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## EDITORIAL NOTE

The *Ethiopia Journal of English, Literary, and Cultural Studies* (ISSN: 0795-5413) is an interdisciplinary journal that explores topical and generative issues in English linguistics and in literary and cultural studies. We recognise that African humanities research is both problem-based and knowledge oriented, and our aim is to provide a platform for scholars to analyse and theorise Africa in a way that is generative, conversational and decolonial. Specifically, the journal focuses on both the analytical and theoretical approaches to knowledge production in the context of Africa and the Global South. We want to curate papers that are hinged on African indigenous paradigms and approaches or that seek to extend, reimagine, or contextualise current theoretical or analytical approaches in English language studies and in literary and cultural studies.

We invite papers that dwell on all aspects of English language studies, including phonetics/phonology, semantics, syntax, discourse analysis, pragmatics, stylistics, ESL, ESP etc. We also welcome papers that theorise literary and cultural texts, including film, still and moving images, music and dance, photographs, cultural objects, spaces and places, society and social formations, and other relevant corpora. While we accept purely analytical essays, we encourage authors to focus on theorising the texts or data they engage with. In particular, we welcome theoretical conversations that implicate postcolonial subjecthood, ecocritical approaches (especially postcolonial ecocriticism), feminism and gender studies, new trends in linguistics, object-oriented criticism and approaches, and other generative approaches to knowledge production. Authors are encouraged to do original theorisation rather than adopt extant theoretical frameworks. They may also extend the scope of extant theories and approaches based on the material they present and discuss.

Furthermore, papers with interdisciplinary approaches are also welcomed. We recognise that knowledge production is an elastic phenomenon, and that bright ideas might implicate various fields. Interesting multi-modal, eclectic, or collaborative research is encouraged in this journal.

## JOURNAL POLICY

The *Ethiopia Journal of English, Literary and Cultural Studies* is published biennially by the Department of English and Literary Studies, Delta State University Abraka, Delta State, Nigeria. All papers submitted to this maiden edition of the journal had undergone double-blind peer review and published papers are well researched, original and data-driven.

Contributors are to submit an e-copy of their manuscript for assessment and publication to [ethiopejournal@delsu.edu.ng](mailto:ethiopejournal@delsu.edu.ng) or [ethiopejournal@gmail.com](mailto:ethiopejournal@gmail.com). Such manuscripts should be original and not under consideration for publication elsewhere and should not have been published in any other journal.

Submitted manuscript which should not exceed 7000 words should be typeset in MS Word Times New Roman Font 12, with double line spacing. The first page should include the title of the manuscript, name(s), and institutional affiliation/address, abstract (not more than 250 words and with not more than six keywords). Manuscripts should conform to the current APA or MLA style sheet. Author(s) of published papers will derive the benefits from peer-review of contributions by seasoned scholars, global visibility and receipt of hard copies as well as soft copies of their papers.

The twelve papers in this maiden edition of the journal cut across disciplines in cultural, media studies and sub-disciplines in English and literary studies. The contributors include seasoned and renowned scholars of international repute and young astute scholars with burning desire to excel in academics. The first article titled: “Folklore and African Poetry in the Age of Globalization” by Prof Ojaide is on cultural studies. Prof. Ojaide is a renowned poet and professor of international repute from the University of North Carolina, USA. It is pertinent to note that the contributors are from universities across the globe. We believe that the twelve articles will be of immense interest to researchers and students.

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## BY CHOICE OR BY FORCE: YANG MU'S POETRY OF HOME

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### Abstract

The idea of home is a significant occurrence within literature of the humanities and social sciences. It is a site where history and memories are made. Home could be inhabited, abandoned and returned to as the case maybe. In this sense, it is a place where stories are told, myths created and is often connected to other notions such as identity and nationhood. The paper discusses how the poetry of Yang Mu resonates the idea of Home from a historical and cultural perspective. Using the textual analysis of selected poems as a methodological choice, it applies Stuart Hall's concept of history to ascertain that the views represented in the poems privilege a graphic rendering of the consciousness of home in images that reflect the experiences of the people. It argues further that history is a significant event in the recognition, constitution, or the systematization of home for the individual and for the group. The paper concludes that for many Taiwanese writers, like Yang Mu, home consciousness is a recurring theme in their poetry about national identity.

**Keywords:** Chinese / Taiwanese poetry, Home, Mobility, National Identity, History, Yang Mu

### Introduction

In the wake of a modernist approach, the meaning of home has become increasingly precarious. A clear reason for this was given by Shutz who argues that “[people are simultaneously strangers and home comers in multiple hyper – differentiated lifeworlds” (31). The idea of a “life world” here is not the normative stability that can be taken for granted in its plurality. It should be noted that the idea of

home evokes many layers of meaning. A lot of literature in the social sciences and humanities has provided us with useful insights into the concept of home. The meaning of home cuts across class, gender, and location. It demonstrates the ontological security that a sense of home provides. Home has been conceived as the grounding of identity which enables people to participate in the public sphere (Sanders 89). It, thus, provides both a spatial and temporal sense of belonging, security, order and permanence (Blunt and Dowling 26).

Notably, the realities of what constitutes home and how people make up their homes are changing in the age of high rates of geographical mobility and changing contexts. In recent times, many people struggle collectively to imagine new ways of seeing or being at home against the hegemonic visions of home. In fact, many writers do not have pleasant or positive feelings and experiences about their homes. For some, home ignites traumatic memories, insecurity, abuse or fear. The resultant effect of this is that many people now have a sense of “trans-national or trans-local belonging”, making themselves at home in more than one place, whether by choice or by force (Hage 205).

Sociologists and anthropologists have, over the years, grappled with the idea of whether or not home can be a “place”, a stable thing or a “process” (Llyods 182 – 183). The concept of home has been regarded as a construction which belongs to a “subjective” phenomenon concerned with self – identities and attitudes, as well as a “structured” phenomenon that transforms objective biographies and life situations (Rutherford 14, Hall 91). In fact, politicians make geographical and historical claims for the nation and empire as home (Blunt and Dowling 206). What this means is that space has symbolic importance to the notion of home in that it “creates a specific identity” (Browit 14).

The site of a home also functions as a repository for complex, interrelated and at times contradictory social – cultural ideas and spaces about people's relationship with one another, especially family, places, spaces and things. (Hamilton 12; Vanni Accargi 13). Seen as such, it projects the 'invisible' aspects of everyday life serving as the 'hub' upon which the socio-structural increasingly relies

(Honeywell 150). And as a “bounded site,” it is a set of practices of domesticity, with a complex interactional achievement between persons, space, and things that require constant homemaking rather than ever finally ‘be at home’ (Cieraad 1999; Schillmeier Heinlein 2009). From the foregoing, the notion of home is a process of “negotiating” and “manipulating” people's identities to suit the context as a way of retaining agency, over the process of home – making” (Deslanders and Humphrey 18). Clearly, too, as a process, it can be constructed as established, fragmented and shared. As a matter of fact, it can provoke a sense of identity which questions traditional sociological views of modernity itself. Simply put, home is now conceived, in recent times, as a site for extraordinary progress and potential.

### **Constructing Home: Creating Home Consciousness as Identity**

In constructing what home is for many people, especially those with a colonial history or people whose identity is a subject of debate, it is important to also note that the historical claim to their geographical territories is a significant factor to consider. This is true with many nations, especially Taiwan, which is for sure, a good example in mind. Thus, to explore the ways in which home is constructed also involves considering the diverse forms of mobility, migration, home-making practice (culture, law, etc.) via an ethnographic frame. This is beyond the scope of this study. To be sure, what we have set to achieve in the paper is to show how, for Yang Mu, the whole idea of home is a process under construction. Of course, the suspicious relationship that exists between Taiwan (ROC) and The People's Republic of China (PRC) has created critical concern about the idea of home. This is particularly true for those who migrated to the Island following the outcome of the election which saw the rise of Mao Zedong as leader of the Communist Party on the Mainland and the withdrawal of Chiang Kai-shek to Taiwan.

Indeed, the redrawing of boundaries is a way of sharpening the contours of a home to separate those who are inside from those who are outside. Within Taiwan itself, internal discourses division resulted into groupings such as *in-province* (deep settlers and

aborigines in Taiwan) and *non-province* (mainland incomers since World War II), as well as *inner-Party* (the KMT supporters) and *non-party* (the dissidents and separatists). Apparently, all these determinants gave birth to a variety of identifications and counter-identification frames. These boundaries show the difference between the *Self* and the *Other*. As a result of the ramifications of identifications, new sites are being created to account for the homeliness of Taiwan.

Many creative writers have taken to the 'mystification' of Taiwan's space as home in their works. To this group, space and place become the site for the construction of a home. This also brought about the questions of "Home" wherefore there was a shift of "poetry of Homesickness" which directs people's minds to the recovery of the island, "poetry of Home" which heightened the call for the "Unity of the Island against the threat of the Mainland". Hsiao in his essay "Shifting from Homesickness to Home," argues that "in space, it [poetry of home] is an acculturation in the homeland of Taiwan; in time, it is a continuation of Chinese culture... What they are looking for is a poetry of both Taiwan and China. Poets' "home consciousness" has gradually changed from a "homesickness" to the observation of "home locality" ... poetry of "homesickness" is oppressing, condensed and meditative, poetry of "home" is liberating [and] diluting (37).

From Hsiao's view, the characteristics of poetry writing between 1970 to 1980 bear the mark of the division of home in plain and simple language (of Taiwanese dialect). It is important to also note that the 'poetry of home' becomes a significant character in the construction of a National Identity for Taiwan. It is not to be seen as some lost place on the Mainland, but on the Island where one lives. As a result, Taiwan's 'Poetry of Home' became a product of poets from two generations: those on the Mainland who came and have lived in Taiwan since 1949, and those who were born and brought up in Taiwan. For the former group, the change from "Homesickness" to "the love of the homeland" can be seen as a manifestation of naturalization, while the latter group gradually initiates this love of home with the anxiety and problems at home. For example, Lo Fu an

exile poet in Taiwan writes about his own *outsidedness* to the mythic homeland in his poem “Grazing at Home on the Border”. In the same manner, Chuang Ch'ui-ming's “On an Observation Tower” questions the meaning of the historical construct of home as its national identity. Both poets looked at the mythic homeland in the Mainland (PRC), but at the same time, invested in the myth of home on the Island (Taiwan, ROC).

From the above, in discussing Yang Mu's poetry of home, it is a fact that history plays an important role. For example, Sung-Sheng Yvonne Chang formulated two different periods in post-1949 Taiwan. For her, “[T]he lifting of Martial Law or 1987 has demarcated this era into two drastically different periods and a clearer contour of the new period seems to be just beginning to emerge in the 1990s, various cultural forces are still easily negotiating with each other” (75). Chiang's conception traces the initial phase of Taiwan's home consciousness to the early 1980s. For Chun, the consciousness of home among the Taiwanese must also consider its cultural identity legacy brought to the Island during the KMT retreat to Taiwan in the late 1940s. He recognizes three different phases of the KMT cultural policy as it affects any attempt at constructing Taiwanese National identity: the era of cultural reunification (1945–67), the era of cultural resistance (1967–77), and the era of cultural reconstruction (since 1977) (Chun 49). Each of these periods opens diverse arguments on the history of poetry in Taiwan. Through them, people have come to understand the various events that resulted in the establishment of the Republic of China (PRC) and the “post-colonial” years of Taiwan's consciousness of home as identity.

To other scholars, for example, Ch'en Ying-Chen, the unique character of Taiwan's home consciousness as identity as expressed in her literature should merge into the character of colonial pieces of literature of Asia, Central and South America as well as Africa (2). By this, Ch'en seeks to draw a connection in the Taiwan-Chinese consciousness. Moreover, the argument against this is that if a Chinese tradition is distinct from the homogeneity of the Asian, American and African literature of the Third World, a Taiwanese literary tradition can be the same logic, and be distinct from the

“Chinese” one. Therefore, according to Sun Tse-lai, Taiwan literature serves as a verbal witness of Taiwanese literature (257). Another objection also came from another critic who sees the bordering of Taiwan's home consciousness within geographical frames at the peripheral position called self-denigration.

More critically, Wong in her study, has discussed Taiwan's consciousness of home along three stages: the first phase of the modern poetry debate to the fall of the Homeland Literary Debate (1972 – 1978); the second stage is marked by “Taiwan Consciousness Debate (1974–1984), and the third and final stage relates to the endangered indigenous minority cultures on the Island in the 1990s. From the above, the multiple identities that makeup Taiwan's national identities are broken down into homeland, homesickness and nostalgia, which are also fashioned on Chinese, Taiwanese and Nativist consciousness. To her, the “Chinese” portrait consolidates a national consciousness that resists foreign cultural imperialistic influence. It is then clear that the “Taiwanese” portrait binds the provincial status of Islanders, including the deep Han Settlers to exclude Outsiders from the Mainland since 1949, and the “Nativist” portrait which concludes the indigenous Taiwanese in residence on the Island “as the legitimate representatives of authentic Taiwanese natives, differentiated from those incoming, in transit and diaspora” (Wong 91).

For these reasons, Taiwan's literary history has always considered critically any attempt at developing a separate consciousness of her writers from those of the Mainlanders. Although it underwent a modernist rebirth in the mid-1950s, this development has often intertwined with national-cultural discourse (Wong 91). Incidentally, this literary practice has also helped to fashion out both for Taiwan and China, a cultural rebirth known as the “horizontal transplant,” that is, a hybrid genealogy of the development of a distinct consciousness in Taiwan. To this effect, Hsia Chi-an (Xia Zhian) who looked at the contribution of the meeting of this *new* consciousness (ROC/PRC versus the Rest of the world) is of the view that, “a national paradigmatic work of new poetry must be noted in the hybridity of the vernacular- a combination of linguistic elements

from “high and low, ancient and modern, Chinese and the West” (Wong 94).

Worthy of note is that in the case of Taiwan, with its colonial past, national consciousness has never simply signified attachment to homeland alone. In a sense, it is defined against the people's loss of identity on the one hand, and against real or imagined encroachment of hegemonic powers on the other. Implicit in such a demand is recovery from loss, redress of injustice and restoration of equality and self-determination of value. In essence, the national consciousness for the people of Taiwan entails the drawing of physical and historical boundaries as it reflects their past as well as an economy of psychological and emotional investment that history and land can give to all.

### **Critical concern in Yang Mu's Poetry**

Yang Mu was born Wang Ching-hsien to a Mainlander father and a Taiwanese mother in Hualien on the East coast of Taiwan, on May 7, 1940. At that time, under the policy of the colonial government, he first learnt to speak Japanese, the official language. Moreover, he grew up learning the calligraphy of the Tang dynasty from his father's side, and thereafter, learnt Taiwanese mandarin from his mother's side. The poet also learnt some aboriginal languages from the tribes living near his hometown. The multifarious linguistic and cultural backgrounds would grow even richer when at the Christian Tung-hai University in Central Taiwan, he studied Mandarin and English at the undergraduate level.

Yang Mu started writing poetry while in high school following the encouragement of his Chinese literature teacher, Ch'u Ch'ing, a poet, and novelist from the mainland (Yeh xviii). Soon, he began editing, with his senior schoolmate, Chen Chin-pai, a poetry gazette called *The Seagull*, as well as a literary supplement devoted to modern poetry in the *East Taiwan Daily*. During this time, he used many pen names but finally settled on Yeh Shan under which he was first known for his serious and sensuous classical flavoured poetry of the 1950s and 1960s.

Michelle Yeh argues that, in many ways, the name Yeh - (*leaves*),

a common Chinese surname and Shan - (*fine jade*), is given usually to women- aptly signifies the style of Yang Mu's early books from the late 1950s through the mid-1960s. In other words, his poetry, at that time, often has beautiful, serene, and majestic nature: stars and forests; mountains and rivers, birds, and butterfly, falling leaves and green moss. Against this background, "a melancholy youth wanders alone, reflecting on love and life, time and death" (Yeh xvii). The name also "bespeaks nature in its exquisite beauty that occupies much of the imagery of Yang Mu's early poetry and of his essays as well" (Lupke 257).

Yang Mu's early poems are revelations of acts of innocence captured in the voice of a youth who is embittered about the pains of going through the human world of experience. This 'half-grading' voice speaks to a listener or group of listeners who are, most times, silent. Moreover, in some of his earliest poems, the persona speaks to nobody. In such cases, his poems are purely monologic, and show a frightened youth tension to avoid situations that are sensitive. As he advanced in age and style, Yang Mu consciously searches for breakthrough, which resulted in 'a radical change in his writing,' (Wong 37). He, thus, adopted the name Yang Mu in 1972 signalling a new direction in his poetry. This inspired him towards a bolder artistic experimentation on one hand, and critical reflections on history, philosophy and social reality on the other.

Progressively, there seems to be a decrease in the use of punctuation marks in his lines. This personalized style helps shift the reader's focus to the words themselves. Thus, the symbiotic relationship between the toughness and tenderness in the poetry of his early stage of writing shows that the speaker is indecisive and uncertain. However, this juvenile experiment soon disappears in his mature works as he begins to get bolder and bolder in the acts of literary creativity. A lot of poetry written in the latter stage of career contains a voice that speaks directly of his identity. To a very large extent, this voice consciously reflects the mind of an intellectual who has transcended borders with a definite ideology on the functional and aesthetic value of poetry.

As a prolific writer, Yang Mu is an essayist, editor, and a highly

respected literary scholar who publishes in both Chinese and English. Some of the poems selected for this study were written in English while others were written in Chinese and translated into English. Yang Mu's voluminous publication of poetry and other critical essays are testament to his contribution to the writing of both Chinese and Taiwanese literature. Many of his works are reports of his personal contacts with the environment. It is found in them, experiences of the everyday life of an average individual. Although they appear purely autobiographical in nature, there is nothing in them to suggest that their speaker is not Yang Mu himself, since their thematic preoccupations "correspond closely in theme and mood to event of his life" (Wong 35). As a result of these publications and style of writing, he has been considered "the greatest living Chinese poet; distinguished Chinese prose stylist, and essayist" (Monterey xv). He has granted over one hundred interviews, the most recent is the one granted to this researcher on the 27<sup>th</sup> of April 2017 in his private residence in National Dong Hwa University, Hualian, Taiwan.

### **Yang Mu's Poetry of Home**

It is important to note that Yang Mu's poetry goes far back into the colonial period of Taiwan before 1949 (Dutch 1622–1682; the Manchus 1897–1895; Japanese 1895–1945), and post-colonial experience (after 1949). In his interview with this researcher, Yang Mu acknowledges that writers in Taiwan, especially post-colonial writers bear the history of Taiwan within them as scars. Thus, he addresses the Taiwan's colonial experiences that are filled with memories of incidences of his early childhood. In fact, the colonial history of Taiwan is a history of warfare, visit and resistance. To him, the Taiwanese colonial experiences of being ruled by other races should not empower the monologic, coercive tyranny of Chinese nationalism (Wong 171). Recounting how Taiwan's colonial history has helped in shaping his literary imagination, Yang Mu in an interview granted to the researcher, reveals that:

Actually, my grandparents moved  
from South China to Taiwan.

Culturally, we are Chinese. My father's generation moved from the West of Taiwan to the Eastern part. In 1940, Taiwan was under the Japanese government due to the treaty that was signed. After the war, Taiwan was ceded to Japan. I was born when Taiwan was under the Japanese government. After the war, Japan was defeated, so the Chinese government came to Taiwan to take over. I speak the aboriginal languages of native Taiwanese. So, I grew up in a complicated language environment (Interview, 1).

The above reveals that he grew up in a complex and complicated environment in terms of colonial history and certain events that characterized such periods. The implication of this development, therefore, is that, in his poetry, there are elements or traces of the effects of colonial history in constructing Taiwan's national identity. This researcher argues that Yang Mu can be seen as a creative writer who conveys the memories of Taiwan's colonial past, and childhood experiences to frame history as a pillar of national consciousness, especially that which sees Taiwan as home, a home which invests a distinct identity for the Taiwanese.

Many literary and cultural critics believe that the history of the colonized is destroyed by colonialism. For this reason, writers and historians engage the society in order to rehabilitate it as this is the main source and basis for constructing identities. For instance, writers such as Frantz Fanon have argued that “the past could give back (to the colonized) their value as it proves that they also have culture” (211). This position may be anchored on the premise that colonialism for the Taiwanese, as slavery for the Africans, disrupted the values of the peoples' collective identities. This is so because, during periods of colonialism, the colonizer usually defines the consciousness of the colonized. This was what Yang Mu meant when

he says:

I am a Taiwanese, speaking Chinese and Japanese. I speak the aboriginal languages; native Taiwanese to the people who are not Chinese at all .... I went to Chinese primary school and was taught to be Chinese and not Japanese. I would be punished if I spoke Japanese (Interview, 1).

The poet captures the influence of colonial powers on the culture of the people of his generation. This accounts for the “complicated language environment” he sometimes refers to in his writings. Recall, that during the Japanese occupation, the colonial power made their Japanese culture the way of life of the Taiwanese. The colonial identity being referred to here is the historical moment captured in his poetry. Wong argues that “given this history writing imperative, poets, as well as critics, have contributed in different [stages] and degrees to the production of a coherent monologic narration, which more often than not, complies with the dominant narrative of the time” (Wong 2) Thus, she concludes that as a result of these historical experiences, the Taiwanese have suffered a troubled national identity right from their colonial past.

In the light of capturing the colonial past, Yang Mu's poetry is a succinct demonstration of a cultural practice of intervention to support Fanon's argument stated earlier. This also aligns with what has been found critically appealing in Bhabha's proposition on the influence of culture (of the colonizer) on the colonized:

[It is] a space of intervention  
... recall the past as social  
cause or aesthetic precedent, it  
renews the past, refiguring it  
as a contingent 'in-between'  
space, that innovates and  
interrupts the performance of

the present.

From the above, Yang Mu's poems which deal with the colonial past are products of *self*-revisiting of the internal struggle to reconcile tensions that are associated with 'cultural transplant' and, or cultural translation that produces new breeds that are altogether different from those of the colonizers. In buttressing the point made so far, the analysis on how Yang Mu betrays his colonial experience will begin with the poem "Zeelandia".

Zeelandia is a significant historical site that marks the beginning of colonial experience of Taiwan by the Dutch in 1624. It was built and developed by the colonizer since it was the place where the Dutch governor had lived until Cheng Ch'eng-kung took it over in 1661. Yang Mu's confessional talks about the end of the Dutch occupation of Taiwan around 1662. Symbolically, it is a national allegory that displays dramatic qualities such as the conflict of values and roles and the expressive power of "dramatic monologue behind the mask." The poem starts with a description of space and time:

The place across the way has snuck into the burning  
chirr of the cicada

Looking up from the stone steps, the soaring tree  
Spreads its broad leaves, and a mattress for the wind-  
The huge cannon is rusting. But I wonder how  
To trample heartlessly upon her new blue dress

In the history of frantic gun fire" (*FG*, Lines 1-6, pp. 105).

Zeelandia is a historical place because it represents the beginning of colonialism in Taiwan. This spot witnessed colonial violence and all other negotiations that saw the smooth operation of the Dutch colonizer. However, the colonized, seen in the image of the female to be conquered, usually hits back at the colonizer with her feminine strictures that eventually weaken her counterpart. If "Zeelandia" is read against this background, it would be discovered that Yang Mu adopts the gendered metaphor of colonization as sexual intercourse in the face of an inversion of the patriarchal hegemony in the colonial discourse:

There is a sadness that brings me great  
pleasure

Like the European swords boldly  
 slicing open  
 Inverted necklines. I mount the stairs  
 With the roll of battle drums, I  
 unbutton  
 The dozen buttons on her blue dress  
 To discover the one who welcomes me  
 is the familiar  
 Cool breast attesting to the mole  
 The enemy attesting to the mole  
 The enemy ships are arrayed along the  
 shore  
 We sweat to get out of the rain.  
 (FG, Lines 7-15, p. 105).

The Dutch soldier's confession in the poem indicates that the moment of the occupation in Taiwan is an insertion of an alien position into the "Chinese" monolithic version of national recovery in 1661. It reads thus:

At daybreak, the enemy ships are  
 poised for an attack  
 We sweat arranging our fortress  
 Two pillows for a cannon mount  
 The call of the cicada slowly fades  
 tropical winds  
 Pound into the mattress of rolling  
 waves  
 You are actually a water beast from  
 abroad Glistening and pristine  
 Your limbs are more slender than ours  
  
 Your accent crystalline  
 A scream for help under crumbling  
 ramparts  
 Also seems as empty as a dry well  
 When I lie listening to your  
 Vacant endless echoes (FG, Lines 16-

29,pp105-107)

Yang Mu presents the Dutch soldier's confession that opposes the Dutch narrative of conquest and at the same time casts doubt on the Han celebration of national recovery solely ascribed to Cheng Ch'eng-kung's military success. "Zeelandia" ends in a chatting of "Ilha Formosa" a second name for Taiwan, coined by the exotic gaze of the European explorer and now well received by the native islanders; a sort of colonization relic. "Zeelandia" resonates to render an exoticized and eroticized identity of the Island. It has been argued that the gendered representations such as taking the landscape as the female body and natural resistance as buttons on women's clothes are stereotypes, yet "the agency for change is not predominately male" (Wong 4). In fact, the prosopopoeia to "*Ilha Formosa*" is a recreation of a Taiwanese-ness as distinguished from a monolithic "Chinese-ness"- which is here depicted by her colonial experiences. In stanza four, the poet writes:

Silently counting the slowly unbuttoned  
 Dozen buttons on her new blue dress  
 In Zeelandia the girls go wearing  
 The easily shed clothes of summer: winds from the  
 strait  
 Come to tease upon their butterfly collars  
 I thought I had discovered the spice Islands, who  
 would have known  
 Rising up in front of me still those bloodthirsty  
 Breasts with their hint of mint, Ilha  
 Formosa, I come to lie upon  
 Your cool mattress of the wind. Ilha  
 Formosa, I come from afar to colonize you  
 But have already submitted. Ilha  
 Formosa. Ilha  
 Formosa. (FG, Lines 41-54, p. 109)

In another sense, it can be said that in Yang Mu's "Zeelandia", the interpellation is invoked not to affirm one's *Self* against the *Other*,

but to problematize the Dutch colonial project and Chinese national recovery in the light of surrender as seen in the Dutch soldier's confession. Notably, to put an end to the Dutch occupation of Taiwan, a fierce battle was fought at Zeelandia in 1661, resulting in the defeat of the Dutch and the victory of the young troops led by Cheng Ch'eng-kung. In October 1661, Cheng who was granted a dynastic surname, Chu, set up the regime of "Eastern Capital" on the Island, in relation to the capital on the mainland, now fallen into the hands of the alien Manchus.

It is important to note that the name "Eastern Capital" suggests that it is a Ming empire taking Taiwan as a temporary refuge with a view to an eventual return to the Mainland. The ultimate ambition of Cheng is to expel the Ch'ing and restore the Ming. However, when Cheng Ch'eng-kung died in 1664, his son Ch'eng Jing ascended to the ruling position by crooked means. He changed the "Eastern Ning" to establish a Ning kingdom independently of the Ning. Under his rule, the power and prospects of the Ning regime declined. While trying to capture the colonial experience of Taiwan, Yang Mu resorts to historical narratives that have created part of the reference points to the Taiwanese National Identity. He goes deep into records and events that link Taiwan with other nations with such political tensions and history. This strategy constitutes a relevant window of looking at Taiwan's colonial past and experience. He, nevertheless, uses those stories and histories to raise or discuss the issues that affect Taiwan and the rest of the world around it. In doing this, he never fails to tell his conviction or interpretation of those events.

"Difficult Is the Journey" is another poem which focuses on the activities of a central character. In it, Yang Mu uses a pilgrim, a native of Taiwan who visits Ch'ang-an, a place in contemporary China to reveal the multiplicity that characterise post-structuralist sense of self and place. This poem is hinged on the crucial events during the change of the ruling regime in the seventeenth century. Ch'ang-an being the capital city for almost thirteen different dynasties of Ancient China, has in the past, witnessed good and tough times. It, therefore, stands as a city that epitomizes not only the imperial conclave but also a home for cultural and literary engagements,

especially as seen in the works of modern Chinese poets. The poem captures the demystification of what can be regarded as the “Chinese” cultural and the Taiwanese national identities.

In it, Yang Mu gives an account of a traveller's traumatic encounter with the Chinese cultural imaginary, Ch'ang-an, after a long separation between the Island: Taiwan, the Republic of China, and the Mainland; the Peoples' Republic of China. It, therefore, captures the complexities associated with the identity issues of Taiwan. Wong, whose essay *Epiphany of Ecoland: Cross-Cultural Intertextuality in Yang Mu's Poetry and Poetics* examines the ways Yang Mu's poetry acts as an echo to the mainstream narrative of Taiwan between the late 1970s and early 1980s when issues relating to Taiwan's national identity were a heated debate, observes that at this period, the issue of Taiwanese identity espouses a native Taiwanese identity against the Chinese one. It can be argued that the nodal point of the communication circuit in Yang Mu's poem is usually animated by a dramatic persona who is situated at a historical juncture. Thus, his dramatic monologue spins out a narrative in history that is constructed as self-deconstruction.

Structurally, “Difficult Is the Journey” begins with a prelude composed of stanzas one to four, in which the persona records his journey to Ch'ang-an, a time-travel into history:

A donkey-drawn cart rolls down the street  
 I stand before a loess alley, gazing at History  
 A crowd of shadows wriggles on the red wall  
 Dry, peel off; it seems that among them is me:  
 Wrapped up a layer over layers behind the billboards,  
 thing  
 Hardly bears the spring chill. People push toward me  
 Slanting body temperature gradually touches my blood  
 and bones  
 I turn to distinguish left from right and found that they are  
 about overlapping shadows  
 On the wall, the shapes are false. I then understand  
 Alien, alone, insignificant and substantial, I am  
 And cannot help shivering in the twilling that has

survived since ancient times (*You ren*, 140-41).

Just as the traveller made his thorny journey through Ch'ang-an (the imperial centre fashioned in classical poetry), Yang Mu sees history as “distorted” or “broken shadows” which are projected through the red wall. This wall admits who is inside and who is outside and installs who is at the centre and who is at the periphery. The deciding factor, (of position and location), is determined by the frame that serves as means to other identifications. The scene on which history can be read or written is also portrayed in the colour of the wall which invokes images: the Red Wall of Communist Russia, the Wall under the gate of Heavenly Peace of the PRC, and the palace walls of Ch'ang-an itself stand as sites for historical and ideological connotations.

Yang Mu's “Difficulty Is the Journey” is a meta-criticism of the construction of multiple identities for the Taiwanese in a deconstructionist narrative context. Thus, the poem attempts a demystification as well as political critique of the identity of the Taiwanese. The traveller discovers that the locals in Ch'ang-an are not influenced by the culture of the environment since they are exiles who are unaware of the relevance of connecting to one's roots. As a result of these discoveries, he struggles within himself to resist the cultural disengagement, which for him, is the loss of one's national identity. He, therefore, laments his loss of identity with the cultural China as is reflective in the expression “can you not see”. Invariably, the traveller also laments the cultural life of the people as their ancestors are now nowhere to be found.

Gradually, he continues his journey until he encounters: “a fiction seller... whose face that I cannot recall, not/old nor young, without joy and without/sorrow. This is an extremely familiar face/I have seen it in books; a face I have imagined and fashioned” (Stanza 5, lines 54 – 57). The meeting between the man who sells fiction, and the poetic persona dramatizes history as perceived by an individual who has gone through the experience of transiting from one reality to another. The poet emphatically reveals that only history can reveal who people truly are. In other words, people's true identity is a product of events that have time boundaries:

My temples grey as an alien's, and I  
 Am actually an alien who has travelled thousands of miles to this  
 place  
 Standing independently under the cool shades of the tower gazing  
 at, History: its dust, its mud and its blood  
 I heard the sorrows clamour of sword as spears the ones for a  
 break- though  
 The devouring flaming tongues, the falling roofs  
 Thunders, lighting, downpours, gates  
 The refugees' song of exiles. (*You ren*, stanza 6, lines 63–70).

“Difficulty Is the Journey” can also be seen as a narrative poem in which contrasting histories play against each other, letting open a myriad of alternatives for addressing national narratives in post-colonial Taiwan and in contemporary China from some peripheral positions. Perhaps, it was for this reason that it has been observed that “read against the history of *Yue Fu* the “Newness” of Yang Mu's “New Yuefu” is significant in that echoing the thematic characteristic of the genre, the poet admits that those poems were composed in reaction to immediate circumstance, both local and global” (Wong 7). “Difficult is the Journey” displays the functional power of the past to demystify the present. In the poem, Yang Mu addresses the cleavages of perception and reality or of history and fantasy through the traveller who seeks to redefine his present situation supported by past events. This history's specificity of constructing place-based identity is, for the poet, a cultural journey that may be considered difficult for both sides of the pole, the Mainlanders and the Islanders. This demonstration of historical experience in the poem is an attempt to capture the connection or unseen tie between the Taiwanese and the People's Republic of China.

## Conclusion

To end this discussion on Yang Mu's poetry of home, it is imperative to reveal that Taiwan's identity issue demands a consideration of the social and political events of the people. Yang Mu's poems demand attention that confronts several colonial cultures and post-colonial realities to reinvent yet a distinctive Taiwanese identity from the

mainstream Chinese culture. This is because a unitary system of Taiwan's national consciousness is not sufficient to capture its hybridity. For this reason, one way of defining Yang Mu's poetry of home is to treat such an issue through the lyrical voices that are both personal and collective in many of his poems. These lyrical voices have been deployed by the poet to create multiple perspectives from which the national consciousness of the people is conceived and understood as in the "Story of the Five Concubines," "Zeelandia," and other poems such as "Kaohsiung," "Solitude," "A Love Poem," "A Strand of Rice," "Moon over Mountain," "Spring," "Someone Asks Me about Truth and Justice," "Flowing River," "On the Cliff," "When Dusk fills the Sky," and "Passing through Peach Blossoms," etc., where he reports on the consciousness of home in Taiwan by locating it within the context of both colonial and post-colonial experiences of the Taiwanese.

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