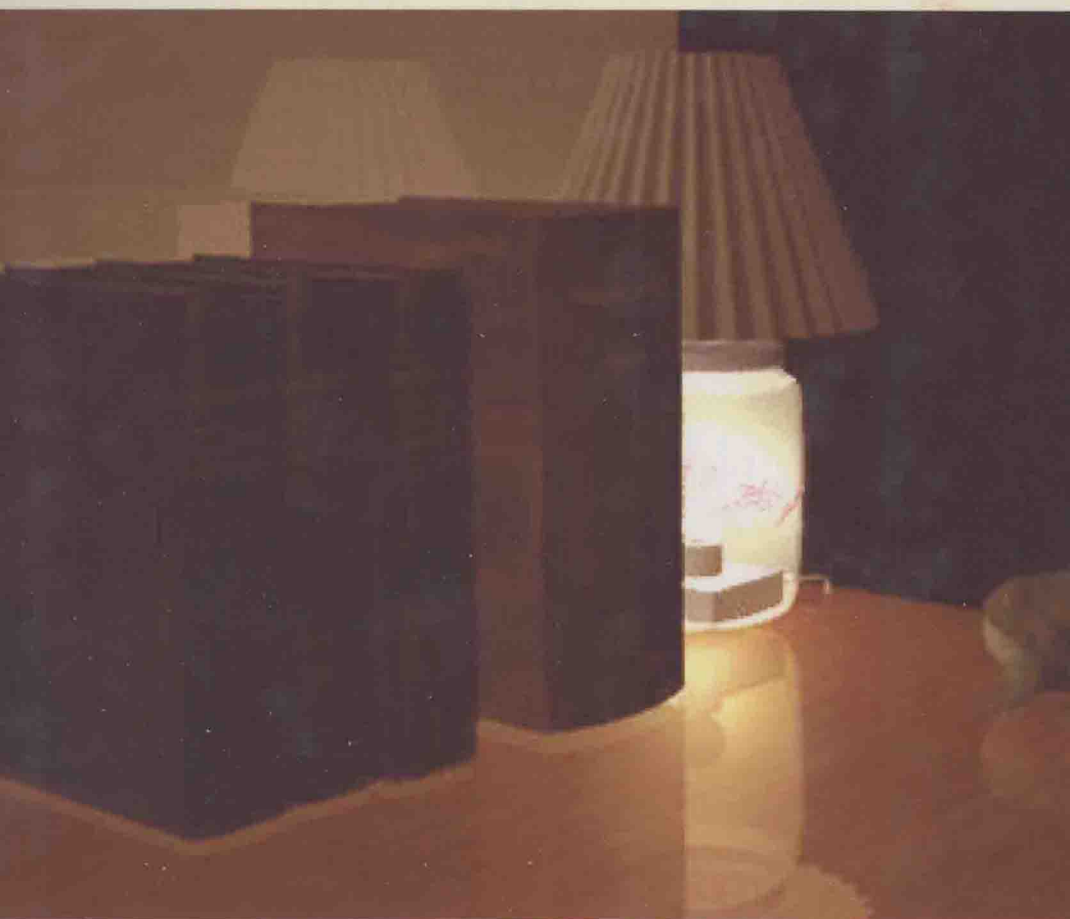


LITERARY
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IN TAIWAN

MARTIAL LAW TO MARKET LAW



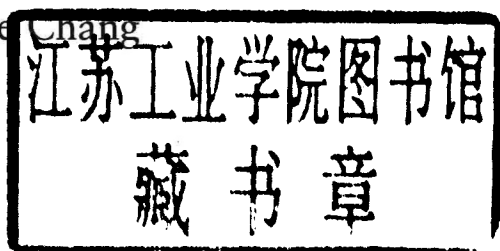
Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang

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Martial Law to Market Law

Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang



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P R E F A C E

This historical overview is for readers unfamiliar with Taiwan's modern era. Taiwan experts, go directly to the introduction.

Taiwan, an island 90 miles off the southern coast of mainland China, saw an influx of Han Chinese settlers from China's Fujian (Fukien) and Guangdong (Kuangtung) provinces in the 1600s, and was formally incorporated into the Qing Empire as a prefecture of Fujian province in 1684. In the second half of the nineteenth century, China suffered a series of losses to western and Japanese imperial aggression. After losing the first Sino-Japanese war in 1895, the Qing court ceded Taiwan to Japan, already modernized and newly powerful thanks to the Meiji Restoration. During 50 years of colonial rule, the Japanese exploited Taiwan's agricultural wealth, but also built a modern industrial infrastructure on the island and introduced modern institutions, including a new public education system. One far-reaching consequence of these changes was that when Taiwan was returned to China at the end of the Second World War, most educated Taiwanese spoke and wrote in Japanese.

The colonial period was mostly orderly, but tensions rose after Japan invaded China in 1937, and again when it expanded the war zone to the Pacific in 1941. Tens of thousands of young Taiwanese were drafted to support Japan's war efforts in Southeast Asia and China; many never returned. The banning of Chinese-language publications early in this period and the imposition of wartime mobilization programs, including the *Kominka* (Japanization or Imperialization) campaign, brought to the surface latent tension between the colonizers and the colonized.

The retrocession of Taiwan to the Nationalist-controlled Republic of China in 1945 came with its own difficulties. The Nationalists (Kuomintang, or KMT) used Taiwan's resources to support their fight against the Communists on the mainland, and failed miserably in their early attempts

at governing the recovered territory. Discontent over rampant inflation, official corruption, and administrative incompetence erupted into spontaneous rioting that spread throughout the island in February 1947. The new government summoned soldiers from the mainland and brutally suppressed the riots, killing many thousands of Taiwanese, including a large number of the social elite. The “February 28 Incident,” as it came to be known, has played a divisive role in Taiwan’s society and politics ever since.

In 1949, the Nationalist regime, led by Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, lost its war with the Communists on the mainland—now declared the People’s Republic of China (PRC)—and retreated to Taiwan, where it continued to reign in the name of the Republic of China. During the massive retreat of 1949, around two million people relocated from various parts of the Chinese mainland to Taiwan. These new arrivals became known as “mainlanders,” as opposed to earlier settlers, who are often called “native Taiwanese.” Conflict and cooperation between these two population groups continue to play a prominent role in the cultural configurations that this study explores.

The Nationalists’ resettlement in Taiwan was consolidated when, following the outbreak of the Korean War, the United States decided to help defend and develop the island nation-state as an anti-Communist outpost in East Asia, initially by sending the Seventh Fleet into the Taiwan Strait. Meanwhile, the Nationalist government declared martial law and, on Chiang’s orders, earnestly prepared to “launch a counterattack” and regain the mainland, a plan unlikely to succeed and not included in the U.S. Cold War agenda. The two Chinese regimes separated by a narrow strait achieved a *de facto* truce after an aborted attempt by the PRC to force Taiwan into submission by heavily bombarding two offshore islands, Jinmen (Quemoy) and Mazu (Ma-tsu), in 1958.

By suppressing civil rights and freedom of speech in the immediate post-1949 decades—an era known as the “White Terror”—the Nationalist regime maintained social stability while instituting successful economic and educational programs that led to accelerated growth, followed by remarkable prosperity. However, the sociocultural order sustained by authoritarian rule began to erode in the early 1970s, when Nixon visited China (1971) and Taiwan was ousted from the United Nations, events that undermined the Nationalist regime’s claim to be the “sole legitimate Chinese government.” When Chiang Ching-kuo (CCK), eldest son of Chiang Kai-shek, took over the reins of power after his father died in 1975, he faced grave challenges on both the domestic and the diplomat-

ic fronts. Overall, Chiang Ching-kuo's era (the mid-1970s to the late 1980s) was more enlightened, a period of "soft-authoritarian" rule marked by serious efforts to "nativize" the ruling KMT regime by means of a peaceful transition of power from mostly mainlander administrators to more native Taiwanese. The leadership also made pragmatic adjustments to Taiwan's newly isolated position in the international community. This, and the impressive performance of capable KMT technocrats, helped make Taiwan a growing economic force on the world stage and a leader among East Asia's remarkable group of Newly Industrialized Countries (NICs).

Prosperity changed things. In the 1970s and 1980s Taiwan's new affluence, a rising middle class, and a less repressive, more open-minded ruling regime fostered political opposition, especially among native Taiwanese tired of the mainlander population's hegemony and eager for a more democratic society. The 1979 Kaohsiung Incident (or Meilidao Incident) was a turning point for political opposition. A clash in the southern city of Kaohsiung between political demonstrators at an International Human Rights Day rally and KMT troops sent to stop the demonstration resulted in the arrests of fifteen of Taiwan's most important opposition leaders, a group of writers and intellectuals organized around the *Meili-dao* [Formosa] magazine. The well-publicized trial and sentencing of these political activists in military court caused a great stir, reminding people of the lack of real democracy in Taiwan under martial law.

The Kaohsiung Incident was followed by a decade-long struggle between the mainlander-controlled KMT and "*dangwai*" ("outside the party") political forces. The Nationalist government was forced to make significant concessions. In 1986, a homegrown political party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), was founded in Taiwan. Then, in 1987, shortly before the death of Chiang Ching-kuo in January 1988, martial law was lifted after 38 years. Radical intellectual ferment, militant political protests, and grass-roots civilian demonstrations made the last years of the 1980s at once tumultuous and euphoric.

Post-martial law Taiwan turned out to be more disorderly and confrontational than most had perhaps anticipated. Native Taiwanese and mainlanders continued to face off over the epic, inevitable redistribution of political, economic, and cultural capital at the center of the rapidly changing society. The 1990s saw the rise of "money politics," increased corruption, and loss of discipline within the ruling KMT party. And electoral democracy was made difficult by ferocious partisanship, fueled by

irreconcilable differences over the issue of *tongdu*—whether Taiwan should move toward reunification with China or independent statehood.

Despite some progress made during the 1992–93 Cross-Strait talks, on the whole the relationship between Taiwan and the PRC has deteriorated in the post-martial law period. Early in his first term, Lee Teng-hui, the first Taiwan-born President of the Republic of China (1988–2000), accelerated former President Chiang Ching-kuo’s “Taiwanization” of the KMT, a process intended to bring the ruling party’s membership and policies more in line with the aspirations of a majority native-Taiwanese public that would soon be choosing its leaders by direct election (Lee became Taiwan’s first democratically elected president in 1996). This and Lee’s “Taiwan first” initiative were preludes to a more explicitly separatist turn in Taiwan’s public policy in the mid-1990s, which drove the PRC to some drastic countermeasures, including overtly threatening military maneuvers in the Taiwan Strait just before the first presidential election in 1996.

Lee’s Taiwancentric policies were popular enough in principle, but also a source of considerable anxiety and controversy over the significant risk involved in overt challenges to the powerful PRC and its unpredictable leadership. Some segments of the society vociferously opposed the policy shift, and complicating factors, like the growing number of Taiwanese businessmen investing in mainland China, contributed to the already intense political strife on the island. In the 2000 presidential election, KMT supporters split their votes between an independent candidate and one selected by the party leadership, allowing DPP candidate Chen Shui-bian to win the election by a narrow margin. This ended the Nationalists’ half-century rule of Taiwan, and along with it much of the unique climate and circumstances that shaped the distinctive literary culture examined in this book.

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Introduction

With the monumental changes of the last fifteen years or so, Taiwan is making itself anew. The process commands serious scholarly efforts at remapping Taiwan's recent past, not least, its literary past. Though unquestionably a crucial component of local cultural production, for various reasons contemporary Taiwanese literature has been consistently neglected and frequently misrepresented by literary historians inside and outside Taiwan. One purpose of this study is to redress those problems. In addition, though, if an in-depth account of contemporary Taiwanese literature is important for Taiwan itself, it is also valuable for illuminating larger issues of cross-border literary phenomena in a globalized context. With this case study approach in mind, in my earlier work, *Modernism and the Nativist Resistance: Contemporary Chinese Fiction from Taiwan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), I examined Taiwan's modernist literary movement in the 1960s and 1970s, situating it in the context of a powerful artistic current that ran through many parts of the nonwestern world in the mid-twentieth century. I initially set out on the current project to explore the intimate relationship between politically instituted cultural ideology and the mechanisms of literary production in Taiwan, as borne out by its mainstream literary output. Ongoing events, however, soon forced me to adjust my perspective to address a literary field already transformed by its race toward market-authorized autonomy. This would also require a more inclusive and nuanced theoretical framework. A trip or two to the drawing board later, I arrived at the critical approach that resulted in the present study, canvassing half a century, tracing the trajectory of Taiwan's post-1949 literature through complex and shifting political and market currents.

Literature in Taiwan today, having traveled a long way from simple political subordination, is now compelled to negotiate a path between residual high culture aspirations and the emergent reality of market domination

in a relatively autonomous, increasingly professionalized cultural field. My new approach incorporates the important understanding that this has not happened just within Taiwan's unique historical environment but also in the context of a modernizing local economy, a globalizing world economy, and a postcolonial, Cold War, then post-Cold War world order. In this respect there are important affinities between Taiwan and other contemporary East Asian societies, including, but not limited to, China.

This contextual approach faces an immediate challenge: how to conceptualize in nonreductive terms the relationship between external determinants—i.e., political and economic forces—and various literary configurations they act upon in direct or mediated ways. This has been less than satisfactorily attempted in recent scholarship on modern Chinese literature from postcolonial, feminist, and other cultural studies perspectives. My goal here is not only to delineate the gradual but profound exchange of position between political and market forces in Taiwan's literary universe but also to explore the closely connected, complex history of the struggle for position among multiple literary movements responding to one another and to dramatic transformations in the political and social realms around them. A brief tour of the territory and how I try to understand it is conducted below, followed by an outline of the book.

NEW VANTAGE

No sooner had I started research for this project than momentous changes began occurring in Taiwan in a breathtaking, exasperating manner. Martial law had been lifted in 1987, and now the impact of that watershed event was suddenly arriving in regular tidal waves. The environment and modes of cultural production in Taiwan were changing so fundamentally that a new critical paradigm would be required to fully comprehend the patterns underlying them. Most significantly, the literary record from before 1987 would now appear in a different light.

The cultural sphere was thoroughly tossed by Taiwan's extraordinary political and economic transformations. Released from official censorship, it was immediately consumed by the political upheavals attending the introduction of electoral democracy, legalized opposition parties, and an increasingly lively civil society. Politics raged on three related fronts: an amazing power struggle between the governing Nationalist Party (KMT) and the fast-rising, opposition Democratic Progressive

Party (DPP); the aggravated identity politics of the divide between Taiwan's two major population groups, "native Taiwanese" and "mainlanders" (pre- and post-1949 settlers from mainland China, respectively); and a societywide debate about Taiwan's national and cultural identity, and how the question of "reunification" with China or independent statehood should be decided. Twists and turns in negotiations with the mainland, sporadic military threats in the Taiwan Strait, and rapidly growing business investments in China added complexity and pressure on all fronts. As Taiwan's politics changed, so did the terms of literary discourse. The value of certain cultural currencies went up at the expense of others, and individuals saw their cultural capital, and hence their positions in the literary field, significantly altered. Polemics of varying levels of sophistication zeroed in on a question of naming: "Taiwanese literature" or "Chinese literature in Taiwan."

Ironically, however, just as "Taiwanese literature" was elevated to serious symbolic status within the literary field, the significance of literature in everyday life was rapidly diminishing. Intellectual freedom, even in the cause of Taiwanese nationalism, was suddenly achieved, but accelerating economic liberalization brought competition from the full range of cultural products available in the global marketplace. This came as a shock. Modern as it regarded itself, Taiwan's literary community was nonetheless used to the respect accorded to intellectuals in Chinese tradition, and unprepared for the deflating effects of capitalist competition in a global market.

Serious literature lost ground on both sides of the Taiwan Strait in the 1990s. In post-Tian'anmen China, popular culture thrived in an increasingly depoliticized cultural market, a phenomenon that has received considerable scholarly attention.¹ Behind controversies revolving around Wang Shuo, Jia Pingwa's *Feidu* [Abandoned capital], Jin Yong's martial arts novels, and Wei Hui's *Shanghai baobei* [Shanghai baby] was a poignant recognition of literature's susceptibility to consumer-driven commodification.

In post-martial law Taiwan, one measure of literature's dwindling status was its dubious role in the progressive cultural trends—the feminist/sexual revolution, gay and lesbian rights campaigns, and critiques of the media and global capitalism—that flourished in the 1990s. Literary treatments of the progressive agenda were largely disposable. Many appropriated radical gestures to position themselves in the market, while few stood out as genuinely provocative.

The recent exponential growth of market forces in Chinese cultural fields can hardly be ignored, but the truth is that, at least in Taiwan, we

have been overlooking the market dimension that existed before this. Previous studies have focused on a presumed binary opposition between the political and aesthetic dimensions of contemporary Taiwanese literature. Little attention has been paid to the additional tug that market forces have all along exerted, albeit more subtly in the early decades of the post-1949 era than in the most recent decade and a half. A major purpose of the present study, then, is to reexamine the whole of contemporary Taiwanese literary history in light of this added dimension, especially the transformation of the literary field from near complete political subjugation in the early 1950s to market domination in the 1990s.

Incorporating the tug of market forces pops our heretofore two-dimensional perspective into something more like three-dimensional reality, but we still need an account of just how these political, aesthetic, and market forces have actually played out on Taiwan's unique social and historical stage to render contemporary Taiwanese literature. We need the local history of Taiwan's literary movements and background on how individuals and groups within the literary field interacted with one another and with these broad forces of change over the decades.

A shift to the local is already apparent in recent U.S. literary scholarship on mainland China. Before the emergence first of "scar literature" and then of the modernistic "root-seeking school" in the 1980s, the best known contemporary Chinese writers, like Bai Xianyong and Yu Guangzhong, were almost all from Taiwan. The obvious reason was that during the third quarter of the twentieth century, literary production in China was so tightly constrained in an ideological straitjacket and so subservient to political purposes that it inevitably scored poorly on the aesthetic scale. The assumed dearth of "artistically accomplished" imaginative writings in socialist China, however, is currently being reassessed. As scholars search for new perspectives to better comprehend the role of literature in Mao's era, they are taking issue with the established criteria for judging literary excellence. What exactly constituted the mechanics of these odd (to western eyes) literary forms? To what extent did assumptions about the nature and value of literature rooted in Chinese culture prepare the way for vulgar political manipulation? Some China scholars are lately exploring the possibility of a different "aesthetics" that explains rather than accuses.² These attempts at accounting for "local experience," what actually governed literary production and reception on the ground in Communist China, promise a more nuanced understanding of a previously obscure period of mainland Chinese literature.

While contemporary Taiwanese literature has fared better than China's "dark ages" in the literary academy, it has also suffered from being analyzed chiefly in terms of cut-and-paste concepts suggested by aspects of Taiwan's experience that fit easily into familiar analytical categories. Issues pertaining to postcoloniality—identity construction, language battles, modernization strategies, and nationalism—have ruled the day. Important as they are, much finer attention to Taiwan's particular history is imperative. The gradual transition from regimented, military-style governance, via what some social scientists have dubbed the "soft-authoritarian" rule, to democratic state and free economy has so significantly shaped post-1949 Taiwan that postcoloniality cannot be properly understood without reference to it. In fact, as scholars inside and outside Taiwan have begun to note, in its first decades the KMT was itself a colonial ruler, so Taiwan's experience of colonialism and postcoloniality is uniquely layered. Within this local frame lies the real excitement in Taiwan's various and changing literary formations as they ride evolving identity discourses, reflect the growth and shifting ground of political movements and parties, and respond to increasingly powerful market forces. Here too are the ethno-linguistic struggles and generational differences within the literary community that reviewers of my previous book (c.f. Edward Gunn and Jeffrey Kinkley) wanted to hear more about. This, then, is the territory for the present study.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

A major focus here is interpositional competition in Taiwan's literary field, and what it reveals about the relative importance of political and market forces in the contemporary period. Faced with organizing a vast body of raw material for systematic analysis, I find the work of two European theorists, Pierre Bourdieu on the "field of cultural production" and Raymond Williams on hegemony and cultural formations, excellent tools. (Let me just take note here of a key difference in their terminology: "culture" is understood as "whole ways of life" in Williams's discussion of hegemony, whereas Bourdieu's "cultural field" refers more narrowly to the space of imaginative, creative activities, and is used interchangeably with "literary field.")

From Bourdieu, with certain modifications, I derive the notion of "aesthetic position," and apply it to four groups of key players in contemporary Taiwan's literary field: Mainstream (which can be roughly translated as

zhuliu) literary agents (“literary agents” denotes people involved in the dissemination and consecration of literature as well as writers), Modernists (*xiandai pai*), Nativists (*xiangtu pai*), and Localists (*bentu pai*). These widely recognized literary formations emerged at different points in post-1949 Taiwan, rising and falling with momentous changes in the larger historical environment. When the literary agent occupies an aesthetic “position” in the literary field, he or she does not simply subscribe to a specific aesthetic standard but also is situated within a network of relationships with other agents in the same field. However, whereas Bourdieu stresses that correspondences between positions in the literary field and in society’s general field of power are primarily governed by the former’s laws of operation, the situation in Taiwan has been quite different, especially in the early part of the contemporary period. Under martial law, cultural institutions in Taiwan were firmly under government control and political legitimacy generally overshadowed other principles of consecration. Hence, developments within and outside the literary field were much more strongly related. This is where Raymond Williams’s notion of a tripartite structure of dominant (hegemonic), alternative, and oppositional cultural formations is useful.

Dominant: the Mainstream. The Nationalist government’s cultural policies in the immediate post-1949 years imposed strict restrictions on intellectual and artistic activities. Mainstream literary agents either tacitly acknowledged or unwittingly internalized these limits, contributing to the development of the martial law period’s conservative, conformist, and neotraditionalist dominant culture. When this culture came under attack after the lifting of martial law, first- and second-generation mainlander writers, the majority of whom occupied the Mainstream position, were caught in an emotional quandary, while seeing the value of the symbolic capital they possessed abruptly diminish.

Alternative: the Modernists. The Modernist cultural and intellectual movement of the 1950s and 1960s, and the various radical trends of the 1980s and 1990s (subsumed under the rubric of “postmodernism”), were inspired by American liberal humanism and global progressive trends, respectively. The alternative cultural visions they introduced were initially fraught with center-threatening emancipatory potential. However, led by the country’s intellectual elite, both formations were quickly assimilated by the establishment. This examination places greater emphasis on the Modernists because, having arisen to a prominent position early in the era, they have exerted more far-reaching influence on the literary field than the postmodernists.³

Oppositional: the Nativists and the Localists. In the 1970s and 1980s, ongoing capitalist modernization, diplomatic setbacks, and the gradual loosening of government control set the stage for serious challenges to the KMT-endorsed dominant culture—first from the socialist-minded Nativists, then from Localists favoring Taiwanese independence. Both the Nativists and the Localists were patently oppositional cultural formations. Leaders of the Nativist movement used literature as a means to voice criticism of the government's pro-West, pro-capitalist policies in an oblique manner. The lifting of martial law eventually allowed them to speak much more openly, but their leftist ideology and pro-China (PRC) stance have remained unpopular. The Localist position in the literary field was from the beginning a product of the Nationalist government's repression of Taiwan's local cultural heritage, particularly from the Japanese colonial period, and the social tension between native Taiwanese and mainlanders. A latent resistance formation early on, it gradually became more self-aware and openly counterhegemonic until it emerged as a powerful contender for the dominant position in the post-martial law cultural sphere, alongside Taiwanese nationalism in the political realm.

Almost from the start, and unlike on mainland China during most of the same period, politics did not entirely prevail in Taiwan's cultural field. Beginning early in the KMT's rule, market forces gradually undermined the control of political authorities, picking up speed in the mid-1970s. During the ten to fifteen years before the lifting of martial law, with the Mainstream position thriving, the power of literary agents to manage the distribution of capital and to determine what constituted "a truly cultural legitimacy" (Bourdieu's term—more on this later) visibly increased. Although the government maintained its grip on the cultural infrastructure, the market had already begun to facilitate what Bourdieu calls a "process of autonomization" of the literary field. The relationship of its aesthetic positions to external forces was increasingly mediated by the field's own operational laws. Gradually shedding their original ideological inscriptions, various positions interacted more frequently, resulting in fragmentation and intermixture of their former salient traits.

These transitions laid the foundation for what happened after the "Great Divide" (marked by the lifting of martial law), when electoral democracy and global capitalism combined to produce a much more professionalized cultural field in Taiwan. As the state withdrew from direct interference in cultural affairs, market forces and a new managerial cultural bureaucracy emerged as the dominant authorities. Striving to adjust

to the new institutional environment and to grasp the new rules of the game, most literary agents developed a vocationalism that visibly affected their creative activities while blurring whatever residual influences the four literary formations from the previous era still exerted. For good or ill, having acquired a fairly high degree of autonomy, the literary field in Taiwan now bears greater resemblance to its counterparts in other advanced capitalist societies.

The closely intertwined stories of literature's involvement in the power struggles of Taiwan's larger social space, and the autonomization of the literary field under market influences, are the subject of this study. The next section broadly sketches the historical trajectories of the four literary formations—along with their corresponding aesthetic positions—as they have intersected with larger sociopolitical developments in Taiwan's contemporary period.

HISTORICAL TRAJECTORIES

Under authoritarian rule, the Mainstream position is by definition instituted and constrained by the ruling political regime. In the years immediately following its retreat to Taiwan in 1949, the Nationalist government exercised highly coercive cultural control, stipulating literature's role as subordinate to the purposes of political propaganda. In addition, cultural production as a whole carried the burden of the nation-building ideology that had dominated the mainland Chinese intellectual community in the preceding Republican era, before traveling to Taiwan with the Nationalists. The state conducted various literary mobilization programs, after models established during the Sino-Japanese war. At the same time, however, a revival in Taiwan of the *wentan* (literary arena) that had first taken shape in the urban environs of mainland China in the 1920s through the 1940s opened up spaces for relatively autonomous cultural production.

From the mid-1950s onward, the KMT's cultural program gradually moved from "rule" to "hegemony," from direct political coercion to an effective "interlocking of social, cultural, and political forces" (Williams, *Marxism* 108). The literary field responded with "*chunwenxue*" or "pure literature," which, by endorsing genteel, ostensibly apolitical genres, lent indirect support to the Nationalist hegemony. As most active writers of the period were mainlander émigrés, this support for the government and its primary agenda of preventing Communist insurgency was largely vol-