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移民、愛國、自殺：白先勇和白景瑞作品中的感時憂國與美國夢想

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中文摘要

從白色恐怖到中共的威脅，戒嚴時期的台灣從許多角度來看是個充滿壓抑的年代。而且在當時台灣經濟起飛和美國通俗文化流入的背景之下，眾多人開始往外看，留學或移民美國便變成大家最嚮往的事。為了順應讀者對美國的好奇心，六〇年代便開始出現所謂「留學生文學」。在往後的二十餘年劉紹銘（二殘）、劉大任、郭松棻、張系國、三毛等人的海外經驗和他們作品中所表現的海外想像，變成許多讀者非常關心和嚮往的一個文學地標。在這群作家當中較具影響力與深度的白先勇，描繪中國人在海外經歷過的甜酸苦辣的一系列短篇小說。其中〈謫仙記〉、〈芝加哥之死〉和後來被稱為《紐約客》系列的其它作品在文學領域已經被公認為當代華文文學的經典，除此以外這些作品在塑造台灣讀者對美國的想像上起了相當大的影響。

到了七〇年代留學生文學帶動「留學生電影」的新潮流，然而在白景瑞等導演的作品中所表現的美國與白先勇作品相當不同。本篇試圖透過白先勇的兩篇短篇小說與白景瑞一九七〇年所拍攝的《家在台北》的閱讀與分析來

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探討六〇與七〇年代的台灣對美國的文化想像。從二位創作者的感時憂國（夏志清語）到作品中的不同美國（惡）夢，本篇將把作品中對離散、愛國主義、歷史創傷與自殺情節的不同呈現，當作理解台灣文化對美國想像的一個轉折點。

關鍵詞：台灣文學、台灣電影、民族主義、離散、創傷、解域化、再域化

Immigration, Nationalism, and Suicide: Pai Hsien-yung and Pai Ching-jui's Chinese Obsessions and American Dreams

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Abstract

From the "White Terror" to the threat of "Red China," the Martial Law period in Taiwan can be seen as an age marred by a multitude of social and political anxieties. As Taiwan grew into its role as one of the four Asian Tigers and American culture flooded the island, many people began to look to the outside and foreign study or immigration to America became the aim for a new generation of Chinese living in Taiwan. In order to quench Taiwan readers' thirst for knowledge about the country that had taken "Free China" under its wings during the Cold War period, the 1960s saw the rise of "overseas student literature" (liuxuesheng wenxue). For the next two decades the works of writers like Joseph Lau (publishing under the penname Er Can), Liu Daren, Guo Songfen, S.K. Chang, San Mao and other writers with overseas experience became a key literary site for countless readers looking to understand or even vicariously experience the West. Among this group of works

portraying Chinese living overseas, some of the most reflective, powerful, and influential came from the pen of Kenneth Pai Hsien-yung, whose short stories about the challenges and dreams of this generation appeared in the collection The New Yorker (Niuyue ke). These stories, including such works as "Li T'ung: A Chinese Girl in New York" ("Zhe xian ji") and "Death in Chicago" (Zhijiage zhi si") have become regarded as classics of modern Chinese fiction for their stylistic refinement and deep reflection on the human condition. At the same time, these works have played a crucial role in how America has been constructed and imagined by Taiwanese (and later mainland Chinese) readers.

By the 1970s "overseas student literature" gave rise to a new phenomena – "overseas student films" (liuxuesheng dianying). However, in the films of Pai Ching-jui – one of the innovators of this new cinematic genre – the image of America portrayed is quite different. This article attempts to use readings and analysis of Pai Hsien-yung's American fiction and Pai Ching-jui's 1970 film Home Sweet Home (Jia zai Taibei) to explore popular representation of America in Taiwan cultural production during the 1960s and 1970s. From C.T. Hsia's "Obsession with China" to what might be termed an "Obsession with America," or perhaps a longing for an "American dream," this article will explore the themes of Diaspora, nationalism, historical trauma, as well as the "suicide complex" the appears in several of the works as a window for better understanding this crucial turning point in Taiwan's cultural imagination of America and the crisis consciousness lurking within.

Key words: Taiwan literature, Taiwan cinema, nationalism, Diaspora, trauma, deterritorialization, reterritorialization, overseas student

Immigration, Nationalism, and Suicide:

Pai Hsien-yung and Pai Ching-jui's Chinese Obsessions and American Dreams

I.

In the 1975 film *Fantasies Behind the Pearly Curtain* (*Yi lian youmeng* 一簾幽夢), director Pai Ching-jui (白景瑞) presented a virtual tour-de-force of international fantasies on screen for Taiwan viewers.[1] The convoluted plot revolved around two sisters and a pair of tortured love triangles based on the conflict of duty verses love, a trope well explored in earlier fiction and films of the popular romance writer Qiong Yao (瓊瑤), which by this time audiences were already growing weary. Much of the action of the film takes place not in Taipei, but in the romantic, snow-covered countryside of Italy where the older male protagonist Fei Yunfan (費雲帆) (Xie Xian 謝賢) whisks away his young love Ziling (紫菱) (Zhen Zhen 甄珍). While there he also takes her on a whirlwind trip around the globe, visiting Greece, the United Kingdom, Egypt, and America where they experience the wonders of the world. The scenes in Italy were shot in South Korea (a much less-expensive surrogate location) and the fantastic trip around the world was composed of simply a short montage of postcard images, juxtaposed against a close-up Ziling's face revealing a mix of wonderment, surprise and delight,

[1] The author would like to extend his sincere thanks to Professors Chen Fang-ming, Ko Ching-ming, Lee Yu-lin, and the two anonymous reviewers for their insight and recommendations.

but the transnational fantasies they revealed and that Taiwan audiences consumed was quite real.

In the end, however, it was not these transnational fantasies that consumed the female protagonist of *Fantasies Behind the Pearly Curtain* – instead she longs for home. Ziling is most happy not when Yunfan takes her on an endless journey to see the kernels of western civilization, but when he buys her a ticket back to Taipei. After an averted crisis, Yunfan and Ziling settle back home in Taipei. The film, on the one hand, projects a persuasive occidental fantasy to its viewers, while, at the same time, balancing the exoticism of the outside world with overt pro-China nationalistic messages. Such a strategy can be seen as endemic of the web of complexities affecting Taiwan foreign relations and its changing place in the world. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Taiwan was caught in complex and constantly evolving relationship with the outside world, and especially America. With policies like the 1954 Defense Treaty between the U.S. and Taiwan and the pervasive presence of popular American culture, some writers and cultural critics went as far as commenting that after fifty years of Japanese colonization, during the second half of the twentieth century, Taiwan essentially became the "cultural colony" of America.[2] The partnership between the U.S. and Taiwan began to transform as early as 1969 when the Guam Doctrine announced a shift in America's Asian strategy, reducing patrols on the Taiwan Straits. This change seemed to foreshadow Kissinger's 1971 secret visit to the mainland and expulsion of R.O.C. representatives in the UN just one month later, signaling the recognition of the PRC. From there the 1972 historic trip by Nixon to China and issuing of the Shanghai Communiqué proved to be traumatic precursors to the December 15, 1978 announcement by Jimmy Carter that the U.S. would no longer recognize the "Republic of China" in order to establish official diplomatic relations with the mainland. Although the writing was already on the wall, the announcement still

[2] See for instance, Wu Nien-jen's comments in *Speaking in Images,* pg. 313.

came as a shock to many, enshrouding Taiwan in a cloud of uncertainty, and setting off social protests throughout the island. One of the iconic images of the period was of the popular essayist and writer Zhang Xiaofeng (張曉風) wearing a long black traditional Chinese gown with the words "American spirit died. Let's weeping for her!" [*sic.*] scrawled across the front and the corresponding Chinese, (美國精神已死，讓我們為她哭泣！) written on the back.

Zhang's public protest performance was but one of numerous cultural interventions that attempted to interpret the increasingly complex state of Taiwan-U.S. relations. For many Taiwan audiences, the real United States had much less resonance and power than the array of cultural representations of "America" that would arise in the post-war era. While many Taiwanese had direct access to American culture through popular culture, imported products, and the U.S. military presence on the island, the growing body of Chinese-language portrayals of America in art, film, literature, comics, and other genres would play a key role in the construction of an alternate cultural imagination of the myriad hopes and anxieties, many of which seem to speak more to Taiwan's own predicament in the modern world, through the vessel of America. This paper will further explore the cultural imagination of America during this period, from mainstream government-endorsed works, such as the transnational films of Pai Ching-jui to the "American" fiction of Kenneth Pai Hsien-yung (白先勇), who would play a key role in re-imagining the "promised land" for several generations of Chinese readers. Although Pai Ching-jui and Pai Hsien-yung actually collaborated on the 1984 feature film *The Last Night of Madam China* (*Jindaban de zuihou yiye* 金大班的最後一夜), this paper will not explore that artistic partnership, instead delving into their respective attempts to imagine America in a series of earlier works. Their one-time collaboration aside, this pairing of Pai Hsien-yung with Pai Ching-jui remains a less than obvious choice for a comparative study, not only does each figure work primarily in different mediums (literature and film, respectively), each

limited by a unique set of aesthetic and formal devices and forms, but the overall tone and reception of the two artists is also quite different. While Pai Hsien-yung's major works seem to have stood the test of time, widely adopted for textbooks, courses and regarded by critics as modern Chinese literary classics, many of Pai Ching-jui's films, which are more deeply enmeshed with the prevailing popular and political trends of the 1960s and 1970s, have fared less well as Taiwan's political and aesthetic sensibilities have shifted over the course of the ensuing decades.[3] What justifies this rather radical cross-reading is the pervasive influence that these works had on Taiwan society in terms of their creation of a more broadly situated cultural discourse on America, the immigration question, and the conflict between national loyalties and international fantasies. By juxtaposing Pai's stories with an important mainstream government-sponsored example of popular culture (as many of Pai Ching-jui's films were) where the cultural imagination of the U.S. plays a central role, I hope to better highlight the unique place of Pai Hsien-yung's work in this tradition. How do the diasporic dreams that so many of the immigrants hold complicate the harsh realities they often face? And how do we contextualize the American stories of Pai Hsien-ying against other Taiwanese works from the same era and their portrayal of America? This paper will offer a re-reading of several key stories from *The New Yorker* against an important 1970 Central Motion Picture Corporation (CMPC) film production by Pai Ching-jui, which is taken as more indicative of mainstream Nationalist views on the American factor facing Taiwan. Exploring the tension between national nostalgia and transnational longing, special attention will be paid to the fictionalized vision of America that emerges through these stories and how that image departed from previous and other contemporary representations of the U.S. in Chinese fiction and popular culture.

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[3] For instance, Pai Hsien-yung's *Taipei People* was ranked number 7 in *Asia Weekly's* list of the 100 most influential Chinese-language works of fiction of the twentieth century. His work has continued to be widely anthologized and adapted for stage, television, and film.

II.

Five years before *Fantasies Behind the Pearly Curtain,* Pai Ching-jui had released a film that articulated a most indicting view of the American dream with his 1970 film *Home Sweet Home* (*Jia zai Taibei* 家在台北). As the only Chinese film director educated in Italy, Pai Ching-jui seemed ideally positioned to present this transnational vision in his work. However, being produced by government-run Central Motion Picture Corporation ensured that the views depicted in the film not be those of just the writer and director, but also somewhat representative of the more propagandistic agendas of the Nationalist regime. In this sense, *Home Sweet Home* was a further reinvention of the "Healthy Realism" model that emerged several years earlier from CMPC and was touted by film critic Wan Ren as the "first realist film to explore the era of the 'foreign student' (Wan Ren 69). The film was actually penned by Zhang Yongxiang (張永祥), a screenwriter also known for such Healthy Realism classics as *Beautiful Duckling* (*Yangyarenjia* 養鴨人家) and can be seen as an attempt to reconcile the wholesome rural vision of Healthy Realism with the transnational dreams and alluring prospect of foreign travel and study tempting so many young people in the 1970s. As Taiwan transitioned from its traditional agrarian economic base to an industrial leader in Asia, economic development brought new opportunities (immigration, foreign study, etc.) that needed to be carefully reintegrated into a "healthy" national vision.

From the title, which literally translated would read "Home is Taipei," and the colorful opening credit sequence, it would be clear that the American dreams of *Home Sweet Home* would be firmly situated within a native Chinese worldview. Not only do actual images of America never appear in the film (the sole exception being a fleeting glimpse of a photograph of Ke Junxiong's (柯俊雄) Caucasian girlfriend back in the U.S.), but images stamped with distinctly "Chinese" cultural codes inundate the film. This is nowhere more evident than in the opening

sequence where we witness a barrage of images of puppet theater, dragon boat races, Peking opera masks, a colorful wedding palanquin, and a traditional Chinese dragon dance. There is no narrative relationship between these disparate images and the actual story or characters other than the fact that the amalgamation of images combine to form an idealized and quintessential vision of "cultural china," a telling foreshadowing of the unabashedly pro-China vision of the film. The final image in the sequence takes us from traditional China to a powerful symbol of modern China – a China Airlines commercial jet, as we cut inside the plane, we are introduced to the protagonists and the film proper begins.

Aboard the China Airlines flight are five characters whom, upon arriving back in Taipei, will break up into three groups upon which a trio of distinct stories will revolve. Although their respective backgrounds are all quite different, common themes begin to unfold as virtually every major character renounces their American roots in favor of new Chinese vision. Xia Zhiyun (夏之雲) (Wu Jiaqi 武家麒) returns from the U.S. with his Chinese-American fiancé Ruyin (如茵) (Zi Lan 紫蘭) to visit his family, which runs a modernized farm. While Zhiyun's little sister continues to fanaticize about the wonders of America, begging her brother and Ruyin to help her immigrate there, the more reflective Zhiyun seems to have a very different perspective on the U.S. At one point, Zhiyun confides to his fiancé, "I don't know why, but when I was in New York I felt like a machine. It was only once I got home that I felt like a real man again." (在紐約我總覺得我是一部機器，回到這兒，我才是個真正的人！) Here the alienating powers of the U.S. are made explicit, while simultaneously stressing the reinvigorating powers of returning home. Indeed, even Ruyin, the Chinese-American fiancé, who travels to Taiwan to marry (with the intent of returning to the states), eventually decides to settle on an idyllic country goat farm in Taiwan "even though this isn't where I am originally from." As an overseas Chinese, Taiwan becomes the "ontological homeland (原鄉)" beckoning her and countless other overseas Chinese home.

And while other overseas returnees in the film seem to express similar sentiments as Zhiyun, such as Leng Lu (冷露) (Li Xiang 李湘) who freely admits, “After all, America isn’t our home.” (「美國畢竟不是我們家呀」). She also hints at the pitfalls and decadence lurking there, “After three years abroad, I didn’t learn anything good; but I did pick up virtually everything that was bad.” (「國外三年，好的你沒有學到，壞的全學到」). But just as characters such as Zhiyun, Ruyin, and Leng Lu come to the realization that their true home lies in Taiwan, the same cannot be said for Zhiyun’s sister who still longs to realize her own American dream. During one crucial scene with her boyfriend, the physical education teacher Chengzhi (承志), Zhixia complains, “Everyone in the world can go abroad, why can’t I?” (天下的人都可以出國，我為甚麼不能出國？) She then attempts to persuade Chengzhi to immigrate with her to America, a proposition to which he passionately resists, “Why should I go to America for? Even if I go to America, who is going to take care of things here at home? Why do we have to go to America anyway?”

Chengzhi decides to stay behind to contribute to the nation through educating the youth about physical education and, in the end, the ever pragmatic Zhixia marries another returnee, He Fan (何範) (Jiang Ming 江明). He is an arrogant womanizer with a taste for expensive suits, sunglasses, and gadgets, such as his high-tech camera. It is telling that, of all the main characters, it is only He Fan and Zhixia that actually return to America at the film’s conclusion. Seemingly representing all of the flaws of America – promiscuity, arrogance, superficiality, gluttony, and waste – He is ultimately banished to the decadent west, thus sparing Taiwan further defilement. Zhixia seems to realize the mistake she is making on the eve of her departure, but by then she has already married He and is on her way to America.

The most central character and plot line in the film revolves around Wu Daren (吳大任) (Ke Junxiong). Having spent more than a decade in America pursuing

his PhD with almost no contact with his wife and child back home, he too returns to Taipei, not to reunite with his family, but to seek a divorce so that he can promptly marry his Caucasian lover back in America. Like He Fan, Wu seems to also embody the corrupting forces of the west, displaying an incredible capacity for unfeeling and selfishness as he ignores his long-abandoned family, moves into a high-scale hotel, and wallows in his professional success. Facing pressure from his American girlfriend who prods him to expedite his divorce, Wu teeters on the brink of completely renouncing his family when he is struck by an eleventh hour change of heart. For Wu, the decisive (and rather unconvincing) change comes not via the many heated arguments and conversations he has with his father, brother, or even wife. Instead, it is a conversation with fellow engineer Ding Chi (丁遲) (Ou Wei 歐威), that Wu finally seems to sway. Ding employs not only a moral argument to persuade Wu to preserve his marriage, but also employs a broader vision of national construction, in which Wu, a specialist in water conservancy, can contribute to the building of a new dam. The allegorical positioning of Ding's profession as an expert of geotechnics (土工學) makes him the perfect representative of the nation to call Wu's wandering soul back to the native soil. So why Ding admonishes his old friend with the maxim, "the most important thing between a man and wife is the moral commitment between them," (夫妻之間最重要的是道義) the unexpected rate at which engineering and automated technology has advanced in Taiwan, seem to play an equally powerful role in convincing Wu to embrace his motherland.

In the end, virtually all of the main protagonists in *Home Sweet Home* (with the exception of the decadent He Fan) decide to settle down back home in Taiwan, eschewing the U.S. for a new idealist vision of home. Here, the old pre-May Fourth reform maxim, "Chinese studies as the fundamental structure, Western studies for practical use (*zhongxue wei ti, xixue weiyong* 中學為體，西學為用) seems to get a rearticulation where western knowledge the group of foreign students accumulate

abroad is brought home and implemented for national construction, such as the building of new dams or modern agricultural centers. Although the temptations of western power and modernity are alluded to throughout the film (from the fawning audiences American-trained Wu Daren attracts to the almost pathological desire to go to America expressed by Zhixia), the real pillars of modernity actually displayed in the film are Taiwan model agricultural farms, high-tech automated construction projects, and the sleek China Airlines jet that sends the characters home. Thereby, the film displaces ideals of American modernity with homegrown symbols of progress and development. The west, however, is never positioned as a place to settle or immigrate, because it is a never a place where Chinese will be fully accepted; in the most extreme example even the Chinese-American returnee Ruyin rediscovers the Taiwan countryside as her lost home. Pai Ching-jui's film naturally represents but one attempt to address the phenomenon of foreign students vying to study abroad (and the subsequent immigration wave) in the 1970s. The film was revolutionary as the first "overseas study" film – although not a single shot was filmed abroad – and, as a CMPC production representing a Nationalist attempt to come to reconcile the lure of America with the needs of the nation.

III.

Although *Home Sweet Home* represented the first major attempt of a major Taiwan film studio to present the American experience on screen, literary representations had long predated the film's release. From Meng Yao (孟瑤), whose novel *Flight of the Swallow* (*Feiyan qulai* 飛燕去來) was the basis for *Home Sweet Home*, to the short fiction of Liu Daren (劉大任) and Guo Songfen (郭松棻), the American experience had already become a key site for Taiwan writers to reflect upon their homeland. In subsequent years there would be numerous other attempts to imagine America in Taiwan fiction, film and popular culture, from Wang Zhenhe's (王

禎和) black comedy anticipating the arrival of a visiting troupe of American soldiers in *Rose, Rose, I Love You* (*Meigui, meigui, wo ai ni* 玫瑰，玫瑰，我愛你) to the Americanized martial arts hero in Zhang Beihai's (張北海) *wuxia* novel *The Last Swallow* (*Xiayin* 俠隱). But when it comes to "imagining America" in Taiwan fiction, over the course of the past half century, perhaps no other writer has played as central a role for Taiwan (and Chinese) readers than Kenneth Pai Hsien-yung.

In 1963 Kenneth Pai Hsien-yung left Taipei, his home for the previous fourteen years, for Iowa where he enrolled in their acclaimed international writing program. The move would prove decisive not only for Pai's future, most of which would be spent in the U.S. after he took up a full-time teaching position at University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), but also for his fictional universe, which would quickly expand to include a series of short stories that would be set in Pai's new adopted homeland. Much of Pai's work has centered around the theme of exile, from Ah Qing's exile from the *juancun* (眷村) where his father lives in *Crystal Boys* (*Niezi* 孽子) to the collective exile of uprooted mainlanders to Taiwan in Pai's classic collection, *Taipei People* (*Taibei ren* 台北人). In many ways, Pai's American stories (collected primarily in *The New Yorker*) is also a series of vignettes about exile – but this is a somewhat different vision of exile as compared to Pai's other work. Pai's first American stories appeared in 1964 and continued for several years. His works of this period include such landmark pieces as "Death in Chicago" (*Zhijiage zhi si* 芝加哥之死) and "Li T'ung: A Chinese Girl in New York" (*Zhexian ji* 謫仙記), which would eventually be collected and published in *The New Yorker* (*Niuyue ke* 紐約客), an influential collection that has been revisited and expanded in several different editions, most recently in 2007.[4]

Much has been written about the lyrical longing for places and times of the past in Pai's fiction, whether it is a nostalgic attachment to the Chinese mainland in

4 Although "Death in Chicago" was appeared in the 1974 version of *The New Yorker,* it was removed from the revised 2007 edition.

Taipei People or a similar longing for Taiwan (or often the mainland) in several of the early stories from *The New Yorker*. This powerful sentiment led C.T. Hsia (夏志清) characterize Pai's stories (along with the fiction of Jiang Gui (姜貴) and the poetry of Yu Guangzhong 余光中) as displaying what he had termed an Obsession with China. This Obsession with China, translated by Joseph Lau as *ganshi youguo* (感時憂國), has been described as a "burden of moral contemplation: its obsessive concern with China as a nation afflicted with a spiritual disease and therefore unable to strengthen itself or change its set ways of inhumanity." (Hsia, 533-534) Over the years, numerous critics have further explored and developed Hsia's theory, and it has had a particular resonance with critics examining Pai's fiction. Not to refute Hsia's observations concerning the "Obsession with China" in Pai's fiction, but certainly, just as his characters obsess over the fate of their motherland, so they find themselves thoroughly enmeshed in a new foreign land that lends itself to a new set of obsessions. One might even be tempted to rhetorically ask about the "Obsession with America" is Pai Hsien-yung's work, however, upon closer consideration it becomes clear that this latter obsession is perhaps better suited to describe the previously discussed films of Pai Ching-jui, a point to be examined in more detail in the final section of this paper. In Pai Hsien-yung's fiction, this "Obsession with China" also resonates with D. Emily Hicks' notion of "reterritorialization," describing a border crosser who clings to nostalgic images from home while on the other side. (Hicks, xxxi) This notion of border crossing and nostalgic clinging is theme that has wider resonances in Pai's other fictional works.

The familial exile of the gay adolescents who long for their lost fathers in *Crystal Boys* can be seen as an extension of the more radical diasporic exile displayed in Pai's fiction set abroad, as his characters flee their home and nation, what awaits them in this new land is often far from the embracing new world they imagined – instead what they discover is loneliness, alienation, and suicide. But

the powerful intersection of the nostalgic sentiments of reterritorialization and "Obsession with China" are displayed most palpably in Pai Hsien-yung's early stories such as "Death in Chicago" and "Li T'ung: A Chinese Girl in New York."[5] It is also of note that the primary cities that Pai spent the most significant period of time in America, including first Iowa City and then Santa Barbara – both small, rather sleepy towns – have been largely eschewed in his fiction. Replacing the small towns where the core of his personal American experience lie, emerges scenes from the twin metropolises, New York and Chicago, and depictions that embellish the iconic sites of the big city: Fifth Avenue, Greenwich Village, Times Square, Lake Michigan, and Marshal Field. If, as critics such as Liu Jun have implied, America represents the future in Pai's fiction, then this future is further accentuated by the hyper-modernity of the modern city.

Published in 1964, the same year Pai first came to the United States, "Death in Chicago" features the tale of Wu Hanhun (吳漢魂), a short, balding, PhD student with low self-esteem who studies English literature at the University of Chicago. "After his commencement ceremony, Wu Hanhun returned to his apartment and began compulsively reading through his resume." (吳漢魂參加完畢業典禮，回到公寓，心裡顛來倒去的念著自己的履歷) So the story begins, already capturing the isolation of the protagonist, who instead of celebrating with friends and family, immediately begins obsessing over his (uncertain) future. The brilliant opening line immediately captures the crisis present at this celebratory moment, before gradually unfolding Wu's back-story and the tragic conclusion already alluded to in the title. As the story progresses we learn that Wu has spent the past six years in America, two years working on his MA and an additional four years in the doctoral program. Depicted are the challenges and travails he faced, from living in a small, humid, largely sunless basement apartment to working two part-time jobs,

[5] Pai's latter American stories, such as "Danny Boy" and "Tea for Two" display a noticeable shift away from this sentiment, making those works less easily characterized by descriptions such as reterritorialization and "obsession with China."

delivering laundry during the week and washing dishes at a Chinese restaurant on weekends. But left for readers to infer from between the lines are other struggles in cultural assimilation and ostracization that Wu inevitably faced.

The heart of the story focuses on what is assumed to be the final day of Wu's life, from his graduation ceremony at the University of Chicago to his (implied) suicide several hours later, drowning in Lake Michigan. Interceding between Wu's life and death struggle are two women whom Wu has effectively abandoned in order to pursue his dreams in the U.S. Although they are never directly present in the story, their haunting absence can be seen as a crucial means of understanding Wu's eventual suicide. The first is Wu's mother who passed away four years earlier as Wu was preparing for his PhD qualifying examination. Through the third-person narrator, the circumstances surrounding the mother's death is recalled in great detail as is Wu's guilt for having been able to visit her again before her passing. In the narrative, the death of the mother takes a place alongside the "death" or loss of the "motherland." And the second is Qin Yingfen (秦穎芬), Wu's ex-girlfriend back in Taiwan, who has since married another man. By abandoning them (representations of the family) and his nation, Wu falls deeper into his world of solitude.

On graduation day when all of Wu's classmates are surrounded by their own parents, the protagonist's isolation is particularly palpable. It is here that a third and final woman enters into Wu's life. She comes in the form of a hostess girl named Leona (蘿娜), whom Wu meets in a basement bar in a seedy Chicago neighborhood the night of his graduation. If Leona is an attempt for Wu to find a surrogate to provide motherly love in this moment of weakness, then she is surely a poor excuse for one. When Wu tells her his name, Leona replies:

- Wu ---- "Leona covered her mouth as she burst out with laughter."
- It's so awkward sounding! How 'bout I just call you Tokyo?
- But I'm Chinese. "Wu Hanhun replied."

- Geez, who cares! All you Orientals look the same anyway; I can't tell you apart!

"Leona laughed." (Pai, 1974, 12)

（「吳——，蘿娜掩著嘴大笑起來，別扭！我叫你 Tokvo 算了吧？」）

（「我是中國人。」吳漢魂說。）

（「啊，無所謂。你們東方人看來都差不多，難得分。」蘿娜笑道）(Pai, 1974, 12)

Here, the irony of Wu's name is felt most palpably. Numerous critics, from C.T. Hsia and Liu Jun to Jiang Baochai have all pointed out the metaphoric dimensions of Wu Hanhun's name. But in Leona's hands, "China's Soul" becomes not only unrecognizable, but crudely and mockingly mistaken for Tokyo. But then again, is Wu Hanhun the soul of China (吳漢魂), a negation of that soul (無漢魂), or perhaps more convincing, an embodiment of the national soul in crisis. It is only after Wu and Leona leave the bar for a more intimate setting that, the alluring young women is discovered to be much older and as she removes her clothing and flame-red wig, what is revealed is a head of sparse brown-color hair. She, like America, is imbued with a superficial guise that seems to promise excitement and pleasure, but beyond the façade awaits a much more depressing reality.. It is here during Wu's drunken encounter with Leona, that Pai Hsien-yung's story sounds a strong resonance with Yu Dafu's (郁達夫) classic story "Sinking" (*Chenlun* 沉淪) as it combines (and updates) the themes of sexual frustration, exile, and, eventually, suicide.[6]

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[6] Jiang Baochai has written of "death by drowning" in the Chinese intellectual tradition and attempted to link the deaths portrayed in "Death in Chicago" and "Li T'ung" to this long history beginning with Qu Yuan. (Jiang 71-83) The very modern conception of nation (and its failure) that so obsesses the protagonists and the schizophrenic place they find themselves in, caught between cultures, not to mention the ways in which the sexual frustration and national failure overlap all seem more indebted to the more recent tradition represented by Yu Dafu and other psychological writers.

In one of the final passages, Pai describes Chicago as an “Egyptian tomb,” a strange characterization for one of America’s great modern cities. But the metaphor resonates with the earlier scene depicting Leona, the “alluring seductress” who turns out to be nothing more than an old prostitute who has learned to conceal her true looks with the help of wigs, dark bars and alcohol. So too, Chicago is not what it seems… at least not to Wu. Although Wu Hanhun is a student in one of America’s most elite universities and living in the heart of one of the nation’s greatest cities, his symbolic placement as “underground” going about his days amid piles of old musty books in his dark basement room, where he remains even after his qualifying exams, means that he is perennially exiled from the privilege of mainstream society (It is also in a basement bar that he meets the prostitute). He strolls past Chicago iconic landmarks such as Palmer House, Marshal Field, and Golden Dome, but those sites seem utterly disconnected from him. Wu Hanhun’s American experience is less driven by a search for modernity and a pursuit of the West as it is overshadowed by his set of reterritorialistic longings haunted by a fractured homeland. As “Death in Chicago” races toward its dark resolution the narrator reveals, “He suddenly felt as if Chicago was as distant from him as some random name on a map, the place ‘Chicago’ seemed to have no connection to the massive old-style buildings and the pedestrians who moved around like puppets.” (Pai 1974, 8) And towards the end of the story Wu Hanhun, the lost soul of China, will “sink” even deeper underground, into the dark waters of Lake Michigan – the only iconic site of the famous windy city that he will ever truly be embraced by.[7]

A similar tragedy would play out in Pai’s 1965 story “Li T'ung: A Chinese Girl in New York.” One of Pai Hsien-yung’s great masterpieces of short fiction from

[7] It should be noted that although the suicide at the conclusion of “Death in Chicago” is alluded to by both the story’s title and the diary entry that concludes the story, the story does not contain any direct depictions of the suicide. As such, it can also be argued that the “suicide” is but a morbid desire projected by Wu Hanhun, but never actually carried out. For the purposes of the current argument, however, whether real or imagined, the suicide stands as an equally powerful commentary of the immigrant experience.

this era, “Li T’ung” stands out not only for its novel narrative structure, but also for the subtleness and sensitivity of the prose, which quietly observes the tragic tale of another dislocated foreign student in America. The story traces the lives of four girls from China who come to the U.S. around the time of the Chinese Civil War to study at Wellesley and eventually settle down in the New York area. Among the girls, the focus clearly lies upon Li Tong (李彤) , the wealthiest, prettiest and most privileged of the quartet, who ultimately also endures the most difficult life and cruelest fate. The other girls in their group, who jokingly refer to themselves as the Big Four (四強) , include Zhang Jiaxing (張嘉行) , Lei Zhiling (雷芷苓) , and Huang Huifen (黃慧芬) , whose husband Chen Yin (陳寅) provides the story’s sensitive narrative voice. Chen takes the reader through a series of snapshots in Li Tong’s life depicting her tragic transformation. Although never romantically involved with Li, Chen’s narration also reveals a strong appreciation for her stunning beauty, if not a suppressed attraction, which further enhances the melancholic tone of the story.

The original Chinese title of the story *Zhexian ji*, which C.T. Hsia had translated as “A Celestial in Mundane Exile,” better captures the spirit of Li Tong’s journey. Daughter of a wealthy and powerful Nationalist official who enjoyed the privilege of Shanghai high society, Li’s American experience represents a form of physical and spiritual exile from her family and homeland. This disconnect is rendered more permanent when, during her sophomore year, she receives word that her parents died trying to escape the mainland to Taiwan when their steamship sunk. When the ship went down, so too went the entire Li family fortune. The tragedy also corresponds to the “loss” of Shanghai to the communists meaning that in addition to her family, Li Tong has simultaneously lost her homeland. The incident also marks a turning point in Li’s life in America, as her personality begins to change, she develops a penchant for luxury items, expensive liquor, gambling, and men. Through Chen Yin’s eyes we are privy to fleeting moments in her life, drinking too

many Manhattans at Tavern on the Green, childish gambling at Yonkers Raceway, becoming the kept woman of a rich Caucasian. Along the way of Li Tong's descent into alcoholism and gambling she changes jobs (going from Originala to Vogue) and apartments at least three times and we as readers sense her increasing instability, depression, and desperation. Ultimately, Li Tong takes her own life, drowning herself in Venice, a final enigmatic closure to a life spent trying to cover up an unspoken pain.

Like in "Death in Chicago" where the protagonist doubled as the "soul of China," "Li T'ung" also features a similar employment of symbolic names. When the girls first set out for America, they assume the symbolic roles of the Big Four, and Li Tong is quick to take up the role of "China." The moment of humor, however, becomes a running theme throughout the story as the characters repeatedly enunciate their roles. The allegorical level of this identity is clearly important to Pai and at one point, Li Tong sarcastically comments to the narrator Chen Yin about her identity.

> - I have known about that for some time. "I said."
> - I even know which of you represents which power. Li [Tong] is China, right?
> - Don't you dare mention it. "Li [Tong] cried."
> - This China of yours has been beaten at every game, a catastrophic loser. (Hsia 1971, 224)
>
> （「我早已打聽清楚你們的規矩了。」我說，「連你們四強的國籍我都記牢了。李彤是『中國』對嗎？」）
> （「還提這個呢！」李彤嚷著答道，「我這個『中國』逢打必輸，輸得一塌糊塗。碰見這幾個專和小牌的人，我只有吃敗仗的份」）(Pai, 2007, 21)

An added layer of irony comes from the source of the "Big Four." In fact, in the west during World War II, the British Empire, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States were commonly known as "The Big Three," but there was originally no place for China among their ranks. Later, the UK, USSR, US, and China were collectively referred to by Roosevelt as the "Four Policemen" (四個警察), but it is interesting to note that as the four girls in the story vie to be identified as "China," it is in itself a construction of an imaginary (or at least, inflated) national vision. And while Li Tong assumes the identity, one can witness her attempts to conflate that identity throughout the story. One notable scene is when she goes to Tavern on the Green – located in Central Park, the very heart of the city – it is there that "China" drinks one "Manhattan" after another, desperately trying to physically fill (or destroy?) herself with the quintessential American city, if in name only. Such schizophrenic moments powerfully capture the cultural tug-of-war playing out inside Pai's characters as they struggle, on the one hand, to hold on to their cultural and historical roots, while, at the same time, trying to assimilate to different world. This further demonstration of what Hicks has termed "reterritorialization," can be seen as a chief characterizing feature of Pai's stories from this period.

Both "Death in Chicago" and "Li T'ung: A Chinese Girl in New York" present this cultural tug-of-war and the pitfalls of assimilation to a horrific end. Within both stories, the "American dream" is not only elusive, but seems to unleash powers of alienation and destruction instead of promise and fulfillment. The characters attend the best schools (Wellesley, the University of Chicago, MIT), achieve great accomplishments (Wu Hanhun earns his doctorate, Li Tong earns a top salary at Vogue, America's premiere fashion magazine), and live amid the excitement of Fifth Avenue and Michigan Avenue, and yet the America they encounter remains a site of loneliness and desolation. Even more peripheral characters, such as Chen Yin seem to be struck by melancholic loss. One reading of this fissure between the

rich physical environment and emotional bankruptcy of Pai's characters is that attaining this so-called "American dream" was, in fact, *never* their objective. For the American journey of Wu Hanhun and Li Tong is not inspired by dreams of comfort, material gain, and hedonistic enjoyment, but rather simply a site of exile for a generation whose homeland has been ravaged by war and dislocation. In the end, the typical elements of the "American dream" work to only further alienate Pai's characters and accentuate their loss.

The ultimate testament to this failed, or misrecognized, "American dream" is of course suicide. Suicide is an act that could easily be read as the ultimate act of individualism and existential angst, a powerful argument for the thoroughness of the Americanization of Pai's characters. I would argue, however, that the way in which suicide manifests itself in such stories as "Death in Chicago" and Li T'ung" points to something very different. In both cases, the self-destruction of the protagonists is inextricably intertwined with that loss. Wu Hanhun's regret over not having been able to visit his mother one last time before her death weighs heavily on the protagonist in the hours before his own implied suicide. And Li Tong's loss of her parents serves as the immediate impetus for her downward spiral, which would not come to a final resolution until many years later in Venice. For Li in particular drowning carries a special resonance as if she is somehow belatedly joining her parents, who also drowned during their unsuccessful escape to Taiwan. In this sense, Li Tong's death can be read as a belated posttraumatic response to the national division and familial collapse, two ruptures which symbolically collapse together in 1949.

In both stories, we are presented with a series of intersecting themes, both characters are framed as allegorical representations of China that are somehow trapped in the labyrinth of America, the premature death of the parents in both stories, and the climactic pair of suicides by drowning. The stories reveal a variation of what I have elsewhere described as centripetal trauma (向心創傷),

"The centripetal force of trauma begins on the outside and converges in the center, resulting in new 'official' or 'national' discourses" (Berry 2008, 7) In other words, the "external" national traumas endured during the characters' lifetimes, from the Second Sino-Japanese War through the Civil War, ultimately culminating in the 1949 Nationalist-Communist divide has trigged an "internal" response whereby the characters attempt to reforge nationalistic sentiments from within. In this example the humiliation and pain includes the immigrant experience and the difficulties the protagonists encounter as they try to get a foothold in a new society, but in both cases, the loss of the parents serves as an additional traumatic experience. But perhaps *the* central trauma of the stories is that which is never directly portrayed, that being the aforementioned historical trauma of the nation's recent past; the war with Japan (1937-1945), the Civil War (1945-1949), and especially the Great Divide (1949), which tore the country in two, setting in motion the melancholic stories of individuals uprooted by history that would be recorded in *Taipei People* and, ultimately, the diasporic tragedies of "Death in Chicago," "Li T'ung" and Pai's other American stories. In some sense, these stories can be seen as the implosion of this phenomenon as external historical trauma leads the protagonists to great lengths in pursuing their own means of rebuilding their own notion of "China." Their course of action and its depiction may be described by some as "an obsession with China" as both Wu Hanhun and Li Tong become symbolic vessels for the nation itself. But with the physical nation fractured by war, far from remaking China, in both cases the symbolic human vessels, which have been scattered to the other side of the sea, prove incapable of saving the nation, or even themselves.

IV.

An interesting counterpoint to the suicides of "Death in Chicago" and "Li T'ung" can be found by returning to Pai Ching-jui's *Home Sweet Home*, the 1970

film that attempted to debunk the temptations of immigration and America through a new nationalistic vision. Although, *Home Sweet Home* was set entirely in Taipei, it was still very much a work centered around imaginations of America, framing the U.S. through its own set of "American dreams," or, what we might describe as an "Obsession with America." Pai Ching-jui's *Home Sweet Home* can on a multitude of levels be read as the antithesis of Pai Hsien-yung's American fiction. Set entirely in Taiwan, depicting a group of Chinese students and young professionals initially obsessed with returning or immigrating to America, the film curiously supplies the complementary side to D. Emily Hicks' notion of "reterritorialization" – "deterritorialization," which can be generally described as referring to one crosses borders leaving behind his or her own soil. (Hicks, xxxi) While Pai Hsien-yung's characters find themselves longing for this lost home country, the central protagonists in *Home Sweet Home* seem to be driven first and foremost by a desire to *cross* national borders and journey to (or back to) America. This desire can also be interpreted not only through the surface materialist desires presented in the film, but although through a deeper psychological thrust fueled by Taiwan's own increasingly precarious place in the world and identity as a "sovereign state." Thus "America" becomes a desired site not only for the images of modernity and affluence which it conjures, but also for the clearly demarcated notion of "nation" which it may represent. This is the "Obsession with America" that draws characters in *Home Sweet Home* to the promised land across the sea, however, the ideological message implicit in the film ultimately provides a value judgment on of this dream of deterritorialization revealing it to be just as futile as the "Obsession with China" displayed in Pai Hsien-yung's fiction.

Suppressed suicide: Two scenes of Wu Daren's despair in *Home Sweet Home*

Although we might expect otherwise, on several levels the vision of America as an unwelcoming site of loneliness, selfishness, decadence, and degradation is startlingly similar in the highbrow fiction of Pai Hsien-yung and the government sponsored portrayal by Pai Ching-jui. It is the response of the characters to this vision of America that we see considerable differences. Although Pai Hsien-yung's America may be as fraught with similar pitfalls as those portrayed in *Home Sweet Home,* Pai Hsien-yung's characters choose to remain there to due battle with their fates. This stands in stark contrast to the compulsory return that virtually all of the characters make in *Home Sweet Home.* Another notable point of departure comes in the respective representations of suicide. Although none of the characters commit suicide in *Home Sweet Home,* there are two key sequences towards the end of the film when Wu Daren, the returnee who had planned to divorce his wife to marry his American girlfriend, stands beside a body of water, lost in melancholic contemplation.

During one of these two occasions, Wu gazes blankly at the waters of the Danshui when a neighbor rushes over to talk him out of taking his life:

> "Gaoshan:"
>
> - Whatever happens don't take this too hard! Daren, what are you doing? You….

"Wu Daren:"

- Brother Gaoshan! You've got it all wrong! I'm not going to jump into the river! I just need a place to cool off and think!

（高山：「你可千萬別想不開阿！大任，你要幹甚麼？你……」）

（吳大任：「高山兄！你誤會了！我不是跳河了！我需要冷靜想想！」）

In the end, not only is the suicide suppressed, but Daren, listening to advice of Gaoshan (which echoes similar advice from his colleague Ding Chi, his father, and brother), decides to stay in Taiwan, contribute to the new national construction projects, and move his long-neglected family into a brand new apartment building. Instead of tossing his body to the raging waters as did Wu Hanhun, Li Tong, or even the protagonist from Yu Dafu's "Sinking," Wu Daren decides to devote his life to harnessing the water's power through national dam projects. The suppression of this suicide drive is predicated not only by the "healthy realist" policies driving CMPC, but also by the politics of space, nation, and ethnic identity driving the narrative. One key to understanding Wu Daren's suppressed suicide is the shift in site from the U.S., Italy, or even Japan to the homeland of China / Taiwan. Superficially, Wu Daren seems to follow a similar pattern as that displayed by Wu Hanhun and Li Tong, however, here the central ideological engine shifts from the reterritorialistic desires of Pai Hsien-yung's fiction to the deterritorialistic drive of *Home Sweet Home.* Wi Daren longs to return to the U.S. and into the arms of his Caucasian lover, however, America is not Wu's native home and that which he longs for and identifies with is, in fact, a form of misrecognition. Earlier, this paper rhetorically proposed an "Obsession with America" in Pai Hsien-yung's fiction, however, if there is such an obsession it lies not with Pai Hsien-yung's characters, but Pai Ching-jui's Wu Daren. Spatially positioned in Taipei, Wu cannot help but obsess over the American life he left behind and so longs assimilate to, even at the expense of sacrificing filial values, family ties, and historical roots. Resolution

comes with Wu's realization of this misrecognition – neither immigration nor suicide can solve his problems, but nationalism can. One can sacrifice one's life for "China" as powerfully demonstrated by the protagonist of Yu Dafu's "Sinking" all the way up to Pai Hsien-yung's tragic characters Wu Hanhun and Li Tong, however, at least according to the ideological logic of *Home Sweet Home* (and the Nationalist regime), it is unthinkable for Wu Danren to sacrifice himself for even an abstracted notion of "America." Thus out of the shadow of suicide rises a new form of modern nation-building (physically manifested through the massive dam and new high-rise apartment buildings being constructed), through which Wu can finally take up the "great task" (*daren*) that the nation calls on him for. Thus instead of hurling himself into cold waters of a foreign land, he abandon's his deterritorialistic desires and American dreams, instead using his skills attained abroad to harness the hidden hydraulic power back home (*zhongxue wei ti, xixue weiyong*). This shift from Wu Daren's American obsession to his Chinese obsession also reminds us that in the case of both *Home Sweet Home* and the American fiction of Pai Hsien-yung, characters dreams and obsessions regarding both China / Taiwan and America are no a clear-cut binary, but a more complex dialectic relationship, wherein the national imaginary of each is contingent upon the other.

While the propagandistic drive of *Home Sweet Home* fundamentally transforms the various characters' *reactions* to the American influence and the overseas experience, in many ways, the *presentation* of America is actually quite similar, a treacherous land for Chinese immigrants who must face discrimination, economic hardship, decadent temptations, and of course the loss of their homeland.[8] Naturally,

[8] Also of interest is the fact that nearly 20 years later when the first wave of PRC literary and filmic representations of America began to appear, many of them framed the U.S. in ways quite similar to the texts examined here. Chief among these examples of PRC fiction about America is Glen Cao's 曹桂林 blockbuster novel *A Beijinger in New York* (*Beijingren zai Niuyue* 北京人在紐約).

the realism, psychological depth, and insight into human nature of Pai Hsien-yung's stories go far beyond the melodramatic conventions and propagandistic limitations of *Home Sweet Home,* but all of these texts played a crucial role in the construction of Taiwan's popular imagination of America from the mid-sixties into the seventies.

For Pai Hsien-yung, who wrote the stories discussed during the very beginning of his American journey, a journey that continues to this day, his fictional representation of America would continue to evolve and transform. Although traumatic experience would remain a central facet of his Pai's latter day American stories, no longer were his characters burdened by this "obsession with China" and the vicissitudes of history. Instead, with more recent stories like "Danny Boy" and "Tea for Two," trauma comes from within, in the form of the AIDS virus, seemingly unburdening characters from the nostalgic attachment to their homeland and the "Obsession with China" which had loomed so long in Pai's earlier fiction. The response can be seen in the rise of a new global community such as the group that gathers to support one another at the moving climax of "Tea for Two." But all those years later, Pai Hsien-yung's New York is still a site for exile and escape, a "promised land" that continues to serve as a key entry point for Chinese readers in their own fictional voyage to America.