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Source: *Modern Chinese Literature*, Spring/Fall, 1992, Vol. 6, No. 1/2, SPECIAL ISSUE ON CONTEMPORARY CHINESE FICTION FROM TAIWAN (Spring/Fall, 1992), pp. 157-177

Published by: Foreign Language Publications

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41490698>

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(En)gendering the Nation in Pai Hsien-yung's "Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream"¹

Christopher Lupke

Forgetting, I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation. . . .

Ernst Renan (Bhabha 11)

I

As a writer and as a person, Pai Hsien-yung (b. 1937) has enjoyed an often paradoxical fame. Though not an enormously prolific writer, he has been applauded as one of the most important writers of his generation. While he has often written about controversial themes, notably issues such as homosexuality, he has been popularly understood as a cultural conservative in Taiwan, at least regarding his reputation as a practitioner of high Modernism and his association, by birth, with the mainlander elite whose political power continues to exceed its proportion of the overall population on Taiwan. He generates this sort of broad attention despite a self-cultivated life on the geographical margin. As a writer of Chinese living in the United States he almost purposely disqualifies himself from a place in either the American or Chinese literary tradition. Yet, perhaps in part because of this exilic status, interest in Pai Hsien-yung's work persists. This theme of exile is present in his work as well as in his life. In some of the earliest of his post-juvenilia fiction, such as his "Niu-yüeh-k'o" [New Yorker] series of short stories, he explores the issues of existence in a society vastly foreign to the Chinese protagonists he writes about, the attendant anxiety of life in the West, and that final exile into death. "Che-hsien-chi" [The case of a banished celestial], for example, features the heroine Li T'ung basking

¹ This article was first delivered in a much different form at the AAS Annual Convention in New Orleans, April 14, 1991. I would like to express my appreciation to Yi-tsi Mei Feuerwerker, chair of that panel, and the organizer, Lydia Liu, as well as Yvonne Chang, Rey Chow, Theodore Hutters, Jeffrey Kinkley, Wendy Larson, and the others who offered productive insights. A special note of gratitude must go to Tani Barlow, who acted as discussant on that panel. I should also like to thank Edward Gunn, William Tay, and David Wang, who read and critiqued a subsequent draft. Any remaining lapses in logic or fact are, of course, my own. At the request of the editors, I have used the Wade-Giles romanization system.

in the wanton life of New York City, sipping Manhattans as she goes (Pai 1976: 293-318).² In a gesture that is even more apparent in “Yu-yüan ching-meng” [Wandering in the garden, waking from a dream],³ Pai Hsien-yung leaves unstated the precise logic behind her suicide. Li T’ung’s friends are somewhat mystified at the news, and after some debate they conclude that her suicide must have been precipitated by the end of some unfortunate affair. They then return to their ensuing card game and play feverishly at high stakes until dawn. If the reasoning they eventually settle on for Li T’ung’s suicide was enough to satisfy them, it can hardly make sense in the context of the short story. As a matter of fact, Li T’ung’s ability to attract men was clear to everyone, and she never seemed to show attachment to any of her lovers. On the contrary, her behavior indicated a complete independence of mind; she herself doubted she would ever marry. More plausible is the deeper and more pervasive sense of disquiet that accompanied her rootlessness. The mystery surrounding her eventual suicide rests in understanding the story as an allegory for a larger social conflict affecting Chinese who are torn between their economic futures in the West and their cultural pasts in China. As Joseph Lau has observed, characters such as Li T’ung “are so intimately related to the tragedy and social turmoil of [their] own time that they are indeed part of the history of modern China. . . . the difference is that the self in the later stories is no longer the autobiographical hero but the collective consciousness of Chinese exiles in general” (Lau 1984-85: 410). First published in *Hsien-tai wen-hsüeh* in 1965, this story is the most poignant example of the deleterious effect this turmoil can have.

One of the interesting aspects of Pai Hsien-yung’s work is the way in which he renders into literary text this historical reality—life in the postcolonial diaspora. Although decolonized from the Japanese occupation, Taiwan represents a purgatory for the mainlanders with mainland China itself inaccessible. Thus, Li T’ung has sought uneasy refuge in the United States. This postcolonial condition raises certain crucial issues for the narration of the nation. Pai often describes in minute detail the circumstances surrounding characters such as Li T’ung as they attempt to, and often fail to, cope with the reality of their present situation by leaving the exact motivation for their self-destruction unexplained, a vacancy in the written text. As a corollary to this reversal of emphasis,

² Translated as “Li T’ung: A Chinese Girl in New York” in Hsia 1971: 220-230.

³ This story first appeared in *Hsien-tai wen hsüeh* 30 (December, 1966). It was the twentieth story written by Pai Hsien-yung, the third of those written for the volume *Taipei jen*, though it is twelfth in order of appearance in this collection. References to this story will be made parenthetically within the text with the pagination from the Chinese edition occurring first followed by the pagination in the English translation on which quotations in this article are based, with some alteration.

the remarkable lacunae that puzzle the supporting characters, a related feature of his narrative is the sense of particularity to Chinese nationality that pervades his work. That is, although considered a practitioner of High Modernism, and therefore read as a writer of the universal human condition, Pai Hsien-yung paradoxically still has been referred to as “obsessed” with his Chinese nationality (Hsia 1969: 2-3 and Hsia 1975: 90-95). Since writing as “national allegory” is felt by some to be one of the salient features of postcolonial literature, it may be productive both to dispense with the pathologizing tone that the word “obsessed” lends to the characterization of authors and to consider the possibility that his work is emblematic of a phenomenon not unique to Chinese literature and culture per se. While the specificity of the Chinese literary and cultural tradition has enormous bearing on his subject matter, Pai’s relationship to a master discourse of Modernist technique, which even the writer admits to (Hu: 8 and passim), is shared by other writers of the postcolonial diaspora (LaCapra and Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin).

The terminology “national allegory” has come under some attack since its invocation by Fredric Jameson in the essay “Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism” (Jameson 1986). Despite theoretical encumbrances, such as an overly economic epistemology based on a notion of “late capitalism” that looks more and more anachronistic as socialist regimes successively fall, the Jameson essay nevertheless provides certain new categories of understanding for area studies. Chief among these is Jameson’s desire to put Chinese literature and its critique on the map of the larger literary terrain, even though his doing so under the aegis of the “Third World” leaves cold some of his “fellow travelers” (Ahmad). Nevertheless, after Jameson it is possible to develop an analysis of Chinese literature that engages literary theory in its broadest terms while not effacing the “historical situatedness” of that literature itself. Further, Jameson touches upon a severe problem of theoretical discourse on Chinese literature (and any other “Third World” literatures): It is often forgotten that Theory is a hegemonic discourse rooted in the West, designed for the analysis of Western literature, mapped onto other literatures, or literatures of the Other, if you will, *without mention of its appropriation*. Jameson says as much himself in his reappropriation of the term “cultural revolution” into a new configuration (Jameson 1986: 76).

What Jameson advances in this novel configuration of “cultural revolution” is a deeper conception of the tensions involved in literatures such as modern Chinese that go beyond micro-analyses of individual subjects, a conception that seeks its roots in a larger global problematic that implicates not just the author and his or her characters, but readers, “Third World” and “First World” alike, as well as the critical community that arbitrates on literary matters. One could even go further than the notion of “subalternity” that he mentions in his article. The subaltern, in Gramscian terms, is formed as a particularity, the condition of fragmen-

tation among passive classes whose unity is circumvented by the dominant, ruling, hegemonic classes (Gramsci 52-55). "Subalternity," considered more generally, can conceivably indicate any subject of scrutiny wherein the one doing the scrutiny—the analyst, "First World" subject, male or a combination of the above—is in a position of overt or covert domination vis-à-vis the one being scrutinized. Jameson's specific discussion here involves a close reading of Lu Hsün's "Diary of a Madman," but a similar argument could be made for the way, for example, the peasantry are depicted in "River Elegy," somehow backward and puerile, and, indeed, *subaltern* because they imbibe the stagnant, loess-laden culture (sic) of the Yellow River instead of the progressive blue oceanic tides of Westernization (Bodman 203-222). In this case, the status of the intellectual is painfully ambiguous, as s/he negotiates the space between Western discourse and the Chinese object of representation. In due course, the discussion of subalternity will become important to an understanding of Madame Ch'ien's silence, the textual vacancy created by the heroine of "Wandering in the Garden." For the time being, it is important enough to know that Jameson's goal is to reconsider the "private individual destiny" of these "Third World" subjects in the context of "an allegory of the embattled situation of the public" that more adequately situates their circumstances in the world (Jameson 69).

Jameson is one of the few major theorists to acknowledge the place of particular national literatures outside the West and even to discuss them in some detail as well. He devotes several pages of this essay to a reading of Lu Hsün as well as the African writer Ousmane Sembène. In spite of his attention, though, the hegemonic relationship between the West and China is only adumbrated. Therefore, although his initial insight that the psychological crises of individual characters in literature constitute the surface structure of larger global issues, that these private internal struggles indicate a collective problem set in terms of a national allegory, there may be some benefit in returning to the formal questions, the individual instances of crisis themselves, and reflect on how it is the nation is engendered in narrative. The notion of hegemony is used frequently now, for example, to emphasize the fact the the maintenance of the world order is not achieved primarily through force but through a complex set of ideological means, not through coercion but through consent (Gramsci 12-13 and 261-264). While an analysis of this issue would be far too ambitious a project for this essay, one of the tasks of literary theory should be to ask what are the structures of the imagination of the nation in and through literature, how within the specific realm of literature the problem is textualized.

A great service to the field of culture studies was made by the contribution of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, which explores not so much the socio-political conditions of the modern nation state as the more ethereal structures of how such a state is imagined by its

subjects (Anderson 1983 and 1991). Anderson's study is illuminating on many levels: He delves into the origins of national consciousness with an erudite discussion of print capitalism and the development of print languages in the vernacular (Anderson 1983: 42-48); His chapter on the pioneering role "creoles," New World natives of Western European descent, have played in the development of the modern nation state is trenchant and unique (Anderson 1991: 47-66); And his chapter on official nationalism demonstrates how established political powers move quickly to appropriate popular national movements that may otherwise be disruptive to the status quo. Thus, although the established powers may ultimately vanquish the energy of popular movements, they are still forced to reconfigure themselves, concealing the discrepancy between modern forms of power and those of the pre-modern dynastic realms, in order to preserve their own bases of control (Anderson 1983: 103). Most relevant for the discussion of literature and its connection to national allegory is Anderson's method of reasoning that the simultaneous movement through time solidifies a nationalistic sense of community among a large population who only occupy the same geographical space for contingent reasons. The novel, he argues, was the perfect gift to instill in the reading public's mind the concept of community that underlies the nation. The national newspaper provides a similarly persuasive example of the nationalist imagination bred in the horizontal consciousness of its subjects whose apprehension of the past, and even the future—the history of its people and the destiny of this imagined community—is enacted synchronically. Although the full knowledge and recognition of one's fellow countrymen is beyond anyone's ability, this simultaneous "mass ritual" of reading reinforces the feeling of community on a grand scale. Most important, the recognition of this mass community relies on the nation's past, present, and future fused together in one instance. Pai Hsien-yung's "Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream" shares this feeling of suspending the past and present, brought about in literary form especially through the use of allusion. Perhaps we can find its future there as well, hidden in the horrible silence that the feeling of exile provokes in the heroine Madame Ch'ien.

II

The novella "Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream" features Madame Ch'ien, a widow and former K'un-ch'ü opera singer of considerable fame from Nanking now living in southern Taiwan. The narrative unfolds as she joins her old friends from Nanking in a reunion at the home of Madame Tou in Taipei. The climax of the story comes with a long interior monologue during which Madame Ch'ien is beckoned onto the stage for one last performance of her signature aria, "Waking from a Dream" (ching-meng) from the opera *Mu-tan t'ing* [*Peony*

Pavilion]. At this point she is unable to sing and recoils in silence, whispering that her voice has left her. This particular novella is an example of a hybrid form of literature that mixes themes and techniques of pre-modern Chinese literature with those of modern Western literature, narrative strategies found in the short story with more compact and evocative strategies common in poetry. In addition, the way the protagonist Madame Ch'ien is constructed as a means to textualize the larger underlying historical background of the Chinese Civil War signals an attempt to narrate the nation. Through a close reading of the story, the goal will be to demonstrate how the heroine's consciousness and unconscious are formed from a mixture of classical Chinese allusions and the alienating effects that shape the narrative technique of Western Modernism. The process of this decoding is a complicated one, one that requires the sort of unraveling characteristic of multi-layered hermeneutic codes, perhaps the most important of the several levels of signification this novella holds, as mentioned in William Tay's analysis (Tay 1979: 55). As Tay explains in this essay, one of the compelling features of this work, in fact the feature that draws one back to multiple readings, is the mystery of the relationship between Madame Ch'ien and the man who is called Cheng Yen-ch'ing in her interior monologue. The other mystifying feature of this work is the relationship between the hostess Madame Tou and her husband's aide-de-camp Colonel Ch'eng. In spite of the allusions in the work, which function like a series of adjacent doors to some intricate floor plan toward the ultimate signification of this story, the relationships between these two couples remain somewhat underspecified. But all this is enmeshed in the ultimately overdetermined structure of both the plot of the novella and the subjectivization of the female protagonist. This sort of a psyche is not something that could have been inscribed in Chinese literature prior to the twentieth century.

While Pai Hsien-yung suppresses some of the key details of these relationships, in general his imagery is profuse. He describes the gowns and jewelry of women, the hairstyles and trends in furniture design, architecture, musical instruments, dinnerware, and food and drink in the most minute and varied ways. This catalogue of the stage for the drama that will unfold is of great significance itself. It testifies to the consummate insular reality, the complete imagined world, the simulacrum of life in exiled Taipei of which the author is architect. The descriptive profusion, then, serves to set the stage in the way that a play to be enacted might first describe its properties or at least give its audience a view of where the action will take place before it begins. It also inscribes a tension between the Realist mode of literary representation and the Modernist, that, as Theodore Hutters has explained in an important essay, have been imported into China for all intents and purposes at nearly the same time (Hutters). This tension is played out in the ulterior significations that this detail assumes, especially within the context of the

allusive imagery and the subject of K'un-ch'ü drama, a performance genre closely associated with the affluent and conservative classes in China. So while on one level the effect of this rich detail is to exhaust the description of this environment, on another it has a symbolic or at least an evocative function. That function is to suggest that the actors in this performance have done more than adorn themselves, their surroundings, and their plates. They have sequestered themselves in the sepulchral room of cultural decay. There is some ambiguity in this, of course, for the immediate historical subtext for this novella is in reality not Nanking of the 1940s but Mainland China of the 1960s. If this story provides a rich catalog detailing the minutiae of high culture, then it stands in stark contrast to its contemporary on the social stage of Chinese intellectual activity, the Cultural Revolution. This is the rich ambivalence between the details of luxury and the stifling moribund air that offers the final tension in the novella.

The resurrection of detail, and we should go so far as to say the detailing of feminine subjectivity in this story, or, another way, feminine detail, is perhaps Pai Hsien-yung's countervailing narrative discourse to an increasingly radicalized narrative technique in the People's Republic of China. For, as Rey Chow has indicated in following Naomi Schor, the revolution that modernization has come to be understood as in twentieth-century China, the "new elitism that is self-consciously revolutionary" has emerged by virtue of the "elimination of details" (Chow 92). Writing in the particular conjuncture of Post-Mao criticism, however, it may now be that the diminution of detail has run its course in China. One can by no means ignore the fact that as the major writers of Chinese fiction outside the mainland during the time of the Cultural Revolution were embarking on intricate projects of complex diminution, their compatriots on the other side of the Taiwan Strait were unveiling accomplishments of epic proportion: large buildings, heavy industry, long historical novels. In her chapter "Modernity and Narration—in Feminine Detail," Professor Chow offers an important rereading of Chang Ai-ling's fiction that ponders the question of "human problems" that are of "universal" significance, even if they are written with the slender pen of Chang's "sensual refinement" (Chow 119-120 and Chapter 3, *passim*). Pai Hsien-yung's construction of female subjectivity owes something to the tortured subjectivity of Chang's female characters. Nevertheless, although he certainly raises some of the issues of Chang, and shares a penchant for the minute, the detailed, and even the feminine, his fiction must still be read in different ways. Gone is the demented repulsion that the reader sees in a character like Ch'i-ch'iao. In its place is something infinitely more lyrical and sedate. In the final analysis, though, we must ask the same question of Pai's fiction that Chow has asked of the fiction of the Republican Period: What is the significance of the intersection of sexuality, subjectivity, and nation in

Chinese fiction that has been encoded in complex allusion and rich, profuse imagery?

Another of the tensions inherent in this work is born out of the necessary hesitation between the two different poles of female subjectivization in it. On the one hand, the emphasis seems to be on the social plight of the heroine, that the sexual repression she experiences is rooted in her victimization as a woman subservient to the desires of a dominant male and patriarchal order. On the other hand, she functions almost as a trope, as the vector for all the allusive imagery of this overtly non-representational text, as the muse through which some hidden, repressed, allegory for the nation is engendered. Some of Pai Hsien-yung's critics have, in fact, advised the writer to develop a stronger sense of social consciousness, arguing that Pai is strongest when his craft is attentive to the goals of a social critic. Yen Yüan-shu, for instance, argues that "Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream" would be more successful if it employed the "omniscient narratorial point of view" found in "Yung-yüan-ti Yin Hsüeh-yen" [The eternal Yin Hsüeh-yen] . . .

allowing the author's consciousness to control the whole scene, subordinating Madame Ch'ien's field of vision, thus increasing [his voice], and broadening it; the author would thereby be free more neatly to extract the unrealized force of this story. (Yen 144)

Pai is most successful, according to Yen, when he maintains distance from the characters in his stories, as he does in his description of Yin Hsüeh-yen. As a dispassionate writer, Yen contends, Pai would be in a better position to criticize the narcissism inherent in the mainlanders' acclimation to Taiwanese society. When the third-person narrative voice adopts the stance of the protagonist, as it does in "Wandering in the Garden," Pai's language becomes "unrealistic." Yen cites "I-pa-ch'ing" [A touch of spring] as the most persuasive counter example of Pai's fatal tendency to "represent" characters of class and gender different from his own. Particularly when writing in the first-person point of view or when employing dialogue, Pai's use of sophisticated and allusive terms is deemed "inappropriate" (Yen 141). What escapes Yen, though, is the subtle historical irony in Pai Hsien-yung's fusion of the vernacular with more classical tendencies usually associated with the literary language. Pai's language could never be purely a realistic language if it were to contain the allusions it does—nor could a Realist project contain such overt use of allusion.

Yen's criticism of Pai Hsien-yung's writing indicates the larger issue of how one subject's consciousness, and perhaps unconscious, is brought to text. Ultimately rejecting a Realist mode of representation, Pai's method is to take advantage of certain psychological gaps that exist between subjects, according to Modernist epistemology. The eloquence of his narrative technique doesn't contradict the "reality" of Ch'ien's

social position. It is less a case of whether the literary erudition is anathema to the dance hall than it is one of what this artifice foregrounds in the clear and unmistakable privileged role it assigns to itself in the novella. There is a certain dialectical logic to Modernist ideology that is crystallized in this story. Just as one of the main themes of Modernism is the breakdown or fragmentation of consciousness, as in the spiritual dryness of "The Waste Land," the primacy of this isolated perspectival existence serves to unify the reader. The logic of Modernist ideology does not rest on the notion that there are contesting factions of readers, waging a war on representation and its political implication, but that there is one isolated reader out there. This notion of the privacy of the subjective gives reign to the colonial era's notion that universality is achieved through the recognition that the human condition is one of isolation. "We" share the knowledge of this isolation. Thus, Fredric Jameson would perhaps agree that while, along with the subject of Edvard Munch's "The Scream," the observer cannot hear his awful cry, the mutual recognition of this angst-filled plea is nevertheless registered in our visual observation of it (Jameson 1984: 63). Even if this isolation of the subject projects an epistemology of post-industrial moral bankruptcy, and Eliot expressed as much in "The Waste Land," this conception of moral bankruptcy at least afforded, and, indeed, insured the unity of "our" disease by staging it as the universal human condition. Interpellated into this way of representing the modern subject, a Chinese writer such as Pai Hsien-yung can then map the political and geographical exile of a lost generation of Chinese singers and generals onto the epistemology of this human condition and the aesthetics of Modernist ideology. The project is reinforced by the use of allusion, for as Joseph Lau has observed, Pai Hsien-yung has been more successful than most at combining what is fundamentally a Western-style of allusion to the subject matter of the Chinese literary tradition (Lau 1975: 40; also, Yao 89-90).

If there is a mimetic side to the way Pai Hsien-yung gilds his prose in order to invest Madame Ch'ien's consciousness with the cohesive erudition of a literary scholar, it is disclosed in the effort of the characters to infuse their present reality with a vision of China's glorified and irretrievable past. This sort of political exile mimed by the literary problematic that Yen Yüan-shu has partially articulated is considered in a somewhat different way by Ou-yang Tzu in her discussion of the "parallel" construction of "Wandering in the Garden" (Ou-yang: 231-274). Ou-yang Tzu carefully dissects the tortuous array of relationships in "Wandering in the Garden," showing the parallel relationships between Madame Ch'ien and her younger sister Yüeh-yüeh-hung on the one hand, and the hostess Madame Tou and her sister Chiang Pi-yüeh on the other. The role the two younger sisters play is to steal their older sister's lovers. Ou-yang Tzu then continues by showing how the elements of allusion and imagery in the novella conspire to evoke a whole aura of

parallel connections with the principal ones being “past” and “present,” “reality” and “fiction”:

This story employs the technique of parallelism in order to offer the people and things of the past a foundation, an “original text,” and constructs an image of the every-day present environment as the “supplementary text.” This is to say that Pai Hsien-yung posits “past” as noumenal reality and “present” as illusory nothingness. However, isn’t “past” clearly gone without a trace? And isn’t “present” clearly before our eyes? Thus, Pai Hsien-yung hints that emptiness is real and reality is empty; what is false is true and what is true is false. This contradictory theory corresponds exactly to the teachings of the Taoist philosophers. (Ou-yang 272)

Ou-yang Tzu is accurate in stating that Pai Hsien-yung employs this parallel edifice to great end and that the allegorical structure of the work is shaped within this parallelism. But while Pai Hsien-yung may be asserting a dualistic notion of truth and falsity that seems more closely related to the Western metaphysical tradition, it appears that the Taoists have a different epistemological point at stake in their writings.⁴

The most complicated aspect of Pai Hsien-yung’s story, and its most powerful ideological message, is rooted in the way the structure of the work “reads back” into the classical tradition of Chinese literature, assigning new significations as it insinuates itself into that legacy. A powerful strategy, Pai Hsien-yung employs it in order to strengthen his position as a literary nationalist even as the structure is informed in profound ways by the tropes of Western Modernism. The lyrical structure of the narrative, for example, is more reminiscent of a narrative poem than it is of narrative in the Realist mode. The description is less vibrant in the action of the characters than it is in the interweaving of key recurring images, symbols and the allusions that give the piece its force. One of the important contributions of Ou-yang Tzu’s chapter on this story is the analysis of some of these images and allusions. A discussion of these will follow, but first the Modernist structure of this narrative should be explained in more detail. The structure of the narrative includes some interior monologue. The terms

⁴ In Chuang-tzu’s second chapter “Ch’i-wu lun” [On the equality of things], for example, the gist of the argument is not that one thing is more real than another but that what is conventionally assigned to different realms—life versus death, reality versus dream, truth versus falsity—are actually mutually constitutive components of one unified essence. Thus things that appear to be as radically opposed as life and death are actually two sides of the same thing. And as the mutually constitutive nature of the dreaming Chuang-tzu with the waking Chuang-tzu illustrates, there is no way to determine which is the real and which is the false subject. In fact, it is the notion of differentiation of things into separate realms, assigning different truth values to them, that will in fact lead to delusion.

for *erlebte Rede* and stream-of-consciousness are elusive markers for a broad range of narrative structures. As William Tay has noted in his article on Chinese Modernism, "interior monologue" is a sort of montage of the mind while "stream-of-consciousness" requires "free association." "Free association," he adds, "always results in a seemingly random, illogical, and ungrammatical presentation, [which] must then be maintained as an important guideline for the identifying of stream-of-consciousness" (Tay 1984: 10 and 14-15). If this is so, then Pai Hsien-yung's writing does not exhibit "free associative interior monologue," nor is his text generally disjunctive. In fact, Pai Hsien-yung employs techniques that could be better characterized as "stream-of-unconscious" rather than "stream of consciousness." In her discussion of "stream-of-consciousness" (*i-shih-liu*) and "interior monologue" (*nei-hsin tzu-pai*), Ouyang Tzu seems to elide the two. The construction of Madame Ch'ien involves passages submerged in interior monologue, but even she is overcome by them. Far from being part of her conscious waking thoughts and actions, the interior monologue portions of the text represent the surfacing of highly repressed regions of her sexual desire, submerged deeply in the unconscious and only triggered by this "evocation of the past" (Lau 1975) that the reunion conjures.

Perhaps the intricate weaving together of images and allusions is emblematic of Pai Hsien-yung's sense of the fragmentation of national and cultural symbols, an anxiety shared by T. S. Eliot and other European Modernists (Collier), even if the latter writers did not experience the forcible exile that Pai Hsien-yung's cohort did. It may further be the case that it is the educated elite that most crave this cultural cohesion. To extend what David Lattimore has advanced in an essay on allusion in T'ang poetry, the use of "textual allusions" that are "legible to the elite" and "are more effectively concealed from other people" may actually help form or even constitute that elite (Lattimore 403). Although it would be overstating the case to argue that Pai Hsien-yung is a modern day mandarin, the experience of an elite education and family background afford him the opportunity to offer sympathy to the aging highbrows who populate his work while still being subtly critical of their insular existence. The textual allusions form an important intertextual link in his work, as do the intratextual relationships between various key images. An example of a textual allusion would be the use of the term "retribution" (*yüan-nieh*) in Pai's text (Pai 234/158), which appears prominently in *The Dream of the Red Chamber*. The allusion to this Ch'ing novel quoted below surfaces as part of a subplot depicting a homosexual male who falls in love with a woman:

He was a confirmed queer and not interested in girls, which shows that the whole business must have been *fated*, because no sooner did he set eyes on this girl than he at once fell in love with her—swore he would never

have anything more to do with boys and never have any other woman but her.⁵

By choosing this particular word, Pai Hsien-yung is doing more than simply associating himself with the fiction of *The Dream of the Red Chamber*. This term contains interesting connotations about sexuality and the conflicting spheres of human society, heterosexual and homosexual. Although this association may only be familiar to the well-schooled, Pai Hsien-yung's novel *Nieh-tzu* [Crystal boys], which depicts a homosexual subculture, employs this term *yüan-nieh* often.

If Pai Hsien-yung's allusive connections to prior texts is well-known and well established, then one should also give some attention to the intratextual web of recurring imagery in a story like "Wandering in the Garden." The connotation of the term for "white" (*pai*) may be laden with the cultural notions of death, but the moribund or elegiac tone that pervades the novella could only be engendered by repeated use of the image. Thus, though near the beginning of the novella General Tou's perennial attendant Liu Fu-kuan may appear "graying at the temples" (*liang-pin hua-pai*) (Pai 221/146), the more foreboding feeling of death is not in evidence until the descriptive images of white begin to accumulate. Madame Ch'ien, for example, is eventually introduced to Ch'eng Ts'an-mou, General Tou's faithful aide-de-camp. For the rest of the evening, Ch'eng puts himself at Madame Ch'ien's disposal by both getting her food and drink, and by chatting with her about the K'un-ch'ü opera. He is described as having a "full smile with perfectly straight, white teeth" (Pai 230/ 154). Henceforth, the narratorial description frequently returns to Ch'eng's white teeth. At one instance in the development of the narrative, Chiang Pi-yüeh sits together with Ch'eng Ts'an-mou as they both stare at Madame Ch'ien:

The two faces confronting her at once, showing their even white teeth, smiling toward her, the two faces so red they shone slowly closing in on each other, merging, showing their white teeth, smiling toward her. (Pai 241/164)

In addition to the repetition of "white" in this eerie scene, Pai Hsien-yung shifts in his lexical usages by using words such as *lieh*, *hsiao*, *liang-chang-mian*, as well as *pai-ya*, which all recur, embellished with adjectives and adverbs. As *pai* continues to collect contextual significance, its appearance in this passage encourages the reader to make an association between the white teeth of Ch'eng (and, by implication, Chiang's) and Cheng Yen-ch'ing's teeth. Cheng, whose name sounds similar to Ch'eng's, is described as having the exact same kind of teeth: "But [Cheng], too, comes holding out a brimming cup to her, his white teeth

⁵ This passage occurs in Ts'ao 44/Hawkes 112.

flashing; Madame, may I also drink with you? he says" (Pai 237/160). This single description of Cheng Yen-ch'ing appears in the first of two sections of Madame Ch'ien's interior monologue. In the latter portion of Madame Ch'ien's second interior monologue, "white" becomes an obsessive image repeated over ten times (Pai 244/166-167). The prominence of the image of "white" in the novella indicates not only Madame Ch'ien's obsession with death, but associates her with Madame Tou as well. When the guests are about to leave, Ch'ien notices her old friend Madame Tou donning her shawl: "Madame Tou tossed a huge white silk shawl around her shoulders and walked down the terrace steps" (Pai 247/169). In the next sentence, Madame Ch'ien notices the moon, metaphorically described as "white frost" (*pai-shuang*) (Pai 247/169). Several paragraphs below, Madame Ch'ien dwells on Tou's "white shawl" for one final moment. The image of white, then, functions allegorically to link together the principal characters in the novella, Ch'eng Ts'an-mou and Cheng Yen-ch'ing, Ch'eng and Chiang Pi-yüeh, and finally Madame Tou. Given the cultural resonance of the term "white," the only possible option is that the repetition of this imagery evokes a strongly moribund feeling.

Some of the terms in this intratextual process can be very subtle. The term *nan-wei*, which might be translated as "to be difficult (for someone)" or "to make (something) difficult (for someone)," seems on the face to be an inconspicuous construction. Pai Hsien-yung, however, employs the term carefully, three times, so that it takes on an intratextual significance. As Madame Ch'ien and Madame Tou meet for the first time in years, the narrative harks back to their Nanking days to a time when Tou was not so well off. "Then she was a concubine, her husband, Tou Jui-sheng, a mere Deputy Minister. He's big in the government now, of course, and Fragrant Cassia [Madame Tou's diminutive] has risen to be the official Madame Tou. You had to give her credit: *she had sweated out all those years; (nan-wei ao-le che-hsieh-nien)*; now, at least, she could hold her head high" (Pai 224/ 148-149). Then, just a few lines later, Madame Ch'ien expresses her gratitude toward General Tou for asking after her: "Ah, that's so thoughtful of Brother Tou" (*Eh, nan-wei Tou-ta-ke hai ne-ma yu-hsin*) (Pai 224/ 149). Here, *nan-wei* could be translated as "to go out of one's way," used to express appreciation. Such close repetition of the *nan-wei* construction calls attention to itself, and implies a relationship between the third-person narrative and the first-person dialogue of Madame Ch'ien. The close association of word choice in the narrative with that in the dialogue indicates the close relationship between the third-person narrative and the protagonist's own perspective. *Nan-wei* occurs once more in the text about half-way through, this time referring directly to Madame Ch'ien. Recalling how her late husband felt about himself, a man over sixty marrying a young girl of twenty, Madame Ch'ien remembers that he once told her "It must be hard on you . . ." (*nan-wei-le ni*) (Pai 234/157). A connection is thereby drawn between the

suffering of Fragrant Cassia (Madame Tou) and Madame Ch'ien. This scene between General and Madame Ch'ien is then repeated in Madame Ch'ien's interior monologue (Pai 242-243/ 165).

Decoding the full reasons behind why life is so difficult for her, why the *nan-wei* construction is used so often, requires an examination of the textual relationships in Pai's story at a raised level of complexity. So far, the discussion has focused on the intertextual relationships between Pai Hsien-yung's novella and prior texts, through the use of allusion, and the textured intratextual relationships through key choices of imagery. Pai Hsien-yung's technique also involves a fusion of these two relational planes, so that through the repetition of key allusive imagery he is able to create a conglomerated set of significations that requires not only a close reading of the story but an erudite knowledge of the literary tradition as well. Ou-yang Tzu's analysis of this story is particularly valuable for its discussion of allusions. The allusions to the Peking Opera *Kuei-fei tsui-chiu* [The imperial consort drunk with wine] illustrate this intratextual and intertextual nexus. The textualization of this imagery develops in a way similar to the previously discussed images. As Ch'eng Ts'an-mou and Madame Ch'ien are seated for dinner, Ch'eng, acting at Ch'ien's disposal, assists her in serving food. "Colonel Ch'eng served Madame Ch'ien a wing from the Chicken Imperial Favorite . . ." (*kuei-fei-chi*) (Pai 238/ 161). A few lines further, General Yü toasts Chiang Pi-yüeh and, in jest, calls the wine "Nocturnal Carousing" (*t'ung-hsiao-chiu*), a reference to Yang Kuei-fei's famous evening of drinking alone in jealous sorrow while the Emperor entertained another consort. Chiang Pi-yüeh's flippant remark to General Yü—"Fie, fie, be off! Who here will carouse the night with you?" (*Yeh, yeh, yeh, ho-jen yü ni-men t'ung-hsiao ne*)—and Madame Lai's gentle chiding—"the banquet at the Hundred Flower Pavilion isn't laid yet, and here you're already 'Drunk with wine' " (*tsui-chiu*)—contribute to the evocation of an intratextual link between the opera about Yang Kuei-fei and this novella. T'ang poetic vocabulary such as "kingfisher feather" (*fei-ts'ui*) to describe Chiang's attire indicates that even subtle descriptive terms such as those referring to clothing accumulate in this text to suggest a strong connection to the Yang Kuei-fei story. "Kingfisher feather" is used to describe Yang Kuei-fei's quilt in Po Chü-i's (772-846) poem "Ch'ang-hen ko" [The song of enduring sorrow] (Kao 303). Yet the connection is not just with Chiang Pi-yüeh, but with Madame Ch'ien as well. The prior significance that this imagery holds, the suggestion that some sort of relationship between a man and woman is occurring while another woman is left in the lurch, proves of symbolic importance to the plot of "Wandering in the Garden." For in Pai Hsien-yung's work, Madame Ch'ien discovers that her secret lover, Cheng Yen-ch'ing, spurns her for her sister. This is revealed in the interior monologue. The significance for Madame Tou is that perhaps she is having a secret affair with her husband's aide-de-camp, Colonel Ch'eng (his name, after all, does bear some resemblance to Colonel

Cheng's), especially in light of the associations with the Yang Kuei-fei imagery and with her sister, Chiang Pi-yüeh, who leaves the party with Colonel Ch'eng.⁶

Thus, the reasons for Madame Ch'ien's "troubling" past are becoming more evident, though one has to read the symbolism in the story as well as the narration of the fact to reconstruct the full signification of the work. Irony is achieved in the text by the subtle shifting back and forth between the literal and the symbolic, allusive meaning of the text. General Ch'ien's infatuation with Madame Ch'ien, for example, owes itself to his love for her rendition of the aria "Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream," the words of which constitute one scene in T'ang Hsien-tsu's (1550-1617) play *Mu-tan t'ing* [Peony pavilion]. The general also preferred to refer to her by her stage name, "Bluefield Jade" (*Lan-t'ien yü*). In addition to being a place name in Shensi Province, "Bluefield Jade" is a prominent image in what James J.Y. Liu has called Li Shang-yin's (813-858) "most famous poem" (Liu 1985: 552 and Liu 1969: 44 and 51). Liu points out that one established line of interpretation reads Li Shang-yin's poem "Chin-se" [Ornamental zither] as an allegory of his tryst with some unknown woman. But the image, itself extant in sources other than Li Shang-yin's poem, is not sufficient evidence to assert an intertextual relationship with Pai Hsien-yung's text. Association with the poem is confirmed by Pai's textual insertion of one of the title characters, "brocade" (*chin*). The initial reference comes from a comment made by Madame Tou: "If the famous 'Bluefield Jade' can't sing, who else dare utter a note" (Pai 225/ 149). Then, two lines later, Pai uses simile to describe the group of guests "in dazzling dress . . . scattered here and there like clusters of flowers embroidered on silk" (*chin-ts'u-hsiu-ts'ung i-pan . . .*) (Pai 225/ 149) with the word for silk here being *chin* in Chinese. The repetition of this key image, in addition to Madame Ch'ien's diminutive name, is enough to conjure the memory of this famous poem, even though, again ironically, Bluefield Jade was a stage name that carried with it a connotation of commonality that she wished to shed (Pai 234/ 157).

Pai Hsien-yung also weaves in an allusion to an opera based on the poem "Lo-shen fu" [The Goddess of Lo River] by Ts'ao Chih (192-232). In the conversation about this play, Ch'eng Ts'an-mou, referring to another opera singer, says to Madame Ch'ien:

She's still got her acting. No wonder they call her "peerless in the *ch'ing-i* roles." She portrayed the love affair of Lady Mi and the poet Ts'ao Chih with great subtlety—a marvelous piece of acting. (Pai 231/ 155)

⁶ Ou-yang Tzu and others have asserted as much (Ou-yang 243-244 and 250).

Chiang Pi-yüeh interrupts the conversation by exclaiming that the actress to whom they are referring, Chang Ai-yün, is really not a good singer at all. When Chiang heard her perform, “barely halfway through the opera her voice failed” (*ya-tiao-le*) (Pai 232/ 156). This episode, then, has an additional supplemental role in the plot of the story. It not only furthers the action taken up with discussions about Chinese drama, it also suggests the notions of tryst and the notion of one’s voice failing. It thus adds to the evidence that a tryst occurred between Madame Ch’ien and Cheng Yen-ch’ing, as it foreshadows Ch’ien’s eventual inability to sing.

The most complex allusion in the novella is its title. “Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream” literally refers to the action of the plot, the singing of the first aria “Wandering in the Garden” by Mrs. Hsü, followed by Madame Ch’ien’s loss of her voice just before she planned to sing the latter part, “Waking from a Dream.” But the reason for Madame Ch’ien’s refusal to sing is made clear only by decoding the complex set of allusions embroidered into the text along with crucial information that surfaces in her interior monologue, the significance of which does not seem to be fully apparent even to her. What surfaces in the interior monologue is Madame Ch’ien’s deeply seated guilt over the affair she had while married to General Ch’ien, even though her tryst with Cheng Yen-ch’ing only occurred once. In this regard, the social satire is quite apparent. Madame Ch’ien is depicted as a victim for having married General Ch’ien, since, as he explained, his attraction to her centered on her lovely way of singing the aria from “Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream”:

Ch’ien P’eng-chih had told her that when he went back to Shanghai from Nanking after having heard her sing “Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream,” he thought about her day and night and simply couldn’t get her out of his mind. Eventually he returned and married her. He had told her all along that if only he could have her by his side to amuse him with singing a few bars from his favorite K’un-shan opera, he would be content for the remaining years of his life. (Pai 228-229/ 152-153)

Starved for love, then, Madame Ch’ien did have an affair with Cheng Yen-ch’ing, which is revealed in her interior monologue. But it was “just one time,” a phrase repeated several times over a number of pages, implying not only that she made love with Cheng once, but that it was the only time she made love in her life. The echoing of this aria in her mind, and things such as “spring fever” (*ch’un-ch’ing*) and “unspoken discontent” (*huai-jen yu-yüan*) (incidentally, this *yu-yüan* is homophonic with the aria title “Wandering in the Garden”) dredges up those deeply submerged feelings of guilt for having once indulged her suppressed passion. This suppression finds its stylistic equivalent in Pai Hsien-yung’s suppression of the name of the only man she ever loved. It is this suppression, moreover, that Pai Hsien-yung hopes to convey to

the reader by encoding the story's signification in complex patterns of intertextual and intratextual webs.

III

There can be no question that, as Yüan Liang-chün has persuasively argued, the allusive quality of Pai's text means that "if it were not for the inspiration of *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, with its 'drama within a drama,' and without the K'un-chü drama 'Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream,' there could not be a short story 'Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream' either" (Yüan 102). Nevertheless, we should contemplate the complex political and aesthetic implications of the supplemental use of allegory in Pai's fiction. The information "added onto" the story by the layering of allusion is certainly essential to grasp the surface meaning of the text. We are able to use it to piece together the fact that Madame Ch'ien had an affair with someone in Nanking prior to the Nationalists' retreat. Thus, on one level, like the deep desire to retrieve a lost love, the story could indicate something larger for the "collective conscious" (Lau) or perhaps one could say the "collective unconscious" of the Chinese people exiled from the mainland. On this level the gesture of molding rich allusion into the work reflects not only the technique of Modernism but the ideology as well: Pai Hsien-yung has worked to reinscribe himself back into the Chinese literary tradition through this investment in the autonomy and authenticity of the pure aesthetic form. The reader is implicated in this project as well, since the literate public, those most likely to respond to Pai's work, are given a chance to re-member the experience of their recent past, to "work through" the historical subtext accomplished during the activity of reading. This notion of "working through" is a stage in Freud's dream work, another influential aspect of Modernist ideology (Collier 22-23). An effort must be made to build on Benedict Anderson's thesis and consider the apparatus of national allegory in literature itself, to ask how a national identity for elite groups of readers is enforced even if, or perhaps by virtue of, the fractured notion of an ontological entity known as "China." But this imagined community is reinforced and molded by the paradoxes and reversals, on forgetting as well as remembering. That Pai Hsien-yung is a writer living in the diaspora, not a "Taiwan writer," is conveniently forgotten by many China experts. Anderson's thesis affords the reader a chance to remember the cultural, literary, and national heritage, which has been in turmoil in the twentieth century, and to remember it simultaneously with the apprehension of the historical present. This apprehension relies on the conflicting notions of dread and desire that are inherent in the uncanny, or as Elizabeth Wright has said, the sense that "the real wish remains hidden" (Wright 273). This is certainly the case for Madame Ch'ien, for whom the feared

object is also the object of ultimate desire, revealed to the reader only during what is properly called a stream-of-unconscious. Pai Hsien-yung's position is equally implicated in this problematic, since as someone writing in the postcolonial diaspora of contemporary intellectuals, confronting problems similar to Salmon Rushdie, Derek Walcott, and Chinua Achebe, he appropriates Modernism as a means to textually suture the wounds of exile. How ironic, yet how fitting, that this most allusive text in contemporary Chinese literature should be written on the margin.

Most important in this regard is the nexus of sexuality and nationality, since the constitution of feminine subjectivity is always already out of reach for the male writer, especially when this depiction involves probing into the supposed most intimate recess of femininity. Madame Ch'ien's interior monologue recalling her tryst with a lover back in Nanking, that frenzied jumble of repressed utterances operating on the unconscious level, is a fascinating example of textual jouissance. The insight for the writer is located precisely in the most hidden recess; this pure otherness of consciousness for Pai Hsien-yung is also the seat of desire, if we remember the home from which he is exiled. This secret can only be unveiled through a careful analysis of the text, but it is always already there. This bizarre or uncanny scene is precisely the return of that familiar thing "old-established in the mind that has been estranged only by the process of repression" (Freud 47). By rendering Madame Ch'ien silent at that crucial moment in the story when she is about to sing, Pai Hsien-yung has problematized this representation of the Other. The "subaltern" is spoken to and spoken for, but she does not speak, just as Madame Ch'ien does not sing (Spivak).

What may also be repressed is the complicated problematic surrounding the position of the critic within the analysis of the literature, complicated because the tropes and techniques are not necessarily "native" to the Chinese tradition, while the substance of the allusions is. The discursive flow of power has continued to be one from "First world" to "Third world." The apparatus for constituting subjectivity has its discursive roots in the West as well. Thus the analysis seems to correspond neatly with the analysand—unless, of course, one considers the historical subtext. It is precisely the historical subtext that is being aestheticized. The neat analysis of this text, valorizing the female psyche of Madame Ch'ien, emphasizing the private over the public, occluding the historical significance, is possible only with a repression of the discursive and ideological nature of the whole project. Allegory has been the means through which the theme of exile is encoded within the theme of sexual desire, and it resurfaces with a transference of the analysis back onto the historical subtext itself. The desire of the Western reader to engage in this analysis, then, may perhaps stem from a recognition of what is familiar, Western discourse, masked within the exotic other. Modernism in the Chinese context therefore may be a counterhegemonic

force to rework what is familiar until it is unfamiliar, for in the logic of Modernism the unfamiliar, as dreadful as it may be, contains the allure of that place from which "we" were once banished.

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GLOSSARY

"Che-hsien chi"	"謫仙記"
<i>Hsien-tai wen-hsüeh</i>	《現代文學》
huai-jen yu-yüan	懷人幽怨
"I-pa-ch'ing"	"一把青"
"Lo-shen fu"	"洛神賦"
<i>Mu-tan-t'ing</i>	《牡丹亭》
<i>Niu-yüeh-k'o</i>	《紐約客》
Ou-yang Tzu	歐陽子
Pai Hsien-yung	白先勇
<i>Taipei jen</i>	《臺北人》
T'ang Hsien-tsu	湯顯祖
<i>Wen-hsüeh chi-k'an</i>	《文學季刊》
Yao I-wei	姚一葦
Yen Yüan-shu	顏元叔
Yü Li-hua	於梨華
"Yu-yüan ching-meng"	"游園驚夢"
yüan-nieh	冤孽
"Yung-yüan-ti Yin Hsüeh-yen"	"永遠的尹雪艷"