

# Taiwan Fiction and Postwar Urban Experience

Week 1: Introductory Lecture

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Instructor:

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# About the Instructor

- Richard Rong-bin Chen
- PhD of Comparative Literature, Catholic Fu Jen University (2011).
- Dissertation: “The Formalist-Structuralist Study of Space in Narrative: A Historical Appraisal and Its Applications to Four Modernist Novels.”
- **A comparative study of the novels by three French and British Modernist writers (J.K. Huysmans, George Moore, and Oscar Wilde), and Pai Hsien-yung [白先勇], one of the pioneers of the Modernism in Taiwan.**

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- ◇ Unexcused absences will affect your grade, so please keep the instructor informed if you cannot attend the class.
- ◇ **More than two unexcused absences will make you unable to acquire an A grade.**
- **All the reading assignments should be read before you come to class.**
- **Be sure to use the Ceiba website of this course, and your NTU email account.**

# Definitions

- **Taiwan Fiction**

- Periodization: in the West, especially in British and American literature:

- Romanticism → Realism → Naturalism → Modernism → Postmodernism

- **Romanticism: against rationality and emphasis of the connections between men and nature.**

- **Realism: socio-political criticism of the urban world.**

- **Naturalism: put Modern men in “experiments” in order to show their fate!**

- **Modernism: represented the urban world through the impressions and consciousness of characters.**
- **Postmodernism: death of author, truth, and God.**
- Periodization of Postwar Taiwan Fiction:
- Romanticism → 1950s: Lin Hai-yin [ 林海音 ]
- Modernism → 1960s: Pai Hsien-yung [ 白先勇 ]
- Nativist-realism/Naturalism → 1970s: Chen Ying-chen [ 陳映真 ], Huang Chun-ming [ 黃春明 ] and Yang Ch'ing-ch'u [ 楊青矗 ]
- Urban Fiction/Postmodernism → 1980s: Chang Ta-chun [ 張大春 ] and Huang Fan [ 黃凡 ]

# Further Information

1. Chi, Pang-yuan and David Der-wei Wang, ed. *Chinese Literature in the Second Half of a Modern Century: A Critical Survey*.
2. Faurot, Jeanette L, ed. *Chinese Fiction from Taiwan*.
3. Wang, David Der-wei, and Carlos Rojas, ed. *Writing Taiwan: A New Literary History*.
4. Chang, Sung-sheng Yvonne. *Modernism and the Nativist Resistance: Contemporary Chinese Fiction from Taiwan*.
5. Martin, Helmut, and Jeffrey Kinkley, ed. *Modern Chinese Writers: Self-portrayals*.
6. An Introduction to Postwar Taiwan Fiction:  
<http://ocw.aca.ntu.edu.tw/ntu-ocw/index.php/ocw/course/100S213>

# Definitions

- **Urban Experience**

- Urban experience is the way of life of the people living in the urban world. What is the urban world? From the so-called structural approach described in the course description, the urban world is apparently more than the world known as **“the city” itself**, and what is supposed to be taken into account also includes its **surrounding suburban area and other cities**. And there is also an **inner structure** of this world. For example, London and Taipei share a similar east-west structure, a distinction which is not only geographical, but also socio-political, economic, and cultural.

# Districts of Taipei

## West District:

Wanhua, Zhongzheng, Datong, and a part of Zhongshan

**East District:** Da'an, Xinyi, Songshan, and a part of Zhongshan

◆ **The strong contrast between West and East Taipei is vividly portrayed in *Crystal Boys* [《孽子》].**





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# Districts of London

**West End:** City of London, Camden, Westminster, Kensington, and Hammersmith and Fulham.

**East End:** Tower Hamlet and the southern part of Hackney

◇ The strong contrast between West and East London is vividly portrayed in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), and several famous books are set in the East End:

◇ *The People of the Abyss* (1903), by Jack London (1876-1916);

◇ *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933), by George Orwell (1903-1950);

◇ *Journey through a Small Planet* (1972), by Emanuel Litvinoff (1915-2011).

- Living in different places means different experiences, and people from different places might feel differently despite the fact that they are living in the same city right now.
- **(The second part of the statement above is quite important for Taiwan's Nativist-realist writers, which will be dealt with latter in this lecture.)**
- What about **urban space**? Urban space is far more than a mere physical collection of places like hotels, bus stations, museums, hospitals, and boulevards, which are unique to the city. **It is a socialized space constituted by all kinds of interactions, which can perform commercial, political, cultural, and even entertainment functions.**

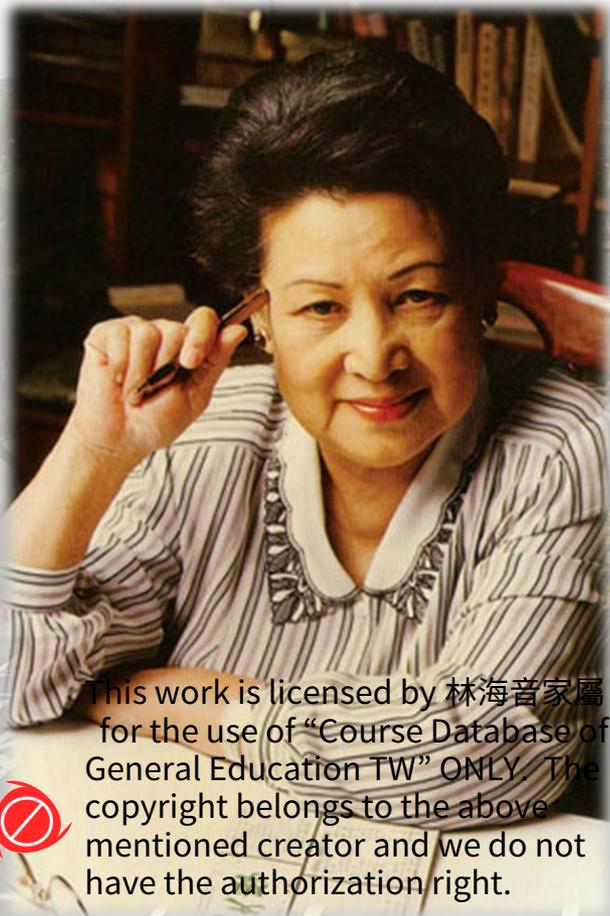
# “Urban Fiction” in Taiwan

- “Urban Fiction” or “Urban Literature” *per se* in Taiwan emerged in the early 1980s, after the economic boom of Taiwan in the 70s.
- **Lin Yao-te [ 林耀德 ]** (1962-1996) and **Huang Fan [ 黃凡 ]** (1950-) were largely responsible for the earliest development of Taiwan’s urban and postmodern fiction. They were both advocates and practitioners of this sub-genre.
- Further reading: Kuo-ch’ing Tu [ 杜國清 ], “Urban Literature and the Fin de Siècle in Taiwan.” ([http://www.eastasian.ucsb.edu/taiwancenter/sites/secure.lsit.ucsb.edu/east.cms\\_taiwancenter/files/sitefiles/publications/6%20-%20Foreword%20in%20English.pdf](http://www.eastasian.ucsb.edu/taiwancenter/sites/secure.lsit.ucsb.edu/east.cms_taiwancenter/files/sitefiles/publications/6%20-%20Foreword%20in%20English.pdf))

# Fiction of Urban Experience in Taiwan

- Huang Fan's urban fiction usually brings our attention to the urban and suburban worlds and how the development and transformation of the city make an impact on people's way of life.
- In this semester, we will expand our scope of study, and focus on "fiction of urban experience," which is urban fiction in its broader sense.
- Rather than limiting ourselves to Huang's and Lin's Taipei, we will try to reach back to Lin Hai-yin's Peking, Pai Hsien-yung's New York and Chicago, and even Yang Ch'ing-ch'u's Kaohsiung.

# Week 3: Lin Hai-yin (1918-2001)



- *Memories of Peking* [ 《城南舊事》 ] (1960)
- “Hui-an Hostel” [ 〈惠安館〉 ]
- “Lan I-Niang” [ 〈蘭姨娘〉 ]
- **◇ What it's like to grow up in a place far away from your native homeland?**

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# Week 4: Pai Hsien-yung (1937-)

- *Taipei People* [ 《臺北人》 ] (1971)
- “Death in Chicago” [ 〈芝加哥之死〉 ] (1964)
- “Li Tung, a Chinese Girl in New York” [ 〈謫仙記〉 ] (1965)
- ♦ the formula of “past vs. present”; both protagonists were students



# Taipei People as a Collection of Historical Fictio

- **“New Year’s Eve”** [ 〈歲除〉 ] and the 1938 Battle of Tai’erzhuang [ 台兒莊會戰 ]
- **“The Last Night of Taipan Chin”** [ 〈金大班的最後一夜〉 ] and Shanghai in the 30s
- **“The Dirge of Liang-fu”** [ 〈梁父吟〉 ] and The 1911 Hsin-hai Revolution [ 辛亥革命 ]
- **“Winter Night”** [ 〈冬夜〉 ] and the May Fourth Movement [ 五四運動 ] (1919)
- **“State Funeral”** [ 〈國葬〉 ] and the Northern Expedition [ 北伐 ], the Chinese Civil War [ 國共內戰 ], and the 1949 Great Retreat [ 一九四九年大撤退 ]

# Week 6-7: Pai Hsien-yung (1937-)

- ***Crystal Boys*** [ 《孽子》 ] (1983)
- The fate of a gay community in Taipei.
- First the gay men gathered at the New Park, then relocated to a gay bar in the East District of Taipei after the park was shut down due to curfew.
- Pai portrayed a Taipei divided into two parts.
- Pai tried to connect Taipei, Tokyo, and New York.

# Week 8: Chen Ying-chen (1937-)

- Political prisoner
- “Night Freight” [ 〈夜行貨車〉 ] (1978)
- “One Day in the Life of a White-collar Worker” [ 〈上班族的一日〉 ] (1978)
- ♦ the influence of multinational corporation on Taipei and its people



# Week 10: Huang Chun-ming (1935-)



Wikipedia C h.Andrew

- **“The Taste of Apples”** [ 〈蘋果的滋味〉 ] (1972)
- **“Young Widow”** [ 〈小寡婦〉 ] (1978)
- **◇ the influence of the Vietnamese War on Taipei and its people**
- **◇ the bars on Chungshan North Road**

# Modernism and *Modern Literature*

- Pai Hsien-yung [ 白先勇 ], Wang Wen-hsing [ 王文興 ], Ou-yang Tzu [ 歐陽子 ], and Chen Jo-hsi [ 陳若曦 ].
- Unsatisfied with the 50s: “Experiments in and explorations and creations of new **artistic forms and styles.**”
- Against ***amateurism***. [Self-trained vs. well-trained.]
- Introduce systematically the movements, trends, criticism, and thoughts of contemporary Western arts.
- **Franz Kafka, Thomas Mann, D. H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and Camus.**

# Modernism vs. Nativist-realism

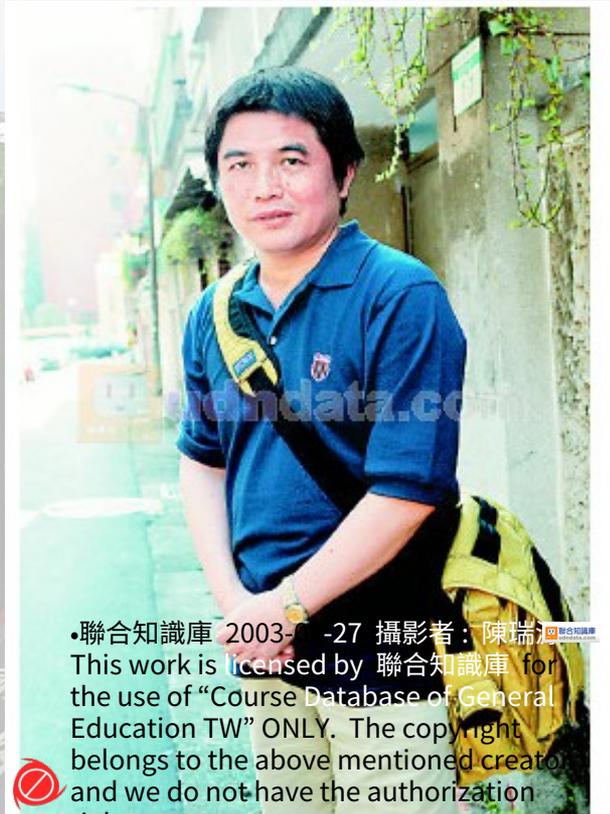
- Westernized vs. localized
- Anti-tradition vs. anti-hegemonic
- Individualism vs. the concern about the grass roots.
- Innovations in forms and styles vs. the themes about the lives of local Taiwanese people.
- Politically disengaged vs. politically engaged.
- Urban life vs. country life.

# Nativist-realism [ 鄉土寫實 ]

- “鄉土” : literally means **Native Soil** [*hsiang-tu*].
- “寫實” [*hsieh-shih*]: means Realism, not only a reflection of reality, but also a criticism of the problems in reality.
- The nativists (the people from the countryside) usually tend to be exploited by oppressors like government officials, businessmen, and city people. [**good vs. evil; naïve vs. sophisticated**]
- It proposed a local Nationalism to replace to Westernized elitist individualism of the 60s.

- The opposition between Modernism of the 60s and Nativist-realism in the 70s culminated in **the Debate of Taiwan Nativist Literature** from 1977 to 1978 [ 台灣鄉土文學論戰 ].
- **Wang Tuo [ 王拓 ] and Chen Ying-chen vs. Peng Ko [ 彭歌 ], Chu Hsi-ning [ 朱西甯 ], and Yu Kuang-chung [ 余光中 ]**.
- **Wang Tuo and Yang Ching-chu [ 楊青矗 ]** were arrested and indicted in 1979 for their involvement with **the Formosa Incident [ 美麗島事件 ]**, but it did not silence the Nativist-realists.

# Week 11: Huang Fan (1950-)



- “A Rainy Night” [ 〈雨夜〉 ] (1980)
- “Tung-pu Street” [ 〈東浦街〉 ] (1981)
- ♦ Emphasis on urban transformation and social problems.

# Week 12: Chang Ta-chun (1957-)



- *Wild Kids: Two Stories of Growing Up* [ 《我妹妹》與《野孩子》 ] (1993, 1996)
- “Wild Child” [ 《野孩子》 ] (1996)
- ◇ Taipei city in the eyes of a group of high school dropouts.

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# Week 13: The City and Marriage



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- “A Love Letter Never Sent” [ 〈一封未寄的情書〉 ] (1984) by Li Ang [ 李昂 ] (1952-)

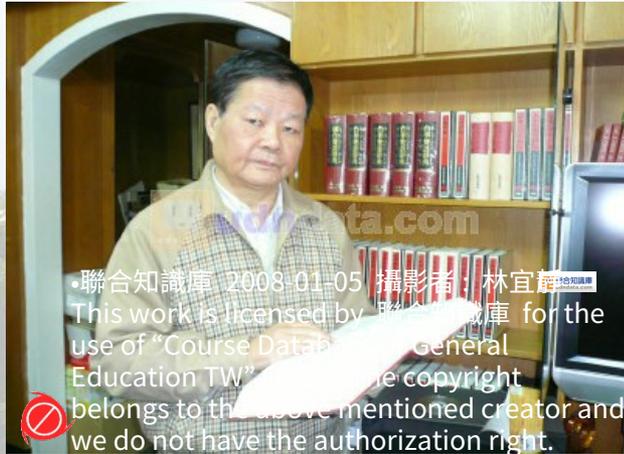


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- “The Tale of the Kangaroo Clan” [ 〈袋鼠族物語〉 ] (1992) by Chu Tien-hsin [ 朱天心 ] (1958-)

- ◇ The problem of extramarital affairs and the way wives can be alienated from husbands.

# Week 14: The City and Labor



- **“Crossing Love River”**  
[ 〈在室男〉 ] (1969) by Yang Ch'ing-ch'u (1940-)
- **“My Son Hansheng”**  
[ 〈我兒漢生〉 ] (1978) by Hsiao Sa [ 蕭颯 ] (1953-)
- **◇ The problems of working in a big city.**

# Week 15: The City and Politics



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- “Lai Suo” [ 〈賴索〉 ] (1979) by Huang Fan
- “Nineteen Days of the New Party” [ 〈新黨十九日〉 ] (1989) by Chu Tien-hsin
- ◇ The political problems before and after the lifting of Taiwan’s Martial Law in 1987.



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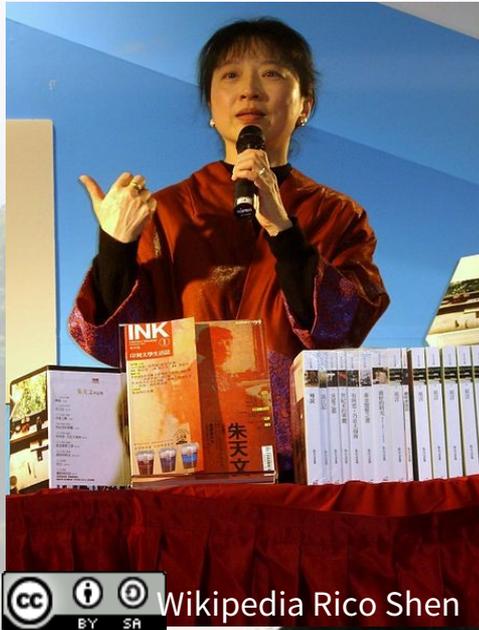
# Week 16: The City and Military Villages



- “Alley 116, Liaoning Street” [ 〈遼寧街 116 巷〉 ] (1991) by Chang Ta-chun
- “The Vanishing Ball” [ 〈消失的球〉 ] (1991) by Chang Chi-jiang [ 張啟疆 ] (1961-)
- ♦ The stories portray the nostalgia for the lost military villages and the way of life isolated from Taiwanese locals.



# Week 17: The City and Consumption



Wikipedia Rico Shen



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- “Fin de Siècle Splendor” [ 〈世紀末的華麗〉 ] (1990) by Chu Tien-wen [ 朱天文 ] (1956-)
- “Breakfast at the Tiffany’s” [ 〈第凡內早餐〉 ] (1997) by Chu Tien-hsin
- ♦ The stories portray the aspect of consumption in the modern city life.

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