

Un défi aux chercheurs: Une poétique des poétiques

Mon métier de comparatiste et mon origine franco-allemande m'ont placé au centre d'une question qui n'est pas seulement difficile pour l'intelligence, mais aussi douloureuse pour le coeur: celle de l'unité et de la diversité culturelle des êtres humains. Les hommes sont-ils surtout semblables ou surtout différents? Les variations sont-elles superficielles ou profondes? Sont-elles négligeables comme les irrégularités à la surface d'une orange, ou bien s'agit-il de crevasses qui vont jusqu'au coeur du fruit?

Dans cette optique, il me semble urgent, au début du XXI^e siècle et en pleine mondialisation technologique, de comprendre que la littérature comparée est confrontée à un défi, celui de savoir si oui ou non on parle partout de la même chose lorsqu'on parle de poétique, si c'est le pluriel des cultures qui l'emporte ou s'il y a un singulier sous ce pluriel, un singulier suffisamment solide pour y construire le concept d'art littéraire. J'ai proposé au seizième congrès de l'AILC une communication sur la poétique, parce que, si les peuples réussissent à mieux se comprendre en matière de littérature, c'est encourageant pour une entente plus globale et finalement pour la paix. Mais le mot "défi" qui est dans mon titre est là pour rappeler combien cela est difficile et combien sournois est le désir de réduire l'autre à soi.

Je donnerai ici une acception large à ce mot de "poétique". Je m'appuierai sur Valéry, la définissant comme "tout ce qui a trait à la création ou à la composition d'ouvrages dont le langage est à la fois la substance et le moyen", et refusant "le sens restreint de recueil de règles ou de préceptes esthétiques concernant la poésie". La formule de "poétique des

poétiques” a été volontairement choisie pour mettre en valeur la recherche générale, planétaire, humaine impliquée par Valéry (1945: 291).

En bonne méthode, il n'est pas possible de partir à la recherche d'une poétique des poétiques sans s'imposer au préalable des contraintes épistémologiques. J'en verrais trois qui sont des conditions *a priori*.

- (1) La première exige un vocabulaire et des concepts adaptés à l'ensemble de l'humanité. Cela signifie que la poétique des poétiques doit éviter soigneusement de recourir au langage critique d'une civilisation donnée. Cette règle est sans doute draconienne parce que le langage des poétiques et des critiques littéraires de nos différentes civilisations est précis, raffiné, forgé par des siècles de réflexion. Il y a, en particulier, en Occident, au XXe siècle, un goût immodéré pour un vocabulaire technique qui n'est pas directement applicable aux autres civilisations.

La nécessité d'un vocabulaire planétaire non spécifique à une civilisation se démontre tout bonnement par le fait que tout (ou presque tout—et ce “presque” sera finalement ce qui donnera une solution à notre défi) ce qui est littéraire est le résultat d'un choix culturel témoignant de l'inventivité des hommes à un moment donné de leur histoire. Ces choix concernent les thèmes traités, les formes utilisées, les goûts préférés par la littérature de même que les fonctions qui lui sont assignées. Quand on compare les arts poétiques d'auteurs de la planète (les seuls que j'envisage ici), on s'aperçoit non seulement qu'ils sont multiples, mais qu'ils se contredisent. Sur terre, la beauté littéraire est résolument plurielle.

Non seulement elle l'est, mais elle est sous-tendue par une autre pluralité, celle des choix de civilisation qui sont plus profonds encore, qui sont des grilles de lecture du monde, des choix religieux, philosophiques, moraux et sociaux. Pour s'en persuader, il suffit de comparer l'importance de l'ontologie en Occident, de la mutation en Chine, du karma et de l'illumination en Inde, de l'énergie en Afrique. Ainsi lorsque James Y. Liu, l'auteur des *Chinese Theories of Literature* a écrit son livre, il s'est appuyé sur une grille de

lecture empruntée à M. H. Abrams, une grille occidentale dans laquelle les poétiques chinoises ne sont pas à l'aise. Autrement dit, s'il faut se méfier des vocabulaires critiques, c'est parce qu'ils s'insèrent dans des langues qui ne font pas les mêmes choix conceptuels d'un point à l'autre de la planète.

Mais le principe draconien dont je parlais à l'instant entraîne encore une autre conséquence draconienne: La poétique des poétiques que nous cherchons ne peut jamais être dite dans une poétique particulière, elle est seulement le lieu commun, tacite, le non-dit à partir duquel les poétiques réelles sont possibles. Et elle ne peut pas être dite parce que tous les auteurs qui font une poétique ont pour principal souci—j'y reviendrai—de faire la théorie de leur propre talent, de leur propre style. De même que la vie, en biologie, ne peut être définie à partir d'une espèce donnée, mais à partir de ce qui est commun à toutes les espèces, le phénomène littéraire n'est pas définissable par extrapolation d'un style donné, mais à partir de ce qui est commun à tous les styles—et qui n'est donc pas un style!

- (2) La deuxième contrainte épistémologique, à vrai dire déjà impliquée dans la première, concerne la distinction entre la nature et la culture. Je sais que les théories sont ici nombreuses et parfois polémiques. Mais les contestations ne portent pas sur le fait qu'il y a une nature humaine, celle d'*homo sapiens* qui est singulière et des cultures plurielles se définissant comme l'élaboration créatrice de l'humain à partir du donné de la nature humaine. Ainsi, par exemple, ce qui est naturel, c'est l'aptitude à la parole, ce qui est culturel, ce sont les langues, ce qui est naturel, c'est l'interrogation sur l'au-delà des apparences, ce qui est culturel, ce sont les mythes et les religions, ce qui est naturel, c'est le goût de la fiction, ce qui est culturel, ce sont les genres. Or l'anthropologie contemporaine a montré qu'il n'y a pas de coupure brutale entre nature et culture; il y a une zone de rencontre, d'influence réciproque, en un mot d'interpénétration. Une zone que l'on peut appeler, avec Edgar Morin, "bio-culturelle". La culture pousse ses racines dans le terreau de la nature avant d'en dégager comme un arbre ses libres frondaisons qui lui renvoient

pendant en le modifiant légèrement ses feuilles, ses fruits et son bois.

- (3) La troisième contrainte *a priori* exige donc que le non-dit des poétiques particulières soit dans cette zone intermédiaire entre la nature et la culture. Afin de vous épargner un nouveau discours abstrait, permettez-moi de développer ce point à partir de l'exemple du théâtre. Vous savez combien les poétiques théâtrales sont différentes. Les uns jouent avec masque, les autres sans, les uns jouent à ciel ouvert, les autres dans une sorte de boîte, les uns cherchent la vraisemblance, les autres la fuient dans la féerie, le fantastique, le grotesque ou l'absurde, les uns respectent la chronologie, les autres la bouleversent. On ne fait pas à Bali le même théâtre qu'à Paris. Une pièce classique du théâtre indien, fondée sur le *Natyasastra* est presque complètement différente d'une tragédie classique européenne, du théâtre Nô ou du Kabuki.

On pourrait donner des pages et des pages d'exemples. Mais si l'on cherche la base du théâtre dans la zone où nature et culture se rencontrent, on s'aperçoit que le lieu commun non pas de toutes les esthétiques théâtrales mais de leur possibilité à toutes est simplement la présence de l'acteur. Ce qui est naturel dans cette définition, c'est l'homme parlant (*homo loquax*) et l'homme joueur (*homo ludens*) et l'homme social (*homo socius*). Ces caractéristiques sont des invariants planétaires naturels. Ce qui maintenant est déjà culturel dans le théâtre, c'est la volonté de réunir la parole et le jeu devant des hommes rassemblés. Dès lors l'acteur est né. A mesure qu'on progresse dans le culturel, les choix sont de plus en plus précis et de plus en plus contradictoires, mais ils se font toujours suivant des axes qui ne sont pas sans lien avec la nature. C'est ainsi que la "présence" implique le traitement du temps qui peut se faire de plusieurs manières et que l'"acteur" implique non seulement toutes les possibilités du style parlé, mais toutes celles du jeu (costumes, expression corporelle, décor, architecture). Enfin, la "présence de l'acteur" implique celle du public qui est très riche du point de vue dramaturgique parce qu'elle permet ces paradigmes que sont l'aveu affiché ou caché du jeu, le regard naïf ou voyeur du public, sa participation ou sa non-participation. Définir le théâtre par la présence de l'acteur, ce

n'est donc pas dire tout ce qu'a été et est le théâtre, mais tout ce qu'il peut être et encore devenir. C'est une définition planétaire; elle n'est pas l'objet des poétiques connues du théâtre; elle y apparaît cependant fugitivement et elle y est toujours impliquée; elle respecte les conditions épistémologiques posées; elle peut servir de modèle à la poétique des poétiques cherchée.

Muni de ces précautions, on peut passer maintenant à la quête proprement dite d'une poétique des poétiques. Puisque le pluriel des cultures n'est pas coupé du singulier de la nature humaine, cette nature apparaît fugitivement, de-ci de-là, au détour d'un paragraphe dans les poétiques réelles. Un auteur, en effet, qui écrit une poétique se préoccupe avant tout, je le répète, de parler de son propre talent, de dire son originalité et, éventuellement, de la justifier par rapport à une autre école ou à une autre génération. C'est donc ici le plus souvent le pluriel du beau qui est exprimé. Lorsque Victor Hugo rédige la préface de *Cromwell*, son projet est de défendre sa pièce, de justifier ses audaces par rapport aux classiques et de donner une dramaturgie à la jeune école romantique dont il fait partie. Il ne pense pas à une éventuelle poétique des poétiques. Cependant, il est homme et artiste et cela transparait.

Cette hypothèse m'a conduit à comparer de ce point de vue toutes les poétiques que j'ai pu lire ou découvrir dans des études spécialisées. Le domaine de l'histoire des poétiques qui a été l'objet de ma thèse est encore restreint et récent, mais il commence à donner des fruits qui, même s'ils n'ont pas mûri en vue d'une poétique planétaire sont cependant très utiles par les analyses et les citations qu'ils donnent. Je ne prétends pas à l'exhaustivité pour l'instant, mais j'espère qu'il sera bientôt possible de fabriquer le CDROM de toutes les poétiques de la terre. Ce serait un instrument merveilleux pour les chercheurs (A côté des travaux de Marekwardt, Wellek, Molho, Nivelles ou Marino et de beaucoup d'autres cités dans mon *Pluriel du beau* pour le domaine occidental, j'ai utilisé principalement ceux de Liu, Julien, Cheng, Debon, Fisk, Yen Yü, Yugen Wang, Detrie et le *Brotherhood in Song* pour le domaine chinois, de Renou, De, Gerow, Bonsat-Boudon, Gnoli pour le domaine indien, Bencheikh, Kilito, Khawam pour le domaine arabe et Senghor, G. Calame-Griaule, Colin, Chevrier pour le domaine de l'Afrique traditionnelle, sans oublier la synthèse de l'AILC, l'*Histoire des poétiques* et celle de la *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*).

Techniquement, la comparaison a consisté à effacer toutes les affirmations contradictoires entre elles. La question était de savoir s'il resterait quelque chose après les éliminations successives. Dans la mesure où tous les choix de thèmes, de formes, de fonctions et de goûts sont originaux et exclusifs les uns des autres on pouvait craindre qu'il ne resterait rien. Au lieu de l'angoisse de la page blanche, j'avais celle de la page effacée! Mais l'espoir était que s'il y a un invariant dans la zone où nature et culture se rencontrent, les auteurs qui le vivent forcément parce qu'ils sont des créateurs, ne pourraient pas le taire ou au moins ne pas le contredire.

A force de comparer les textes et en cherchant surtout dans les marges et toujours avec l'idée de respecter mes trois contraintes *a priori*, j'ai découvert un invariant au niveau de l'effet de l'oeuvre littéraire sur le lecteur, l'auditeur ou le spectateur. Ce domaine ne concerne aucun des quatre éléments qui sont nécessairement multiples; c'est un cinquième élément, celui de la réception; c'est l'aptitude naturelle, universelle de l'esprit à se pénétrer totalement, dans certaines circonstances de ce qui est dit par un texte. Or cet invariant est défini par les auteurs très simplement et très précisément comme un effet de vie.

L'effet de vie a lieu lorsque le lecteur met sa propre vie en sommeil et que le texte a le pouvoir d'investir à la fois toutes les facettes de sa psyché. Le texte réussi, le beau texte ou le grand texte possède un certain nombre de techniques d'ambiguïté, de plurivalence, de suggestion, de valeurs allusives, de dhvani et de figures de styles comme la métaphore qui créent dans l'esprit des transferts ou transports de sens, d'images, ou d'émotions. Il institue des réseaux de rythmes, de sonorités, de mise en page et de calligraphie créant des concordances formelles qui investissent toute la psyché tout en lui apportant une cohérence bénéfique. L'effet de vie, c'est lorsqu'un texte ne s'adresse ni à l'intellect, ni à l'imagination, ni à l'affectivité, ni à la sensualité, mais à toutes ces facultés à la fois. C'est aussi lorsqu'il a l'art de s'ouvrir aux richesses psychiques du lecteur pour collaborer avec elles. Il s'agit donc de toute une alchimie du cerveau ou, comme l'a dit magnifiquement le poète français Baudelaire, d'une "sorcellerie évocatoire".

Au moment où j'évoque la liste des facultés, on peut m'arrêter et me dire que j'utilise une taxinomie occidentale. Effectivement. Un indien en utiliserait une toute différente. Il parlerait de rati et de sringara, de hasa ou

de hasya, de soka ou de karuna. Mais peu importe la classification puisqu'il s'agit de les rencontrer toutes!

Je ne puis évidemment pas ouvrir ici le fichier que j'ai constitué au cours des années et dont je suis sur le point de publier l'essentiel et d'en tirer les conclusions. Voici cependant quelques exemples. Dans la préface de *Cromwell*, justement, on trouve trace de l'effet de vie. "L'art feuillette la vie", écrit Hugo (1968: 90)

feuillette la nature [...] revêt le tout d'une forme poétique et naturelle à la fois, et lui donne cette vie de vérité et de saillie qui enfante l'illusion, ce prestige de réalité qui passionne le spectateur, et le poète le premier, car le poète est de bonne foi. Ainsi le but de l'art est presque divin; ressusciter, s'il fait de l'histoire, créer, s'il fait de la poésie

Or, la préface de *Cromwell* est une oeuvre de jeunesse. Mais à l'autre bout de la réflexion théorique de sa vie, Hugo (1973:191) reprend la même idée dans son fameux *William Shakespeare* à propos de tout autre chose, à propos des types:

puissance de la toute poésie! Les types sont des êtres. Ils respirent, ils palpitent, on entend leur pas sur les planches, ils existent. Ils existent d'une existence plus intense que n'importe qui, là, se croyant vivant dans la rue. Ces fantômes ont plus de densité que les hommes. Il y a dans leur essence cette quantité d'éternité qui appartient aux chefs-d'oeuvre et qui fait que Trimalcion vit et que M. Romieu est mort.

Il y a des centaines de textes de la même encre dans tous les arts poétiques de l'Occident. Ils disent à la fois l'effet de vie et son moyen, la plurivalence, comme ce passage de *La Défense et illustration de la langue française* de Du Bellay (1948: 314):

Sache lecteur, que celui véritablement sera le poète que je cherche en notre langue, qui me fera indigner, apaiser, éjouir, douloir, aimer, haïr, admirer, étonner, bref qui tiendra la bride de mes affections, me tournant çà et là à son plaisir. Voilà la vraie pierre de touche où il faut que tu éprouves tous poèmes et en toutes langues.

La méthode des invariants demande évidemment que l'on corrige certains textes par d'autres car il faut tenir compte des déformations que chaque civilisation introduit dans le principe général, ainsi que des humeurs des auteurs, de leurs préjugés et surtout des limites de leur documentation. Certains attribuent l'effet de vie à la poésie seulement, d'autres au théâtre d'autres encore seulement au style ou à l'école qu'ils défendent. Il y a ceux qui n'imaginent pas, comme le héros des *Lettres persanes* que l'on puisse être persan et ceux qui pensent que le climat du nord de l'Europe n'est pas favorable aux artistes. Toutes les coordonnées de l'effet de vie forment, en fait, sur un graphique, un nuage de points que la pratique de la statistique nous permet de rapporter à un centre qui n'est peut-être jamais dit en tant que tel par un auteur précis, mais qui est l'endroit où les "points" sont plus denses.

L'effet de vie se trouve aussi en Chine. Le poète Bo Juyi (772-846), le grand poète, ami de Yuan Zhen, qui destinait ses vers mêmes aux nourrices donne en quelques mots un aperçu de la genèse d'une poésie (cité par Liu, 1975: 29):

Le sage émeut le coeur des hommes et alors le monde est en paix. En émouvant le coeur des hommes, il n'y a rien qui précède l'émotion, rien qui ne commence pas par des mots, rien qui ne s'accorde pas à la musique et rien qui ne soit plus profond que le sens. Ce que nous appelons poésie a l'émotion pour racines, les mots pour bourgeons, la musique pour fleurs et le sens pour fruit.

Le vocabulaire de Bo Juyi est fort différent de celui de Du Bellay de même que son propos. Nous sommes dans une autre civilisation. Pourtant qui ne voit que ces deux auteurs parlent de la même chose, de l'effet du bon texte sur une psyché par le biais d'un investissement de toutes ses facettes. Yuan Mei, un poète moderne du XVIIIe siècle exprime lui aussi l'idée de la plurivalence de la poésie. Si les mots du poète "émeuvent le coeur, si ses couleurs éblouissent les yeux, si son goût plaît à la bouche et si ses sons enchantent les oreilles, alors, c'est de la bonne poésie" (Yuan Mei, cité et traduit par J.Y. Liu 1975:136). D'ailleurs, ce qui fait l'originalité des poétiques chinoises, c'est le pouvoir d'un texte d'utiliser le support de signes graphiques et sonores pour créer un système d'échos prolongés qui viennent de et qui vont vers la nature extérieure, la subjectivité des hommes,

leur vie morale politique et sociale, le Vide, enfin, l'Indéfinissable dont tout procède. Nous sommes en plein effet de vie, mais combien différemment de l'Occident!

Les mêmes idées sont dans toutes les poétiques; on les trouve assez facilement dès que l'on tient compte de l'hétérogénéité des langages et pour peu qu'on accepte que le traitement des documents ne peut se faire en sciences humaines d'une manière aussi rigoureuse que dans les sciences dites exactes. Voici, par exemple un texte du chantre malien du Komo cité par L.-V. Thomas et H.El Nouty dans l'*Encyclopaedia Universalis* (tome 1, entrée "Afrique noire", 1^e éd. 1968) :

La parole est tout.
Elle coupe, écorche.
Elle modèle, module.
Elle perturbe, rend fou.
Elle guérit ou tue net.
Elle amplifie, abaisse selon sa charge.
Elle excite ou calme les âmes.

Qui ne voit que, *mutatis mutandis*, la parenté de ce texte avec celui de Du Bellay est criante. On dirait presque qu'ils se sont donné le mot tellement ils se ressemblent. Pourtant Du Bellay n'aurait jamais dit que la "parole tue". C'est que l'animisme africain qu'on retrouve évidemment dans les poétiques les fait aller plus loin que les autres civilisations. Il prolonge l'effet de vie jusque dans l'action ce qui n'est pas le cas dans les autres civilisations.

Je pourrais continuer longtemps si j'avais plus de temps. Mais je ne puis passer sous silence l'étonnante contribution de l'Inde. La théorie indienne met d'entrée de jeu au centre de sa poétique l'idée de réception, l'idée que l'oeuvre réussie provoque un effet de *rasa*, effet de saveur, de plaisir esthétique, de plénitude comme un jus qui éclate dans la bouche. Le *rasa*, c'est l'actualisation patente des sentiments latents de la psyché selon la conception indienne qui en fait la nomenclature. Le *rasa* est la manière originale dont l'Inde a pensé l'effet de vie, l'effet, pour citer Abhinavagupta, qui fait apparaître les choses "aussi clairement que si nous en avions une perception directe" (*Kavyakautuka*, cité par L. Bansat-Boudon, 100). Quant au concept concurrent, le *dhvani*, il a souvent été rapproché du *rasa* par les Indiens eux-mêmes. Il s'agit de la force de suggestion d'un texte, qui fait

que la chose dite est au fond plus présente dans la psyché que dans le texte. En fait, le *rasa* et le *dhvani* forment un couple de mon point de vue; l'un définit le phénomène littéraire par l'effet, l'autre donne le plus important des moyens de cet effet.

En somme, la comparaison des arts poétiques d'auteurs est sans doute originale à plusieurs titres. Elle indique d'abord que l'intuition naïve des dictionnaires qui rapprochent les mots de "wen", de "bungaku", de "kavya", de "adab", de "littérature" et de "parole huilée", (car j' aime beaucoup cette expression africaine) renvoient tous à un invariant humain peu visible sans doute mais réel, impliqué dans le travail créateur des écrivains auquel il ne peuvent s'empêcher de faire allusion dans leurs arts poétiques même lorsqu'ils n'ont pas de synthèse planétaire en vue.

Elle permet de sortir de l'aberration du relativisme absolu qui justifie tout et n'importe quoi en art. Il y a un pluriel du beau, c'est certain, mais il y a aussi un singulier de l'art, ce dernier étant la base des beaux possibles.

Elle montre que le sens esthétique que les philosophes ont tant cherché en direction d'un sixième sens ou d'une vérité spirituelle ou encore dans des formes n'existe pas en tant que tel. Ce qu'on appelle en général la beauté (en se désespérant, je le dis par parenthèse, de ne savoir que faire des oeuvres qui sont belles par la laideur), c'est en fait, tout simplement, un effet psychique de plénitude, d'investissement total et cohérent par un certain nombre de techniques qui sont très différentes dans les différentes littératures, mais qui ont toutes le même but sur le plan de la réception et qui font plaisir.

Elle ouvre enfin de larges perspectives à la recherche comparée puisqu'il est clair que le traitement de tous les documents où les auteurs parlent de leur création ne peut vraiment devenir une science par l'effort d'un seul chercheur. Mais je vous demanderai en attendant de garder en mémoire cette hypothèse que l'œuvre réussie est celle qui, sachant déclencher dans l'esprit un système d'échos multiples, l'investit tout entier sous la forme d'un effet de vie. C'est là, peut-être, notre poétique des poétiques.

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Postcolonial Studies and Multiculturalism Talk in Taiwan: Issues in Critical Debates

We are a flock of sad birds,/The name is Magpie./Morning sees tears on our cheeks;/At night elegies become our lullabies./No matter how hard we beat our wings,/Happiness, honour, and dignity/Are forever out of reach. /The nests we built in pain/Have already been occupied by vultures.

(Mo Na-neng 1989:22)

Mo Na-neng, a blind Taiwanese poet of the *paiwan* (one of the nine to thirteen ethnic minority groups), opens this lyric “Listen to Me, You Magpies” with a reference to a classical Chinese myth of the vulture, an aggressive newcomer. It is clear from the first stanza just quoted that the poem is about displacement and low self-esteem among the aborigines in present-day Taiwan. The tone is melancholic and even mournful; however, the speaker does not despair. He urges his people to know the true character of vultures and to have confidence in traditional forms of life. Toward the end of the poem, he cautions, “tears only introduce more trauma;/lack of self-respect would bring in more humiliation;/and reconciliation quickens the pace toward destruction” (Mo Na-neng 1989:24). As an utterance of radical and real multiculturalism the poem advocates a compassionate use of inspired responses to improve situations of crisis. As a result, it doesn’t speculate on possible ways to prevent majority tyranny, to interrogate the dominant ideology, or to take seriously the diversity and multiplicity of cultures. On the contrary, it rejects the doctrine of tolerance and of plurality. For it is but a rhetoric of violence legitimating the act of taking over other peoples’ nests, another form of subordination and subjugation forcing the aborigines to compromise or to yield. The urgent message is that the aborigines are on the verge of extinction, unless they pull themselves

together and develop the art of survival to protect their identity in addition to winning recognition.

While protesting against physical and symbolic violence of the Han Chinese-vultures in the poem, the speaker resorts to a classical Chinese literary motif. In an attempt to resist the majority tyranny and thereby to consolidate aboriginal identity, the poet finds himself in an awkward discursive situation. He has little choice except writing in Chinese, a common language, to communicate with his fellow men and alluding to a famous episode in the *Book of Songs* about the miserable condition of an ex-wife to make the point. Not only is the magpie-vulture frame used to illuminate the social condition of the aborigines, but the Chinese ideology of reclamation and of the desire for family reunion is appropriated, if not given a new twist. For under the guise of magpies, the aborigines are not just driven out of their homes. They have been cheated and exploited, their women violated or sold, and the indigenous systems of cultural signification almost completely erased. By employing the magpie-vulture allegorical device Mo actually suggests that what has happened between the aborigines and the Han Chinese is much more brutal than the family feuds recorded in an ancient lyric. He pushes the allegory even further by implying that the aborigines constitute the racial Others to the Han and that magpies are not of the same subspecies as vultures. That may be why the speaker of the poem asks his readers, more specifically, young aboriginal cultural workers, to tell the difference between white and black.

Black and White Multiculturalism

However, the linguistic means, literary reference, and structure of the poem appear to be indebted to the expressive culture of the dominant group. For the minority to be able to come up with resistance literature, they must have always been enabled and disabled by a sense of inadequacy and a colonial history of cultural pollution. The symbolic act of “writing back” is itself informed from the very beginning by an impossibility to really tell the difference between black and white. At this point, I shall turn to a local (albeit it not really local) writer, who observes in a very different context:

White is not really a colour. Too often it's only dead light. Unless you can turn it over and show what's underneath or let the layered colours shimmer

through the veil or pull the eye to notice how it fits in or froths over non-light. Black has potentially a richer surface. Shapes are brought attention by shadows which act as echoes, and these are not usually black. White can be a darkness. (Breytenbach 1993:55)

Thus Breyten Breytenbach, the celebrated albeit controversial South African writer, “on the background” of his paintings. What I want to do in the paper is to show the bright as well as dark sides of multiculturalism talk in Taiwan, so as to let the layered colours shimmer through. It is my hope that some of the issues raised in the essay can be of interest to the audience here. For superficially speaking, Taiwan’s colonial and postcolonial historical trajectories can be said to share a number of features with those of South Africa. In both countries, for instance, the majority groups had undergone the minoritising or apartheid processes under various colonial regimes in terms of subject matter, ideology, and style. Thus Han writing produced in Taiwan and on Taiwan seems to resonate with what J.M. Coetzee has said about white writing in South Africa, especially on the subject of lazy, backward, and uncivilised natives. Writers of both cultures have been forced to deploy their textual strategies in relation to censorship and political persecution (Coetzee 1990, 1996). And the situation doesn’t seem to improve in the age of so-called “post-colonialism”, as the multiculturalism talk in Taiwan is mostly talk about power struggles among the Chinese, Minnan, and Hakkar populations. The issues raised more often than not concern the redistribution of power among the three leading ethnic groups rather than real minority peoples and their cultural rights. Only in passing would the proponents of multiculturalism address the interests of the aborigines, so as to highlight the majority tyranny over the other major ethnic groups—for instance, Han Chinese chauvinism, Minnan chauvinism, etc.. That is to say, the prevalent anxieties of the Han Chinese over the aboriginal groups who have refused to be assimilated are now being displaced by new fears that Chinese and Hakkar would soon become minorities themselves. Within such discourse the aborigines serve as “shadows” and the “invisible”, to rephrase Breytenbach and Foucault, that help focus attention on the shape or order of things. And on top of these already complex forms of cultural and racial politics, there is an ever threatening presence—China—which almost dictates the terms of

multiculturalism and of postcolonialism talk in Taiwan. To political leaders of the PRC, all the peoples on the tiny island—the so-called “renegade province”—are to be one, and to be eventually unified by China. Any talks of multiculturalism or postcolonialism would be informed by a sense of entrapment that Taiwan is nothing but “a state without nationhood”, a polity incapable of claiming its independence even though it has undergone several stages of decolonisation and kept refashioning itself in the process of democratisation. In this regard, the multiculturalism or postcolonialism talk in Taiwan is developed in a very different political context than that of South Africa, South Korea, or Algeria.

It is true that multiculturalism talk is becoming popular in the contemporary Taiwanese public sphere. Scholars, particularly those affiliated with the Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, are keen on “nominalising” the aborigines, adumbrating ways for the aborigines to reclaim their family names. Several of the aboriginal groups have recently won support from the new government that they will soon gain cultural autonomy and land rights. However, as tourism and capitalism have practically saturated the habitats as well as the habitus of the aborigines, the younger generations are increasingly in favour of postmodern urban hybrid cultures. This is most noticeable in such singers of aboriginal descent as the Power Station or Chang Hui-mei—whose MTV commercial for Coke was withheld (though not for long) because of the PRC’s anger with her performance at President Chen Shui-pen’s Inauguration. (I hasten to add that there have been singers reinventing their native ritualistic traditions; however, their impact on the CD-market is limited.) And to make things even worse, there are no more than ten aboriginal writers and even fewer aboriginal public intellectuals around, to make their voice heard (cf. Walis Nonan 2000:134-56). At this point, I would like to distinguish between liberal, Marxist, and critical multiculturalism. Whereas liberal multiculturalism stresses equality and its Marxist equivalent singles out inequality, critical multiculturalism is mainly concerned with the tactics of survival and the cultural agency of grouping.

With these differences in mind, we can go on to ask a series of questions. To begin: What can one make of the multiculturalism talk which often takes the form of postcolonialism or of “not-there-yet” in time-frames coexistent with those of the aborigines? How should real peoples respond to

such discourses of double displacement and marginalisation? But before venturing any answers, let me give you a general background of postcolonial studies in Taiwan and reflect on its implications for multiculturalism. I shall draw upon several recent debates to analyse their respective discursive positions with regard to the emergent critical regionalism and nationalism. While these debates are invariably tied to the cultural politics of place and identity, the issues raised can be of general interest to students of literature in other cultural contexts. For at the core of these debates, scholars are not just having a disagreement on what constitutes postcoloniality in Taiwan, but they are expressing discontent over critical frameworks as well as cultural translation mechanisms which help make these models available. My concerns are hence twofold, one theoretical, centring on the applicability of a “globalising” postmodern and postcolonial theory, and the other more pragmatic, in terms of the tensions of ethnic relations and conflict of interpretations in response to the factors which contribute to the build-up of tensions.

But when can Taiwan be said to have entered into the postcolonial phase? This is where the controversies begin. The orthodox view is that with the demise of Japanese rule in 1945 Taiwan has attained that stage. However, for many scholars and intellectuals in Taiwan, 1945 marks a tragic beginning, of yet another fifty years of KMT internal colonisation. To a large number of pro-unification nationalists, Taiwan still has a difficult time freeing itself from Japanese colonial legacies and American neocolonialism. They often point their finger at former President Lee Teng-hui and criticise him for his rather ambiguous attitudes in relation to Taiwan’s colonial and postcolonial histories. These diversifying discursive positions testify to the fact that there are gaps and lags among divergent ethnic groups living on the island who, because of their different racial heritage and colonial encounters, have had different senses of what constitutes Taiwanese modernity and coloniality. To more adequately describe the postcolonial condition in Taiwan, we will have to take into account the multiple and mutually contesting communalities and temporalities. For instance, the aborigines in Taiwan have been victims of different periods of foreign and domestic colonial cultures—Dutch, Spanish, southern Chinese, Japanese, and KMT. Their concern for cultural autonomy has almost never been addressed in the mainstream nationalism or

postcolonialism talk put forth by the Han scholars, who seem to be divided among themselves because of their ethnic background. For on the one hand, the “first-generation” mainland Chinese, who came with the KMT government around 1947, and their descendants would consider 1945 as a year of Taiwan’s decolonisation and hence of its postcolonialism. On the other hand, “local” Taiwanese—to be more precise, Minnan and Hakkar—scholars tend to refer to 1987, the year martial law was lifted, as a new era of postcoloniality. And all these critical opinions will become even more complex once the ongoing debates among first- and third-world academics are brought into play around the meaning of the terms: postcolonialism, postcolonial, and postcoloniality.

Postcolonial/Postcolonialism/Postcoloniality

Scholars such as Benita Parry, Arif Dirlik, Aijaz Ahmad, and many others have pointed out the pitfalls of literary postcolonialism. The argument has to do with their unease with the transhistorical theoretical account of a wide range of postcolonial experience across many areas, as provided by postcolonial critics like Gayatri Spivak; and Homi Bhabha; Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin who have succinctly summed up the debates as having differences in emphasis—either on “material effect” or on “discursive power” of colonialism. In a gesture to reconcile the two camps, they suggest that “any definition of post-colonialism needs to include a consideration of this wider set of local and specific ongoing concerns and practices”. “At the present time”, they warn,

no matter how we conceive of “the post-colonial” and whatever the debates around the use of the problematic prefix “post”, or the equally problematic hyphen, the grounding of the term in European colonialist histories and institutional practices, and the responses (resistant or otherwise) to these practices on the part of all colonised peoples, remain fundamental.

(Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 1998:189)

In other words, we need to pay attention to the materiality and locality of various kinds of post-colonial experience. Granted that, I hasten to point out that these three critics seem to base their observations solely on the effects of the formal European and British colonial empires. In their

framework, political differences between cultures are not only defined in relation to, but also subordinated to their temporal distance from European colonialism. Chinese, Arabic, Japanese, American, and other imperial powers are left out from their cultural map. In order to better comprehend the uneven trajectories of colonialism's cultures at a global scale, I propose we use the term "postcolonialism" as a concept which urges us to rethink the limitations of the Eurocentric aesthetic norms (cf. Mukherjee 1996:3-11). That way we may be able to develop certain perspectives with regard to our specific historical and geographical location. As manifested by several debates that concern me here, postcolonial studies in Taiwan become sites of discursive struggles in response to local constituencies and to global postmodern or neocolonial forces. For these postcolonial critics draw heavily on poststructuralism and postmodernism to challenge the old canonical texts from China and Europe. However, they also attempt to find ways to move beyond the "posts-s". Such is the case with the 1992 debate between Chiu Kuei-fen and Liao Chao-yang concerning the status of Taiwan as a postcolonial state. It originally took place at the 16th annual ROC Comparative Literature conference in 1992, but it soon developed into more critical exchange between the two in *Chungwai Literary Monthly*, a leading journal in the field, and won quite a bit of attention in the form of "the war between anti-essentialism and anti-anti-essentialism". Since Chiu is a female scholar from Chung-hsin University (Taichung) and Liao is a male critic at National Taiwan (Taipei), the debates are made more complex by gender and geography—the north vs. the south.¹

¹ Throughout the paper I use the Wade system, as it is the most popular mode in Taiwan. I put the family name first, following the common practice in most Chinese societies. The major texts include: Chiu Kuei-fen (1995) "Fa-hsien Taiwan": Chien-kuo Taiwan hou-chih-ming lung-shih (Rediscovering Taiwan: Constructing Taiwan's Postcolonial Discourse), paper delivered at the 16th Annual ROC Comparative Literature Conference, May 1992—"Cha-lung shi Taiwan-ren: Ta Liao chao-yang yu-kuan Taiwan hou-chih-ming te wen-ti (We Are all Taiwanese: Reply to Liao Chao-yang's Comments on Taiwan's Postcoloniality).—Liao Chao-yang, Commentary, *Tien-lu vu wen-hsueh chiao-hsueh* (Canon and New Methods of Teaching Literature).—Shih shi-pu-hsiang, hai-shih fu-pao-shih-hsiang (Confusion Won't Make a Fine Case).

Language and Memory Projects: Questions of the Agency

Of course, there have been a number of debates and critical responses in respect of Taiwan's postcolonial subjects before 1992. But they are often political in nature, invariably relating to the emergence of a civil society and to the Lee Tenghui era that in a sort of calm revolution moves towards localisation and strategic ambivalence about Taiwan's national identity. The crucial question raised in those debates is whether Taiwan, after the lifting of martial law, is to influence and eventually join PRC as a Chinese model of democratisation and consumerism, or to assert its own independence and to become a member of the UN. While these issues still play important roles in the 1992 debate, they are so reoriented as to adopt the methods of literary and cultural studies to explore the possibility of conceiving a postcolonial Taiwan. In the 1992 debate, Chiu Kuei-fen tried to define Taiwan as a multi-ethnic society in which different racial heritage strands are finally able to mix with the rise of Taiwanese consciousness. To Chiu, postcolonialism is a historical stage of collective memory retrieval and of nation rebuilding. That is to say, after fifty years of Japanese rule (1895-1945) and another fifty years of KMT internal colonisation, Taiwan is on its way to rewrite its national history. Chiu (1996:10) draws on Anthony D. Smith's theory to stress the importance of nationalists rediscovering and reinterpreting the communal past in order to regenerate the community. She relates the emerging memory project to literary and cultural fields in which Chinese orthodox texts are being brought into question. A crucial site of such discursive struggle is the ideological function of language as a medium of knowledge and power. For Chinese has been instituted as the official language by the K-government since 1945, but it is a mother tongue to only 15% of the population in Taiwan. Minnan and Hakkar are major ethnic groups — up to 83%; however, their languages are considered to be not only minor but also backward. At the bottom of the hierarchy the aboriginal languages are on the verge of extinction. In response to the cultural and political situations of the 90s, Taiwanese now urge "decolonisation of the language". They push forward textbook reform in the process of "re-placing

the language”, first by denying the privilege of Chinese and its power over other means of communication, and secondly by remoulding the vernacular culture and local dialects to new usages, in order to more adequately address social experience (Chiu, “Fa-hsien Taiwan”, 238). Chiu sees such decolonisation of the language already at work in a masterpiece of nativist literature, i.e., *Rose, Rose, I Love You* (*meikuei meikuei er yai ni*) by Wang Chen-he, published in 1984. There she finds many levels of polyglossic postcolonial utterances: appropriation of the official language, pidgin English, hybrid Taiwanese dialects, etc..

Chiu draws upon such poststructuralist notions as “decentering” and “syncretism” in her discussion of the postcolonial condition in present-day Taiwan. On the one hand, she cherishes language and memory retrieval projects, considering them to be an important part in the reconstituting of the imagined community. On the other hand, she criticises “essentialism” in the name of cultural hybridity. She writes, “[I]n the case of Taiwan, if its history is that of colonialism, its culture is hybrid and indeed transcultural in character” (“Fa-hsien Taiwan”, 240). “Since translanguality is a unique feature in the languages of Taiwan”, she continues, “we should rid ourselves of such myth as reclaiming the pure native language, as if uncontaminated by colonialism, in our attempt to debunk the ethnocentrism of colonial regimes”. This sort of postmodern gesture leads Chiu to confuse anti-colonialist resistance with essentialism or even ethnic fundamentalism. It is on this point that Liao Chao-yang takes her to task. While sympathetic to the memory and mother-tongue projects as laid out by Chiu, Liao finds Chiu’s postmodernist stance concerning anti-essentialism misleading. For Chiu seems to forget that Chinese is still the metropolitan language of power and that the stress on heterogeneity or multiplicity can be a hegemonic discursive strategy to subjugate as well as to suppress the Other. Liao teases out the warring forces between subjectivity reclamation and multilinguality talk in Chiu’s argument. To reclaim one’s cultural subjectivity involves struggle and resistance, whereas to stress hybridity is to move beyond opposition and to recognise the self in the other (cf. “Fa-hsien Taiwan”, 255). Almost in perpetual conflict, the two discursive positions, one assertive while the other reconciliatory, can be brought together only on the ground that postcolonialism is quite the same thing as postmodernism, i.e., the metropolitan power is decentred to give full voice to the marginal.

However, that is hardly the case in present-day Taiwan. As Anthony Appiah and Cornell West demonstrate in the Afro-American context, postmodernism is hardly the same as postcolonialism: cultural syncretism is but one co-optative strategy to trade in the local, to repackage it for the global market. In this regard, postmodernism is another form of neo-colonialism: or at least in complicity with the latter. Thus, Liao Chao-yang looks upon Chiu's view on cultural hybridity and impurity as a compromised and messed-up version of conservative albeit liberal multiculturalism. Apparently, Chiu is completely on the wrong track when she advocates that the mother-tongue-retrieval project aims to return to the primordial state of the language in its singularity and subalternity. To Liao Chao-yang, the reclamation is an ongoing process in which each ethnic group can only have a relative, rather than absolute, autonomy. The urgency of survival and of a critical multiculturalism in reaction to the potential danger of disappearance is not to be deterred by hybridity talk or such "melting-pot" discourse as "translinguality". Even the primary text that Chiu uses to make the point about linguistic hybridity is filled with colonial languages. For the protagonist in *Rose, Rose, I Love You* teaches the prostitutes English, so that they may serve American soldiers more efficiently. And throughout the text, the dominant language remains Chinese.

In her rebuttal to Liao's criticism, Chiu makes another attempt to define "cultural syncretism" by mainly relying on the work of Bakhtin and Bhabha, particularly the latter concerning such notions as "ambivalence" and "hybridity". She persists in resorting to hybrid and borderline cases, in order to appropriate and to subvert the metropolitan language of power. Here, one can detect the influence of cultural feminism on her discourse, more specifically the stress on textual strategies to transform the system of social signification from within and the tactics of "repetition with a signal difference" ("Fa-hsien Taiwan", 265). She also draws on African and Afro-American colonial discourse and postcolonial theory to make her point. However, the essay does not fare any better in winning over Liao Chao-yang, who employs a cloning metaphor to suggest that Chiu is creating a monstrous theoretical body that mimics and appropriates many things but actually resembles none of them. The question raised in his critical response concerns the adequacy of applying postcolonial theory to Taiwan studies. Liao distinguishes the British colonialism from the Chinese, indicating that

whereas the former subordinates the colonised—South Africans or Indians, for instance—the latter attempts to incorporate the minority or marginality to attain the goal of unification. In the case of Taiwan, a case made particularly complex by its relationships with China (PRC), colonialism is coupled with Chinese nationalism. The mass media, for example, are but one sector of the Chinese nationalist ideological apparatuses. In other words, postcolonial mimicry may be able to achieve sly civility, but as a strategy it is deployed by such Taiwanese statesmen as James Soong, the former provincial governor, to further strengthen the internal colonial rule, a rule that is approved ironically by the majority of Taiwanese. (He won 35% of the votes in the 2000 presidential election.) Unless we relate the Taiwan situation to the larger Chinese context, Taiwanese won't be, Liao argues, able to push forward a postcolonial Taiwan.

In advocating a postmodern notion of anti-essentialism, Chiu takes herself to be criticising “communitarian” conceptions of the self which view people as embedded in particular cultures, in contrast to more liberal conceptions of the self, which emphasise the ability of individuals to question and revise inherited ways of life. Yet it is of interest to note that Chiu also bases her argument on communitarianism to make the point about language and memory retrieval projects. One may say that Chiu actually falls prey to a “kaleidoscope or even bricolage of cultures”, in proposing that Taiwanese have not only adopted customs and cultural values of internal ethnic groups, but incorporated ideas and practices from other parts of the world—particularly from Japan and America. However, the fact that some Taiwanese eat Japanese food and listen to Peking opera does not mean that they cease to form a distinct culture. Chinese, one should not forget, is still the language of public and private schools, of court proceedings, and of the mass media. In his commentary on Charles Taylor's essay on nationalism and modernity Will Kymlicka suggests that

it is very difficult for languages to survive in modern industrialized societies unless they are used in public life [...] Given the spread of standardized education, the high demands for literacy in work, and widespread interaction with government agencies, any language that is not a public language becomes so marginalized that it is likely to survive only among a small elite, in isolated rural areas, or in a ritualized form, not as a living and developing language underlying a flourishing culture. (Kymlicka 1998:58)

The “mother-tongue” programme in Taiwan’s public schools does very little to guarantee the passing on of the languages and its associated traditions to the next generation, as the time allocated runs only from two to four hours per week. The “language retrieval” project is hence not without its problematic. But Chiu does raise the question if minority rights talk will encourage the “freezing” or “closure” of group identities, preventing people from adopting a wider perspective that takes into consideration the interests of other groups, from exercising the right to expand and challenge traditional values.

To do justice to the debates between Liao and Chiu, then, I should point out that Chiu’s approach is good for describing the loosening effects at the macro level, calling attention to the urgency of inter-ethnic and translingual dialogues in present-day Taiwan. By linking postcolonial theory with postmodernism, she aims to project emancipatory new significations of the hybrid within cultural difference. However, her view of language misleadingly posits unity and coherence among what are actually multiple contesting arenas of discursive regimes, subject positions, signifying practices, political interventions, public spheres, and conflicting significations of ethnicity and history. On the other hand, Liao provides us with a more discrete moral-political account at the micro level, privileging the local divisive particularism. He analyses the uneven intra-ethnic and cross-strait power relations, putting into question such postmodern notions as “heterogeneity”, “liberating fragmentation”, and “radical democracy”. His framework underestimates the expansive, border-crossing performative possibilities of everyday language use in relation to structural dynamics of the counter-publics. Not very helpful in conceptualising the social totality, he has a difficult time mapping the links among various discursive regimes or theorising intersubjectivity. For he often invokes a quasi-Zizekian account of the phantasmatic and exclusionary character of politicised collective identities, among them, “Taiwanese” or “Minnan”, to the dismay of Chinese nationalists.

Postcolonialism or Postmodernism?

Not surprising, these issues raised concerning language, colonialism, and nationalism again feature in recent debates between Liao Chao-yang and Liao Hsien-hao (or Sebastian Liao) in *Chung-wai Literary Monthly*.² Both teaching at Foreign Languages and Literatures, National Taiwan, Liao Chao-yang and Liao Hsien-hsiao share many common experiences—raised in the countryside, educated at National Taiwan, getting advanced degrees in the States, using the same office, and having only one year age difference—except their ethnic backgrounds. Like Chiu Kuei-fen, Liao Chao-yang has Minnan ancestry. Liao Hsien-hao, on the other hand, belongs to the ethnically speaking more ambivalent group normally labelled as second-generation Chinese mainlander, i.e. offspring of the Chinese émigrés who came to the island around 1947 with the KMT government. Though not explicit, ethnicity in fact has a vital role to play throughout the debates on postcolonialism and multiculturalism. In fact, it was Chen Chao-ying, a junior Chinese literature instructor at National Taiwan, who opened up the debates. A member of the Unification Association, Chen launched her critique on Taiwan literary studies as regards its limitations in the August 1995 issue of *Chung-wai Literary Monthly*. According to Chen, Taiwan literature should be considered to be part of Chinese literature. For the former has got a lot of inspiration from the latter and should not be studied independently. A number of scholars, among them Chiu Kuei-fen and Chen Fang-ming, wrote critical responses to the essay in question. They insist that Taiwan literature has its own relative autonomy and that to subordinate it to Chinese literature is simply an act of symbolic violence and an outrageous claim in complicity with Han chauvinism as well as Chinese imperialism. At the request of Wu Chien-

² I sum up their main arguments based on the following texts: Liao Hsien-hao 1995a and 1995b;—Fu-li yu pai-lang: kung-pai yu hseh-yuan te mi-shi (Myths of the Blank Subjectivity and Ethnic Origin) 1995a and 1995b—. Liao Chao-yang 1995b, Tsai-tan kung-pai chu-ti (Reconsidering the Blank Subjectivity) 1995.—Hsien-tai te tai-hsien: Chung den-yin dosan kan chu-ti yu li-shih (Re-placing Modernity: History as a Subject in *A Borrowed Life*) 1997, 1998; and Arif Dirlik and Xudong Zhang 1998.

cheng, editor of *Chung-wai*, Liao Chao-yang and Liao Hsien-hao joined the debates. After two exchanges on such postcolonial subjects as multiculturalism and nationalism, Liao Hsien-hao singled out Liao Chao-yang as a major target and the subsequent debates almost completely ignored contributions of other participants.

As though a feud within the family the discussions nevertheless touch on important issues in the public sphere. Liao Hsien-hao highlights the problematic of cultural identity and of imagined community, suggesting that Northern Ireland is hardly a model for Taiwan if the latter is to seek independence. On the issue of identity, he advocates the idea of cultural China or of "Chinese cultural federalism" (1995a:64). As for the concept of an imagined Taiwanese community, he cautions that there are other ethnic groups which are not easily assimilated under the aegis of Taiwanese or Minnan nationalism. He fears that internal colonisation will be reintroduced to replace the KMT rule if postcolonial discourse as proposed by several leading Minnan scholars is to prevail. The anxiety is centred on the politics of inclusion and exclusion. For example, how would members of different ethnic groups be able to communicate with each other once Minnan dialect substitutes Chinese, the metropolitan language? In what way can the people recognise the values of other cultures and learn to live in harmony? What is the material basis for Taiwan's radical independence movement? Won't that put lives on the island in peril or at least, in the abyss of uncertainty? Since the desire for independence and postcoloniality can only lead the majority group to exclude others, it should be re-examined in more rational light. Consequently, Liao Hsien-hao hints that multiculturalism and postmodernism, rather than postcolonialism, are the solutions. He evokes the case of Yugoslavia to indicate people's fear of unwanted ethnic conflicts, but at the same time he also acknowledges the sense of entrapment on the part of Taiwanese citizens in response to the growth of Chinese power to "contain" and even subjugate Taiwan.

Interestingly enough, both Chiu Kuei-fen and Liao Hsien-hao think in terms of multiculturalism and postmodernism, but for totally different purposes. Whereas Chiu thinks the postmodern notion of "decentering" will contribute to multicultural education and the constitution of a postcolonial condition, Liao Hsien-hao tends to put multiculturalism in opposition to postcolonialism. To Liao Hsien-hao, postmodernism means a cultural

politics of re-negotiation in an uneven world, rather than a poetics of revision. Here, he is at the crossroad of Marxism and liberalism: every group should have its rights; although one tends to dominate others when one has more. The stress he puts on the postcolonialism/multiculturalism debate is on equality or exploitation, rather than on esteem. Apparently, he does not have faith in civic nationalism and critical multiculturalism. To him, the rise of Taiwan consciousness inevitably introduces a dangerous form of cultural nationalism, of inclusion and exclusion. As a result, he leans on the totalitarian rhetoric of repressive nationalism while addressing ethnic tensions and their potential problems in the name of civic nationalism: “we are one, so long as we don’t raise our eyebrows at each other and no less so, disturb China with the argument of Taiwan independence”. Unwittingly, he celebrates national unity at the expense of multiculturalism which, as a social movement, highlights the identity and self-confidence of multiple subcultures.

The question can be rephrased as follows: Should postcolonial identity assume a singular form and must it exclude others? Can postcolonial histories be so written as to displace and even negate colonial legacies? Liao Hsien-hao seems to opt for a “yes” as the answer. However, Liao Chao-yang disagrees. He draws on Slavoj Žižek to make the case of a “blank” and yet fluid postcolonial identity. Also, he warns that there are gaps and lapses between literary discourse and social practices. For there are many material effects to be taken into account if one wants to talk about nation building. If viable, any postcolonial discursive positions can be taken to make the best of the life situation. Deep down, Liao Chao-yang does not believe in the notion of a fixed identity although he does acknowledge material and historical constraints on identity formation. Regarding the historical effects of Japanese colonialism, he uses the term “borrowed modernity” to give an alternative reading of such films as *Dosan* and *Banana Paradise*. He argues that the conflicts of interpretation between postcolonial scholars and nationalists, between appropriation and rejection of Japanese colonialism’s culture, actually open our eyes to the problematic of differential communalities and temporalities in dealing with the colonial past. For example, *Dosan* reveals a “divisive confrontation with the historical real”. At one level, the historical trauma is thematised by the admiration for the Japanese felt by the old father, who is a clown by

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As though a feud within the family the discussions nevertheless touch on important issues in the public sphere. Liao Hsien-hao highlights the problematic of cultural identity and of imagined community, suggesting that Northern Ireland is hardly a model for Taiwan if the latter is to seek independence. On the issue of identity, he advocates the idea of cultural China or of "Chinese cultural federalism" (1995a:64). As for the concept of an imagined Taiwanese community, he cautions that there are other ethnic groups which are not easily assimilated under the aegis of Taiwanese or Minnan nationalism. He fears that internal colonisation will be reintroduced to replace the KMT rule if postcolonial discourse as proposed by several leading Minnan scholars is to prevail. The anxiety is centred on the politics of inclusion and exclusion. For example, how would members of different ethnic groups be able to communicate with each other once Minnan dialect substitutes Chinese, the metropolitan language? In what way can the people recognise the values of other cultures and learn to live in harmony? What is the material basis for Taiwan's radical independence movement? Won't that put lives on the island in peril or at least, in the abyss of uncertainty? Since the desire for independence and postcoloniality can only lead the majority group to exclude others, it should be re-examined in more rational light. Consequently, Liao Hsien-hao hints that multiculturalism and postmodernism, rather than postcolonialism, are the solutions. He evokes the case of Yugoslavia to indicate people's fear of unwanted ethnic conflicts, but at the same time he also acknowledges the sense of entrapment on the part of Taiwanese citizens in response to the growth of Chinese power to "contain" and even subjugate Taiwan.

Interestingly enough, both Chiu Kuei-fen and Liao Hsien-hao think in terms of multiculturalism and postmodernism, but for totally different purposes. Whereas Chiu thinks the postmodern notion of "decentering" will contribute to multicultural education and the constitution of a postcolonial condition, Liao Hsien-hao tends to put multiculturalism in opposition to postcolonialism. To Liao Hsien-hao, postmodernism means a cultural

politics of re-negotiation in an uneven world, rather than a poetics of revision. Here, he is at the crossroad of Marxism and liberalism: every group should have its rights; although one tends to dominate others when one has more. The stress he puts on the postcolonialism/multiculturalism debate is on equality or exploitation, rather than on esteem. Apparently, he does not have faith in civic nationalism and critical multiculturalism. To him, the rise of Taiwan consciousness inevitably introduces a dangerous form of cultural nationalism, of inclusion and exclusion. As a result, he leans on the totalitarian rhetoric of repressive nationalism while addressing ethnic tensions and their potential problems in the name of civic nationalism: “we are one, so long as we don’t raise our eyebrows at each other and no less so, disturb China with the argument of Taiwan independence”. Unwittingly, he celebrates national unity at the expense of multiculturalism which, as a social movement, highlights the identity and self-confidence of multiple subcultures.

The question can be rephrased as follows: Should postcolonial identity assume a singular form and must it exclude others? Can postcolonial histories be so written as to displace and even negate colonial legacies? Liao Hsien-hao seems to opt for a “yes” as the answer. However, Liao Chao-yang disagrees. He draws on Slavoj Žižek to make the case of a “blank” and yet fluid postcolonial identity. Also, he warns that there are gaps and lapses between literary discourse and social practices. For there are many material effects to be taken into account if one wants to talk about nation building. If viable, any postcolonial discursive positions can be taken to make the best of the life situation. Deep down, Liao Chao-yang does not believe in the notion of a fixed identity although he does acknowledge material and historical constraints on identity formation. Regarding the historical effects of Japanese colonialism, he uses the term “borrowed modernity” to give an alternative reading of such films as *Dosan* and *Banana Paradise*. He argues that the conflicts of interpretation between postcolonial scholars and nationalists, between appropriation and rejection of Japanese colonialism’s culture, actually open our eyes to the problematic of differential communalities and temporalities in dealing with the colonial past. For example, *Dosan* reveals a “divisive confrontation with the historical real”. At one level, the historical trauma is thematised by the admiration for the Japanese felt by the old father, who is a clown by

profession and a failure in real life. At another level, the trauma is re-enacted by the system of signification since the dialogue is in Minnan while its voice-over is in Mandarin. The divisive and contradictory ways to make sense of colonial and postcolonial histories on the part of the father and son nonetheless urge them to rethink identity issues, in order to comprehend the relations of colonial subject and citizenship. Unless we come to terms with this constitutive lack in identity, with the impossibility of symbolic pedagogy to subsume everything, he concludes, "advocacy of radical democracy would not lead to fruitful intervention either in postmodern culture or in the settling of political conflicts in Taiwan" (Liao Chao-yang 1998:25).

Chen Fang-ming, a professor of Chinese literature at Providence University and a major force in Taiwan studies, has recently made similar points about postmodernism and multiculturalism talk in relation to the development of postcolonial studies in Taiwan.³ According to him, it is only after 1989, the year Lee Teng-hui assumed presidency, that Taiwan finally entered its postcolonial phase. However, due to the fifty years of Japanese colonial rule (1895-1945) and another fifty years of the "second colonization" by the KMT (1945-1987), Taiwanese suffer a great deal from the loss of language and the loss of memory. The majority of people can no longer speak their own languages, let alone rewrite their own histories using the language. As if to resist the coming of a postcolonial age, the mass media and a number of intellectuals keep promoting postmodernism to the suppression of postcolonial demands. Global trends, codes, and fashions are made to appear attractive and accessible, whereas the local culture is appropriated and interpreted to such an extent that it becomes a mere component to be cut and pasted. One such example is Chu Tien-wen's *Fang-ren sou-chi* (The Queer's Notebook), in which queer theory, hybrid genres, poststructuralism, and local politics intermix. Chang Ta-chun, Luo Yi-chun, Cheng Ying-shu, and Hung Ling are some more names immediately coming to mind. And in the field of cultural studies, these postmodernist scholars tend to look upon the localisation movement as a form of cultural imperialism. In part as a reaction to the movement, they

³ Chen Fang-ming, Taiwan te hou-chih-ming wen-ti (Problems of Taiwan's Postcolonial Studies), paper delivered in Writing Taiwan Conference, Columbia University, April 30-May 3, 1998.

adumbrate queer-body politics, to promote the privatisation or transsexualisation of the public sphere. The resurgence of local dialects is often seen as the exercise of power of one language over the others. So in the name of multiplicity and fluidity, they reject any attempt to reclaim a cultural or national identity. Ethnicity and history become violent categories of partial truth, as they inevitably do harm to or repress the interests of the peripheral. However, the concern with political justice is simply a displacement of postmodern guilt and an empty rhetoric of postcolonial manipulation. For when these postmodernists speak of the unjust situation with which the aborigines have to live, the target of their criticism is the emergent Minnan population who finally have their chance to overturn the language of the centre and to replace it with their own. It is as if these postmodernists were speaking outside of history and outside of any special location to articulate a cosmopolitan concept of justice, in order to disguise their status as cultural elite and transnational intellectuals.

“To portray the postcolonial condition in Taiwan”, Chen Fang-ming reminds us, “one should pay attention to the urgent need of language and memory reclamation projects”. Postmodernist discourse of multiculturalism can be deviative and misleading in this regard. For whereas the postcolonial critics respond to the perceived crisis of disappearance, the postmodernists poke fun at such urgency and render it as trivialities. Indeed, one sees this sort of postmodern twist in the 1997 debates on a junior high school history textbook *Renshih Taiwan* (Knowing Taiwan History). For those who criticised the textbook for its mistaken details and “political incorrectness” in labelling 1895-1945 as a period of Japanese Rule rather than Japanese Occupation, the urgency of having the history told from Taiwan’s—instead of China’s—perspective seemed ridiculous. Thus the New Party members as well as intellectuals from right and left wings launched attacks on minute details, voicing their uncompromising opinions in newspaper columns and call-in programs. They even suggested that aboriginal perspectives be told. As a matter of fact, several months after the textbook debates, the novelist Chen Ying-cheng and several others started another battle in the literary supplement section of *United Daily*, blatantly denouncing the *Kominka* literature from Taiwan’s Japanese period. It is therefore instructive that after witnessing the outcome of these debates Chen Fang-ming tries to distinguish the postmodern from the postcolonial, in order to readjust to the emergent

cultural imaginary. As Chang Sung-sheng (1997:94) demonstrates, Chen did appeal, in a slightly earlier stage, “to a utopian vision supposedly embodied by postmodern pluralism and feminist egalitarianism as hope for the future of cultural reconstruction in contemporary Taiwan”. The shift toward a more sophisticated postcolonial mode of articulation is self-evident in the promotion of the Taiwanese language movement. Here, let me quote Chang Sung-sheng again:

In an earlier stage of the nativization discourse, the pure/impure binary opposition and the concept of “origin” featured prominently, and one frequently encountered the fetishized image of the “land” and mother “tongue” (*Taiwaner* 1996). Such romantic notions, however, have been harshly criticised in intellectual circles, and recently we have seen a notable change in the strategy employed by proponents of the revivalist Taiwanese language movement. For instance, with tactics of identity politics inspired by the discourse on multiculturalism Lu Hsin-ch’ang has effectively justified his promotion of the Taiwanese language movement as an effort to remove the “sinocentrism” (Han-tsu chung-hsin chu-yi) so far dominating language use in contemporary Taiwan. (Chang Sung-sheng 1997:89-90)

Such a shift as Chen Fang-ming’s or Lu Hsin-ch’ang’s is triggered by the postcolonialism debates I have just outlined. To grasp the recent trends in Taiwan postcolonial studies, however, we must examine the genealogy of critical terms like “postmodernism” or postcolonialism. Both Chen Fang-ming and Chiu Kuei-fen would agree on such postcolonial subjects as language and memory projects. But they develop conflicting views about what postmodernism can do to help or to hurt postcolonialism. Arguably, these terms also mean different things to different scholars in the West. Nevertheless, the appropriation of foreign ideas can have extremely complex impacts as these imported concepts may not only transform indigenous culture and society, but also create enabling and *disabling* distance or time-lag between postcolonial scholars and their objects. Take “postcolonialism” for example. The term was used by historians and political scientists after the Second World War as a chronological label to designate the post-independence societies. However, increasingly, literary critics and cultural studies people tend to evoke the concept to discuss the diversifying cultural effects of colonisation—especially of late European

imperialism. The pitfall is that “the term confers on colonialism the prestige of history proper” and that “the world’s multitudinous cultures are marked. Not positively by what distinguishes them, but by a subordinate, retrospective relation to linear, European time” (McClintock 1993:293). In the context given by Chiu Kuei-fen, “postcolonialism” signals a new post-martial-law period in which multi-vocality is to prevail and various domains of contesting identities are reconstituted. The trajectory she has in mind is that of sequential and linear progress toward “postmodernity”. Though sharing that sort of post-Enlightenment mentality in evoking the term “postcolonial” with Chiu, Chen Fang-ming, on the other hand, expresses a reluctance to interpret contemporary Taiwanese public culture in terms of “postmodernity”. But the question Liao Chao-yang raises for Chiu and which is, in part, also valid for Chen concerns the prematurely celebratory and eventually evasive character of such a framework. Put in another way, “postcolonialism” as proposed by Chiu cannot adequately describe Taiwan’s colonial and postcolonial histories in relation to China.

Alternative Modernity in Taiwan

I want to push Liao Chao-yang’s argument one step further by suggesting that we need to re-define the term “postcolonialism” in terms of the continuities and discontinuities of power that have shaped the legacies of the Japanese and Chinese colonial empires. To grasp the context of Taiwanese intellectuals travelling and translating in the early 20th century between the two cultures to render their identities problematical, “alternative modernity” may be a more appropriate framework to re-narrate Taiwan’s colonial and postcolonial histories. As Anne McClintock (1993:294) has pointed out, many contemporary cultures, while profoundly effected by colonisation “are not necessarily *primarily* preoccupied with their erstwhile contact with Europe”. The histories of African colonisation, for example, “are certainly, in part, the histories of the collisions between European and Arab empires, and the myriad African lineage states and cultures”. And in the case of Taiwan, its colonial histories are not simply marked by the collisions between Japanese and Chinese empires but also made complex by the multiple levels of ambivalence on the part of these imperial forces toward Taiwan. First of all, Taiwan was handed over to

Japan in 1895 by the Ching dynasty on the ground that the island had never been seriously considered to be part of China. But the irony was that Taiwanese intellectuals turned Chinese nationals when they heard the bad news. As a result, the psychic structure of cultural identification became very unstable during and even after Japanese rule. Second, at that time Japan was, Stephen Tanaka tells us, forming its new Oriental discourse to overcome its inferiority complex in relation to Chinese culture, in order to become the new China in the Orient. The traces of Chinese civilisation in Taiwan nevertheless reminded Japanese colonial officers of their cultural affinity with the Taiwanese and of the difficulty to remove the anxiety of Chinese influences. To make friends with their cultural “brothers”, Japanese colonisers allowed Taiwanese to move freely between China and Japan. Consequently, instead of suffering from the perpetual collision between the Chinese and Japanese identities, Taiwanese, merchants in particular, developed fluid albeit ambiguous identities—labelling themselves as Japanese to avoid Chinese tax, while addressing their “countrymen” in Chinese to do trade, for example. Third, because of the worsening situation in other parts of Asia—Korea and Manchuria, to be specific—Taiwan occupied an important place in Japan’s “south advance” colonial project. As a side effect to such moral luck, however, Taiwanese won such bad names as “Japan’s underdogs” or “traitors to China”. In his representative work, *Ya-his-ya-te-ku-erh* (Asia’s Orphan), Wu Chou-liu (1945) describes Taiwan’s colonial condition as a case of “neither-nor”. The protagonist Huu Tai-ming remembers vividly that his Grandpa says to him one day:

“Now that Taiwan is in the hands of Japanese, there are fewer reports about bandits and robbers. The roads are also getting wider. For all the merits, you are no longer entitled to enter Chinese civil examination. And to make things even more unbearable, such heavy taxes on us Taiwanese!”

(Wu Chou-li 1945)

In spite of the beneficial aspects of Japanese colonialism, Taiwanese are, Grandpa Flu laments, losing touch with Chinese traditional ways of life. Deep down, Grandpa Flu considers himself a Chinese subject. However, Papa Hu is keenly interested in Japanese and Western learning. Tai-ming is an unfortunate product of the conflicting cultural dictates: the early stage of his upbringing is in Chinese classics, later on he is sent to a normal school

of national language (Japanese), and finally for advanced study to Tokyo. He is constantly troubled by the lack of a presentable identity. In Tokyo, he is advised to pretend to be Japanese. But on several occasions when with Chinese intellectuals, he has to keep his Taiwanese identity a secret. Often he has to come to terms with the Chinese Minnan label. Once, when he declares himself as Taiwanese, he is condemned as a “spy” and a “traitor” to the nation (pp. 96-97). During the Sino-Japanese War, his projected long-term stay in Nanking, following a grand tour to the fatherland, ends in censure and arrest. By then his Taiwanese identity has been revealed and his status as a high-school teacher is considered to be a mask for illicit activities against the state. Assisted by two former Chinese students, he manages to escape from prison and to return to Taiwan. But back home, he becomes insane, unable to stand the impact of Japanese colonialism.

The story of Hu Tai-ming represents the effects of Chinese and Japanese imperial powers in their unstable mixtures and mutual contestations on Taiwan culture. As the effects are very different from those of European colonialism, the dominant postcolonial theory can only partially describe what constitutes the “postcolonial” condition in Taiwan. This problematic is made even more complex by the fact that Taiwan is still uncertain about its own identity and destiny. For identity has by now turned into a plurality of contested arenas, as practically all the indigenous counter-traditions and colonial legacies that were suppressed or marginalised are being mobilised. Being a “state without nationhood”, Taiwan has experienced the KMT internal colonisation and, more recently, localisation as a process toward decolonisation, which for all its merits receives challenges and censures not only from within but also from without—particularly from the PRC and several overseas Chinese communities. To theorise its current situation, I would like to suggest that aspects of postcolonial theory can be coherently combined with aspects of alternative (post-)modernity. However, it remains to be seen precisely how an eclectic and more nuanced postcolonial theory will develop to do justice to the Taiwan case study. The critical debates and their concrete elaborations indicate that more collective tasks are called for in such a political and intellectual enterprise.

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Fun and Games in “La Señora Cornelia”

An overview of the *Novellas ejemplares* shows the far-reaching range of Cervantes's interests: in “La gitanilla”, a love-story involving a gypsy girl and a well-to-do young man, fraught with obstacles; in “La española inglesa” another love-story superimposed on the background of secret Catholics, a love in which each character is subjected to numerous obstacles that challenge their love, not the least of which is the female character's loss of beauty; in “El licenciado Vidriera”, perhaps Cervantes's best-known and anthologised story, several novellas treat the themes of honour in which Cervantes shows that one of the most favourite themes of the theatre could also be treated in prose. While love is the basis for many of the stories, what changes is the attitude toward that theme and the manner in which it is treated individually.

The stories are serious or gay, in some cases there is tragedy, and there are episodes of comedy but it is in “La Señora Cornelia” that Cervantes takes the theme of love, gives it some serious twists and then re-approaches it through burlesque and tongue-in-cheek humour. It is an attempt at demythifying some of the very same themes that he has treated seriously. The novella of course has other purposes, one of which is to study the relations between Italy and Spain in the Renaissance, but it is the particular treatment of a love situation that I shall study in this paper. My title: “Fun and Games in ‘La Señora Cornelia’” is a clue to how we must view Cervantes's treatment of love in this novella.

In this paper I shall focus on the theme and presence of Italy in “La Señora Cornelia”, a story which, due to the fact that it takes place in Italy has been referred to as *novella italianizante*.

A resumé of the story may be useful to understanding my approach to the novella. The novella centres on two young Basque noblemen who, after some travels around Europe, come to live in Bologna. One evening while walking, Don Juan, in a case of mistaken identity is handed a newly born baby whose mother is Cornelia Bentivolli. He brings the baby home. Later that evening he comes across a street fracas which involves Lorenzo Bentivolli, the brother of Cornelia, and Alfonso d’Este, Cornelia’s lover and the father of the baby. The novella deals with overcoming obstacles to the marriage of Cornelia and Alfonso.

Source-hunters have wavered between seeing the novella as a product of Cervantes’s own experience, travelling to and through Italy as a page to Cardinal Acquaviva; or the more literary stimulus, seeing the novella as a product of Cervantes’s wish to emulate Boccaccio in the writing of a novella in the Italian style

Certainly both positions are to be recognised and to them we must add the awareness of an ingredient that is very important to my own approach in this novella, and that is the historical, i.e., the presence of Italy as a live polemic in Spanish historical, political and cultural life.

The choice of Italy as a locale for this novella was not an accident and responded to specific awareness by both author and reading public. For many, Rome identified the seat of Papal power, whose symbol was not limited only to religious and theological matters but also to greatness in art and science. Spaniards flocked to Italy attracted by the ideal of humanism.

Canavaggio believes that the ideal of humanism and literature flourished in Italy, and Cervantes taught himself literature in Rome in the retinue of Cardinal Acquaviva. In Naples, Láinez introduced him to several literary *cénacles* where he became aware of the work of Petrarch, Boiardo, Ariosto and the *Decameron*. The status of Italian letters was so exalted from the time of Dante to the middle of the 17th century that people from all over Europe came to partake of the glory that was Renaissance and Baroque Italy. Spain could not, Croce noted, bring models for the Italians to emulate but rather went to Italy to take from that glorious tradition. No better examples could be found than Garcilaso and Cervantes himself. The Spanish

humanists who wrote in Latin were regarded as inferior to the Italian humanists, and their work within the Latin writing tradition was to be looked upon as undergoing improvement in Italy.

Not only was Italy and the ideal of humanism, letters and learning sought after, but the great Aldine press was publishing the works of Spanish writers like Alfonso Valdés and the *Amadis de Gaula*.

At that time that Cervantes was undergoing this experience in Italy, there was to be reckoned with an image or ideal of Italy which permeated all of Europe and to which Cervantes fell sway no doubt as so many of his compatriots did. As Canvaggio sees it, Cervantes's Italy was "le fruit d'une expérience directe, elle est aussi grace au pouvoir des mots, un monde imaginaire où évoluent des êtres de fiction"; or even the image and attraction of Italy for Cervantes and others was a "nostalgie d'une civilisation raffiné, Donc, mais aussi d'une dolce vita italiana, qui, a l'étranger capable à les apprecier, offre la gamme infinie de ses seductions [...]"

At the core of the novella is the wish of the Spanish characters to succumb to this image of Italy: "Quisieron ver todas las mas famosas ciudades de Italia; y habiéndolas visto todas pararon en Bolonia" (p.241). The choice of Bologna was a natural one since Cardinal Gil de Albornoz had established the Colegio Español there, which, and not coincidentally for the novella, was excluded from Philip II's general pragmatic against studying abroad. That the Italian side of this Italian/Spanish equation in the novella was loaded in favour of the Italian side can be gleaned from Lorenzo's self-defending statement: "Yo, señor español, soy Lorenzo Bentivolli, si de los más ricos de los más principales desta ciudad" [...]. Or even, when the ama is relating her life and wishes to point to the nadir to which she has fallen would say: "[...] pues con ser quien [de los Cribelos (Crivelli) de Milan] he venido a ser masara de españoles [...]" (p.263).

Therefore Cervantes takes this image and "concept" of Italy and has one set of the equation built up as an ideal power, looked up to, admired and idealised. Cervantes's handling of the Spanish side of the equation is more complex and is the answer to the riddle of the use of Italy in the novella in such positive terms.

It is my contention that in "La Señora Cornelia", Cervantes is reacting to a negative image of Spaniards in Italy, and that the novella

(along with “La española inglesa”) represents a kind of *apologia pro patria sua*.

Basically, the Italians looked upon the Spaniards in a lesser light. Buttressed on a privileged position in the world of spirituality and religion (the presence of the Holy See) and strengthened by the awesome influence of Italian letters in the world, the Italians looked down upon the Spaniards as people who came to Italy to learn. Moreover, the Spaniards affected a “disprezzo per le lettere” (Croce, p.116) which must have been very shocking to Italians, much of whose culture was tied to the word. A character of the novella tips off the reader that in this novella the Spaniards are working at a disadvantage, i.e., they have a negative reputation, and it was best in some situations to disavow being Spanish (“[...] dijo al que defendía, en lengua italiana, por no ser conocido por español” (p.245)).

The negative images of Spanish permeated everyday life. As Croce points out, the expression “danari di Spagna” referred to empty wealth, money that never came. In literature, Spanish characters appear as boasters (“vantatori e millantori” [Croce, p.186]). A “spagnoleta” referred to “pompsita” and “fanfaronata” (p.186). This Spanish negative characteristic is associated with certain external modes and gestures. In the theatre there is a Spanish character named Don Diego de Mendoza, known as the “Spagnuolo innamorato”. Anything but a positive image of Spaniards is to be found in the works of Aretino.

Spaniards were also looked down upon for their insistence on externals, especially their dress, which was looked upon as “pompe e ricercatezza delle vesti e altri mali costumi [...]” (Croce, 121, 181). The text of “La Señora Cornelia” reveals an awareness of the Spanish penchant for ceremony. Along with the stress on ceremony was the Spanish use of titles, many of which became assimilated into Italian life, e.g., the use of “Señor”, “Don” and other titles. Expressions of obvious origin came into the language: “bacio le mani”. Giraldi Cinzio urged writers to avoid Spanish language usage.

The Spanish occupation of the Italian peninsula can be viewed in stages. There was an early stage where the Spanish Imperial idea brought to other countries perhaps its best and most noble representatives.

However, in Cervantes’s time, the Italian peninsula saw the arrival of soldiers of all kinds, and not always the best people. The image that both

Spaniards and Italians alike had of the Spanish Imperial dream was a dream of power and strength. But with time the reality of this image began to crack and decay. After the great moment of adventure, Croce observes:

La Spagna, invece d'invviare in Italia, come ai primi tempi, uomini di guerra, arditi e avventurosi, inviava magistrati esperti nello spremere I popoli e nel tenerli a freno col rigore o con gli accorgimenti e le blandizie e la "grascia" [...] (p.263)

At this later stage of the Spanish presence, which coincides with Cervantes's stay in Italy the Spanish became identified with "le plebi oziosi e cenciose coi luridi vizi della miseria" (p.266). This moment also is characterised by a change from lively Renaissance literary models to models of works of preachers and spiritual books. The adventurous spirit of the much read *libros de caballerias* is replaced by a different view, conditioned no doubt by a counterreformation ambience.

Once again, the Italian "ama" views her lowest point as having to serve Spaniards, especially since she hails from the family of the Crivelli of Milan, or even that Lorenzo Bentivoli, an Italian, should as Rodriguez Luis observes, surprisingly "solicit[ar] la ayuda de los vizcainos, lo primero en que repara el ama [...]" (p.102).

But another clue to the particular polemical nature of the novella is to have the Basque students reject an invitation to take an Italian wife, a solution as antithetical as it is aesthetically unjustified. In terms of the binominal rivalry, Cervantes has the Spanish half of the equation prevail. They reject the invitation politely ("Ellos dijeron que los caballeros de la nación vizcaína por la mayor parte se casaban en su patria [...]", p.277). However, Cervantes's final phrase in rejecting the Italian marriages, tongue-in-cheek, has the narrator add: "[...] no aceptaban tan *ilustre* ofrecimiento" (p.227; emphasis mine). "Illustre" can only be read ironically, and the Spanish pride is safely retained.

Consequently, Cervantes finds himself present in Italy as a Spaniard no doubt being identified with numerous stereotypes, many of which are negative. When Cervantes has the Captain sing the praises of Italian life, it is, of course, a form of idealism. The novella, with its latent polemic of

Spanish life being viewed through Italian negativism, has to have a defence, and this is the function of the Basque noblemen.

Italian contacts with Spanish life hark back to the Middle Ages. There is a lively interchange over the centuries of Italians responding to Spanish culture. At a relatively early moment Catalans emigrate to Italy and maintain a lively presence, even though Croce points to an odium of Italians for Catalans. While the Italians could boast the importance of Aldine presses, the Valencians could also boast the lively book trade which included translations and printing of the great Italian writers.

In the era of Alfonso de Aragon the immigration of Spaniards very strongly took on a particular intensity and meaning. Another wave of immigration accompanied Cardinal Borja and his retinue. Among many, Alfonso de Cartagena, Bishop of Burgos, came to Italy in search of its great culture, and equally Pietro Matire and Andrea Navagero got to Spain, but the overwhelming emigration was of the Spanish to Italy for numerous reasons, politics being the most obvious and the most important. In fact, the Spanish presence became so widespread that the influence overwhelmed cities like Genoa, Naples, Rome and Messina. Nicolas Audebert notes that c. 1577 the number of Spaniards in Naples was equal to the number of Italians. At the time when Garcilaso went to Italy, numerous Spanish families had become almost permanent fixtures in Italian life: the Alarcóns, Leyvas, the Toledos, the Borgias, Quiñones, and the Enríqueses. The response to Spanish presence must have been overwhelming. In terms of the Spaniard's own self-image, perhaps the phrase of the great Capitain Gonzalo de Córdoba should be recalled: "España las armas e Italia la pluma" (Croce, p.214).

Cervantes structures a Spanish pride *sui generis* through his youthful adventurous Basque heroes. These characters, according to Amezá, were to be seen as examples of "perfección física y moral". This creation was not without a particular use and purpose. Amezá says:

Nuestros buenos mancebos vizcaínos refrenaron este orgullo, en aquella idealización del tipo del caballero español a que Cervantes aspira a esta novella, uno de aquellos momentos de su concepción novelística en que él se aparta de la realidad para buscar la ejemplaridad propuesta, pues la ejemplaridad no sólo se consigue en los venturosos desenlaces, Donde la virtud es premiada y castigado el vicio, sino mostrando también al lector

como los personajes concebidos deben ser en su vida y costumbres, para que así sirvan de modelo y dechado a todos. (pp.365-366)

What is striking about the Spanish representation in the story is its link with nobility. Together with the Italian side, a world of superior values is identified. Don Juan says: "—Si hasta aquí, hermosa señora, yo y Don Antonio mi camarada, os teníamos compasión y lástima por ser mujer, ahora que sabemos vuestra *calidad*, la lástima y compasión pasa a ser obligación precisa de serviros" (p.254; emphasis mine).

Lorenzo also acknowledges the nobility of the pair, a nobility that is indivisible with being Spanish. He says: "[...] que me acampanasedes en este camino confiado en que lo haréis por ser español a mi lado, y tal como vos me parecís" (p.258). Also Don Juan says: "[...] y tomo a mi cargo la satisfacción o venganza de vuestro agravio; y esto no sólo por ser español, sino por ser caballero y serlo vos tan principal" (p.258).

The characters, including the Italian ones, all seem to be in agreement in seeing the ideal of Spanish nobility and courtesy, for Cornelia says: "[...] Podría ser que traigo lo fuese, si presto no se me da remedio; por cortesía que siempre suele reinar en los de vuestra nación, os suplico señor español, que me saquéis destas calles [...]" (p.247). An interesting detail should catch our attention, because it reveals the substratum of Don Antonio's pride as a nobleman: "Por ventura, señor, sois extranjero o de la ciudad?" "Extranjero soy y español, respondía ya [...]" (p.247). Focusing on the other Basque, El Saffar says: "Don Juan throws himself into life and the story because of his noble spirit. It is his faith in his honor and justice that leads him into action which might otherwise look dangerous" (p.122).

Contrary to what Italians may have fixed in their minds about Spanish manners, Cervantes presents a completely different picture: "Oyendo y viendo cual Don Juan, llevado de su valeroso corazón en dos brinos se puso al lado, y metiendo mano a la espada y a un broquel llevaba, dijo al que defendía en lengua italiana, por no ser por español [...]" (pp.244-245). Although Don Juan speaks Italian, paradoxically it merely serves to intensify his achievement, a Spanish nobleman, who, having mastered Italian, can therefore deal with Italians on a completely equal level.

While Italian mores may have taken the Spanish nobleman and caricatured him, especially in the area of love, Cervantes has Cornelia strongly point to their good manners:

“Y en tanto que comían dio cuenta Cornelia de todo lo que le había sucedido hasta venir a aquella casa por consejo de la ama de los dos caballeros españoles, que la habían servido, amparado y guardado con el más honesto y puntual decoro que pudiera imaginarse [...]”. (Cervantes)

There is still another aspect of the characterisation of the young Spanish noblemen, a characteristic that we might find only with difficulty in comparable Italian *novelle* and that is a sense of spirituality and religiousness that they possess.

Thus does Cervantes juxtapose an ideal vision of Spain and Spaniards by creating a scenario of a Spaniard defending the nation before another culture. Cervantes's gesture is all the more meaningful at a time when Spain was beset by numerous problems; political and economic ones, among others, and at a time when Spain's power was waning. The story is aimed at other Spaniards who prefer to see a picture of a Spain that *was* rather than a Spain that *is*.

And so it is that Cervantes shows his tremendous literary dexterity by presenting us with a tale that almost becomes a caricature of self-mockery of humour by giving us a love situation that is from the beginning a game, a joke in many ways, a poking of fun at the theme of love to show that it is not always sublime or tragic but at times just very funny.

One must acknowledge that in the service of Cardinal Acquaviva, Cervantes was exposed to Italian life in all its forms. Is it reasonable, once we review his use of the Italian language in “La Señora Cornelia” and in “El Licenciado Vidriera”, to believe that Cervantes, who read the great Italian authors, would not know that the name of the character is Bentivoglio and not the Italian-sounding [emphasis mine] Bentivolli? The *Novellas ejemplares* were written for the Spanish public that may, like Cervantes himself, have been in Italy either in military service or like the millions across Europe at the time, who had made the culturally perfunctory trip either to the Holy Roman See or to contemplate the artistic greatness of Florence, Venice, etc.. Cervantes's use of Italian almost reminds of G.I.-jargon of German, Italian, Japanese, Korean or Vietnamese. His use of

Italian must have been a gentle stroking of the memory of those who were in Italy, and who were at the same time, perhaps just like Cervantes, looked at askancely by Italians who regarded them as vacuous boors, exemplary on the outside but empty on the inside, "gonfio e vuoto", as Croce described them. Out of a deep sense of pride, Cervantes creates a tale in which the "good guys" are ideal configurations of Spaniards, and their comportment the best that could be gotten from their culture. Glimpsing the decline of that same one-time great culture, Spain, Cervantes performs an act of patriotism and painful recollection. It is in his mind, the recreation of the "grandeza española" in an era that was hardly grand any more.

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