/lesbian/queer literature, but as texts that queer readers will respond to, interpret, or appropriate.

Moreover, as far as canonization is concerned, more efforts are being made with the start of the Twenty-first Century. Fran Martin's introduction to *Angelwings* (2003a), her translation of ten Taiwanese queer short stories, and her book *Situating Sexualities* (2003b) also attempt to establish a Taiwan lesbian/gay/queer literary canon, though they are addressed to the reader in the English-speaking world. Both her book and her introduction deal with Taiwanese queer fiction as well as film in relation to public culture and show her in-depth understanding of the critical debates and the cultural politics involved. More recently, Chu Wei-ch'eng's "Ling-lei ching-tien" (Alternative Canon), his introduction to *Tai-wan tong-chi hsiao-shuo-shuan* (Selected Taiwanese Tong-chi Fictions) (2005), an anthology that he compiles, is an informative survey of Taiwanese *tong-chi* fiction since 1960.

One of the key theories flourishing in Taiwan's cultural and academic scene in the 1990s, queer theory has helped transform the public discourse on sexuality and gender. To have queer theory and gay/lesbian theory translated to Taiwan almost at the same time is to contribute to gay-positive awareness with more resourceful tactics, to generate a carnivalesquely gay-friendly atmosphere, to address the differences within lesbians and gays, and to even break down the homosexual/heterosexual divide almost from the beginning. By connecting with the media, popular culture, and postmodernism, queer politics has succeeded in presenting itself as at once the avant-garde and the most progressive and trendy at the cultural front. But queer politics also finds the need to connect with postcolonialism by

tracing the history of local gay/lesbian/queer communities and cultivating new ones, and by thinking about the transnational politics of translation. The translation of queer theory is always already indiginized for the specific needs of the lesbian/gay/queer movements in Taiwan in the 1990s. And the success of the lesbian/gay/queer movements within a very short time is indicative not only of the dynamic, pluralist cultural atmosphere right after the lifting of the martial law in 1987, but also of the resourcefulness of the activists in cultural production of queerness.

Works Cited

- Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble*. New York: Routledge.
- , 1991. "Imitation and Gender Insubordination." *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*. Ed. Diana Fuss. New York: Routledge. 13-31.
- Chang, Chih-wei. 1997. "Yi t'ong-sheng tzu-lien chi-tsao tong-hsing chu lien: *huang-jen shou-chi* te fu-yu-shu" (Homosexual Voices and Homonymic Desires: Chu T'ien-wen's *Huang-jen-Shou-chi*). *Chung-wai Literary Monthly* 25.10 (March): 160-79.
- Chang, Hsiao-hung. 1993. *Ho-hsien-tai/nu-jen* (Postmodernism/Woman). Taipei: Shi-pao.
- , 1995. *Hsing-pieh yueh-chieh* (Gender Crossing). Taipei: Lienho wenshueh.
- , 1996a. *Yu-wang hsin ti-t'u* (Queer Desire, Gender, and Sexuality). Taipei: Lienho wenshueh.
- , 1996b. "Tong-chi ch'ing-jen feh-ch'ang yu-wang" (Queer Politics of Desire). *Chung-wai Literary Monthly* (June): 6-25.
- Chao, Antonia. 2000. "Tai-wan tong-chi yen-chiu te huei-ku yu chan-wang" (A Retrospective and Prospective View of Taiwanese Tong-chi Studies). *Wen-hua yen-chiou tsai Tai-wan* (Cultural Studies in Taiwan). Ed. Chen Kuang-hsing. Taipei: Chu-liu. 237-79.
- , 2001. "Drink, Stories, Penis, and Breasts: Lesbian Tomboys in Taiwan from the 1960s to the 1990s." *Journal of Homosexuality* 40.3-4: 185-209.
- Chen, Shueh. 1995. *Eu-nu* (Evil Woman). Taipei: Ping-shi.
- , 1996. *Meng-you yi-chiu-chiu-ssu* (Sleepwalking in 1994). Taipei:

Ping-shih.

- Cheng, Mei-li. 1997. *Nu-erh chuan* (Girls' Circle). Taipei: Nu-shu-tian.
- Chi, Ta-wei. 1995a. "Tai-eu-se-p'o-la: Huang-jen shou-chi te ku-er yueh-tu" (Queer Diaspora: A Queer Reading of *Notes of a Desolate Man*). *Chung-wai Literary Monthly* (Aug 1995): 153-60.
- , 1995b. *Kan-kuan shi-chieh* (Queer Senses). Taipei: Ping-shi.
- , 1995c. "Shi" (Eclipse). *Kan-kuan shi-chieh* (Queer Senses). 173-206.
- , 1996. "Mo" (The Membrane). *Mo* (The Membrane). Taipei: Ping-shi. 1-110.
- , ed. 1997a. *Ku-er ch'i-shi-lu* (Queer Archipelago: A Reader of the Queer Discourses in Taiwan). Taiwan: Yuan-tsuen.
- , 1997b. "Ku-er luen: su-k'ao tang-tai Tai-wan ku-er yu ku-er wen-shueh" (Introduction: On *ku-er*--Contemporary Taiwan Queerness and Queer Literature). *Ku-er ch'i-shi-lu* (Queer Archipelago). 9-16.
- , 1998. "Fa-hsien eu-yu" (Discovering the Crocodile). *Wan-an pa-pi-luen* (Sexually Dissident Notes from Babylon). Chi Ta-wei. Taipei: T'an-suo. 137-54.
- Chien, Chia-hsin. 1997. *Huan-ch'u nu-tong-chi: chiu-ling nien-tai Tai-wan nu-tong-chi te luen-shu hsing-ko yu yuin-tong chi-chieh (1990-1996)* (Bring Out Taiwan Lesbians: The Lesbian Discourses and Movements in Taiwan (1990-1996). Master's thesis. National Taiwan University.
- Chiu, Kuei-fen. 1997. "Fa-hsien Tai-wan" (Discovering Taiwan). *Chun-chieh Tai-wan nu-jen* (Reading Taiwan/Woman). Taipei: Yuan-tsuen. 153-77.
- Chiu, Miao-chin. 1994. *Eu-yu shou-chi* (Notes of the Crocodile). Taipei: Shi-pao.
- Chu, T'ien-wen. 1994. *Huang-jen shou-chi* (Notes of a Desolate Man). Taipei: Shih-pao.
- Chu, Wei-ch'eng. 2000. "Tai-wan tong-chi yuin-tong te ho-chi-ming su-k'ao: chien-luen hsien-shen wen-t'i" (Postcolonial Thoughts on Taiwan tong-chi Movements: the Problem of 'Coming Out'). *Ts'ung ku-er kong-chien tao chiao-yu kong-chien* (From Queer Space to Educational Space). Ed. Josephine Ho. Taipei: Mai-t'ien. 1-25.
- , 2005. "Ling-lei ching-tien" (Alternative Canon). *Tai-wan tong-chi hsiao-shuo-shuan* (Selected Taiwanese Tong-chi Fictions). Ed.

- Wei-ch'eng Chu. Taipei: Er-yu. 9-15.
- Ding, Nai-fei, and Jen-peng Liu. 1998. "Wang-liang wen-ching: han-shu mei-shueh yu ku-er cheng-luei" (Reticent Poetics, Queer Politics). *Hsing-pieh yen-chiu* (Working Papers on Gender/Sexuality Studies) nos. 3 & 4 (Sept.): 109-55.
- Huang, Ch'u-hsiung. 1998. "Ku-er fa-yao: ku-er tong-hsing-lien yu nu-hsing ch'ing-yu yao-yen tsuo-t'an-hueh" (Displaying Queer Monstrosity: the Minutes of the Colloquium on the 'Monstrous Speech' for Queer/Lesbian/Gay and Women's Desire). *Hsing-pieh yen-chiu* (Working Papers on Gender/Sexuality Studies) 3& 4 (Sept. 1998): 47-87.
- Huang Tao-ming. 2000. "Chao-huan tong-hsing-lien chu-t'i: huen-ming wu-ming yu Tai-wan nan-tong-hsing-lien wen-hua te piao-yi" (Interpellating the Homosexual—Nicknames, Stigmata, and the Signification of Taiwan Gay Culture). *Hsing-pieh cheng-chi yu chu-t'i hsing-ko* (Sexual Politics and Subject Formation). Ed. Josephine Ho. Taipei: Mai-t'ien. 111-29.
- Hung, Ling. 1995a. *Chi-chieh Yi-sho* (Beast). Taipei: Ping-shi.
- 1995b. *Yi-tuan hsi-hsieh-kuei lieh-chuan* (Chronicles of Heretic Vampires). Taipei: Ping-shi.
- 1995c. "Shou-nan" (The Beast's Catastrophe). *Yi-tuan hsi-hsieh-kuei lieh-chuan* (Chronicles of Heretic Vampires). 56-86.
- Lai, Cheng-che. 2000. "Tsai kong-su shang-pan: hsin-kong-yuan tzuo-wei nan-tong-chi yan-ch'u ti-ching chu yan-chiu" (Working for the Company—A Study on the Taipei's New Park as a Location for nan-tong-chi's Performance). *Hsing-pieh cheng-chi yu chu-t'i hsing-ko* (Sexual Politics and Subject Formation). Ed. Josephine Ho. Taipei: Mai-t'ien. 131-86.
- Liang, Nung-gung. 1989. *Ku'ai-kan yu liang-hsing ch'a-yi* (Pleasure and Sexual Difference). Taipei: Yuan-liu.
- Liao, Ping-hui. 2000. "Tai-wan: ho-hsien-tai huo ho-chi-ming" (Taiwan: Postmodern or Postcolonial?) *Shu-hsieh Tai-wan: wen-shueh-shi, ho-chi-ming yu ho-hsien-tai* (Writing Taiwan: Literary History, Postcolonialism and Postmodernism). Eds. Cho Ying-hsiung and Liu Chi-huei. Taipei: Mai-t'ien. 85-99.
- Ling, Yen. 1990. *Shi-sheng hua-mei* (The Silent Thrush). Taipei: Tze-li

wan-pao.

- Liou, Liang-ya. 1998a. *Yu-wang keng-yi-shi: ch'ing-se hsiao-shuo te cheng-chi yu mei-shueh* (Engendering Dissident Desires: The Politics and Aesthetics of Erotic Fictions). Taipei: Yuan-tsuen.
- , 1998b. "K'u-yi te yu-wang mi-kung: p'ing Chi Ta-wei te *Kan-kuan shi-chieh*" (A Labyrinth of Queer Desire: Chi Ta-wei's *Queer Senses*). *Yu-wang keng-yi-shi* (Engendering Dissident Desires). 43-56.
- , 1998c. "Hung Ling te Chi-chieh yi-sho yu Yi-tuan hsi-hsieh-kuei lieh-chuan chung te ch'ing-yu yu hsing-pieh" (Sexuality and Gender in Hung Ling's *Beast* and *Chronicles of Heretic Vampires*). *Yu-wang keng-yi-shi* (Engendering Dissident Desires). 57-81.
- , 1998d. "Chiu-ling nien-tai Tai-wan nu-tong-hsing-lien hsiao-shuo—yi Chiu Miao-chin Chen Shueh Hung Ling wei li" (Taiwanese Lesbian Fiction in the 1990s: The Instances of Chiu Miao-chin, Chen Shueh, and Hung Ling). *Yu-wang keng-yi-shi* (Engendering Dissident Desires). 83-109.
- , 1998e. "Ai-yu hsing-pieh yu shu-hsieh: Chiu Miao-chin te nu-tong-hsing-lien hsiao-shuo" (Eroticism, Gender, and Writing: Chiu Miao-chin's Lesbian Fictions). *Yu-wang keng-yi-shi* (Engendering Dissident Desires). 111-52.
- , 2001a. *Ch'ing-se Shi-chi-mo* (Gender, Sexuality, and the *Fin de Siecle*: Studies in Erotic Fictions). Taipei: Chiuko.
- , 2001b. "Pien-yuan fa-sheng: chieh-yan yi-lai te Tai-wan tong-chi hsiao-shuo" (Voicing from the Margin: Taiwanese *Tong-chi* Fiction since 1987). *Ch'ing-se Shi-chi-mo* (Gender, Sexuality, and the *Fin de Siecle*). 79-112.
- , 2003. "At the Intersection of the Global and the Local: Representations of Male Homosexuality in Fictions by Pai Hsien-yung, Li Ang, Chu Tien-wen, and Chi Ta-wei." *Postcolonial Studies* 6.2 (July 2003). 191-206.
- , 2004a. "Kuei-mei shu-hsieh: Tai-wan nu-tong-hsing-lien hsiao-shuo chung te ch'uang-shang yu kuai-t'ai chan-yan" (Ghost-writing: Trauma and Queer Performativity in Taiwanese Lesbian Fiction). *Chung-wai Literary Monthly* 33.1 (June): 165-83.
- , 2004b. "Cultural Studies in Taiwan." *Cultural Studies in Asia*. Eds. Seong-Kon Kim and Alec Gordon. Seoul: Seoul National

- University Press. 113-42.
- Martin, Fran. 1998. "Yi-kuei mien-chu mo: tang-tai Tai-wan luen-shu chung tong-hsing-lien chu-t'i te yin-hsian luo-chi" (Closets, Masks and Membranes: The Homosexual Subject's *Yin/hsian* Logic in Contemporary Taiwan Discourse". Trans. Ta-wei Chi. *Chung-wai Literary Monthly* (May 1998): 130-49.
- , 2003a. "Introduction: Taiwan's Literature of Transgressive Sexuality." *Angelwings: Contemporary Queer Fiction from Taiwan*. Trans. Fran Martin. Honolulu: U of Hawaii P. 1-28.
- , 2003b. *Situating Sexualities: Queer Representation in Taiwanese Fiction, Film and Public Culture*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong UP.
- Ning, YinBin. 1997. "She-mo shi ku-er" (What Is 'ku-er'?) *Ku-er ch'i-shi-lu* (Queer Archipelago). 231-43.
- Pai, Hsien-yung. 1990 (1983). *Nieh-tze* (Crystal Boys). Taipei: Yun-chen.
- Rubin, Gayle. 1984. "Thinking Sex." *Pleasure and Danger*. Ed. Carol Vance. New York: Routledge. 267-319.
- Tsao, Li-chuan. 1999. "T'ung-nu chi wu" (Maiden Dance). *T'ung-nu chi wu* (Maiden Dance). Taipei: Ta-tien. 12-49.
- , "Kuan-yu t'a te pai-fa chi ch'i-t'a" (Regarding Her White Hair and Other Matters). *T'ung-nu chi wu* (Maiden Dance). 98-174.
- Tu, Hsiu-lan. 1996. *Ni-nu* (A Bad Daughter). Taipei: Ping-shi.
- Yeh, Te-hsuan. 1995. "Ying-huen pu-san te Chia-t'ing chu-yi ch'e-mei: tui chuan-she nieh-tze chu-wen te luen-shu fen-his" (The Haunting Specter of Familialism: A Discursive Analysis of Some Commentaries on *Crystal Boys*). *Chung-wai Literary Monthly* (December 1995): 66-88.



臺灣大學學術
期刊資料庫