

*Overcoming Internal Disparities:
Imagining Taipei in Contemporary Novels*

Shiaw-Chian Fong, National Chengchi University, Taiwan

The Asian Conference on Cultural Studies 2017
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

This paper aims at studying Taipei with 4 most recent and awards-winning Chinese novels that depict ordinary Taiwanese' everyday activities. Applying a semiotic analysis to these urban texts, we find that, in mundane thinking, Taipei is a split city with ethnic division between the Chinese-mainlanders and the locals, and with economic inequality between the haves and have-nots. But it is also a city with optimism about the spreading of a remember-but-forgive attitude that may one day turn it into a solidary community.

Keywords: atypical, metaphor, metonymy, novel, Taipei

iafor

The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

Introduction

This paper aims at the understanding of Taipei among ordinary Taiwanese in their everyday life, as is suggested by Lefebvre (1991b: 362).

We propose to follow Latour (2005: 82) by beginning our study with 4 most recent and renowned Chinese novels that depict ordinary Taiwanese' everyday activities. After introducing the key plots of each story, we shall subject them to a semiotic analysis inspired by Donald and Lefebvre. Their methodologies help us understand that, in mundane thinking, Taipei is a split city with ethnic division between the Chinese-mainlanders and the locals, and with economic inequality between the haves and have-nots. But it is also a city with optimism about the spreading of a remember-but-forgive attitude that may one day turn it into a solidary community.

A Semiotic Model for Urban Novels

To excavate the meanings of the novels, we resort to Lefebvre's semiotics and Donald's concept of "atopical" to syncretize a method for deciphering them.

Since Lefebvre writes in a "purposefully unsystematic" manner (Highmore, 2005: 145), to grasp his gist, we must go through a search in his major works—the three-volume *Critiques of Everyday Life* (1991a, 2002, and 2005), *The Production of Space* (1991b), and an English reader, *Writings on Cities* (1996). Here a sentence from the reader (1996: 108) is pivotal:

[C]onceiving the city as a ...semiotic...system, [one notes that] (t)he context, what is *below* the text to decipher (daily life, immediate relations, the *unconscious* of the urban, what is little said and of which even less is written), hides itself in the inhabited spaces—sexual and family life—and rarely confronts itself, and what is *above* this urban text (institutions, ideologies), cannot be neglected in the deciphering.

For our research purpose, we need to focus on Lefebvre's ideas on a typical urban text. He approaches the issue by distinguishing 4 levels (utterance, language, connotative language, and writing; 1996: 115), 3 dimensions (symbolic, paradigmatic, and syntagmatic; 1996: 116), and 2 forms (simultaneity and encounter; 1996: 129) of the text, and then by teasing out those levels and dimensions that are relevant to his semiotic analysis. To make what he says empirically applicable, let us recast what he means in terms of Fiske's interpretation of connotation. Fiske (1990: 98) says,

So metonyms work syntagmatically for realistic effect, and metaphors work paradigmatically for imaginative or surrealist effect. It is in this sense that connotation can be said to work in a metaphoric mode.

We note first that what Lefebvre calls syntagmatic and paradigmatic dimensions are actually two modes of operations by words or phrases we designate as metonyms and metaphors respectively. While metaphors express the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar and exploit simultaneous similarity and difference across different linguistic planes (e. g., the *ocean* of life), metonyms make a part stand for the whole, namely it works by linking meanings within the same plane (e. g., the *crown* means king, Fiske, 1990: 92-95). Secondly, connotation and denotation make up what Barthes (1989: 115) terms as two

orders of signification. Denotation stands for the first order, which refers both to the relationship between the signifier and signified within a sign (in Saussure's sense, see note 1), and to the sign with its referent in external reality.

The second connotative order is where the interaction between the sign and the user (with his culture) is most active. It is the interaction that occurs when the sign meets the feelings or emotions of the users (or the values of their culture). Barthes then connects the two orders by indicating that "the first-order signifier is the sign of the connotation" (Fiske, 1990: 86).¹ Where the signifier in the first order refers partially to something concrete in the external world, it becomes a sign whose outlook is identical with the signifier and whose meaning, or signified, is now partially culture-determined, and thus arbitrary and imaginative. If we repeat the operation and put the n-ordered signifier as the sign of the n+1 order of signification, the imaginative dose will get ever heavier than in the n-order till it reaches the level of ideology, namely that of total imagination.

In sum, Lefebvre (2002: 308-309, 341 & 356) and Fiske suggest that narratives about urban events as occurring around monuments, on streets, and in festival moments constitute the essence of the urban text, and that they are subject to the semiotic analysis. This interpretation dovetails nicely with the film expert, James Donald's notion of "atopical". By way of discussing his idea of "atopical", an idea borrowed from Miller and supplementing Lefebvre's method, we shall have a model for the understanding of the four Taipei novels.

Miller suggests that, for Derrida, every philosophical issue begins with the question of literature and that the philosopher approaches literature from the atopical, defined by Miller (1995: 8) as the "encrypted place [which] generates stories that play themselves out within a topography." Donald (1999: 123) rephrases this definition as, "Narratives about cities imagine events taking place in an urban topography.... [T]he real to which they refer is atopical. The events narrated did not take place, or not like that, although their effect is real enough."

So defined, the atopical helps Donald to distinguish narrative imagination in the linear temporal modes:

To the past mode, he (1999: 125) says,

Notoriously, the vivid events recalled from childhood may or may not have taken place, and yet the reworking of the past plays a crucial role in our sense of who we are.

In the present mode, "the way the city is narrated in novels...is actively constitutive of the city. Writing ...plays a role in producing the city for a reading public." (1999: 127) The imaginative structures in creating a city come not from reality out there, but from the atopicality of the novel.

Finally, although Donald (1999: 139) does not underline the future-oriented functions of novel, he does indicate that textual imagination "would take the form not of a dream city, but a re-thinking of the processes and technologies of change."

Therefore, we have syncretized a model for urban novels—a genre of urban narratives

about events in the forms of past city memories, present constitutions of the city, and future urban changes. To put it in Lefebvre's terms, these narratives are those of lived urban space, a series of re-mentionable activities happening in various city-places where ample space is left for the semiotic analysis in terms of different levels and different dimensions.

The Four Contemporary Novels on Taipei

Located at the north part of Taiwan in west Pacific, Taipei City is surrounded by New Taipei City. It covers 271.8 km² and has a population close to 2.7 million. Administratively, it has a city government with 12 districts under its jurisdiction. Since the 17th century, its territory was subjected to the rule of the Ming- (1368-1644) and Qing-Dynasties (1644-1912), the Japanese colonialism (1895-1945), the Chinese Nationalist Party (*Kuomintang*, KMT), and, currently, the Democratic Progressive Party. Taipei has been the politico-economic nerve center of Taiwan since late Qing and is now the capital of Taiwan.

If one traces the novelistic depiction of Taipei back to the most famous one, *Wandering in a Garden, Waking from a Dream* (Pai, 1982), there must have been hundreds of novels or short stories about Taipei written since then. We cannot do justice in selecting "the most representative fictions" except that, based on the choices of the latest academic theses regarding Taipei novels and our preferences, we come up with 4 current stories that sufficiently transcribe it.

Qi Li-Feng, 2014 *Escape from Taipei (EFT)*

It observes the daily life of working people in Greater Taipei from a unique perspective: the traces left by a murder suspect, De-Yu, and his girlfriend, Zi-Yao, in their four-day getaway from the crime scene.² Although the novel is set in the classic *whodunit* frame, solving the murder is insignificant compared to the intention of the author to describe these working people's lives in Taipei: where they live, work, relax and commute.

Almost all the characters live in New Taipei City but work in Taipei, a real pattern set by the different living costs and confirmed by sociological studies (Zhang, 2015).

Most characters are employed in the service industry: three girls, including the victim, were service ladies in the same department store chain; one service lady's mother sold insurance; and De-Yu was a high-tech salesman when the murder occurred. Later he became a computer programmer and married Zi-Yao, who then worked for an advertisement firm.

In terms of the leisure time, most characters spend it in BBQ bistros, karaoke halls, and boutique shops, all located within the 2-km² "Eastside" of Taipei, the recreational area identified by the novel.

Finally, the pattern of the separation of living and working place is sustained by the subway system, which began with the operation of the first Brown Line in 1996. Now, the five major lines have effectively connected every part of Taipei City.

From the description of the major components of city life through the viewpoints of the two escapees, Qi (2014: 264 & 270) concludes what living in Taipei means for general folks by saying, “Our city, so beautiful and yet so lonely,... so abundant and yet so bleak”.

Xiao Sa, 2015 *Backlit Taipei*

The bleakest thing about living in Taipei is the desperation felt by common Taiwanese to build a home there. This is the key theme elaborated in *Backlit Taipei*.

Throughout the novel, one is struck by the fact that almost all characters, when they first appeared, were shown in their homes with detailed domestic descriptions. Thus, divorced Qin-Mei lived in the old fourth-floor apartment in Shi-Pai District of Taipei City, a house left by her ex-husband but owned by her mother-in-law, who, since the divorce, had tried repeatedly to reclaim the unit. “Even this shabby apartment is better than the crowded public housing,” said Qin-Mei, comparing her current living with where she used to live. It was in the public housing period that she began dating Guang-Qun, who lived on the first floor of an apartment mansion in Fu-Jin Street of the “egg-yolk” area in Taipei City, in contrast with Shi-Pai which was located in the “egg-white” area.³ Guang-Qun, after obtaining a doctorate degree and marrying a Taiwanese tycoon’s daughter in the States, moved his family back to Taipei and inherited his father-in-law’s business. They now lived on the 26th floor of Le-Yue Mansion which overlooked Daan Park, the Hyde Park in Taipei. Using housing status to indicate who and what the dweller is, is widely applied to other characters in the story as well.

Backlit Taipei realistically maps the changes in a character’s socio-economic status onto his or her different home-sites. The egg-yolk is occupied by the do-gooders like Guang-Qun. In the egg-while Taipei, people, with 2 to 3 decades of hard work and savings, realize their dreams to reside in a 100 m² (1,076 ft²) and 10-year-old apartment unit. The rest of the people who hold jobs in Taipei City have to live in the egg-shell areas for affordable and available rental houses. Finally “losers”, who cannot support themselves in Taipei, just as the end of the story describes, have to stay far away from it.

Zhu Tian-Xin, 2002 *Ancient City*

Housing problems aside, local novelists pay attention to the troubled “colonial” history of Taipei. Two such stories, written respectively by a second-generation female of the mainland-refugees and an indigenous Taiwanese girl, become renowned in recent years. The first and earlier one is *Ancient City*, a novelette that focuses on the nostalgia about places and people before their rapid change. Thus, it first contrasts the changes of both the “Westside” of Taipei City and Tam-Shui District of New Taipei City, two areas connected by the subway Red Line, by means of “you,” a forty something woman who remembered that she and her senior high schoolmate “A” used to spend so much time visiting these places in the 1970s. The story then contrasts politically volatile Taipei with the serene ancient city, Kyoto, via contriving a plot in which “you” made an appointment with “A” to meet at Kyoto, a meeting after two decades of separation but eventually without A’s appearance. Finally, there is the contrast of political opinions between “you” and her Taiwanese husband ever since

the democratization of Taiwan in the late 80s, a contrast occasioned by “you” being a child of mainlander parents who fled from China to Taiwan in 1949 to avoid the Civil War.

Unlike the focus on Taiwanese daily life in the previous novels, *Ancient City* talks about Taipei’s political story. What that story illustrates is, on the one hand, the real distaste of the first and second generations of mainland-refugees that Taiwan would become independent. But, on the other hand, it also sends a strong message accusing what blind nationalism, be it pro-Taiwan or pro-unification (with China) would do to people’s memory of places. The message is coded in the colonial Japanese names of several places located between Westside and Tam-Shui District that “you” insisted in using. All these place-names have, “of course,” been changed into Chinese names by the succeeding KMT regime, taking the new names from those of towns and cities existing in the pre-1949 geography of China.

This skill of renaming public places shows that, with a new regime, inevitably the memory of the old ones is almost completely wiped out. And renaming comes with a repercussion. Nationalist aside, the KMT regime has also claimed to be a progressive government. It influences people, in the name of progress, to remove or bury as soon as possible anything that smells old. Nationalism and its related progressive inclination, according to Zhu, are responsible for deleting the memory of places in the capital city.

Hu Shu-Wen, 2011 *The Bloodshed of the Sun is Dark (BSD)*

In contrast to a mainlander’s nostalgia about old-time Taipei, *BSD* is written by a native Taiwanese who wants to shed light on the era of “White Terror” (1949-1987) that corresponded to the KMT’s rule by martial law.⁴ Ostensibly, it talks about a romance between graduate school classmates, Wen-Xin, a Taiwanese whose grandpa was a political prisoner under the KMT white-terror rule, and Hai-Xu, the grandson of a mainlander military judge who had tried and sentenced Wen-Xin’s grandpa. However, much more space is spent on narrating the lovers’ relatives and friends who, because of gender, ethnic, political, or class differences, had various encounters in different parts of Taipei City during and after the horrible era.

In terms of Wen-Xin’s grandpa, his political misfortune is portrayed in the context of Taipei’s two landmarks that were occupied by KMT in the 1950s: Shi-Zi-Lin Commercial Building and Sheraton Grand Taipei Hotel. The historical burden of the two buildings contrasts the history-naïve Taipei 101, the final landmark mentioned in *BSD*.

Shi-Zi-Lin is an entertainment complex, which, along with Sheraton, is located in the primary corner of the Westside and is frequented by Wen-Xin and Hai-Xu for fun and for food. The two buildings used to be the Security Office and the Martial Court of Security Headquarters, set up immediately after World War II when KMT took hold of Taiwan. When their history was introduced by Wen-Xin to Hai-Xu, she added, “My grandpa’s case was handled by your grandpa.... You are my best friend. But I must admit that I despise all those things symbolized by your family.” And since the buildings were filled with intolerable memory of the White Terror, they were torn down by land developers and rebuilt into something that comforted both mouth and

body.

In contrast, Taipei 101, completed in 2004, is not only immune from historical burden but located in the commercial center of Eastside. Its appearance in the story is tied with the author's monologue (2011: 243),

Taipei is like a wriggling snake who is molting. She is disarmed and becomes most vulnerable. But she still imagines that she will swallow this world which is bigger and newer than she. She thus ponders how this world will shape her or destroy her; how Beijing, Shanghai, Seoul, and Mumbai will catch up with her or win over her.

Apparently, Taipei 101 symbolizes Taipei as one of the global cities that, while ritually celebrates the New Year by, for example, displaying fireworks, competes fiercely with the rest of the Asian cities. Currently Taipei is globally positioned in an awkward situation: internationally its famous "original equipment manufacturing" brings in diminishing profits while internally it faces fast polarization of its citizens into the rich and the poor. That awkwardness has been represented especially in a scene where Taipei 101 faces its neighboring slum while being encircled in the "bleeding dusk".

The contrast between Shi-Zi-Lin and Sheraton on the one hand, and Taipei 101 on the other is finally brought to indicate the stance of the author. Belonging to the third generation of a family violated by the White Terror, Hu is ready to take up the remember-but-forgive position to the mainland-refugees and their descendants since, nowadays, when these people travel in China, they are already recognized as being Taiwanese.

Before we resort to the model of urban novel for further analysis, we may conclude that the four novels on Taipei all focus on the identity of its inhabitants. *EFT* and *Backlit Taipei* profile common Taiwanese who strive for a middle-class life. Their class status depends primarily on what kind of housing they are able to afford. In addition to class, another key component of identity—ethnicity—is clearly emphasized in both *Ancient City* and *BSD*. Thus *Ancient City* first narrates disparity in political opinions of the ethnicity-different bedfellows. It then accuses the blind nationalism with progressivism of being responsible for erasing Taiwanese' memory of old places. However ethnicity divided as it stands, it is the remember-but-forgive stance taken by the young author, Hu who is of the same generation as Qi, the author of *EFT*, that reveals a solution of Taiwanese, and Taiwanese, identity predicament. After all, since 1949 it has been 7 decades of co-habitation between people from the both sides of Taiwan Strait. They can all legitimately claim themselves to be "Taiwanese" in face of the People's Republic of China. Finally, it is the two young writers, Hu and Qi, who have shown the common optimism about the class and ethnicity improvements, and therefore the unified identity, of their and subsequent generations.

The Procrustean Bed

Our model on urban novels emphasizes two things: atypical events in the 3 linear temporal forms and the semiotic meanings of the recurrent activities involved in those events. How does this model work?

One atypical event that runs through the 4 stories is the romance between the protagonists. In the two nostalgic stories, while Wen-Xin and Hai-Xu's encounters are shot through with their grandfathers' experience of the White Terror and do not reveal much of their own childhood, "you" and "A," two middle-aged women in *Ancient City*, do seem to have developed puppy love in their high-school days. Since puppy love is "intense but relatively shallow", according to an English dictionary, the author associates it with the nationalism and especially its associated progressivism. Thus, to the progressivism which involves abolishment of the old buildings, "you" mentioned that if one likened the old Taipei walled city (built in 1884) to the Japanese Imperial Palace in Kyoto prior to the Meiji Restoration, then the outlook of the whole Taipei basin was similar to Kyoto City. With this similarity the comment actually implies the different views of the sacred direction of the emperor's throne between Chinese-Taiwanese and Japanese.

In the old Taipei walled city, mandarins' offices faced south, paralleled with the palace of the Chinese Emperor in Beijing (literally the capital in north). But later on Japanese tore down the wall and had the new official building, Sōtokufu (completed in 1919), face east, the holy direction toward their emperor's new palace in Tokyo (literally the capital in east). The change of the direction of façade was not just a matter of regime change. It started the centennial east-bound developmentalism, or expanding infrastructure construction, of Taipei in the hands of both the colonial and KMT governments, and resulted ultimately in the decline of the Westside and the prosperity of the East that one can easily contrast today.

The love story in *Backlit Taipei* is a contemporary allegory of Taiwanese' housing and thus class disparity. When they first met, Qin-Mei lived in public housing located at Nan-Ji-Chang, the slum area of the Westside, while Guang-Qun resided in Fu-Jin Street at the edge of the Eastside. After succeeding his father-in-law's business, he eventually moved to a high-rising mansion overlooking Daan Park, located at the core of the Eastside. Their romance ran into problems when Guang-Qun visited Qin-Mei's home for the first time. It was less than 40 m² but crammed with a family of 4 without a living room. Guang-Qun was ushered into the smelly kitchen-qua-dining room directly behind the entrance and sat on a stool. This short visit goes a long way to explain why, after knowing that Qin-Mei was pregnant, he simply disappeared and went to the United States.

Finally, *EFT* begins with a bizarre episode, De-Yu took Zi-Yao to run away from being a murder suspect, but ends with a banal "they-live-happily-in-Taipei-ever-after." The banality, as we have shown, can mean the optimism of the younger generation about their bourgeois lifestyle. But this understanding seems incongruent with what the author, Qi, also comments at the end of the novel that Taipei is both "beautiful and lonely," and "abundant and bleak." For if optimism sides with beautiful and abundant, what about the lonely and bleak side?

Qi, being a novelist and an academic, does have his postmodern "simulacrum" explanation of Taipei. He (2014: 64) says, "The world operates with the *quid pro quo* principle. There is no gift without intention, no courtesy without purpose." When material reciprocity permeates human relations, the latter reify; they become relations of things, and ultimately relations of monetary exchange, that is fit for media exposure and re-exposure. Eventually what is left is medium-made images circulating

in the *quid pro quo* tracks of the urban space. A city shot through with glamorous images is called a city of simulacra, and that is what Qi would bestow Taipei.

Therefore, the atypical event of romance in the 4 novels imbricates with nationalism and progressivism from the past, with current polarization of the rich and the poor, and with slim optimism of a happy urban life amid reified human relations.

In terms of the Lefebvrian (and Fiskian) semiotics, first it can be applied for judging whether the titles of the 4 novels are metonymic or metaphoric. Since we are short of space, we simply state that both *EFT* and *Ancient City* are metonymical, *Backlit Taipei* is both synecdochical and metaphorical. And *BSD* is strictly metaphorical.

The second issue to be analyzed concerns streets and monuments that Lefebvre considers to be fertile ground for urban meaning. In *EFT*, De-Yu, Zi-Yao and others would spend their leisure time in the Eastside. Specifically, the actual names of the public spaces given in the story are located at the 4th section of Zhong-Xiao East Road, which, when extended west-bound and crossed the central point of the city, is called Zhong-Xiao West Road. It is this main street that connects the East and Westside and serves as the locale for the key plots in three of the four Taipei novels, except *Backlit Taipei*. The East road is not only the recreational area depicted in *EFT*, but also houses department stores like Breeze, Ming-Yao, Sogo, and Uni-Ustyle, which are geared to Japanese and European shopping styles. However it is the architectural style, called either modernist or functionalist, of these big buildings that qualify them as representations of *modern Taipei*.

West-bound to the 1st section of the East Road, one comes across the Sheraton hotel where, in *BSD*, Wen-Xin and Hai-Xu knew that it used to be Taipei Martial Court. Further west, Wen-Xin introduced the Shi-Zi-Lin building as the site of former Military Security Office. So the two sites that represented the White Terror itself were all turned to commercial properties for entertaining both body and appetite. This is how the collective memory gets forgotten.

Further west, from the 1st section of Zhong-Xiao West Road to Dan-Shui River, one walks on the dividing line of the Westside, which comprises Da-Tung District in north, Wan-Hua District in southwest, and part of Zhong-Zheng District in due south. These three districts with their various places are the background of *Ancient City*, although the author refers to the places by their Japanese names and calls the whole area “San-Shi-Jie,” (three cities), a term used in the Qing Dynasty. By calling their old names the sense of nostalgia is thus aroused.

Therefore, Zhong-Xiao East-West Road epitomizes the sesquicentennial history of the modernization of Taipei. The city started with Da-Tung and Wan-Hua as its river ports exporting oolong tea by Chinese junks. It was then invaded by the Japanese who tore down its walls and set up Baroque-styled office buildings to lead the east-bound infrastructure construction. It finally reached the Eastside and first turned it into a military shooting range with a cemetery, and then into the modernist-styled “Xin-Yi Shopping District” with the skyscraper, Taipei 101.

So we wind up facing Taipei 101. After studying the skyscraper, Morley (2013: 218) comments,

As a building, to look at the Taipei 101 Tower is thus drenched in denotative features for Taiwanese people to read so that they can connect their tradition and societal modernization with the uniqueness of their society, and *their sense of place in the modern world*. In this sense *gradualistic modernity*... is implemented.

I agree that what Taipei has achieved is a gradualistic modernity. For it has taken three regimes--Qing, Japanese, and KMT--and over 150 years to get to where it is now. But I am not sure simply by climbing up to the observatory at the 91st floor of Taipei 101, one can get the “denotative” sense of Taipei’s history. Rather, I suggest that it is the guided walk on Zhong-Xiao East-West Road that will really take one to the historical sites just mentioned and give one that sense. As to Taipei 101 itself, I think, Hu Shu-Wen is, in *BSD*, apt to make it encounter the bleeding dusk and the slum simultaneously. Because in this scene, Taipei 101 *connotes* that Taipei, in transforming itself into a global city, faces the dual challenge of fierce competition from without and worsening inequality from within.

In reading the 4 Taipei novels from the semiotic viewpoint, we detect the existence of Zhong-Xiao East-West Road as the epitome of the developmental history of Taipei that has been, and is, the economic and political capital of Taiwan. The road denotes Taipei. But it also houses the Sheraton hotel and Taipei 101, whose histories and current existences connote sources of division in Taipei’s politico-economic significance. For, as the Sheraton signifies the White Terror that has divided the mainland-refugees from local Taipei-ese, Taipei 101 symbolizes the disparity of wealth that separates the haves from the have-nots. Taipei is therefore almost a sad city that, via walking through the Zhong-Xiao Road, reminds its citizens of their class-wise and ethnically divided identity. We said “almost,” because we also detect the optimism held by the two younger novelists that, with a remember-but-forgive attitude, we may consolidate ethnic differences and go on reducing class distances through welfare policies. So, after all, Taipei is our bittersweet living space.

Conclusion

The reality of Taipei is described in our novels as an atypical event of romance with its semiotic meanings. The romance points to the disparity between Sheraton and Taipei 101 in political history, between Eastside and Westside in geographical and economic sense, and between a city of simulacra and living-happily-in-Taipei-ever-after. And it denotes Zhong-Xiao East-West Road as the epitome of Taipei’s politico-economic modernization. But it also connotes that both ethnic division between the mainlanders and the locals, and economic inequality between the haves and have-nots are tearing Taipei apart.

A splitting city as it stands cannot deliver a hopeful promise for Taipei-ese in the future. What they need most, as the end of *The Bloodshed of Sun is Dark* suggests, is a remember-but-forgive attitude that they are willing to share with their mainland counterparts. If a young author like Hu Shu-Wen can embark on promoting the dignified attitude, why cannot the rest of us follow the lead and change our mind-set in accord?

Footnotes

1. In Barthes' own terms (1989: 114), "that which is a sign (namely the associative total of a concept and an image) in the first system, becomes a mere signifier in the second." Fiske has reversed what Barthes means but it is hardly a mistake since the outlook of the sign and that of the signifier are identical.
2. Greater Taipei refers to Taipei City and New Taipei City together, with a population of 6.7 million, a quarter of that in Taiwan.
3. Egg-yolk, egg-white, and egg-shell constitute a trichotomy popularized in the realty market of Greater Taipei.
4. By December 1949, the KMT regime had completely withdrawn from China and moved to Taiwan with 2 million mainland-refugees. Fearing the communist penetration, the KMT put the whole island under martial rule that lasted until 1987.

References

Chinese

- Fu, J. G. (2013) Interviewing Shu-Wen Hu, taken from <http://blog.roodo.com/coolfu/archives/25423146.html>.
- Hu, S. W. (2011) *The Bloodshed of the Sun is Dark*. Taipei, Taiwan: Ink Press.
- Qi, L.F. (2014) *Escape from Taipei*. Taipei, Taiwan: Shi-Bao Wen-Hua Press.
- Xiao, S. (2015) *Backlit Taipei*. Taipei, Taiwan: Jiu-Ge Press.
- Zhang, Y. H. (2015) *Insight City*. Taipei, Taiwan: Chu-Liu Book.
- Zhu, T. X. (2002) *Ancient City*. Taipei, Taiwan: Ink Press.

English

- Barthes, R. (1989) *Mythologies*. New York: Noonday.
- Donald, J. (1999) *Imagining the Modern City*. London: Athlone.
- Fiske, J. (1990) *Introduction to Communication Studies*. (2nd ed). London: Routledge.
- Highmore, B. (2005) *Cityscapes: Cultural Readings in the Material and Symbolic City*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Latour, B. (2005) *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University.
- Lefebvre, H. (1991a) *Critiques of Everyday Life, Vol. 1: Introduction*. London: Verso
- . (1991b) *The Production of Space*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- . (1996) *Writings on Cities*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- . (2002) *Critique of Everyday Life, Vol. 2: Foundations for a Sociology of the Everyday*. London: Verso.
- . (2005) *Critique of Everyday Life, Vol. 3: From Modernity to Modernism*. London: Verso.
- Miller, J. H. (1995) *Topographies*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University.
- Morley, I. (2013) *Asian Culture and Urbanism: Meanings and Experiences of the Evolving Built Environment*. In I. C. Wang, M. Theis, & C. Larkosh (Eds.), *Writing Spaces: Travel, Global Cities and Landscape* (pp.207-225). Kaohsiung: National Sun Yat-sen University.
- Pai, H. Y. (1982) *Wandering in a Garden, Waking from a Dream: Tales of Taipei Characters*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University.

Contact email: scfan@nccu.edu.tw