

The Failed Odysseus:
Reading Pai Hsien-yung's *Taipei People* (1971) through “odyssean tropes”

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Classics Senior Thesis

May 10, 2026

**For “the Wandering Chinese” and all Odysseuses,
whose homecoming journeys are disrupted by political upheavals.**

Table of Contents

<i>Acknowledgement</i>	2
<i>Abstract</i>	3
“An Age of Hysteria”	4
The Birth of <i>Taipei People</i>	6
<i>Literature Review</i>	10
Reception Studies on <i>Taipei People</i>	10
Michelle Zerba’s “Poetics of Indirection”	11
<i>Reading Taipei People through “odyssean tropes”</i>	14
Odysseus’ <i>Kλέος</i>	14
Taipei People’s Self-Performing <i>Kλέος</i>	18
<i>Ξενία</i> and Wine in <i>the Odyssey</i>	25
Drinking Culture in <i>Taipei People</i>	29
<i>Conclusion</i>	34
<i>Works Cited</i>	36

Acknowledgement

In writing this thesis, I want to thank three wonderful professors who have greatly influenced me at Hamilton College. I am truly grateful for Professor Amy Koenig, who has introduced me to the fascinating world of Greek and Latin Literature. Her endless support makes the discipline of Classics more welcoming and inclusive. I also deeply appreciate Professor Pavitra Sundar, whose inspiring thoughts on “the Others” not only motivate me to conduct this project but also shape my lifelong passion for Comparative Literature and Postcolonial Studies. I also thank Professor Onno Oerlemans, whose course “Literature as/of Medicine” helps me understand how healing and meaningful literature can be for me.

Additionally, I appreciate the time I spent back at Li Po Chun United World College of Hong Kong. “海内存知己，天涯若比鄰” (“Friendship Across the World Made Near Neighbors of Far Horizons”). Everyone I met there has taught me to embrace diversity and celebrate differences. I especially thank my Chinese Literature teacher, Dr. Cherrie Cheung, who has continually made me appreciate the beauty of the Chinese language—a love I will carry with me to every single corner of the world I might go to.

Finally, I want to express my deep gratitude to my family and friends. Like Pai, my grandparents lived through the Second Sino-Japanese War and the Chinese Civil War, and I am more than honored to share a small part of this history. I appreciate my parents for bringing me into a world that is not yet peaceful, but one I am about to change. I especially owe immense gratitude to my mom, who read me Classical Chinese poetry aloud every single day when taking me to primary school. I also thank my friends—Rhea, Grace, and Peicen—for all the days and nights we spent together at the List Center, and my partner, for all the moments we exchange our mother tongues.

Abstract

When Pai Hsien-yung crafted *Taipei People* (1971) in the US, he compared his displaced, exiled protagonists in postwar Taiwan with Ulysses under James Joyce's pen, calling them "the Wandering Chinese." While scholars have studied Pai's reception of Joyce and Classical Chinese Literature, their focus remains on identifying thematic similarities in exile and vicissitude. I suggest that reading *Taipei People* through Michelle Zerba's framework of "odyssean tropes" will reveal the deeper narrative structure influenced by the movement and temporality of exile, enriching current reception studies of *Taipei People*. This thesis particularly examines three heroic stories centered on former male officers of the Nationalist Army: "New Year's Eve," "The Dirge of Liang Fu," and "State Funeral." Through the notion of *κλέος* (news and glory) and *ξενία* (hospitality or guest friendship), I argue that *Taipei People* presents a temporary epic suspended by the political upheaval in 1960s Taiwan. During Odysseus' homecoming journey, others keep recounting his *κλέος* during and after the Trojan War, continually renewing his heroic identity. The *ξενία* network, which values storytelling, also uses diluted wine to encourage Odysseus himself to revive his *κλέος* during visits to other households. Like Odysseus, Pai's heroes also have a glorious past on the battlefields of the Second Sino-Japanese War and the Chinese Civil War. Yet, fleeing to Taiwan, which receives military and economic "aid" from the US government, their Americanized descendants no longer believe in their old world order. Even when they share their glory among themselves, the Chinese drinking culture equates high-alcohol-content liquor with respect and courage, which makes overdrinking easy and prevents people from taking their drunken words seriously. Both factors make them the failed Odysseus by turning their *κλέος* into a fixed, non-circulating concept.

“τὸν δ’ ἄρ’ ἐπ’ ἀκτῆς εὔρε καθήμενον: οὐδέ ποτ’ ὄσσε

δακρυόφιν τέρσοντο, κατείβετο δὲ γλυκὺς αἰὼν

νόστον ὀδυρομένῳ” (*Od.* 5. 151-153).

「舊時王謝堂前燕，飛入尋常百姓家」——劉禹錫〈烏衣巷〉

Introduction

“An Age of Hysteria”

After publishing the traditional Chinese version of *Taipei People* (1971), Pai Hsien-yung (白先勇, 1937-) received an invitation from Chinese Literature Professor C.T. Hsia to attend the annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies in Boston, 1974. He presented his paper, “The Wandering Chinese: The Theme of Exile in Taiwan Fiction,” as follows:

Deprived of his cultural heritage, the Wandering Chinese has become a spiritual exile: Taiwan and the motherland are incommensurable. He has to move on. Like Ulysses, he sets out on a journey across the ocean, but it is an endless journey, dark and without hope (208-209).

Compared to James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, Pai describes “the Wandering Chinese” primarily as supporters of the *Kuomintang* (Chinese Nationalist Party, abbreviated as KMT). Believing in the KMT’s “Recover the Mainland” (反攻大陸) campaign, they temporarily dwell in Taiwan. However, in a changing world heavily influenced by American and Western culture, they fail to return to Mainland China and instead continue their “endless journey.”

Following World War II and the Cold War in East Asia, Taiwan in the 1960s became “an age of hysteria” (Huang 184). After the Second Sino-Japanese War (1939-1945), which marked the end of Japanese colonization in Taiwan and occupation of parts of Mainland China, the

Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the KMT fought in the Chinese Civil War (1945-1949). CCP's victory in 1949 led to the establishment of today's People's Republic of China on the Mainland, and the KMT's flight to Taiwan, with about 1.2 million supporters and their families following them (Huang 183). In Taiwan, the KMT "set up a government whose political ethos was to 'Recover the Mainland'... This official myth bespoke the exile's, [including Pai's families], mentality: mainlanders who made Taiwan only a temporary base for their dream of eventual return to their homeland across the Straits" ("The Wandering Chinese" 206). It also found a powerful ally in the US government to combat the possible spread of Communism. While sending Taiwan a total of \$1.4 billion in economic and military aid (1950-1965), the US government "insisted that Taiwan not launch military operations against the mainland without American approval," leading to the hollowing of the "Recover the Mainland Plan" (Hugar 302 and Chang 49).

With the US government's involvement there, American and Western culture inevitably enter Taiwan's new, changing world. Although more scholars later identify the US intervention in East Asia as neocolonialism, Taiwanese media at the time (and some continue to do so now) portrayed US involvement as a positive inspiration, compared with Taiwan's strict Martial Law (1949-1987). The US Information Agency (USIA) promoted US national interests in Taiwan through its magazine, *World Today*. It "introduced Taiwanese to American and European Literature, bringing new ideas and inspiration to Taiwan's youth and providing a source material that was eagerly absorbed and imitated" (Virtual Museum of Taiwan Literature). The popular slogan, "來來來，來台大；去去去，去美國" ("Study at NTU, go to the USA") attracted elite students to study Foreign Languages and Literatures at National Taiwan University (NTU, the

best university there) and to continue their graduate studies in the US¹ (“Shining Stars of Modernism”). While Americanization and Westernization have become symbols of success, the later generation of “the Wandering Chinese” no longer shares the same nostalgia as their ancestors, but instead seeks opportunities abroad in the US and the West.

The Birth of *Taipei People*



Figure 1: Pai Hsien-yung and Pai Chung-his

The son of a prominent KMT general, Pai Chung-his (白崇禧, 1893-1966), Pai Hsien-yung fled from Mainland China to Taiwan during the Chinese Civil War. Born in Guilin, he

¹ Most notably, this includes founders of the literary magazine *Modern Literature* (現代文學). Some of them ultimately decide to stay in the US; others decide to move back to Taiwan and other regions in Asia; some decide to switch back to writing in Chinese, while others continue writing in English or bilingual writing. No matter their choice, all of them continue their career related to writing, and most of them, including novelist Pai Hsien-yung, Lucy Hsiu-Mei Chen, Wang Wen-Hsing, and literary scholars Leo Ou-Fan Lee, Joseph S.M. Lau, and Ouyang Tzu, become predominantly literary figures in both the Anglophone and Sinophone worlds.

moved through various cities across Mainland China—Chongqing, Nanjing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and others—and Hong Kong before settling in Taipei in 1952. Being “the Wandering Chinese” themselves, the Pai family initially viewed Taipei as a temporary settlement until the KMT’s failure to “Recover the Mainland.” Since Pai Hsien-yung spent his adolescence in Taiwan’s “age of hysteria,” the societal slogan “Study at NTU, Go to the USA” also influenced him to study Anglo-American Modern Literature at NTU. Following that, he moved to the US to pursue his MA in Creative Writing at the Iowa Writers’ Workshop (1963-1965) and later worked as a Professor of Classical Chinese Literature at UC Santa Barbara until his retirement in 1994.

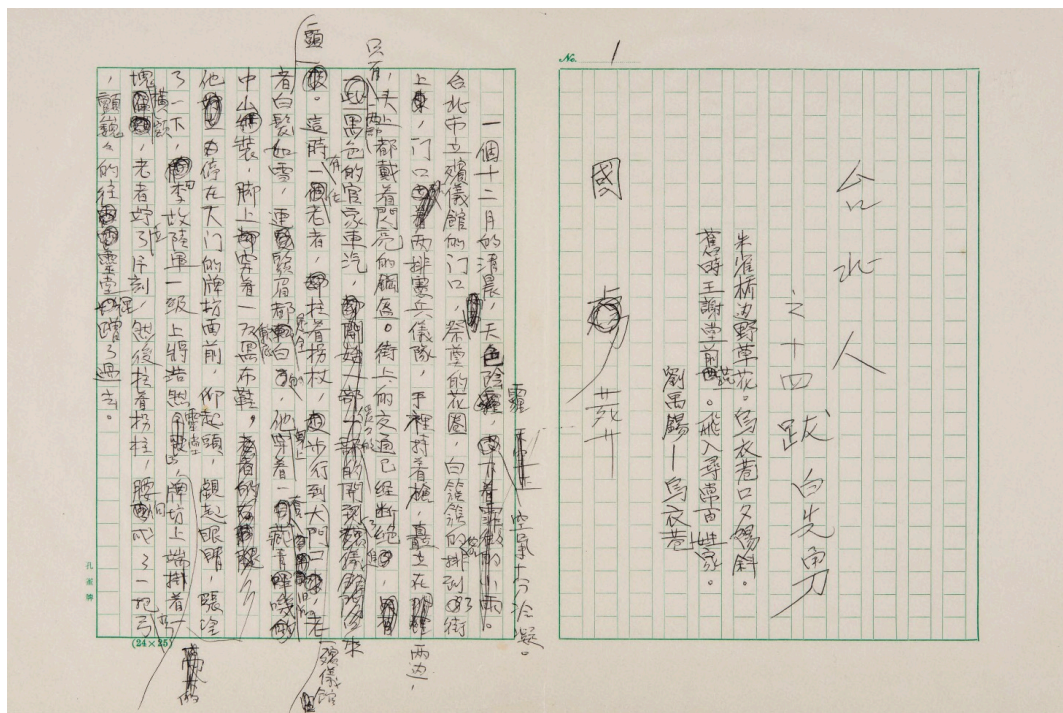


Figure 2: “State Funeral” Manuscript

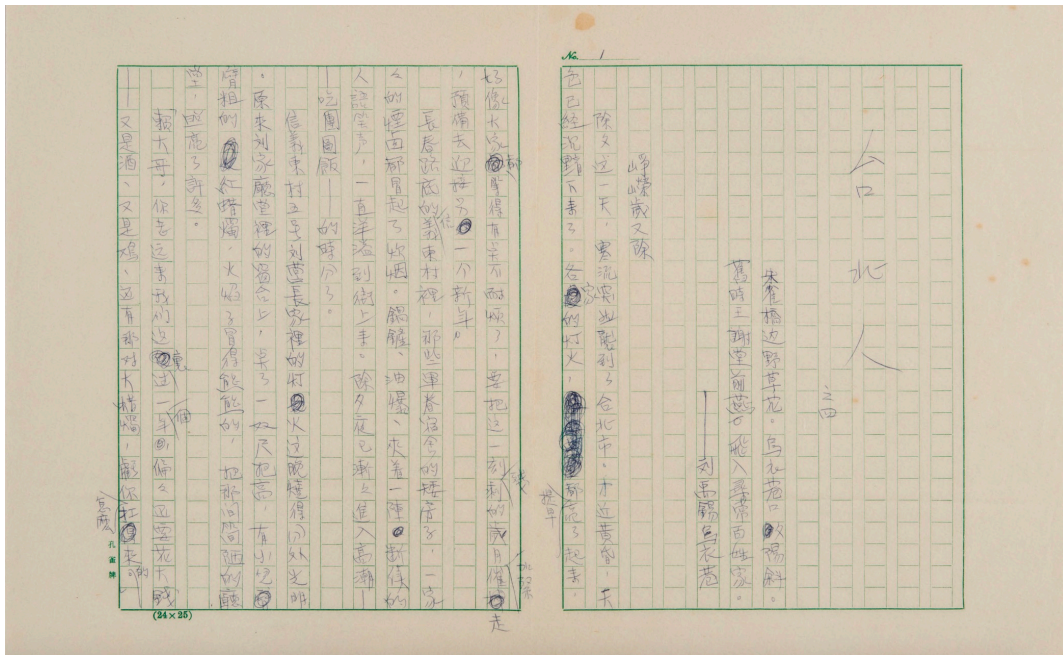


Figure 3 “New Year’s Eve” Manuscript

Feeling emotionally attached to the theme of identity crisis in the works of Anglo-American Modernist writers, especially James Joyce’s *Dubliners* and *Ulysses*, Pai crafted fourteen short stories about “the Wandering Chinese” for the collection *Taipei People* in the US. He began writing the first story, “永遠的尹雪艷” (“The Eternal Snow Beauty”), during his final year in Iowa, and completed the rest in Santa Barbara. These stories portray a diverse range of individuals, from prostitutes in Shanghai’s Paramount to KMT soldiers who fought in the Second Sino-Japanese War, professors of Western Literature, and others. Yet, Pai cites Liu Yu-his (劉禹錫, 772-842 AD, Tang Dynasty)’s poem “烏衣巷” in the preface of every story in his early manuscript, shown in Figures 2 and 3. Its last two lines, “舊時王謝堂前燕 / 飛入尋常百姓家” (“Of old, swallows nested in the halls of the Wangs and Hsiehs / Now they fly into the homes of commers”) imply the overall theme of vicissitude (trans. Pai and Yasin; *Taipei People Preface*).

In other words, although being extremely different, all those characters share the wartime experience of fleeing from Mainland China to Taiwan with the KMT. Migrating to Taiwan with the official myth of “Recover the Mainland,” they all “have an unforgettable ‘past’” and the heavy burden of this “past,” directly influences their immediate day-to-day living” (Ouyang 79).

Among these, I specifically examine three stories featuring former male officers of the KMT army: “歲除 (“New Year’s Eve”), “梁父吟” (“The Dirge of Liang Fu”), and “國葬” (“State Funeral”). The identities and destinies of these heroes—Lai Ming-sheng in “New Year’s Eve,” General Pu in “The Dirge of Liang Fu,” and General Li in “State Funeral”—all have direct association with the vicissitude of the KMT. Having fought in the Second Sino-Japanese War and the Chinese Civil War, they build their identities around nationalist ideals and wartime heroism within the broader context of establishing the Republic, which ended China’s last Imperial dynasty. Yet, relocating to Taiwan, they are trapped between their glorious past and the humiliating reality of exile. To restore their wartime heroism, they maintain the military customs by wearing uniforms, addressing each other with military titles, and sharing wartime memories when drinking with their old comrades. However, as mentioned, Americanization and Westernization have become an inevitable trend in Taiwan’s rapidly changing world. These actions become self-performances without ritual, and their heroic glory can survive only in the minds of people with shared wartime memories.

Literature Review

Reception Studies on *Taipei People*

Current scholarship on *Taipei People*'s reception mainly focuses on Pai's inheritance from either Anglo-American Modernist Literature or Classical Chinese Literature, the two main fields Pai studied as a student and as a professor, respectively.

Regarding the reception of Anglo-American Modernist Literature, current scholars frequently compare *Taipei People* with its direct inspirations, Joyce's *Dubliners* (and potentially, *Ulysses*). Many have identified parallels in the socio-political settings of 1960s Taiwan and semi-colonized Ireland, between "a waning British imperialism and a waxing Irish nationalism" (Hillenbrand 22). Based on this observation, Hillenbrand further suggests that, for both Pai and Joyce, storytelling serves as a form of self-representation in the age of chaos. Some specific, frequently-discussed, shared experiences of those characters include "exile," which Pai himself identifies as "like Ulysses, [the Wandering Chinese] sets out on a journey across the ocean, but it is an endless journey, dark and without hope" ("The Wandering Chinese" 209); "loneliness" in the aspects of "性愛、情感、時間、文化" ("sex, affects, time, and culture"; my trans; Hua 52).

Due to the language's specificity, studies focusing on the inheritance of Classical Chinese mostly appear within the Sinophone world. These mainly include *紅樓夢* (*The Dream of Red Chamber*, Mid-18th century AD, Qing Dynasty) and *Kunqu* Opera (14th-17th century AD, Ming Dynasty), which are the focus of Pai's own scholarship and cultural promotion activities. For the first case, scholars focus on the thematic similarities; yet instead of "exile" when comparing to Joyce, they mainly emphasize "興衰感、歷史感" ("a sense of vicissitude and history"; my trans.), which both works frequently refer to "往事、舊夢" ("glorious past," literally meaning "past events, old dreams"; my trans.; Gao 164 and 166). For the other case, scholars primarily

identify the role of *Kunqu* Opera in the narratology of the *Taipei People*. For instance, “戲曲音樂成為連結過去與現在、展示人物情感的重要手段……戲曲表演成為小說中展示人物性格和命運的工具” (“opera music becomes the major method of connecting the past and present, as well as showcase characters’ emotions...opera performance becomes the tool of showcasing characters’ personalities and destinies”; my trans; Meng 31).

Despite the richness of current scholarship, several methodological limitations still exist. Reception scholarship on either Anglo-American Modernism or Classical Chinese Literature focuses on descriptive, thematic similarities. Meanwhile, Anglophone and Sinophone scholarship remains divided by language barriers, even though *Taipei People* itself is a culturally hybrid work. Both limitations indicate that current scholarship lacks a transnational, structured framework for understanding the narrative of *Taipei People* as patterns of movement—exile, disturbance, and (im)possibility of return—which are essential to the exile journeys of Pai’s characters.

Michelle Zerba’s “Poetics of Indirection”

In her monograph *Modern Odysseys*, Michelle Zerba points out that the dominant understanding of the Homeric epic’s oral tradition as the fixed, canonized foundation in Classical Reception Studies would “marginalize alternative odysseys.” Throughout centuries, the oral performative characteristics of the *Odyssey* make it “anew in historically situated moments and through an extended diachronic process in which each performance yielded a different poem.” However, “the multiformity in the Homeric poem” leads to the lack of “Ur-text from which derivations stem, and this renders problematic the notion that the poem is an Ur-text itself” (14). In other words, current scholarship understands the *Odyssey* as a fixed, fundamental father-figure

in works with direct links to it, from Joyce's *Ulysses* to Pound's *Cantos*, H.D.'s *Helen in Egypt*, and Walcott's *Omeros* (11). Yet, the *Odyssey* itself draws on elements from other cultural traditions, such as "the Near Eastern epic of *Gilgamesh*, including the first-person narration of travel in foreign lands" (14-15).

Given the limitations of current scholarship, Zerba proposes her concept of "indirect links," which provides "a looser set of [uncapitalized] odyssean tropes that enable them to develop stories and create lyric sensibilities that drift in Homeric waters without coming into his wake" (17). After all, "we cannot...assume that in ancient art the depiction of figures and scenes associated with Odysseus and the Trojan War were drawn from Homeric epic rather than from material in the epic cycle" (Zerba 17). Her particular choice of the lower-case "o" and "t" in the phrase "odyssean tropes" "modern odysseus" should not be read by particular Homeric vocabularies, but the following thematic elements that offer indirect links:

- 1) **Diffusion and mixture:** a plethora of human experience that challenges normative categories by exerting a centrifugal force;
- 2) **Islands and Isolation:** a withdrawal of exertion on the part of an agent as a consequence of trauma or loss;
- 3) **Passage and Detour:** A need to reengage that brings with it the challenges of liminality;
- 4) **Return and Split Endings:** a movement toward recuperation that cannot be satisfied because the end is unavoidably vexed (17-18)

Zerba's framework of "odyssean tropes" offers a transnational, structured approach to interpreting the narratives of movement in *Taipei People*. While its flexibility can easily adapt to the specific cultural context of post-war Taiwan in the 1960s, its structured, universal framework also addresses current gaps in Sinophone and Anglophone scholarship, which both remain

descriptive and are respectively disconnected. In current scholarship, Anglo-American Modernism gives Pai the language of exile, while Classical Chinese Literature provides him with the basis of vicissitude. Yet, reading *Taipei People* with Zerba's "odyssean tropes" will reveal the deeper narrative structure through the movement and temporality of exile — not just as the final destiny of displacement, but as the desire and collapse of homecoming.

Within this framework, I primarily examine the concepts of κλέος and ξενία in both the *Odyssey* and *Taipei People*. As Zerba suggests, "diffusion and mixture" act as the "base" of odyssean epics, and "key to this circulatory network is what Homer calls κλέος." Moreover, "in a network of sea crossing where strangers meet to conduct commerce and trade...diffusion is...enabled by ξενία, the law of hospitality" (Zerba 18 and 31). During Odysseus' νόστος, others continuously circulate his κλέος—his glory and news—among the people inhabiting several Greek islands. Since Greeks encourage guests to share their stories to reciprocate the hosts' hospitality, they mix wine with water to help guests speak more openly and consciously. In such a ξενία network, Odysseus also renews his κλέος when seeking hospitality on unfamiliar lands. However, although κλέος of Pai's heroes is also associated with their former military role in the KMT army, in Taiwan's age of hysteria, the retelling of their glorious past becomes a self-performance without ritual. While Chinese culture also values the equal host-guest relationship, it associates drinking high-alcohol-concentration liquor with respect and courage. Such a drinking culture often leads to overdrinking, causing people to not take their words seriously after drinking, which further limits the circulation of κλέος. Overall, I argue that *Taipei People* presents a temporary epic suspended by the political upheaval in 1960s Taiwan.

Reading *Taipei People* through “odyssean tropes”

Odysseus’ *Κλέος*

While Odysseus encounters characters from different cultures, genders, and customs during his *νόστος*, “*κλέος* is intertwined with this itinerancy and diffusion...and enables a view of island dynamics, especially as they involve Ithaca” (Zerba 35). A specific concept in ancient Greek language and culture, *κλέος* means both “rumor, report, news” and “good report, fame, glory” (LSJ). The dual meaning of *κλέος* as a carrier of news and a glorified identity suggests that *κλέος* functions as a circulating concept that continuously generates heroes’ glory through storytelling, rather than as a fixed trait. In other words, during Odysseus’ journey home, other characters — whether male or female, mortal or immortal, Ithaca residents or not—not just memorize but also keep telling Odysseus’ *κλέος* during the Trojan War to each other, to enhance Odysseus’ glorious, heroic identity.

One outstanding example of Odysseus’ *κλέος* is his son Telemachus’ process of understanding Odysseus, not through memorizing, but by listening to others retell Odysseus’ story. When Athena asks Telemachus whether he is Odysseus’ son, Telemachus responds, “μήτηρ μὲν τέ μέ φησι τοῦ ἔμμεναι, αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ γε / οὐκ οἶδ’· οὐ γὰρ πῶ τις ἐὼν γόνον αὐτὸς ἀνέγνω” (“My mother / says that I am his son, but I cannot / be sure, since no one knows his own begetting”; trans. Wilson; *Odyssey* 1.215-216). Telemachus’ words reveal his uncertainty not only about his own identity but also about Odysseus’. The indefinite subject “(πῶ) τις” shows that no particular person Telemachus knows in Ithaca knows Odysseus’ fate, so he initially has no access to any information—good or bad—about Odysseus. Therefore, in order to learn who he and Odysseus are, Telemachus must find other characters outside his *οἶκος* (family, household) and Ithaca who know Odysseus. With Athena’s guide, he sailed from Ithaca to Pyros,

asking Nestor, Odysseus' companion during the Trojan War, about Odysseus. At Nestor's palace, Telemachus learns about some of Odysseus' *κλέος* as follows:

ἔνθ' οὐ τίς ποτε μῆτιν ὁμοιωθήμεναι ἄντην
 ἤθελ', ἐπεὶ μάλα πολλὸν ἐνίκᾳ δῖος Ὀδυσσεὺς
 παντοίοισι δόλοισι, πατὴρ τεός, εἰ ἐτεόν γε
 κείνου ἔκγονός ἐσσι: σέβας μ' ἔχει εἰσορόωντα.
 ἦ τοι γὰρ μῦθοί γε εἰκότες, οὐδέ κε φαίης
 ἄνδρα νεώτερον ὧδε εἰκότα μυθήσασθαι.
 ἔνθ' ἦ τοι ἦος μὲν ἐγὼ καὶ δῖος Ὀδυσσεὺς
 οὔτε ποτ' εἰν ἀγορῇ δίχ' ἐβάζομεν οὔτ' ἐνὶ βουλῇ,
 ἀλλ' ἓνα θυμὸν ἔχοντε νόῳ καὶ ἐπίφρονι βουλῇ
 φραζόμεθ' Ἀργείοισιν ὅπως ὅχ' ἄριστα γένοιτο.

[Odysseus,] your father, if you really are his son—

Well, no one dared to try to equal him
 in cleverness. That man was always best
 at every kind of trick. And seeing you,
 I am amazed at how you talk like him.
 One would not think so young a man could do it.
 Well, back in Troy, Odysseus and I
 always agreed in councils, with one mind.
 We gave the Argives all the best advice.
 (*Od.* 3.120-129)

Nestor's retelling of Odysseus' story with him in Troy allows Telemachus to learn Odysseus' identity, circulating Odysseus' *κλέος* to him. He uses vocabulary with positive, glorious connotations to describe and even deify Odysseus, such as “μῆτιν” (wisdom) and “δῖος” (god-like). Two intensifiers, “μάλα πολλόν,” further emphasize Odysseus' superiority in terms of intelligence over other heroes. Moreover, Nestor's account of his and Odysseus' roles in the Trojan War verifies that Odysseus has fought, led, and provided crucial strategy in winning this long-lasting war. As heroes and leaders of the Greek army, they offer strategic suggestions to the Argives (Greeks), with the adverbial, superlative phrase “ὅχ' ἄριστα” (as best as possible) showing Odysseus' extraordinary wisdom. Furthermore, Nestor compares Telemachus' rhetoric to Odysseus', saying “οὐδέ κε φαίης / ἄνδρα νεώτερον ὧδε εἰκότα μυθήσασθαι” (One would not think so young a man could do it). The similarity in superiority regarding wisdom suggests that, to Nestor (and other individuals who recognize their similarities, such as Athena and Menelaus), Odysseus' *κλέος* in terms of intelligence is inherited by Telemachus, both through biological lineage and other people's retelling of their perceived similarities. Therefore, Nestor's retelling of Odysseus' personality and story helps Telemachus learn that Odysseus is not just his father, but also a wise hero who fought in the Trojan War. This process acts as Nestor's retelling of Odysseus' *κλέος*, spreading it to another person, Telemachus, who is not involved in the war.

In the world of “diffusion and mixture,” Odysseus' *κλέος* does not end here. Instead, Telemachus also spreads Odysseus's *κλέος*, which he learns from figures like Nestor and Menelaus, to others. This ongoing process of retelling further forms a “circulatory network” that continually renews Odysseus's *κλέος* (Zerba 18). After learning about Odysseus' noble identity from Nestor, and more specifically about his suffering on Calypso's Island during his *νόστος* from Menelaus, Telemachus shares this *κλέος* (news) with Penelope, as follows:

τοῖος ἐὼν μνηστῆρσιν ὁμιλήσειεν Ὀδυσσεύς:
πάντες κ' ὠκύμοροί τε γενοίατο πικρόγαμοί τε.

...

φῆ μιν ὃ γ' ἐν νήσῳ ἰδέειν κρατέρ' ἄλγε' ἔχοντα,
νύμφης ἐν μεγάροισι Καλυψοῦς, ἣ μιν ἀνάγκη
ἴσχει: ὁ δ' οὐ δύναται ἦν πατρίδα γαῖαν ἰκέσθαι.
οὐ γάρ οἱ πάρα νῆες ἐπήρετμοι καὶ ἐταῖροι,
οἳ κέν μιν πέμποιεν ἐπ' εὐρέα νῶτα θαλάσσης.

May [Odysseus] fight the suitors that same way,
so all of them will find their courtship ends
badly, and their lives soon

...

He said he saw him in distress: the nymph
Calypso has him trapped upon her island,
inside her house. He cannot come back home
to his own country, since he has no fleet
or crew to row across the sea's board back.

(*Od.* 17. 136-137 and 142-146)

Telemachus' words show that he circulates Odysseus' *κλέος*, which he has learned from others, to his mother, Penelope, who is also not involved in the Trojan War and waits for Odysseus to return home. Telemachus' wish of “μνηστῆρσιν ὁμιλήσειεν Ὀδυσσεύς” (may Odysseus fight the suitors) suggests that, through the spreading of Odysseus' *κλέος* in terms of glory, bravery, and

wisdom by others, he affirms that Odysseus holds the heroic qualities necessary to fight against all the suitors. In addition, *κλέος* also serves as a report about Odysseus's *νόστος*. From Menelaus, Telemachus learns that Odysseus has not died yet, but “νύμφης ἐν μεγάροισι Καλυψοῦς, ἣ μιν ἀνάγκη / ἴσχει” (the nymph / Calypso has him trapped upon her island). In sharing this news with Penelope, Telemachus further spreads Odysseus's *κλέος*, which he has learned from others, by informing more people about his experiences, thereby circulating it.

Κλέος functions as a circulating concept that spreads heroes' glory across the Greek world, a process Zerba defines as “diffusion and mixture” (17). Its circulatory nature allows characters to share heroes' stories with others, who then pass them along to more people. That's why Odysseus' identity is linked with his *κλέος* in the sense of glory, intelligence, and leadership during wartime. Odysseus' comrades, such as Nestor and Menelaus, share his *κλέος*—glorious identity, leadership during the Trojan War, and suffering on his *νόστος*—to Telemachus. Then, Telemachus spreads Odysseus' *κλέος* that he has learned from them to Penelope. In this world, individuals continually renew Odysseus' *κλέος*, thereby strengthening his heroic identity.

Taipei People's Self-Performing *Κλέος*

Like Odysseus' leadership in the Greek army during the Trojan War, *κλέος* in *Taipei People* is also associated with characters' glorious past in the KMT's army, where they fought in the Sino-Japanese Wars and/or the Chinese Civil War. However, unlike Odysseus, the *κλέος* of Pai's characters cannot be renewed in this changing, new world of Taiwan. This is, in the first place, demonstrated by the short story genre, which emphasizes fragmentation over continuous plots. After all, with the hope of “Recover the Mainland,” Nationalist soldiers stuck in their “crip

time²,” which refers to “bending the clock to meet disabled bodies and minds...[and] extract [them] from linear, progressive time with its normative life stages” (Rangan 80). That means, although the war has ended in the normative timeline (pre-war vs. post-war), their minds cannot be recovered from their wartime experience, and they are always prepared to return to the battlefields to fight for the KMT. “Although they are physically present in Taipei, they are at heart diehard Szechwan [people], Shanghai [people], etc.” (Lau 33) However, unlike Odysseus’s *κλέος*, theirs cannot be renewed through retelling in Taiwan’s changing world. Their repeated retelling of their *κλέος*—glorious, military identities connected with their birthplaces in the past—becomes a self-performance without ritual.

Through the symbolic meanings of each story’s titles, Pai reveals the political reality of an era ending with the KMT’s loss. He initially titled “New Year’s Eve” as “崢嶸歲又除” (“another extraordinary year has passed”; my trans.), as shown in figure 3. Roughly translated as “extraordinary,” “崢嶸” originally describes tall, lofty mountains. So, when used to refer to a time period, it conveys two meanings: “glorious”—similar to mountain heights—and “harshness”—like the steepness of mountains. By changing the title from “崢嶸歲又除” to “歲除,” Pai deliberately erases the sense of glory in the initial title, leaving only the sense of the New Year’s arrival. In doing so, he reveals the political truth that the KMT’s glorious past has ended, and a new era is coming whether they want it or not. Similarly, in naming the last story “國葬” (State Funeral), he changes from the word “殤” (sorrow) to “葬” (Funeral) in his early

² The concept of “crip time” initially appears in the field of disability studies, but it can apply to this concept as well. It is, after all, a concept to explain bodies and minds that misfit in the society with progressive, linear development. In the normative timeline, the war has already ended; yet, for those characters who fight in the war, their minds are stuck in their traumatized, wartime memories and personal honor, and many of their bodies remain disabled because of it.

manuscript (see figure 2). His choice of the word “funeral” not only conveys sorrow but also symbolizes the end of the *κλέος* of the KMT, or arguably, the conclusion of the Republic Era.

Regardless of the cruel political reality, Pai’s heroes live in their “crip time,” which refers to their goal of establishing the Republic of China during wartime, always preparing to “Recover the Mainland.” Hence, they not just remember, but also continue “performing” their military identities by maintaining military manners. The story “The Dirge of Liang Fu” narrates General Pu’s conversation with Commissioner Lei, the student of his dead comrade Wang Meng-yang. General Pu and Wang Mengyang were “四川武備學堂的同學” (“schoolmates at the Szechwan Military Academy”) who fought in the 1911 Revolution, which ended China’s last imperial dynasty and established the People’s Republic of China. (trans. Pai and Yasin; *Taipei People* 206-207). Their military identity functions like a *κλέος*, in the sense of glory and heroism, because it is closely tied to the formation of the country. Thereby, although relocating to Taipei with the Nationalist Army, General Pu still addresses people around him with their military titles. He addresses his servant by “Lai *Fukuan*,” which Pai himself explains in his translation footnote as “a military rank particular to the Chinese army, similar to an aide-de-camp. The term *fukuan* is sometimes employed loosely to designate any military personnel in close personal attendance on a general” (*Taipei People* 228). Moreover, when serving General Pu, Lai *Fukuan* “做了一個立正的姿勢” (“the old aide quickly stood to attention, his hands pressed to his sides”; *Taipei People* 201). The action “stand to attention” primarily appears in the military, yet it occurs in this context at General Pu’s house in Taipei; this dislocated behavior suggests that Lai *Fukuan*, who accompanies General Pu, maintains a military manner like his.

Similarly, Pai’s heroes also decorate their space in Taipei with military elements, performing their self-rituals of *κλέος* during wartime. The second half of the calligraphic scrolls

in General Pu's house features the “国父遗嘱：革命尚未成功 / 同志仍需努力” (“the Last Will and Testament of Sun Yat-sen, the Father of the Country: The Revolution is not yet accomplished. / Our Comrades must strive on with all their might!”; *Taipei People* 202). The specific calligraphic scrolls with Sun Yat-sen's encouragement on the establishment of the republic suggest that General Pu considers “日後打回大陸” (“in the future when fight [their] way back to the homeland”) with certainty rather than condition (*Taipei People* 225). Similarly, in another story, “國葬” (State Funeral), which depicts the funeral of General Li Han-jan, a leader of the Northern Expedition³, Pai describes the setting as follows: “堂中靈台的正中，懸著一幅李浩然將軍穿軍禮服滿身佩掛勳章的遺像，左邊卻張著一幅綠色四星上將的軍旗” (“in the center of the altar hung a portrait of General Li in full-dress uniform arrayed with medals and decorations; on the wall to the left was spread the green military standard emblematic of a four-star general”; *Taipei People* 427). Guests attending General Li's funeral, in which all of them has fought during war, choose to use a photo of him with noble military elements, including “full-dress uniform” and “medals and decorations”. This indicates that, in their minds, General Li appears to be entirely identified with his military identity rather than with others. The “green military standard emblematic of a four-star general” further suggests that all guests choose to memorize his military κλέος.

However, unlike Odysseus' κλέος, which circulates in the Greek world, the κλέος of Pai's heroes remains fixed and is preserved only in individuals with shared wartime memory. In the new, changing world of Taipei that receives military aid from the US, “Chiang Kai-shek's promise to lead his soldiers to return to the [M]ainland remained hollow because Washington

³ A war that unifies Republic of China and named Nanjing as its capital, 1926.

wanted the Taiwan Strait to be a peaceful passageway” (Chang 49). Meanwhile, US military and economic aid to Taiwan makes the US an attractive destination for Taiwanese people to migrate to, which further idealizes and promotes Western culture. In “Dirge of Liang Fu,” “General Wang’s son, Chia-chi...immigrated to the United States when he was young and is hence unfamiliar with Chinese etiquette. He represents the Westernized people in Taipei” (Chang 52). When General Pu asks Commissioner Lei how Chia-chi wants to observe General Wang’s “Seventh Seventh⁴,” “雷委員點臉上現出了難色，隔了半晌，終於說道：「此事我跟家驥兄商量过了，他說他們幾個人都是信基督教的，不肯舉行佛教的儀式」” (“Commissioner Lei look[s] disconcerted at this question...[and answers]: ‘[Chia-chi] told me that they’ve all become converted to Christianity and wouldn’t want to perform Buddhist rites’”; *Taipei People* 222-225). Chia-chi’s belief shift from Buddhism, which he inherited from his father, General Wang, to Christianity suggests the Americanization of the second generation of Pai’s heroes. Even General Pu’s own son and his wife have moved to the US for academic work. They then give birth to General Pu’s grandson, Hsiao-hsien, who “是在美國生的……他剛回來的時候，一句中國話也不會說，簡直成了小洋人！” (“was born in America...when he first [comes] back he [can’t] speak a word of Chinese; he’d practically turn[s] into a little foreigner!”; *Taipei People* 218-219). As Pai memorizes, “事實上我們父兄輩在大陸建立的那個舊世界早已瓦解崩潰了” (“in fact, the Old World built by our parents’ generation in Mainland China was already broken”; my trans.), moving to the US becomes an opportunity for the second and future generations to pursue dreams (《現代文學》創立的時代背景及其精神風貌” 97). Americanization and Westernization of the future generation, including shifts in religious beliefs, languages, and

⁴ An important ritual event held on the 49th day after death in Buddhism, marking the end of the finalization of rebirth.

ideologies, have become an inevitable result. These future generations no longer memorize or pass down their ancestors' κλέος, causing it to become a fixed concept that only survives in the crip time of the past generation.

In this context, Pai's heroes attempt to pass their wartime κλέος to future generations becomes a self-performance without rituals. In Chinese characters, General Pu's grandson's name “效先” (Hsiao-hsien) means “imitate ancestors,” symbolizing his hope that Hsiao-hsien embodies the same level of κλέος in terms of glory, intelligence, and leadership as their generation that fought in the war. Yet, as mentioned, Hsiao-hsien initially “[can't] speak a word of Chinese” (*Taipei People* 218-219). General Pu also tries to teach Hsiao-hsien classical Chinese poetry, hoping that Hsiao-hsien will feel more connected to his cultural heritage and thereby remember his ancestors' κλέος. Under General Pu's guidance, Hsiao-hsien recites a Tang Dynasty poem, “涼州詞” (The Song of Liang-chou), which ends with “古來征戰幾人回” (“Since ancient times, how many have returned of those who went off to fight?”; *Taipei People* 220-221). Through Hsiao-Hsien's recitation of the notion “回” (return, similar to νόστος) in a classical Chinese poem, Pai implies General Pu's nostalgia in multiple senses: like ancient soldiers, many fighters in the Nationalist Army die or are injured during the Sino-Japanese Wars and the Chinese Civil War; those who survive flee to Taiwan and cannot return to the Mainland for the rest of their lives; they also fail to pass down their κλέος and Chinese heritage to future generations. Even though Hsiao-hsien learns to cite this poem, he is very likely to follow the path of his parents—General Pu's son and daughter-in-law—who go to the US, the still-appealing destination for Taiwanese people.

A more obvious example is that General Pu's clear memory of General Wang's “Seventh Seventh”—a specific Buddhist term—indicates that he is stuck in his “crip time” and trapped by

heroes' wartime *κλέος*. Yet Chia-chi, the son of General Wang, has already converted to Christianity and no longer practices Buddhist rituals to fit in with American society. General Pu can only say, “那麼這樣吧，那天由我出名，在善導寺替孟養念經超渡好了” (“Well, then let's do it this way. We'll invite people in my name on that day to the Temple of Kindly Guidance and have the monks chant the sutras and perform the necessary rites for Meng-yang's departed soul”; *Taipei People* 224-225). Even as General Pu practices Buddhist rites for General Wang, he still does not pass Wang's *κλέος* to his son because Chia-chi no longer believes in Buddhism. This ritual, resignedly, becomes General Pu's act of self-performance: acting on his own, and acting for himself, in memorizing General Wang's *κλέος* that becomes not circulatory.

In short, Taipei People become the failed Odysseus, because their *κλέος* can no longer be circulated and renewed in this changing, new world of Taiwan. Following US military and economic support for Taiwan, migrating to the US becomes an icon of success, which inevitably leads to Americanization and Westernization among elite Taiwanese. Like Nestor, Menelaus, and Telemachus, Pai's heroes also attempt to circulate their and their comrades' *κλέος* in the sense of glory, intelligence, and leadership during wartime. They live in their crip time, obeying the military orders among themselves and attempting to teach their future generation their *κλέος* and Chinese heritage. However, their Americanized future generation no longer believes in their old world order, making their *κλέος* a fixed, non-circulatory concept in the past. In this sense, Pai's heroes fail to circulate their *κλέος*, making their glorious, heroic identities trapped in the past.

Ξενία and Wine in the Odyssey

In addition to *κλέος*, “in a network of sea crossing where strangers meet to conduct commerce and trade...diffusion is...enabled by *ξενία*, the law of hospitality” (Zerba 31). Often translated as “guest-friendship” or “hospitality,” *ξενία* is a particular Greek networking circumstance that creates mutual reliance among people from different backgrounds. Since *ξενία* is so culturally specific to Greeks, understanding its proper practice becomes a testament to Greek identity. It begins with the stranger guests “travel[ing] in his own country and in other countries,” seeking “a network of *xenoi*, guest-friends, who will provide him with the basic necessities” (Scott 6). After receiving the guest’s request for *ξενία*, the hosts should welcome them by offering gifts and feasts, which usually include wine, before asking for any information about the guests. However, “[they] cannot be the benefactor when he is in a foreign land,” but join “a circle of cooperation whose members have the right to feel mutual reliance, and a right to whatever basic necessities are available for consumption” (Scott 9). Therefore, the guests need to return the *ξενία* to the specific hosts and/or continue the *ξενία* network by providing it to others. Within the host’s *οἶκος*, the guest must respect the host’s rules and share their stories with the host to pay their *ξενία*. After leaving, they should also continue providing *ξενία* to their guests seeking it. Like *κλέος*, once the networking system of *ξενία* expands, all individuals involved can spread heroes’ stories to more and more people in the Greek world.

While hosts provide a feast to guests, “wine [acts as] part of the heroic code of *ξενία*” (Papakonstantinou 15). Greeks notice that wine-drinking, as part of divine ritual performance, can increase “courage and strength⁵”. Yet too much drinking leads to “socially disruptive”

⁵ Papakonstantinou primarily discusses wine’s ability to increase “courage and strength” for soldiers before fighting on the battlefield. Yet, the logic of moderating the percentage of alcohol is the same in the *ξενία* context: mixing wine with water enables guests to have the courage to share their private stories, while also helping them avoid getting drunk and unable to engage in social gatherings.

behaviors (Papakonstantinou 5). Particularly, in the process of *ξενία*, wine-drinking is intended to help guests pay the *ξενία* back by sharing their stories more openly, rather than letting them get drunk. Hence, “the preferred drinking condition...involve[s] the acquisition of a moderate alcohol-induced intoxication while maintaining one’s decorum” (Papakonstantinou 6). In practice, hosts “almost always...dilute[s] [wine] with water, a practice that eventually become[s] standard throughout the ancient Greek world,” so guests can share their identities and stories both with consciousness and enough courage (Papakonstantinou 4).

The guest friendship between Odysseus and the Phaeacians illustrates how *ξενία*, with the supply of diluted wines, enables the circulation of heroes’ stories. Arriving in the strange land of Scheria, Odysseus seeks *ξενία* from King Alcinous of the Phaeacians. To welcome him, Alcinous orders Pontonous—the wine boy—to mix wine for everyone to pray to the gods before preparing a bed for Odysseus. He says, “κρητῆρα κερασσάμενος μέθυ νεῖμον / πᾶσιν ἀνὰ μέγαρον, ἵνα καὶ Διὶ τερπικεραύνῳ / σπείσομεν, ὅς θ’ ἰκέτησιν ἅμ’ αἰδοίοισιν ὀπηδεῖ” (“Go and mix / a bowl and serve the wine to all our guests, / so we may offer drink to thundering Zeus / who blesses those in need”; *Od.* 7. 179-181). Both the noun “κρητῆρα”—mixing bowl—and the participle “κερασσάμενος”—mix—suggest that Pontonous will mix the wine with water, thereby lowering the alcohol content to a proper level. In doing so, all individuals in Alcinous’ οἶκος have enough, but not too much, energy to pray for Zeus, who can ensure the safety of Odysseus’ νόστος. Meanwhile, by offering Odysseus the diluted wine, the Phaeacians invite him to join “a circle of cooperation whose members have the right to feel mutual reliance” by allowing him to share his identities openly (Scott 9).

In paying back the valuable and genuine *ξενία* hosted by the Phaeacian, Odysseus spends the entire four books full of details to tell his adventures. After Alcinous provides Odysseus with

diluted wine, gifts, and food, and the poet Demodocus sings, Alcinous asks Odysseus his name by saying, “εἴπ’ ὄνομ’ ὅτι σε κεῖθι κάλεον μήτηρ τε πατήρ τε / ἄλλοι θ’ οἱ κατὰ ἄστυ καὶ οἱ περὶ ναιετάουσιν.” (“What did your parents name you? With what name / are you known to your people?”; *Od.* 8. 550-551). Odysseus tells long narratives about his suffering at the hands of Calypso, the Cyclopes, and Circe, spreading his stories to the Phaeacians, who did not join the Trojan War. For instance, he describes in detail how he escapes the Cyclopean Island. He says that, before escaping under the sheep’s bellies, he tricks Polyphemus by getting him drunk and helpless, as follows:

ὥς φάτ’ , ἀτὰρ οἱ αὖτις ἐγὼ πόρον αἶθοπα οἶνον.
 τρὶς μὲν ἔδωκα φέρων, τρὶς δ’ ἔκπιεν ἀφραδίησιν.
 αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ Κύκλωπα περὶ φρένας ἤλυθεν οἶνος,
 καὶ τότε δὴ μιν ἔπεσσι προσηύδων μελιχίοισι:
 “Κύκλωψ, εἰρωτᾷς μ’ ὄνομα κλυτόν, αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ τοι
 ἐξερέω: σὺ δέ μοι δὸς ξείνιον, ὥς περ ὑπέστης.
 Οὗτις ἐμοί γ’ ὄνομα: Οὗτιν δέ με κικλήσκουσι...”

So I gave him / Another cup of wine, and then two more.

He drank them all, unwisely. With the wine

gone to his head, I told him, all politeness,

“Cyclops, you asked my name. I will reveal it;

then you must give gift you promised me,

of hospitality. My name is Noman...”

(*Od.* 9. 360-366)

Telling these details of bothering the Cyclops, Odysseus demonstrates his wits by playing with the concept of *ξενία* and using the pun “Οὔτις” (Noman). Since Odysseus understands the proper process of *ξενία* while the Cyclops do not, he has the privilege to bother them by showing them the incorrect practice of *ξενία*. Odysseus gives Polyphemus “κισσύβιον μετὰ χερσὶν ἔχων μέλανος οἴνοιο” (“a cup of ivy wood / filled full of wine”; *Od.* 9. 346). As mentioned, Greeks mix wine with water when serving *ξενία* to their guests, so they can share their stories with consciousness but more openly. However, Odysseus gives “him / [a]nother cup of wine, and then two more” without mixing with water, while Polyphemus still drinks it and demands more. As “the story assumes that all civilized Greeks would be familiar with the protocol of feasting and wine drinking,” Odysseus’ skill in using the false *ξενία* not only shows his comprehensive understanding of this culture but also highlights Polyphemus’ lack of awareness of the trick due to his non-Greek identity (Papakonstantinou 1). Both conditions allow Odysseus to make Polyphemus drunk through offering him unmixed wine. Hence, Odysseus chooses the best time to reveal his fake name as “Noman” when Polyphemus remains drunk and unconscious. In doing so, Odysseus foresees that Polyphemus will then tell other Cyclops that “Οὔτις με κτείνει δόλῳ οὐδὲ βίηφι” (“Noman is killing me / by tricks, not force”), so he cannot receive assistance from them but becomes helpless (*Od.* 9. 408).

Together, sharing those details not only allows Odysseus to repay the *ξενία* offered by the Phaeacians but also allows them to hear his adventures in full. Therefore, Odysseus’ heroic identity, shown by his intelligence, leadership, and understanding of *ξενία*, no longer remains private to himself. Instead, he spreads his *κλέος* to others who do not know him before. Prior to that, Demodocus sings the story of Odysseus during the Trojan War, including the following: “νεῖκος Ὀδυσσεὺς καὶ Πηλεΐδew Ἀχιλλεύς, / ὥς ποτε δηρίσαντο θεῶν ἐν δαιτὶ θαλείῃ / ἐκπάγλοις

ἐπέεσσιν” (“Achilles’ and Odysseus’ quarrel—how at a splendid sacrificial feast, / they argued bitterly”; *Od.* 8. 75-77). Demodocus’ song stops at the story of the Trojan War, implying that the Phaeacians only know Odysseus’ story up to that point but do not know what happens afterward: whether Odysseus dies, returns home, or ends up somewhere else. Yet, Odysseus’ recounting of his adventure on his *νόστος*, as a repayment of *ξενία* provided by the Phaeacians, adds new narratives to those they already know. Therefore, he circulates his stories and broadens the existing body of the poet’s song, which becomes a basis for further circulation. That also means, within the framework of *ξενία*, wine creates a moderate setting for Odysseus to move his *κλέος* from personal experience to the status of an icon of heroes in the broader Greek world.

In this way, *ξενία* builds a guest-friendship network between hosts and guests, creating the proper settings for sharing the heroes’ stories. With diluted wine that’s neither too strong nor too weak, hosts can invite guests to share their identities and stories consciously and openly. This explains that after receiving *ξενία* from the Phaeacians, Odysseus repays them by sharing his stories. This allows him to circulate his *κλέος*—both his glory and suffering on his *νόστος*—to them. In doing so, he renews the stories of himself that the Phaeacians already knew, letting more people learn what happened to him after the Trojan War.

Drinking Culture in *Taipei People*

Liquor also plays an important role in the Chinese networking system, *guanxi* (關係), yet its cultural logic marks a significant difference from *ξενία*. While *ξενία* emphasizes the moderating and civilizing effects of wine, Chinese culture values the strength of liquor as a marker of respect and courage. The *guanxi* system emphasizes mutual reliance between hosts and guests, often called *lishangwanglai* (禮尚往來, reciprocity). As in *ξενία*, *lishangwanglai*

requires both hosts to welcome guests—usually by offering food and drinks—and guests to reciprocate the same level of respect. Yet, unlike the Homeric system, in which storytelling serves as a valuable repayment of hospitality, Chinese culture does not regard narrative exchange as an adequate return for hospitality. Instead, the performance of respect is enacted through the act of drinking liquor itself, which is associated with respect and courage.

For both hosts and guests, the more liquor they drink with higher alcohol content, the more respect and courage they display. Although people criticize and, for some, reject this drinking culture because of its risks to both physical and mental health, until today, heavy drinking at Chinese banquets usually “demonstrate[s] trustworthiness and establish[es] interpersonal networks, or *guanxi*” (Lin et al. 4-5). At least, it serves as an important part of hospitality and a symbol of respect and courage in *Taipei People*. Because of this logic, Chinese people do not mix liquor with water, unlike the Greeks. Instead, they value “high-end Chinese liquors (*baijiu*—e.g., Maotai [茅台]), which are often much stronger than other types of alcohol, are popular at [the] banquets” (Lin et al. 4). “This kind of reputation has been termed ‘face’ (*mianzi*) ...in a *guanxi* society, when a person receives an invitation to a banquet hosted by one’s *guanxi*, the invitee is seen as having face. If the person turns down the invitation, then the host loses his/her face” (Bian 277). At dining tables, if individuals—either guests or hosts—choose not to drink or drink very little, they not only fail to show *mianzi* (respect) to others, but also lose their own *mianzi* due to a lack of courage.

The story “歲除” (New Year’s Eve) highlights Chinese culture’s emphasis on the act of drinking itself rather than storytelling. On the surface, Pai depicts Major Liu inviting Lai Ming-sheng, his Szechuan comrade who has fought in the Sino-Japanese Wars, to his household to celebrate the Chinese New Year. They enjoy traditional Szechuan cuisine and drink Quemoy

*kao-liang*⁶. Yet narratively, the internal power dynamic between Liu and Lai shifts from the past: “back in 1938, Lai Ming-sheng was already a Cavalry Captain[,] whereas Liu was only an orderly under him...[However,] Liu is now a battalion commander[,] and Lai is only a cook” (Lau 34). Theoretically, in the *lishangwanglai* network, Lai—the guest—should *jingjiu* (敬酒, toast) to the Liu family, not just because they host the banquet but also because Major Liu now has a higher military status than he does. However, “in deference to his former officer, Liu and his wife both try their best to help Lai bypass the present so that he may revisit his past,” ensuring Lai will not lose his *mianzi* (Lau 34). Hence, Major Liu is the first one who “端著一杯滿滿的高粱酒... 雙手舉起酒杯向賴鳴升敬酒” (“holding a brimming cup of *kao-liang*...raising his wine cup in both hands, [and] offer[ing] a toast to [Lai]”; *Taipei People* 88-89). Following him, Mrs. Liu “自乾了半杯酒，桌上的人個個都...要敬他的酒” (“[drinks] up half the cup. Everyone at the table... offer him a toast”; *Taipei People* 90-91). All the manners the Liu family performs at this dining table—the act of toasting itself, the high-alcohol-content *kao-liang* drink, and Mrs. Liu’s immediate drink of “half the cup”—show their great respect for Lai. By toasting and drinking much *kao-liang*, the Liu family maintains Lai’s *mianzi* and restores his former *κλέος* without articulating it. In this sense, compared with storytelling, drinking liquor is a more stable medium for tying *guanxi*, which values visitors’ *mianzi* over the stories.

A common sequence in such a drinking culture is, undoubtedly, intoxication, which produces various side effects: confession or exaggeration of the truth, singing and dancing, or even alcohol poisoning. To reciprocate Liu’s family’s hospitality and show his heroism, Lai drinks *kao-liang* quickly and steadily, cup after cup. He “舉起了兩杯酒……連著兩杯灌下去”

⁶ A strong Chinese liquor (*baijiu*) made of fermented sorghum originates from Quemoy (Kinmen) Island. It is mostly sold in 58% or 38% ABV.

(“raise[s] the two cups...[and] gulp[s] them down one after the one”) and “把手裏一杯高粱乾了” (“drain[s] his cup of kaoliang without having to be encouraged”; *Taipei People* 94-95 and 96-97). Then, “他喝急了，一半酒液淋淋瀝瀝瀉得他一身” (“he drink[s] so fast half the liquor spilled, dripping all over him”; *Taipei People* 104-105). Before drinking, Lai understands his present lower status as “榮民醫院廚房裏的買辦” (“a purchasing agent for the kitchen at the Veterans Hospital”; *Taipei People* 90-91). Yet, he no longer stays humble since getting drunk. Instead, he feels and performs—very likely, exaggeratedly—his past κλέος. Without any actual decorated medals, he demonstrates his past heroic masculinity by showing off his flesh, which is typically understood as an indecent behavior. He then argues that his “殷紅發亮的圓疤” (“blood-red scar, shiny [and] round” and “被剝掉的整個乳房” (“breast [that] ha[s] been hewn away”) 比「青天白日」還要稀罕” (“is rarer than a ‘Blue Sky and White Sun’ medal”; *Taipei People* 100-101). In the real world, medals honor heroes’ κλέος for their glorious achievements; in contrast, scars symbolize painful, traumatic wartime memories. However, after drinking, Lai sees his wounds as a sign of heroism, suggesting that he perceives it unconsciously.

Since intoxication causes unreliable and unstable words and actions, observers usually see these reactions as drunkenness rather than intentional, formal communication. After seeing Lai getting overly drunk, Mrs. Liu says, “每次都是這樣的。我們大哥愛鬧酒，其實他的酒量也不怎麼樣” (“it’s the same every time. He loves to drink and raise a ruckus, but he can’t really hold that much”; *Taipei People* 108-109). Lai’s frequent overdrinking—“every time,” as Mrs. Liu describes—suggests that the Liu family is already familiar with Lai’s alcohol tolerance and accustomed to his drinking habits. Therefore, they do not take seriously the words he says after getting drunk. After all, they *jingjiu* to him for showing respect and keeping his *mianzi*, rather

than urging him to exchange his true stories as Greeks do for ξενία. Finally, after Lai falls asleep, all other characters continue celebrating the New Year without mentioning him at all. In other words, they do not circulate Lai's words like the Greeks do for Odysseus, because it does not produce any intellectual meanings. Furthermore, the story ends by “除夕已經到了尾聲，又一個新年開始降臨到臺北市來” (“New Year's Eve drew to an end and another New Year descended on Taipei”; *Taipei People* 110-111). This timeline further suggests that Lai's κλέος remains in the previous year, or in the past in general. In the upcoming new year, his κλέος will soon be erased. Consequently, during New Year's Eve, which symbolizes a new world, the Chinese drinking culture that dismisses storytelling limits the circulation of heroes' past κλέος.

The difference between the Chinese drinking culture and the wine's role in Greek ξενία explains why Pai's heroes also fail to circulate their κλέος. In the *Odyssey*, Greeks see guests' storytelling as a valuable gift in the hosts' ξενία; in *Taipei People*, Pai dramatizes that intoxication can destabilize narrative exchange in Chinese drinking culture, where drinking itself is more valued than the stories. Chinese people associate liquor drinking with respect and courage: the more liquor with more alcohol content individuals drink, the more respect and courage they display. Yet this practice also leads to the ease of getting overly drunk, speaking and acting unstably and unreliably. Hence, witnesses do not see their actions after getting overly drunk as having intellectual meaning. As in “New Year's Eve,” Lai Ming-sheng gets overly drunk and exaggerates his past κλέος, very likely without consciousness. So, the Liu's family continues celebrating New Year's Eve without sharing Lai's drunken words with anyone else. This also leads to the inability of Pai's heroes to circulate their stories to someone unknown, thereby becoming the failed Odysseus.

Conclusion

By discussing the concepts of κλέος and ξενία in both the *Odyssey* and *Taipei People*, I argue that *Taipei People* acts as a temporary epic suspended by 1960 Taiwan's "age of hysteria." Digging into the narratology of *Taipei People* through "odyssean tropes," my study contributes to current reception studies of it, which primarily focus on its thematic similarities with James Joyce and Classical Chinese Literature. It further explains why Pai's heroes become "the failed Odysseus": in Taiwan's changing world, which is largely influenced by US involvement, Westernization becomes a symbol of success. Therefore, while Odysseus and other characters circulate their κλέος, Pai's heroes can only perform their κλέος without ritual. While they maintain their old military manners, their future generations no longer appreciate them; while they share their old wartime stories at the drinking table, others do not take their words seriously after they get drunk.

Following this, future studies may continue to read Pai's works through "odyssean tropes," but focus on different aspects. For instance, in the "diffusion and mixture" society, *Taipei People* feature Mainlanders from different regions speaking different dialects. How might multilingualism and multiculturalism complicate characters' shared memory of wartime glory? Moreover, while many scholars have studied Pai's heroines (e.g., Yin Hsueh-yen and Taipan Chin), who are family members of KMT servicemen, they might also examine whether the notions of κλέος and wine culture apply to heroines in the same way. They might also consider Pai's other short story collection, 紐約客 (*New Yorkers*, literally *New York Guests*), which features Chinese immigrants in the US: based on "odyssean troops," why does *Taipei People* become Taipei "people" while *New Yorkers* only become New York "guests"? They might also

look at the linear reception from the *Odyssey* to Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Dubliners*, and from *Dubliners* to *Taipei People*.

Finally, does the KMT's loss truly mark the end of an era? Indeed, the political upheaval in Taiwan's "age of hysteria" persists, evidenced by the continuous tensions today between China and the US, Mainland and Taiwan. Yet, Pai responds in the documentary 他們在島嶼寫作 (*The Inspired Island*): “我是廣西桂林人，但我很小就出去了，在台灣也住了一陣子，在美國住了很久。人家問我家鄉在那裡，我一下答不出來。不是地理上的。我說，我的家鄉是中國傳統文化。” (“I’m from Guilin, Guangxi, but I moved when I was little. I lived in Taiwan for a while and have been living in the USA for a long time. When people ask me where my hometown is, I find it hard to answer. Instead of a geographical home, I say, my home is traditional Chinese culture”; my trans.; 0:34:25-0:34:45). After publishing *Taipei People*, Pai dedicated much of his life to promoting Classical Chinese Literature. He has taught 紅樓夢 (*The Red Chamber*) and 崑曲 (*Kunqu Opera*) for thirty years in Santa Barbara and continues to do so after his retirement and return to Taiwan. He collaborated with Suzhou *Kunqu Opera Theatre* to produce the youth edition of the *kunqu* 牡丹亭 (*The Peony Pavilion*), which was first performed in Taipei (2004) and later in many cities across the Sinophone world. He also wrote the memoir 父親與民國 (*Fuqin yu Minguo, Father and the Republic of China*, 2012) to memorize his father's contributions to the KMT, especially during the Second Sino-Japanese War and Chinese Civil War. Today, he keeps sharing his thoughts on Classical Chinese Literature on his social media. Although his heroes' κλέος remains fixed in *Taipei People*, he circulates it to millions of readers, including me.

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