Between the National and Cosmopolitan: Liu Na'ou's Modernist Writings Travelling across East Asia

Ying Xiong

In 1926,[1] a young Taiwanese man travelled to Shanghai to learn French in the Jesuit *Université L'Aurore* (上海震旦大学).[2] He had just graduated from the English department at Aoyama Gakuin University (青山学院) in Tokyo.[3] He was greatly influenced by the French writer Paul Morand (1888-1976) and the Japanese movement of Neo-Sensationalism (新感覚派). This young Taiwanese man was Liu Na'ou (刘吶鸥 1905-1940) who became one of the founders of Neo-Sensationalism in China.[4]

Liu was born in Taiwan in 1905 and moved to Tokyo in 1920 to pursue his high school and university education. After his mother refused his request to study in France following his graduation, Liu travelled to Shanghai to learn French. In Shanghai, he published a collection of short stories titled *City Scenery* (都市风景线) in 1930. The popularity of the book made him one of China's first modernist writers. In his short life, Liu travelled across four

[1] The exact year in which Liu went to Shanghai was uncertain. In Shu-mei Shih's study, *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China, 1917–1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), Liu went to the Jesuit Université L'Aurore in 1924.

[2] Xiaoyan Peng, 'Liu Na'ou 1927 nian riji' (Liu Na'ou's Diary of 1927), in *Reading*, no. 10 (1998), pp.134–142.

[3] I have used Pinyin and Hepburn Romanisation for Chinese and Japanese terms respectively. In both languages exceptions are made for words and place names that are familiarly used in English, such as Tokyo and Kuomintang.

[4] Literary modernism as a self-conscious movement in China only started in the middle 1920s, initiated by two groups: the symbolist poetry of Li Jinfa (李金发 1900–1976) and Dai Wangshu (戴望舒 1905–1950) that borrowed from French symbolism and the Neo-Sensationalism of Liu Na'ou, Mu Shiying (穆时英 1912–1940), and Shi Zhecun (施蛰存 1905–2003) that borrowed heavily from Japan. Due to the dominant communist ideology, research on Chinese modernist stories in contemporary China only started to gain attention in 1985, with the effort of Yan Jiayan (严家炎). Since then, many researchers including Leo Ou-fan Lee and Shu-mei Shih have made ongoing contributions to the study of Chinese modernist writing. In Yan's study, he recognises the Chinese Neo-Sensationalism led by Liu as the initial Chinese modernist novels and the first modernist literary school in modern China. In this paper, I follow this acknowledgement, regarding Liu as one of the founders of Chinese modernist writing.

geographical areas: Taiwan, Japan, Shanghai and Beijing. Likewise, he was familiar with five cultural domains: the Taiwanese, Japanese, French, English and Chinese. In the early period of his stay in Shanghai, Liu worked closely with Feng Xuefeng (冯雪峰 1903-1976), who later became a significant member of the Chinese Communist Party. Later in life he was involved in movie production and propaganda work for the Japanese-sponsored Wang Jingwei Regime and was mysteriously assassinated in 1940.[5] From his formal settlement in Shanghai in 1927 to 1940, Liu supervised the publication of many literary journals and the work of two publishing houses: Frontline Bookstore (第一线书店) and Water Foam Publishing House (书沫书店).[6] He was recognised as a beacon of modernist writing.[7]

Although many aspects of Liu's writing are worthy of investigation, in this paper I mainly focus on the role that language plays in his writing, which in turn, I suggest, reflects the ambiguity of Liu's national identity. Although Liu only lived for 36 years, his identity is always associated with political discourses in contemporary Taiwan and China. Liu and his modernist writings have long been used as tools for factions of various political stances to articulate their political opinions. He has been used by literary critics in China to illustrate the so-called anti-realistic school. In the opinion of certain Taiwanese critics Liu represented the essentialness of Taiwanese nationalism and the culmination of Taiwanese literature, in the form of cosmopolitanism. Thus, in this paper, I argue that China's modernism cannot be confined to either a study that overwhelmingly stresses the ideological stances adopted in China or to one simply limited to research into cosmopolitanism. Liu's writing was associated with Chinese nationalism, traceable to the cultural bond between Taiwan and China and reflected in Liu's persistence of writing in Chinese. Yet, due to the Japanese colonial influence on Liu's acquisition of standard Chinese, Liu's modernist writing somewhat ironically reflects the cultural penetration of colonialism, which also has a profound impact on the content of Liu's writing. A reading of Liu's writing from the perspective of "intertwined colonisation", a term I coin in this paper, will shed light on the debate over his national identity issue in contemporary research.

The first section of this paper focuses on the limitations of contemporary interpretations of Liu's writing. This leads to the second section in which I

[5] Although many researchers have been working on the detail of Liu's death, there is still no agreement as to why he was assassinated.

[6] The publication activities of both of these publishing houses was stopped by the Kuomintang for suspicion of Liu's endorsement of communism.

[7] These literary journals included *Trackless Train, La Nouvelle Littérature, Modern Cinemas, Six Arts, Women's Pictorial.*

propose a new approach that may offer a better reading of Liu's writing. My analysis of the contradictory features of Liu's modernist writings appears in the third section, in which I examine the relation between language and national identity. I explore how language is deployed in the construction of Liu's national identity and reciprocally, how language enhanced or impaired Liu's identification with China. This section is followed by a brief conclusion addressing the issue of the flexibility of Chinese modern literature from a perspective of the Sino-Japanese cultural interchange.

Contemporary Study and Its Limitation

The complexity and controversy surrounding Liu's identity makes evaluating his writings a thorny task. Various readings of Liu's modernist writing differed dramatically with each other, according to the ideology to which each reading adhered. Some ideas even seem to be irreconcilable.

Most researchers in China support the notion that Liu's modernist writing was neither threatened by colonialism nor did it unsettle Chinese nationalism. If there is one point that requires clarification, it is his writing's engagement with capitalism, which essentially symbolizes the contamination of imperialism and Liu's corruption. In Chinese scholarly opinion, Liu's Neo-Sensationalism was an "absent presence" in literary history: it was deliberately kept low key due to its ambiguous stance vis-à-vis the capitalism of Shanghai. In literary critique throughout mainland China, Liu's writing had been portrayed as both a betrayer of Chinese realist tradition and a capitulation to decadent Western capitalism. This did not change until 2001 when urban study underwent a new growth period in interest for China. However, the interpretation of Chinese scholarship toward Liu's literature remained obstinately national.

The study of Liu in Japan and Taiwan focused on separating Chinese modernist writing from Chinese nationalism and articulating the emergence of Taiwanese nationalism. Scholars argue that modernism deviated from the realistic tradition of modern China. This artistic divergence parallels the ambiguity of national identification. For example, as indicated by the title 'Liu Na'ou, A Filmmaker with no "National Flag"', Mamie Misawa stated that from his experience of colonisation, Liu was too vulnerable to have any national identification and was doomed to become a "cosmopolitanist".[8]

[8] Mamie Misawa, 'Nitchū sensō boppatsugo shanghai ni okeru Liu Na'ou no eiga katsudō' (Li Na'ou's Film Activities after the Breakout of the Second Sino-Japanese War), in *Liu Na'ou guoji yantaohui lunwenji* (*International Conference on the Works of Liu Na'Ou*), ed. Guoli zhongyang daxue Zhongguo wenxuexi (The Chinese Department of the National Central University) (Taipei: Guojia Taiwan wenxueguan, 2005), p. 396.

This opinion echoes western academia. For example, as Shu-mei Shih's study attempts to convey. "Shanghai modernists expressed an ambivalent, and at best oscillating, allegiance to nationalism and critique of the colonial presence."[9] She argued: "cosmopolitanism was nowhere as explicit as in the work of the self-styled modernists and decadentists who, refusing to be dictated to by the ideological left or right."[10] Similarly, Leo Ou-fan Lee[11] also saw Chinese cosmopolitanism as a facet of Chinese modernity.[12] Liu's identification in contemporary reviews outside China, I suggest, extended from 'national identification' to 'cosmopolitan identification'.

Any denial of nationalism in his work results in a limited understanding of the multiplicity of nationalism, which "is rarely the nationalism of the nation, but rather marks the site where different representations of the nation contest and negotiate with each other."[13] What we call nationalism is not a predetermined concept but an historical configuration always subject to reconciliation and renegotiation. The unease that marked the reconciliation between national and cosmopolitan discourses in the broad configuration of colonialism, semi-colonialism and modernity formed the basis of the dilemma confronting Chinese modernist writings.

A New Approach to Liu's Writing: An East Asian Triangle and 'Intertwined Colonisation'

The contradiction revealed among various interpretations offers an opportunity for a new approach that can fully take into account the contradictions, tensions, and complexity of Liu's writing. In this paper, I propose a concept of 'intertwined colonisation' based on the more specific and detailed historical context of East Asia to replace semi-colonial Shanghai and the Western, non-Western and Japan triangle.

As argued by many scholars, China was never totally occupied, nor was China occupied by a single power. This historical formulation directs contemporary scholarship to the concept of 'semi-colonialism', which describes the "multiple imperialist presences in China and their fragmentary colonial geography and control, as well as the resulting social and cultural

[9] Shih, *The Lure of the Modern*, p. 232.
[10] Shih, *The Lure of the Modern*, p. 237.
[11] In this article, any material quoted or referenced comes from the writings of Leo Ou-fan Lee in English. Therefore, I use "Leo Ou-fan Lee" instead of "Lee Oufan" which appears in books in Chinese.
[12] Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930–1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 313.
[13] Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995), pp. 7–8.

formation."[14] This was a term adopted by both Mao Zedong and contemporary China experts. However, as suggested by Tani E. Barlow, "historical context is not a matter of positively defined, elemental, or discrete units-nation states, stages or development, or civilizations, for instance-but rather a complex field of relationships or threads of matter that connect multiply in space-time."[15] By no means does each case of colonisation or colonial modernity conform to a single paradigm, nor should the modern European imperialism and colonialism be regarded as the only model.[16] Therefore, the legitimacy of 'semi-' that defines China's history of foreign colonisation by a European parameter of 'colonialism' should be challenged.[17]

The fragmentary configuration of 'semi-colonial China' can be further complicated by the Japanese total colonisation of Taiwan, considering the historical and cultural connection between Taiwan and China in the early twentieth century. Admittedly, a vision of an essentially intact Chinese terrain awaits a critical reflection, however, what also requires a challenge from a more sophisticated model of thinking is the view of 'semi-colonial China'. In this paper, I propose the idea of 'intertwined colonisation', which indicates the convergence of semi-colonial China and colonial Taiwan, to define the historical context from which Liu's modernist writings derived.

Moreover, the triangle of China, the West and Japan is no longer sufficient when analysing Liu's writing. The rediscovery of 'colonial modernity in East Asia' has gone through a theoretical process that can be roughly divided into three steps:[18] 1) disclosing the cultural imperialism of the West through what Said called 'Orientalism'[19] and revealing how a regenerated Western modernism was possible only when imperialism was included in the economic agenda; 2) the rise of non-Western modernism from the strength of mimicry or subaltern that was proposed by Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak; and 3) the collapse of the binary platitude of East and West by unearthing the 'Japanese connection'[20] or the "mediating role of

[14] Shu-mei Shih, *The Lure of the Modern*, p. 31.
[15] Tani E. Barlow, 'On "Colonial Modernity"', in *Formations of Colonial Modernity in East Asia*, ed. Tani E. Barlow (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), p. 6.
[16] Edward W. Said, 'Yeats and Decolonization', in *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature*, ed. Terry Eagleton (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), pp. 70–71.
[17] According to Edward W. Said, the modern European imperialism itself is a constitutively and radically different type of overseas domination from all the other earlier forms that had long existed before the scramble fro Africa in the late 1870s.
[18] The term 'colonial modernity in East Asia' is borrowed from *Formations of Colonial Modernity in East Asia*, ed. Tani E. Barlow, (Chapel Hill: Duke University Press, 1997).
[19] Said, 'Yeats and Decolonization'.
[20] Lee, *Shanghai Modern,* p. 316.

Japanese modernism"[21] in the cleavage. The ensuing question remains how to remap the modernist writings within East Asia.

As I will demonstrate in the following sections, Liu's modernist writing derived from sources located in more than these three places. The colonial experience in Taiwan, his Chinese cultural heritage, and other geographical resources in Taiwan and Japan all contributed to the moulding of his writing. Effective explanation of Liu's modernist writing can be attained only by widening the understanding of the social and historical scope from which it stemmed. Within the internal triangle of Japan, China and Taiwan, this paper aims to consider the cultural influence of the Japanese colonisation of Taiwan and simultaneously the cultural connection between China and Taiwan.

The Birth of Chinese Modernist Writing Within East Asia

East Asia provided the necessary intellectual resources for Liu's writing. The focus of this section is on the origins of Liu's modernist writing. To this end, I aim to enlist the mobility and flexibility of modernism in the East Asian triangle of China, Taiwan and Japan, tracing the trajectory of Liu's mobilization.

From Taiwan to China via Japan

Around 1928, Liu Na'ou shuttled back and forth between different territories. Unsure where to stay, Liu finally decided to settle in Shanghai. His determination to stay in Shanghai had two dimensions: the economic and cultural advancement of Shanghai; and, in sharp contrast, the cultural backwardness of Taiwan. Shanghai in the 1930s was among the top ten cities in the world, a centre that could lay claim to modern industry, burgeoning finance, and extremely busy ports.[22] As early as 1896, a year after the inception of film in France, western films appeared in Shanghai, bringing the earliest practice of the movie to China. From that time on, the development of Shanghai was inscribed with the growth of the Chinese film industry. In 1927, the year Liu arrived in Shanghai, the city witnessed the debut of the talking film, only one year after its debut in Hollywood. The maturity of cultural capitalism not only lured Liu from Tokyo but also laid the foundations for his later career.

However, in sharp contrast, at the time, Taiwan was under the colonial government of Japan. Native Taiwanese could not receive a proper education due to the imperial education system introduced by the Japanese colonial government. Colonial discrimination worked to block the advancement of the

[21] Shih, *The Lure of the Modern*, p. 16.
[22] Jin Li, *Haipai xiaoshuo yu xiandai dushi wenhua* (*Haipai Stories and the Culture of Modern City*), (Anhui: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 2000), p. 8.

native Taiwanese. For this reason, many opted to study in either Japan or China. Against this background, Liu went to Japan in search of educational opportunities. Most of the pages in the newspapers in Taiwan were printed in Japanese: only a quarter of the space allocated to Chinese.[23] Chinese journals at the time were preoccupied with classical poetry.[24]

It is not surprising that Liu chose to go to Shanghai rather than return to Taiwan. "Go back home! Go back to the warm south" and "The banian trees are the origin of our happiness, reflecting the strength of people living in the South" are two quotes cited by many Taiwanese researchers to show Liu's Taiwanese nationalism. As studied by Wang Juanru, the above quotations are the only two occasions Liu explicitly expresses his love for Taiwan. The former was written when his career in Shanghai was jeopardized, while the latter was composed when he went back to Taiwan for his grandmother's funeral.[25] In general, Liu stayed in Shanghai for pragmatic considerations. Liu's attachment to Taiwan in 1928 has been overwhelmingly stressed at the price of overlooking other elements that contributed to his identity.

From Beijing to Shanghai

In contemporary scholarship addressing Liu's modernist writings, there has been a trend to associate his work exclusively with semi-colonial Shanghai, stressing the overwhelming effect of Shanghai on his writings. However, Beijing, as a part of the Chinese power, also exerted a great influence on Liu's writing, not only providing him with a personal relationship upon which to forge his later career but also offering a direct Chinese experience on his writing. Liu's literary career encapsulated the social and political changes in China of the late 1920s. Rather than being isolated from the rest of China, Shanghai's cultural exuberance was formed in part as a result of political struggle as well as social change in China.[26]

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[23] Newspapers printed in Chinese were entirely prohibited in Taiwan after 1937.

[24] Jin Li, *Haipai xiaoshuo yu xiandai dushi wenhua*, p. 8.

[25] Juanru Wang, 'Finding Neverland: Liu Na'ou de duochong kuayue yu dianfu' (Finding Neverland: Liu Na'ou's Multiple Supervisions), in *Liu Na'ou guoji yantaohui lunwenji* (*International Conference on the Works of Liu Na'Ou*), ed. Guoli zhongyang daxue Zhongguo wenxuexi (The Chinese Department of the National Central University) (Taipei: Guojia Taiwan wenxueguan, 2005), pp. p. 467.

[26] See Meng Yue, *Shanghai and the Edges of Empires* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006) and Kuang Xin'nian, *1928: Wenxue geming* (*1928: Literary Revolution*) (Jinan: Shandong jiaoyu chubanshe, 1998). Both Meng and Kuang elaborate on the formation of Shanghai's prosperity and cosmopolitanism from a perspective of an inner China. Meng Yue demonstrated that rather than being build up by Western imperialism, Shanghai as a centre of China in the early twentieth century was constructed by inner-China social and economic mobility that could be traced back to the Qing and early Republican era,

Prior to the beginning of his literary career in Shanghai, Liu embarked on a pilgrimage to Beijing. This seldom-mentioned experience was carefully recorded in Liu's diary in 1927. On 28 September 1927, Liu set out by sea and arrived in Tianjin on 1 October. From Tianjin, Liu took a train to Beijing, where he spent the next two months. It was not until 3 December that Liu returned to Shanghai.

The days spent in Beijing offered Liu a chance to experience first-hand contact with Chinese culture and Chinese literature for the first time. The cultural atmosphere in Beijing made Liu realize that the reason he could not get a feeling of the real China from the literary texts he used to study was because he had not actually been to Beijing.[27] In other words, the trip to Beijing signalled the start of Liu's understanding of China.

The significance of his trip to Beijing is also evident in the fact that during this trip, Liu established the personal connections necessary for his later career in Shanghai. In other words, his experience of Beijing, to some extent, laid the foundations for his career. In Beijing, Liu encountered Feng Xuefeng, who later became a significant figure in the Chinese Communist Party. After settling in Shanghai, Feng published many books through Liu's Publishing House, at one time working there as a main editor. Many members of Liu's Publishing House, including Feng, Yao Pengzi (姚篷子 1891–1969), and Xu Xiacun (徐霞村 1907–1986) all fled Beijing for Shanghai when the political and cultural situation in Beijing deteriorated.

Post-1927, Beijing, the cultural centre of China, was under the political control of the Kuomintang. The year Liu settled in Shanghai saw a large number of writers leave Beijing and other places for Shanghai, in order to avoid political prosecution.[28] Lu Xun (鲁迅), Hu Shi (胡适), Guo Moruo (郭沫若), Mao Dun (茅盾), Jiang Guangci (蒋光慈), and many other significant figures in Chinese modern literature arrived in Shanghai in 1927. Concomitant with the decline of the Beijing era was the birth of a new modern Shanghai, which sustained Liu's image of China in the years that followed.[29] Liu's Publishing House rode the trend of intellectual mobility of the China of 1927.

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such as the influx of wealth from Jiang nan (江南). Kuang's book details how significant cultural and literary leaders of China gathered together in Shanghai in 1927 to form what he calls 'culture migration'. This formed the base of the cultural exuberance of Shanghai from 1928 onwards.

[27] 'Liu Na'ou's Diary' on 9 November 1927, in *Liu Na'ou quanji rijiji*, eds. Xiaoyan Peng and Yingzhe Huang, vol. 2, (Tainan: Tainanxian wenhuaju, 2000), p. 700.

[28] Xin'nian Kuang, *1928: Wenxue geming* (*Literary Revolution*), (Shandong: Shandong jiaoyu chubanshe, 1998), pp. 18–24.

[29] Xin'nian Kuang, *1928:Wenxue geming*, p. 19.

The advancement of the cultural market in Shanghai which was largely held as the enzyme for Liu's literary career, should not be separated from the cultural accumulation in Beijing.

Liu's trip to Beijing also directly contributed to his writing material. According to his diary, while living in Beijing, Liu frequently visited a prostitute named Lü Xia (绿霞). This girl may have inspired Liu's *Etiquette and Hygiene* (礼仪与卫生), which depicts a similar experience with a prostitute named Lü Di (绿弟), whose name is similar to the protagonist Lü Xia in Liu's diary. Liu's visit to Lü Xia in Beijing ended in failure due to a disagreement over prices. Liu's nasty mood in Beijing was reflected in the male protagonist Yao Qiming's evaluation of modern prostitution in *Etiquette and Hygiene*. Yao Qiming insisted: "there should be a thorough reformation, since they [prostitutes] are not professional in dealing business, demanding improvements on simplicity and efficiency. They seem to deliberately decorate their occupations with unnecessary rituals and trivialities, lacking efficiency."[30]

In the end, Liu chose to live and work in the cosmopolitan city of Shanghai, which was home to migrants from all over the world. In fact, by 1927, Shanghai had attracted many Taiwanese besides Liu. For example, Zhang Wojun (张我军 1902–1955), the father of Taiwanese modern literature, arrived in Shanghai as early as 1923. Huang Chaoqin (黄朝琴 1897–1972), who later worked in foreign diplomacy for the Republic of China, arrived in Shanghai around the same time as Liu, and eventually became one of his neighbours.

As such, the birth of Liu's writing should be located in the historical background of East Asia in the 1920s and 1930s, fully taking into account its cultural mobility. Liu's writing was initially propelled by two cultural and geographical torrents, one flowing from Taiwan to China via Japan, the other from Beijing to Shanghai.

The Modernist Writing of "Intertwined Colonisation"

The modernisation of language played a significant role in the establishment of nationalism. As pointed out in contemporary studies; "In spite of their reading knowledge of foreign literatures, modern Chinese writers did not use any foreign languages to write their work and continued to use the Chinese language as their only language."[31] Reading foreign literature and practicing

[30] Na'ou Liu, 'Liyi yu weisheng' (Etiquette and Hygiene), in *Liu Na'ou xiaoshuo quanbian*, ed. Zhifang Jia (*The Complete Collection of Liu Na'ou's Stories*), (Shanghai: Shanghai xuelin chubanshe, 1997), p. 51.
[31] Leo Ou-fan Lee: *Shanghai Modern*, p. 312.

writing in foreign languages only acted as a means through which the writers could acquire new knowledge. It was thus an instrument that served nationalism. Leo Ou-fan Lee triumphantly declared that unlike some African writers who were forced to write in the language of the colonizer, Chinese writers fortunately never confronted such a threat.[32] Therefore, he drew the conclusion that Chinese modernist writers' Chinese identity was never in question. The 'Chinese modernist writers' Leo Ou-fan Lee referred to included Liu Na'ou, who was one of the core writers of 'modern Shanghai.' Notwithstanding this, inside China, or even Shanghai, intellectuals' circumstances differed in countless ways. For Liu, the strategy of language not only reflected his connection with Chinese culture and literary history but also revealed the colonial reality of Japan and Taiwan.

Heritage of May Fourth Spirit[33]

All of Liu's works were written in Chinese. There is no denying that Liu's choice to write in Chinese was related to the objective requirement for him to publish novels in China. But there were other reasons hidden deep in his cultural background. Although Liu's Japanese was more fluent than his Chinese, and most of his diary was written in Japanese, he did not publish his works in Japanese. This was a common strategy adopted by many Taiwanese writers during the period of Japanese colonisation. Liu insisted on writing his stories in his 'awkward Chinese.'

According to Liu's diary, by 1927 he had received a Japanese education for more than ten years, but this did not essentially hinder his Chinese writing. Without the special attention he paid to Chinese writing, apart from the normal education in Japanese, he could not have published his first Chinese collection shortly after he finished his overseas study in Japan.[34] Liu also actively encouraged people around him to learn Chinese. For example, he subscribed to *Short Story Monthly* (小说月报) for a whole year so that he could help 'A'Jin'

[32] Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern*, p. 312.

[33] The May Fourth movement, which started on May 4, 1919 as a student demonstration against the Chinese government's weak response to the Treaty of Versailles, also refers to the New Culture Movement spanning from the 1910s almost to the 1930s. One significant cultural dimension of the May Fourth movement is the literary revolution (文学革命) that advocated the reformation of the Chinese written language.

[34] Zhengfang Lin, 'Wenming kaihua: yige rizhi shiqi taiji wenhuaren de anli' (The Enlightenment: a Case of a Taiwanese Intellectual under Japanese Colonization), in *Liu Na'ou guoji yantaohui lunwenji* (*International Conference on the Works of Liu Na'Ou*), ed. Guoli zhongyang daxue Zhongguo wenxuexi (The Chinese Department of the National Central University) (Taipei: Guojia Taiwan wenxueguan, 2005), p. 89.

(阿津), Liu's peer from Taiwan, to study modern Chinese.[35] As for domestic communication, according to Liu's children, Liu taught them the Shanghai dialect and Taiwanese instead of Japanese when Liu's wife and children moved to Shanghai in 1934.[36]

Given the relations between Taiwan and Japan, I suggest that Liu's modernist writing can be regarded as an escape from Japan's assimilative colonial policy and Japanese literature, or a protest of the colonized against the colonizer. By creating Chinese modernism in China's mainland via Japanese modernist writings, Liu conquered the double challenge of Japan's colonial language policy and Taiwan's old literature, finally converging into the tradition of China's modern literature. Liu's insistence on writing in Chinese and his persistent interest in participating in the modern Chinese literary arena formed the basis of his national identification with China. This is the facet that has been exclusively stressed in contemporary literature reviews in Mainland China.

The Fragility of Modernist Writing

Ironically, Liu's writing in Chinese also reveals the ambiguity of his identity. The novelty of Liu's modernism was largely achieved by borrowing Japanese concepts in his grammar and vocabulary development. This fully demonstrated Japan's colonial influence on Taiwan and also in turn on Chinese modernist writing. The formation of Chinese modernist writings was forged by the colonial relationship between Japan and Taiwan, leaving remarkable colonial scars in both languages.

In the short stories translated by Liu, specific Japanese characters can be found everywhere. This can be understood given that the Japanese and Chinese use a similar character system; some were even grammatically modified, or exotically embellished with a 'foreign tone.' For example, when studying Liu's translation of Japanese Neo-Sensationalists' writing, it is easy to find that in the original Japanese version, the 'foreign tone' was not necessarily evident from beginning to end, however, once translated by Liu, the proportion dramatically increased.[37] In other words, Liu introduced an exotic flavour that could not be found in the original Japanese versions.

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[35] 'Liu Na'ou's Diary' on 30 March 1927, in *Liu Na'ou quanji rijiji*, vol. 1, p. 218.

[36] Cutivet Sakina, 'Linguistics Representations in Liu Na'ou's 1927 Diary', in *Liu Na'ou guoji yantaohui lunwenji* (*International Conference on the Works of Liu Na'Ou*), ed. Guoli zhongyang daxue Zhongguo wenxuexi (The Chinese Department of the National Central University) (Taipei: Guojia Taiwan wenxueguan, 2005), pp. 114–15.

[37] Zhisong Wang, 'Liu Na'ou de xinganjue xiaoshuo: fanyi yu chuangzuo' (Liu Na'ou's Neo-Sensationist Novel: Translation and Composition), *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue yanjiu congkan* (*Modern Chinese Literature Researches Series*), no. 4, (2002), p. 59.

For example, Chinese term 葬礼 (zang li) which means funeral was expressed by Liu in the Japanese term 葬式 (sōshiki). The Chinese term 一分钟 (yi fen zhong), meaning 'one minute', was expressed as the Japanese term 一分间 (ippunkan). As such, 葬式 and 一分间, both Japanese characters, were preserved by Liu Na'ou without differentiation. In Liu Na'ou's *Erotological Culture*, there is a translation that literally reads 'to take out the words about food' (把关于食物的话拿出来). This is actually another example of translating Japanese in an 'exotic' way. The corresponding Japanese compound word for 拿出来 (to take out) is 持ち出す (mochidasu) which has many meanings, including "to take out" and 'to start talking'.[38] In this context, it should be translated into 'to start talking' rather than 'to take out.'

This extraordinarily exotic usage was not only confined to translations. Conversely, it was scattered throughout his own fiction. Take the following: "The Russian who is selling newspapers brings out a page of foreign language in front of him. The front page is a foreign emperor's coronation ceremony. However, what is the relation between the coronation ceremony of a foreign emperor and the life of people in this country? Jing Qin wonders whether it deserves such a huge report."[39] (卖报的俄人在他的脸前提出一页的外国文来了。头号活字的标题报的是外国的皇帝即位祝贺式的盛况，但是外国的皇帝即位跟这国的这些人们有什么关系呢，镜秋想，那用得到这么大的报告吗) In this short quotation, in four places the Chinese words have been replaced with Japanese words: 提出 (teishutsu, bring out), 外国文 (gaikokubun, foreign language), 祝贺式 (shukugashiki, ceremony) and 报告 (hōkoku, report). Although similar in appearance to the Chinese characters and imbued with almost the same meaning, these Japanese words provoke a feeling of alienation in the Chinese context. Examples like this can be easily found in Liu's works.

Even the titles of articles were imbued with Liu's particular tone of writing. In the August 25, 1935 issue of *Women's Pictorial*, with Liu as editor-in-chief, an article appeared, titled 'Problems Confronted by Chinese Cinema' (中国电影当面的问题). 当面的问题 (Problems Confronted) is a transplantation of a typical Japanese expression 当面の問題 (tōmen no mondai). Analysis suggests that, the Chinese modernist writing of Liu was mostly realized by substituting Chinese with Japanese. Such borrowing of Japanese expression rendered Liu's texts as exotic as foreign writings.

The linguistic borrowing and transplantation reflected in Liu's works

[38] Zhisong Wang, 'Liu Na'ou de xinganjue xiaoshuo: fanyi yu chuangzuo', p. 61.
[39] Na'ou Liu, 'Liu' (Flow), in *Liu Na'ou xiaoshuo quanbian*, p. 26.

was not his voluntary choice but resulted from his particular cultural identity of being born and growing to adulthood in colonial Taiwan. Growing up in colonial Taiwan and the experience of studying in Japan affected Liu's acquisition of Mandarin. Liu's close friend Shi Zhecun recalled that Liu's Chinese was so awkwardly bad it was as if he were writing Japanese.[40]

This experience of writing in the Chinese language also affects the plots of Liu's writing, which can be read as a reflection of his bewilderment over his own national identity. Liu kept wandering between different cultural and geographical boundaries. This disjunction is reflected in the hero and heroines in his fiction who are often single and have no connection with their families. They are strangers: they have no knowledge of each other's past and future; they simply encounter each other at a specific time. What they care about is 'Now'. Day and night they haunt the public consumption space in the city, possibly "walking on an insensible road", "from the race club to teahouse", or "from tea house to the busy street", "five minutes later", they may appear "in one corner of the dim ball hall".[41]

The segments quoted above from Liu's short stories have been widely read by previous scholars as the reflection of the capitalistic decadence of Shanghai, or the cosmopolitan feature of his writing. However, considering Liu's personal experience and the linguistic ambiguity demonstrated in his works, these segments also capture the essence of Liu's life as a colonial writer, reflecting the intertwined colonial situation he was facing. In the case of Liu, who travelled constantly between different cultural terrains, the disjointed images and a writing experience coloured by dichotomous national boundaries further deepened Liu's personal alienation and sense of homelessness. Once embodied in writing, this feeling of exile constitutes a view of some fragile semiotics morphing together. This apparent lack of coherency and consistency, which is regarded as one of the hallmarks of modernist writing, was not merely a novice's literary experiment related to the cultural importation from Japanese Neo-sensationalism but the result of the cultural and psychological influence of colonialism within Asia.

As Liu recorded in his diary in July and August 1927, he was stricken by successive bouts of indulgence accompanied by strain. Liu was plagued by neurasthenia and insomnia to such an extent that he mentioned committing suicide in his diary. Half of the space in Liu's diary in 1927 was consumed by his ongoing complaints about his neurological disorders. This deteriorated

[40] Zhecun Shi, 'Zhendan er'nian', (Two Years at Aurora University), in *Shinwenxue shiliao,* (*Historical Materials of New Literature*), no. 25, (1984), p. 51.
[41] Na'ou Liu, 'Liangge shijianbuganzhengzhe' (Two People Impervious to Time), in *Liu Na'ou xiaoshuo quanbian*, p. 43.

further when he was shocked by the news of Japanese famous writer Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's suicide. Yu Dafu (郁达夫), a writer of the Creation Society that Liu so highly endorsed, stated, his life "was a pursuit of sensory pleasure when one was too depressed to feel the happiness of life."[42] This mode of living, which was spiritually decadent and preoccupied with seeking pleasure, was described by Yu as aestheticism of fin-de-siècle (世纪末思潮) in China, a type of Chinese modernism similar to its European counterpart. Liu, along with other writers of the Creation Society, shared the same processes of sinking into self-doubt and anguish, of modernity and a trend towards seeking pleasure while their hearts were steeped in gloom.[43] The difference is that Liu had to contend with a feeling of rootlessness engendered by his colonial experience, and this was beyond the understanding of Chinese native intellectuals living in Shanghai.

The male protagonists in Liu's stories were characterized by the same amount of melancholy and frailty as Liu. This in turn reveals Liu's own psychological state. They were ignored by 'modern' girls because they still observed the outdated morality of the patriarchy.[44] Some, like the protagonist Bu Qing in *Games* (游戏), were too preposterous, too sentimental and too romantic. [45] Others, like Jing Qiu in *Flow*, wallowed in immeasurable melancholy, and spoke as though they were composing a poem. [46] The protagonists were pursuing not only modern girls but also a time beyond their capability. Rather than looking at Liu's stories as reflections of a kind of total moral decadence found in capitalist societies, I suggest regarding these protagonists, who seem unable to catch up with the present, as incarnations of Liu's anxiety concerning the sense of time, a failure to connect the past with the future. In a word, the figures under Liu's pen, such as the modern girls who are out of reach and the male protagonists who suffer from incomprehensible sentimentality, reflect Liu's uneasy soul and unrestrained anxiety. Similar to Japanese Neo-Sensationalism, which emerged after the Great Kantō Earthquake in 1923, Chinese modernist writings were also generated in a loose atmosphere. The difference was that the decadent atmosphere of Chinese

[42] Dafu Yu, 'Zenyang jiaozuo shijimo wenxue sichao' (On the aestheticism of fin-de-siècle), in *Yu Dafu wenji*, vol. 6 (*The Collected Works of Yu Dafu*), (Guangzhou: Huacheng chubanshe, 1983), p. 288.
[43] Xingcun Qian, 'Yu Dafu daibiaozuo houxu' (The Afterword for Yu Dafu's Works) in *Yu Dafu yanjiu ziliao (xia)* (*The Recource for Research on Yu Dafu, vol.2*), eds. Zili Wang, Zishan Chen (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1982), pp. 337–59.
[44] Shu-mei Shih, *The Lure of the Modern*, p. 219.
[45] Na'ou Liu, 'Youxi' (Games), in *Liu Na'ou xiaoshuo quanbian*, p. 3.
[46] Na'ou Liu, 'Liu', p. 20.

modernistic writing was in part resulted from Japan's colonisation of Taiwan.

In the above discussion, I have dealt with several issues that are closely related to the linguistic feature of Liu's works. These included an analysis of Liu's borrowing from Japanese words, the historical and social reason resulting in his language use, and the relation between Liu's linguistic ideology and the specific embodiment of his literary impulse. The writing style of image juxtaposition not only indicated Liu's innovative form but also his psychological status. The vagueness and rupture of Liu's use of language would probably have influenced his recognition of national identity.

Identities are negotiable, and subject to mutations and changes. For the Taiwanese, a peripheral island that was transferred from the Qing Empire to Japanese empire after 1905, the sentiment of nationality accompanied the changing political landscape of Asia. As a component of national identity, language can both affirm and deny certain national identification, not necessarily generating an imagined community.

Liu Na'ou's short stories were created mainly in the two years from 1928 to 1929, when he first sojourned in Shanghai. Except for his sporadic writings between 1932 and 1934, no new literary works appeared after 1934; and almost no movie reviews or journal publications after 1935. It may have been that with the further strengthening of the imperialist aggression against China and the deepening of Liu's awareness of his own situation, his persistence in China, or rather in modernism, disappeared along with his initial arguable Chinese national sentiment. Therefore, neither the Chinese nationalism nor the cosmopolitanism, two opposite stances in the contemporary debate over how to define Liu's writing and his identity, offers sufficient summary of his writing. Instead, a new framework of "intertwined colonisation" and the inner triangle of China, Japan and Taiwan, reveals the complicity and tensions between these two ends.

Concluding Remarks: The Flexibility of Modern Chinese Literature

The variations in Liu's Chinese language and the popularity of his writing in modern China lead to a reflection on how to demarcate Chinese modernist writing and how to imagine modern Chinese literature. These are the issues I aim to reflect on in the concluding section.

Although Shi Zhecun, the writer who worked in the same era as Liu, indicated that Liu wrote in Chinese as if he was writing in other foreign languages, was the novelty the only reason the reading market accepted his works? The situation might be even more complex if the development of new literature and language reformation in China is taken into account. Liu's writing was tolerated and even embraced in China around 1928 perhaps also because of the immaturity of the Chinese national language and Chinese

modern literature which started to develop only after the late 1920s.

Many scholars, such as Geller, Hobsbawm and Anderson have highlighted the role that language plays in nation building. For example, Benedict Anderson highlighted the role the "revolutionary vernacularising thrust of capitalism" played in constructing "an imagined political community" that is inherently limited.[47] 'Being Chinese' requires a device for producing "a palpable sentiment of nationality" which further depends on the creation of "a mother tongue", a native language, or a national language.[48] This argument is largely valid whether in the case of the Japan that Naoki studies or in the case of Europe which is Anderson's focus. The rule also can be applied to the process of Chinese modernity and the modernization of Chinese literature.

Rather than a given condition bringing out nation building, the dynamic relationship between language and nation building is far from resolved, since "not only communities but also languages must be imagined before their unity can be socially accomplished."[49] Nation building in China entailed a process of reforming both modern Chinese language and modern Chinese literature.

The naissance and reformation of China's modern language can be traced back to 1887, when Huang Zunxian (黄遵宪 1804–1905) highlighted the importance of the consistency between oral words and written words in his *Record of Japan* (日本国志). After that, the will among Chinese intellectuals to reform modern Chinese was unwaveringly sustained until the pinnacle of Chinese nationalism of the May Fourth Movement finally arrived. Although the subject of national language entered the curriculum of elementary schools in 1913, the set up of a similar subject in middle schools was only realized as late as 1923. The textbooks for the education of national language used in middle schools in 1925 were occupied by essays and short stories such as *Hometown* (故乡) written by Lu Xun, whose works cannot be said to be written in an exemplary modern Chinese.[50] The modernization of Chinese went through a long period of several decades, even extended into the post-war periods under the supervision of Mao Zedong. It is obvious that amid the

[47] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso; Revised edition, 1991), pp. 6, 37.
[48] Naoki Sakai, 'Nationality and the Politics of the "Mother Tongue"', in *Deconstructing Nationality*, eds. Naoki Sakai, Brett de Bary and Toshio Iyotani (New York: East Asia Program, Cornell University, 2005), p. 18.
[49] Susan Gal, 'Multiplicity and Contention among languages ideologies', in *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory*, eds. Bambi B. Schieffelin, Kathryn A. Woolard, and Paul V. Kroskrity (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 325.
[50] Feng Wang, 'Wenxue geming yu guoyu yundong zhi guanxi' (The Reformation of Literature and the Movement of National Language), in *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue yanjiu congkan* (Modern Chinese Literature Studies), no. 3 (2001), pp. 75–96.

promotion of vernacular, many official documents and newspapers were still written in classic Chinese.[51] The 1920s was just located in the initial stage of this long process. In other words, the 1920s still saw a certain degree of flexibility and multiplicity in written Chinese. It is in this broadly experimental environment that Liu's novel, albeit impure, found its place.

The paradox of modern Chinese is that on the one hand, "modern Standard Chinese, Putonghua Mandarin and Guoyu Mandarin have been set in opposition to local language as the signifier of the historical past", while on the other hand, the history of the standardization of the Chinese national language is unable to eliminate the local elements which were prevalent in literature and the media.[52] The paradox can be further complicated if 'locals' are historicized in a colonial context. Chinese modern literature, which entailed various factors, cannot be reduced to a national facet of homogeneity; rather, it contains various heterogeneous voices serving as the signifier of various historical pasts, among which is the modernist literature rendered by Japanese colonisation. Liu's writing involves variations that could not be simply reduced to the Chinese written language, and these deviations only can be understood in the process of historicizing Chinese modernist writings in "an intertwined colonial situation".

These variations in modern Chinese and the incommensurability of modern Chinese and the sentiment of Chinese nationalism can lead to a possible reflection, by using an Asian example, on the "discontinuity-in-connectedness" raised by Anderson. According to Anderson, the concrete formation of nation-states is "by no means isomorphic with the determinate reach of particular print-languages". The discrepancy between print-language, the national consciousness, and nation-states results in the so-called "discontinuity-in-connectedness", which is evident in nation-states of Spanish America, the "Anglo-Saxon family", and many ex-colonial states such as Africa.[53] Yet, this "discontinuity-in-connectedness", I suggest, also can be found in modern China that was confronted with 'intertwined colonisation.'

Liu's Chinese writing, which was mixed with Japanese in various levels, transcended the function of communication and reached a symbolic realm, signifying a cultural and historical specificity. The impurity of Chinese modernist writing should not be reviewed merely in the rigidly demarcated borders of China; rather it ought to be understood in the cultural interchanges between China and Japan. It reveals not only the political and social influence

[51] Feng Wang, 'Wenxue geming yu guoyu yundong zhi guanxi', p. 94.
[52] Edward M. Gunn, *Rendering the Regional: Local Language in Contemporary Chinese Media* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), p. 4.
[53] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 46.

of the colonial encounter between Japan and Taiwan but also the influence of a rising Japan within Asia.

In her *Translingual Practice*, Lydia H. Liu offers many good examples of Japanese loanwords in modern Chinese to demonstrate how Chinese intellectuals managed to speed up Chinese modernization by introducing modern European concepts via Japan.[54] Similarly, although the initial interest in phonetic writing of Lu Kanchang, the harbinger mentioned above, was aroused by the Romanizing activities of the missionaries, his later work was inspired by the Japanese linguistic system.[55] Nevertheless, centuries before Chinese nationalists reformed the Chinese language by the emulation of Japan due to their admiration of Japanese achievements, it was Japan that imported Chinese cultural and characters from China. As recorded in *Record of Ancient Matters* (古事記) and *Chronicles of Japan* (日本書記), the origin of Japanese writing derived from Chinese and Chinese books such as the *Confucian Analects* (论语) and *Thousand-Character Classic* (千字文).[56] Yet, when it came to the Edo period, the school of national learning (国学者) denounced the influence of Confucianism and tried to revive Japanese by rejecting the use of Chinese words and Chinese characters in Japanese.[57] The attitude toward Chinese characters and the corresponding confidence in Japanese language were further developed to an extreme degree, encapsulated by the idea of making Japanese the Asian common language in 1941, with the establishment of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.[58]

In modern Asia, the enthusiasm among Chinese nationalists for absorbing and borrowing Japanese words was diametrically opposite to the Japanese elaboration of getting rid of the influence of Chinese. Liu's modernist writing, a direct result of an output of Japanese into China after 1905, can be read as the reification of the changed power structure of Asia, specifically, the diminishment of Chinese cultural power and, conversely, the rise of the Japanese empire. Therefore, inspired by Arif Dirlik's articulation of the relations of power when studying the discourse of Orientalism,[59] the Chinese

[54] Lydia H. Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity: China, 1900–1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 18, Appendix B.

[55] John de Francis, *Nationalism and Language Reform in China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), p. 52.

[56] Christopher Seeley, *A History of Writing in Japan* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1991), p. 4

[57] Yaeko Sato Habein, *The History of the Japanese Written Language* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1984), p. 83

[58] Nobukuni Koyasu, *Dongya lun: Riben xiandai sixiang pipan* (*On East Asia: Critiques of Japanese Modern Thoughts*), (Changchun: Jilin renmin chubanshe, 2004), pp. 204–16.

[59] Arif Dirlik states that being implicated in power relations, Orientalism is a product of the

modernist writings of Liu were a product of the unfolding relationship between countries of Asia, signalling a process of power shifting.[60] It is an issue of political and cultural interactions of East Asia instead of a problem only pertinent to Chinese literature.

circulation of Euro-American and Asian intellectuals in the contact zone, a concept he borrowed from Mary Louise Pratt. Arif Dirlik, 'Chinese History and the Question of Orientalism', *History and Theory*, vol. 35, no. 4 (1995), pp. 96–120.

[60] Dirlik, 'Chinese History', p. 97.