

MEDIEVALISM IN TAIWAN: CONSTRUCTING WESTERN MEDIEVAL HERITAGE AS CULTURAL MEMORY

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The burgeoning of the fascination with Western medievalism in the Chinese-speaking world refers back to the beginning of the twentieth century when Dante's *The Divine Comedy* was translated and the stories about King Arthur and his round-table knights became a part of outside readings for youngsters from the prestige families. The renowned critic and translator Tao-sun Chien's Chinese translation of *The Divine Comedy* was published in Shanghai, 1921 and it was widely circulated by the publisher.¹ The most acclaimed Chinese version of *The Round Table Knights* (*Yuan- Chuo Wu- She*) was published in Hong Kong in the nineteen fifties. The author Pai Shiang-Cheng rewrote the story about King Arthur, Merlin and Camelot and the interesting stories accompanied by pictures echo the later published books for children. *The Round Table, Holy Grail and the Sorcerer*, first published in 1996, Taiwan, culminates the rewritten chivalric narratives for children in the Chinese-speaking world.² Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, however, is among the world masterpieces that continues to attract the attention

¹ For Tao-sun Chien's translation, see *Sheng Chu*, Shanhai, Shang Wu Publishers, 1924.

² The most popular translations with rewritten parts include Pai Shiang-cheng's *Yuan Chuo Wu She*, Hong Kong, Dai-Gung, 1954; and Liu Yuang-ching's *Yuan-Chuo Wu-She* (Round Table Knights), Taipei, Tung-fang, 1987. Hsiun Lin, *The Round Table, Holy Grail and The Sorcere*, Taipei, Shi Pao wen Hwa, 1996.

from the readers and translators from the Chinese speaking world; Tien Deh-Wong, an expert in the Italian and German languages, took about thirteen years translating the three canticles of *The Divine Comedy*, namely, *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso*, while the distinguished translator and Professor Kwok-pun Laurence Wong took almost twenty years translating the medieval masterpiece to Chinese in verse form.³ Professor Tien's translations were published in Peking and Wong's version of Chinese translation was published in Taipei, Taiwan. The development of Medieval Studies, however, paralleling the Early Modern Studies, has become a trend in the academic field during the past twenty years in Taiwan; through translation, researches, and rewriting stories of the medieval period, the medievalists and culture workers in Taiwan are constructing Western medieval culture as a part of cultural memory shared by all humans.

Cultural Memory is a concept introduced to the archaeological disciplines by Jan Assmann. It refers cultural memory to the outer dimension of human memory because memory is not just an individual experience. It, however, involves with collective cultural experiences.⁴ Cultural memory in previous centuries implied collective cultural experiences shared by a group of people living close to each other. Due to globalization, cultural memory is not limited to the memory shared by a community or a country. People who are in their sixties shared their memories about World War II and those who are in their fifties share their memories about popular songs of Beatles and movie stars such as Audrey Hepburn, James Dean and Sean Connery. During different periods of human history, people across lands and countries share their memories about human happiness, sufferings and moral codes. Some human heritages, like medieval history and codes, are still considered as illuminating in different parts of the world. The Association of Classical, Medieval and Renaissance Studies was established in Taipei, 2007 and members include graduate students and high school

³ Tien, Deh-Wong's Chinese translations of *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso* were published respectively in 1990, 1996, and 2000 (Peking: People's Literature). For the most recently published translation of *The Divine Comedy*, see Kwok-pun Laurence Wong, *Sheng Chu*, Taipei, Chiou Ko, 2002.

⁴ Jan Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory: Ten Studies*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2005, pp. 2-8.

teachers. The establishment of the association heralds the era that Western medieval culture has attracted enough scholars. For the general public, films and DVDs such as *Beowulf*, *A Knight's Tale*, *Excalibur*, *The First Knight*, *Barabbas*, *Ben-Hur*, and *Lady Jane* are available at stores. Episodes of medieval stories are widely seen on the stage of students' repertoire. Although Western medieval culture is never simple, the images of heroes, kings and peasants as well as architecture and social structure have confirmed the cultural heritage of the Western world. In a sense, those who are interested in Western medieval culture are carriers of Western memory, incorporating themes and motifs of the Western medieval culture into the Eastern world. Generally speaking, medieval fair, films and performances provide experience opportunities and research groups render individual experiences communicable and collective.

A part of the fascination of Western medieval culture in Taiwan is related to the concept of the hero. Joseph Campbell in his popular book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* identifies the fundamental structure of hero adventures as four stages—a call to adventure, a road of trials, achieving his goal, return to the ordinary world.⁵ Myths of the hero are seen in all cultures of humans. It is not surprising that the Western hero images from Roland to King Arthur and Sir Gawain recur in children's books in Taiwan and in the academic field, the studies on the code of chivalry, feudalism, social structure as related to the core of medievalism, echo medieval studies developed in the Western world. Arthur as a national hero and the center of folk myth in South Wales and Herefordshire touches numerous hearts of youngsters. The story of the sword in the stone or the Legend of Arthur and Excalibur is widely read among school children. Stories about the Isle of Avalon, the magic of Merlin and the beauty of Camelot pave ways for students who will read "Holy Grail" and "Idylls of the King" by Tennyson in the survey course of English Literature. The tragic story of Roland that was read from children's book helps students to perceive the beautiful discourse in the French epic. All the heroes as represented in the medieval romances share the same characteristics as either knights or warriors:

⁵ Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1972, pp. 1-25.

they need to carry out the missions given to them and they will have to face the unknown, just as Markman comments, “Knights who are at the wars eat their bread in sorrow; their ease is weariness and sweat; they have one good day after many bad; they are vowed to all manner of labor; they are forever swallowing their fear; they expose themselves to every peril; they give up their bodies to the adventure of life in death.” Markman in his “Romance Hero and Antagonist,” a paper read at 1955 MLA meeting in Chicago, affirms that with good knights, “the king and kingdom in medieval times can be honored and protected.” Markman’s concept about the hero applies not only to romance heroes but also to the heroic figures of all times. The codes of the hero and the images of the hero thus become one of the most important parts of human culture to be preserved. Due to veneration for great people and respect for those who sacrificed for social goods, St. Joan of Arc (1412-1431) and Thomas Becket (1118-1170) are frequently mentioned in sermons, and legends of saints are widely circulated among church-goers.

The concept of the body as related to religion and the history of medicine is a part of cultural memory preserved in the Eastern world. During the medieval period, the body was taken as a part of the universe; the seven deadly sins—pride, envy, wrath, sloth, avarice, gluttony and lust—were contrasted with seven virtues. Faith, hope, charity, justice, prudence, temperance and fortitude are concepts still preserved and these qualities are represented through records of lives of saints. The concept of body is a topic attracting scholars in Taiwan in recent years. The interests in Maurice Merleau-Ponty as related to medieval Christianity bring about philosophical interests in a carnal presence and its relations between bodies, between things and thoughts, self and world in the universities in Taiwan. The philosophical approaches to medieval thought are emerging and study groups in universities are expected to develop intellectual dialogues on the related topics such as madness and civilization. In Taiwan, there are at least ten different study groups with a focus on Foucault. Ship of fools, the birth of asylum and the ways of punishment as represented in medieval times are always on their reading list. The history of human beings is a history of civilization, a history of human sufferings and emotions, and a history that looks into human weaknesses and strengths. Western medieval literature and history not only reflects spiritual lives but also physical experiences of

people. These experiences either illuminate the later periods of history but also remind of the mistakes that humans had made.

Medievalism is the study of the middle Ages, and it also refers to the inspiration of the middle Ages in all forms of art and thought.⁶ According to Norman Cantor, the medieval heritage found in the contemporary Western world includes the concepts and practices as related to Catholic Church, Anglo-American Law, parliamentary government, romantic love, heroism, just war, and even the cherishing of classical languages and literatures.⁷ From the perspectives of Francis G. Gentry and Ulrich Muller, however, the medieval reception in Germany is mainly constructed on four models: creative reproduction, renovations or reproduction, the academic reception of the middle Ages, and the medieval themes and persons reworked for some purposes.⁸ Francis G. Gentry and Ulrich Muller are certainly right when they refer medieval studies as a reproduction since in each different era, scholars would use their specific viewpoints to look back into the past and bring new lights on the themes and motifs that they are already familiar with. Medievalism, therefore, is involved with not only inter-textualization, historical studies and new historicism but also the examination of the cultural values, concepts, thematic studies and social discourses as represented in the medieval world. Taiwan, as the other non-European countries, is not embedded with a medieval past. There is, furthermore, the lacking of connection to the visible, unless it is found in books and pictures. The impact of medieval themes and characterization upon children's literature is obvious, and one of the most significant trends in Taiwan in the past few years is the growing attention to the medieval values found in the studies on history and literature in the academic world. The studies on Western Medievalism are seen in several categories: surveys of literary history and literature; interdisciplinary studies; studies on masterpieces of literature; thematic and typological studies and translation, etc. These books and articles published in Taiwan are either for academic purposes or for public readers. However, all the efforts

⁶ Leslie J. Workman, "Editorial", *Studies in Medievalism*, 3:1 (1987), pp. 1-4 (p. 1).

⁷ Norman Cantor, *Inventing the Middle Ages*, New York, Morrow, 1991, p. 47.

⁸ Francis G Gentry and Ulrich Muller, "The Reception of the Middle Ages in Germany: An Overview", *Studies in Medievalism*, 3:4 (1991), pp. 399-422 (p. 401).

have contributed to the construction of the cultural memory of the medieval world in the Eastern countries. In Taiwan, the cultural memory of the medieval world is approached through survey, interdisciplinary studies, and studies on masterpieces of the period. The most popular approaches to medieval period include historical approach, thematic and typological approach, and translation.

Survey

The first significant book written in Chinese and surveying the medieval period with critical perspectives was published by Yuan-shu Yen, a distinguished professor at National Taiwan University. His book, entitled *English Literature: The Medieval Period*, initiated many students in the department of English and American Literature. Yuan-shu Yen surveys the history of English literature from the dream vision narratives, *Beowulf*, dramas, and early poetry. The historical background of Norman invasion, social discourses as represented in *Piers Plowman* and the themes and motives as found in ballads are all commented with critical points of view. Probably due to his formative experiences at the University of Wisconsin, the scope that Yuan-shu Yen tends to draw is wide and profound;⁹ the seriousness of his scholarship in all genres of the medieval literature becomes the standard that later medievalists try to model on. Yen's book is divided into twelve chapters: 1) People and History, 2) Church and Society, 3) Language and Literature, 4) Old English Short verse narratives, 5) Old English Prose, 6) *Beowulf*, 7) Medieval Ballads and Lyrics, 8) Medieval Drama, 9) King Arthur and Round Table Knights, 10) *Piers Plowman*, 11) Chaucer, and 12) Late Medieval Verse Narratives. Yen's book contains not only discussions on the historical background, the definitions of genres but also the interpretations of texts. Until now, Yen's *English Literature: The Middle Ages* is still acclaimed the best textbook about English medieval Literature written in Chinese. Although it is generally accepted that the opinions of the Middle Ages in the Oriental world are somehow shaped

⁹ Yuan-shu Yen, *Ying-Kuo Wen Hsueh: Chung-Ku She Chi* (English Literature: The Middle Ages), Taipei, Bookman, 1983.

by nineteenth-century Romanticism and the nostalgia for a mystic and devout world with an emphasis on heroism and chivalry, the appeal of the Middle Ages is also connected with the late Victorian period, especially the paintings by the Pre-Raphaelites. The National Library in Taipei has a wide collection of books on the styles of the Pre-Raphaelites and the historical surveys on the Pre-Raphaelites brothers' commitment to artistic truth and beauty. Arthurian knights, allegorical motifs and high-lighted medieval figures are usually the topics for art history classes and lectures at colleges. Yuan-shu Yen's survey focuses on literature while another important reference book written by Yung-ching Tu focuses on the social structure in the medieval period, namely, feudalism. Feudalism, according to Tu, is basically the combination of a form of government and the land tenure system and feudalism bespeaks the bond between the lord and his vassal. Tu, furthermore, employs the phrase "no land without its lord" to indicate how the relationship between fief and vassalage develops into feudal laws and chivalric system, although Tu reminds that the order of knighthood and chivalric literature do not necessarily represent the real life in the medieval world. Tu's book not only introduces the development of feudal state but also discusses its decline and fragmentation of the political power.¹⁰ *A History of the European Medieval Ages* (Hsi-Yang Chung-Ku Shi) introduces cultural interactions between European countries and the people from the Eastern world. This book starts with the invasion of the barbarians, Constantine I the Great, the Muslim religion developed in the Middle East, North Africa and the confrontation between the Ottoman and the Western world. Tseng-chuan Liu's interests include the establishment of universities, the political systems, the flourish of towns and cities, as well as the reasons of crusades. The racial problems as involved with political and economical issues are discussed in detail. This book has been acclaimed as one of the most useful reference books on medieval studies.¹¹

¹⁰ Yung-ching Tu, *Medieval Feudalism* (Ou-Chou Feng-chien Chi-Tu), Tainan, Wenshan, 1980; and Chuan-wei Yuan, *Hsi Yang Chung-Ku Shi* (A History of the European Middle Ages), New York, The McGraw-Hill and Taipei Wu-Nan, 1992.

¹¹ See Tseng-chuan Liu, *A History of the European Medieval Ages* (Hsi-Yang Chung-Ku Shi), Taipei, Wu-Nan, 2001.

Interdisciplinary Studies

Medievalism, or the studies on the European medieval period, takes roots in various fields and disciplines in Taiwan. Although it is commonly understood that medieval studies require the cooperation of various disciplines such as archeology, history, folklore, government, law, literature, philosophy, theology and other academic disciplines, the studies on the Western medieval world in Taiwan are mostly concerned with aspects as found in Christianity, the social structures of the medieval world, gender relations, and chivalric spirit as found in romances. The comparative studies on the Western medieval world and that of China are not irregular and the interesting topics for research include the evolution and the lettering styles of *Gothic textura* in medieval manuscripts, and the medieval concepts of the body in Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*.¹² The former tries to understand the esthetic concepts as represented in *Gothic textura* and the latter is an analysis of the significance of the body in the Medieval religious context.

Studies on Masterpieces

In the current curriculum of the Department of English and American Literature, Greek and Roman literature are generally taught for freshmen while European literature has been a required course for senior students at most of the departments of English in Taiwan. *La Chanson de Roland*, the *Romans de la Table Ronde* and the stories about Tristan et Iseult, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, King Arthur and Guinevere are not strange to the students. On the level of the graduate program, however, major authors and masterpieces of the medieval period and medieval themes and motifs attract the attention of a lot of students and the output of the thesis has been an important asset of medieval studies in Taiwan. Professor Ming-Tsang Yang's Ph.D dissertation explores the constitutive and epistemic function of the trivium in *Piers Plowman*.

¹² See Pei-yu Tseng's "A Study to the Evolution and Lettering styles of "Gothic Textura" in the Medieval Manuscript", *She ji xue bao* (Journal of Design) 9:1 (2004), pp. 63-86; and Hsieh, Hsin-weng's "Medieval Concepts of the Body in Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*" (unpublished thesis at Chinese Cultural University).

By means of discussing the language as juxtaposed with signification, Yang examines grammatical culture and the use of grammatical metaphors in the medieval work to illustrate the ideal orders of society as well as the relation between God and man. Yang concludes his dissertation by pointing out that in *Piers Plowman*, the divine word informs and redeems the human word, and since God is the ultimate Signification, the poem enacts the allegoresis of the human trivium toward the divine Trivium. Both *Piers Plowman's Progress* and *Medieval Concepts of the Body* in Umberto Eco's "*The Name of the Rose*" represent the trend of appropriating critical theories and medieval context together. Yang emphasizes not only the tension between human word/reason and Christian faith but also the intellectual and religious implications of the signifying capacity/incapacity of logic. Similarly, Hsieh pinpoints the Christian church governs the Christendom with its religious ideology so that the medieval body is "regimented" and "disciplined" politically with the Christian doctrine.¹³

Historical Approach

The theories that are applied to the analysis of medieval context are seen in the discipline of agricultural economics. Lung-sheen Lee, for example, did a comparative study on the medieval open-field farming system and the farming system developed in Chinese Han Dynasty. The open-field farming system developed during the medieval period refers to the practice that each village would be surrounded by several large open fields and each field contains a different crop. Furthermore, there would be the so-called common ground that provides the villagers to graze their cattles and to hold special events. The well-field system in the Han dynasty refers to the land divided into nine parts with eight private parts surrounding the central part. The central part is the communal land. To Lung-sheng Lee, however, the land system suggests not only the relationship between landlords and peasants but also the power system in the social structure. Richard Emerson and Karen Cook

¹³ See <http://etds.ncl.edu.tw/theabs/site/sh/detail-result.jsp> for Yang Ming-Tsang's unpublished dissertation.

hold their theory that the exchange of social and material resources is a fundamental form of human interaction. According to Emerson and Cook, any trade agreement or interaction between people involve with power system, and the open-field system in the medieval world is obviously a system that maintains order and harmony.¹⁴ The interest in peasantry as related to social structure is also seen in Hsiao-Fang Cheng's thesis, *Development of the Medieval Peasantry*. As Cheng indicates, three functional classes of European feudal society are clergy, knights and farmers. However, within the feudal culture of domination, each grundherrschaft is a self-sufficient economic system. Production is not for market but for consumption, taxes and exchange.¹⁵ Cheng's representation of the development of the medieval peasantry is from the perspective of history and it emphasizes the function of peasantry as the core of agricultural devices. The master-slave relationship is still to be explored. For the course of History of English Literature that I taught for National Sun Yat-sen University in Taiwan, I tended to include late medieval allegories of feudalism that represented the master-slave dialectics, especially in *Pearl*, Julian of Norwich's *Shewings* and in the case of John Ball and his followers in the English Rising of 1381. Such a subject-object relations can be also supported with Gayatri Spivak's "the mechanics of the constitution of the Other".¹⁶ Another professor in history, Sheng-kuang Lee focuses his attention to Lynn White and the discourse on the peasants' life in medieval Europe. In his article "The History of the Silent Majority," Lee explores theory of Lynn White's theory. Lynn White was a well-known professor of medieval history and he believes that medieval Western Christianity provided the "psychic foundations" of technological inventiveness and the idea that human beings having the power to dominate nature have led to

¹⁴ Richard Emerson and Karen Cook, "Power, Equity, and Commitment in Exchange Networks", *American Sociological Review*, 43 (1978), pp. 721-739.

¹⁵ See Hsiao-fang Cheng, "A Comparative Study on the Agricultural Contracts between Landlords and Peasants of Former Han Dynasty and Medieval England Using Exchange Theory", *Chung-Hsing University Journal of Humanities*, 34 (2004), pp. 595-605.

¹⁶ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988.

an indifference towards nature.¹⁷ Lynn White's theory brought but a lot of debate; however, Lee seems to focus on the attitude of the silent majority and he employs other examples such as witchcrafts and the blackdeath to discuss the helpless situation of peasants.¹⁸ Another well-written research article involved with the status of peasants in Western medieval period is Yu-chin Lin's "The Rise of the Medieval Towns in Europe—A Focus on Economic Factor" published in *The History Review* (Shi-Hsueh Yien-Chiu).¹⁹ Lin's viewpoint echoes Alan Dyer's theory that the development of towns is involved with economic factors. It is generally understood that self-government seems to be a part of the practice in the medieval towns. Many of the residents of towns may engage themselves in agriculture on the common fields and pastures, although *quite a few* townspeople hold non-agricultural occupations. According to Lin, this was in part to furnish their own larders but also to supply the businesses of themselves. In this sense, the economic structures and the development of the towns and magnetized economy intertwine with each other and become one of the main features of the medieval period.²⁰

Thematic and Typological Studies

Similar to the field of comparative literature, within the field of medieval studies, the approaches such as the studies in themes and types are widely employed by scholars. According to the *Canadian Encyclopedia*, comparative literature includes the studies on "broad currents of

¹⁷ Lynn Townsend White, Jr, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis", *Science*, 155 (Number 3767), March 10, 1967, pp 1203-1207.

¹⁸ See Sheng-kuang Lee, "The History of the Silent Majority: Lynn White and the Discourse on the Peasants' Life in Medieval Europe", *Soochow Journal of History*, 15 (2006), pp. 173-206.

¹⁹ Yu-chin Lin, "The Rise of Medieval Towns in Europe: A Focus on Economic Factor", *Shi-Hsueh Yien-Chiu*, 17 (2003), pp. 1-23.

²⁰ For Lin, 25-36. Alen Dyer, *Decline and Growth in English Towns 1400-1640*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002. Hsiao-fang Cheng, "Development of the Medieval Peasantry", Unpublished thesis at Fu-Jen University, 2005, 1-5. Richard Emerson and Karen Cook, *Decline and Growth in English Towns 1400-1640*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002.

thought and style and of major schools; of literary genres, forms and modes; of motifs and themes; of the presence of a work of literature, an author, a whole literature or even a country, in another national literature; of authors writing in different languages, but linked with ‘influences’ and typological affinities”. Faust, Don Juan, Ulysses, King Arthur are all examples for typological studies. As a matter of fact, King Arthur has inspired writers, filmmakers, and other artists from the Middle Ages to modern times. The legends of King Arthur are not only involved with the iconology of Excalibur and the Round Table, Arthur’s relationships with Merlin, and the rise and fall of Camelot but also related to the quest for the Holy Grail, one of the most enduring medieval Christian myths. Owing to the fact that Arthur represents the Age of Chivalry and no other king represented medieval kingship and chivalry than Arthur, Ray-yuan Li introduces hero types as represented in French medieval literature and Roland is among them. Medieval code of chivalry was a moral system that went beyond rules of combat. Bravery, courtesy and honor were the central concern of the lord-knight relationship. In *La Chanson de Roland*, chivalry means a worthy action on the battlefield, and Roland was portrayed as a loyal defender of his liege Lord Charlemagne. Written shortly after the first Crusade, the heroes in *La Chanson de Roland* are trying to defend the Christian world. In the earliest work of French literature which has survived, the Saracen army is described as “Slaves, Armenians, and Moors” and they relentlessly are described to have destroyed a Frankish army led by Roland. Ray-yuan Li discusses chevalier courtois in her paper. According to Jean Bodel’s *Chanson des Saisnes* there are three sources for the genre of chanson, matters of France, matters of Rome and matters of Brittany.²¹ To Bodel, most of the main characters of chansons and medieval romances demonstrate either chivalric culture or courtly love. Another book that is widely used by undergraduate English majors in Taiwan is entitled *Oh-Chou Chuan-chi Wen-Hsieh Feng-Mao* (European Expedition: Medieval Romance Reader).²² This book written by Francis So provides not only an introduction to the historical

²¹ Jean Bodel, *La Chanson des Saxons* (Traductions de classiques français du Moyen Âge), Paris, Honoré Champion, 1992, pp. 1-10.

²² Francis So, *Ou-chou Chuan-chi Wen Hsieh Feng-Mao*, Taipei, Bookman, 2006.

background of European romances but also detailed discussions on *Sir Gawain and Green Knight*, *Wife of Bath's Tale*, *Parzival*, *Lancelot*, *Sir Orfeo*.

Translation

Medieval history is not a required course at the universities in Taiwan; however, translated books on medieval history have produced a phenomenon in Taiwan. *Western Europe in the Middle Ages, 300-1475* written by Brian Tierney and Sidney Painter was translated into Chinese in 1990. Such a huge book in English with about eight hundred pages covers a survey to the political and economical situations, social cultures, religions and philosophies, arts and literatures in the medieval period. Owing to the fact that the book by Brian Tierney and Sidney Painter is an illuminating textbook for college students in many universities in the Western countries, the Chinese version of the book in three volumes is also widely used for general education curriculum.²³ *L'Art au Moyen Âge* written by Jannic Durand with a focus on Western architecture and paintings was translated into Chinese by Chiang Tung, and the book is available at local bookstores in Taiwan, but the most widely used book concerning medieval philosophy, *L'Esprit de la philosophie medievale*, was translated by a well-known scholar Vincent Tsing-Song Shen, who taught at National Cheng-chi University and was recruited by Toronto University in 2001. According to Shen, reading medieval philosophy from a comparative perspective is more fruitful to the scholars from the East and he suggests the philosophical concepts as discussed by Étienne Gilson not only provide the meanings of significant concepts such as ethics, order and self but also systematically illuminate the major concepts formulated by medieval philosophers.²⁴ Since medieval philosophy is embedded in Christianity, the meanings of divine providence, contingent beings, supreme beings are easy to be

²³ Brian Tierney and Sidney Painter, *Hsi Yang Chung Ku Shi* (Western Europe in the Middle Ages) was translated by Chuan-wei Yuan (Taipei, Wu Nan, 1989).

²⁴ For the Chinese translation of *L'Esprit de la philosophie medievale*, see Vincent Tsing-Song Shen, *Chung-Shi-Chi Che-Hsieh Ching-Shen* (The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy), Taipei, Shang-wu, 2001.

comprehended through Chinese translation. Among translated books, the Arthurian stories seem to be the most popular. *I am Morgan le Fay* published by Nancy Springer was translated into Chinese in 2006. The powerful language, the political intrigues, and the desires found in the novel fascinate many readers. The beautiful translation echoes the original lines by Springer, retelling the tragic life of the young passionate woman. Morgan le Fay is Arthur's half sister, the daughter of Arthur's mother Igraine the beauty and her first husband, the Duke of Cornwall. The legendary woman Morgan le Fay is depicted in medieval times as a dangerous yet seductive enchantress conspiring against Arthur. She gives Excalibur to her lover Accolon and later falls in love with Guiomar, Guinevere's cousin. In the Chinese translation, the underlying motifs of fate and destiny that Morgan le Fay is rendered to its readers with smooth narrative told from the perspective of a sorceress.

I am Morgan le Fay and I will never die. I hover on the wind and fate falls out of each slow beat of my wings. That is what my name means: Morgan the fate, Morgan the magical, fey Morgan of the Other World, Morgan who must be feared. But I was not always Morgan le Fay. When they killed my father, I was only little Morgan.²⁵

The most translated medieval stories about in Taiwan are the books about King Arthur. If there is one story with which every child growing up in Britain should be familiar, it is the story of King Arthur. However, in Taiwan, if there is one story about the Western world that a teenager can share with his classmates, it is the story about King Arthur. Several chapters of Neil Philip's *Illustrated Book of Myth* is translated into Chinese and *The Death of King Arthur* is published as a book and Alfred Lord Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, firstly translated by Chi Ming Translation Department in 1957, receives more attention recently. Hsueh-ching Wu worked on the same text and has the translated work published in 2003. Kevin Crossley-Holland, born in North Buckinghamshire, is a well-known poet and prize-winning author for chil-

²⁵ Nancy Springer, *I am Morgan Le Fay*, New York, Penguin Groups, 2001, p. 1. The novel with the first-person narrative was translated by Wei-la Lee (Taipei: Muse Wen-Hwa, 2006).

dren. Crossley-Holland has translated *Beowulf* from the Anglo-Saxon. His most popular production is the Arthurian trilogy set in the Welsh Marches in the Middle Ages: *The Seeing Stone* (2000); *At the Crossing-Places* (2001) and *King of the Middle March* (2003). *The Seeing Stone* won several prizes, including the 2001 Guardian Children's Fiction Prize, and the trilogy has been published in 23 languages. The Chinese translation did not come out until 2004. The translation of the Trilogy comprises 461 pages, Yu-tze Wang, a popular translator of children's books helped promote the story of King Arthur in Taiwan. Following the taste of school children, Liang-yi Han did his translation of Paul C. Doherty's *King Arthur* in 1992. Han's recent translations parallels Sun Chi-chi's translation of *Sur les traces du Roi Arthur* in contents. Jeremy Roberts has been widely circulated among Taiwanese teenage readers. The lines from *King Arthur: How History Is Invented*, "The warrior sat on his horse as the morning mist drifted across the hills of southern England. A short distance away lay his enemies fierce Saxons who had been raiding his homeland for one hundred years or more," are enjoyed and appreciated by his young readers.²⁶ Claudine Glot is a medieval historian. As the introduction on the back of the book indicates, whether epic tale or legendary quest, the narrative texts in this series are adapted in a captivating style for each period, allowing the reader to follow the track of heroes and share their adventures, discover great civilizations, and learn about world history.²⁷ While Howard

²⁶ Hsueh-ching Wu translated *Idylls of the King*, Tai-Chung, Hao-Du, 2004; Philip Neil, *Illustrated Book of Myth*, New York, DK Children, 1995; Hsio-yu Ho, *The Death of King Arthur* (Yia-Se-Wang Chi Si), Taipei, Hsiao-tien-Hsia, 2003. Kevin Crossley-Holland, *King of the Middle March*, New York, Scholastic, 2006. Crossley-Holland, *The Seeing Stone*, New York, Scholastic, 2002. Kevin Crossley-Holland, *At the Crossing Places*, New York, Scholastic, 2004. (Hsiao-Chi Tang). Liang-yi Han, *King Arthur*, Taipei, Lu-Chiao Wen-Hwa, 1992; Paul C. Doherty, *King Arthur*, New York, Chelsea House Publications, 1987. For Liang-yi Han, see *Chue-Chung Yia-Se-Wang Te Chiao-Yin* (Following the Footsteps of King Arthur), Taipei, Mai-Tien, 2004. Sun Chi-Chi published his Chinese translation of the book *Sur les traces du Roi Arthur*, Paris, Gallimard Jeunesse, 2001, written by Claudine Glot, Taipei, Mai-tien, 2004. For Jeremy Roberts's passage, see *King Arthur: How History Is Invented*, New York, Lerner Publishing Group, 2001, p. 1.

²⁷ For the introduction to the book by Claudine Glot, see <http://www.ipgbook.com/showbook.cfm?bookid=8495939649&userid=2E29072C-803F-2B7A->

Pyle, a renowned storyteller, in his wonderfully illustrated tales, carries his Oriental readers back to the enchanting world of King Arthur and his Round Table, Claudine Glot impresses her readers by her *Centre de l'Imaginaire arthurien*, a center for myth and Arthurian studies, at Comper-en-Broceliande Castle in Ploermel.

Chanson de Roland is based on the story that the valiant Christian king Charlemagne has made war against the Saracens in Spain. Betrayed by his own stepfather, Ganelon, Roland together with the twenty thousand Christians of the rearguard is ambushed by Saracens' force, numbering in the hundreds of thousands. The Chinese version of the *Chanson de Roland* (Lo-Lan Chi Ko) was translated for children, and Chia-chi Kuan is among the translators recruited for the whole series of epics intended for children, and the *Chanson de Roland* and *Shahnameh* are among the most popular among teenagers.²⁸ *Shahnameh*, the Book of Kings, is the masterpiece of the Persian poet Hakeem Abolhasem Ferdosi. With the history of old Persia before the Arab conquest of the region as background, this epic, all written in poetic form and in Darī Persian, narrates the story of old Persian Kings and their actions. Among the whole series of epics for children, *Shahnameh* and the *Chanson de Roland* represent respectively the eastern and Western medieval epics.

Medievalism and the Curriculum

Most medievalists in Taiwan are professors at research universities and they are involved with scholarly writings, translations and graduate thesis supervisions. The courses on medieval periods are found in the departments of foreign languages and literature of the research universities; the most notable ones are National Taiwan University, National Sun Yat-sen University, National Cheng-chi University, National Normal University, National Chang-hwa University, Chung-cheng University and the Private Fu Jen Catholic University. All of these universities in Taiwan offer survey courses on medieval period and individual au-

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²⁸ *Chanson de Roland* (Lo-Lan Chi Ko), Taipei, Shi-Pao, 1995.

thor studies. Among the medievalists, Yuan-shu Yen, a distinguished professor who taught National Taiwan University, Vincent Tsing-Song Shen who taught at National Cheng-chi University and Francis So, still teaching at National Sun Yat-sen University, are the most well-known. It is true that medievalists are considered rare in Taiwan, as Francis So explains:

Though we have French, German, Spanish, Italian and Russian departments in Taiwan, we cannot boast that there is at least one medievalist in each of these departments on every campus. The total number of medievalists in these disciplines can only add up to a single digit number. The English departments accommodate more experts in this area, but even so their number is small. There is a long way to go to cultivate more specialists in the field.²⁹

Owing to the understanding that medieval studies should be promoted in Taiwan, and that teaching medieval texts and classical texts could be the best way for the students, Dean Koss and Francis So started to organize the Program of Western Classical and Medieval Culture. The program is granted by the Ministry of Education, and many well-established professors are recruited for the program. Vincent Tsing-Song Shen, Brother Nicolas Koss, Fu-Ning Ding, Ching-cheng Wu, Hai-chiu Hwang together with younger professors such as Cecilia H. C. Liu, Chia-sheng Wung and Ming-yue Wang have been devoted themselves to the promotion of the classical and medieval studies. The core curriculum include the Latin languages, Introduction to Classical Studies, European Medieval Romance, Homeric Epics, Introduction to Medieval Studies, Dissents and Others in Medieval Europe, Religious Dialogue in the Middle Ages, Hagiography of the Western Late Antiquity and Middle Ages, Medieval Drama, Topics on Medieval Art and Aesthetics, etc.³⁰ This program draws the attention of graduate students from different universities. Within the past six years, more than one hundred students took courses from the cross-university extra-curricu-

²⁹ See Francis So, "Medieval European studies in Taiwan at the turn of the Century", *MESN* (2004), pp. 2-16 (p. 9).

³⁰ For the curriculum of the Program of Western Classical and Medieval Culture, see <http://cmc.fl.fju.edu.tw/main.asp?URL=10.review.asp>

lar program. The promotion of medieval studies by the professors manifests in the visibility of the program and the grant for book purchase at National Sun Yat-sen University. The grant for medieval book is one hundred thousand for National Sun Yat-sen University and hopefully one research room on medieval studies will be established by this university as well. Currently, medievalists in Taiwan are together with the scholars specialized in early modern studies trying to establish the association for Medieval and early Modern Studies in Taiwan and the number of young scholars pursuing Ph.D.'s degrees in the United States and United Kingdom reaches ten.

Francis So in his "Medieval European Studies in Taiwan at the Turn of the Century" warns of the phenomenon in the recent publications of medieval studies. According to him,

Young medievalists are too eager to use theories and attempt to say something new or unusual often at the expense of neglecting the lexicographical meaning of the text....the traditional type of philological studies has been slighted and is treated as old-fashioned and out-dated. To some of the younger generation, only the new and modish kinds of methodologists are valued.³¹

Francis So is among the scholars who meditate upon the medieval studies as discipline. According to him, Foucault, Derrida, Habermas, Gramsci, Kristeva, Lacan, Walter Benjamin are the theorists most mentioned, but some of the researchers run the risk of misreading or slighting the texts. Similarly, Kathleen Biddick in her *The Shock of Medievalism*, explores the nineteenth century of medieval studies as an academic discipline and certain contemporary trends of medieval studies. Biddick expresses her worries that the field of medieval studies had significantly shifted the objects of its historical inquiry. Isolation and exclusion are the words that she employs to describe the popular studies of medieval culture.³² However, R. Howard Bloch and Stephen G. Nichols comment that the study of medieval culture and literature has never been more alive at a more interesting, innovative stage because the ins-

³¹ So, *art. cit.*, p. 12.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 12. Kathleen Biddick, *The Shock of Medievalism*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1998.

titudinal signs of a New Medievalism are everywhere. The founding of scholarly journals, *Exemplaria*, *Envoi*, *Assays* confirms the achievement of the medievalists. Bloch and Nichols also find that Middle Ages now are within the context of contemporary discourses of cultural criticism; furthermore, “a number of medieval historians, art historians, and philologists have felt the need for a more sustained external history of the various disciplines of medieval studies”.³³ Bloch and Nichols also stress that within the broad realm of New Medievalism, scholars are happy to find that the *Roman de Tristan* was rewritten, the interpretation of medieval texts are known interwoven with Lacan’s theories and semiotics, and some issues like genders, ethnic problems as well as social status of people are all reexamined. It is worth of our attention when Bloch and Nichols stress that, some medievalists try to explore some of the possibilities of a history of medievalism by examining letters, written records of private conversations, unpublished notes, or private and domestic life of some authors.³⁴ This explains that the disciplines within medieval studies reveal aspects of modernity.

Other Aspects of Medievalism

Medievalism is the study of the Middle Ages, and medievalism is seen in the application of medieval models to contemporary works, and the inspiration of the Middle Ages in all forms of art, literature and architecture.³⁵ During the past ten years in Taiwan, interpretations of *Harry Potter* and *The Lord of the Rings* from the perspectives of medieval culture are seen in many reading classes in universities and colleges. *Harry Potter* and *The Lord of the Rings* have been embraced by so many people in different cultures. Medieval themes and motifs are discussed widely in Taiwan. In academics, Fanfan Chen is among the

³³ See Paul Freedman and Gabrielle M. Spiegel, “Medievalisms Old and New: The Rediscovery of Alterity in North American Medieval Studies”, *The American Historical Review*, 103:3 (1998), pp. 690-692. R. Howard Bloch and Stephen G. Nichols, *Medievalism and the Modernist Temper*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, p. 4.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 5.

³⁵ Leslie J. Workman, *art. cit.*

professors specialized in fantastic literature; her interests include alchemists and magicians as represented in literature. The other professors working on alchemists are Shu-hwa Chou at National Taiwan University and Yuh-jyh Lin at National Chung-yang University.³⁶ In general understanding, Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* represents different aspects of medieval culture; the themes such as the return of the king, warriors' fight against the evil, the prototype of national mythology, and Christian mythos are interwoven with the activity of creation. Such a fantastic world with chivalric spirit and the confrontation between the good and evil constructs the fans of the Eastern world. The medieval themes and their relationship to language, beauty, evil and power, the role of monsters in imagination and criticism culminate Tolkien's achievement of the representation of the medieval in Victorian literature. However, Tolkien's medievalism is represented not only in the identification of national identity and medieval heroes but also in the twinned challenges of death and immortality, fate and free will, and the interaction between the world of "faeries" and religious belief. Besides Tolkien, Pre-Raphaelites and their fascination of the medieval are also popular with college students in Taiwan. The Program for Western Arts designed by Shai-Shu Tzeng at National Normal University promotes several aspects of Western art history. The late nineteenth century paintings and Christian arts especially are within the core courses. Since medieval art covers a vast scope of time and place, the program designing ranges from Christian paintings to art movements and periods, national and regional art, genres, revivals, the artistic crafts. The program director even invites professors from European countries for cross-country co-operation. Arthurian Legends as represented in Victorian culture, paintings with the theme of Christian saints and Jesus Christ as the materials for the courses. The center chaired by Shai-Shu Tzeng organized a conference with a theme on the hero images in 2005,³⁷ and in his speech "The Artist as Hero: Art History as History of Heroes", Professor Hubert Locher at Staatlichen Akademie der Bildenden Künste Stuttgart puts an emphasis on the formation of heroes and the repre-

³⁶ Fanfan Chen's research includes the use of languages and the medieval themes as represented in Tolkien.

³⁷ See conference program at <http://www.ntnu.edu.tw/fna/arthistory/heroes.htm>.

sentations of heroes in arts. According to him, the heroes throughout the ages share some qualities such as their adventurous spirit, integrity and their bravery. From this perspective, the heroes in medieval times are inseparable from the cultural heritage and collective memory of the humans. Although it is not easy to see into the reception of medieval art in Taiwan, the merchandise with all kinds of medieval icons has already enriched the collectables of school children.

Within colleges, the Introduction to English literature course always starts with Beowulf and Wanderer. In the survey course that I taught for several times, students discuss in classes whether we share a common ground with the Wanderer, and whether Grendel is considered as the Other. It is true that most medieval texts reflect a strong sense of fear of 'the Other'; however, in Heinrich von dem Türlin, students find a voyeuristic and fascinated protagonist who basically enjoys the phantasmagoria and indirectly acknowledges its relevance for his own existence.³⁸ Moreover, myth of nations and the way to define the self in the medieval ages are the topics students are interested in, not to mention there is an enormous variety of response to an imagined Arthurian past. Thanks to globalization, students and medievalists in Taiwan start to construct closer relationships with medievalists in other countries. By means of internet, medievalists in Taiwan are able to access to medieval texts, audio and video teaching material and have dialogues with scholars around the world. Western medieval era is no longer taken as a dark period; instead, it is been taken as a part of cultural memory for is world civilizations. The exploration into the medieval world not only promotes further studies on east-west relations in the middle ages but also solidifies more medieval studies in Taiwan.

I-Chung Wang, "Medievalism in Taiwan: Constructing Western Medieval Heritage as Cultural Memory", *Revista de poética medieval*, 21 (2008), pp. 295-317.

³⁸ *Diu Crône* (*The Crown*) is a Middle High German Arthurian poem. See A. Classen, "Self and Other in the Arthurian World: Heinrich von dem Turlin's *Wunderketten*", *Monatshefte für Deutschsprachige Literatur und Kultur*, 96 (2004), pp. 20-39.

RESUMEN: “Memoria cultural” es un concepto introducido en las disciplinas arqueológicas por Jan Assmann. Este autor relaciona la memoria cultural con la dimensión externa de la memoria humana, porque engloba experiencias culturales colectivas. La memoria cultural en épocas anteriores implicaba experiencias culturales colectivas compartidas por un grupo de personas que vivían próximas las unas de las otras. Debido a la globalización, la memoria cultural no se limita a la memoria compartida por una comunidad o un país. La cultura medieval de Europa como parte de la memoria colectiva de la civilización humana es reconocida por el público lector de Taiwán. Las historias del Rey Arturo, la *Divina Comedia* de Dante y muchos otros textos medievales atraen la atención de personas de las más diversas edades. El florecimiento de la fascinación con el medievalismo occidental por parte del mundo chino-hablante se retrotrae hasta principios del siglo XX. El desarrollo de los Estudios Medievales, por el contrario, de forma paralela a los Estudios de la Modernidad temprana, se ha convertido en una moda en el mundo académico durante los últimos veinte años en Taiwán. A través de traducciones, investigaciones y reescritura de historias del período medieval, los medievalistas y trabajadores culturales en Taiwán están construyendo la cultura medieval occidental como parte de la memoria cultural compartida por todos los seres humanos.

ABSTRACT: Cultural Memory is a concept introduced to the archaeological disciplines by Jan Assmann. He refers cultural memory to the outer dimension of human memory because it involves collective cultural experiences. Cultural memory in previous centuries implied collective cultural experiences shared by a group of people living close to each other. Due to globalization, cultural memory is not limited to the memory shared by a community or a country. The medieval culture of Europe as a part of collective memory of human civilization is recognized by the reading public in Taiwan. The romances of King Arthur, Dante’s *The Divine Comedy* and many other medieval texts attract the attention of people of different ages. The burgeoning of the fascination with Western medievalism in the Chinese-speaking refers back to the beginning of the twentieth century. The development of medieval Studies, however, paralleling the Early Modern Studies, has become a trend in the academic field during the past twenty years in Taiwan; through translations, researches, and rewriting stories of the medieval period, the medievalists and culture workers in Taiwan are constructing Western medieval culture as a part of cultural memory shared by all humans.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Taiwán. Medievalismo en Taiwán. Memoria cultural. Traducción.

KEYWORDS: Taiwan. Medievalism in Taiwan. Cultural Memory. Translation.