

ENCOUNTERING SPECTRAL TRACES:  
GHOST NARRATIVES IN CHINESE AMERICA AND TAIWAN

BY

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature  
in the Graduate College of the  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2010

Urbana, Illinois

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation aims to explore different tropes of ghost haunting in the cultural productions from Chinese America and Taiwan. Ghost haunting can be regarded as the supernatural and social embodiments. The spectral representation goes beyond the public perception and reception of the phantom other, thereby delivering the senses of the fearful and the uncanny. Besides, haunting is related to the attachment to and detachment from the earthly world, and the ghostly return conveys complicated contacts and conflicts between the living and the dead. It is also important to note that ghost narratives are associated with the representation of spectral identities in relation to multiple dimensions of history, ethnoscapes, and gender politics. I would bring into focus a close engagement with the current scholarship of ghost storytelling, and provide theoretical reflections on haunting from thinkers like Jacques Derrida, Sigmund Freud, and Avery F. Gordon. Focusing on the two traditions of Chinese ethnic writing from Chinese America and Taiwan, I would like to bridge the gap between the two via the circulating ghost narratives in a global context. Without any question, the two traditions, one written in English and one in Chinese, are different from each other, but still, we can find the similarities between the two if we trace their ghost images back to the classical Chinese ghost storytelling. Herein the original haunting of Chinese narrative serves to stitch together a possible coalition. Additionally, both Chinese American literature and Taiwanese literature can be placed

in the category of 'minor literature' in the Deleuzian sense. While written in the major languages, both 'minor' narratives carry the political concerns and represent the collective mentality of the minority groups in contrast to their cultural Other(s). The first two chapters recount the development of ghost narratives in Chinese American literature. While Maxine Hong Kingston leads the autobiographical narrative and creates a fictional world of ghosts, the following writers like Amy Tan and Shawna Yang Ryan seek alternative ways of narrating the haunting past. From Chapter Three to Chapter Five, the ghost narrative in Taiwan is examined from historical, feminist, and sexual perspectives, thus gesturing profound complexities of haunting in the diasporic, postcolonial, and postmodern contexts. To conclude, ghost narratives in Chinese America and Taiwan can be affiliated with the critical discourses of history, ethnicity, and gender politics. Haunting is thus a cross-cultural phenomenon in mediating the rhetoric of ghost storytelling.

To my family...

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to my advisor and director of the committee Professor Nancy Blake, who has inspired me in a thousand ways as a teacher and scholar. I have considerably benefited from her constructive and valuable advice on my researches along the way. I also want to thank my committee members. Professor Gary Gang Xu, who offered helpful tips on my job application, is a great role model for me. I am truly touched by his passion for Chinese studies and life.

Professor Susan Koshy has won my genuine appreciation for her kindness, generosity, and expertise in Asian American literature, and Professor Robert Tierney has opened a new window for me by constantly providing critical insights into the literary texts.

Moreover, I owe heartfelt gratitude to the faculty in the Program of Comparative and World Literature. Professor Michael Palencia-Roth is a wonderful mentor and true inspiration for me. I see in him a real scholar's spirit. Professor Jean-Philippe Mathy is an amazing director of the program who really cares about graduate students' needs. Professor Wail S. Hassan is a very helpful graduate advisor in giving me useful advice during my study at the University of Illinois. He is also a great teacher to work with. Further, I feel lucky that I either took courses with or taught under several intelligent teachers with beautiful minds, including Professor Robert A. Rushing, Professor Lilya Kaganovsky, and Professor Rini Bhattacharya Mehta. By the way, Professor Stephanie Hilger gave me some good advice at a mock job interview before my

campus visit.

Additionally, I want to express my thanks to my friends and colleagues for their encouragement, to the staff in the Foreign Language Building such as Ms. Mary Ellen Fryer, Ms. Beth Ann Creek, and Ms. Lynn Stanke for helping me through various paper works, and to the IPRH faculty and graduate fellows for inspiring me with their fantastic research projects in different areas.

Finally, I want to thank my dear parents, Chun-hui Wu and Ch'un-lien Liu; my inspiring parents-in-law, Dao-an Lu and Li-chu Wang; my sisters Yi-yu and Yi-xuan; my adorable son Andrew. Here my deepest gratitude goes to my wife Yin-yen Lu, the love of my life. I would not be able to finish my dissertation without their enduring love and support. Therefore, I dedicate this dissertation to my family.

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## INTRODUCTION

My dissertation is entitled *Encountering Spectral Traces: Ghost Narratives in Chinese America and Taiwan*. This research project explores the topic of ghost narrative as a cross-cultural phenomenon in the contemporary literary and film production from Chinese America and Taiwan. Ghost narrative refers to the storytelling wedded to the motifs of ghost haunting and the figurative manifestation of ghosts in fiction and film. I attempt to examine the ghost narratives from two interrelated perspectives: history and gender politics. First, the literary and cinematic spectral appearances are profoundly associated either with a nostalgic attachment to the past or with an emotional resistance against historical traumas. Second, ghostly figures can be cast as the (in-)visible and marginalized subjects within a dominant social framework related to gender politics. The above two perspectives do not represent all the spectral manifestations in the contexts of Chinese America and Taiwan, but still, help to unpack the historical, social, and psychoanalytic implications behind the ghostly representation in a global context.

In order to conduct a comparative research on the spectral traces, this dissertation is centered around the representation of ghosts in Chinese American and Taiwanese fiction and film. In comparing the diverse cultural spectacles of ghost story-telling from Chinese America and Taiwan, this project builds on the faces of the ghostly Chineseness, lingering aboriginal spirits, and spectral identities with respect to ethnic and sexual complexities. Before jumping into more

details about this project, I would like to survey the significance of ghost haunting in the cultural productions. The word 'ghost' can be defined as an apparition, specter, or soul of the deceased. Ghost story-telling has its long tradition worldwide. The spectral representation in literature and cinema goes beyond our common perception of the mundane world, thereby arousing our feelings of horror towards the unknown and the uncanny. The darkness and hollowness represented by ghosts to a great extent consort with the fear of death as well as the dark side of human nature. Furthermore, the representation of the haunting ghost(s) may be allegorically associated with the historical, political, cultural, and even sexual dimensions of the world of the living.

Ghost has long been described as an ambiguous supernatural being loaded with a complicated attachment to the earthly world. On the one hand, the lingering and haunting ghosts usually represent revengeful anger towards and unfulfilled desire for the living beings. On the other hand, the human characters are terrified by and obsessed with the existence of ambiguous ghosts due to various reasons (e.g. religious purpose, fear of death, desire for afterlife, and reminiscence of the past). In this sense, the power dynamic between the dead and the living is worth discussing. More importantly, it would be interesting to examine the different modes of human contacts and conflicts with the haunting ghosts through historical, social, and psychoanalytic readings.

In this project, I would like to look into the spectral representations in Chinese American and Taiwanese fiction and cinema. At the same time, this research brings into focus the current scholarship of ghost haunting in order to provide scholarly reflections upon and productive insights into the ghost narratives. Kathleen Brogan labels the ghost narrative in the American ethnic writing as a form of “cultural haunting” in *Cultural Haunting: Ghosts and Ethnicity in Recent American Literature* (1998). In *The National Uncanny: Indian Ghosts and American Subjects* (2000), Renée L. Bergland argues that the Indian ghostly appearance and disappearance in white imagination provide ambivalent traits such as horror and glory for the Americans. More scholarly interpretations of haunting can be found in *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History* (1999), edited by Peter Buse and Andrew Stott. Drawing upon the above critical theories, I would like to explore more ways of reading the ghostly in comparing the two literary traditions of ghost storytelling, one from Chinese America and the other from Taiwan. It is true that the two ghost traditions are different due to the cultural and racial gaps. Still, we can find the overlapping zones between Chinese America and Taiwan in terms of ghost narratives when we trace the ghost images from the two traditions back to the classical Chinese ghost narrative. More interesting twists of ghost haunting, of course, can also be found in these two forms of Chinese ethnic production.

Then, how does this project fit in the scholarships on the ghost narratives that have been

done? First, the spectral representation in literature and cinema is usually examined from a historical perspective. A great number of scholars have treated the issue of ghost haunting as the trace of the past and the reverberation of history. Second, ghost haunting emerges as a ritual to conjure up the dead and as a medium to relocate the missing and the forgotten. In this project, I plan to follow the historical perspective of ghost haunting which has become a dominant reading in the field. I argue that the spectral representation is associated with the multiple dimensions of subjectivity. It can be related to history, culture, ethnicity, and more. The spectral representation is even more complicated in diasporic and postcolonial memories. Besides, the ghostly figures can be formulated through a gender lens.

Focusing on the textual analyses, this project is based on several theoretical foundations. The first one is Jacques Derrida's concept of hauntology from his critical book *Specters of Marx* (1994). Second, I would take into account the psychoanalytic approaches. Finally, Avery F. Gordon's sociological reading of ghost haunting should also be recounted. In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida presents the concept of hauntology from a historical and philosophical perspective. To Derrida, ghost is neither living or dead, neither present nor absent. Here the specter Derrida bears in mind is the specter of Marxism which is lurking behind neo-capitalism and neo-liberalism. Derrida suggests that the ghost of Marx is conjured up by way of hegemony. According to Derrida, "Hegemony still organizes the repression and thus the confirmation of a haunting.

Haunting belongs to the structure of every hegemony” (37). At this point, the politics of hegemony is related to the overpowering capitalist system, but in other contexts, it can be applied to different forms of hegemony such as the cultural or sexual hegemony in conjuring up the ghost haunting from a different angle.

In addition to Derrida’s hauntology, Freud’s concept of the ‘uncanny’ serves as an important theoretical thread of my research in formulating the topic of spectral presence and absence. Freud defines the ‘uncanny’ as “what is frightening—to what arouses dread and horror” (*Sigmund Freud* 219). Furthermore, there is a parallel between the ‘uncanny’ feeling and the ghostly return. The uncanny feeling comes from the “repressed infantile complexes” like castration anxiety and the “surmounted” “primitive beliefs” like seeing the dead become alive (*Sigmund Freud* 248-9). Uncanny ghost haunting can be associated with the issues of the return and loss, the trauma and symptom from a Freudian looking glass. What is repressed in the unconscious may come back to haunt us. Here the function of the uncanny is not unlike the return of the ghosts.

As a matter of fact, the historical and psychoanalytic approaches can also be tied in with the sociological reading of ghost haunting. Generally speaking, the otherness of the ghosts can be associated with the social figuration of the subject. Avery F. Gordon has made psychoanalytic connections and emphasized the social function of ghost haunting in her influential book *Ghostly*

*Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. For example, the haunting in fiction can be the reflection of human psyche and social reality. Also, the ghostly return is accompanied by the ideas of the uncanny and the unconscious. Moreover, Gordon treats the haunting effects as a “social phenomenon” (7). Gordon further argues that ghost writing is concerning the issues of “exclusions and invisibilities” (17). If ghost narratives are related to “exclusions and invisibilities,” an unbalanced power dynamic between the center and the other can be taken into account in the discourses of race and gender. In this way, the spectral appearances with invisibility and marginality not only represent the return of the repressed past, but also are linked to the racial and sexual minorities within a social framework. The theoretical threads mentioned above do not determine my research ends, but support my arguments in exploring more possible ways of interpreting the profound trope of ghost haunting.

It is worth considering that both Chinese American literature and Taiwanese literature can be placed in the category of the so-called ‘minor literature’ in the Deleuzian sense. From Deleuze and Guattari’s perspective, the ‘minor literature’ refers to the literature of minority groups and is written in a major language. Moreover, ‘minor literature’ is imbued with political concerns in delivering its collective and revolutionary features:

The literary machine thus becomes the relay for a revolutionary machine-to-come, not at all for ideological reasons but because the literary machine alone is determined to fill the conditions of a collective enunciation that is lacking elsewhere in this milieu: literature is the people’s concern. (Deleuze & Guattari 18)

Taken together, the concept of ‘minor literature’ and the trope of haunting would help to disclose the similarity between Chinese American and Taiwanese ghost narratives as well as their mediations of a fundamental Chineseness and local identity formations. For this reason, it would be helpful to take into account the classical Chinese ghost tradition in my discussion of the ghost narratives in Chinese ethnic writing. Furthermore, ghost haunting divulges the characteristics of ‘exclusions and invisibilities’, and the recurrence of the repressed touches upon the political agenda and collective trauma of the minority groups. In this sense, ghost narratives in both Chinese America and Taiwan provide the cultural and ideological divergence from their Chinese Other. Herein ghost writing functions as a significant tool to elaborate the historical, cultural, and sexual issues.

My dissertation is divided into five chapters. In Chapter One, I bring into focus the cross-cultural shadows in Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts* (1975), *China Men* (1980), and *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book* (1989). Ghost narrative has long been a prominent trope in Chinese American literature. Kingston’s first work *The Woman Warrior* has set up a new category of ghost storytelling and inspired her successors like Amy Tan and Lan Samantha Chang. Kingston accounts for the earlier Chinese immigrants and new-generation Chinese Americans who are faced with the haunting effects of the past and the present. In this light, the haunting ghost images permeate throughout the entire work.

Kingston's ghost narrative covers three modes of the ghost images: the looming return of the Chinese ghosts, the overpowering dominance of the American ghosts, and the in-between position of the Chinese American ghosts. In the face of the ghostly figures from the past and the present, Kingston's characters struggle through a wandering journey of in-betweenness and rootlessness in formulating transcultural and translocal identities. At this point, Chinese Americans' cross-cultural positioning is mediated by the haunting ghosts that straddle the past and the present outside the regular time frame. To sum up, ghost haunting reveals to the living a spectral spectacle regarding the historical trauma and racial oppression of the Chinese minorities in America.

In Chapter Two, I continue to discuss the Chinese American ghost storytelling beyond Kingston's influences. Decades after the publication of *The Woman Warrior*, the narrative of haunting established by Kingston still surfaces in the Chinese American literary works. My attention is drawn to Amy Tan and Shawna Yang Ryan. Tan has followed Kingston's family haunting style and gained enormous success with her popular novels, including *The Joy Luck Club* (1989), *The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991), *The Hundred Secret Senses* (1995), *The Bonesetter's Daughter* (2001). Different from Kingston's imaginary cross-cultural transition, Tan takes into account both the geographical the cultural channels between China and Chinese America. To Tan, the 'return' not only refers to the Chinese spirits coming back, but points to the

travel of the Chinese American subjects back to spectral China. Recognized as a worldly writer by critics like Harold Bloom, Tan departs from Kingston in her latest fiction work *Saving Fish from Drowning* (2005). In this novel, China merely functions as a transitional site for the ghost subject's travel, and Tan addresses various issues of international affairs, tourism, and news media with a primary background setting in Myanmar. While Tan is going and writing globally, Ryan finds her own way of looking into the older Chinese American past in *Locke 1928* (2007). Ryan centers on a historically bound ghost story and a specified locale in Chinese America without seeking the formulation of the Chinese American identity in the present. With the discussion on Kingston's influences and younger writers' departures, this chapter would fill in the lack of the researches to date and explore the continuous spectral representation of Chinese diaspora in the context of Chinese America.

Chapter Three shifts the focus from Chinese America and probes into a different Chinese ethnic writing—that is, Taiwanese fiction. In Taiwanese literature, the ghostly return is usually situated in the diasporic and postcolonial contexts. From a historical perspective, ghost haunting represents the rupture between the past and the present. Also, the ghostly memories are entwined with nostalgia, mourning, melancholy, and trauma. To elaborate the spectral representation through a historical lens, this chapter analyzes the literary texts written by Pai Hsien-yung [Bai Xianyong], Chu T'ien-hsin, Li Ang, and Dancing Crane [Wu He]. This selection is based on the

attempt to delineate the spectacles of haunting in response to the complicated ethnoscaples of Taiwan. Pai and Chu represent the first- and second-generation Chinese immigrant writers with identity crisis, and further engage with the cultural and emotional ambivalence towards the imaginary Chineseness. That said, Pai's and Chu's imagining of the past conveys the trenchant senses of historical haunting. Additionally, Li Ang and *Dancing Crane* modify the public understandings of the local consciousness by highlighting the historical traumas in postcolonial contexts. What Li Ang and *Dancing Crane* bear in mind is an ideological divide against the KMT regime. While Li Ang investigates the repressed pains of local Taiwanese, *Dancing Crane* starts from local concerns and moves on to aboriginal cultures in response to historical and ideological violence. Examining the multiple states of haunting in the above Taiwanese writers would help to unpack the complexity of ethnoscaples in Taiwan and acquire unique ghost narratives regarding Chinese diaspora and postcolonial discourse.

Chapter Four aims to follow up the historical reading of ghost haunting in the previous chapter, and continues to elaborate the relationship between historical trauma and female ghost images in Li Ang's *Visible Ghosts* [Kan de jian de gui] (2004). This work calls into question the traditional female ghost traits of being either life-threatening or sexually attractive. Li Ang provides revolutionary forms of female revenants in defiance against the patriarchal hegemony. Readers are thus provided with grotesque pictures of disfigured female bodies and ghosts.

Making female ghosts visible and vocal, Li Ang subverts the sociological interpretation on ‘invisible and excluded’ spectral identities, and step by step she places the female consciousness at the center of her writing. Furthermore, it is worth noting that Li Ang’s female ghost figuration is closely entwined with the traumatic historical past. Actually, the five female ghosts witness and suffer the colonial and political turmoil in premodern Taiwan. Put together with the female bodily wounds, the gendered trauma of history results in a new dimension of ghost imagining. On top of that, Li Ang addresses the issues like the (mis)recognition of female ghost image and female ghost writing, thus mediating a transition from female ghost body to national body in (post-)colonial contexts.

Chapter Five explores more faces of ghost haunting in Taiwanese fiction and film. Herein the profound complexity of sexuality and historiography are taken into account. The first half of this chapter pertains to the interrelation between ghost figuration and gender politics with a focus on Dancing Crane’s homosexual fiction *Ghosts and Fairies* [Gui er yu a yao] (2000).

Interestingly, the author’s targets are actually real human beings instead of the returning spirits of the dead. Whereas gay men are called Ghosts, lesbians are Fairies in the novel. At this point, the significance of ghost-naming must be connected with the spectral features of “invisibility and exclusion” in a social context. As Avery Gordon pinpoints the social figuration of haunting, the ghost transformation of homosexuality in Dancing Crane’s writing can be viewed through a

similar lens. The second part lays stress on Tsai Ming-liang's film *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* [Bu san] (2003). Like *Ghosts and Goblins*, Tsai's film also deals with the ghostly figuration in response to suggestive sexual desire. However, Tsai's agenda is far complex in that his ghostly figures are formed in accordance with the colonial history and gender dynamic. The figures in the film are forlorn human subjects like the crippled woman, the Japanese gay man, and the two aged actors, and they are presented as social outcasts due to their disability and marginality. To conclude, Dancing Crane's novel and Tsai's film shed new light on the sexual and historical complexity of ghost haunting.

In comparing the ghost narratives in contemporary Chinese America and Taiwan, I do not attempt to highlight the culturally hybrid Taiwanese literature and cinema and to narrow down the scope of Chinese American literature from the angle of the ghost haunting related to the intricacy of memories and gender politics. As a matter of fact, this project aims to bridge the cultural gap between Taiwan and Chinese America via circulating ghost narratives in a global context, and in this way creates a profound overlap of the critical discourses of history, ethnicity, and gender. To sum up, I argue that the ghost narratives in Chinese America and Taiwan cross the boundaries between the living and the dead, the past and the present, thus demonstrating a pastiche of phantasm, Chinese diaspora, postcolonial trauma, and gender politics.

**CHAPTER 1**  
**GHOSTING AMERICA:**  
**MAXINE HONG KINGSTON AND CROSS-CULTURAL SHADOWS**

Chapter One aims to undertake a comprehensive survey on Chinese American writer Maxine Hong Kingston's ghost storytelling as a narrative strategy in her autobiographical and fictional works *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts* (1975), *China Men* (1980), and *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book* (1989). I would like to closely examine the concepts of 'ghost' in transit to the specter, the spirit, the strange, and the double. Through the comparison between Kingston's ghost narratives and classical Chinese ghost tradition, this work addresses the transformation of ghostly identities corresponding to Kingston's focuses and concerns while completing these works during different periods. As Kingston's writing deals with different issues that various generations of Chinese Americans may encounter, the readers are provided with complicated spectacles of haunting in response to historical trauma and emotional discontent within the collective mentality of Chinese America. I argue that Kingston incorporates the (re-)imagining of Chinese ghost images into Chinese American contexts and unsettles the lines between factual and fictional spaces in the Orientalist processing of ghostly distortion, thereby creating transformed cross-cultural shadows in relation to Chinese American ethnic and sexual identities.

For academic purposes, this chapter is divided into two sections: literary review and

scholarly engagement. The first section starts with a preamble on Kingston's ghost writing and then takes up a generic study into the ghost traditions in classical Chinese literature so as to provide comparative snapshots of the spectral representations in Chinese America. I will take into account the development of ghost traditions from the ancient period to the Late Ming and Qing. Scholars like Judith T. Zeitlin have bridged the ghostly appearances and the critical concepts of the lost, the return, and the strange, thereby highlighting the functions of ghost stories in relation to history, culture, and entertainment. The ghostly figuration in Kingston's works is surely connected with the ghost traditions of Chinese literature and beyond. That said, her ghost narrative represents a cross-cultural pastiche of spectral identities ranging from revenants and demons to historical figures, and finally to racial ghosts who are actually human. I will bring into focus the No Name Woman, the Sitting Ghost, and human ghosts in *The Woman Warrior*, the travelling ghosts, white demons, and historical figures in *China Men*, and the racial shadows and doubles in *The Tripmaster Monkey*.

In the second section, I will directly engage with the vital issues drawn from leading literary critics in the field to analyze the spectral representations in Kingston's works. Through the engagement with current scholarship, I intend to explicate the literary motif of ghostly shadows in Kingston's writing. This section examines the overlapping of the historical elements and the autobiographical features in response to Kingston's ghost narrative. While history

dominates the general perception of the past, the shadowy autobiographical voices complement the historical narration, and thus heal the rift between the public and the private. In this sense, the history and politics of Chinese America can be reassessed through Kingston's autobiographical and fictional writing. At this point, Kingston fashions the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882-1943) as a significant case in shaping the Chinese American history and writing. The historical and political aura during and after the Act have made considerable impacts on the identity politics in spectral Chinese America. Moreover, Kingston's ghostly writing can be tied in with a way of expression, a medium of narrative, and a process of cultural translation. Confronting racial and gender politics, cross-cultural shadows seem to permeate Kingston's early works and represent a two-way-traffic communication between ghostly China and haunted America. While ghosting America in her autobiographical and literary pieces, Kingston demonstrates the empowerment of the ghostly shadows and the cultural other in an attempt to remember the historical trauma of the past and to resist the racial oppression of the present.

Kingston has long been recognized as one of the most influential Chinese American writers in the fields of gender study, minority discourse, and diasporic issues. The strength of her writing lies in its pictorial representation of the Chinese American subjects loaded with cross-cultural identities in face of sexism, racism, dislocation, and displacement. Her autobiographical and literary works, *The Woman Warrior*, *China Men*, and *Tripmaster Monkey*,

can be treated as translated texts, both linguistically and culturally, providing new twists and interpretations of the original Chinese inputs and creating a Chinese American remake of female consciousness and ethnic positioning. In this regard, Kingston appears as a creative writer, a cultural translator, and more importantly, an ethnic (auto-)biographer. It is important to note that the three major works by Kingston not only account for the psychological development of the human subjects, but also deal with the ghostly past and present of Chinese America from historical, political, and cultural perspectives. As a second-generation Chinese American, Kingston puts into words the conflicting and traumatic experiences of Chinese Americans who are presented as racial and sexual others, and further complicates these experiences with the spectral figuration from the past and the present.

Interestingly, ghost storytelling turns out to be Kingston's dominant narrative in handling such issues as the autobiographical orientation, the desire for racial identity, the awakening of male and female consciousness, and the resistance against sexual persecution and racial discrimination. Accordingly, the ghostly figures, male or female, foreign or domestic, all become the essential subjects in Kingston's writing. Moreover, Kingston's figuration of Chinese ghosts can be traced back to the ghost stories from the classical Chinese literature. What needs to be highlighted here is that ghost haunting is usually perceived as a supernatural phenomenon regarding the unfinished business of the returning dead in a social context. According to Rania

Huntington, “Since ghosts are former humans and they bring into question man’s fate in the afterlife, they raise more sensitive issues than a separate species on an independent trajectory” (Huntington, *Alien Kind* 320). From this angle, ghost haunting can be connected with the topics of power imbalance, social justice, and identity dynamics. On top of that, ghost haunting can also be based on romantic love, moral teaching, and historical mourning in Chinese literary traditions of ghost storytelling.

To further discuss Kingston’s ghost narrative, I would like to foreground the literary tradition of Chinese ghost storytelling and elaborate how Kingston’s literal and figurative creation of ghosts deviates from and is leveraged by that tradition. According to Zeitlin, “A specter is always an image, culturally and historically constructed, and it therefore forces us to consider what it means to represent something in a given period and context” (*The Phantom Heroine* 10). Zeitlin’s definition of ‘ghost’ reminds readers of the specter’s attachment to a specific time and locale. However, Kingston’s Chinese ghosts seem to be more complicated. When conjured up in different linguistic, literary, and cultural contexts, Kingston’s ghosts leap from the past and their resting places, cross the geographical borders, and reach a new territory and (con-)text within the time frame of Chinese America.

Before moving on to the discussion on Kingston’s Chinese American ghost narrative, it would be beneficial to launch into the genre and traits of the Chinese literary ghost tradition. For

this unique genre of Chinese literature, Xiaohuan Zhao has produced a scholarly work entitled *Classical Chinese Supernatural Fiction*, which details the development of Chinese ghost stories. Zhao points out that the tradition of Chinese ghost storytelling can be dated back to the early Warring States Period when ‘zhiguai’ [志怪] literature began to evolve “in the form of myths, fables, legends, and parables” (145). ‘Zhiguai’ refers to the “records of the strange,” or “supernatural fiction” in the western culture (Zhao 1). ‘Zhiguai’ then reached its watershed in the Tang and Five Dynasties, during which this genre went beyond the historical inkling and developed different faces of the supernatural and the strange. Finally, from the late Ming to the early Qing, ‘zhiguai’ rose to its peak of progress due to the popularity of the ‘zhiguai’ genre and Pu Songling’s masterpiece *Strange Stories from the Studio of Leisure* [Liaozhai Zhiyi]. Pu’s work contains hundreds of stories about ghosts, fox fairies, and monsters, and profoundly reflects the social and political backgrounds of China in the seventeenth century. It has been argued that this *strange* collection benefited from the cultural trend and historical change during this period; however, what lastingly appealed to the public readers then and now are its remarkable richness and vitality in molding the imaging of the strange. It is also interesting to note that *Strange Stories from the Studio of Leisure* acts as a conduit between social life and historical vision and further brings into focus the romantic imagination of ghostly love. While placing the factual and the fictional side by side, Pu problematizes the pure model of the supernatural and creates high

historical tensions in his literary work. In this sense, Pu's ghost storytelling forms a profound triangle of the individual, the strange, and the historical.

If we examine the literary works by Kingston and other Chinese American writers, we will find some similarities between Chinese literary ghost tradition and Chinese American ghost narrative. First of all, the trope of ghost haunting in Kingston's works goes beyond the western perception of ghosts. In Chinese language, the character 'ghost' [鬼 *gui*] has many variations and implications. 'Gui' in classical Chinese literature is more complicated than the English word 'ghost.' While the western notion of 'ghost' is usually affiliated with the disembodied soul of the dead, 'gui' in a Chinese context conveys multiple meanings regarding the beings in the supernatural world, including revenants, ancestral spirits, demons, and monsters. Besides its various forms, 'gui' or 'ghost' is imbued with generic complexities. As Zeitlin argues,

Ghosts can be accepted as both psychologically induced *and* materially present, just as a sequence can be cast simultaneously as a dream *and* as a real event. As we can see, the strange often results when things are paradoxically affirmed and denied at the same time. In other words, the boundary between the strange and the normal is never fixed but is constantly altered, blurred, erased, multiplied, or redefined.  
(*Historian of the Strange* 7)

It is obvious that Kingston's depiction of ghosts is figuratively close to the general definition of the supernatural in classical Chinese literature. Yet, Kingston's ghost narrative also shares the shifting border "between the strange and the normal." Thus, her ghostly figures can be adapted into various faces/phases in cross-cultural and postmodern contexts. Moreover, one of the

dominant implications of 'gui' is 'return'. The concept of 'return' occupies a particularly significant niche in the tradition of ghost storytelling. The character 'return' [歸 gui] verbally resembles the character 'ghost' and generally means "to return home, to return to one's roots or origins" (Zeitlin, *The Phantom Heroine* 4). This correlation between the two characters is also bound up with the identity of the ghost coming back from death.

Second, there is a parallel between Pu's *Liaozhai* tales and Kingston's ghost writing. Pu's work covers a number of sophisticated forms of the strange, among which the image of ghost is given close attention. Likewise, Kingston's ghost pieces are filled with provoking spectral traces, especially in *The Woman Warrior* and *China Men*. Also, both Pu and Kingston deal with the fusion of the factual and the fictional, thus making the credibility of their works in dispute. More importantly, both of them fashion the literary writing as an emotion outlet. While Pu suffers from his personal failure in the imperial examination, Kingston is disturbed by the undesirable racial identity and the collective haunting memories of Chinese Americans. Following the issues mentioned above, readers will see in both ghost writings historical attachment as well as emotional release.

Then, what is the significance of the triangle of ghost haunting, historical remains, and personal emotions? To answer this question, I would like to start with an interesting example drawn from Chen Weisong's *A Collection of Writings By and About Women* [Furenji]. In the

story of Lin Siniang, the ghost of a palace lady who used to be a maid to the late Ming princess rises from death and haunts an official serving under the early Qing regime. The late Ming ghost maid's appearance here straddles the border between the living and the dead, between the past and the present. As Zeitlin argues, the palace lady is identified both as "a synecdoche for what is being mourned and remembered" and as "its chief mourner and the custodian of its memory" ("Disappearing Verses" 103). Zeitlin further mentions, "In the huaigu-inspired ghost story," the palace lady revenant is clearly a stand-in for an eyewitness to history, someone who experienced past events and can provide 'inside information' to others with no firsthand memory of what happened" ("Disappearing Verses" 104). Through the aid of ghostly return, the historical complexity of the past can be unpacked and examined in the present time. Within a historical timeframe, ghost haunting also demonstrates the author's reminiscence, nostalgia, and mourning for the fading past.

In addition to its historical basis, ghost haunting is entwined with the secular functions such as entertainment and moral teaching. The union of male characters and their female ghostly consorts is a popular theme in 'zhiguai' literature. Sometime it is romantic, and sometimes tragic and scary. The constant feature of this relationship is that men's essence, or 'yang qi', can be consumed by the female ghosts, and they will lose their male potency gradually due to the influence of the female 'yin qi'. This gender dynamic between men and women (ghosts) can be

found in Kingston's *China Men* and other works by Chinese American writers. Another function of ghost haunting is its projection of social (in-)justice. Take the theme of female ghosts for example. The female ghosts usually return as avengers to haunt those who imposed brutal violence on them and caused their deaths in unjust ways. No matter how powerless and voiceless they used to be when alive, the female ghosts are empowered to seek human substitutes. As long as one substitute is compelled, or forced, to die in the same way, the female ghost will have a second chance for reincarnation and start a new life cycle, thus tasting the sweet revenge. This empowerment of the women ghosts can be placed in a grander scope. In Huntington's account, "[T]he disturbing deaths [here]" do not refer to "the psychological distress of an individual but the historical residue of past violence" ("The World in the Newspaper" 369). From this viewpoint, the individual sentiment is elevated to the level of the moral and the historical in terms of social justice. Through the description of the unjust incidents and the final just solutions, ghost stories may pass down the moral values of the society. Still, we need to keep in mind that the delivery and reception of these lessons will complicate the reading of the literary ghost tradition. Whereas the author serves to dominate a set of moral teachings, different readers may have different comments on the ghost texts. In Kingston's case, the different perceptions and responses from her readers have grown into an ongoing debate in the academy. This issue will be further elaborated in the second section of the chapter.

Combining the mythical and historical elements, Kingston transforms the moral teachings of social justice in Chinese ghost tales into a calling for gender and racial equality in Chinese American (con-)texts. As stated earlier, ghostly return is associated with the unfinished business. At this point, the theme of ghost haunting helps readers remember the trauma of the past and to ponder the continuous predicaments of the present. Despite some differences from the Chinese literary ghost tradition, Kingston's ghost narrative is indeed allied with the topics like historical mourning, social injustice, and gender problems. Beyond those issues related to the Chinese literary perception of ghost haunting, Kingston develops her own way of shaping ghostly figures in the context of Chinese America. Next, I will further discuss the representations of the spectral shadows in Kingston's early works including *The Woman Warrior*, *China Men*, and *Tripmaster Monkey* in order to examine the continuation of those unsettling issues.

In the three works mentioned above, Kingston constructs a complex picture of cross-cultural shadows, including Chinese revenants, American demons, and Chinese American ghosts. In *The Woman Warrior*, Kingston deals with the ghostly past and present of the speaking subject(s) and highlights the racial conflicts in Chinese America as well as the mental developments of the female lead, Maxine. As Gayle K. Fujita Sato recognizes, "*Woman Warrior* [can be read] as a distinctly Asian-American text by showing how 'ghost' designates a particular as well as a shared Chinese-American existence" (193). In this light, we need to keep in mind

both the individual and the collective Chinese American-ness represented in Kingston's ghost writing. Gender and history turn out to be the topics that should be recounted here. As a matter of fact, the female protagonist's identity develops with Kingston's narrative of ghost haunting. This autobiographical piece contains five interrelated chapters, "No Name Woman," "White Tigers," "Shaman," "At the Western Palace," and "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe." Kingston puts into words her conflicting and traumatic experiences as a second-generation Chinese American surviving in a world of two symbolic ghosts: "one in the mother's ghost story" and "the other [as] foreigners" (Lee 111-2). Based on this dichotomy, my analysis of Kingston's ghost narrative in *The Woman Warrior* will start from the No Name Woman to the Sitting Ghost, and then to the racial demons with which the protagonist is confronted. Finally, beyond the above two categories, the spectral identities of the Chinese American characters will be included in my discussion.

It is notable that Maxine's account of memoirs opens with her mother's story of the No Name Woman—her father's sister who lives in a traditional Chinese village. Maxine's no-name aunt is cast as a victimized figure whose husband leaves for America merely one day after their wedding. Then her pregnancy and delivery of an illegitimate baby becomes both a despicable crime for the village and a wicked shame for the family. In this regard, she is totally excluded by the others and literally figured as a ghostly figure. When raiding this poor woman's house, the angry villagers call her, "Pig. Ghost. Pig" (Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* 5). And later the

no-name woman's family lashes against her infidelity which brings misfortune and humiliation to the entire family. They yell at her, "Aiaa, we're going to die. Death is coming. Death is coming. Look what you've done. You've killed us. Ghost! Dead ghost! Ghost! You've never been born" (Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* 13-4). Not being able to bear the punishment, Maxine's aunt drowns herself with her newborn in the family well, and thus becomes a tabooed, haunting water ghost.

The punishment on the No Name Woman is not over with her death. As Maxine has it, "The real punishment was not the raid swiftly inflicted by the villagers, but the family's deliberately forgetting her" (Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* 16). Thereupon the No Name Woman is "[a]lways hungry, always needing, she would have to beg food from other ghosts, snatch and steal it from those whose living descendants give them gifts" (Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* 16). Before and after her death, the No Name Woman is always imbued with spectral identities, signifying her exclusion from society and family. In retaliation for being excluded and marginalized, the female subject returns as a water ghost to haunt the family who abandon and disown her. Deborah L. Madsen is right in pointing out the connection between "ghosts" and "the loss of identities [in the social structure]" (*The Woman Warrior and China Men* 34). In this light, being forced into a ghost position undertakes the state of being alienated and adrift.

In response to the alienation of the No Name Woman, Yuan Shu argues that Kingston

creates a “problematic pattern” when she identifies the No Name Woman as a “failure” and the woman warrior as a “success” while “reproduc[ing] [Chinese patriarchal] logic in writing the female subject” (213). Shu’s argument is valid to some degree. Whereas the no-name aunt suffers from deliberate social exclusion, the woman warrior Fa Mu Lan in *The Woman Warrior* indeed follows the patriarchal values and succeeds in bringing fame and glory to her family. Yet, we need to bear in mind that the spectral remains of the No Name Woman can be deemed as a different act of revenge against the male-dominated society. Despite the punishment inflicted on her, the No Name Woman represents a hidden possibility to overturn the social orders. Her adulterous act and the subsequent illegitimate baby turn out to be a misdeed rebuked and criticized due to its destructive power on a patriarchal society. More importantly, the lingering female ghost here is meant to be remembered in a haunting way. That said, the No Name Woman’s “failure” is transformed into a ghostly comeback of female consciousness against the patriarchal values.

Furthermore, Kingston’s re-writing of the female ghost’s story illustrates the intricacy of the No Name Woman. The no-name woman’s intention to haunt is reinforced by Kingston’s ability to (re-)tell stories. Or, we can say, “Telling can be a form of vengeance” (Madsen, *Maxine Hong Kingston* 37). At this point, Kingston successfully transforms the shame and oppression of the No Name Woman into the empowerment of women through telling and writing stories. Ruth

Y. Jenkins relates this issue to Kingston's "power to script history"—that is, an account dominated by female appearances and voices (66). Although the No Name Woman cannot be entirely liberated from the patriarchal construct and given a proper name to be remembered, Kingston actually bases the feminine power on the No Name Woman as the prototype of a female avenger, or a haunting water ghost.

The second important ghost image is the Sitting Ghost in the chapter "Shaman." This story is not centered around the spectral presence, but accounts for how Brave Orchid, Maxine's mother, confronts ghost haunting. At the opening of this chapter, Maxine describes the old photographs of her mother, followed by the accounts of Brave Orchid's experiences in China. Years ago, Brave Orchid's husband goes to America and leaves her and two children behind. After the two children die, Brave Orchid goes to a medical school in an attempt to become a doctor. Her reputation as a female warrior reaches the peak when she exorcises the Sitting Ghost, which haunts one of the dormitory rooms in the school. The story about the Sitting Ghost makes clear the significance of calling and naming. While Brave Orchid's confrontation with the ghost is coming to an end, the young students call out, "Come home, come home, Brave Orchid, who has fought the ghosts and won. Return to Keung School, Kwangtung City, Kwangtung Province. [...] Your friends call you. We need you. Return to us" (Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* 71). As for the evil ghost, it is urged to return to where it belongs: "Go back, dark creature, to your native

country. Go home. Go home” (Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* 75). The word “home” refers to two diverse worlds—the world of the living and that of the dead. On the one hand, these women’s exorcism is not unlike a ritual to shut down the channel to the ghostly past that is unknown and haunting. On the other, Brave Orchid is “a named [...] female warrior” and a “heroine, a real person in a real setting” (Outka 462). Besides, Brave Orchid confronts the Sitting Ghost by talking back and humiliating the wicked shadow looming in the dark room. In other words, Brave Orchid is not only given a name, but also loaded with vocal power to be a ghost fighter. This empowerment of voiced women can be allied with Kingston’s literary power to narrate.

It is also interesting that Brave Orchid compares ghost haunting and illness. As she says to her fellow students, “You have to help me rid the world of this disease, as invisible and deadly as bacteria” (Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* 74). Brave Orchid cleverly blends the physical with the invisible in connecting ghost haunting and disease. As a shaman and a woman warrior, she is empowered to purge the haunted room and exterminate the ghost with the aid of her fellows in the end. Near the end of ghost fighting, Brave Orchid briefs the inexplicable danger of the ghost: “It wants lives. I am sure it is surfeited with babies and is now coming after adults. It grows. It is mysterious, not merely a copy of ourselves as, after all, the hanged men and seaweed women are” (Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* 74). Here the Sitting Ghost is identified as an evil spirit

beyond the traditional perception of ghosts who originate from the shadowy dead. To make it clear, the evil spirit represents a fracture in the social and cultural contexts.

Related to the past, the haunting ghosts represent the evil modules of the society against which the united female figures do battle, thus presenting the power of sisterhood. In the words of Diane Simmons, “The very existence of these evil spirits suggests a hidden dysfunction and chaos lurking behind the male-ordered world” (72). Simmons further mentions, “[T]he ghosts are now symptoms of a [patriarchal] system that has been broken” (73). Following this logic, the cases of the No Name Woman and the Sitting Ghost can be placed in the same category in representing the fractures even though they are triggered by different motives. Whereas the female ghost returns to haunt the system, the evil spirit operates as a by-product of the male-dominated system. Through *Brave Orchid*’s triumph over the evil ghost, Kingston brings into focus the voice and power of the woman warrior.

While the No Name Woman and the Sitting Ghost are Chinese ghosts, a number of American and Chinese American shadows emerge in a disparate contexture. Generally speaking, ghosts can be invisible and intangible beings rising from the underworld. However, Kingston in *The Woman Warrior* characterizes quite a few human figures as ghostly shadows, thereby mediating the gap between the living and the dead. The ghostly or demonic human beings Kingston illustrates can be roughly divided into two groups—the racial/foreign/American ghosts

and the Chinese American ghosts. In face of the racial marginalization, Maxine attempts to criticize the western hegemony through writing. In *The Woman Warrior*, the “urban renewal [construction]” turns the laundry and slum of Maxine’s parents into a parking lot, thus making Maxine bear some impractical “gun and knife fantasies” to fight against white men’s oppression (Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* 48). From then on, Maxine realizes that her real enemies, besides the mysterious Chinese ghosts, are the white demons.

Besides, Kingston labels the American subjects with various occupations as ghostly figures. As Maxine states, “But America has been full of machines and ghosts—Taxi Ghosts, Bus Ghosts, Police Ghosts, Fire Ghosts, Meter Reader Ghosts, Tree Trimming Ghosts, Five-and-Dime Ghosts. Once upon a time the world was so thick with ghosts, I could hardly breathe” (Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* 96-7). Maxine’s words surely present a suffocating world of ghosts. Here these human ghosts can be “redefined” as “unfathomable beings whose actions are puzzling to the immigrant community, and whose speech borders on the unintelligent” (Huntley, *Maxine Hong Kingston* 82). To sum up, the word ‘ghost’ is an important and repeated image in Kingston’s account. The narrator Maxine undergoes the experiences of struggling between Chinese and American cultures. The “Chinese ghosts” symbolize the haunting memories of the past and traditions of China, while the “white ghosts” imply white racists’ persecution towards Chinese American immigrants. In this light, Maxine attempts to get rid of her Chinese heritage and resist

the dominant American culture. For Maxine, learning how to deal with the ghost problems thus becomes one of the most critical survival lessons in Chinese America.

Beyond the haunting effects of Chinese and American phantoms, Kingston takes into account the spectral positions of Chinese Americans as well. Moon Orchid, sister of Brave Orchid, is a notable character in this category. Moon Orchid's Chinese American husband lives a bourgeois life in America and leaves her behind in faraway China. Finally, Brave Orchid sends for her sister and urges the reunion of her sister and brother-in-law. Yet, Moon Orchid's husband denies her legitimate status as the first wife: "You weren't supposed to come here, [...] It's a mistake for you to be here. You can't belong. You don't have the hardness of this country. I have a new life" (Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* 152-3). What is worse, it ends in a ghostly encounter. "Her husband looked like one of the ghosts passing the car windows," Maxine narrates, "and [Moon Orchid] must look like a ghost from China. They had indeed entered the land of ghosts, and they had become ghosts" (Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* 153). What is crucial to note is that Moon Orchid appears as a Chinese ghost who travels all the way to America and finds out that she does not belong and fit in Chinese America and is further rejected by a Chinese American ghost. Here Moon Orchid, sister of Maxine's mother, can be compared to the No Name Woman, sister of Maxine's father. Both aunts of Maxine's are left behind by their husbands. While the No Name Woman commits suicide and lingers as a water ghost in China,

Moon Orchid makes it to the United States but still becomes an unwanted racial ghost. Put together, the No Name Woman's spiteful suicide and Moon Orchid's madness and final death serve to rupture the male-female and Chinese-American relations.

Among these Chinese American shadows, Brave Orchid stands as the most complex figure. In *The Woman Warrior*, Maxine finds some role models. For example, Maxine takes the No Name Woman as her forerunner, who is able to unsettle the male-dominated orders. In "White Tigers," the story of Fa Mu Lan gives Maxine another possibility of an empowered position that women can occupy beyond the enslaved identities of wives in Confucian doctrines. Actually, women can become warriors and avengers to fight against men's oppression. Like Fa Mu Lan, Brave Orchid is a consequential role model as a woman warrior to Maxine. However, Brave Orchid shows her contrastive features in "Shaman" and "At the Western Palace." On one hand, she is a woman warrior that Maxine admires, for she can be labeled as a new woman among the old ones. Moreover, she dares to fight against the Sitting Ghost, which symbolizes the traditional burdens upon women, and she finally chases it away. On the other, she still sticks to the Chinese patriarchal customs in the Chinese American context, therefore consorting with the male-centered ideology.

In short, Brave Orchid is cast as a female, or feminist, ideal in fighting the ghostly world and as a cultural oppressor in preventing Maxine from searching for her cross-cultural identity.

At this point, the mother's stories convey "a legacy" which is "both empowering and burdensome" (Barker-Nunn 55). Or, it can be said that Brave Orchid, despite her feminist traits, emerges with spectral traits to Maxine. As Maxine remarks, "My mother would sometimes be a large animal, barely real in the dark; then she would become a mother again" (qtd. in Freud, *Freud on Women* 71). Undoubtedly, Brave Orchid's double-identities further lay bare the complexity of the mother-daughter relationship in formulating a cross-cultural selfhood.

In addition, Maxine's encounter with a quiet girl in school can be a case in point. In the final chapter "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe," Maxine takes radical ways to make this silent girl speak up, but later on, she feels sorry about it. The mute girl represents the weak and passive aspects of China that Maxine tries to get rid of. This incident projects "Maxine's own sense of inferiority in a racist culture" (Mackin 521). In Sau-ling Cynthia Wong's classic phrase, the quiet girl here refers to a "racial shadow" which involves "simultaneous identity and difference" (*Reading Asian American Literature* 86-7). The racial shadow looms out of darkness and stands as the marginalized other. While the formerly silent Maxine encounters a shadow of her own past, she immediately negates this presence in order to distinguish herself from the powerless racial other. Yet, Maxine's failure to make the quiet girl speak out seems to overlap her own difficulty in being entirely freed from Chinese legacy and from the racist construct. This kind of racial shadows can also be found in *China Men* and *Tripmaster Monkey*.

There is no doubt that Maxine herself is linked with some spectral traces in relation to her cross-cultural positioning. Wandering and searching for a resting spot to fit in, Maxine's identity as "Ho Chi Kuei" is worth discussing. "Kuei" in Cantonese or "gui" in Mandarin means ghost, but "Ho Chi" seems complicated and untranslatable. Sato argues, "*Ho Chi Kuei* is an adjective that puts the entire cultural fabric signified by *ghost* into perspective" (211). Since the term itself already signifies Maxine's Chinese American identity, it seems unimportant to translate the phrase into English. Ken-fang Lee agrees with Sato's interpretation of "Ho Chi Kuei" but still would like to give a possible definition of the term in order to better grasp Kingston's ghost storytelling. As Lee indicates, "Ho Chi" in Cantonese means "similar" or "like," so "[Ho Chi Kuei] can be translated as ghost-like" (111). And Maxine is indeed ghost-like while straddling two worlds in a cross-cultural context.

Following her ghost-like identity, Maxine's search for racial and cultural position is surely a significant issue. Maxine's ghostly Chinese American position intensifies her rootlessness, instability, and identity crisis when she tries to assimilate into the American cultures. To Maxine, the past of old China is the haunting trauma and burden from which she cannot escape. Moreover, the Chinese traditions still have great influence on her even though she has never been to China. Brave Orchid keeps reminding Maxine of the sayings and values of traditional Chinese sexism. The Chinese patriarchal conventions are the burdens that make her feet bound and prevent her

from being voiced as a female and ethnic subject. However, Maxine gradually realizes that the problem of her awkward position originates not only from the reminiscent past of faraway China but also from the cruel present of the United States. Throughout the entire novel, what Maxine bears in mind is to carry out a psychological development and a cultural transformation so as to subvert the flawed gender framework and to challenge the binary opposition between the East and the West. This goal occupies the center of Kingston's writing universe in a cross-cultural sense.

While *The Woman Warrior* concentrates on the female voices from Maxine's family, Kingston's *China Men* accounts for the stories about Chinese men, inclusive of Maxine's great grandfathers, grandfathers, father, and uncles. *China Men* comprises long chapters "The Father From China," "The Great Grandfather of the Sandalwood Mountains," "The Grandfather of the Sierra Nevada Mountain," "The Making of More Americans," "The American Father," and "The Brother in Vietnam." These long chapters are accompanied by minor pieces like "On Discovery," "on Father," and "The Ghostmate." Some stories are based on the historical events and family issues, while the others rely on fictional, supernatural, and even spectral elements. According to Monica Chiu, "*China Men* [...] is haunted by a collection of real and fictional fathers, grandfathers, great-grandfathers, and uncles who feel pain, fear, loneliness, and anger" (188). Like the female characters in *The Woman Warrior*, these China men turn out to be ghostly

shadows in a haunted world of racism and sexism.

In the short section “Ghostmate,” a young scholar is on his way home after the Imperial Examination. Caught in a thunderstorm, this man finds shelter in a beautiful widow’s house. After living with the lady, the young husband falls in love with her, but he still decides to go home to fulfill his family duties. What follows is the woman’s begging, “She stands, opens her robe, opens it like wings, and wraps him inside, enclosing him against her naked body, reminding him how unwifely her breasts and thighs are, how helplessly her body works as [he] touches it. Unable to remain joined, connected, he breaks from her, and leaves” (Kingston, *China Men* 80). The scholar’s attachment to the tantalizing ghost and inability to stay “joined, connected” seem to echo the relationship between the human subjects and the ghostly world. On the road to his village, this young man’s haggard and ghost-like face appalls people. And later he finds out that the beautiful widow is actually a noblewoman’s ghost and her place a marked grave.

The female ghost in this story is not unlike the traditional Chinese ghost stereotype of the “hypersexual female ghost” described by Zeitlin (*The Phantom Heroine* 3). The female ghost performs sexual acts on the male subject in order to extract his masculine essence, thus empowering herself and weakening the victim. This short story can be further related to the Chinese American history of the “bachelor’ culture, comprised of men in their middle years or

older, [...] form[ing] the background of events in Kingston's *China Men*" (Huntley, *Maxine Hong Kingston* 43). Huntley argues that the lady ghost signifies "the temptation offered by America" that the Chinese immigrants who have family in China "must cope with and try to withstand" (*Maxine Hong Kingston* 123). Huntley's take is problematic and inappropriate in an American context because the female ghost here is surely constructed in accordance with the Chinese literary ghost tradition. It should also be noted that China men's Chinese past, family, and heritage are calling to be remembered and recaptured within the framework of this Chinese American male culture. As Linda Kauffman mentions, "Rejection and abandonment are pervasive fears and realities in [*The Woman Warrior* and *China Men*]" (225). Actually, in both works, Chinese women's fears of being left behind in China and memorialized as ghostly past are quite obvious. From this perspective, both the beautiful ghost and the scholar's family are laden with the collective fears of being abandoned and forgotten. Unfortunately, as the concluding line of this section goes, "Fancy lovers never last" (Kingston, *China Men* 81). The female ghost is doomed to a tragic end. While the female ghost embodies the supernatural fabric and the collective senses of "rejection and abandonment," the young scholar's family are luckily recalled and retrieved after the male subject's spectral encounter.

The senses of abandonment discussed above linger on and coincide with the topics of longing and wandering in "The Making of More Americans." In this chapter, Maxine provides

more accounts of her “‘grandfathers,’ a term loosely applied to all older male ancestors” (Madsen, *The Woman Warrior and China Men* 16). She narrates how her fourth grandfather Say Goong returns as a ghost to haunt his brother Sahn Goong. Significantly, Say Goong’s ghost is completely silent and forcibly expelled by Sahn Goong’s words: “Go back to China. Go now. To China” (Kingston, *China Men* 170). Then the ghost of Say Goong disappears, and so does Sahn Goong. It is quite obvious that the older Chinese immigrants like Say Goong are still attached to their homeland even after death. As Say Goong is figured as an aimless, wandering spirit, going back to China seems to be an unconscious wish that can only be fulfilled in a ghostly state.

Say Goong’s case is narrated together with another ghostly presence—that is, the ghost of Mad Sao’s mother. The ghost of Mad Sao’s mother from China crosses the seas and arrives in America. Unlike silent Say Goong’s ghost, Mad Sao’s mother is given voices and places blames on her irresponsible son who does not send money to her. As she says, “You have turned me into a hungry ghost, [...] You did this to me. You enjoyed yourself. You fed your wife and useless daughters, who are not even family, and you left me to starve. What you see before you is the inordinate hunger I had to suffer in my life” (Kingston, *China Men* 176). The hungry ghost here tells how she dies of starvation and is totally forgotten and abandoned. Her return from death and travel to America bring about a virulent form of haunting. Only until Mad Sao travels back to China and performs rituals can the hungry ghost be fed, satisfied, and appeased. According to

Zetlin, “[G]host stories represent death as an interior state of exile in which suffering and longing are intensified rather than annihilated” (*The Phantom Heroine* 87). Likewise, the ghost of Mad Sao’s mother severely acts out the anger and suffering for being rejected and abandoned. At this point, her ghostly appearance is laden with historical, supernatural, and psychological complexity in the context of Chinese America.

In addition to the above Chinese ghosts, Kingston also touches upon the racial/white ghosts as she does in *The Woman Warrior*. Those racist characters are also described as ghosts, demons, or devils, demonstrating the threats of the unfamiliar, the frightening, and the vicious. A good example is the white bosses’ haunting effects on Chinese laborers. In Monica Chiu’s view, “The relationship between Chinese workers and their bosses is equally a repetition of the master–slave relationship. Those who attempt to break their contracts by escaping are promptly sought out and punished” (200). Ranging from the overseers to the immigration staff, white demons in Kingston’s account establish a world of unjust law and order against the non-dominant immigrant groups. Thus, the demonization of the racial oppressors makes explicit Kingston’s criticism of racism and reminiscence of the traumatic past and present.

Moreover, Kingston scatters the historical and cultural shadows from China in (re-)constructing the history of Chinese American men. For this discussion, the cases of Guan Goong [Guan Gong] and Ch’u Yuan [Qu Yuan] can be brought up. Guan Goong, an important

figure with great battle skills in Chinese history and literature, is presented as a guardian for Chinese American communities. As Maxine's paternal grandfather Ah Goong watches a Chinese opera in "The Grandfather of the Sierra Nevada Mountains," he is fully absorbed in the historical and theatrical moments of battles on the stage. Maxine writes,

Ah Goong felt refreshed and inspired. He called out Bravo like the demons in the audience, who had not seen theater before. Guan Goong, the God of War, also God of War and Literature, had come to America—Guan Goong, Grandfather Guan, our own ancestor of writers and fighters, of actors and gamblers, and avenging executioners who mete out justice. Our own kin. Not a distant ancestor but Grandfather. (Kingston, *China Men* 149-50)

It is obvious that Guan Goong becomes an ancestral model with whom Chinese Americans can identify. Across the geographical borders, Guan Goong is admired and even worshiped as an ancestral spirit or deity for his profoundly masculine power to fight enemies and injustice. This power is what the Chinese American men need because they have long been feminized as the sexual other and marginalized as racial shadows.

Kingston also narrates a story about Ch'u Yuan in the small piece "The Li Sao: An Elegy."

Unlike the physically powerful Guan Goong, the patriotic poet Ch'u Yuan shows his mental integrity in a corrupted court. As a minister of Southern Chu, Ch'u Yuan gives constructive but critical advice to his king. Later the angry king banishes Ch'u Yuan from the court.

Heavy-hearted and disillusioned, Ch'u Yuan in exile finishes his classic poem Li Sao and drowns himself in a river. After his death, people who understand the greatness of Ch'u Yuan try to call

for the return of Ch'u Yuan's spirit. In memory of this great poet, they throw rice into the river to serve the hungry ghost of Ch'u Yuan<sup>1</sup> and hold dragon-boat racing in the river on the fifth day of the fifth month in the Chinese lunar calendar. At the close of this story, the ghost of Ch'u Yuan really returns and asks people to wrap rice in leaves, or the fish would eat it up. Ch'u Yuan's case inspires Chinese American men in a different vein. His story is imbedded in the collective memory of both Chinese and Chinese American people. As Maxine's father mentions, "All Chinese know this story" (Kingston, *China Men* 256). Also, there is an intertextual parallel between Ch'u Yuan's exile life and Chinese Americans' diasporic/immigrant experiences. In the words of Madsen, "Kingston uses the legend of Ch'u Yuan to represent the complex quality of her father's depression. Ch'u Yuan, a man defeated by his own integrity through his incorruptible nature, was only appreciated by others after his death" (*The Woman Warrior and China Men* 27). Thereupon Ch'u Yuan's individual pain and sadness are transformed into the collective trauma in Chinese America.

It is interesting to note that the ghostly images are pervasive in *The Woman Warrior* and gradually decreases in *China Men*. Further, the figuration of ghosts becomes sporadic in Kingston's third work *Tripmaster Monkey*. Different from the previous two autobiographical pieces with female narratives, Kingston's first novel *Tripmaster Monkey* revolves around the life

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<sup>1</sup> Another reading of people throwing rice into the river is that they do so to feed the fish, so the fish would not eat Ch'u Yuan's body.

of Whittman Ah Sing, a fifth-generation Chinese American man in California during the 1960s.

As a poet and a playwright, Whittman is surely a transformed version of American poet Walt

Whitman. He is a recent honored graduate from Berkeley and lives in San Francisco. This

fictional story unfolds with Whittman's struggle on the job market and interracial love affairs.

Finally, he is given an opportunity to stage a postmodern play that builds up a miscellaneous

collection of Chinese myth, legend, and fiction in a Chinese American context.

Although there are rare signs of apparition or spirit of the dead in this novel, readers still can find spectral shadows in this fictional piece—a unique category highlighted in Kingston's previous attempts. In one scene, Whittman shows his utter contempt for new Chinese

immigrants:

The whole family taking a cheap outing on their day offu [sic]. Immigrants. Fresh off the Boats out in public. Didn't know how to walk together. Spitting seeds. So uncool. You wouldn't mislike them on sight if their pants weren't so highwater, gym socks white and noticeable. F.O.B. fashions—highwaterss [sic] or puddlecuffs [sic]. Can't get it right. Uncool. Uncool. The tunnel smelled of mothballs—F.O.B. perfume. (Kingston, *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book* 5)

Like Maxine's encounter with the quiet girl, Whittman's contempt for F.O.B. is absolutely related to Cynthia Wong's concept of "racial shadow," which "project[s] undesirable 'Asianness' outward onto a double" (*Reading Asian American Literature* 78). Jonna Mackin cleverly compares Whittman's "reaction" with "Maxine's psychological disowning the 'quiet girl' [in *The Woman Warrior*]" and further attributes his rejection of F.O.B. to his identical position as one of

the marginalized “immigrants” (521-2). In this regard, the presence of F.O.B. as a racial double consorts with Whittman’s complex identity as an oppressed Chinese American, an alien to the whites. To quote Irma Maini, “[Whittman’s] feelings of superiority are ridiculous, given the fact that the dominant society, whose racist myths he has partially internalized, does not accept him as an equal” (249). Moreover, F.O.B. not only parallels Whittman’s current position, but also repeats the collective experiences of earlier Chinese immigrants. This repetition, or return, of the rejected and the disdained reproduces the racial shadows or doubles that connect memories of the past and effects of the present as a real ghost does.

Bound up with his senses of rejection, Whittman always tries to escape from the influences of racial shadows. As a “New China Man,” Whittman “represents a new model of cultural assimilation in which crossing the boundary from the ethnic minority community into the white mainstream of American society” (J. Wang 108). Whittman’s psychological development consorts with his play-writing and re-writing of traditional Chinese fiction and American cultures in a playful tone. In the words of Hsiao-hung Chang, “*Tripmaster Monkey* creates an open literary space of heteroglossia, simultaneously incorporating various genres, transcending time and space, and making allusions to a variety of works from Shakespeare to Hollywood films” (16). Yet, the main structure of Whittman’s play is still based on Chinese works. The three fundamental Chinese sources of his play are *Journey to the West* [Xi You Ji], *Romance of the*

*Three Kingdoms* [Sanguo Yanyu], and *The Water Margin* [Shui Hu Zhuan]. In *Journey to the West*, the leading role Monkey King (Xun Wu Kong) accompanies his Buddhist master on a trip to the western world (now India) in order to obtain the sacred Buddhist scripts. The Monkey is famous for his seventy-two magical transformations and immense power in fighting evil demons and monsters. Unlike the mythical Monkey story, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* has a clear historical backdrop of battles among warlords. For his play, Whittman chooses to rewrite the renowned scene of the “Oath of the Peach Garden.” The three heroes, Liu Pei [Liu Bei], Gwan Goong (also Guan Goong in *China Men*), and Chang Fei [Zhang Fei], take an oath to strengthen their brotherhood and to fight together till death despite their lack of biological relations. As for *The Water Margin*, what is highlighted in the story is the rising of rebellious heroes against the tyrannical minister Gao Qiu.

Each of the three texts seems to serve certain functions for Whittman to re-create a literary piece and reconstruct his own identity. As the Monkey is powerful enough to brave demons, *Journey to the West* becomes a story about fighting the evil and retrieving the sacred, thus reminding readers of Maxine’s attempts to cope with the ghostly world. More importantly, the Monkey is capable of transforming himself into diverse objects and animals. His transformation coincides with the changing process of Chinese immigrants. While A. Noelle Williams states that the fighting spirit imbedded in *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* is connected with Whittman’s

“martial tendencies” against the white racist dominance (97), I would like to highlight the brotherhood or companionship among the three heroes, which can be related to the kinship shared within the collective Chinese American community. Finally, the desire for rebellion in *The Water Margin* can be similar to the literary and political challenge posed by Chinese American writers like Kingston in face of white racism. As the narrator says, “Chinese stories having no end, sons and ghosts continuing to fight in the ongoing wars” (Kingston, *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book* 236). Following this literary and political thread, the three works indeed share the recurrent theme of fighting, a significant element for survival in Chinese America.

Through the three famous Chinese works along with American texts and cultures, Whittman is able to stage a cross-cultural play that transcends literary traditions and cultural stereotypes. By means of this complex task, Whittman attempts “to break the existing hegemony of the dominant society,” “to be recognized as an Asian American artist with a unique vision,” and finally “to start a new tradition in American theater that would enable marginalized groups in American society to tell their stories on their own terms” (Maini 254-5). We need to keep in mind that Whittman’s act of staging the play serves as a performative ritual to remember the lost and to conjure up the historical dead. As one preparation scene of fireworks goes,

More sounds effects—bomb-like fireworks—signal for back-up. Fighting man and fighting women enter on horseback, riding from over the mountains. [...] An offstage voice will call out the names of heroes and heroines that were once not long ago—less than twenty years ago—star roles in American theater. They have left us.

We will call them back. Where are you? Come back. Gwan Goong and his brothers—Liu Pei and Chang Fei. (Kingston, *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book* 138)

This scene shows that the historical spirits, unlike haunting ghosts and racial shadows, are desirable. As Jennie Wang mentions, “[O]ne does not have to ‘sell out’ in order to ‘fit in,’ [and] one does not have to deny one’s cultural heritage in order to create one’s individual self identity” (108). Examining this stage scene closely, we can see a reversal of the human-shadow relations. It is not a calling from the dead for a haunting purpose; instead, it is a calling from the living to awaken and recapture the treasured past. Even though the above scene does not guarantee a lift from Whittman’s rejection of racial shadows, we do witness a literary form of playfulness created by Whittman in facilitating the communication between himself and his Chinese origins, between East and West.

After analyzing the representations of ghosts in Kingston’s writing, I will continue to explore the profound coupling of her autobiographical and historical complexities. It is true that Kingston’s ghost narrative in *The Woman Warrior*, *China Men*, and *Tripmaster Monkey* serves as a literary projection of the historical trauma of Chinese Americans in face of the political act of racist exclusion. Fusing the historical and the supernatural, Kingston stages the traveling Chinese ghosts and racial shadows and further renders the representation of ghost haunting within the political framework of Chinese America. There is no doubt that the Chinese Exclusion Act plays

a very important role in Chinese American history and has tremendous impact and aftermath.

Actually, some stories in *China Men* are mainly set during this period. With this political act in the backdrop, Kingston takes into account such critical issues as racial discrimination and economic control over early Chinese Americans. Moreover, Kingston's re-imagining of the ghostly figures presents a haunting picture and successfully directs the readers' attention to the traumatic past and present of Chinese America. Maxine's aunt Moon Orchid, the *China Men*, and the various racial shadows are all cases in point.

Importantly, Kingston wraps all these historical and political struggles in autobiographical and fictional narratives. Both *The Woman Warrior* and *China Men* are dominated by the first-person voice (the narrator and the leading character combined). This Chinese American autobiographical narrative can be entwined with "the representation of cultural authenticity, the production of reliable or authentic knowledge about Chinese America" (Madsen, "Chinese American Writers of the Real and the Fake" 259). Besides, the name of the female lead is never revealed. A number of critics call the protagonist of *The Woman Warrior* "Maxine" directly, thereby blurring the distinction between fiction and reality. At this point, readers can get into the inner world of Maxine and further understand how she, her family, and her ancestors are faced with the sexual and cultural conflicts in Chinese America. Additionally, the ghost narrative in Kingston's autobiographical fiction *The Woman Warrior* is adapted into a political agenda in

resisting the one-dimensional account of history. Although the No Name Woman's tragic end majorly results from the flawed social structure of China, there is still "an indirect result of Western colonialism and US institutional racism" (Shu 210). The reason is that No Name Woman is separated from her husband due to the exclusion laws. Of course, Moon Orchid may be a clearer case here.

As Kingston admits, "I feel I've written a political and artistic work. It is important for me to show that both are possible" (qtd. in Madsen, *Maxine Hong Kingston* 40). This political tendency is also noticeable in *China Men*. For example, in the chapter "The Laws," Kingston provides a detailed chronicle of Immigration Laws from 1868, the year the Exclusion Act began, to 1980, the year *China Men* was published. This section has nothing to do with any literary digression or projection of history. What can be found here is merely a direct engagement with the unjust laws of racism. Departing from family history, Kingston moves on and takes into account the Chinese American history, thus blurring the line between the private and public perceptions.

From this viewpoint, Kingston's autobiographical writing becomes "indigenous ethnography" (Huntley, *Maxine Hong Kingston* 39). Or, her autobiographical writing can be labeled as an "ethnic autobiography" that "allow[s] non-white people to have their 'own' identity and to claim their 'own' voice" (Hattori 220). However, Frank Chin in his essay "This is Not an

Autobiography” argues that Kingston’s autobiographical writing does not really reflect Chinese American authenticity, but is fake in offering Oriental myths for western readership. Frank Chin’s criticism is concerned with the significance of historical and cultural truth, whereas Kingston’s writing goes beyond the factual level and leaves space for imagination. According to Ruth Maxey, Kingston’s writing of history can be divided into four categories:

History is separated into the public (political events), the personal (family history, whether fact or fiction or a mixture), the mythical and the supernatural. [...] this personal history gives both writers more creative licence and, unwittingly or not, more room to be orientalist, since there is little or no risk of being corrected for making factual errors. (5)

Maxey reminds us that Kingston’s writing should be examined from multiple perspectives. Any limited scope of analysis will not be able to fully unpack its implications. Also, Kingston’s autobiographical version of “personal history” can be read as a narrative shadow of the grand history. Mediated by Kingston’s creative mind, this autobiographical shadow evolves with the flow of history. Incorporating the mystical and supernatural elements into her individual projection of history, Kingston attempts “to remythologize America, “to break down rigid ethnic and gender boundaries,” and “to create a correspondingly new literature” (Simmons 27). Ultimately, Kingston’s ghost narrative is adopted as a sophisticated tool to problematize history in the process of ‘remythologizing’ America.

Besides its relation to history and politics, ghost narrative is fashioned as a border-crossing

medium and a unique cultural translation. Maxine's autobiographical voice places a high premium on the issues of articulation. This oppressed daughter's priority is to avoid being tongue-tied and to speak freely. In the feminist discourse, we can find "a deliberate link of the tongue" to "language" as well as "sexuality" (Davies 156). As a source of speech and power, 'tongue' is a crucial image concerning the female voice because it symbolizes the feminine power to speak up in the patriarchal system. As Maxine reveals, "I thought talking and not talking made the differences between sanity and insanity. Insane people were the ones who couldn't explain themselves. There were many crazy girls and women" (*The Woman Warrior* 186). In other words, women are usually forced to be voiceless in old China. Under this circumstance, ghost haunting serves as a significant means of narration.

In Kingston's narrative, "[T]he supernatural is closely linked to female voice; [...] ghosts and spirits provide authority for articulation and identity" (Jenkins 70). Take the case of the No Name Woman for example. *The Woman Warrior* begins with Brave Orchid's warning to Maxine, "You must not tell anyone [about the No Name Woman]" (Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* 3). As mentioned much earlier, the no name woman commits suicide and infanticide by jumping into the family well. Through reinforcing the family taboo, the mother Brave Orchid stands on the position of patriarchy to silence Maxine. When Maxine retells her aunt's story, she not only breaks the family taboo, but also speaks out for her no-name aunt, a "forerunner" who boldly

crosses the borders. It is common for feminist writers to employ the strategy of reversal in their literary works in an attempt to subvert the oppressive conventions set by men and to free the silenced female subjects from the patriarchal dominance. Maxine employs her imagination to complement the fragmented story about her aunt. The No Name Woman is undoubtedly a victim, but her spiteful suicide and infanticide turn her weakness into the power to haunt the whole family and community. Here the ghost of Maxine's aunt definitely carries feminist messages in response to the male-dominated Chinese system. On another level, the significance of articulation also fits within a cross-cultural framework. Such issues as silence, articulation, and narration respond to the confrontation with the racist acts. Earlier I have discussed Maxine's conflict with the quiet girl. The girl's silence is a repetition of Maxine's previous experience as an incompetent racial shadow, or a voiceless racial ghost. Maxine is actually at the crossroads of departing from being the oppressor of her own kind in this incident. When she looks back, she is sorry for what she has done to that unfortunate girl. Her writing regarding her aunts, the No Name Woman and Moon Orchid, becomes the best evidence of her psychological development in a world of ghosts.

Furthermore, Kingston's ghost narrative can be taken as a form of cultural translation. According to Huntley, "Kingston claims her cultural inheritance, transforming it into a new American narrative form that serves to unite her present and her past" (*Maxine Hong Kingston*

79). What is more, Kingston attempts to resist the haunting past of Chineseness and react to the oppressive present of the west-centered ideology imposed upon her. The diasporic concepts such as rootlessness, migration, displacement, and mobility permeate the whole story. In this regard, Maxine pursues the course of cultural mobility and aims at the relocation of shifting identity. While staging the conflicting stories of cultural otherness vis-à-vis western/American cultural dominance, Maxine undergoes a process of transformation and translation, both linguistically and culturally, so as to mediate between the East and the West. This kind of translation may be complicated by the translatability from the original to the translated.

Walter Benjamin has pointed out that “translatability” occupies a key position in the translation work: “It is plausible that no translation, however good it may be, can have any significance as regards the original. Yet, by virtue of its translatability the original is closely connected with the translation” (71). It is obvious that something profound in the original text may be lost in translation due to the problems of (un-)translatability; however, the original is still associated with the translation due to the possible exchange between texts and contexts. And Benjamin further confirms the connection between the original and the translated: “Translation thus ultimately serves the purpose of expressing the central reciprocal relationship between languages. It cannot possibly reveal or establish this hidden relationship itself; but it can represent it by realizing it in embryonic or intensive form” (72). In this case, Benjamin’s focus is

on the linguistic translation, but the “reciprocal relationship between languages” can also be applied to that between cultures.

Sidonie Smith has made the parallel between Kingston’s “storytelling” and “translation to another culture” (59). Following this reading, the cultural translation undertaken in Kingston’s works is laden with complicated tasks. On one hand, the linguistic translation normally requires a closer representation of the original since the same exact representation is impossible to retrieve. On the other, Kingston’s cultural translation accounts for rewriting and redefinition of the original Chineseness in a cross-cultural context. In short, Kingston’s cultural translation here is not just about the linguistic exchange but a transformation from one state to another. As a mediate cultural translator, Kingston tries to circumvent the untranslatability and bridge the huge gulf between cultures. Her turning the untranslatable segments into translatable can be cast as the move of cultural transformation through female development and ghostly performance in a shifting process.

In Kingston’s cultural translation, the constant change and mobile identity of the ghostly shadows are regarded as the essential elements against the singular reading of the cultural and sexual hegemony. The ambiguous female reaction to the overpowering structure of patriarchy resonates with the fantasy of the cultural and racial minority to confront with and then assimilate into the dominant center of the West. In this light, the fluid ghost images project a spectacle of

sexual and cultural transformation. On one level, Chinese readers may feel Kingston's hybrid form familiar and distant at the same time due to her act of recapturing and rewriting Chineseness. On another, American readers may be amazed by the exotic and feminine Chineseness represented in the figuration of cross-cultural shadows from an Orientalist perspective.

To be sure, highlighting the function of cultural translation in Kingston's writing may draw similar criticism of its authenticity. Jeffery Paul Chan and Benjamin R. Tong have accused Kingston as a "mis-translator" (Williams 86). But we need to understand that this accusation is based on Kingston's linguistic translation of Chinese terms in that "only one translation, with all the 'right' connotations, is applicable" (Wong, "Necessity and Extravagance" 4). Different from the perspective of the previous critics, Kingston is actually conducting translation tasks between cultures. To quote Rufus Cook, "[Kingston] tries to translate her traditional Chinese cultural heritage into contemporary western terms" (134-5). The best parallel of Kingston's project of translation may be the case in which Ts'ai Yen's Chinese song crosses the linguistic and cultural borders. As Maxine concludes the work, "It translated well" (Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* 209). This demonstrates Kingston's emphasis on translation in her literary and autobiographical writing.

Kingston's cultural translation can be further related to the theme of ghost haunting. As

Lee stresses, “[C]ultural translation” is employed “in formulating a cultural identity for those who struggle between two cultures and/or languages[,]” and “[g]host are exorcised by writing and translating the past to construct their future” (106). Lee’s compelling argument expounds on the in-between position of ghosts in rendering the past and constructing the future. Yet, not all of Kingston’s ghostly shadows are from the Chinese and American past. Instead, it is an ongoing process combining past and present if we bring in the racial shadows and demons for discussion. In Kingston’s writing, American figures are changed into or translated as racial ghosts or demons such as “Taxi Ghosts, Bus Ghosts, Police Ghosts, Fire Ghosts, Meter Reader Ghosts” from an American context to a Chinese American (con-)text. In Chinese culture, it is actually normal to label people from abroad as ghosts [gui], like Ocean Ghost (western foreigners) and Japanese Ghosts. In Chinese America, Kingston interestingly addresses a twisted form of translation between languages and cultures.

Lynette Carpenter and Wendy K. Kolmar believe that female writers’ ghost storytelling indeed demonstrates “a reimagining of this genre” so as to “critique mainstream male culture, values, and tradition”(1-2). Thus, the union of supernatural elements and female voices challenges the male-dominated genre and grand narrative. Writing and translating cross-culturally, Kingston deals with gender politics in her fictional creation and closely engages inter-racial issues in Chinese America. More importantly, the frequent recurrence of ghost

haunting in her works becomes an important narrative style. However, we need to understand that Kingston's ghost narrative is not merely based on supernatural or magical realist writing. As Kingston herself emphasizes in an interview,

I don't like [...] supernatural, instant changes that come out of nowhere, and I believe in an logical scientific sequence of events in which there's an idea, there's finding for the words for it [...]; the negotiations, the dialogue—one word at a time between people taking place moment by moment, and each moment causing the next moment, and that's not magic. Magic is illogical, supernatural, it's not in our hands and that world isn't in our hands" ("Maxine Hong Kingston with Maggie Ann Bowers" 175-6).

In her account, there is always a cause or reason for the emergence of ghost haunting. Also, the figuration of ghostly shadows helps the author and her readers to enter into a multilateral negotiation at the critical juncture of history. Therefore, Kingston's ghost narrative serves her own use and encompasses the racial, cultural, or sexual aspects of Chinese America in creating an imaginative, yet somewhat realistic, cross-cultural world.

Of course, this survey of the ghostly images and implications does not cover all the segments of spectrality in Kingston's works. It is meant to touch upon the essential issues regarding the diverse ghostly representations of Chinese America. Through the process of rewriting and cultural translation, Kingston makes explicit the possibility of the female voice and the transcendence of cultural otherness. Also, she roundly criticizes the male dominance and racial discrimination. While engaging in the struggle between cultures and races, she attempts to

make a compromise with the Chinese values in a Chinese American context. That said, she suggests a way to construct her sexual and racial identity—the mutual understanding and combination of Chinese and American cultures. She hopes that her readers can understand her ambivalent emotions towards the past and the present represented in her ghost narratives. To conclude, Kingston's works help readers to examine the power imbalance in the conditions of cultural, racial, and sexual hegemony through cross-cultural rewriting. It further touches upon the issue of how the ethnic and sexual minorities can challenge the dominant mechanism and cross the rigid boundaries with an aim to breaking the culturally and sexually biased myths and facilitating the communication between the East and the West.

In the long run, the foreignness and the otherness embedded in these cross-cultural shadows can be taken as the traces of historical ruptures, thus mediating between the Chinese and American readerships. Kingston did it, through a narrative of ghosting America.

**CHAPTER 2**  
**BEYOND KINGSTON'S GHOST NARRATIVE**  
**CHINESE AMERICAN HAUNTING IN AMY TAN AND SHAWNA YANG RYAN**

Ghost storytelling has emerged as a notable narrative mode in American literature, and each specific haunting can be related to a diverse domain of historical, cultural, and even individual issues. Despite the ample studies on ghost haunting in literature, it is a pity that there are few studies focusing on the literary development of the Chinese American ghost narrative from Maxine Hong Kingston onward. To further develop this research, this chapter aims to examine the spectral presence and absence in Chinese American fiction after and beyond Kingston's ghost narrative. As ghosts rise from the dead and coincide with the senses of dislocation in Chinese America, the concept of haunting goes beyond the time frame and crosses the geographical border between places in Chinese American ghost imagining. More importantly, ghost haunting suggests a possibility of crossing historical and cultural boundaries, thus serving to re-define and re-shape Chinese American identities. In addition, Chinese American ghost tradition can be related to a shared, legitimate feminist concern in transcending the patriarchal barriers. Through the examination of the ghost stories by contemporary Chinese American women, we will get a better look at the lingering ghost tradition and the literary departure from that in Chinese America of the 1990s and even the twenty-first century.

Before discussing the development of the Chinese American ghost storytelling, it may be

beneficial to survey the academic accounts of ghost stories in America. Ghost storytelling has become an essential feature in contemporary American literature and received scrupulous attention in the academy. Two influential scholarly works in this trope are *Cultural Haunting: Ghosts and Ethnicity in Recent American Literature* (1998) by Kathleen Brogan and *Spectral America: Phantoms and the National Imagination* (2004) edited by Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock. Brogan argues that American ethnic ghost stories represent a special phenomenon of “cultural haunting,” and in this way serve to reflect the predicaments of minority groups (4). To Weinstock, the representation of ghost haunting may refer to the “awareness of the narrativity of history” in response to the emotional and historical loss (5). At this point, both Brogan and Weinstock bring into focus the literary ghost narrative vis-à-vis ethnic and historical imprints. Of course, there are many other researches dealing with the representation of ghost haunting in American fiction and film. These academic studies help to unpack the complexities of ghost haunting in the American context as a whole, which can be applied to the development of the contemporary Chinese American ghost narrative, starting from Kingston.

In her ghost trilogy, *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts* (1975), *China Men* (1980), and *Tripmaster Monkey* (1989), Kingston explores multiple dimensions of cross-cultural shadows and haunting effects in relation to historical fissures. In Kingston’s ghost narrative, the supernatural elements are deftly woven into the historical fabric, thus featuring

such crucial issues as cultural loss, racial discrimination, and gender politics. What we need to bear in mind is that Kingston's ghost narrative mediates the past and the present and shuffles between China and (Chinese) America. It is critical to remember that Kingston tries to recuperate the historical past and the cultural gist of China with a greater focus on the experiences of Chinese immigrants in the American soil. The talk stories and memories from Chinese-born mothers and fathers function as the cultural references and packages with which Chinese Americans have to deal while searching for ethnic identities and cross-cultural positions.

Kingston has more than shaped the mode of ghost storytelling and further paved the way for younger writers in Chinese America. Since Kingston, a number of Chinese American novelists have produced fascinating literary outputs, many of which, interestingly, come to grips with haunting effects and ghostly representations as well. Examples are Fae Mayenne Ng's *Bone* (1993), Aimee E. Liu's *Face* (1994), and Lan Samantha Chang's short story collection *Hunger* (1998). Whereas Ng's *Bone* and Liu's *Face* deal with haunting issues like family trauma and emotional loss, Chang's *Hunger* resorts to the Hungry Ghost figures in representing family alienation and cultural disruption.<sup>2</sup> As Hetty Lanier Keaton argues, "[I]n Lan Samantha Chang's stories, when the characters neglect the spirits of their ancestors, these vengeful Hungry Ghosts,

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<sup>2</sup> For more information about Lan Samantha Chang's *Hungry*, please refer to Hetty Lanier Keaton's dissertation "Feeding Hungry Ghosts: Food, Family, and Desire in Stories by Contemporary Chinese American Women." The University of Tulsa, 2002.

which represent the repressed and unrecognized desire to reconnect to lost family members, refuse to lie dormant” (236). While the ancestral spirits are properly worshipped and fed by their descendents, they become hungry and disturbing to the living. That said, the hungry ghost images reflect the eternal state of insufficiency and hollowness. In this sense, Chang’s *Hunger* demonstrates a significant trait of Chinese American haunting—that is, the return of the repressed. Besides the above writers, Amy Tan stands out as the most well-known contemporary Chinese American novelist with five popular novels: *The Joy Luck Club* (1989), *The Kitchen God’s Wife* (1991), *The Hundred Secret Senses* (1995), *The Bonesetter’s Daughter* (2001), and *Saving Fish from Drowning* (2005). In addition, Shawna Yang Ryan’s *Locke 1928* (2007) provides a locally and historically specified Chinese American ghost story vis-à-vis what Kingston and Tan have shown in their cross-cultural family haunting. Unlike Kingston and Tan, Ryan does not employ the autobiographical style of narration and shift between the past and the present, but focuses on a historical and fictional scenario frozen in 1928.

We need to keep in mind that the Chinese American ghost narrative discussed here is not singularly formulated and optimized for any specific approach. Instead, it is worth considering the similarity and diversity simultaneously in the Chinese American ghost tradition. To better understand the development of the Chinese American ghost storytelling, I would like to explore Tan’s and Ryan’s ghost narratives in response to Kingston’s. Kingston and Tan, for instance,

bring into focus the autobiographical voices and the mother-daughter relationship in shaping ghostly figures. Although we find no such autobiographical connections in her historical fiction, Ryan shares Kingston's and Tan's concern about the historical and traumatic past of Chinese and Chinese American women.

Despite Kingston's influence, Tan and Ryan take unique paths in representing the spectral trope within the Chinese American framework. While Kingston's ghostly figures either come from the Chinese past or from the American present, Tan bypasses the racial ghost images in the present and merely stages the haunting shadows from the past. To Kingston, the ghostly return refers to the recurrence of the historical and cultural absence in response to the formulation of Chinese American identities. In Tan's account, the concept of 'return' not only displays the return of Chinese ghosts, but covers the return of Chinese American subjects to visit their spectral motherland, China. As for Ryan, the notion of historical time is frozen in the past in her nostalgic novel without relating to autobiographical knots and contemporary references in Chinese America. Her idea of the ghostly return is made materialized when the horrifying Chinese water ghosts return to haunt the Chinese American subjects in bodily form. While sharing the feminist concerns with Kingston, Tan and Ryan still develop their own ways of ghost storytelling in Chinese American fiction writing after and beyond the traditional ghost narrative.

My discussion of the development of Chinese American haunting beyond Kingston can be

divided in two. The first section focuses on the domestic haunting, individual loss, and historical trauma in Tan's fictional works. Since there have been numerous studies on Tan's writing style and intentions, I plan to concentrate on the spectral traces of her fiction writing in response to historical and family shadows. The second illustrates Ryan's localized ghost storytelling via a close reading of *Locke 1928*. Focusing on a specific historical context, Ryan jumps from conventional issues like Chinese American family tensions and mother-daughter relationships. This departure makes her work special to a great extent in shaping the course of Chinese American ghost storytelling. Besides, there is no scholarly research on Ryan's novel yet; thus, my analysis of Ryan may serve as the first attempt in the academy.

To start with, critic Harold Bloom has expressed his reading experience of being haunted by a ghostly mother image in Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*. Bloom emphasizes "the power of simplicity and universality" delivered by the haunting effects in Tan's writing and further relates Tan to her forerunner Maxine Hone Kinston in exploring new ways of storytelling (2). If Tan is indeed changing the course of American literature and reshaping the fundamental image of America, she has established a spectralized canon through a Chinese American ghost narrative. It is important that Tan's ghost storytelling contains three important tropes: the historical haunting from the traumatic past of China, the domestic haunting from the Chinese/American family, and the border-crossing haunting outside Chinese America. Tan's novels have been known for their

historical significance of China and autobiographical/individual values of Chinese America.

According to Weinstock, “Ghosts [...] reflect the ethos and anxieties of the eras of their production” (6). In this sense, the chronological rift between history and the individual subject can be healed through ghost haunting. Moreover, Tan, like Kingston, is adroit at interweaving historical and cultural conflicts with domestic tensions—that is, the tug-of-war between mothers and daughters. Still, readers can find the difference between the two. As Kingston employs Chinese literary and mythical elements to reconstruct Chinese American history and identity, Tan continues to deal with the spectral representation of Chinese American positioning, but directly traces the haunting effects back to the real chaotic Chinese history in contrast to Kingston’s cultural remake of Chinese fantasy.

In her debut work *The Joy Luck Club*, Tan extends Kingston’s autobiographical style and takes into account the interwoven stories of four mothers (Suyuan Woo, An-mei Hsu, Lindo Jong, and Ying-ying St. Clair) and lives of four daughters (Jing-mei June Woo, Rose Hsu Jordan, Waverly Jong, and Lena St. Clair). In this sense, mothers’ memories and daughters’ voices are all rolled into multidiegetic narratives. It seems that the daughters cannot bridge the cultural and emotional divide with their bossy mothers until they “learn to listen—truly listen—to their mother’s stories” (Huntley, *Amy Tan* 42). In this regard, ghost haunting can be applied to the cultural transmission from the mothers’ spectral China to the daughters’ identity-forming Chinese

America. The novel begins with a brief story about an unidentified old woman who travels from China to America with a swan. When she arrives, the immigration officials take the swan from her. She merely has a light swan feather with her for memory, but she carries hopes and wishes for her future daughter in the new land. The old woman's myth foretells the four mothers' expectation for their daughters. It further remakes the shared wish of all Chinese women immigrants. As Catherine Romagnolo argues, the old woman's story is fashioned "as national mythology, revised" (94). This wish lingers upon the presence and absence of the mother figures in relation to the haunting past.

For example, Suyuan Woo has been dead at the opening of the story, but her ghostly presence is mediated through photographs and talk stories, thereby creating haunting impacts on her daughter Jing-mei Woo, who is the leading narrator of this novel. The ghostly memories here work to conjure up the spirits of the dead in response to the distress and wishes of the living. In the words of Ben Xu, "Memory" stands as "a socializing, ego-forming expression of anxieties, hopes, and survival instinct" for the female characters in the novel (6). Through the functions of memory, the multilateral negotiations between mothers and daughters can be conducted, and in this way accelerate the process of relocating Chinese American identities. The story concludes with Jing-mei's travels to China to visit her two half-sisters, the flesh-and-blood remains of her mother. As Jing-mei reveals in the last few lines of the novel:

The gray-green surface changes to the bright colors of our three images, sharpening and deepening all at once. And although we don't speak, I know we all see it: Together we look like our mother. Her same eyes, her same mouth, open in surprise to see, at last, her long-cherished wish. (Tan, *The Joy Luck Club* 332)

Jing-mei needs to go back to China to retrieve the last piece of her cross-cultural jigsaw puzzle, not just for her mother but for herself. At this point, the family reunion brings out the compromise with the dead, strengthens the mother's cultural heritage, and further recreates the daughter's cross-cultural identity. Therefore, the ghostly return from the past is appeased and exorcised by a spatial movement of the living back to the origin of 'cultural haunting'.

Another case of ghost haunting in this novel is embedded in An-mei Hsu's story about her no-name, widowed mother who remarries a wealthy merchant as the third concubine. The spectral identity of this no-name woman reminds us of Maxine's no-name aunt in *The Woman Warrior*. Both unnamed women are excluded from their families due to their transgression of social norms. In this regard, they become forbidden taboos and family ghosts in the social context of old China. Furthermore, An-mei's mother commits suicide and transforms from a social ghost to a real ghost returning to haunt her husband, thus demonstrating a threat to the male-dominated society. While the family taboo is being passed down to the new generation in the male-centered system of China, Tan, like Kingston, empowers the silenced women characters and displays the ghostly power of female avengers. More important, this ghost story encourages An-mei's daughter Rose Hsu Jordan to confront her domineering husband Ted, who is seeking a

divorce and asking her to move out of the house. On top of the lingering cultural heritage, the mother's haunting stories instruct the daughter how to deal with the gender imbalance in contemporary Chinese America. From the two cases discussed above, we can find a feminist spirit and a cross-cultural linking between mothers and daughters. Also, this family-bound ghost storytelling can be regarded as the fundamental tone in her following three works.

In *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Tan's use of ghost metaphors has slightly increased. This novel centers around the mother-daughter relationship; yet, this time the mother Winnie Louie's (or Jiang Weili) narrative is filled with more haunting ghosts. From the spirit of the young servant to the Holy Ghost, Tan illustrates a series of Chinese ghost images that add supernatural and exotic appeals to western readers from an Orientalist perspective. Like the four daughters in *The Joy Luck Club*, Winnie's daughter Pearl Louie Brandt is faced with the mother's haunting talk stories and memories. It is also important to note that the mother herself is plagued by the traumatic past and learns to deal with the distressing memories in the novel. As Winnie recalls,

Even I was scared my old life would catch up with me. But then China turned off the light, closed the door, told everyone to be quiet. All those people there became like ghosts. We could not see them. We could not hear them. So I thought I really could forget everything. Nobody could get out to remind me. (Tan, *The Kitchen God's Wife* 72)

Winnie's statement demonstrates her fear of being caught by her distant past, and she rejects the emotional access to it. However, those silenced specters return and force the human subjects into

communication by way of ghostly presence and memory. “Recollection,” as Yuan Yuan argues, “reveals a process of negotiation with the past, constantly translating and revising the past into a narrative that grants reality to present situations” (154). Yuan Yuan’s point is applicable in Winnie’s case. Despite her fear of the past, Winnie selectively passes down those haunting stories to her daughter in the present time. She does not want to recall her traumatic life in China, but the surfacing of her recollection is spontaneous and surprisingly beneficial in liberating herself and her daughter from the suffocating, denied past, thereby coming to terms with the family haunting.

In addition to the domestic haunting imprints on the mother-daughter relations, Tan explores the historical haunting with respect to the Sino-Japanese War, the Kuomintang’s retreat to Formosa (Taiwan), and the Chinese Communist Party’s control over entire China. The significance of Tan’s writing is thus appreciated with its “represent[ation] [of] a particular period of Chinese history” (Adams, “Identity-in-Difference” 9). Take, for example, the ambiguous ghost story of Gan, a Kuomintang air force pilot fighting against Japan. Friend of Winnie’s husband, Gan secretly falls for Winnie. He tells Winnie that he is haunted by a ghost and disturbed by nine bad fates. The ghost tells him that he will die at the time when the ninth bad fate comes. Later on, Gan’s plane crashes, and he dies in the hospital. After his death, Gan turns out to be Winnie’s “ghost lover” (Tan, *The Kitchen God's Wife* 205). Gan’s ghost-lover identity represents Winnie’s

deep sorrows and regrets. Moreover, his ghost story interestingly bridges the divide between the individual/domestic haunting and the historical haunting. Although the mother-daughter relationship still serves as the core of the work, the historical haunting intensifies the mother's trauma and loss in China. At the end of the novel, the compromise between the mother and the daughter is made through the exorcism of ghosts and the worshipping of the statue of the Kitchen God's Wife—"See her name: Lady Sorrowfree, happiness winning over bitterness, no regrets in this world" (Tan, *The Kitchen God's Wife* 415). After the recollection of ghost haunting accompanied by danger, misfortune and suffering, Tan envisions a ghost-free world with hope and happiness.

Compared with *The Joy Luck Club* and *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Tan's third fiction *The Hundred Secret Senses* is imbued with clearer spectral traces. This work starts with the supernatural vision of Kwan Li, who is the narrator Olivia Yee Laguni Bishop's Chinese-born half sister: "My sister Kwan believes she has *yin* eyes. She sees those who have died and now dwell in the World of *Yin*, ghosts who leave the mists just to visit her kitchen on Balboa Street in San Francisco" (Tan, *The Hundred Secret Senses* 3). Even though Tan's previous interest in the mother-daughter bond is replaced by the concept of sisterhood in this novel, she still holds on to the tensions between Chinese mysteries and Chinese American identities. In an interview with *Salon* magazine, Amy Tan distinguishes the yin people from ghosts: while ghosts are "politically

incorrect” and related to haunting effects, “the yin people [...] are around, and kind of guide you to insights” (95). In this case, Tan transforms ghost haunting into an invisible, profound force for the human subject to acquire better senses regarding literary writing, identity searching, and even historical revision in response to the trauma of the past.

Moreover, these supernatural “insights” seem to work well with individual memories.

While memory plays a crucial role in representing, reconstructing, and mediating the haunting past in this work, Kwan’s special vision provides inexplicable and mysterious contacts with the lingering dead. In one scene Kwan explains to Olivia the features of secret senses:

Ah! I already tell you so many times! You don’t listen? Secret sense not really secret. We just call secret because everyone has, only forgotten. [...] [A secret sense is] [m]emory, seeing, hearing, feeling, all come together, then you know something in your heart. (Tan, *The Hundred Secret Senses* 102)

In the above passage, Kwan emphasizes the secret senses in relation to the supernatural vision and communication. It seems that Kwan’s words function to open Olivia’s secret senses in face of the World of *yin*. It is also interesting that Tan stages the first ghost or yin person in the novel apart from the Chinese past—that is, the spirit of Elza Marie Vandervort, who is the ex-girlfriend of Olivia’s husband Simon Bishop. While Kwan interprets Elza’s ghost talk as benign, Olivia hears a different voice: “[Elza] was pleading, crying, saying over and over again: ‘Simon, don’t forget me. Wait for me. I’m coming back’” (Tan, *The Hundred Secret Senses* 107). Yet, near the end of the novel Kwan claims that what Olivia hears is not from Elza’s spirit but from her own

worry and concern about her relationship with Simon. Kwan even says that Elza was actually Olivia's mother two lifetimes ago. At this point, Kwan introduces the concept of reincarnation and reinforces the overlapping between individual lives and collective memories. In another frame story of the novel, Kwan reveals her former life as Nunumu, a young Chinese girl, and Olivia's as Miss Banner, an American lady, both of whom stay together in face of the troubled situations of China in the 1860s. The function of reincarnation, then, refers to another version of the ghostly return with flesh and blood, thus suggesting the repetition of the relationship between Nunumu and Miss Banner in the present time.

Like her previous life as Nunumu, Kwan always wants the best for Olivia/Miss Banner. To save Olivia's marriage, Kwan persuades Olivia and Simon into a trip to China, where they gradually fall for each other again. Then Kwan disappears in caves of Changmian, in Guilin, China, and does not go back to the United States with Olivia and Simon. Her disappearance does not prevent Olivia from embracing the World of *yin*. Instead, Olivia does possess secret senses and open her arms for the *yin* in the end. As she states,

I think Kwan intended to show me the world is not a place but the vastness of the soul. And the soul is nothing more than love, limitless, endless, all that moves us toward knowing what is true. I once thought love was supposed to be nothing but bliss. I now know it is also worry and grief, hope and trust. And believing in ghosts—that's believing that love never dies. If people we know die, then they are lost only to our ordinary senses. If we remember, we can find them anytime with our hundred secret senses (Tan, *The Hundred Secret Senses* 358)

Through Kwan's world view and Olivia's final awakening, Tan develops a unique approach to spectral representation. What surfaces is not merely the haunting past, but also the good will of the *yin* people. In other words, Tan proposes a new way to re-connect the living and the dead via secret senses and memories. From this perspective, the exorcism of ghosts may be one significant strategy to confront the traumatic past, but Tan places in the foreground a different form of ghost haunting or loving from the spirits of our precious others. Therefore, one's love for and with the *yin* people turns out to be another way to examine and embrace the past.

After her former successes in narrating ghost stories, Tan continues to explore the possibility of ghost haunting and writing in her fourth novel *The Bonesetter's Daughter*. This time she skips sisterhood and returns to her familiar theme—the mother-daughter relation entangled with historical trauma and cultural loss. This novel focuses on Ruth Luyi Young's individual dilemma in love and career as well as emotional conflicts with her mother LuLing Liu. It is important that in this novel Tan starts to experiment on the transmission of ghost tradition through writing instead of talk stories. While LuLing contracts Alzheimer's disease, her haunting stories need to be negotiated by way of writing and translation. LuLing asks Ruth to translate into English a manuscript recounting her early life in China. Ruth cannot fully grasp the meanings of her mother's manuscript due to her incapability of reading Chinese language. Thereupon she asks Mr. Tang, an aged Chinese scholar, to translate the manuscript, and he

becomes obsessed with LuLing while reading it. With the aid of Mr. Tang, LuLing's stories about ghost haunting in mysterious China are transformed into a literary and cross-cultural text in Chinese America.

In LuLing's stories, Precious Auntie can be regarded as the most important Chinese female figure. She is LuLing's nursemaid in the wealthy Liu family. As the story unfolds, readers get to realize that Precious Auntie is actually LuLing's mother. She commits suicide and leaves a promise for her ghostly return in an attempt to prevent the young LuLing from marrying Mr. Chang's son. The reason is that Mr. Chang, who owns a coffin shop in town, is cause to Precious Auntie's tragic life. Before serving in the Liu family, Precious Auntie is the daughter of a Chinese bone doctor or bonesetter, which echoes the book title *The Bonesetter's Daughter*. Mr. Chang robs Precious Auntie's marching process on her wedding date and results in her husband's death. After this incident, Precious Auntie disfigures her face and becomes a low servant. As a suicide ghost, Precious Auntie haunts the Liu family, her disobedient daughter LuLing, and even her granddaughter Ruth.

Actually, Ruth is forced by LuLing into making mysterious contacts with her grandmother Precious Auntie. Since her childhood, Ruth has been asked to write on the sand tray in conveying vague messages from Precious Auntie's ghost. By that means, Ruth suggests a different way to communicate with the past and the ghost. While Kwan in *The Hundred Secret Senses* has a

supernatural ghostly vision (the *yin* eye), Ruth, who suffers from a periodically forceful silence, can communicate with ghosts through (sand-)writing. In this light, “Tan’s depiction of ‘spirituality’” can be placed side by side with “materiality, particularly in writing,” and here “ghosts” or “bones” are fashioned as “texts” or “books” (Adams, *Amy Tan* 127). Furthermore, Ruth’s early experience of writing for ghosts is interestingly remade in her career as a ghostwriter, or a book doctor, who puts into words and translates what people fail to express properly. To escape from the double-bind ghostwriting, she gradually achieves mutual understanding and forgiveness with her mother, and finally realizes the importance of writing for oneself and her own family.

Ruth first discovers the real name of Precious Auntie—Gu Liu Xin. As LuLing’s sister GaoLing has it, the Chinese word ‘gu’ means “‘old,’ ‘gorge,’ ‘bone,’ and so on. Moreover, ‘gu’ defines one’s character—the core of one’s life. The discovery of Precious Auntie’s real name seems to propel Ruth into self/autobiographical writing in relation to her family history. At the end of the story, Ruth and her grandmother Bao Bomu [Gu Liu Xin/Precious Auntie] are able to work hand in hand so as to negotiate the past and the present through a different form of ghost writing. As the novel concludes,

[Ruth and Baobomu] write of a past that can be changed. After all, Bao Bomu says, what is the past but what we choose to remember? They can choose not to hide it, to take what’s broken, to feel the pain and know that it will heal. They know where happiness lies, not in a cave or a country, but in love and the freedom to give and

take what has been there all along.

Ruth remembers this as she writes a story. It is for her grandmother, for herself, for the little girl who became her mother. (Tan, *The Bonesetter's Daughter* 355)

In any case, Ruth's ghost writing reflects haunting memories and history. According to Lisa M. S. Dunick, this novel demonstrates "the possibility for the reception of cultural and personal memory" in response to Ruth's awakening (11). Upon accepting her family lineage of bonesetting, Ruth learns to (re-)collect and piece together the symbolic family bones and cultural remains. Whereas a bonesetter adjusts one's bone structure, Ruth corrects and modifies the traumatic past for a present cause. In this regard, writing refers to "a process of confrontation, discovery, and creation of their cultural identities" (Yuan 162). More important, Ruth's ghost writing is thus loaded with the function of catharsis, bridging the cultural divides and healing the family wounds. From *The Joy Luck Club* to *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, Tan has successfully dominated the Chinese American ghost tradition with family dynamics and historical perspectives. As Bella Adams asserts, "[Tan] participates in a feminist rewriting of Chinese, Chinese American and American histories, transforming a legacy of silence and oppression into 'a legacy of strength' by offering a challenge to ethnic and gender stereotypes" (Amy Tan 30). While Tan's ghost storytelling counteracts ethnic oppression and historical trauma, her feminist concern further negotiates the gap between Kingston's women warriors and Ryan's female avengers, which will be elaborated later this chapter.

Five years after the publication of *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, Tan goes on playing with ghost storytelling in her *Saving Fish from Drowning*. Yet, this time she marginalizes the mother-daughter relationship in Chinese America and explores more respects of tourism, media, international affairs, domestic violence, and cultural (mis-)understanding. In this novel, Tan retains and further shapes her ghost narrative from a global perspective. Tan's focus is switching from domestic and historical haunting to global haunting. What is unique about this work is that the story line is observed and narrated by the ghost of Bibi Chen, a Chinese American expert and connoisseur of art. We need to bear in mind that Bibi's mother dies when she is still a baby. Her second mother, Bao Tian, or Sweet Ma, is the second wife of her father. Here the alienation between Bibi and Sweet Ma may suggest a departure from the mother's haunting story and memory.

In the opening of the book "A Note to the Reader," the author tells the story about how she meets with Karen Lundegaard, who is a medium talking to the ghosts and writing down the random thoughts of them. Depending on Karen's supernatural writing, the author reveals the words of Bibi, thus opening up the entire story. In Bibi's narrative, she originally plans an art appreciation trip to Myanmar with twelve American friends. Right before starting on, Bibi suffers a mysterious death. Yet, she returns as a ghost and joins her friends' trip. This story unfolds with these twelve American tourists' cultural shocks in China and then in Myanmar.

Without rendering the spectral traces in Chinese and family history, Tan gives full credits of writing and narration to a ghost figure. Bibi here rises to the peak as a ghost narrator. Although it is a ghost story about Bibi, Bibi's ghost does not really trigger the incidents onto the American tourists during the trip. As a ghost, she is endowed with a supernatural power to discern people's "secret thoughts: their motives and desire, guilt feelings and regrets" (Tan, *Saving Fish from Drowning* 34). However, she stands as a neutral observer for most of the time, rather than a haunting presence to the living.

The twelve tourists, aside from Bibi, suffer from their cultural misconduct and misunderstanding. Take, for example, Harry, a celebrity dog trainer on TV. In Bai Park, China, Harry mistakes a shrine as a public urinal, and thereby enrages the local Bai people. Another case of cultural misunderstanding is about how the Karen tribesmen in Myanmar kidnap the Americans and worship Rupert, a young American kid and son of Moff. Rupert is mistaken as a local deity "Younger White Brother" only because he shows some card tricks to the tribe members. Ironically, those Americans do not know that they are being captivated and trapped in the no name place. In addition, the news regarding these missing Americans draws considerable international attention from media and governments. Finally, these tourists are saved and return to their normal life, while Bibi discovers a possible explanation of her mysterious death. Every problem seems to be solved. However, Tan leaves a series of issues for readers to ponder. It is

quite obvious that Tan here puts aside the historical trauma and cultural anxiety embedded in the Chinese American ghost tradition. Instead, she brings into focus her concerns on social injustice, political atrocity, and ethnic conflicts in this novel. As the book title “Saving Fish from Drowning” reveals, fishers in Myanmar believe that they are actually saving fish from drowning. In other words, a normal act may be interpreted differently in a different cultural context. This issue has been brought up through these American tourists’ misconducts and misadventures.

This novel may point to a watershed of Tan’s career as a fiction writer. Despite her ongoing ghost style, Tan goes beyond the domain of Chinese America in relation to historical and family shadows, thereby moving on to explore the world outside America from a global perspective. Is it a one-time deal or a sign of Tan’s attempt to depart from Chinese American haunting? We still do not have an affirmative answer at this moment. Yet, there is one thing for sure. Tan’s ghost narrative has been proven cross-culturally enchanting for numerous Chinese, Chinese American, and western readers. Beyond the cultural and ethnic haunting, beyond the Chinese American autobiographical narrative, Tan is making herself distinctive from other Chinese American women writers, including Kingston. That said, Tan’s success is not a coincidence. Her novels are not only widely discussed in the academy but also well received by general readers inside and outside the United States, thereby making her a cross-cultural and worldly renowned writer. Furthermore, her ghost storytelling gradually changes and transcends

the course of Chinese American ghost tradition, and further demonstrates an interweaving of traumatic history, diasporic memory, and ghost haunting within a cross-cultural framework. Tan has indeed created a diverse canon in response to spectrality, and her narrative of ghosting America and beyond is still going on.

Like Tan, younger writer Shawna Yang Ryan presents a unique Chinese American haunting in her debut novel *Locke 1928*. My selection of Ryan's fiction for discussion is not random. Whereas Tan's ghost storytelling gradually shapes Chinese American literature, Ryan provides an exclusively local view of Chinese American haunting from the past. She excludes the typical issues like the mother-daughter relationship and autobiographical narrative. What she takes into account is an imaginative, supernatural revision of the traumatic history of Chinese America. In *Locke 1928*, Ryan deals with the haunting memories of the early Chinese immigrants in a local river town of Locke, Sacramento. To analyze Ryan's ghost storytelling, I would first take into account the historical backdrop of *Locke 1928* and examine the interaction between the local history of Locke town and the cross-cultural memory of its residents. Then I would address the significance of Kingston's ghost storytelling in relation to the figuration of ghosts before I recount the elusive spectral traces, including the ghostly memories and water ghosts as the sources of haunting. It is quite obvious that Ryan tries to relocate the silenced and marginalized Chinese (American) women from a feminist angle. It is also important to discuss

the drastic solution to the problems of the traumatic history and repressed memory by means of the ghostly return, reunion, and revenge. Through this haunting novel, Ryan leads her readers to re-examine the local history in tandem with the diasporic memory in the town of Locke, 1928.

Born in 1976 in Sacramento, California, Ryan is a second-generation Chinese American. Ryan's mother is a Chinese mainlander from Taiwan, while her father is a white American. It is worth noting that Ryan has a strong attachment to her American homeland in response to the diasporic memories of the first-generation Chinese Americans. As Ryan states,

I started thinking about those types of stories, and I thought I would do something local, being from Sacramento, but I didn't know much about the history of the Chinese in Sacramento. I remembered coming to Locke as a kid, and suddenly there was a "click." I had thought of it as this place where we went on weekends and my parents would buy me a little toy. Suddenly, there was a connection, that this whole area, the Delta, has a really rich Chinese history. (qtd. in Reid)

This is the reason why Ryan chose the small Sacramento delta town as the local setting of her fiction. As mentioned earlier, *Locke 1928* centers on the local history and the cross-cultural memory of Locke town back in 1928. Issues regarding the early Chinese American life and the Exclusion Act (1882-1943) are brought to the fore. Ryan stages such characters as the manager of the Lucky Fortune Gambling Hall Richard Fong (Fong Man Gum), the brothel madam Poppy See (Po Pei), the white prostitute Chloe Virginia Howell, and Corlissa Lee, who is the Chinese pastor's wife and the only white woman not a prostitute in town. Though bearing the ghostly memories of the haunting past, these characters find their own ways to survive in the misty town

founded by Chinese immigrants. Their lives are doomed to be changed forever by three mysterious Chinese boat-women who dramatically arrive in Locke by a boat on a morning of 1928. These women claim that they cross the sea from faraway China with the aid of smugglers. One of them is Richard Fong's wife Ming Wai, who was left behind in China ten years ago. Most importantly, the three women later appear to be disturbing water ghosts in search of the opportunities of revenge and rebirth by drowning the living.

In this novel, the mysterious elements are skillfully channeled into the historical setting. Ryan attempts to delve into the relationships between sex and desire, loss and return, past and present in a mix of history and fiction. While the historical scripts and the ghostly memories intermingle in the novel, Ryan blurs the border between the public and the private, and further provides a personal retrospection of history and a haunting revision of memory. Critics have widely discussed the conflicts between the public history and the private memory; however, history and memory can be placed side by side in discussing the reconstruction of the past. According to Aleida Assmann, "Memories [...] can help bridge the gap between the abstract academic account, on the one hand, and the intensely painful and fragmented personal experience, on the other" (262). "History and memory," Assmann continues to argue, "are no longer considered to be rivals and more and more are accepted as complementary modes of reconstructing and relating to the past" (263). In this sense, memories indeed complete the

historical discourse in the process of recapturing the past. Thereupon Ryan's re-writing of history and memory can be regarded as a coalition of the two.

It is worth considering that Ryan takes into account the supernatural elements and ghostly images in shaping the historical fiction. In this case, ghost haunting is entangled with collective reminiscence and cultural repression. Whereas the ghostly memories of the characters surface time and again, the water ghosts appear as the embodiment of the upsetting memories in response to the traumatic history. From this perspective, Ryan's ghost narrative can be wedded to Kingston's in many aspects, especially the figuration of the water ghosts as female avengers. Thus, it is beneficial to compare Kingston's and Ryan's ghost storytelling in the feminist and cross-cultural contexts.

In *The Woman Warrior*, Kingston demonstrates different faces of ghosts and creates the haunting effects of the past and present. Interestingly, Kingston touches upon the ghostly Chineseness as represented in the No Name Woman and the Sitting Ghost. The narrator Maxine's no-name aunt is a family taboo because she breaks the social and cultural norms by having an illegitimate baby when her husband has gone to America for years. The violent raid conducted by the angry villagers later causes her suicide along with her newborn baby in the drinking well. The suicide of the No Name Woman not only pollutes the drinking water of the family, but also suggests her haunting return as a water ghost. In this sense, the No Name Aunt transforms from a

hapless victim into a female avenger, serving as a role model for Maxine to challenge the overpowering patriarchal system. As E. D. Huntley mentions, “‘No Name Woman’ introduces the unidentified aunt who represents the fate of transgressive women in traditional China, providing a context for Kingston’s embedded account of discovering her self by contesting the unwritten rules that she is expected to obey” (*Maxine Hong Kingston* 77). It is the No Name Woman’s transgressive act that inspires Maxine when she reaches puberty. Through re-narrating her aunt’s story, Maxine, as a storyteller and writer, creates the possibility of self-discovery and self-empowerment.

In the chapter “Shaman,” Maxine details the incident about how her mother Brave Orchid encounters the Sitting Ghost in a haunted dormitory room. While the other female medical students are too afraid to get into the haunted room, Brave Orchid volunteers to sleep in the room and fight the Sitting Ghost. During their confrontation, Brave Orchid keeps taunting the ghost. “I do not give in,” she says, “There is no pain you can inflict that I cannot endure. [...] You kill babies, you cowards. You have no power over a strong woman” (*The Woman Warrior* 70). Later on Brave Orchid and her fellow students lift the smoke and fire to every corner of the ghost room to exorcise the evil spirit. Here the Sitting Ghost emerges as a threatening figure overcome by the woman warrior Brave Orchid. Both the No Name Woman and the Sitting Ghost, though with various spectral attributes, represent the inexplicable and haunting past of China.

By means of the figuration of these haunting shadows, Kingston empowers her female characters and turns them into women warriors. Through the inspiration from and resistance against ghosts, Kingston's dragonesses, or female warriors, demonstrate their power to survive in a cross-cultural world of Chinese and American ghosts. Moreover, ghost haunting channels the in-betweenness and rootlessness of Chinese Americans. Therefore, the border-crossing ghosts in this autobiographical fiction serve to locate the historical remains, to highlight the racial oppression, and finally, to bridge the past of China and the present of Chinese America. At the end of the novel, Maxine finds her own way to be a woman warrior compared to Fa Mu Lan and her mother Brave Orchid.

While *The Woman Warrior* discloses Maxine's search for her cross-cultural identity in face of ghostly figures, Ryan's *Locke 1928* is not associated with identity crisis but with the politics of history and memory via the ghostly return of the past. Unlike *The Woman Warrior*, *Locke 1928* neither unfolds in Ryan's autobiographical tone nor is based on her family history. Actually, Ryan relies on her personal experiences, researches, and imagination to recount the historical incidents and spectral appearances in Locke of the early twentieth century. In the late summer of 2000, Ryan visited the rural town of Locke, where less than one hundred people resided. She paid three-hundred-dollar rent and lived in an old apartment there for one month. During her stay in Locke, she never saw any ghosts, but she did encounter unexplainable incidents like hearing

footsteps from downstairs when she was alone in the remodeled house, which was a gambling hall long time ago.<sup>3</sup>

Even though most residents in Locke nowadays are not Chinese, the historical and cultural heritage of the early Chinese Americans is still preserved in the landscapes of Locke. Therefore, Ryan's stay there offered significant resources for her to blend history with memories of Locke, a town loaded with spectral elements. This profound fusion turns out to be Ryan's individual reminiscence, or re-interpretation, of a specific locale. Critic Dydia DeLyser has provided an insight into the connection between historical sites and visitors:

Historical sites and places of memory such as ghost towns are, at least ostensibly, landscapes of the past, but such landscapes [...] are seldom left to the ravages of time. Rather, they are more often expressly set up to be interpreted by the visitors in the present. But as these [...] landscapes are reinterpreted by each generation of viewers, they can convey new meanings and new associations [...]. (606)

From this perspective, Ryan as a visitor and writer is actually instilling “new meanings and new associations” into the local history of Locke when the historical text is overlaid with fictional and spectral traces. In “Prologue: The Founding (1915),” Ryan adds imaginary pictures to the fire that burnt down the original Chinatown and led to the founding of Locke river town afterwards. Interestingly, Ryan imagines the fire caused by an anonymous woman who is cooking in the kitchen:

She thought of them as she lit the oil stove. The newspaper that covered the wall

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<sup>3</sup> For more information, please refer to Dixie Reid's “Spirit of the Past: Sacramento Native Shawna Yang Ryan Grounds Her First Novel in the Town of Locke” in The Sacramento Bee 6 May 2007.

behind the stove was ready to be replaced. Yellowed already, torn, grease-splattered to a high sheen—it had done its job.

[...]

She stood up and slid her chopstick along the thick black pan and the sweep of her hand was met by the sudden sweep of flames up the wall, up the newspaper. [...]

The fire spread across the wall, licked at the ceiling. (1-2)

At the opening of the novel, the anonymous woman starts the fire by accident and leads to the founding of the Chinatown of Locke. It seems that both the newspaper and the fire that indeed happened in 1915 are fashioned as historical markers. While the fire burns down the original Chinatown, the newspaper might have “done its job,” thus leaving space to the fictional and the supernatural. What ensues is a series of spectral incidents within a historical framework in the town of Locke.

We need to bear in mind that *Locke 1928*, though a historical piece, is a ghost story. The first chapter of the novel is set on the morning of the Dragon Boat Festival in 1928. Along with the Chinese New Year and the Mid-Autumn Festival, the Dragon Boat Festival is one of the most important holidays in Chinese culture. On this day, Chinese people pay homage to Qu Yuan, a renowned Chinese poet and minister of Chu during the Warring States Period. To honor this patriotic poet, people hold dragon boat racing and eat zhongzi, a Chinese rice food wrapped in bamboo leaves. Although this festival is supposed to honor the dead, it turns out to be a ritual that conjures up haunting memories as well as water ghosts. Therefore, the collective nostalgic attachment to faraway China is transformed into recurring nightmares from which the townsmen

of Locke suffer.

It is worth considering that Ryan's ghost narrative is entwined with the ghostly memories and the images of water ghosts in a locale without symbolic father figures. While the fog drifts around the river town right before the arrival of the three boat-women, an unbearable smell reminds the male lead Richard Fong of the death of his father back in China long ago:

It is a gesture of honor propelled by the stink.

The smell is a prelude. For Richard, it hearkens back to a hot August day fifteen years past: his father's body laid out in the parlor, puddles of melted ice beneath him. Mourners dressed in white, all windows open, but even the crossbreeze couldn't undercut the humidity. (16)

There are two issues to note here. First, the smell of the dead and the sea is adapted into the prelude of the approaching ghost haunting. It opens up the following disturbing incidents with respect to spectral traces. Like the horrible smell, the sense of haunting pervades the entire town and lingers on even at the end of the story. Second, the concepts of the fatherless and the powerless father occupy places of particular significance in fashioning Chinese American manhood. By that means, the fatherless Richard to a great extent consorts with the symbolically fatherless state of the early Chinese immigrants. Additionally, Howar Lee, the Chinese Christian preacher, acts as an inconsequential father figure that fails to exorcize the water ghosts and stop the final tragedy. The only father-like figure may be Uncle Happy, who is an experienced and respected farm laborer. Yet, he is just an aged, dying uncle, not a strong father that fathers.

While narrating the fatherless town of Locke with historical and fictional elements, Ryan puts emphasis on her female characters. According to Ryan,

I wanted to write a story about Chinese women that took place in the past, because a lot of books I was reading had Chinese women characters but took place in the present day. And I said, where is the Chinese American woman in history? That's when I discovered the immigration laws – the exclusion acts – and understood why there were so few stories about Chinese women in America in the late 1800s, early 1900s. The laws kept them from being here. (qtd. in Reid)

Whereas the American laws kept Chinese women from entering the United States in the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, Ryan makes possible the representation of the silenced and abandoned Chinese women through the ghostly memories in this historical fiction.

To be sure, there is no linear timeline in this work while history and memory are intermingled and shift back and forth in fragments. Moreover, ghost haunting seems to be another source to upset the chronology of history. In the words of Peter Buse and Andrew Stott, “[H]aunting, by its very structure, implies a deformation of linear temporality: there may be no proper time for ghosts” (1). Buse and Stott also writes,

Ghosts arrive from the past and appear in the present. However, the ghost cannot be properly said to belong to the past, even if the apparition represents someone who has been dead for many centuries, for the simple reason that a ghost is clearly not the same thing as the person who shares its proper name” (11).

As a result, both the ghostly memories and the spectral figures function as the agents to cross the lines between past and present, fact and fiction, as observed in Ryan's *Locke 1928*.

To write the local history of Locke regarding Chinese women, Ryan does not depend on

one singular narrator or perspective. Instead, she brings in the voices of different male and female characters. Richard's haunting memory of ghostly China represents the collective memory shared by those Chinese immigrants who left their wives and family behind while pursuing their American dreams. In addition to Richard, whose cultural anxiety surfaces along with the ghostly return, Ryan stresses the haunting memories of her female characters.

Interesting enough, Ryan even incorporates the memories of white female characters in reconstructing the local history, thus providing a cross-racial angle beyond the traditional viewpoint of Chinese immigrants. Throughout the entire novel, the memories of Poppy See, Corlissa Lee, and Chloe Virginia Howell are projected as fragments and interpolated into the historical flow of Ryan's storytelling. No matter where they go, their disturbing memories trail along behind them, just like haunting ghosts.

First, the Chinese brothel madam Poppy See should be emphasized while discussing the ghostly memories. She is figured as a mysterious psychic who is able to access the supernatural world and has prophetic dreams or premonitions of ghost haunting. In other words, Poppy See stands as a medium between the living and the dead, between the memories of ghostly China and those of haunting America. After leaving her bloodsucking husband, Poppy See runs the only whorehouse in the town of Locke. She is deeply in love with Richard, who leaves her for the young white prostitute Chloe. Yet, Poppy See seems to be the only character in the novel that

really cares about Richard. She foresees the potential danger of the three boat-women and tries hard to prevent the tragic end of Richard. She remembers her encounter with a river ghost in China in 1910 when she was still named Po Pei. This water ghost is actually her dead neighbor, Old Chan's wife. It seems that Old Chan's wife has a secret adulterous affair with Po Pei's father. After her death, Old Chan's wife becomes a water ghost and returned to haunt her secret lover.

In one scene, young Po Pei witnesses the ghostly reunion of her father and the water ghost:

[The water ghost and Po Pei's father] embraced, and even in the small touch, Po Pei saw the transference of her father's essence. He grew dimmer as the woman shined. He was losing his yang ch'i, his male essence, his life-light. His yin had grown unbalanced—too much darkness, too much moon, too much female. (155)

The ghost haunting here is not unlike an extended version of the feminist revenge taken by Kingston's No Name Woman, who drowns herself in the drinking well. Furthermore, we can surely find a parallel between the haunting of Old Chan's wife in China and that of the three water ghosts in the town of Locke. This ghostly encounter ends with the young Po Pei's successful exorcism against the ghost. She burned the hell notes, the paper money for ghosts, to attract the spirit of Old Chan's wife. Then she slices open a hen's neck and creates an inexplicable vacuum from the wound that sucks in the ghost. Finally, the ghost is confined in the hen which becomes "a vessel for the ghost of a slighted lover" (156). Similar to Brave Orchid in *The Woman Warrior*, Po Pei wins over the haunting ghost, though in a different way. Po Pei in China might be a powerful exorcist. However, she loses her power of wizardry in America, and

only her psychic premonitions remain.

Besides Poppy See, Corlissa and Chloe, both of whom are white, provide different angles for readers to observe the lives of the early Chinese Americans. In *The Woman Warrior*, the female lead Maxine encounters a number of racial ghosts who are actually human but are loaded with oppressive and haunting traits. Unlike these negative ghost figures, Corlissa and Chloe are treated as major characters and victims. Many Chinese American literary works have coped with the predicaments of Chinese American women. Yet, few have touched upon how white women suffer when they are part of the Chinese American community. As wife of the local Chinese preacher, Corlissa always acts as a good-hearted and helpful figure to the other townspeople. She is the one who helps to accommodate and educate the two boat-women So Wai and Sai Fong. Yet, Corlissa's identity as an outsider has been determined when she chooses to marry a Chinese man. The conflict between Corlissa and her mother-in-law Ma seems to be a haunting memory that she can never get rid of:

Despite the weakness in the feet and the shoulders, Ma's face was shaped and tight, and she disapproved of Corlissa at every turn. Corlissa believed it came to this: she was white, and all that entailed. That the ways she had learned to be a daughter were not how she should be as a daughter-in-law. (42)

Ma's negative attitude toward Corlissa can be applied to the townspeople's as well. No matter how hard Corlissa tries to get along with the others, she seems to be isolated and marginalized like a white ghost on the American soil.

Like Corlissa, Chloe is a victimized woman. She also has to live with her memories of the haunting past. When she first arrives in Locke, she is about to deliver a baby. And Poppy See becomes her midwife. Unfortunately, Chloe's baby dies at birth. This scene is narrated in recurring flashbacks from three different perspectives. Each perspective adds and modifies some details of Chloe's delivery and the death of the baby. At this point, the attributes of memory are highlighted. The ghostly memory comes and goes, shifts and lingers. What remains the same is the endless haunting. Examining the ghostly memories of Poppy See, Corlissa, and Chloe, we would be able to better understand how the individual consciousness can be projected onto the haunting memories, and vice versa.

Besides the ghostly memories of women, Ryan is fascinated by the images of ghosts and stages three ambiguous boat-women that haunt the entire town. In Ryan's account, "I was determined to have Chinese women in my story and decided that a nice metaphor for that would be ghosts" (qtd. in Reid). Employing ghosts as the key metaphor, Ryan presents a profound relationship between the repression and the return in a psychoanalytic sense. As Buse and Stott reveal, the ghosts can be adopted as "an expressive symptom of the phenomena that bear upon an unsettled psychic life" and as "symbols of lack, disquiet, and unmediated tragedy" (13). While dealing with the issues of diasporic memories and local history of Locke back in 1928, Ryan focuses on the unfair treatments imposed on the early Chinese immigrants. Due to the Exclusion

Act, most Chinese men were unable to send for their wives living in China. For those wives who were left behind, their hope was turned into endless wait and despair.

Keeping in mind the history of those abandoned and forgotten Chinese wives, Ryan narrates the arrival of the three boat-women, Ming Wai, So Wai, and Sai Fung, in the town of Locke. If ghosts represent an intervention on history from the past, the three boat-women, or water ghosts, serve as the haunting embodiment of the collective trauma shared by the forgotten. In short, they become the recurring nightmares to the living. Ghost haunting here not only requests remembrance but also seeks revenge. In traditional Chinese ghost stories, water ghosts are usually trapped in a specific body of water and have no access to reincarnation until they find their human substitutes and drown them in the water. Ryan's water ghosts seem to be scarier in that they are described as specters with physical bodies and float across the vast Pacific Ocean for the taste of revenge and the opportunity of rebirth in Chinese America.

In *Locke 1928*, Ming Wai is identified as a haunting nightmare Richard cannot get rid of. As a matter of fact, Poppy See in a premonition already sees Ming Wai following Richard before the arrival of the ghost boat:

Behind Richard follows a woman in an old-style dress—snapped-closed collar, sleeves falling wide like bells and, beneath the embroidered hem of her dress, tiny bound feet. Against the harsh outlines of Richard's suit, the woman is so delicate she follows like an echo to a sound. (7)

This prophetic vision indeed foreshadows the coming of Ming Wai along with the other two

boat-women. Besides, the tension between the husband and the ghost wife here resembles the bond between the Chinese immigrants and the cultural heritage of faraway China. What is repressed, what is forgotten, and what is left behind may come back to trail and haunt the subjects, “like an echo to a sound.”

Additionally, Ryan suggests the connection between Ming Wai and memory. As Ryan puts it, “[Richard] lets [Ming Wai] rest her hand on his arm. Her touch seems unreal, and it’s very light—light as a memory, which, for a moment, Richard is sure it is” (22). At this point, the spectral representation of Ming Wai as memory conveys “uncanny” feelings. Though not fully unpacking the enigma of the uncanny, Sigmund Freud does elaborate the potential association between the uncanny and the repressed: “It may be that the uncanny [‘the unhomely’] is something familiar [‘homely’, ‘homey’] that has been repressed and then reappears, and that everything uncanny satisfies this condition” (*The Uncanny* 152). In this regard, Ming Wai represents the surfacing of the once-familiar but repressed memory that returns to haunt the living. Moreover, the sexual act Ming Wai performs on Richard turns out to be ultimate rituals of ghost loving, hating, and haunting:

[Ming Wai] licks him and sucks on him and he feels like he’s getting weaker. [...] This is what they warn in the stories—women can steal your strength, your essence. [...] He is unsure what it is, but is sure he is losing is. [...] When it is over, when he opens his eyes again, she is above him, smiling. She seems to glow—her cheeks are flushed, her eyes shine like wet ink. (122-3)

This sexual scene reminds readers of the ghostly return and deadly embrace of Poppy See's neighbor, Old Chan's wife. Also, it demonstrates the empowerment of the female ghost over the sexually potent Richard, who courts and manipulates Poppy See and Chloe.

Like Ming Wai, So Wai and Sai Fung are wandering water ghosts in search of their human substitutes. Their arrival has a strong impact on the local bachelor culture. In Ryan's account, "The town had a few such men: split and living two lives—one in China, through paper, with a wife remembered only through a photograph, and one in America with flesh and blood" (190). Fifty-two bachelors in the town of Locke end up assiduously courting the two boat-women even though So Wai is married and searching for her lost husband who is later confirmed dead in the United States. As Huntley has it, "Chinese families were practically legislated out of existence in the United States, and a 'bachelor culture', comprised of men in their middle years or older, came to represent Chinatowns [...]" (*Maxine Hong Kingston* 43). For these Chinese men who already settled in America and were unable to send for their Chinese wives, finding an alternative in the local place would be an easier choice for them. What these men have not realized at this moment are the spectral identities of these boat-women as well as the forthcoming destruction of Locke town.

On the day of the Festival of Weaving Maiden (July Seventh in the Chinese lunar calendar), a big party is held in the Lucky Fortune Gambling Hall to celebrate the holiday and Richard's

reunion with Ming Wai. After all, it is a holiday for reunited lovers. During the party, So Wai sings a magical song of sadness that deeply touches all the guests, especially couples, and turns the entire town into a dreamy world of lovemaking. Ryan writes, “Song, like scent, is a wrist-flick to the past” (188). This song indeed makes Richard remember his early years, his family, and Ming Wai. More importantly, this song makes him think of a forbidden word: “abandonment” (188). This word “abandonment” is tied up with Richard’s identity as a Chinese immigrant. To come to the United States, he needs to leave everything behind. Yet, his haunting memory gets to him, while his earlier ambition fails him. At the tragic end of the story, both he and other townsmen cannot but pay for the act of “abandonment.”

What follows the Festival of Weaving Maiden is the Festival of the Hungry Ghost on July Fifteenth in the Chinese lunar calendar.<sup>4</sup> On this day, the heavy rain starts. Three days after the ghost festival, the levee breaks and the town of Locke is flooded. While Richard and Ming Wai are running away from the flood, Ming Wai falls into water. Richard remembers that Ming Wai cannot swim so that he jumps into water to save her. As soon as Ming Wai calls Richard’s Chinese name in the water, Richard realizes Ming Wai’s spectral identity:

Ming Wai whispers in [Richard’s] ear: Fong Man Gum—breaking through the heartbeat quiet of water-rush and he wants to sleep to the sound of her voice.

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<sup>4</sup> In *Locke 1928*, Shawna Yang Ryan mistakenly takes July the fifteen in the Chinese lunar calendar as the first day of the Ghost Month. Actually, the ghost month starts from July the first to the twenty-ninth in the lunar calendar. And the fifteenth is the so-called the Festival of the Hungry Ghost. The ghost festival activities include serving food on the tables and burning hell notes for the wandering hungry ghosts in order to keep the balance between the living and the dead.

He opens his mouth to respond and water fills it. With a start, he realizes the incongruity of her voice with the underwater world. A water ghost. He has been living with a water ghost. [...] A servant to the water god, exchanging her life for that of another. His. (220)

Out of a sense of guilt, Richard gives in to his deadly wife and dies. In this haunting climax, Ming Wai exacts her final revenge, not simply draining Richard's male essence but also taking his life away. Furthermore, she replaces her husband and regains her physical body—the only way for a water ghost to be reborn as a human. It is quite obvious that Ryan attempts to justify Ming Wai's revenge through Corlissa's thought: "Corlissa wonders about the little redemptions in [Richard's] life, because she knows only of the larger shape: he lived, he sinned, he died" (224). In this sense, Richard's death is adapted into a performance of "redemption."

While the other two boat-women fail to drown their substitute Corlissa in the flood, Ming Wai succeeds in killing Richard and thus achieves what the other abandoned wives cannot. Whereas a great number of Chinese women were abandoned and forgotten by their husbands in the course of Chinese American history, some lucky Chinese women finally made it to America, but were rejected by their husbands who were already remarried. A similar case of Moon Orchid can be found in Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*. Yet, in *Locke 1928*, the ghostly return punishes the husband who abandons, and further grants the wife a new life in America. At this point, the collective trauma of the abandoned Chinese women seems to be assuaged by Richard's redemption.

In addition to the ghostly revenge, the flood caused by the water ghosts in *Locke 1928* can be taken as an important motif. Earlier in the novel the preacher tells the story of Noah's Ark in the church. According to the Old Testament, God decides to destroy the world by flood. He instructs Noah, his faithful follower, to build a large ark to save Noah himself, his family, and animals in pairs from the destructive flood. Eventually, the sinned are cleansed, and the innocent saved. Richard's death and Ming Wai's rebirth seem to hit on the simple formula of the biblical flood. Through the mix of Chinese ghost haunting and the biblical teaching, Ryan creates a cross-cultural and historical myth of her own. Whereas Noah's descendents and the animals in pairs promise the production and reproduction of lives, the continuation of the living in Ryan's literary work relies on the ghostly reunion and replacement.

At the end of the novel, all of the women with the ghostly memories learn to deal with the aftermath of Richard's death. Corlissa prays for Richard. Poppy mourns for him. And Chloe decides to leave Locke, which has been silenced by the dead, without saying goodbye to Corlissa's young daughter Sofia, with whom she may be secretly in love. As for Ming Wai, she looks at herself in the mirror with mixed feelings of triumph and sadness. However, her recuperation leads to a new stage of life, memory, and history. As the novel concludes, "[Ming Wai] has even started bleeding again. She watches red drops bloom in the toilet water and thinks that maybe someday another life will come out of her own" (230). In this regard, Ming Wai's

identity as a water ghost is transformed into that as a capable mother with the power of giving birth to the next generation. However, the final victory of Ming Wai does not bring an end to ghost haunting. Instead, the disturbing effects from the past still remain and linger in the present.

In the words of Roger Luckhurst,

My concern with the ghost [...] is not simply with the ghost as interruptive witness of the untold histories, as if telling this history could then lay it to rest. As Derrida suggests, the ghost intersects and divides contemporaneity with a double gesture that invaginates the past and future into the present. (62)

Luckhurst's words remind readers of how the time frame of history can be interrupted in relation to the representation of ghosts. And the ghost haunting in the present straddles what happened and what will happen. Ryan in *Locke 1928* indeed tells "the untold histories" via ghosts.

Additionally, she revises the history along with the ghostly memories, thereupon transcending the past, present, and even future.

Finally, Ryan treats ghost haunting as a narrative of counter-history. As Uncle Happy tells Poppy when she asks for help, "It's all superstition. [...] There are no ghosts. There is no such thing, Little Poppy. No ghosts—only our regrets" (208). Uncle Happy does make a good connection between "ghosts" and "regrets." In other words, the return of the horrifying ghosts embodies the regrets of the early Chinese immigrants. From Ryan's feminist angle, men's regrets need to be acted out via the revenge taken by the abandoned Chinese wives. Through the revenge of the water ghosts, Ryan re-writes the local history of Locke town and re-negotiates the

cross-cultural memory of the early Chinese immigrants, thus helping readers reconsider the relationship between the past and the present, reality and myth.

Writers like Tan and Ryan do share the contemporary Chinese American ghost tradition starting from Kingston. In this case, the spectral representation in Chinese American literary texts is associated with historical and cross-cultural fabric. Ghost haunting seems to keep reminding the living of issues such as the neglected past and the emotional loss in the context of Chinese America. It is worth discussing that Tan and Ryan provide more possibilities of ghost storytelling outside the autobiographical, mother-daughter framework in the twenty-first century. While Tan is departing from Chinese America and turning global, Ryan goes to the opposite pole and re-examines a specific period of Chinese American history. Chinese American haunting, thus, can be re-defined and re-evaluated in accordance with the changes made by Tan, Ryan, and other ghost storytellers.

**CHAPTER 3**  
**HISTORICAL HAUNTING AND ETHNOSCAPES RECONSIDERED:**  
**TRAUMA, LOSS, AND VIOLENCE IN MODERN TAIWANESE FICTION**

Modern Taiwanese fiction has demonstrated the layered history in line with the collective trauma, nostalgia, and melancholy. Taiwan was invaded by Spain and Netherlands back to the seventeenth century. Then the late Ming general Zheng Chenggong expelled the Dutch colonists and established a temporary political rule in Taiwan. It was not until 1684 A.D. did the Qing government take over Taiwan and officially mark Taiwan as part of China territory for the first time in history. More than two hundred years later, Japan took Taiwan from the Qing and imposed its colonial rule on Taiwanese people for the following fifty years. After Japan's defeat in 1945, Taiwan became part of China again under the rule of Kuomintang (KMT), or the Nationalist Party. Later in 1947, Taiwan was overshadowed by the massive bloodshed of the February 28<sup>th</sup> Incident<sup>5</sup>. Finally, in 1949, the defeated KMT regime retreated from mainland China to Taiwan. From the 1950s onward, the notorious White Terror by KMT continued to hunt down political activists and social elites in Taiwan, and the mutual hatred between

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<sup>5</sup> On the evening of February 27, 1947, an elderly Taiwanese woman who sold black-market cigarettes in Taipei was pistol-whipped by the official agents of the KMT government. A number of Taiwanese people soon gathered around and tried to intervene. Things immediately went out of control, and one agitated agent fired and killed an onlooker. On February 28, the very next day, the furious crowd held a mass demonstration and asked for justice, but the armed force of the government shot the crowd and caused heavy casualties. Then the Martial Law and the March Massacre ensued and spread over different regions of Taiwan. It has been estimated that 18,000 to 28,000 Taiwanese people were killed in subsequent slaughters.<sup>5</sup> In revenge for the incident, some Taiwanese radicals started to attack Chinese civilian immigrants who were not directly involved in the massacre. For a fuller account, please see Robert Ru-shou Chen's *The Historical and Cultural Experiences of Taiwan New Cinema* [Taiwan xin dian ying de li shi wen hua jing yan]. Trans. Luo Pocheng. Taipei, Wanxiang, 1993. pp79-80.

mainlanders/outside (waisheng ren) and locals (bensheng ren) flared up. While the 'sheng-ji'<sup>6</sup> complex has been a critical source of the political and ethnic conflicts, a calling of recuperating the ancestral spirits within aboriginal communities is also rising on the Taiwanese soil.

Reflecting Taiwan's traumatic history, modern Taiwanese fiction is heavy with brutal deaths, dark shadows, and haunting ghosts. While the English word 'ghost' refers to the returning dead, its Chinese corresponding character 'gui' seems to be more complicated in terms of forms and uses. In Taiwanese literature, 'gui' can be associated with the lost soul of the dead, ancestral spirits, imperialist foreigners, and even the socially marginalized homosexuals<sup>7</sup>. On top of that, this chapter aims to examine the haunting effects of history and multiethnicity in modern Taiwan. It is also worth considering that the uses of language by Taiwanese writers from different ethnic groups represent complex experiences of haunting. Readers can see in the specific language and structure the writers employ the sensitive cultural connotations and transitions. Taiwanese fiction is Mandarin-Chinese-based in combination with local dialects like Taiwanese Hokkien<sup>8</sup>, Hakka<sup>9</sup>, and Formosans<sup>10</sup>, thus piecing together various faces of ethnic haunting. Critics like Fang-ming

Chen and Liang-ya Liou have discussed the postcolonial and postmodern features of Taiwanese

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<sup>6</sup> 'Sheng-ji' complex is a tricky situation drawn from the ethnic conflicts in Taiwan. 'Sheng-ji' refers to the province one is affiliated with. Taiwanese people can be roughly divided to two groups: ben-sheng ren (local Taiwanese) and wai-sheng ren (mainlanders).

<sup>7</sup> This chapter focuses on the significance of historical haunting, and the last chapter will highlight the relationship between ghost haunting and (homo-)sexuality.

<sup>8</sup> Taiwanese Hokkien, or Taiwanese, is the most popular dialect spoken by local Taiwanese, Chinese mainlanders, and even aborigines.

<sup>9</sup> Hakka is a Chinese language originally from southern China.

<sup>10</sup> Formosans generally refer to the languages of the Taiwanese aborigines.

literature. I would like to follow the theoretical threads and place the historically-bound ghost haunting in Taiwanese fiction within postcolonial and postmodern contexts.

In Taiwan's case, history, simply put, is traumatic and haunting, and the literary writing of the its past is loaded with shadows and phantoms. In *The Monster That Is History* (2004), David Der-wei Wang traces the literary images of monsters and connects multiple narratives of history from China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong with monstrosity and spectrality. As Wang claims, "The continued reappearance of ghosts" can be regarded as "a reminder of the incessant calamities of Chinese history" (*The Monster That Is History* 263). He further points out that Chinese and Taiwanese writers at the end of the twentieth century have made manifest "the ghostly effects of déjà vu, of uncanny re-visions of the past" (*The Monster That Is History* 272). Following Jacques Derrida's concept of hauntology, Wang indeed makes a good connection between history and ghost haunting in the field of Chinese history and literature. In his discussion of Taiwanese ghost narrative, David Wang takes into account two diverse fictional works: Chu T'ien-hsin<sup>11</sup>'s [Zhu Tianxin] novella "The Old Capital" [Gudu] and Lin Yiyun's "Mission: Ghost Hunt" [Zhuogui dadui]. Wang addresses interesting facets of phantasm from Taiwan and relates writing to the ghostly return and fin-de-siècle phantasmagoria respectively. However, to further discuss the

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<sup>11</sup> To be consistent with the Romanization of Chinese words, I always use hanyu pinyin. However, there are a few exceptions when I follow the spellings preferably used by the discussed writers/critics and those found in the English translations in the Works Cited. Chu T'ien-hsin [Zhu Tianxin] and Pai Hsien-yung [Bai Xianyong] are cases in point.

literary haunting of Taiwan, it is necessary to delineate its historical course along with ethnic divisions. The reason is that the historical haunting in Taiwanese literature is beyond Wang's scopes of Chinese diaspora and phantasmagoria and connects with the ethnic conflicts and struggles in the past of loss and violence. In short, ghost haunting in Taiwanese fiction is bound by profound ethnic tropes. Here I would like to borrow Arjun Appadurai's concept of "ethnoscape," which can be defined as follows:

By ethnoscape, I mean the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other moving groups and individuals constitute an essential feature of the world and appear to affect the politics of (and between) nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree. (Appadurai, 33)

Although Appadurai's ethnoscape pertains to the cultural dimensions of global flows, I would like to emphasize and apply its fluidity and mobility to this multicultural and multiethnic island. Taiwan has long been labeled as a hybrid culture zone where its inhabitants need to cope with diverse cultural legacies. As Taiwan has cultural and political tensions within and outside its territory with China, Japan, and even the United States, it presents extremely complicated ethnoscares in relation to the shifting identities and positions among different ethnic groups, such as the local Taiwanese, Chinese mainlanders, and indigenous people. Along with its historical complexity, Taiwanese ghost writing indeed resonates with the haunting ethnoscares.

More important, the haunting of historical trauma seems to trail the shifting ethnoscares of

Taiwan, and in this way provides inner tensions between traumatic memories and the subject's consciousness. According to Cathy Caruth,

The ability to recover the past is thus closely and paradoxically tied up, in trauma, with the inability to have access to it. And this suggests that what returns in the flashback is not simply an overwhelming experience that has been obstructed by a later repression or amnesia, but an event that is itself constituted, in part, by its lack of integration into consciousness. Indeed, the literal registration of an event—the capacity to continually, in the flashback, reproduce it in exact detail—appears to be connected, in traumatic experience, precisely with the way it *escapes* full consciousness as it occurs. (*Trauma: Explorations in Memory* 152-3)

Even though Caruth's notion of trauma narrative here is primarily related to the victims' and survivors' personal experiences, we need to take into account the interrelation between individual traumas and historical events behind the scene. As Caruth points out, both "history" and "trauma" are "never simply one's own," and "[h]istory is precisely the way we are implicated in each other's traumas" (*Unclaimed Experience* 24). Caruth's argument addresses the connection between the individual experience and the collective consciousness in terms of trauma narrative. In Taiwanese fiction, the personal traumas can be mediated by ethnic writers and put together with the historical incidents. These writers reconstruct the past that has been repressed and forgotten, in some cases with great violence, thus facilitating the coalition between trauma and repression at the background. That is, ghost haunting emerges as the product of the coalition embedded in the writers' fictional works.

With the above issues in mind, I want to explore the mutual relationship between literary

texts and collective consciousness through a haunting historical lens. To look into various periods and ethnic perspectives of haunting, I choose to analyze the works by Pai Hsien-yung [Bai Xianyong], Chu T'ien-hsin, Li Ang, and Dancing Crane [Wu He]. While Pai Hsien-yung's nostalgic writing illustrates various experiences of Chinese diaspora, such as studying abroad in America and persisting with Chinese fantasy in Taiwan, Chu T'ien-hsin transforms the singular diasporic longing and introspects the cultural ambivalence of Taiwan towards China and Japan. Unlike Pai and Chu, local Taiwanese writers like Li Ang and Dancing Crane question the military and ideological violence committed by KMT and reexamine the historical trauma of the February 28<sup>th</sup> Incident and the ensuing White Terror. Moreover, Dancing Crane thinks outside the Chinese-centric and Taiwanese-centric views in an attempt to recuperate the declining aboriginal cultures and spirits. Of course, it is impossible to cover all the ethnic writings of Taiwan in my discussion of ghost haunting. My selection is surely subjective, yet, with an aim to representing the cultural retrospection and resistance within various ethnoscaples of Taiwan. Although the above writers make manifest their political agendas in recounting the haunting history, they provide possibilities of communication among different ethnic groups. Centering around the traumatic history, these writers profoundly delineate haunting shadows of Chinese complex, the February 28<sup>th</sup> Incident, and the cultural loss of aborigines in diasporic and postcolonial contexts.

Based on the historical haunting of the ethnoscaples represented in Taiwanese fiction, I

would like to start from Pai Hsien-yung to Chu T'ien-hsin, then to Li Ang, and finally to Dancing Crane. Born in Guilin, Guangxi Province, China, Pai Hsien-yung has long been considered one of the foremost modern Chinese/Taiwanese writers in the twentieth century. His father Pai Ch'ung-hsi [Bai Chongxi] was a prestigious general of KMT. When still young, Pai moved with his family from China to Hong Kong, and finally settled in Taipei, Taiwan after the Chinese Civil War. Themes such as exile, wandering, reminiscence, and sentimentality permeate his oeuvre. When placed along with the historiography of Taiwan, Pai's works display a unique cultural and ethnic positioning in the name of Chinese diaspora. Pai's collections *Taipei People* [Taibei ren] (1971) and *New Yorkers* [Niu yue ke] (1974) can be cases in point. It is interesting to note that Pai's *New Yorkers* delineates a haunting picture of Chinese diaspora in America, while *Taipei People* presents a parallel spectacle in Taiwan. Both works divulge clear senses of historical loss and haunting. Critic Chih-ming places *New Yorkers* in the category of Asian/Chinese American studies and takes "Death of Chicago" from *New Yorkers* as an example in analyzing "spectral politics" of Chinese diaspora (27). In "Death of Chicago", the protagonist Wu Hanhun studies English literature at the University of Chicago. Ironically, his name sounds like "No Han/Chinese Soul" in Mandarin Chinese. Wu lives in a tomb-like, confined basement, and only cares about the spirits of the British writers surfacing on the pages. He neglects the telegram regarding his mother on the death bed while he is preparing for his preliminary exams. Later, he

starts to hear the calling from his mother: “You must come back. You must come back”<sup>12</sup> (Pai, *New Yorkers* 17). The ghostly calling leads to Wu’s final destruction. At the end of the story, he commits suicide in Michigan Lake on the day he gets his Ph.D. degree.

On the topic of spectral identity, Chih-ming Wang argues that Wu Hanhun straddles “Asian” and “America,” fashioning his “Chinese identity” as “hollow, insubstantial specter” (29). Due to his mother’s death and ghostly calling, Wu refuses to return to Taiwan, but he finds no proper position culturally as a Chinese, not Taiwanese, with a degree on British literature in America. His tragic death is caused by the double-layered Chinese diaspora, from China to Taiwan, then from Taiwan to America. Wu’s incompatibility and emotional loss can also be found in other stories of the collection like “Riding the Ferris Wheel” [shang mou tian lun qu], “One Day in Pleasantville” [An le xiang de yi ri], “Story of Fallen Fairy” [Zhe xian ji], “Resentment of Fallen Fairy” [Zhe xian yuan]. Take, for instance, Li Tong from “Story of Fallen Fairy.” After retreating to the United States, Li leads a debauched life surrounded by alcohol and male mates. Like Wu Hanhun’s case, Li ends up in committing suicide in a lake located in Venice, Italy, thus becoming a “lonely wandering ghost” in Europe (Pai, *New Yorkers* 84). Displaced and disillusioned, both Wu and Li represent the collective trauma and tragedy of Chinese diaspora. Geographically, culturally, and emotionally speaking, they are situated in a state of passing

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<sup>12</sup> Translation mine. I translate all the Chinese texts into English, if not otherwise provided.

through like ghostly shadows.

Beyond the wandering experiences in America, Pai's nostalgic longing and retrospection are further illustrated in a haunting city called Taipei. In *Taipei People*, Pai touches upon the nostalgic yearning for China as well as the reminiscence of the past. Shifting between the past and the present, the immigrant characters in this collection are haunted by geographical dislocation as well as interweaving memories. Through the representation of their wandering memories, a re-imagined homeland, or re-imagined China, is created. However, these immigrant mainlanders suffer from their growing disillusion in that the displaced time and space problematize their cultural identities. In this light, Pai's Taipei characters are imbued with diasporic yearning and loss at the same time. Interestingly, the title *Taipei People* juxtaposes a geographical locale and people, but suggests the detachment and alienation between the two. As Joseph S. M. Lau comments, "Pai Hsien-yung's Taipei *ren* [people] are misnomers: though they are physically present in Taipei, they are at heart diehard Szechwan [Sichuan] *ren*, Shanghai *ren*, etc. [...] The past has not only overshadowed their present, but also blocked their view of the future" (33). June Yip also asserts that Taipei people are "trapped in their inner worlds of nostalgic memory" and "unable to connect with the realities of the Taiwanese world around them" (25). Following Lau's and Yip's points, Pai's Taipei characters serve as the historical silhouettes of the past. Their nostalgic memories overtake their present existence, not to mention

the future prospect. Therefore, these mainlanders are figured as historical shadows attached to the fading past. Placed within the geographical and cultural dislocation, these characters are bound up with various sensual emotions and memories, thus demonstrating a simulacrum of the shadowy history.

In *Taipei People*, Pai Hsien-yung portrays his characters with a great variety and diversity, but they all share senses of loss and dislocation. As Shih Yi-lin has it, Pai's stories are laced with such themes as "human alienation," "desolation," "loss of tradition," "disillusion," "fading youth," and "fatalism" (195). The first story "The Eternal Snow Beauty" [Yong yuan de Yin Xueyan] opens with an eye-catching line: "Yin Hsueh-yen [Yin Xueyan] somehow never seemed to age" (Pai, *Taipei People* 2). Through Yin's dream-like social gatherings in Taipei, the mainland elites are bewitched and intoxicated by their old official titles, delicacies, and even fashions in their imagining process of the past. Yin, the eternal Snow Beauty or witch of time, seems to preserve and revitalize the best memories of the people around her. In this regard, Yin's magic seems to coincide with the so-called "ghost value," in Chris Kearney's diasporic term, which provides the "echoes of the past calling to us generations after their real force has been spent, tantalizing us with idealized visions of a stability or order or certainty of meaning" (169). Besides her embodiment of ideal dreams, Yin is also fashioned as a femme fatale causing her lovers' gradual decline and haunting death, thereby reminding us readers of the threat of being

indulgent in the cultural mirage of Chinese diaspora. Whereas loss and death seem to be inevitable, the never-aging Yin is nothing but a ghost figure in a persistent myth of Chinese diaspora.

From “The Eternal Snow Beauty” onward, Pai continues to narrate the interweaving of individual memories and official history. Take “New Year’s Eve” [Sui chu] for example. We should keep in mind that in this story the grand history is represented by means of Lai Ming-sheng’s oral memory. In ancient civilizations, either in the East or in the West, the stirring deeds of national heroes and religious leaders was passed down from generation to generation by storytellers and bards. “New Year’s Eve” centers on Lai Ming-sheng, who plays the storyteller and the unsung participant of the bloody war at the same time. It is clear that the scar on Lai’s chest has become a mark of personal memory as well as national history. But he cannot find any suitable words to further praise the brilliant victory of Taierhchuang [Taierzhang].

While Lai’s oral memory is failing, national glory is fading as well. Lai is not a military company commander any more. At the present time of the story, he is merely a purchasing agent in a hospital kitchen. The story backdrop—New Year Eve—is also significant. Chinese New Year Eve is a time for family reunion. This reunion provides characters with an opportunity to revisit their memories of the past. As immigrant mainlanders from Sichuan Province, Lai and Major Liu can merely reminisce the past and imagine their faraway homeland. It expresses the idea of

ever-changing life. At the close of the story, everyone except Lai is ready to celebrate the coming of New Year. But Lai is in the state of alcoholic intoxication and drunk with his memories of the shadowy past. Whereas Lai's oral memory represents the grand history, his vomit in the toilet evinces a sense of counter-history, and thus suggests his emotional waste as well as trauma of wandering and rootlessness. At this point, the national glory is overshadowed by the sense of loss.

Like "New Year's Eve," "Ode to Bygone Days" [Si Jiu Fu] is composed of the oral memories of the past. Whereas the former story projects the memory of grand history, the latter unveils the decadence of the old generation. The oral memories in the story are ushered in by two old women: Mamma Lo and Nanny Shun-en in response to the break between the old and new generations. Readers are informed that the toppling Li's house is located on Nanjing East Rd., Taipei (the present), and in this way provides a contrast with the Li's fancy villa in Nanjing (the past). The two old women's dialogue points to the fall of the Li family. Right after Madam Li's death, two young servants plunder the precious jewelry and run away. In addition, Young Miss falls in love with a married man and leaves the Li residence. Young Master who comes back from a foreign country becomes mentally-retarded for some unknown reason. Only the rather old Master Li and the two elderly servants remain emotionally attached to this family. Their reminiscence of the past reflects a haunting history of the declining family

Pai's "Winter Night" [Dong ye] is another example in talking about the quandary of diaspora. This short story starts with the reunion of two old friends, Yu Ch'in-lei [Yu Qinlei] and Wu Chu-kuo [Wu Zuguo], in Taipei. They were student leaders of the May Fourth Movement in China, but after retreating to Taiwan and to the United States respectively, they gradually stray from their ideals and passions. Both Yu and Wu suffer from their ideal loss. On this winter night, they decline the connection with the present and revisit the memory of their glorious past. As C. T. Hsia puts it, this short story is "an elegy on the dashed hopes of youth" (94). More important, their emotional loss is laced with the fall of written texts to which they used to be attached. The aged and crippled Yu constitutes a flagrant contrast with his young and energetic image preserved only in reminiscence. Life pressure gives rise to Yu's disillusion. And Yu stops translating Byron's poetry, and tries every chance to leave for the United States so as to make more money for his sons who are planning to go to the United States as well.

Unlike Yu, Wu Chu-kuo is an active and prestigious figure in his academic field—history; however, he has his own emotional loss:

"Oh, sure, I've written quite a few books [...]. I've even written a monograph [...]. Altogether several hundred thousand words—empty talk, all of it!" cried Wu Chu-kuo, waving his hand. "Those books," he sneered. "They are stashed away in the library, and probably only some American student working on his Ph. D. would want to flip through them." (Pai, *Taipei People* 406)

Wu teaches and studies Chinese history of Tang Dynasty in the United States. He is unwilling, or

mentally unable, to deal with modern Chinese literature. As a deserter from his ideal of youth, Wu dares not to defend himself when an American student lashes out against the May Fourth Movement in an academic convention. After all, China is not a term or nation that matches his current identity any more. Deep inside himself, he is floating and wandering back and forth, between Taiwan and his homeland—China. He wants to come back to Taiwan to settle down not because of his emotional attachment to this island, but because of a practical reason—that is, a suitable living environment. The two Taipei characters here do not belong to Taipei or Taiwan. What can be observed in them is their inner state of endless wandering and loss.

Pai also addresses similar themes of the historical shadows, haunting deaths, and construction boom of cityscape in works like “A Touch of Green” [Yi ba qing], “A Sea of Blood-red Azaleas” [Na pian xie yi ban hong de du juan hua], “Glory’s by Blossom Bridge” [Hua qiao rong ji], and “Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream” [You yuan jing meng]. Unlike the above stories with memories of historical shadows, Pai further explores the correlations between two ghostly figures in “Love’s Lone Flower” [Gu lian hua]. In this story, Pai fashions female body as a site on which memories can be imposed. Observer and narrator, “Fragrant Cloud Number Six” [Yun-fang Lao Liu] used to work in Myriad Springs Pavilion in Shanghai, but due to the civil war she moves to Taiwan and serves as a manager in Mayflower Bar. Through stream of consciousness, Fragrant Cloud’s memories of Baby Five [Wu Bao] in

China and Dainty [Juan Juan] in Taiwan are pieced together. Fragrant Cloud and Baby Five used to dream of buying a house and living together in Shanghai. They even dream to buy a little virgin singsong girl. After retreating to Taiwan and meeting Dainty, who resembles Baby Five in many aspects, Fragrant Cloud decides to fulfill this dream. Fragrant Cloud spends all of her savings (including the money she gains by selling Baby Five's hangover, a jade bracelet) on a house in Taipei. However, the house turns out to be haunted and cursed after Dainty is entangled with the King of Hell, K'o Lao-hsiung [Ke Laoxiong]. Fragrant Cloud's dream of having a house emerges with the resumption of memories of the past, and it also decomposes with Dainty's insanity.

Readers can easily find the parallel between Baby Five and Dainty through Fragrant Cloud's eyes:

I've heard it [the song "Love's Lone Flower"] sung by God knows how many girls in the Mayflower, but not one of them sang with as much bitter sorrow as Dainty, note by note as if she was pleading all the wrongs she'd suffered. I don't know why, but for just a moment the way she looked reminded me of Baby Five. Dainty and Baby Five didn't really look that much like each other; Baby Five had finer features, yet when Baby Five sang opera she had that same sorrowful look. [...] Both girls had pinched, triangular faces, pointed chins, high cheek-bones, sunken eyes; and both of them had that look of a castaway drifting to a no-good end. (Pai, *Taipei People* 236)

Both of them are singers/prostitutes in the bars/brothels. Also, they are from low social class and broken family. Baby Five is sold to the brothel. Dainty is raped by her own father, and

experiences pregnancy and abortion. And both of them are controlled and tortured by male gangsters. In brief, Dainty is not unlike a revenant or spectral remake of Baby Five. It seems that Dainty's body serves as the site of interweaving memories. However, as placed within different time and space, Baby Five and Dainty end their life in different ways. Baby Five is tortured to death by Hua the Third [Hua San], and before her death, she invokes a curse: "I'll turn into a ghost and hunt him down" (Pai, *Taipei People* 252). Interestingly, Dainty turns out to be a female avenger and knocks K'o Lao-hsiung's head open on the Ghost Festival, signifying the return of the wandering ghost. Dainty's revenge chimes with Baby Five's curse. However, Dainty loses her sanity forever. Dainty's insanity is complicated for some reasons. At first, Dainty is burdened with the "unatoned-for sins" not only from Baby Five but also from her demented mother and Graceful Phoenix [Feng Juan], a prostitute tortured to death by K'o Lao-hsiung. Graceful Phoenix's miserable death repeats the tragedy of Baby Five. Also, Dainty's scar bit by her insane mother on the throat indicates her inherited misfortune and foreshadows her insanity at the end of the story.

Fragrant Cloud's memorial transition between Shanghai and Taipei problematizes the narrative continuance in this story. While Baby Five is a Chinese, Dainty is a local Taiwanese. Whereas Baby Five sings the traditional Chinese opera "Lovers Reincarnate"<sup>13</sup> [Zai Sheng

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<sup>13</sup> *Zai Sheng Yuan* is a traditional Chinese opera about two star-crossed lovers who overcome challenges and get

Yuan], Dainty sings the Taiwanese song “Love’s Long Flower.” The literal meaning of “Reincarnate” [zai sheng] is “rebirth,” thus suggesting the reincarnation of Baby Five in the form of Dainty(Ou-yang Tzu 165). Of course, judged by the year of her birth, Dainty is unlikely to be a reincarnated figure of Baby Five, but her body indeed inherits the misfortune. The song “Love’s Lone Flower” sheds light on the destined solitude for both Dainty and Fragrant Cloud. After killing K’o Lao-hsiung, Dainty becomes insane and is confined in a mental asylum of Hsinchu. As Fragrant Cloud claims,

[Dainty] didn’t know us any more; only after I called her name several times did she smile a little. That triangular little face of hers looked even paler and thinner. But, oddly enough, her smile no longer had that touch of sadness; instead she had taken on a dash of mad, childlike innocence. (Pai, *Taipei People* 255)

While other sensual memories coincide with the nostalgic remembrance of homeland, Dainty’s mental regression is associated with a sign of forgetting. Without any question, her body carries the traces of traumatic memories and history. Dainty’s body repeats and echoes the tragedy of the past, but it takes more than what she can bear. Accordingly, her amnesia stands as the only way to tackle the traumatic past.

Through various modes of memories, Pai examines the inner complication of immigrant mainlanders. These Taipei characters are unable to let go of their reminiscence of the past.

Furthermore, the geographical and cultural dislocation problematizes their recognition of the

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together in the end.

present. Their wandering memories constitute a dream homeland and represent the hiatus of history. Therefore, Pai re-creates an imagined homeland and provides himself with an emotional outlet for nostalgia. In *Taipei People*, there is no way for immigrant characters to completely get rid of their nostalgia in that their imagined China only exists in the interweaving memories.

Memories keep alive their primitive yearning, but they fail to catch up with the fleeting time. As a result, their reminiscence of China emerges as a sense of eternal loss and lack, thus making the transcendence of nostalgia impossible. The re-imagined China, in this light, turns out to be an intangible cultural matrix, loaded with rosy pictures as well as haunting effects.

From 1980s onward, Pai focused on the restoration and reform of the Kunqu Opera, a form of the traditional Chinese opera, which was very popular in premodern China. He devoted his attention to the classical ghost romance *The Peony Pavilion* [Mudan ting], a play written by Tang Xianzu in the Ming dynasty. This play also pertains to an intertextual repetition in Pai's earlier work "Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream." Pai's efforts on staging the juvenile version of *The Peony Pavilion*, detailing the love in the dream, the tragic death, the ghostly romance and resurrection, and finally, the reunion of lovers. Instilling new looks/takes into the classical Chinese opera, Pai offers a unique cultural remake in response to the ghostly shadows.

Like Pai, Chu T'ien-hsin is categorized as a 'waisheng' writer in Taiwan. Yet, Chu's writing seems to be more complicated in terms of multicultural diversity and expressions in the

fluid public space and the individual mindset. Born in Taiwan as a second-generation mainlander, Chu's position of writing pertains to a sense of emotional ambivalence. There is no doubt that Chu's political view is relatively pro-China; however, she does not share Pai and other first-generation writers' desperate nostalgic longing, but shifts to a cross-cultural mix in postmodern and postcolonial contexts. In the words of Liang-ya Liou,

Due to their personal or parents' Chinese experiences and the grand-China education operated by KMT, it is not easy for mainland writers to identify with the historical view of Taiwan centrism. However, some of them started to reflect upon and adjust [their view] because of the PRC's intense pressure on Taiwan in the 1980s and 1990s as well as the stimulation of the local Taiwanese movements. (76)

Chu is surely one of those who provide retrospection and introspection in literary writing. Chu questions the KMT rule and self-examines her cultural quandary, but no matter how hard she tries, there is an invisible string connecting the bewildering present with the shadowy past. In her writing, Chu's Taipei characters are not insubstantial Chinese shadows like most of Pai's. Instead, these figures are from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Critics like David Wang and Chang Ta-chuen (Zhang Dachun) have discussed Chu's identity as a writer with 'an old soul' [lao ling hun], which recollects the old, the dead, and the missing. Herein Chu's "old soul" consorts with the historical shadows and revenants, and in this way shapes a ghostly vision of the past. That said, Chu's "In Remembrance of My Buddies From the Military Compound" [Xiang wo juan cun de xiong di men] (1992) and "The Old Capital"

pertain to a complex mechanism of cultural and internal memories. Moreover, her lively and discursive narrative displays a spectral reflection of the social fabric and individual psyche.

In “In Remembrance of My Buddies From the Military Compound,” Chu sensitively narrates the female consciousness of ‘she’, which can mirror part of the author herself. The female protagonist’s memory starts from her early life in the military compound to her change of locale and attitude. As Chu writes in the story,

That year, she moved away from the military compound and moved to the outskirts of the city—a new community with some mainlanders, numerous native Taiwanese, and various walks of life. [She was] just like a river flowing into the sea and losing various forms of recognition and connection within its original clan of water. (“In Remembrance of My Buddies” 77)

Chu’s words not only reflect the emotional perplexity and uncertainty of the individual, but also reveal unique ethnoscapes of Taiwan—that is, a cross-cultural phenomenon of ethnic interflows.

After leaving the military compound, ‘she’ re-examines her relations to the KMT government and to the isolated island Taiwan, and further reconsiders the cultural position of

second-generation mainlanders. More interestingly, the female character marries a local

Taiwanese man, thus putting her former cultural belief in jeopardy. ‘She’ eventually realizes that

her emotional anxiety and uneasiness are caused by an unconscious sense of cultural

rootlessness.

Whereas the first-generation Chinese immigrants bear the collective anxiety of Chinese

diaspora, the second-generation mainlanders like the female lead suffer from “the trauma of feeling lost and not being accepted”(Liou 77). Besides, the female character’s emotional ambiguity is cross-culturally transformed and locally transplanted. Along with Chu’s old soul, the female character’s attachment to China and the KMT regime is mediated through the military compound in Taiwan, and thereby problematizes the absolute cultural loyalty. In this regard, Chu modifies the conventional understanding of the mainlanders, despite her (un-)conscious pro-KMT or pro-China views. From Chang Ta-chun’s perspective, “The old soul represents a desire to freeze or stop the time flow and serves as a register to reconstruct history or memory through fiction” (5). In addition to her reconsideration of history and memory, Chu makes it both public and personal by revisiting the shadowy past as well as calling her old buddies from the military compound.

In “The Old Capital,” Chu further elaborates the functions of politics and memories. This time she delineates the urban construction and historical decadence of Taipei, and also marks pronounced cultural and geographical shifts between Taiwan and Japan in a postcolonial context. Taipei, under Chu’s eye, becomes an old city of ghostly memories and figures. David Wang argues, “Doubly alienated, [Chu T’ien-hsin] sees in Taipei a space where memory has failed and history has been derailed. All that remains is vacuity, breeding amnesia as much as anamnesis” (*The Monster That Is History* 268). At the intersection of “amnesia” and “anamnesis,” Chu plays

with the shadowy figures in response to the ghostly return of the past. For example, at the opening of the novel, the repetition of the phrase “Back then” highlights a rupture between the present (now) and the past (then). This sort of rupture may also point to a hint of cultural and individual loss.

It is worth considering that the representation of memories in “The Old Capital” is not only culturally sensitive but also sexually ambiguous. Interestingly, the author writes in a second-person narrative of the female lead ‘you’. We may read ‘you’ here as the extension of ‘she’ from “In Remembrance of My Buddies From the Military Compound” because the two female characters come from military compounds, get married with native Taiwanese men, and share similar senses of identity crisis in relation to the complicated ghost history of Taiwan. In Chu’s account, numerous ghosts are wandering and lingering in Taipei: the ghosts of French soldiers, the ghosts in the neighborhood, the fox spirits, the ghost of the famous Taiwan Confucian scholar Chen Weiying, etc. Moreover, the mainlanders like the female protagonist are also figured as ethnic ghosts who are alienated and excluded by politically fanatic native Taiwanese.

However, Chu not only intermingles Chinese nostalgia with postcolonial shadows in the story, but revolves around a female-female love entanglement. The female lead ‘you’ has made manifest female-female affections for her best friend A since high school. Both ‘you’ and A make

boyfriends in high school, but they are emotionally attached to each other. After graduation, A leaves for the United States and studies Taiwan issues in the academy. One day 'you' gets a fax from A who sets up a reunion in Kyoto, Japan. But, 'you' returns to Taiwan earlier than scheduled without meeting with A. Back in Taipei, 'you' rediscovers the urban construction and historical ruins of Taipei. Chu's female-oriented writing and traveling deconstruct the traditional view of history and locality, and in this way lays bare an intriguing form of triple-crossing in terms of postcoloniality, homosexuality, and spectralness.

We also need to keep in mind that memories in the story are evoked by means of various senses such as vision, hearing, smell, and taste. At this point, memory turns out to be the very source of cross-cultural imagining. On top of that, the female protagonist's traumatic memories of her individual past can be projected on a bigger screen as those of the collective past. Chu's writing functions in this text as a medium to recapture the fading past and mourn for the urban progress in contrast to the historical loss. As suggested above, the functions of memory can be complemented by the spectral presences. As Jacques Derrida in *Specters of Marx* claims, "Haunting belongs to the structure of every hegemony" (37). Haunting ghosts and phantoms may provide a counter-discourse blurring the boundaries between the past, the present, and the future. From the angle of hauntology, "The Old Capital" can be read as a haunting text in which 'you' fails not to recollect the shadowy past, thus demonstrating her cultural persistence and emotional

alienation in postcolonial Taipei.

Finally, the female protagonist's traveling and loitering may echo the cultural flows of human subjects (and plants) in response to the endless haunting of spectral history. As Chu vividly puts it,

No, no, it's definitely not because there were chrysanthemums and osmanthus (if your father had come from another province), hibiscuses and tree orchids (if your father was local Taiwanese), or wisterias and arhat pines (if your ancestors had spoken Japanese), or eucalyptuses and breadfruit trees (if your ancestors had fought in the South Pacific, even Australia, as imperial soldiers). ("The Old Capital" 128)

Like "In Remembrance of My Buddies From the Military Compound," "The Old Capital" records the unique ethnoscaapes of Taiwan with respect to a history of mobility stretching from Taipei to Kyoto, to New Jersey, to the South Pacific, and to Australia. According to Jen-yi Hsu, Walter Benjamin's concept of *flanerie* or *flâner* can be associated with the spectral loitering in

"The Old Capital":

*Flânerie*, in terms of physical wandering and mnemonic loitering, is therefore capable of producing an uncanny, or *unheimlich* temporal-spatial dimension out of the present, familiar (*heimlich*) urban topography. [...] [T]he loiterly subject is a spectral subject who seeks to confront those ghosts, instead of dispelling them, in the hope of interrogating the legitimacy of the dominant representational system and its ideologies (551)

Straddling amnesia and recollection, Chu narrates a border-crossing, wandering experience together with a ghostly revision of historical rupture and cultural legacy. If Chu's story represents "an individual and collective fear of historical amnesia" (Tang 391), we can safely relate her

repeated imagining of Peach Blossom Grove or Peach Blossom Spring to a hint of the elapse of time as well as a search for emotional escape.

Chu's obsession with death and wandering ghosts can also be found in her collections like *The Elapse of Time* [Shi yi shi wang] and *Wanderer* [Man you zhe]. It is also interesting to note that Chu sometimes deal with the issue of the dead/absent father figure. For example, in "Sail Away" [Chu hang] (1999), the narrator accidentally conjures up the ghost of the National Great Man, assumedly former president of Taiwan Chiang Kai-shek, through the ghost-calling ritual Plate Immortal [Die xian]. The ghost of the Great Man reveals that he is right now in the Eastern Sea, vaguely pertaining to a private university in Taiwan or the East China Sea, east of China. Again, the Great Man's statement suggests a state of ghostly lingering as well as geographical/cultural crossing.

Besides the absence and presence of the symbolic national father, Chu takes into account the death and return of the real father. In her short story "Someone is Afraid of Ghosts" [You ren pa gui] (1983), the male lead Wang Dongming is extremely scared of ghosts. Ironically, his residence is located right next to a public cemetery hill. He always sees ghosts following him home, looming behind curtains or in the ceilings. To ward off the haunting specters, he invents his own way to exorcize the ghosts by tightly clenching his fists. But after he accidentally sees a human skull on the cemetery hill, his fear returns, and so do the haunting ghosts. The story

reaches the climax when Dongming stares at his father's corpse:

On the day of the funeral, Dongming sees his father again. [...] [His father] wears burial clothes and hats, with full makeup. He looks good, not even slightly different from his former looks. Dongming is preoccupied and has no clue. [...] A body without soul is so helpless without dignity. Has Father become a ghost? Clueless. Clueless. (Chu, "Someone is Afraid of Ghosts" 126)

It is worth remembering that Chu's ghost writing here can be related to the fear of hollowness as well as the absence of the father. The dead father figure here can also be extended and read from a cultural perspective of mainlanders. Moreover, Tongming may serve as an emotional reflection of Chu herself. It is obvious that Chu is deeply attached to her father Chu Hsi-ning (Zhu Xining), who died in 1998 and left his last work *Family Biography of Hua Taiping* [Hua Taiping Jia Zhuan] unfinished. Sixteen year after "Someone is Afraid of Ghosts," Chu wrote down "The Author of *Family Biography of Hua Taiping* and I" [Hua Taiping Jia Zhuan de zuozhe yu wo] in memory of her father's last days. Placed side by side, the two stories formulate very interesting intertextual relations. As Chu concludes the story,

Father is finding the path for me. He knows I am afraid of darkness, ghosts, illness, pain, and death. He used to tease me, "A villain has no guts." [E ren mei dan] So he staged a show—peace in sickness, firmness on his way. He even wears a smile in his last portrait. I believe, in the distant future, at a critical moment, he will break in the door and help me when I scream, "Da, Help!" (Chu, "The Author of Hua Taiping Jiazhuan and I" 167)

While the growing fear returns to Dongming after his father's death, Chu finally seems to discover her own way to deal with the loss of the father and cultural legacy. Interestingly enough,

her father's last looks differs from that of Dongming's. Although the ethnic shadows in the ghost city are still lurking in the dark and can never be laid, Chu starts to exorcize the cultural and emotional haunting from within, with an imagining of the return of her beloved father.

Whereas Pai's and Chu's fictional works represent the cultural loss and emotional exile of the first- and second-generation mainlanders, local Taiwanese writers provide a wide range of topics in relation to the social and political conflicts in Taiwan. Earlier novelists like Chen Ying-zhen, Huang Chun-ming and Wang Zhen-he already offered the significant texts of nativist literature of Taiwan in the 1970s. While Huang and Wang focus on the issues of social realism with respect to the local life of the lower class, politically rebellious Chen addresses his once-taboo pro-China and Marxist/socialist views. The rise of local consciousness in their texts further brought to fore the critical debate between the nativist literature and the modernist literature in the late 1970s. In the 1980s, the literary works by writers like Li Qiao reflect upon the political and capitalist issues but circumvent the repressed historical trauma. Since the lifting of the Martial Law in 1987, Taiwanese literature has been flourishing and exploring different social and political dimensions of Taiwan: (post-)modernity, (post-)colonialism, and gender politics. Moreover, special attention has been directed to the relatively sensitive, traumatic tragedies like the 2/28 Incident and the Musha [Wushe] Incident.

In the 1990s, ideologically perceptive writers like Li Ang and Dancing Crane take into

account the local consciousness against the national narrative of the KMT government. It is important to note that many local writers, despite their diverse political agendas, have written about the historical haunting effects of the 2/28 Incident and the White Terror over the course of their literary careers, thus offering complex narratives of counter-history. Without any question, the 2/28 Incident has been figured as a historical trauma for immigrant mainlanders and, especially, for local Taiwanese. This traumatic incident is triggered by “KMT corruption and monopolistic control over the island’s economy” (Yip 105). Also, it provokes the mutual antagonism between Chinese mainlanders and Taiwanese locals. In this sense, local Taiwanese writers with pro-Taiwan views are worth discussing in that their native consciousness delivers “Taiwanese oppositionists’ reconstruction of Taiwanese collective memory of victimization and resistance” (Hsiau 26). Beyond the dominant national discourse of Taiwan, writers like Li Ang and Dancing Crane cast haunting shadows of the historical trauma of Taiwan through the representation of the February 28<sup>th</sup> Incident and White Terror.

Li Ang, whose real name is Shi Shuduan, was born in Lugang Township, Zhanghua County, Taiwan. She is famous for her works “Butcher’s Wife” [Sha Fu] (1983) and “Everyone Puts Their Incense Sticks in the Beigang Burner” [Beigang xiang lu ren ren cha] (1997) in relation to feminist consciousness and political satire respectively. In *The Maze Garden* [Mi yuan] (1991) and “Bloody Sacrifice of the Make-up Face” [Cai zhuang xue ji] (1997), she presents the

historical shadows of the February 28<sup>th</sup> Incident and revises the political and ethnic conflicts from a gender-based perspective. The story of *The Maze Garden* revolves around the rise and fall of the mysterious and fancy garden, Han Yuan, of the Zhu family in Lucheng, Li Ang's variation of Lugang, in which the female protagonist Zhu Yinghong (Ayako) grows up. Its narrative shifts between Zhu's reminiscence of the haunting past under KMT's political oppression and her obsession with Lin Xigeng, a successful C.E.O. of an international real-estate developer, in the present. Also, the inner voices of Zhu herself and the letters of Zhu's father Zhu Zuyan fill the gap between the individual (sexual) anxiety and the historical trauma.

Zhu Zuyan suffers from the White Terror after the 2/28 Incident. When she is still a little girl, her father is arrested by special agents and charged with involvement in treacherous communist activities. Later he is set free due to severe illness but kept under KMT surveillance. Herein Han Yuan becomes a haunted residence with endless nightmares for both Zhu Zuyan and Zhu Yinghong. Since his release, Zhu Zuyan has become a fainéant merely lamenting about his uselessness and being indulgent in photography, stereo sets, and Mercedes Benz sedans. Unable to fight against the 'repressive state apparatus', he cannot but recede from his former political concerns.

As for Zhu Yinghong, she is terrified by the investigator's violent threat when she is just a third grader. As the investigator angrily talks to her, "Say it! Tell me that your father planned to

revolt against the government. If you don't, I will throw you into the jail. There will be ghosts coming after you at night, Headless Ghost, Hanging Ghost..." (Li Ang, *The Maze Garden* 61-2). We can clearly see in this coercive statement the haunting threats under the atrocious KMT rule. More important, Zhu can never escape from the recurring nightmare scenarios of her father's arrest and ghastly looks after release. As Li Ang narrates the scene when Zhu sees her father, who finally returns home from prison, "Zhu Yinghong lifted her head in haste and saw her father's face. His swollen and cadaverous white face is laden with a deep apprehension. That sort of anxiety continuously emerges in Zhu's memory" (*The Maze Garden* 66). The narrations regarding the anxious, ghostlike face of Zhu's father are repeated time and again throughout the entire novel, showing Li Ang's attempt to highlight the repetition of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Examining the recurring nightmares of trauma, we need to bear in mind that Zhu Yinghong's emotional expression can be laced with historical accounts. As Li Ang starts the first chapter with an opening in Zhu's composition entitled "I"—"I was born at the end of year 1895, when the First Sino-Japanese [Jiawu] War ended" (Li Ang, *The Maze Garden* 21). As a matter of fact, it is impossible that she was born in 1895. If it is true, she would be over fifty years old when she writes her composition in elementary school. However, Zhu Zuyan provides a special reading of this line: ".....I used to think, the First Sino-Japanese War is a beginning and an end

for Taiwanese people. Since then, the destiny of Taiwanese has been determined fatalistically” (Li Ang, *The Maze Garden* 32). His words indicate an important facet concerning the (post-)coloniality of Taiwan. After the Japanese colonization, Taiwan is faced with another form of colonial/domineering power—the KMT, which, from his angle, is more violent and corrupt than Japan. In this sense, the colonial past of Taiwan is overlapped with the political repression in the present. Zhu Zuyuan and Zhu Yinghong, thus, become the refrain and witness of the haunting historical shadows.

It is also worth discussing the ancestral spirits of the Zhu family as well as the mysterious garden. As its title *The Maze Garden* suggests, Han Yuan of the Zhu residence is indeed like a cultural maze. As Lin Fang-mei argues,

[Han Yuan] is loaded with ambiguity and paradox. Han Yuan [菡園 Garden of Water Lily] sounds the same as Han Yuan [漢園 Garden of Han<sup>14</sup>]. Its original design aims to present the traditional cultures of Chinese Confucian scholars, but Zhu Zuyan tries to grow trees suitable for the climate of the island in order to show the local characteristic of Taiwan. (161-2)

Lin’s argument on Han Yuan can be further related to a form of “hybridity,” which pertains to “Taiwanese culture” and “the historical memory of Taiwan” (Liou 180). Besides, its mystery and inscrutability point to the complicated cultural hybridity, translation, and mutation of Taiwan, which is also represented in the Zhus’ family line. The Chinese pirate Zhu Feng is probably the

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<sup>14</sup> The Han dynasty (206 BC-220 AD) is regarded as one of the greatest periods of Chinese history in terms of military expansion and cultural dissemination. Ever since, “Han” has become a general term to express pan-Chineseness even in the modern times (e.g. the Han culture and the Han people).

first ancestor of Zhus' who comes to Taiwan from China. More interestingly, Zhu Feng's Taiwanese wife Chen has mixed blood of Chinese, Taiwanese indigenous, and Dutch. Unfortunately, the hybridity of the family and the garden does not bring in lively energy. What remains is the endless loss and haunting. As mentioned earlier, Han Yuan is not unlike a haunted garden where, as Lin Xigeng tells Zhu Yinghong twice, the Zhus' multi-ethnic ancestors looming and watching in the darkness. At this point, historical memories and shadows never fade away but intermingle with each other.

The novel ends in Zhu Yinghong's giving away the garden and making it a public space for all Taiwanese people under the keeping of a private foundation, not any repressive state organization. At the public ceremony of announcing the donation of Han Yuan, an expert on historical architecture gives a speech in praise of Zhu Zuyan's remodeling and photography of the garden, both of which help to preserve its historical heritage. Finally, it turns out that Zhu Zuyan, though politically castrated, plays the role as a cultural keeper recording historical remains as well as local consciousness. This ending also delivers a possibility of the revision of the haunting past as well as the representation of the historical shadows.

Like *The Maze Garden*, Li Ang's "Bloody Sacrifice of the Make-up Face" is related to the impact of the February 28<sup>th</sup> Incident. Still, there are some discrepancies between the two. While the narrative in *The Maze Garden* shifts between the past and the present, "Bloody Sacrifice of

the Make-up Face” is set in the modern time in remembrance of the traumatic past. While the political violence is somehow veiled and mediated through second-handed information and (re-)imagining in the former text, Li Ang directly engages the bloody memories through the third-person narration, individual voices, and historical accounts in parenthesis in the later.

In “Bloody Sacrifice of the Make-up Face,” Li Ang takes into account the (mis-)representation of the February 28<sup>th</sup> Incident in a sympathetic yet parodic way. The plot unfolds with multiple narratives centering around MaMa Wang’s tragic story, a memorial activity of the incident, and a rumor about the first public exhibition of “Portraits of the Dead” [死の寫真], which are believed to be detailed photographs about a dead victim of the incident. The above materials make clear an interweaving of the individual and collective memories of the historical trauma.

MaMa Wang’s husband is arrested under the charge of treason on the next day after their wedding and soon put to death, leaving her a son. Due to the collective fear of the White Terror, nobody is willing to provide substantial support for MaMa Wang. She, though well-educated, needs to raise her son by herself as a make-up artist for dead people. Over the years, she has to put up with the violent and sexual harassment from the official agents of KMT. Years later, her son grows up and becomes a medical doctor. MaMa Wang starts to side with anti-KMT radicals and passionately participates in protest activities against the government. Not until she finds out

her son has contracted AIDS does she realize that her son is a gay man with male mates and that in the past years a suspicious agent sexually molests and violates her young son. Eventually, MaMa Wang needs to put on the death make-up for her own son.

Aside from MaMa Wang, characters like the female writer and the director of documentary videos also provide different takes on the incident. Before the female writer is being interviewed, she watches TV news about a fire and is terrified to find out the young make-up artist who just helped her to put on the make-up already died in the fire. An old lady besides the female writer laments,

Today must be an unlucky day. That is the reason why the *qi* (or *chi*) of injustice is so heavy. Look, more than sixty people died [in the fire]. When I was a kid, I heard that this place is where the 2/28 Incident started. [...] So many deaths, so many vengeful spirits. It has been almost fifty years since the incident and the spirits of the dead are not properly mollified. They stay in the city without any place to go. They linger around and search for human substitutes. No wonder more than sixty people died. They are all called on [by the vengeful spirits of the 2/28 Incident]. (Li Ang, “Bloody Sacrifice of the Make-up Face” 211)

At this point, Li Ang skillfully mixes the historical shadows in the past and the haunting deaths in the present so as to stress the victimization of the dead in the February 28<sup>th</sup> Incident and subsequent events. At the same time, amateur plays about the 2/28 Incident are staged along with the ceremony and parade, thereby re-casting the ghostly shadows. In the case of the documentary film director, he eventually discovers that no matter how hard he tries to grasp the authentic takes during the memorial ceremony, what he can really videotape and record in his camera is nothing

but darkness.

Through the first memorial ceremony and parade of this traumatic incident, personal memory and collective memory of the traumatic past are intertwined with each other and juxtaposed in the postmodern contexts of Taiwan, demonstrating a subtle and complicated picture of haunting history. Significantly, this meta-fiction manifests the complication of reality-and-fiction and further demonstrates a parody of the past. In this story, death can be (mis)represented in the process of masquerading, first MaMa Wang's dead son, then the female writer, and finally the returning dead in the 2/28 Incident. It is true that this incident has widened the gulf between the immigrant mainlanders and the native Taiwanese for decades. Since it is impossible to easily let go of the traumatized memories, the historical gap inbetween remains unbridgeable.

Obviously, Li Ang attempts to criticize KMT's atrocities in the 2/28 Incident and during the period of the White Terror. However, the insistence on evoking and representing historical trauma can be problematic sometimes. It is droll to examine the parallel between the exaggerated theatrical performance and the mechanically textualized history. Dislocated in the (post-)modern era and misrepresented by the politically indifferent young generation, the chronic sufferings of Taiwanese people are adapted into a series of slapsticks. In contrast to the ridiculous drama performance, the "Portraits of the Dead" serves as a sublime record of the traumatic past. These

portraits are highly expected by the female writer and the family members of the victims in the 2/28 Incident, but those pictures remain unexposed throughout the entire story. Along with the marginalized videotaping under official censorship, this novella seems to embody the failure of representation and the difficulty of narration. In the long run, putting on the make-up for the dead and for the living may be an ideological method to beautify or to cover up the lingering trauma.

In the last section of this chapter, I would like to devote my full attention to Dancing Crane, who represents “one of the most important phenomena in Taiwanese literature of the 1990s,” in the words of David Wang (*Into the New Millennium* 299). While each of the above three writers has clear literary agendas in response to the specific ethnic haunting, Dancing Crane’s writing pertains to multiple ethnoscaapes of Taiwan and various spectral identities. His unruly language and sarcastic tone deviate from the traditional route of Taiwanese fiction writing, but his profound insights into social, political, and even sexual issues make his novels impossible to ignore. Dancing Crane’s writing career can be dated back to the 1970s, when he used the pseudonym “Chen Jing-hua”<sup>15</sup> and presented two works, “Peony Autumn” [Mudan qiu] (1974) and “Tiny Incense” [Wei xi de yi xian xiang] (1978). In the 1970s, there was a heated debate on Taiwanese literature between the camp of modernism and that of nativism. “Tiny Incense” artfully straddles modernist consciousness and nativist narrative, and in this way came into

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<sup>15</sup> The name Jing-hua is borrowed from the Chinese idiom “Jing hua shui yue,” which literally means the flowers in the mirror and the moon in the water, thus suggesting fleeting illusions.

notice in literary circles. Dancing Crane has published novels and collections of novellas, including *Ruminating on Ah Bang-Kalusi* [Si suo Abang Kalusi] (1997), *Remains of Life* [Yusheng] (1999), *Ghosts and Fairies* [Guier yu ayao] (2000), *Sadness* [Beishang] (2001), a collection of his earlier works in the 70s and 90s, *The Sea of the 17-Year-Old* [Shiqi sui zhi hai] (2002), *Dancing Crane Danshui* [Wu He Danshui] (2002), and *Chaos* [Luan mi] (2007).

Like the writers discussed earlier, Dancing Crane also takes into account the historical trauma of Taiwan in relation to haunting spirits and shadows. He brings into focus various topics, including Taiwan's colonial past, the February 28<sup>th</sup> Incident, and even the Musha Incident, in which a group of aborigines killed more than one hundred Japanese colonists, women, and children. Dancing Crane occupies a significant place in this chapter because his experimental writing deals with haunting subjects related to multiple ethnic minorities, such as the trauma of the victims in/after the 2/28 Incident, the loss of aboriginal cultures, and the marginality of homosexuality. Beyond one specific dimension of history, we can see in Dancing Crane's haunting texts the fluidity of the ethnoscaples within the framework of postcolonial and postmodern Taiwan. As shown in his earlier works, it is difficult to place Dancing Crane in a specific writing camp because of his heterogeneous writing. His heterogeneous writing challenges the political center and opens up space for the marginalized groups.

From 1981 to 1991, he quit writing and lived as a recluse in Danshui, a seaboard town in

Taipei County, Taiwan. After ten years of reclusion, Chen left Danshui and began his journey far into aboriginal tribes and mountains. He put into words his passion for his native land Taiwan and stood out conspicuously as novelist Dancing Crane in the 1990s. Dancing Crane is actually the name of a tableland in the eastern area of Taiwan where the Amis aborigines have lived for generations. Chen employs Dancing Crane as his penname not only because he is deeply touched by the “figurative image of dancing cranes” but also because he attempts to identify himself with “the native soil” (N. Li 57). With such a romantic penname, Dancing Crane, ironically, is obsessed with the grotesque and gothic representation of sex, politics, and trauma.

In “Tiny Incense,” Dancing Crane leads readers to examine the haunting history of a family. The idle narrator of the story lives in a haunted mansion with his grandfather, wife, and son. The narrator’s father was recruited by the Japanese colonists during the World War II. Later he passes away in the same year he returns home, thus evoking haunting memories in the house. Also, the other family members are presented with ghostlike features. As the narrator argues, “We are all lingering ghosts under the colonial rule” (Dancing Crane, “Tiny Incense” 197). The only human-like figure in the story is Second Uncle, who leaves the haunted house and opens up his own business. As described by Second Uncle, “[The macabre house is] dilapidated, shady and humid, filled with ghosts. Damn it! Lots of ghosts” (Dancing Crane, “Tiny Incense” 171). It seems that the historical haunting never fades away as the narrator continuously lights incense

sticks in the ancestral shrine of the house. The story ends in the narrator's awakening and retrieving his previous job in order to let his son receive the best education. His awakening results from his fear that the old family mansion can never be located in the map some day. With such tiny incense, the cultural and family legacy will have a chance to be passed down, though in a spectral setting. *Dancing Crane* thus provides religious meanings from the folk culture of Taiwan, such as the lingering spirits, ancestral worshipping, and Taoist rituals, in response to the significance of haunting.

In addition to the (post-)colonial trauma in "Tiny Incense," *Dancing Crane* explores the spectacle of Taiwanese folk faith in "Excavating Bones" [Shi gu] (1993). The narrator of the story sees his mother return as a ghost in his dream. In this light, he suggests to his family that they excavate his mother's bones and resettle them in order to appease the dead. In "Investigation: A Narrative" [Diao cha: xushu] (1993), *Dancing Crane*, touches upon the haunting effects of the 2/28 Incident and plays with multiple narratives of historical trauma. When the male narrator is merely ten years old, his father is arrested during the 2/28 Incident and never comes home. Then two investigators visit him after the narrator is over fifty in an attempt to discover the truth regarding the incident. Yet, the authentic information about his father's disappearance/death can never be attained. After all, the narrator's father is merely "a historical bubble" (*Dancing Crane*, "Investigation: A Narrative" 128), which can easily be neglected.

Furthermore, the narrative of the incident, as the narrator admits, is determined by the representation of memory, which can be unreliable sometimes. Yet, the trauma about the lingering dead will surface time and again, thereby bridging individual and collective memories as well as reconstructing the haunting past.

More interestingly, Dancing Crane resorts to aboriginal issues like the lingering ancestral spirits in the indigenous communities despite his identity as a local Taiwanese. Along with the rise of aboriginal consciousness, this topic has been very popular in the past two decades in the indigenous writing. Famous works include “The Last Hunter” [Zuihou de lie ren] by Topas Tamapima whose Chinese name is Tian Yage, and “Children Who Forgotten by the Ancestral Spirits” [Zuling yiwang de haizi] by Liglave A-wu.<sup>16</sup> Both stories deal with the alienation between the indigenous people in the present and the lingering ancestral spirits from the past. It is worth noting that Dancing Crane may be the first local Taiwanese writer that makes tenuous links with aboriginal spirits in his writing and receives scrupulous attentions from both aboriginal and Taiwanese critics in the academy. *Ruminating on Ah Bang-Kalusi* can be a case in point. This novel is dominated by multiple narratives: the local Taiwanese photographer Ah Bang, the Rukai<sup>17</sup> [Lukai] aborigine Kalusi, and the narrator, assumingly Dancing Crane himself. As

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<sup>16</sup> Topas Tampima’s Chinese name is Tian Yage, while Liglave A-wu’s is Gao Zhenhui.

<sup>17</sup> The aborigines in Taiwan can be divided into more than ten aboriginal peoples, such as Atayal, Saisiyat, Bunun, Tsou, Rukai, Paiwan, Puyuma, Amis, and so on.

Liang-ya Liou argues,

Through the communication between multiple voices, the narrator presents the damage to the Rukai culture caused by Japan, Han people, and Christian civilization, making the loss of the ancestral spirits, traditional cultural craftsmanship, and oral history. (90)

Liou's argument is valid to a great extent. While Ah Bang's photographs grasp the visual fragments of Rukai cultures, Kalusi provides the original takes from the perspective of aborigines. As for the narrator, he acts as an observer, recorder, negotiator, and of course, a writer in representing the loss of Rukai culture. It is important that the narrator ever talks about anthropologist Dr. Torii Ryuzo's researches on aboriginal groups. In 1896, Torii came to Taiwan to do field studies and took pictures of each aboriginal clan he encountered. Ironically, the division between Taiwanese aborigines is recorded by a Japanese researcher and colonist. It seems that *Dancing Crane* presents the problem of the aborigines being identified as species or specimens by the Other. Shuttling between the representations of history and memory, *Dancing Crane* demonstrates the cultural decline of Rukai. At this point, the haunting comes from the passing and lingering of the aboriginal spirits.

The haunting of the ancestral spirits can be better grasped in *Dancing Crane's Remains of Life*. This novel is worthy of close reading so as to explore how haunting violence is represented textually and psychologically in *Dancing Crane's* heterogeneous writing. In this novel, the male

narrator in plains<sup>18</sup> visits a declining tribe of the Atayal<sup>19</sup> aborigines in order to discover the truth of the Musha Incident, in which the Atayal warriors beheaded more than one hundred and thirty Japanese people and were later bloodily suppressed by the high-tech Japanese military force in 1930. First, I would like to bring into focus how *Dancing Crane* re-writes the historical violence in response to the ethnoscaapes of Taiwan. *Dancing Crane* uses a particular style with the undisciplined language and structure so as to deconstruct the dominant linguistic system and convey a fractured and dispersed sense of reality. The breakdown of *Dancing Crane*'s spectral language not only echoes the heterogeneity of aborigines but also suggests their failure of fitting in with the Lacanian symbolic order in terms of ethnic identity. The second part deals with the issues of decapitation as a spectacle of violence and a sign of symbolic castration. Haunting here pertains to the actual violence of decapitation as well as the ideological violence of politics and racism. The third part takes into account the remains of the Atayals' lives, the passing of the Atayals' spirits, and the continuity of violence. While the Atayal characters reveal the loss of their historical memories, the narrator helps us to ponder over the haunting past and present of the victimized aborigines.

The phrase "remains of life" can be examined in two aspects. On one hand, it refers to the

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<sup>18</sup> In Taiwan, the general population can be roughly divided into two categories: people in plains (local Taiwanese, Hakkas, immigrant mainlanders, etc.) and aborigines.

<sup>19</sup> Among the aborigines in Taiwan, Atayal is the biggest group.

two Memorial Stones of Remains of Life—one set by the KMT government and the other by the Atayals. On the other, it conveys the Atayals' remains of lives in response to the haunting past and present. In this regard, the landscape of "remains of life" is complicated by the issue of ethnicity and thus highlights the ethnoscaples of Taiwan from the perspective of the marginalized aborigines. According to Cartmell and Hunter, "The postmodern emphasis on history's construction and textuality [...] acknowledges that numerous incommensurable stories can be made up about the past," but the "truth" of these stories "may be judged according to political usefulness rather than coincidence with reality" (1). In *Remains of Life*, Dancing Crane attempts to go beyond resonant voices associated with "political usefulness" and to display alternative possibilities of narration and writing for the ethnic other. In this light, he stresses how the Atayals are faced with highhanded politics and racism in their remains of lives. As David Wang has it, "'Remains' have two levels of meanings, 'surplus' [and] 'remnants'," both of which imply "the incompleteness of history, the social group or the individual subject" (*Into the New Millennium* 300). In effect, narrating the remains of aborigines' lives can be tantamount to writing the memories of the cultural other. Hence, the historical haunting and sadness, unsurprisingly, become key tones of this novel.

At the outset of this novel, the male narrator, assumably Dancing Crane himself, recounts the significance of the aboriginal tradition, "head-hunting" [Chu cao], in the bloody Musha

Incident. Led by the aboriginal chief Mona Rudao, the Sedek<sup>20</sup> warriors from six tribes attacked and beheaded more than one hundred Japanese colonists. Then the Japanese colonizers struck back with superior soldiers and high-tech weapons such as machine guns, cannons, and even poisonous gas. Most Sedeks involved either were slaughtered or committed suicide after their loss to Japanese, while the survivors were forced to leave their home villages and moved to other places. What is worse, Japanese incited some Atayals from other tribes to “head-hunt” the aboriginals who survived the first incident, and in this way caused the tragic Second Musha Incident. The Musha Incident is one of the bloodiest revolts against the Japanese colonization. Yet, the pride and dignity of these aboriginal martyrs have suffered a catastrophic decline due to the military governance during the Japanese colonization and the cultural impact under the KMT regime. As Dancing Crane argues, “Taiwanese have no sense of history, while tribesmen are even more short-sighted. [...] During the period of anti-assimilation in the 1990s, the [aborigines’] assimilation [to the Han people] is the fastest” (*Remains of Life* 187). In short, the aborigines are losing their consciousness of ethnic identity and memories of the historical past. Some critics may argue that the take on the loss of ethnic identity is form of colonial nostalgia and essentializing; however, we need to bear in mind that the political and literary movements of recuperating the ancestral spirits are organized and supported by the indigenous people

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<sup>20</sup> Sedek is a clan of the Atayals.

themselves. To them, it is a way of raising the collective consciousness of Taiwanese aborigines, and Dancing Crane tries to side with the indigenous awareness in representing the lingering spirits and historical violence.

In *Remains of Life*, the interweaving of the haunting violence in the past and present surfaces in fragmented forms of dialogues, storytelling, and memories. Here Dancing Crane serves as a narrator, a researcher doing field works, and more importantly, an ally to aborigines in recounting the historical trauma. The violent conflicts between the Sedeks and the Japanese are ushered in through Dancing Crane's inquiry into the truth of the Musha Incident. Then in the modern society of Taiwan, the prevailing authority of people in plains has changed aboriginal mores and assimilated aborigines by way of political and ideological violence. By dealing with the haunting of violence, Dancing Crane conjures up the shadowy dead and re-writes the historical haunting in an intricate way. It is difficult for readers to handle the complicated linguistic structure and punctuation of this novel. The following passage can be a good example to examine his heterogeneity of writing:

can't writing go beyond the coherent literary structure and grammar and confer the freedom of blabbering, is blabbering narrating the real or is the real penetrating the words and making writing nonsense, the freedom without blabbering is like writing without the fundamental freedom[,] so the act of writing is "instrumentalized," there's no freedom of life if there's no freedom of writing, (Dancing Crane, *Remains of Life* 229)

What readers can notice here is the breakdown of the linguistic structure in Dancing Crane's

writing. There is almost no period or question mark in *Remains of Life*, except for a few found in quotations. Commas are the dominant punctuation marks from beginning to end. Dancing Crane has disclosed his preference for commas: “both speaking and listening require commas, comma is an empty interval, pure stillness, it does not think for the past and not prepare for the future” (*Remains of Life* 187). Obviously, Dancing Crane’s humanistic concerns on aborigines and the native land are associated with the pattern of localism, but his written language can be related to modernist experimental literature, such as James Joyce.

If the standard punctuation system symbolizes the confinement of political ideology as well as the formalization of violence, the breakdown of such an overpowering system may provide readers with a critical insight into the positioning of heterogeneity—that is, “pure stillness [...] not think[ing] for the past and not prepar[ing] for the future.” Besides, there is no paragraph division in the entire novel which is two hundred and eleven pages long. However, the seeming coherence of paragraph structure here results in fragmented meanings. As Yang Chao states, “[In Dancing Crane’s works,] the meaning of life is shattered to pieces constantly, and there is no ground for continuity. The instant sensual stimulation becomes the only thing that life can grasp, not because senses are credible, but because others are emptier, compared with senses” (262). This comment makes explicit Dancing Crane’s sensual subjectivity in relation to his heterogeneous writing.

While linking the “freedom of writing” with the “freedom of life,” Dancing Crane stages his mode of thinking in response to the haunting violence of war, politics, and ideology. If *Remains of Life* is a story about marginality and heterogeneity, the relatively disadvantaged positions of the Atayal characters may suggest their failure of fitting in with the Lacanian symbolic order in political and racial conditions. It is true that the Sedek warriors beheaded the Japanese colonists in the Musha Incident, but they and their descendents have suffered more violence culturally and spiritually. In this regard, Dancing Crane wants to examine the history of violence from the contemporary perspective and even to re-historicize the psychological trauma. He believes that the aboriginal tribes revolted against the national machine not out of the “stupid and ignorant resistance,” but of “the bursting anger from the inside heart” (*Remains of Life* 64). Nevertheless, the physical decapitation the Sedeks imposed on Japanese cannot be compared with the haunting symbolic castration that the aborigines endure from first the Japanese colonizers and then the Han people in plains.

It is also worth considering that Dancing Crane internalizes the beheading scenes through a misty lens in *Remains of Life*. At this point, decapitation is not only the actual violence, but also a form of “cultural” process since it is “always subject to social control” and serves as “symbolic practice” (Janes 2-3). From this angle, the Sedeks’ violent act or ritual of head-hunting turns out to be a form of counter-authority. The act of beheading enemies used to be a symbol of

masculinity and bravery in Atayal societies, and it later turned from individual valor to tribal rituals. In this novel, Dancing Crane narrates the origins and traditions of the aboriginal “head-hunting.” The representation of decapitation as violence is performed in two diverse domains. On the one hand, Dancing Crane details the bloody Musha Incident through the Atayals’ memories. On the other, he pieces together various stories of the Atayals’ remains of lives, thereby demonstrating a post-violence and post-trauma spectacle. In the Musha Incident, quite a few Sedek women did not want to become the burden of the male warriors, so they took their children with themselves into the foggy forest. One after another, these women either hanged their kids or threw them in the valley. The “collective hysteria” leads to “the final collective suicide of these [Sedek] women by jumping off the cliff,” in the words of Dancing Crane (*Remains of Life* 70). What is the cause of such collective hysteria? Their deep fear of the civilized yet revengeful violence by Japanese may be the cause of such an extremely unstable psychological state of the hysterics.

In the colonial context of the Musha Incident, the aborigines were forced to accept the homogeneous identity of the colonized population as a whole within the tyrannical system of colonialism. Otherwise, they would be oppressed by radical means. In this regard, the Atayals indeed suffered from the “symbolic castration” in a Lacanian sense. To quote Zizek, “[Symbolic castration is] the castration that occurs by the very fact of me being caught in the symbolic order,

assuming a symbolic mask or title. Castration is the gap between what I immediately am and the symbolic title that confers on me a certain status and authority” (34). The gap between “what I immediately am” and “the symbolic title” may lead to the destructive hysteria, which means the inability to “distinguish what he or she is (his or her desire) from what others see and desire in him or her” (Zizek 36). It is true that everyone can be symbolically castrated in some respect, and in the case of aborigines, they are culturally marginalized by the traumatic past and Han-centered ideology. For the indigenous people in Dancing Crane’s writing, the primitive violence of head-hunting is repressed by the upcoming violence of colonization and assimilation at the symbolic level.

Besides the issues of psychological stress and conflicting violence, Dancing Crane attempts to confront “epistemic violence” as well as “textual violence” represented by a stereotypical Han narrative, thus providing the possibility of re-presenting the aboriginal subjects. Instead of manipulating the aboriginal characters and imposing violence on them, he weaves the Atayals’ voices together into his literary narrative, and reduces the effects of pure fiction with a quasi-documentary style. However, he also senses the difficulty of the self-narration of the cultural other. The aborigines are not able to participate in the “formation of Taiwanese consciousness,” and their own “consciousness” is even replaced by “the Han people’s historical scripts” (Chen 122). Even the interpretation of the Musha Incident can be affected by political

ideology. As a matter of fact, one essential motive of Dancing Crane's quest is to illustrate the contemporary understanding and misunderstanding of the Musha Incident. Bound by various workings of cultural and political mechanism, this incident may be interpreted as the spiritual fight for aboriginal dignity, "political resistance" against Japanese colonization, or nothing but a "large-scale head-hunting" (Dancing Crane, *Remains of Life* 174-5). The problem here is that the aborigines are always "represented by the Other" (Ng 16). And the declining position of the aborigines is actually the "consequence of the collective violence performed by the national machine and advantaged races" (Nokan 112).

Due to the experiences of military and ideological violence, the aborigines have been assimilated consciously and unconsciously. In this sense, Dancing Crane uses his consistently sarcastic tone to lash out at the coated poison of assimilation:

some anthropologists or ethnographers make a dubious argument: assimilation is a gradual progress, an interaction between the primitive integrating the civilized and the civilized integrating the primitive, a reform of peace, no, the word 'reform' may be too strong, it is close to a natural transformation, the racial minorities accept unconsciously in the natural transformation. . . . .reading this passage[,] one must point out first it is the words of a tiger in the sheep's clothing, (*Remains of Life* 114-5)

At this point, Dancing Crane criticizes the masquerade of the "natural transformation" in the process of assimilation. In effect, the unbalanced interaction demonstrates the seemingly civilized group's control over of the uncivilized in a colonial context. Moreover, the younger

generations of the Sedeks have been adapted into “variety [shows]” while the original Sedek cultures are being uprooted (Dancing Crane, *Remains of Life* 151). Here “variety” signifies the hodgepodge of diverse cultures and the gradual erosion of aboriginal purity.

From the contemporary perspective, the Sedeks’ head-hunting or political revolt against Japanese seems to be meaningless since the ensuing assimilation is inevitable. Nevertheless, whether the massive head-hunting of the Musha Incident is fashioned as a ritualized carnival of violence, a desperate fight for self-esteem, or a legitimate political revolt against Japanese colonization, it is the reality of the present age that counts. Li Sher-shiueh is right in claiming that “history” for Dancing Crane in *Remains of Life* does not serve as “‘the past’ of the Musha Incident,” but as “‘the present’ of the Musha Incident” (101). From Dancing Crane’s point of view, “[T]he present age’ has its own research rules, the first one of them is ‘the respect for life’ or ‘respecting life’” (*Remains of Life* 119). That is the center of Dancing Crane’s writing—to collect and to examine the fragments of “the present” in line with historical shadows of violence.

At one serene moment of this novel, Dancing Crane is lying on the bed in an aboriginal village house and enjoying the quietness of nature. Suddenly, he hears the sounds of flipping pages. He sees or imagines that the ancestral spirits of the Atayals are flipping through his notebook: “why skimming the content of my writing in such a hurry, and not flipping the pages quietly, maybe the hunters’ fingers can never flip with caution” (*Remains of Life* 118). This

mysterious spectral encounter fulfills Dancing Crane's long-cherished wish—a close contact with the roots of aborigines through writing. It is obvious that his heterogeneous writing has distanced him from the Han-centered chauvinism and made him closer to the aboriginal ethnicity. It is a milestone of his writing career, indicating that his focus changes into the cultural other. We can take *Remains of Life* as the extension of *Ruminating on Ah Bang-Kalusi*. But this time, Dancing Crane goes farther and takes issue with the aboriginal haunting history in the present age. He employs “language” to excite the “imagination of violence,” displays “the spirits of anti-politics, anti-nation, and anti-rationality,” and further “challenges the value system of Taiwanese society” (Hu 49). In terms of nativism, Dancing Crane creates a unique way to counter the ideological violence of the Han-dominated narrative.

While the violence inflicted upon the Atayals shifts from the military level to the ideological, their memories of the past and consciousness of cultural origins are declining. As the image of the Memorial Stone of Remains of Life repeatedly appears and brings into focus the remains of temporality in the novel, the Atayals' memories of trauma linger on and on. The Memorial Stone Dancing Crane always bears in mind is not the one built by the KMT government after the end of Japanese colonization, but the much smaller one built by the Atayals themselves. As he says, “After the retreat of the glory of [Japanese] Emperor, the tribesmen

modestly set up the ‘Stone of Remains of Life’, [...] I did not come to Chuan Zhong Dao<sup>21</sup> accidentally, but I stay and live here only because of the words—‘remains of life’” (*Remains of Life* 185). At this point, Dancing Crane takes into consideration the relationship between history and trauma in narrating the Atayals’ remains of lives and the haunting violence.

To examine the present picture of the Musha Incident, Dancing Crane starts with the integration of the Atayals’ diverse flashbacks so as to awaken their consciousness of collectiveness. Unlike Chen Fang-ming, who focuses on the “representation of history,” Chiu Kuei-fen believes, “While excavating historical memories, what is recalled is not the representation of history; excavating historical memories is actually reconstructing history. [...] Recollecting the past is actually creating identification, constructing the future” (8). In this sense, Dancing Crane’s attempt to negotiate Atayals’ past and spirits is not a way to recover the passing reality of this incident, but a way to reconstruct their identity through the historical trauma shared by all individuals. “[T]rauma as a psychic phenomenon,” Andreas Huyssen argues, “is located on the threshold between remembering and forgetting, seeing and not seeing, transparency and occlusion, experience and its absence in repetition” (8). In *Remains of Life*, the collective trauma of the Atayals is a process of assimilation as well as a consequence of the haunting violence.

How do they live with such a psychic trauma? Many of them choose to remain silent about the

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<sup>21</sup> Chuan Zhong Dao is the place where the Sedek survivors and their descendents have lived since the Musha Incident.

issues of cultural loss and assimilation under the dominant discourse. Many aborigines have lost their pride as the descendents of wild hunters, and they are unable to fit in the so-called modern and civilized society. Drinking, as described in this novel, becomes the best amusement for them. Thereupon alcohol is labeled as the “addiction of life” (*Dancing Crane, Remains of Life* 45) and enables the aborigines to stay in a drunken state—nothing to worry about and nothing to lose in their remains of lives.

To recapture the historical trauma and the Atayals’ remains of lives, *Dancing Crane* resorts to multiple narratives. In this novel, the most important character, besides the male narrator, is Girl, a no-name Sedek woman, who claims that she is the granddaughter of the anti-Japanese hero Mona Rudao. Divorced woman and mother of two, Girl returns to her home village alone and befriends the male narrator. She is the key to the connection with the past incident and also the witness of the present violence. She used to be a high-class prostitute in a neon-lighted city. Undoubtedly, most of her customers are people in plains who should be responsible for the fall of aboriginal cultures. In addition to Girl, some important aboriginal figures also help to piece together the collective trauma, sadness, and hope of the aborigines. Take several characters for example. Old Daya and Little Daya are the son and grandson of Mona Rudao. Their wandering life matches the scattered memories of aborigines. Besides, Old Daya is making a plan of a real “Movement of Returning to the Native Soil.” Bagan and Bifu, both of whom are intellectual

politicians, show us a picture of civilized, yet corrupt, democracy in aboriginal tribes. There are several other interesting figures such as mentally deficient Strange Man, Wandering Man, the white Christian priest, wandering female monks, Miyamoto Saburo (an Atayal who regards himself as a Japanese samurai), the chief, and so on. These characters, when taken together, produce interweaving voices of the remains of lives. Furthermore, Mahong Rudao, the daughter of Mona Rudao, is a voiceless figure and only appears in others' narrative memories. She survived the Musha Incident, and later she tried to commit suicide many times, but in vain. Finally, she died with endless sadness. Her bodily death does not necessarily symbolize the spiritual death of all aborigines, but to some degree, it foreshadows the inevitable and irretrievable decline of the aboriginal cultures.

Throughout *Remains of Life*, the male narrator cannot discover the *real* causes of the Musha Incident. Instead, he is surrounded by polyphonic voices from Atayal characters. The very space of historical reality is left blank, thus releasing more possibilities of imagination and interpretation. Although the beheading scenes are not shown in the first-person narration but through the memories of the characters, the invisible severance of body, soul, and culture is still haunting in Dancing Crane's description of the Atayals' remains of lives. Furthermore, Dancing Crane offers a pastiche of heterogeneous writing, darkness, and decadence represented by the revised history of aborigines, thereby provoking a criticism of the ethnoscaples in the postcolonial

era of Taiwan. His peculiar language turns out to be an experimental narrative to resist the dominant discourse and writing politics. Indeed, this novel is not unlike a documentary of historical trauma, ongoing violence and remains of life.

The Atayals' traditional head-hunting has been adapted into historical haunting, their remains of lives, like Dancing Crane's heterogeneity of writing, are represented in a form of fragmented coherence. The wheel of history is rolling and urging them to proceed, but trauma and exploitation are still lingering in their remains of lives. In this sense, the aborigines have to live with their fragmented identity. They should have been hunters chasing the game in the mountains, but in this civilized society, they are hunted down and haunted by the Big Other. We can say that Dancing Crane himself builds a memorial stone of remains of life by way of heterogeneous writing. It is obvious that Dancing Crane attempts to draw the public attention to the decline of the Atayals and other aboriginal groups. While examining the Musha Incident and the Atayals' remains of lives, he brings into focus the historical trauma, ancestral spirits, and haunting violence in relation to the cultural loss within aboriginal tribes, and thereby demonstrates the remapping of the ethnoscapas in modern Taiwan.

History can be progressive and traumatic at the same time. While the political ideology is dominating the official history and collective memory, the multicultural and multiethnic Taiwanese literature has been proven subversive and deconstructive in representing the

individual takes on historical trauma. Placing spectrality and ethnoscapas side by side, we would be able to further examine the haunting shadows of the past and the present, ranging from Pai Hsien-yung's diasporic nostalgia to Chu T'ien-hsin's multicultural complex, then to Li Ang's spectral resistance, and finally to Dancing Crane's spectral writing. This chapter is surely not a comprehensive study detailing all forms of haunting in Taiwan fiction, but I attempt to reconsider the cultural and ethnic subjectivity in relation to the historical trauma from several selective ethnic angles. The traumatic marks embedded on the literary pages tell engaging stories and remind us of the past. As the ethnoscapas of Taiwan are not unlike ghostscapes, the spirits of the dead still lurk in the dark and moan, "We're here. Don't forget us!"

Wounds may heal, but trauma remains for generations. Haunting in Taiwanese fiction never ceases....

**CHAPTER 4**  
**FROM FEMALE (GHOST) BODY TO NATIONAL BODY:**  
**THE GENDERED TRAUMA IN LI ANG'S *VISIBLE GHOSTS***

Since the 1980s, the complex political and social mechanism in flux has given rise to the flourishing of feminist consciousness and gender discourse in Taiwanese literature. It is worth considering how female writers, such as Li Ang (Shi Shuduan), Shi Shuchin, and Ping Lu, demonstrate the multicultural gendered spaces at the intersection of feminism and historiography. The cultural productions created by these female writers perform an ideological act of defiance against the male-dominated and phallogocentric diegesis, and further reflect political and sexual conflicts in accordance with the historical trauma of Taiwan. In this case, Li Ang may be the most controversial female writer in Taiwan. Born in Lugang Township, Zhanghua County, Taiwan, Li Ang is well-known for her feminist story "Butcher's Wife" [Sha Fu] (1983) and political satire "Everyone Puts Their Incense Sticks in the Beigang Burner" [Beigang xiang lu ren ren cha] (1997). Also, her historical and political retrospection can be found in *The Maze Garden* [Mi yuan] (1991) and "Bloody Sacrifice of the Make-up Face" [Caizhuang xueji] (1997). Dedicated to feminist voices in fiction, Li Ang shows her concerns about the local consciousness against the national narrative of the KMT regime.

In *Visible Ghosts* [Kan de jian de gui] (2004), Li Ang's feminist fiction writing takes on a new dimension. She has dealt with the correlation between female subjectivity and national

identity in her previous works; however, in this novel, she takes a retrospective look at premodern Taiwan and places the female ghosts at the center of narratives, thus adding interesting twists in making a critical (re-)examination of the traumatic past of the island. This chapter aims to elaborate the representation of historical trauma and female consciousness with respect to spectral identities in *Visible Ghosts* from a Lacanian psychoanalytic perspective. As the sexually violated and physically tortured female body mirrors the colonial history of Taiwan, Li Ang further problematizes the female subjectivity and national narrative along with a spectral reproduction and reinterpretation. This novel contains five stories entitled “East of the Country: Ghost of Ding Fan Po” [Guoyu zhi dong: Ding Fan Po de gui], “North of the Country: Ghost Who Blows Bamboos” [Guoyu zhi bei: chui zhu jie de gui], “Center of the Country: Ghost of See-No-sky” [Guoyu zhi zhong: Bu Jian Tian de gui], “South of the Country: Ghost of Lintou Trees” [Guoyu zhi nan: Lintou cong de gui], and “West of the Country: Ghost Who Travels” [Guoyu zhi xi: hui luxing de gui]. The five stories account for five female ghosts around Lucheng, which is Li Ang’s fictional name for her birthplace Lugang.

Reading *Visible Ghosts* closely, I would like to examine the significance of female ghost talking/writing and trace the female ghost images back to the Chinese literary classic *Strange Stories from the Studio of Leisure* [Liaozhai Zhiyi] and the local Taiwanese formation of spectrality in popular cultural production. To start with, Li Ang’s ghost writing demonstrates a

refrain of female consciousness within a cross-cultural framework. By making the female ghosts visible and voiced, Li Ang goes beyond the public perception of the gender dynamic between men and women, thereby making explicit the subversive transgression of (dead) women or female ghosts. Moreover, the repetition of these women's suffering and the return of the dead women are entangled with the intricate revisiting of the historical turmoil of Taiwan. At this point, what we need to keep in mind is the repeated, gendered trauma in Li Ang's ghost tales in response to the Freudian concept—that is, repetition compulsion. Further, I would explicate Lacanian concepts of the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real in discussing the formation/(mis-)recognition of female ghost image, the female ghost writing in contrast to male narrative, and the unspeakable and incomprehensible trauma. That said, Li Ang's *Visible Ghosts* shows her trenchant critique of trauma and gender related to the historical fabric of Taiwan.

In the author's preface, Li Ang clearly points out her deep concerns regarding the current political conflicts inside and outside the Taiwanese territory. Activists on both sides of the ideological divide, pro-China and pro-Taiwan, have been competing for the political control for decades. While mainland China has become the superpower with dominant status on the globe, Taiwan, despite its remarkable economic development, is not unlike an isolated island in terms of international politics. As Li Ang states in the Preface,

If the island loses its economic advantage, cultural identity, independent autonomy, and self-centered ideology, it will resort to the grand national

perspective [of China], and truly become a faraway isle in the Pacific Ocean, a marginalized land, and again, “the ancient uncivilized Chinese possession” [Guhuang fudi].

[...]

Such a ghost island is borderless and not a country, and its voices are outside the center of the grand national body and can be taken as extraterritorial ghost talks and indiscernible ghost sounds. (*Visible Ghosts* 7-8)

Obviously, Li Ang’s words point to the spectral identity of marginalized Taiwan in contrast to overpowering mainland China. Just as ghosts are alienated outcasts of the human world, spectralized Taiwan straddles between being visible and being invisible, being there and being not there, in international relations around the world. Moreover, Taiwan’s peculiar (post-)colonial characteristics make it an island of multiculturalism related to the repetition of political takeover and historical trauma. Taiwan’s subjectivity and local consciousness have always been in jeopardy in face of the cultural impacts from China, Japan, and other foreign powers. A ghost identity with marginality and invisibility is thus formulated. It is significant to note that Li Ang tries to make the invisible subject visible, and in this way redefine the ghost qualities and relocate spectral Taiwan. While creating visible ghosts and writing the past, Li Ang gives voices to the excluded, mobilizes a new cross-cultural network, and tells a political fable in response to current situations.

More importantly, Li Ang provides a feminist and spectral overview of historical retrospection. What she has achieved here is double-crossing in timeline and gender norms. The

return of female ghosts from the past reveals the untold suffering and trauma and seeks the opportunity of revenge and justice in the present. In short, female ghosts can do what cannot be done by women. The reason is that women are confined by the social constitution of gender roles, while female ghosts are loaded with flexibility and mobility. Our society always audaciously illustrates the discrepancies between male and female identities. For example, the baby's social gender has been decided and defined since birth. Some researchers like Levi-Strauss mention that women as the socially subordinate originates from natural/biological features and is then shaped by cultures.<sup>22</sup> Sex roughly consorts with biological differentiations, while gender is “the far more elaborated, more fully and rigidly dichotomized social production and reproduction of male and female identities and behaviors<sup>23</sup>,” in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's words (27). In this regard, a boy/man must be active and masculine, and a girl/woman passive and feminine.

As a feminist, Li Ang is surely disgusted by the traditional images of Chinese and Taiwanese women, who are supposed to be submissive and obedient to their fathers, husbands, and grown-up sons. In her broadly acclaimed and critiqued “The Butcher's Wife,” Li Ang stages the female avenger Li Shi, who kills her abusive husband Chen Zhiangshui with the butcher's knife. In *Visible Ghosts*, Li Ang casts female ghosts as subversive figures fighting against their

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<sup>22</sup> For a close study of Levi-Strauss's argument, see Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990), pages 36-7.

<sup>23</sup> Similar argument can be found in Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*: “The binary relation between culture and nature promotes a relationship of hierarchy in which culture freely ‘imposes’ meaning on nature, and, hence, renders it into an ‘Other’ [...]” (37).

male victimizers and the entire patriarchal system. This gendered presence of ghost haunting offers a deconstructive criticism of social reality and gender relationship. In the history of Chinese patriarchy, women suffer from various notorious customs like foot-binding and domestic confinement. From a comparative angle, this sort of femininity has long existed in the Chinese ghost tradition, which serves to shape the ghost storytelling of Taiwan. In Pu Songling's *Strange Stories from the Studio of Leisure*, even though the female ghosts are laden with horrifying effects of darkness and death, they are usually bound by their love and sexual relation to male subjects. Like living women, these female ghosts' sexual lures make them the objects of male gaze—the gaze of the male characters and male readers.

The most famous female ghost story in Pu Songling's collection may be "Nie Xiaoqian," which has been adapted into a classic trilogy in Hong Kong cinema: *A Chinese Ghost Story* [Qiannu youhun] (1987), *A Chinese Ghost Story II* [Qiannu youhun er] (1990), and *A Chinese Ghost Story III* [Qiannu youhun san] (1991). In the original story of "Nie Xiaoqian," the scholar Ning remains aloof to the beautiful female ghost Nie Xianqing's sexual seduction. After Nie causes the deaths of another scholar and his servant, she reveals to Ning that she is actually controlled by an underworld monster. With her help, Ning flees from the monster. Afterwards, Ning sets the female ghost free by excavating her bones and burying them right next to his residence. Later, Nie returns and gets married with Ning. To readers' great surprise, this female

ghost, not a woman, even gives birth to two boys. This story can be regarded as a ghostly remake of conventional scholar-beauty romance. After all, the female ghost image of Nie still complies with the social expectation of feminine traits such as sexual attraction and biological function.

In the film *A Chinese Ghost Story*, the feminine ghost image of Nie, as Zeitlin argues, is transformed into a “heroine” with “self-determination,” “initiative,” and “dominance over her male partner,” and emerges as “the agent for her own liberation and redemption” (*The Phantom Heroine* 11). However, Zeitlin’s take may be inopportune in that her heroine does not totally possess self-determination. It is true that Nie disobeys her master-monster Lao Lao and overpowers her weak male partner, but it is the powerful Taoist priest Yan Chixia that comes to the ill-fated lovers’ rescue and defeats all the evil creatures, thus reconfirming the male-centered narrative. In the long run, the beautiful phantom is just an *updated* type of feminine ideal—more deadly and sexually attractive.

In Taiwan’s popular cultural imagination of female ghosts, the above ghost romance keeps a proper footing; yet, it seems to work with the moral teachings of social justice. Take, for instance, famous popular Taiwanese novelist Sima Zhongyuan. Sima Zhongyuan is famous for his ghost fiction writing in tackling supernatural disorders set in both China and Taiwan. In his writing, the ghostly return is always associated with unsolved issues in human history and social customs. In this light, the return of ghosts, especially female ones, is usually essence-extracting

and life-threatening for male subjects. In *Visible Ghosts*, Li Ang modifies the spectral femininity in response to the spiritual transformation beyond corporeality. Also, we can identify this feminist work as a leap from “The Butcher’s Wife,” in which the female protagonist is sentenced to death after she slaughters her husband like a pig. The reason is that female ghosts, unlike women, are outside the social rules of human society. Herein the female subject’s exclusion as a ghost turns to exercise self-reliance and border-crossing. Moreover, the transformation from women to female ghosts demonstrates a substantial masquerade of self-identity, and further overlaps with the traumatic history of (post-)colonial Taiwan in Li Ang’s fiction. To Li Ang, writing female ghosts represents a social fantasy, and through adding feminist twists to the novel, she reconstructs the gendered figuration of ghost haunting and historical trauma (my emphasis).

Li Ang’s ghost writing is poised to stir historical and emotional concerns about gender and trauma. Herein the representation of roving female ghosts does not assist in perpetuating the traumatic memories of the past, but in relieving them through recovery and re-narration. In contrast to the official historical accounts, ghost storytelling turns out to be the best medium for the voiceless and the marginal. It is worth remembering that the interplay between the female corpse and the disembodied spirit has occupied a place of particular significance in Li Ang’s writing. The appalling images like the mutilated wife, the disfigured aboriginal prostitute, and the suicide ghosts, make explicit a grotesque picture of sexual imbalance. Besides, the tortured

female body and lingering female ghosts can be wedded to the national body and spectral historiography of Taiwan. On this level, gender and trauma are united as one in re-shaping the public consciousness of femininity and history.

Based on the ethnic and regional divisions with Lucheng as the center, Li Ang in *Visible Ghosts* tells five ghost stories about five female ghosts from the east, north, center, south, and west. These female ghosts are forced into death either by men or by the patriarchal society. To facilitate my analysis of the female ghost images, I would like to start with the shortest one “South of the Country: Ghost of Lintou Trees.” The reason is that this four-page-long story provides a key tone of the female ghost haunting for the entire book. Afterwards, I would examine “North of the Country: Ghost Who Blows Bamboos,” in which both the male and female protagonists are from China. Then I would move on to “West of the Country: Ghost Who Travels,” which is affiliated with the geographical connection and cultural exchange between China and Taiwan. Later, I would discuss “East of the Country: Ghost of Ding Fan Po,” which focuses exclusively on the gender and ethnic conflicts on the island in response to its traumatic past. Providing close readings of the above stories, I plan to save “Center of the Country: Ghost of See-No-sky” for the last since it serves as the most important story in showcasing the possibility of female (ghost) writing. The female ghost author and Li Ang herself are thus connected together in writing the gendered trauma of Taiwan. To sum up, the entire book

represents local, cross-cultural, and feminist consciousness associated with historical trauma.

At first, Li Ang pays tribute to the well-known ghost lore about Sister Lintou [Lintou Jie] in “South of the Country: Ghost of Lintou Trees” [Guoyu zhi nan: Lintou cong de gui]. Although it is the shortest story in *Visible Ghosts* for merely four pages, it stands as a significant reference to the other four stories. Actually, the ghost of Sister Lintou can be cast as the prototype of all female ghosts in Taiwan, thus representing a collective trauma of ill-fated women. As Li Ang puts it, “Sister Lintou refers to all those [women] die of injustice” (*Visible Ghosts* 146). Within this framework, the female subject may be sexually violated and become pregnant. She may be forced into a marriage by a rascal. Or, she may be abandoned by her husband. At any rate, she must suffer misunderstanding or physical/emotional violence, so she finally commits suicide by hanging herself on a Lintou tree (Pandan Tree). Of course, the female victim returns as a ghost and takes revenge eventually. In Li Ang’s writing, Sister Lintou’s journey does not end with her final revenge. After that, she keeps loitering in Lucheng over the time from early Qing through the period of Japanese colonization. At this point, Li Ang takes into account the female suffering and revenge with respect to complex historical backgrounds. As mentioned earlier, it is a notable strategy that Li Ang presents the mix of female and historical traumas, which will be further elaborated below.

Then, in “North of the Country: Ghost Who Blows Bamboos,” Li Ang provides a

China-oriented ghost tale set in Taiwan under the Qing rule. Both the male protagonist Deity of Chinese Herb Medicine [Han yao zi xian] and the no-name female ghost are from mainland China. From some reason, the Chinese doctor knocks down his pregnant neighbor and causes the deaths of the woman and her unborn baby. To flee from the crime scene, the male protagonist immediately moves from China to Taiwan with his wife and two children, and finally settles down in Lucheng. Besides providing medical treatments, the male doctor wants to make a living by manufacturing bamboo chopsticks. To get a cost-down, he stocks up huge piles of bamboos in the front yard of his house. However, the ghost of the pregnant woman follows them all the way to Taiwan. To exact her revenge, she appears at night blowing bamboos and making disturbing sounds. Perturbed by the ghostly appearance, the residents in Lucheng resort to the supernatural guidance in Temple of Third Duke Wu [Wu Fu San Wangye], which is a male deity from China. Without revealing the details, the male spirit-medium in the temple keeps saying the word “Injustice!” Later, people seek help from the female medium Wangyi in Qingshui Palace, which is a temple of Lady Linshui. Through Wangyi’s mouth, the female ghost speaks of the crime committed by the Chinese doctor, who attacks her with sexual attempts. Later, the medium possessed by the female ghost performs sexual acts in front of a gathering crowd and makes unbearable statements to her victimizer in obscene language,

Your rotten dick inserted into the baby in my womb. You felt good? Did the eyes of your dick see that the eyes of the baby in my womb are looking carefully at your

rotten dick!

(Hey, hey, hey....)

Did you rotten dick see a hand reaching out? Oh! My baby's hand. The little hand grasped—grasped your rotten dick. (Li Ang, *Visible Ghosts* 57)

The imaginary sexual intercourse performed by the female ghost alone is surely disgusting and subversive. In Lacan's account, men imagine "having the phallus," whereas women are in the process of "being the phallus" in an attempt to "reflect the power of the Phallus, to signify that power, and "to 'embody' the phallus" in the symbolic order (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 44). Being the sexual objects, women's "stylized" bodies can be interwoven with the desire of men, thereby operating as a masquerade of femininity in the process of being the phallus. Yet, Li Ang gives a different take in response to a self-recognized subject here. On the one hand, the ghost romance and its sexual appeal are deconstructed. The female object of the male desire is no longer desirable at this point. On the other, the signification of phallus is modified and inverted by the female ghost. The sexual penetration of the penis is transformed into the manipulation of the phallic signifier by a ghost baby's grasp. Also, rotten dick is actually a vulgar expression in Taiwanese dialect and should be pronounced as "Lanjiao." The "power of the Phallus" in this case is not embodied and signified, but instead, mocked and challenged by the female other.

However, the above feminist take is undermined gradually. It is important to observe that Li Ang does not present a thorough feminist fantasy and exclude the male dominance entirely. As the female avenger returns and haunts the male doctor every night, the female medium herself

cannot resist against the ghost possession every night, not to mention exorcize the female revenant. Combined with the local aboriginal wizardry, the female medium's spiritual power is still limited to a great extent. In the end, the male protagonist cannot but go back to ask for help from Third Duke Wu. It is actually the male deity that announces the final verdict. The spirit-medium reveals Third Duke Wu's order that the male protagonist, after his pregnant wife's delivery, send the baby back to the female ghost's family in China as an adopted child in order to make up the loss he caused. In this way, the vengeful female ghost's anger can be appeased. As the male god overpowers the female deity and ghost, the final solution seems to be problematic as well. The story does not end with the actual punishment on the male lead, but with a promise regarding the continuation of family name and family line, which is obviously a by-product of patriarchy. The female ghost's emotional perturbation is thus made insubstantial and replaced by her previous obligation as a biological mother.

Another related topic that we should remember is the ghostly Chineseness. As the only Chinese-oriented story, "North of the Country: Ghost Who Blows Bamboos" can be read as a spectralized case reflecting the collective experiences of early Chinese mainlanders in Taiwan. When people travel from China to Taiwan, they bring both cultural legacy and burdens. This ambivalence is embodied in the conflicts between the male doctor and the female ghost. While the male lead demonstrates his comprehensive knowledge of Chinese herb medicine, the

repeated return of the female ghost becomes a source of his emotional anxiety towards the past.

On his way to Taiwan, the male doctor never looks back in fear of being followed by the female revenant. Still, the female ghost succeeds in crossing the Taiwan Strait and following her victimizer all the way to his new home. His inescapable past here emerges with spectral features—lingering, trailing, and haunting. Distressed and hopeless, the male doctor realizes that there is no way for him to escape from the past. For this problem, Li Ang makes a quick remark,

Even such a deep sea cannot keep away the pregnant female ghost. Thereupon no matter where he goes, he can never find a place to settle down.

In this sense, why not take this island as a final settlement? No matter how hard he tries to flee, he can never find a destination. (*Visible Ghosts* 63)

Ghost haunting here serves as a different form of home-sickness for the human subject. Besides, Li Ang's literary statement not merely mirrors the inner state of the male doctor, but reads like her political suggestion to the Chinese expatriates in Taiwan, who cannot free themselves from the unforgettable past. Just as the spirit-medium/Third Duke Wu orders, "Go back to Tangshan [China]; finish everything back in Tangshan. There is no more entanglement once you go across the sea" (Li Ang, *Visible Ghosts* 68). It is clear that Li Ang puts much emphasis on the connection, conflict, and split between China and Taiwan. Only by giving away the cultural linkage can the Chinese immigrants, like Deity of Chinese Herb Medicine, formulate new identities in the local community.

Like the story discussed above, "West of the Country: Ghost Who Travels" deals with the

cultural and emotional exchange between mainland China and Taiwan. Again, it is a typical ghost story about the undone justice and the subsequent revenge, and the female phantom travels across the sea, back and forth, back and forth. Li Ang divides the story into two parts. While the first part details how the female revenant takes bloody revenge, the second handles her experiences as a free traveling ghost. What is not revealed in the book is that this story is also adapted from one version of the Sister Lintou tale. In “West of the Country: Ghost Who Travels,” the female protagonist in Taiwan does not have a fixed name in the story. As Li Ang tells, “Back then, she had a name, which could be Wangshi, Meigui, Zhaodi, Xianglian, Shuli, etc. Yet, maybe she should be called Yue’e, or Yuechang” (*Visible Ghosts* 152). And the handsome male protagonist from China can be named Jiacheng or Jiazhong. Li Ang turns the couple’s names into unreliable and unstable signifiers, and in this regard, points to the possibility of repetition as well as the collective experience of Taiwanese women. It is ghastly to find that Yue’e and Jiazhong’s marriage ends up with a cold-blooded murder. Without any question, the female ghost returns for their unfinished business.

It is interesting that Li Ang lists several different possibilities of the first encounter between Yue’e and Jiazhong. She focuses on the appearance and family backgrounds of the female protagonist as if these are the only qualities that matter for a proper match. If Yue’e is a homely woman, she must be rich. If she is a widow, she may look prettier. At any rate, she must

be submissive and feminine as an obedient daughter and wife-to-be. As for the male subject, no special requirements are recounted. Here lies the dichotomy between male and female roles in a patriarchal society. Traditionally, men are tied in with qualities like masculinity, power, sovereignty, and self-consciousness, whereas women are described as passive, feminine, weak, and voiceless. Anthropologists have proven that this type of dichotomy is socially constructed. Under the male dominance, women may complain, but they are unobtrusively influenced and thus feel safe with diverted consciousness in the patriarchal system, which turns out to be the source of their endless suffering. This dichotomy applies to the relationship between the two characters as well.

To give a more formidable sense of the male atrocity, Li Ang describes various scenes of Yue'e/Yuechang's death. The female victim's skull may be knocked in and her brain smashed. Her face may be cut in half by an axe. She may be cut in pieces by knife and turned into a pile of flesh and bones. Her belly may be cut open, and her internal organs pulled out. She may be strangled to death. She may be beheaded. No matter how she dies, her eyes are poked out, and her tongue cut off. These various deaths of Yue'e remind us of what Helene Cixous has discussed in "Castration or Decapitation?" with respect to how hysteric women are silenced by men: "[Women] are decapitated, their tongues are cut off and what talks isn't heard because it's the body that talks, and man doesn't hear the body" (49). While Cixous relates the disciplined and

punished female body to the female voices unheard, Li Ang fashions the female ghost as an agent making herself visible and heard. After the murder, Jiacheng/Jiazhong sneaks back to China with all the money he steals from his dead wife. On this level, the female body is thoroughly exploited. The targeted work can be a case in point inasmuch as it not only demonstrates the ongoing sufferings of women who are unable to cross the social and sexual boundaries, but also illustrates the incompleteness of love in relation to the impossibility of sexual relationship between the two sexes from a Lacanian angle. The exploited body of the female protagonist can further be placed under the microscope lens of sexual politics. Without any doubt, one is judged by his or her social status and sexual identity in the realist world of materialism. Through the functioning of Louis Althusser's concept of 'ideological interpellation,' the "symbolic identity" of a human subject is "historically determined" (Zizek 35). In this sense, a woman's "symbolic identity" is decided by the lasting ideology of patriarchy, thus adapting the female body to men's expectation. In this sense, Yue'e's body can be desired, possessed, brutally tortured, and left behind.

However, the female ghost is unable to track her husband down because she cannot go across the sea to China. Her ghostly appearance in the haunted house unsettles the people in Lucheng, but the local deity Third Duke Su [Su Fu San Wangye] is unwilling to intervene. Later, the female ghost gets her chance of crossing the strait via the assistance of powerful Dili Shi, a

Taoist priest who analyzes geographical locales and responsive supernatural energy. Based on the local cult culture, she needs to hide in a furled black umbrella so as to be carried by a human subject, Dili Shi himself, during the trip across the sea. Before their departure, Dili Shi and Yue'e at the sea port of Lucheng encounter hundreds of thousands of wandering ghosts who died in the numerous wars between the Qing government and the retreated Ming. In "West of the Country: Ghost Who Travels," the female ghost's personal vengeance is also laced with the collective trauma of the past. However, whereas the female ghost is able to wreak revenge on her husband, the historical trauma may find no outlet at any rate.

It is also important to note that the female ghost has a sense of *déjà vu* once she arrives at Quanzhou, Fujian Province, China. Perplexed by the similar cultures and landscapes, she loses her voice and sense of direction. According to Li Ang,

The vengeful ghost finds herself in an enlarged model of Lucheng, a more prosperous place with more population. After landing, the ghost from Lucheng goes all the way here. She examines this seemingly familiar but entirely strange city vis-à-vis her memories of Lucheng. She doesn't need to care if Lucheng is just a simulated homeland built by the immigrants from Quanzhou. She only knows that she can locate the man who betrays her by means of the sense of familiarity generated by the interaction between the two [cities]. (*Visible Ghosts* 186)

What the female ghost experiences here is a complicated form of imaginary overlapping as well as a confirmation of the cultural relocation and dislocation across the sea. Also, Li Ang points out that the close link between China and Taiwan is indeed bewitching and confusing at the same

time. Still, the female ghost never forgets her real mission. Finally, she tastes sweet revenge and returns as a phantom heroine. Her story is thus passed down from generation to generation in Lucheng.

Some critics may indicate that the female ghost cannot but resort to the male priest's power in order to exact her final revenge. It is true that she needs to obey the Taoist rules which can be related to a various system of patriarchy. However, in Part Two, the female revenant leaves Dili Shi and starts her own journey traveling back and forth between China and Taiwan. Dili Shi teaches the female revenant the secrets about how to hide and leave the furled black umbrella by herself. In this light, she appropriates the male-dominated tricks and travels freely without a human carrier. Interestingly, although the female phantom already takes her desired revenge, she still feels insatiable. With unlimited time, she loiters on the sea from one ship to another searching for the first vessel that took her to China. During her journey, some sailors discover the existence of the black umbrella and even witness the loitering ghost. At first, the male sailors are afraid of the haunting ghost; yet, they later figure out that the existence of the umbrella/ghost prevents their ship from danger. At this point, the female ghost quality has been transformed from horror to protection, thereby formulating a new identity of the female ghost.

In addition, we need to bear in mind that the female revenant's Chinese complex does not fade away with the death of her husband. Instead, it surfaces time and again in her memory. Her

nostalgia towards her husband's hometown seems to promise her second haunting years later.

When she revisits Quanzhou, she is shocked to find out that the previously prosperous town has become a ghost town in ruins. Here the communication between the past and the present, between China and Taiwan, is repeated in a different time frame. This kind of repetition can be associated with the Freudian concept of repetition compulsion, which is “an uncanny urge to repeat painful past experiences” (Zizek 63). This continual process of repetition is embodied through the female ghost's deliberate or unconscious attempt to re-live her traumatic memories and perform her previous acts after her revenge.

Moreover, it seems that the female ghost's second haunting is employed to regain a peaceful mind. According to Li Ang, “Eventually she realizes that she must come back again [...]. She revisits [Quanzhou] in order to say goodbye and to leave peacefully. She not only leaves this land, but everything related to it—everything” (*Visible Ghosts* 226). After that, she continues to travel back and forth and gradually enters into a state of meditation. As she comes to a gradual understanding and ecstasy, she yells out, “I—am sea” (Li Ang, *Visible Ghosts* 228). Then with the elapse of time, she has a different take and thinks, “I—am the island—and the mainland (China)” (Li Ang, *Visible Ghosts* 229). Near the end of the story, she finally realizes her real identity and blurts out, “I—am this island” (Li Ang, *Visible Ghosts* 234). It may be appropriate to connect the female ghost's self-recognition with Taiwan's cultural attachment to

and emotional anxiety towards China. This is the reason why Yue'e first situates herself in the traffic between the two interrelated cultural entities, then regards herself as both, and finally identifies herself with local consciousness. The female revenant keeps modifying her viewpoint of the cultural exchange and identification, thus demonstrating an endless cycle and repetition in formulating the self-identity. More interestingly, the story ends with the ghost's wish to take the Big Bird [place] some day, and suggests a shifting position of the female subject globally in the end.

Along with her repetitive traveling, the female ghost's identity is shaped and re-shaped gradually. Besides, the personal memory and the collective memory of the traumatic past are intertwined with each other and juxtaposed in the cross-cultural context of Taiwan. This juxtaposition delivers a subtle and complicated picture of haunting history. Significantly, this tale manifests the complication of reality-and-fiction and further makes explicit a refrain of the past. Since it is impossible to easily let go of the traumatic memories, the historical gulf between China and Taiwan remains unbridgeable. Beyond the original moral teaching of the story, the female ghost keeps loitering, traveling, and observing the evolvement of historical course. Haunting seems not to be important any more.

Similar to previous stories, "East of the Country: Ghost of Ding Fan Po" points to the multiethnic and multicultural conflicts in Taiwan. The story centers on an aboriginal prostitute

who suffers double-discrimination from patriarchal and ethnic perspectives. Li Ang deliberately lists a series of aboriginal names for this female subject, but she is still remembered by her Chinese name Yuezhen/Yuezhu. Yuezhen's identity is extremely complex because she is a hybrid with aboriginal, Chinese/Taiwanese, and even Dutch blood. Ironically, her hybridity does not guarantee any spatial location for her to settle down or cultural position to identify with. In the very beginning, Li Ang directs readers' attention to how the aboriginal people, especially women, are gradually marginalized. While the indigenous people leave the plains and move to the mountain areas, a number of middle-aged and old aboriginal women are left behind. These abandoned women's dwellings are called Village of Aboriginal Women [Fan Po Zhuang] and Downhill Aboriginal Women [Xia Fan Po]. Later, these aboriginal women are forced to move to Ding Fan Po, which, means "the last place for aboriginal women" (Li Ang, *Visible Ghosts* 11). Also, the title Fan Po, literally [uncivilized] aboriginal women, carries out the signification of discrimination.

Unlike other aboriginal women from Ding Fan Po, Yuezhen dares to claim her land occupied by people in plains after she breaks her leg and cannot make a living by providing sexual service. This individual case is soon expanded to a serious issue of political revolt against the Qing government. To punish Yuezhen as a warning to others, the local chief officer who comes from China has the female victim severely tortured to death. Rumor has it that the officer

batters and skins the poor woman's breasts. More abominably, he leaves bloody wounds, including holes and cuts, on Yuezheng's sexual organ before she dies. "Each of the ten cleanly-cut vaginas," Li Ang writes, "represents a sorrowful and voiceless mouth, continually denouncing the sadness of fatalism" (*Visible Ghosts* 32). While the officer makes an example of the female subject by disfiguring her sexual body parts, the readers are given a clearer picture about the unbalanced relationship between men and women, people in plains and aboriginals from an angle of body politics. Having control over one's own body is a critical move of self-reflectivity for feminist critics. The reason is that body exists as the fundamental vehicle to harbor one's position physically, socially, and even spiritually. Yuezheng's loss of control over her own body definitely effaces her identity as a female subject with dignity.

After her death, Yuezheng's corpse is buried in a pile of sea salt, and her spirit is thus confined within as well. During her confinement, Yuezheng has a fantasy about her feet transformed into phallus/penis, and then the phallus/penis becomes excrement. This scene can be interpreted as an embodiment and a parody of phallus in a Freudian sense. On one level, the woman's feet are fancied as the object of men's desire. On another, Li Ang slyly converts the symbolic power of phallus to human waste, thus making Yuezheng's imagination an (un-)conscious critique of the male-dominated society. Due to a crack in the pile of salt caused by earthquakes hundreds of years later, Yuezheng's ghost finally gets out of her remains. She

immediately senses the political and social change. Taiwan is then colonized by Japan, and, and to her excitement, women are free from the notorious convention of foot-binding. Thus, she laughs aloud and loiters around Lucheng as a free-floating agent. Jumping from Yuezhen's liberation, Li Ang continues to narrate the process of the female ghost's deification in relation to the February 28<sup>th</sup> Incident. It is said that she appears at night time and helps some Taiwanese activists to escape from the KMT's hunting in the incident. Consequently, a small shrine is built for her, and her remains are placed and worshipped within. In this regard, the female body of personal shame is recast as a symbol of political resistance. According to Li Ang,

The ancient memories are recovered. The great grandfather of a local wise man ever talks about the aboriginal woman who dares to fight against the government. [In his account,] she really has "aboriginal guts" [Fan Dan]. She never regrets even though she is tortured to death. (*Visible Ghosts* 29)

It is interesting that Yuezhen suddenly becomes a cultural and political icon against the oppressive KMT regime. It seems that her female identity is elevated to some degree; however, the true sexual liberation has yet to come inasmuch as her previous occupation as a prostitute is still a taboo topic to the public. Thirty years later, Yuezhen's shrine becomes popular again and is worshipped by a great number of gamblers when the so-called Everybody Happy [Dajia Le] and Six Matches Lottery [Liuhe cai], both of which are illegal/unofficial gambling games, drive entire Taiwan into frenzy. This time she is not a model political activist any more, but a deity that offers previsions of lottery numbers. With both illegitimate identities, deified Yuezhen serves as

the spokeswoman outside the political control of the KMT, and Li Ang re-narrates the deification of a ghost in response to the local Taiwanese folk religion. In this light, Yuezhen's female, spectral, and cult-culturally deified positions are associated with the undercurrents of the social system beyond the state surveillance.

Despite her popularity, Yuezhen shows deep anxiety towards her physical wounds and emotional trauma, so she is afraid to take a careful look at her body in the past hundreds of years. Near the end of the story, the female ghost is struck by the young strip dancers' performance in celebration for her foreseeing power. Li Ang deliberately describes the strippers' bodies as a pile of meat so as to dehumanize the sexually bound female body as the object of the male gaze. At that moment, Yuezhen realizes the limitation of the female body, and it is the first time that she examines her wounds closely. Then she dances to the music, caresses her own body, and reaches an elated state of sexual liberation. In the end, the female ghost disappears, and so does her golden statue. With the decline of illegal gambling, less people care about the missing statue, and that concludes the story. It is obvious that Li Ang wants to reveal the fact that Yuezhen's status is elevated only in accordance of the specific values she can provide. It does not point to a real liberation of women. Yuezhen's final awakening is followed by her disappearance. Maybe there is no proper space for the female subject, even as a ghost, to stay in a patriarchal society. That is why Yuezhen's liberation is mediated by self-examination, self-touching, and quasi-masturbation

from a real female-oriented angle.

As the first story in the book, “East of the Country: Ghost of Ding Fan Po” is actually the last ghost tale that Li Ang finished. Obviously, Li Ang wants to map out the female ghost haunting from various regions, directions, family backgrounds, and ethnic groups with respect to the historical course of Taiwan. In this story, she casts the aboriginal woman Yuezhen as the subject. While the historical trauma in this story is veiled and internalized, its collective pain is imposed on the female protagonist’s wounds. The most interesting moment lies in the deification of Yuezhen after the February 28<sup>th</sup> Incident. The worshipping and the suffering of Yuezhen represent the agency against KMT and the shared victimhood of women respectively, thereby mediating a combination of the individual and collective memories of the historical trauma.

However, we need to keep in mind that the female body of political purposes and monetary values may harbor various functions in addition to the sexual desire of men. As soon as their purposes and values are removed, the female body retreats to its previous marginality. The golden statue of Yuezhen can be a case in point. We may say that the golden statue pertains to a converted phallic signifier related to the desire of the Other. According to Bruce Fink, “The Other’s desire—that is, what the other wants, and more specifically, what the Other wants from us—is hidden from us or presented to us by a signifier, an intangible signifier: the phallus” (32). It is the power of the phallus that functions in giving privilege to the female (ghost) body, which

is always fashioned as the object of the male desire. Yuezhen's final awakening and disappearance may refer to a rethinking of transcendence, and thereby make possible a feminist liberation from the phallic signification through the spiritual sublimation embedded in the local cult culture.

Apart from the other four stories, "Center of the Country: Ghost of See-No-sky" incorporates the profound writing of the female ghost into the interweaving of history and female sexuality. In this regard, this story, as its title suggests, stands as the most significant tale vis-à-vis Li Ang's spectral politics. Placing Lucheng as the center of the book, Li Ang provides a close examination of this ancient sea-port town's historical and cultural implications. Lucheng used to be the second biggest city in Taiwan, next to Tainan, and "See-No-Sky" refers to the most famous shopping street in Lucheng, which is several miles long and fully covered with roofs. This is how it is named—seeing no sky when you walk on the street. Actually, Li Ang borrows this phrase from an old saying about Lugang, or her fictional Lucheng. As the old saying goes, "You can't see three things in Lugang. See-No-Sky. See-No-Earth, and See-No-Women." Visitors cannot see the earth because the street is paved with red bricks and flagstones, and there are no women in the public areas because they are confined in the domestic space. Although Li Ang does not talk about See-No-Women in the story, it must be taken into account in my discussion. Whereas See-No-Sky and See-No-Earth result from the architectural designs of the

street, See-No-Women can be identified as a social and cultural construct of patriarchy. On this level, making the female ghost visible seems to be a political reaction to the construct of See-No-Women.

In “Center of the Country: Ghost of See-No-sky,” Li Ang brings into focus a hapless woman from a wealthy and scholarly family. Likewise, this woman may have various names like Yuehong/Yuexuan. Familiar with the classic Confucian readings and Chinese cultures, Yuehong is a gifted female scholar who can compose poetic works; yet she is still bound by the notorious conventions such as domestic confinement and foot-binding. One day she accidentally drops her handkerchief or moon-shaped fan with her signature and poetic words on it when she is leaning against the window upstairs. It is the beginning of her misfortune. The falling fan/handkerchief may be taken by a playboy, a vagabond or a hoodlum, and he may spread rumors about how he has secret love and sex with the woman. Then he may come to visit her parents and ask for a proper marriage. At this point, Yuehong’s original intention is completely disregarded and misrepresented. As Li Ang puts it, “The signature on that handkerchief/circular fan equals an endorsement. There is no leeway left” (*Visible Ghosts* 83). That said, readers are given a collapse of the scholar-beauty romance here, and a sexual imbalance is reconfirmed. To show her innocence, Yuehong jumps into the well and dies. In this case, Li Ang reclaims the traditional bondage imposed on women in a patriarchal society. A woman’s chastity is of the greatest

importance, and others second. Of course, she returns as a water ghost with an attempt to exact revenge herself. To her surprise, the man who causes her suicide is already found dead for some reason, assumedly executed by the female victim's influential family. People in Lucheng surely understand the underlying power that functions and are wise enough not to talk about it in public. Therefore, the suicide of the innocent woman further serves as an opportunity of empowering the entire family.

Afterwards, the water ghost finds herself soaking wet all the time. The dripping water from her body is profoundly associated with her uncontrollable tears with respect to shame and hatred. Soon she understands that she cannot stay in her bedroom or by the well in order not to stir the peace in her family's residence. And she is happy to find out that she is no longer troubled by her bound feet. As a ghost, she is excited to travel light. Later she ends up hiding in the home library of her family mansion. She carefully reads the philosophical and literary classics, but the more she indulges in reading, the clearer picture of the male-centered ideology she gets. This finding gradually becomes an emotional burden to her. Yet, her energy is rekindled by discovering and reading the forbidden books regarding erotic stories and sexual positions in the library. As a virgin, she has no sexual experience before, but she imitates and performs erotic acts bisexually, and through this sexual awakening, she feels dry and satisfied. At this point, Li Ang points out the patriarchal standards are still oppressive to the female ghost. By means of the sexual

self-teaching, Yuehong is provided with an opportunity to perform the imaginary sex, thus freeing her repressed desire of the unconscious.

It may occur to readers that Yuehong's sexual awakening is essential in helping her get rid of the conferred female position in the symbolic order, and the female ghost gradually reaches the stage of self-awareness. While she passes the ancestral shrine in the mansion that she used to be afraid of, she demonstrates an ideological resistance against phallogentrism: "Fake phallus is the ancestral tablet," the female ghost repeats to herself, "Fake phallus is the ancestral tablet. Fake phallus is the ancestral tablet" (Li Ang, *Visible Ghosts* 99). Although the female ghost is still excluded from the patriarchal space of the ancestral shrine, her mocking repetition indeed shows her deconstructive power from the marginal against the overlapping of the Freudian father, probably the real, biological one, and the Lacanian father, the social law. What is significant to note is that the female ghost image here, like her previous protagonists, straddles between being a sexual object and being a self-recognized subject. The patriarchal construct foreshadows the leading female character's tragic end, while her femininely stylized body reconfirms her subordinate identity no matter how well she is perceived as a female scholar. Consequently, this unfortunate woman is fashioned as a sexual object in response to the male desire and gaze. Nevertheless, Yuehong's ghost identity step by step transforms her personal suffering and challenges the male-dominated ideology. The best parodies are embodied in her discovery of

forbidden erotic accounts and her practice of sexual imagining in the so-called sacred home library of male classics. Behind the dominant male laws lies the weak spots that can be penetrated, appropriated, and mocked by the female ghost.

In addition, Li Ang skillfully combines her own writing and the female ghost's writing in representing the female consciousness and the decentered narrative of history outside the official accounts of the past. Despite her sexual excitement, Yuehong is greatly troubled by the wandering ghosts she encountered on the See-No-Sky Street the other day. She finds no detailed information about these aimless souls. She understands that there must have been wars and revolts that result in so many deaths and phantoms. To better grasp the past, she gathers all the information she hears on the street. The oral version of the collective past thus makes apparent a counteracting narrative against the written history. It is worth noting that Yuehong recollects the stories about the revolutionary leaders Zhu Yigui and Lin Shuangwen, both of whom fight against the Qing rule in Taiwan. Zhu and Lin are brutally cut into pieces and beheaded, and their followers are also slaughtered by the army from China. These so-called radicals become lost souls and can never be recognized by their family or legalized by official history. As social and political outcasts, these revolutionaries are similar to repressed women in terms of marginality. Moreover, Zhu's and Lin's cases remind readers of the death of the aboriginal woman in "East of the Country: Ghost of Ding Fan Po." Thereupon women's and political activists' sufferings are

overlapped, conceiving a gendered understanding of collective trauma in Taiwan. In order to recover the erased violent past of Taiwan against Qing from 1683 A.D. to 1895 A.D., Yuehong uses branches of Wideleaf Bamboos and Monthly Peach Trees to write down a feminized history on the bottom side of the See-No-Sky roofs. In the words of Li Ang, “What the female ghost wants to write about are the private voices regarding the past, which are different from the local historical records” (*Visible Ghosts* 116). That said, the bloody combats and massacres are represented through the female narrative.

There are two issues worthy of discussion in response to the female (ghost) writing. On the one hand, the historical trauma never ceases to surface even in a spectral way. While the female ghost is writing, she is soaked by the dripping blood coming from the words she put down on See-No-Sky. With the dripping blood and her own tears, Yuehong senses the complicated feelings and condensed memories of Taiwan’s trauma. Once again, she encounters those wandering, faceless spirits and takes a closer look at them. She suddenly discovers that these ghastly shadows’ wounds are extremely notable and still shedding blood like new ones. What is worse, most of them are mutilated and disfigured. The female ghost is shocked and starts screaming. According to Li Ang,

[The female ghost’s] screaming cannot stop the ghosts from coming towards her. Numberless wounds and disfigured body organs are thus coming and passing through the female ghost body. [...]

It does not inflict any pain on her. She can’t even feel anything by the hitting and

passing, but those bloody wounds seem to leave certain marks on the female ghost body, as eternal imprints that—

Never fail away.

The female ghost makes no more sounds and moves. She lets the large ghostly crowds pass through her body with their wounds and traumas. (*Visible Ghosts* 120-1)

Here Li Ang employs the ghostly crowds to indicate the collective trauma of being suppressed by the center. More interestingly, the historical trauma is superimposed on the female body along with the ghost crowds' passing through and leaving historical imprints. In this regard, Li Ang reinforces her interweaving of sexual politics and historical narratives via the representation of spectrality.

On the other, Yuehong presents a female-oriented revision of history in relation to her own imagination. Actually, we can take Yuehong as an alternative ego of Li Ang. Yuehong is unsatisfied with the title Female Thief [Zei Po] given to the female revolutionaries by both the officials and the activists. It is interesting that the female ghost does not change this negative signifier for female revolutionaries; instead, she creates a diverse signified meaning for it. By bringing into focus the female subjects and voices in her writing, Yuehong re-interprets the symbolic title Female Thief and makes it a positive and active agent throughout the history of political revolts. Topics of gender and trauma seem to be inseparable at this point.

For more than one hundred years, Yuehong on *See-No-Sky* concentrates on her (re-)writing of the period of two hundred and twelve years during which Taiwan is under the

control of Qing. The entire See-No-Sky roofs are full of Yuehong's words of blood. Whenever there is any damage to the See-No-Sky roofs by natural disasters and human actions, Yuehong, who knows every detail by heart, can write down the missing parts again easily. However, she faces her real challenge in the Incident of Shi Jiudian, who is also a revolutionary leader against Qing. To defeat the radicals, the military force of Qing is ordered to attack Lucheng with fire arrows. In this light, Yuehong cannot but stand out to protect See-No-Sky from destruction. On the night of the army's attack by fire, Yuehong flies over the See-No-Sky roofs and receives all the fire arrows via her vagina. Her acts, described by Li Ang, resemble various sex positions and point to a ghostly sexual intercourse. Further, the female ghost's magical acts scare the fire god away and stop the military confrontation. Ironically, people in Lucheng believe that the town is saved by Ma Zu, the most famous female sea deity in religious Taoism.

Later the Japanese colonists replace the outsiders from China and continue the oppressive rule in Taiwan. Since there is no space left on the roofs, Yuehong cannot but quit writing. The narrator tells us that it may be unnecessary for any other writing on this new rule because the Japanese colonization is merely a repetition of the previous one. Then the colonizers decide to tear down the See-No-Sky roofs for urban construction purposes. Attached to See-No-Sky for more than three hundred years, the female ghost reads through her own writing for one last time before the destruction. While she is "reading herself (or her cursive writing)," she voices out,

“I—am...” (*Visible Ghosts* 138). It is critical to note that Li Ang deliberately juxtaposes the female ghost and her own writing about history. More important, the female ghost does not fully reveal her true identity here as done by the female ghost in “West of the Country: Ghost Who Travels.” Still, the female ghost’s incomplete statement makes herself the embodiment of the traumatic past of Taiwan. The climax of the story lies in the final scene in which the female ghost performs sexual acts with the keel of the See-No-Sky roofs, which is a symbolic phallus supporting the female ghost writing. The rapidly enlarged body of the female ghost becomes big enough to embrace the entire See-No-Sky. Right before the sunrise, she reaches orgasm and freedom, and the story ends with her waiting in the twilight. At this point, Li Ang enables the liberated female ghost to fully integrate herself into the feminized history of Taiwan. The female ghost’s bloody words may fade away with the demolition of See-No-Sky, but Li Ang’s writing has drawn readers’ attention to a female-oriented interpretation of the marginal and the repressed.

As I already emphasized earlier, this story is the most important and complicated one in *Visible Ghosts*, which can be examined side by side with Lacan’s concepts of the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real. First, the formation of the female ghost images is embodied in the mirror reflection of the imaginary phase. In “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function,” Lacan argues that the infant starts to make distinctions between the self and the other in the mirror stage. The infant may be obsessed with his/her own mirror image, and misrecognizes it as the ideal-I

through the so-called “mirror apparatus in the appearance of doubles” (Lacan, *Ecrits* 77). In the imaginary, ego is a formulated identification in the process of alienating before entering into the linguistic system. In other words, the formation of ego is dominated by fantasy and constructed by one’s interaction with the other (autre). Furthermore, we need to keep in mind that the formation of ego starts at infancy but continues to function with the symbolic in mediating one’s psychical state. In Yuehong’s case, the spectral identity is doubly reflective to the female subject. On one hand, the free-floating agency embedded in the female ghost, in Li Ang’s writing, represents a perverse form of anticipation for socially and sexually bound women. The spectral masquerade here refers to a way of adaptation that leads to the female subject’s revenge and empowerment. On the other, Yuehong’s ghostly positioning refers to a social and sexual reflection of the female otherness concerning absence and loss. After all, women in Li Ang’s ghost narrative are not unlike social phantoms excluded from the patriarchal center.

Second, Yuehong’s female writing of the past illustrates the intricate interaction and confrontation with the symbolic order, which is “society’s unwritten constitution” (Zizek 8). In Lacan’s account, the speaking being’s position is arranged in the unconscious design of the linguistic network. Following this concept, the female ghost’s writing is framed within the symbolic system. While the other four female ghosts rely on sensual perception, physical action, and acoustic expression, Yuehong enters the linguistic realm and performs her writing of the

(un-)conscious. It is true that Yuehong's literary manifestation is still restricted by the symbolic law. For example, the bloody words are written on the bottom side of the roofs and thus see no sky. Also, her historical writing is eventually erased by another colonial power. In this light, there seems to be no way out of the symbolic laws. However, Yuehong finds loopholes in the laws of the Father while writing with branches of bamboo and peach trees and blood of historical shadows, rather than with ordinary brush pens and inks. More importantly, she makes clear a female storytelling engaging the symbolic system. If language is a physical and cultural function fleshed out from the unconscious, the sexual unification of Yuehong's body and writing at the end of the story serves as an alternative way of narrative colliding with the phallogocentric discourse. From this perspective, the female ghost's writing points to a function of sublimation as well as an outlet for the repression of the unconscious. That said, we have a visible female ghost talking and writing on the edge of the symbolic law, thereby formulating an engaging female subjectivity in a spectral sense.

Finally, the female ghost's writing may touch upon the real, which is incomprehensible and unknown to us in the Lacanian discourse. Lacan has made the distinction between the real and reality. While reality is sensible in our symbolic world, the real remains mysterious in the inner psyche of the human subject and cannot be fully expressed via images, signs, or languages. In Lacan's own words, "[T]he real should have presented itself in the form of that which is

unassimilable in it—in the form of the trauma. [...] The trauma reappears, in effect, frequently unveiled” (*The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* 66). Lacan does not define what is exactly the trauma mentioned here, and merely imposes trauma onto the unconscious mechanism like dream. Anyway, this explanation is still not clear enough. Critics already provided different interpretations on the real. According to Fredric Jameson, Lacan’s Real is “history,” which is “fundamentally non-narrative and nonrepresentational” (82). In this regard, Jameson’s idea of the real connects the ambiguous psychic domain with the evasive social, or Marxist, reality of history beyond textualization. However, Slavoj Žižek holds a different view. “[T]he Lacanian Real,” Žižek argues, “is a much more complex category than the idea of a fixed trans-historical ‘hard core’ that forever eludes symbolization” (65). And Žižek describes the real as “traumatic,” as we already learned from Lacan’s original text (57). In this case, the traumatic real functions against the process of signification in the symbolic order. Likewise, it is beyond the fantasy and (mis-)recognition in the imaginary stage.

Going back to my discussion of Li Ang’s text, it is noteworthy that the female ghost cannot complete the statement regarding her identity and writing near the end of “Center of the Country: Ghost of See-No-sky.” Her saying “I—am...” refers to a historical, cultural, and sexual void in response to her overcomplicated and inscrutable subjectivity. We need to keep in mind that the void can be laced with the Lacanian real—trauma. The real here not only coincides with the

pre-experience “psychical trauma,” in Sean Homer’s phrase (83), of the human subject, but mediates the traumatic experiences of women in patriarchal society or victims in colonial rule. All in all, the multi-layered traumas that the female ghost bears are overlapped symbolic and imaginary orders. The traumatic real represented in the interweaving of the female ghost body and the historical imprints may be approached through female (ghost) writing, but can never be visualized, signified, and grasped in any ways.

To sum up the five stories discussed above, the female bodies molded by Li Ang can be observed from three interrelated angles. First of all, the repressed female subjects piece together a mirror image reflecting the male-dominated society in which women find no way out for individual liberation as well as disconnection from men’s expectations and social obligations. Second, Li Ang deals with the flow of the feminine self-awareness and self-reflectivity, and in this way questions the overarching male-dominated society. Third, the female (ghost) body undergoes a process of being disciplined and stylized through patriarchal ideology, thereby manifesting the fluid gender performativity. As Judith Butler claims, “Gender is, thus, a construction that regularly conceals its genesis; the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions is obscured by the credibility of those productions” (*Gender Trouble* 140). Although Li Ang’s female characters grow into profound stylized bodies with spectral features, they still seek the possibility of being recognized

as their true identities. In other words, Li Ang's female characters oscillate between being the sexual object and being the self-recognized subject beyond men's expectation.

Bringing into focus the stylized female corporeality and spectral positioning, Li Ang makes explicit the unbalanced power dynamic between men and women. Situated in a patriarchal society, women are objectified and conformed to the desire of men. Lacan has reminded us that there is no sexual relationship between men and women. Here the sexual relationship between men and women does not refer to the physical intercourse; rather, it represents the intricate mechanism of phallus, desire, and love in the symbolic order. Following Lacan's formula, Žižek argues, "Man's desire is the other's desire. [...] the fundamental impasse of human desire is that it is the other's desire in both subjective and objective genitive: desire for the other, desire to be desired by the other, especially, desire for what the other desires" (36). Furthermore, Lacan tries to unpack the knots of femininity in relation to masquerade:

Paradoxical as this formulation [of a demand for love] may seem, I am saying that it is in order to be the phallus—that is, the signifier of the Other's desire—that a woman rejects an essential part of femininity, namely, all its attributes, in the masquerade. It is for what she is not that she expects to be desired as well as loved. (*Écrits* 583)

From this Lacanian viewpoint, women are associated with the idea of "being the phallus," and they wear the phallic mask of femininity and live up to the expectation of men so as to be desired and loved by men in a mirage. Accordingly, the mirage-like love relationship between men and

women is based on a process of misrecognition and misrepresentation coinciding with men's demand for love in that there is a huge divide between what a woman really is and what masquerade a woman wears.

Given that "female ghosts can actually achieve what women cannot" (Li Ang, *Visible Ghosts* 237), we can safely say that the visible ghosts create ambiguous spaces in representing the repressed subjects. It is worth remembering that the author places the female revenants at the center of the book and fashions them as free agents, nocturnal observers, and even historical narrators. From margin to center, the formulation of female ghosts and the deconstructive deeds they perform demonstrate esoteric twists outside the social patterns and political norms.

Therefore, the spectralized female alternative is self-assertive and autonomous compared with socially bound women. In addition, the female ghost narrative represents the historical shadows and revises the haunting past of Taiwan's history. The historical course is always marked with numberless deaths. The return of the dead women and their haunting tales profoundly represent the corresponding refrains into the entangled knots of sexual imbalance and historical tumults.

While examining the spectralized female body and the wounded national body, Li Ang's *Visible Ghosts* points readers towards an older past and projects a signifying game of haunting and writing in an attempt to approach the unspeakable traumatic real through a Lacanian lens. This book, thus, shows us a realignment of power in historic core and gender discourse.

**CHAPTER 5**  
**EXPLORING SPECTRAL IDENTITIES:**  
**THE MANIFESTATION OF SEXUAL AND HISTORICAL COMPLEXITY**

In previous chapters, I have taken into account the temporal discontinuation of historical haunting and the sexual manifestation of feminist consciousness in the literary production from Chinese America and Taiwan. The last chapter of my dissertation explores less-trodden domains of ghost haunting: the gender figuration of ghostly identities in relation to sexual minorities as well as the interweaving complexity embedded in the historical fracture and sexual desire. By discussing the broader perspectives of spectral otherness in Taiwan, I would further examine the profound function of the ghostly through a close examination of sexuality represented in Dancing Crane's *Ghosts and Fairies* (2000) and layered intricacy in Tsai Ming-liang's film *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* (2003). In both Dancing Crane's and Tsai's works, ghost haunting and sexuality are combined with expressive techniques of playfulness beyond the one-dimensional phase of homophobia. Whereas Dancing Crane places the (gay) ghosts beyond the political framework of both heterosexuality and queerness, Tsai takes into account the haunting complexity in relation to diasporic longing, nostalgic attachment, and subtle eroticism. Both Dancing Crane and Tsai, thus, present the fluid desire in en-gendering the ghostly faces/phases of sexuality and history.

First, I would like to examine the ghostly figuration in Dancing Crane's queer/homosexual

writing. As a matter of fact, homosexuality has long been excluded from the political and social mechanism dominated by patriarchy and heterosexuality. According to Diana Fuss,

[T]he homosexual [is identified as] the abject, as the contaminated and expurgated insides of the heterosexual subject. Homosexual production emerges under these inhospitable conditions as a kind of ghost-writing, a writing which is at once a recognition and a refusal of the cultural representation of “the homosexual” as phantom Other. (3-4)

This feature of spectral otherness can be observed in the “tongzhi” [(homosexual) comrade] fiction of Taiwan. While the homosexual subjects are actually human beings, their abject-identity makes them alien and invisible to the overarching heterosexual ideology. What is interesting to note here is that the “ghosting” process of homosexuality in Taiwanese literature has appeared decades before Fuss’s observation on the “homosexual production” in the West. In Pai Hsien-yung’s “Lonely 17-Year-Old” [Jimuo de shiqisui] (1961), the homosexual character Yang Yunfeng is already described as an alienated ghost from his family. In Pai’s *Crystal Boys* (1977), the first gay fiction in Asia, the homosexual characters appear as shadows looming in a dismal park, or the kingdom of darkness, where their homosexual desire is liberated. This sort of spectral otherness is best expressed in the scene when Wang Kuilong, one of the leading characters, narrates his experience of loitering like other lonely (homosexual) ghosts in New York. At this point, Wang’s double-exile identity as a racial and sexual other is intensified to the extreme. As for the lesbian fiction of Taiwan, Liang-ya Liou also makes interesting connections

between ghost haunting and homosexuality. Analyzing Chiu Miao-jin's [Qiu Miaojin] *Crocodile Note* [E Yu Shouji] (1994) and Chang I-hsuan's [Zhang Yixuan] "The Haunted House of Happiness" [Xingfu Guiwu], Liou relates the ghostly manifestation of homosexuality to the "lesbian trauma" of being "invisible, unknown, and abject"<sup>24</sup> (298). Liou's analysis of the ghostly homosexuality is well elaborated; still, there is room for further discussion on this issue.

In Chapter Three, I already accounted for Dancing Crane's heterogeneous writing in *Remains of Life* while dealing with the ethnic otherness of aborigines in Taiwan. His ghost writing of homosexuality and bisexuality in *Ghosts and Fairies* can be regarded as another form of heterogeneity. It is worth remembering that Dancing Crane conducted field works and had homosexual encounters before. His homosexual writing first appears in his short fiction "A Homosexual's Secret Notes" [Yiwei Tongxinglian zhe de mimi shouji] (1996). This story contains seventy-three brief notes, in which the I-narrator delineates a bizarre arena of homosexual desire. The key tone of this story is cynical, destructive, anti-Confucian, and anti-Christian, basically deconstructing all the ethical rules against homosexuality. For example, the I-narrator imagines a disturbing incest between the gay son and the straight father. In Note 38, he even dehumanizes the homosexual subjects and makes them "Jungle Men": "Men transform in the jungle / A kind of not-male, not-female, male, female, Beast Men / I love Jungle Men"

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<sup>24</sup> In this chapter, the English translation of the original Chinese texts is mine unless otherwise noted.

(Dancing Crane, “A Homosexual’s Secret Notes” 261). Through the meditation on homosexuality, the I-narrator creates a heterogeneous space transcending the sexual dichotomy between male and female. As Dancing Crane admits at the end of the collection *The Sea of the 17-Year-Old*, the works including “A Homosexual’s Secret Notes” are “demonic products” (“Afterword” 287). In this light, the rebellious spirit of homoeroticism emerges throughout the entire text and challenges the oppressive heterosexuality and patriarchy.

Whereas “A Homosexual’s Secret Notes” represents the rampant, fearless homosexual resistance, *Ghosts and Fairies* further bridges the demonic and the ghostly in highlighting the ecstasy of (homo-)sexual ghost body. First of all, we need to take into consideration the significance of the title. Instead of describing homosexuals as ghostly, Dancing Crane directly names gay men Ghosts [Guier], and lesbians Fairies [A-Yao]. The bottom line is—“Ghosts are not Queers,” in the words of Dancing Crane (*Ghosts and Fairies* 5). In Taiwan, the word ‘queer’ is translated as Kuer, which literary means the cool being. The localization of the English term ‘queer’ is thus imbued with a political reinterpretation of homosexual identity by making homosexuality ‘cool’. However, this political term is not favored by the I-narrator of the novel, the alternative ego of Dancing Crane. Actually, the ghostly subject Guier, which sounds like Kuer, refers to a departure from Queers. While Fairies and Queers may be politically subversive, Ghosts are aloof to the outward resistance against heterosexuality. What Ghosts always bear in

mind is the complete corporeal life vis-à-vis the extreme carnival-like sexual acts.

At the beginning of *Ghosts and Fairies*, the I-narrator serves as a social observer who visits a homosexual bar called Devil in Heart [Xin Mo] on Wednesday and Friday nights. His constant visit soon draws the attention from the Ghosts and Fairies in the bar, and one Ghost named O-A even falls for him. Even though the I-narrator is always fascinated by Fairies' performative acts and eccentric use of language, what really interest him are the ambiguous Ghosts. As a matter of fact, the I-narrator is also an old Ghost. Later, he shifts his identity from an observer to a participant and becomes the leader of Lair of Ghosts [Guier Wo], which is a secret residence for Ghosts and Fairies in the urban jungle. Interestingly, the gender figuration of ghosting here coincides with the imagining of the dark terrain connected with homoeroticism. On one hand, the ghostly otherness of homosexuality alludes to the process of alienation and marginalization from the national narrative and heterosexual ideology. Sexual indulgence and physical decadence of homoeroticism are thus criticized by and excluded from the patriarchal dominance. It is obvious that the places like "Devil in Heart" and "Lair of Ghosts" demonstrate the inhuman traces of homosexual subjects, thereby reinforcing the dark impacts in the homosexual fiction. On the other, the death threat of homosexuality never ceases to emerge in the heterosexual discourse. The reason is that homosexuality subverts the biological reproduction of human species. Also, the deadly AIDS affects the public perception of homosexual acts, thus

making AIDS a falsely-assumed gay disease. As some homosexuals promote throwing condoms away while having sex, they are figured as the underground criminals and carriers of the deadly disease. For example, common people usually identify Ghosts as “a fin-de-siècle virus,” and Lair of Ghosts as “a plague zone” (Dancing Crane, *Ghosts and Fairies* 149). In this case, the latent danger of homosexual acts further contributes to the otherness of sexual minorities.

Despite its abject-identity, the ghostly homosexual subject carries the possibility of gender-crossing. Beyond the demarcation between male and female, Ghosts carry the sexual agency in breaking through the sexual boundaries. In defiance of the patriarchal and heterosexual hegemony, Dancing Crane makes use of spectral figuration to make possible a subversive homosexual practice. Therewith it brings about a vague, shadowy space where the socially subordinate homosexual figures perform their repressed desire. However, the Ghosts discussed above do not achieve real liberation unless they reach the stage of complete corporeal life, which will be further elaborated later. Unlike Queers, who resort to political movements against the heterosexual dominance, Ghosts’ existence should be accredited outside the general construct of gender politics. It has been argued that gender is merely a masquerade, and the generic terms like queer and ghost are nothing but signifiers constructed in the symbolic order. The ghostly representation of homosexuality is surely related to the social and sexual otherness. Nevertheless, Dancing Crane’s Ghosts channel the sexual otherness and straddle between heterosexual beings

and queer subjects. In Hsieh Chao-chen's account,

The reproduction of the ritual and ethnical rules and the conventional thinking [...] continue to encode everybody and process a reproduction and a dominance of the social mechanism of heterosexuality without leaving any space for deviation. Dancing Crane's writing serves to escape from the trajectory of encoding and to make an ambivalent argument between giving up and not giving up.<sup>25</sup> (144)

Hsieh's argument points to Dancing Crane's remakes of homosexual identity. Through a diverse cognitive process of signification, Dancing Crane assigns new meanings to a Ghost, who is neither spiritual nor evil, neither heterosexual nor queer. Moreover, his emphasis on the ecstasy of the Ghost body transforms the spiritual into the corporeal, thus cleverly substantializing the spectral entity of homosexuality.

It is worth repeating that the center of Dancing Crane's ghost writing lies in the sensual excitement and sexual orgasm with an aim to reach the complete life of corporeality. While substantializing the homosexual other, Dancing Crane reverses the expression of the ghostly hollowness and further brings into focus the sexual orgies of Ghosts and Fairies. In *Ghosts and Fairies*, the sexual arena Lair of Ghosts is not unlike a secret swinging club exclusively for homosexual swingers. This dark, spectral space is filled with casual sex, oral sex, anal sex, and even multi-sex. Besides, these homosexual rituals are complicated by bisexual acts. What needs to be underscored here is that Dancing Crane audaciously depicts the overlapping desire of gays and lesbians even though it may be problematic to some homosexual readers. As lesbian writer

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<sup>25</sup> In the chapter, all the translations from Chinese into English are mine, unless otherwise noted.

Chen Xue puts it in an essay on Dancing Crane, “[Dancing Crane’s] writing on lesbians, to be honest, misses the point to some extent” (270). However, maybe it is what Dancing Crane wants to represent—a demonic world conforming to no conventional imagining. In this sense, his subversive writing not only challenges the heterosexual construct, but also disturbs the homosexual/queer performance. In *Lair of Ghosts*, the carnal desire regresses to the primitive, natural, and beast-like condition. As Dancing Crane comments, “[T]he biggest sexual pleasure can only be experienced in the margin” (*Ghosts and Fairies* 107). As a matter of fact, Dancing Crane criticizes the public fear of bestial sex and multi-sex. Multi-sex, in the author’s opinion, should be “sublime,” “wild,” and “beautiful” (*Ghosts and Fairies* 131). Dancing Crane continues to argue,

On this planet, only human beings can have complicated and wonderful sex. Halleluiah! Amitabha! Human beings haven’t wasted any time in the universe only because of such “sex things.” Please pay attention: I never use words like “perverse,” “eccentric,” and “abnormal” to describe anything. (*Ghosts and Fairies* 132)

By resorting to the pure corporeal rapture, Dancing Crane stages a series of (homo-)sexual carnivals. It is the lust of flesh that makes reality possible, while the spiritual elevation is of no importance at this point.

Placing the carnal desire in the center, Dancing Crane indeed reverses the spiritual-and-corporeal paradigm. It can be regarded as a generic mutation of homosexuality. The

gradual regression to a primitive demand turns out to be a grand state above love, ethnics, and faith. In this regard, ghosting the homosexual body points to the author's unique way to localize the western concept of being 'queer'. Dancing Crane has reminded readers that the western notion of 'queer' has its historical backgrounds and political agendas. That is why he insists on using the word Ghost, which is a transformed and localized queer subject. It is also notable that Dancing Crane appropriates both the western conceptions and local Taiwanese cult cultures in ghosting his homosexual characters. In one scene of multi-sex between Ghosts and Fairies, Dancing Crane describes the erotic procedures in detail. He does not use the terms directly translated from English words like qianxi (foreplay) and huoxi (afterplay). To portray the ritual-like sexual act, he makes use of the worshipping conventions from local cult and aboriginal religions. For example, 'qingshui', asking for water, is originally a ritual to summon the deity from the sea in memory of the ancestors across the sea, but in this sexual act, it becomes the Ghosts' playful tricks to wet Fairies' vaginas. In addition, 'qianqu', chanting tunes, and 'hauhai', sea-howling, derive from the aboriginal ceremonies in Taiwan, but in this case, both terms pertain to the sexual moans, cries, screams in the erotic ritual at night. Connecting the (homo-)sexual performance and the cult/aboriginal tradition, Dancing Crane presents a unique sexual orgy and expresses his concerns about the fall of the so-called local cultural legacy, which has been proven in other literary works of his like *Remains of Life*.

Despite the difference between Ghosts and Queers in political consciousness, the performative queerness is indeed embodied in the sexual acts of Ghosts and Fairies, thus making apparent a diverse performative gender pattern. According to influential queer theorist Judith Butler,

[H]eterosexuality is always in the process of imitating and approximating its own phantasmatic idealization of itself—*and failing*. Precisely because it is bound to fail, and yet endeavors to succeed, the project of heterosexual identity is propelled into an endless repetition of itself.” (“Imitation and Gender Insubordination” 21)

Butler then moves on to relate the gay and lesbian performative acts in repeating and re-signifying the gender norms. It is worth considering that Dancing Crane’s ghost writing here serves as a phantasmatic mutation of homosexuality. It not only provides a parodic repetition of the gender pattern, but deconstructs it from the margin with a focus on the physical sensation and sexual pleasure.

Furthermore, this mutation of homosexuality brings about an ambiguous penis-centric or phallogentric myth represented in the I-narrator’s observation of and encounter with the Ghosts and Fairies. Dancing Crane first deconstructs the signification of the male sexual organ by narrating the story of sexually active Snow-A [Xue-A]. In one scene, Snow-A’s orgasm is stimulated by all the body parts of a sexually impotent man, except the penis. Later Snow-A is fascinated by the magical fingers and hands of lesbian T. Additionally, Dancing Crane highly

praises the free-floating corporeality of Sister Man [Man Jie Jie]<sup>26</sup>, who is a secret middle-aged lady. She only visits Lair of Ghosts on the nights of full moon and new moon and appears as a sexual guide and mentor for both Ghosts and Fairies. Without any question, she plays a critical role in pursuit of the complete life of corporeality. To put it another way, her body embodies the elevation of the bodily domain. However, the I-narrator never really puts away the sensitive male organ. He has wild sex with Fairies like Snow-A and Lake-A [Hu-A]. Even though he takes Fairies as androgynes, not real women, he still presents a suggestive bisexual complex. Ironically, the I-narrator does not depict his sexual acts with Ghosts, but focuses on his bestial sex with Fairies in this homosexual novel. This bisexual performance makes the homoerotic acts more complicated. The section that homosexual readers may find the most problematic can be the sexual enlightenment of Purple-A [Zi-A], who represents a well-educated and well-mannered noble lady. Through Sister-Man's sexual education, Purple-A gradually frees herself from the Confucian bondage, liberates her sexual desire, and embraces the ritual of corporeality. As the I-narrator describes the first ritual for Purple-A,

After Purple-A's moans turn to be raucous, Sister Man responds by kissing her back. Sister Man moves away and gazes on Purple-A's body. Her gaze lingers on every part of her body. At the same time, Ghosts have been waiting for a long time. Once Sister Man moves away, [one of] the Ghosts inserts his penis into Purple-A's vagina. In the silent Lair of Ghosts, Purple-A screams, and what follows is the sound of splashing water out of her vagina. (*Ghosts and Fairies* 286)

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<sup>26</sup> The word Man here has no 'male' connotations.

It is worth noting that both the extreme sexual pleasure and the complete life of freedom require the contribution of the male organ in the ritual of corporeality. Even if Sister Man functions as the dominant figure in *Lair of Ghosts* as well as the embodiment of corporeal life, the completion of the sexual ritual returns to a normal picture of male-female sexual act. Dancing Crane does not clearly account for this issue. Maybe we can say that the possible criticism of the phallogentric discourse is not part of Dancing Crane's concerns. As Dancing Crane says in the very beginning, Ghosts are not Queers, and Ghosts do not have any political agenda. The gist of the Ghost philosophy lies in a profound struggle between giving up and not giving up, abandoning and not abandoning, learning and not learning, and finally, signifying and not signifying. Take, for example, the linguistic structure in the symbolic order. Ghosts need to abandon the common structure of language, and use Ghosts' (fragmented) language; still, this process of giving up can never be completed since part of the original language must be retained in order to maintain meaningful communications among Ghosts and Fairies. In other words, Dancing Crane addresses the desperate struggle as the development with both denial and acknowledgment. As Dancing Crane states,

The biggest inner self that a Ghost abandons is the 'ego'. He also abandons the two useless followers of ego, 'self-respect' and 'dignity'. The space within is much enlarged after abandoning the ego, and the Ghost enjoys visiting and leaving this vast space without any trace of ego. (*Ghosts and Fairies* 114)

This denial of ego consorts with the remaking of the Ghost identity. Being a Ghost can be

interpreted as a reflection of the subject's otherness in a gender discourse. Nevertheless, real Ghosts do not care about the interpretation and recognition offered from the Other. Dancing Crane in an interview has explained the correlation between Ghosts' ambivalence and the Zen notion: "Giving up is the beginning of realization" ("Complicated Dancing Crane" 252). While the Zen ideal promotes the philosophical sublimation of thinking, the Ghost ritual aims at the corporeal excitement and enjoyment. One's corporeality becomes the unspeakable reality that can only be experienced and realized by way of wild sexual acts. Its physical purity, yet filled with creativity and playfulness, transcends the human language, social system, and political movement. Its ultimate embodiment, as emphasized earlier, turns out to be the completion of corporeal life. Ghosts' apolitical position is further reconfirmed in the intense debate between Queers, led by leading political activists, and Ghosts, led by the I-narrator. Whereas Queers want to recruit Ghosts for future social events, the I-narrator and his Ghost crew totally neglect, not argue against, the necessity of the movements against heterosexuality. Ghosts are self-content in the shadowy space of primitive desire beyond any form of political conflicts. In short, Ghosts only pursue the pure corporeal ecstasy and sexual freedom.

Dancing Crane's Ghost story reaches the climax when the I-narrator finally agrees to participate in the "fin-de-siècle heterogeneous virgin sacrifice" [Shijimuo yizhi chunuji], organized by Fairies and supported by Queers. In this public ritual, the I-narrator would insert a

nuclear-radiant tube, which is assumedly safe, into the vagina of a voluntary virgin girl. This heterogeneous ritual performed in the Memorial Hall aims at changing the public perception of virgin complex. To be sure, this highly explosive event captures close attention from the government and news media. Under the surveillance of the national machine and the public press, the agency of the virgin sacrifice is brought to the extreme. As Snow-A, the leader of Fairies, announces on the stage:

We Fairies will complete the masterpiece exclusively about Fairies. For those who are present today, please ponder over the prefatory remarks of this great masterpiece: “Stop shedding tears! Pour the vaginal water!” “Pour the vaginal water!—Stop shedding tears!—Pour the vaginal water!” (Dancing Crane, *Ghosts and Fairies* 295)

Snow-A’s statement indeed points to a subversive political message against the heterosexual hegemony. If we take the tube as a symbolic agent of national machine, the performance of penetrating the virgin’s vagina does not just mock the national control over the human body, but involves an ideological collision with patriarchal dominance. As the above sexual ritual is organized by Fairies and performed by a Ghost (the I-narrator), it conveys the political messages regarding the homoerotic desire and corporeal autonomy. It is worth discussing that Dancing Crane stages such a weird and provocative show so as to represent the bewildering entanglements of gender consciousness and national supervision. Besides, Dancing Crane uses his black humor in depicting the sexual ritual performed to break the myth of virgin complex, and in this way makes the entire event shocking and farcical. While questioning the heterosexual

ideology, *Dancing Crane* also provides a parody of the homosexual political movement.

After the virgin sacrifice, Sister Man asks the I-narrator to leave Lair of Ghosts in that he breaks his own promise to be apolitical and fails to retain his invisible spectral identity. At the end of the story, the I-narrator leaves the lair and stays with Lake-A. At this point, the author delivers an ironic vision to the homosexual fiction by providing the formulation of the male-female relationship in the end. After the publication of the novel, *Dancing Crane* admits that he attempts to perform “a reversal of the reversal” through returning to the normal way of sex in this queer/Ghost fiction (“*Complicated Dancing Crane*” 249). To put it another way, he tries to create his own (homo-)erotic fiction. However, this male-female myth does not serve as the final idealization of gender norms. Solitude seems to come with the corporeal excitement of and beyond homosexuality, inside and outside Lair of Ghosts. That said, the gender relationship of Ghosts and Fairies is always free-floating and evolving.

To sum up, *Dancing Crane*’s Ghost narrative is another form of queer writing against the patriarchal and heterosexual systems, and he really brings the subversive Ghosts and Fairies into full play. The homosexual subjects are marginalized if they recognize and accept the negative symbolic titles given to them by the Other. To avoid the dominance of heterosexuality, the author chooses not to identify with the gender stereotypes. When he transforms his homosexual characters into (in-)visible Ghosts, he does not deny the subversive power of the ghostly

mutation. The Ghosts in the novel may be apolitical, but the author's queer writing surely carries lots of political messages in challenging the stiff binary oppositions of sexuality. From Dancing Crane's perspective, the socially and culturally subordinate homosexuals must take an alternative route in face of the heterosexual hegemony. Ghosting homosexuality here is fashioned as a political strategy to celebrate the fluidity of gender identity and to embrace the freedom of human body. To Ghosts and Fairies, the complete life of corporeality transcends the political ideology and linguistic structure. Following Dancing Crane's logic, it is the sexual enjoyment that counts. It does not matter if the sexual act is performed with penises, fingers, or toes. It does not matter whether or not it is a homosexual encounter. Therefore, Dancing Crane deconstructs the Taiwanese homosexual fiction by queering the queerness.

Like Dancing Crane, Taiwanese director Tsai Ming-liang brings into focus the suggestive sexual vision and the ghostly figuration in his film *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*. Whereas Dancing Crane's queer writing centers around the complete corporeal life, Tsai skillfully presents the close relationship between space and body with respect to ghost haunting, diasporic memories, and eroticism. It is critical that Tsai explores the ideas of the cityscape as a free-floating memory-scape, the relationship between body and space, and the haunting cinematic effects on the spectators, thus making this film beyond the scope of homosexuality. To start with, it is necessary to account for Tsai's diasporic background and sentimental attachment to the old

Chinese film *Dragon Inn* (1967). The concept of the ghostly façade plays an important part in terms of the transformation of the modern cityscape and mindscape. At this point, the decline of the old theater not only signifies the passing of old memories but also reflects the desolate mental state of human beings in a diasporic context, thus establishing a profound relationship between space and body. That said, the geographical and cultural displacement is represented in the fall of the architectural façade and in the dysfunction of the human body, and the unfitting façade and the dysfunctional body can never fill the lack of the double-layered spectatorship: the characters/spectators inside and the audience outside.

Born in Malaysia and educated in Taiwan, Tsai Ming-liang infuses his diasporic memories into the Taiwan film industry. In *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*, Tsai delicately deals with his nostalgic longings represented by the queer/ghostly body behind the falling façade. The fluid body here refers to the unstable body images and registers. In this film, the soon-to-be-closed Fu He Theater offers its last screening of the sword-fighting classic *Dragon Inn*, which has long been recognized as one of the best-known Chinese martial arts films. The dilapidated theater turns out to be a gloomy site occupied by a handful of forlorn people and lost souls, such as a disabled ticket woman, a homosexual Japanese tourist, and two retired actors. These physically and sexually marginalized figures gather in this nearly empty theater searching for love, sex, and memory. However, what awaits them is nothing but emotional solitude and dark hollowness, a

sense reaffirmed by the dismal and watery setting of the theater itself.

Tsai's characters in this film are not unlike ghosts. They act as lost souls, haunting and lingering with their unfulfilled desires. As Kenneth Chan argues, "[O]ne lingers at a particular place of choice to appreciate, to relish, to study, or to reminisce" (91). In this way, haunting can be identified with nostalgic lingering. This gloomy theater haunts not only the spectators within the film but also the audience who watch the film. The deliberately slow pace and bulky silence of the film works to disturb and haunt its audience. The most unbearable and unforgettable scene is the 5.5-minute long take of the empty screening room after the screening. By means of this long take, the patience of the audience is put to the extreme test. The haunting experience of the dark hollowness originates from the lack caused by Tsai's nostalgia. This experience is exactly what the director wants to pass on to the audience, the real spectators, through the intolerable silence and emptiness. This kind of haunting stress lingers on even at the close of the film, in that neither the characters nor the audience find a way out of the suffocating atmosphere of the setting.

To better understand the multilayered *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*, we have to understand its background. The film pays tribute to King Hu's *Dragon Inn* (Longmen Kezhan), a film which on its release in 1967 achieved a record-breaking box-office success.<sup>27</sup> *Dragon Inn* had a hand in

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<sup>27</sup> Hu's *Dragon Inn*, together with his previous film *Come Drink With Me* (1966), attained brilliant box-office

the prosperity of the Taiwan film industry in the 1960s and 1970s. Born in Beijing, sojourning in Hong Kong, and then shooting feature films in Taiwan, King Hu witnessed the historical and political split between mainland China and Taiwan. For this reason, Hu's *Dragon Inn*, his first work filmed in Taiwan, is tinged with nostalgia and diaspora. *Dragon Inn* stands as the epitome of Hu's nostalgic imagining and longing. The setting of *Dragon Inn* is Longmen in Henan Province in China of the Ming Dynasty; yet, the entire movie was filmed in the Central Mountains and the valley of Choshui River in Taiwan. In this way, Hu touches upon the displacement of spatial and temporal elements. Hu re-imagines the landscape of China and makes explicit his nostalgic reminiscence through this film. He not only revisits distant Longmen, which literally means Dragon Gate, but also stages his imaginary dragon, or his own Chineseness in a diasporic sense. Tsai shares a similar diasporic experience with Hu. Like Hu, he left his hometowns and ended up making films in Taiwan. In this light, their similarity in expressing nostalgic reminiscence reinforces the dynamic of diaspora represented in *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*.

Doubtless, Tsai pays tribute to King Hu's *Dragon Inn* and deplors the fall of the Taiwanese film industry. The Taiwanese film industry has been declining under the invasion of Hollywood blockbusters for the past few decades. *Goodbye Dragon Inn* centers on the last showing of *Dragon Inn* in an old haunted movie theater in Taipei, Taiwan, and in this way shows

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success and marked a milestone of martial arts films.

Tsai's nostalgia in relation to the fading grandeur of Taiwanese cinema. Through the dynamic interplay between *Dragon Inn* and *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*, Tsai shows his concerns regarding the cultural amnesia and the individual aphasia in the face of diaspora. Tsai seems to enjoy projecting the repeated themes such as physical incompleteness and emotional separation in his previous films like *Vive l'Amour* (1994) and *The River* (1997). By the same token, *Goodbye Dragon Inn* lays out physical and emotional fragmentation represented in the characters, such as the crippled ticket clerk, the hidden projectionist, the gay Japanese tourist, the two elderly actors/spectators, and so on. In this film, the characters echo their surroundings in profound ways. The dilapidated theater is a confined space secluded from the outside world. The entire story line of *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* unfolds within this suffocating space. These marginalized characters thus echo the deterioration of Taiwanese movies and old theaters. The film's Chinese title, "Busan" (lingering), also becomes sorrowful and ironic rhetoric, showing that something important is disappearing though still lingering like the ghostly figures inside the haunted theater.

When it comes to the interweaving of space and body in *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*, the concept of façade is important. Although façade is literally "the exterior face of a building," it is also laden with "complexity" and "depth, composed of multiple layers to meet multiple functional requirements."<sup>28</sup> In terms of architecture, the surface interacts with the internal

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<sup>28</sup> For more information about façade, please refer to Scott Murray's short essay "The Architectural Façade," which

complexity of space and being. Moreover, the agent-body<sup>29</sup> behind the façade connects with the cityscape around it and the confined space within it and so echoes the human solitude and alienation of modern life. Space and body seem to be inseparable in their physical resemblance. Behind the ghostly façade Tsai demonstrates the decadent cityscape, the confined space, and the connection between body and space. In *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*, there is indeed a complex relationship between the façade of the theater and the beings inside. Whereas the façade of the run-down theater is haunting in its appearance as shown at the gloomy opening and ending of the film, the outcasts inside are ghost-like due to their seeming invisibility and marginality in the society.

The transformation of the cityscape has been an important issue since Tsai's first feature, *Rebels of the Neon God* (1992). In this film, Tsai does not present the prosperity of the modern cityscape. Instead, he makes use of heavy rain, grey sky, and concrete buildings to delineate a

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was written in 2007 for the art exhibition "Façade" in Krannert Art Museum at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. This exhibition dated from October 19 to December 30, 2007.

<sup>29</sup> For further information, please refer to Stephen Heath's *Questions of Cinema* (Bloomington: Indian University Press, 1985). Talking about the relationship between character and agent, Stephen Heath argues in *Questions of Cinema* that the actor or actress is able to "[empty] his or her body and fill it with meaning," and in this way "absents him or herself" as "the agent-character" (180). In other words, Heath suggests that each actor or actress can be separated from his or her original self and become an agent with a representational body. Heath also points out that films are composed of "fragments, bits of bodies, gestures, desirable traces, fetish points" (183). An agent is not necessarily a human being. It can be any animated entity shown in films. In terms of Tsai's films, we may introduce "the agent-character" as the *agent-body*, which consorts with the fluid images of bodies and body parts. While the agent-character is associated with the individual as a whole, the agent-body is wedded to the fragmentary identity and the ambiguous sexuality of the characters such as the homosexual loner and the old men in the decaying, ghostly theater. Tsai treats the representational body as a register with multidimensional meanings. In this light, the bodies of the sexually and physically marginalized characters can be examined from diverse perspectives. These characters are bound up both with their individual bodily deficiency and with the collective mental lack within a historical timeframe of the diasporic longings. Hence, the body narrative in relation to the transforming space emerges as a dominant strategy of Tsai's stylistic storytelling.

portrait of urban decay. To Tsai modern cities such as Taipei and Paris are tinged with turn-of-the-century desolation and bleakness. In the words of Ivy-chu Chang, Tsai's films "personalize" the public space and transform the "landscape" into the extension of the "mindscape [of the characters]" (80). Why then does Tsai connect his diasporic nostalgia with the transformation of cityscape and the ghostly figures inside the haunted theater? On the one hand, Tsai attempts to pay homage to the classic Chinese-language martial arts film *Dragon Inn*. On the other hand, he goes beyond nostalgia and resorts to his repeated themes, such as solitude and fluidity of sexuality in modern urbanization. To be sure, the multilayered film *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* is loaded with historical and cultural implications which create the aura of the lingering past embedded in the haunting façade as well as the representational bodies of the ghostly characters.

In *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*, the dismal Taipei movie theater is scheduled to be temporarily closed and is screening *Dragon Inn* for the last time. By employing two old Taiwanese actors, Miao Tian and Shih Chun, both of whom starred in the 1967 version of *Dragon Inn*, to watch their own youthful performance, Tsai creates an intertextual dimension. Miao Tian, appearing as a ghostly figure, meets Shih Chun in the lobby of the theater after the screening. Shih Chun sighs mournfully and tells Miao Tian, "No one comes to the movies anymore. And no one remembers us anymore." The old men's languishing bodies indeed correspond with the fall of the Taiwanese

cinema and the near-empty old Taipei theater. However, at the same time Miao is accompanied by a young child, and in this regard Tsai heals the divide between the old and new generations. Except the brief conversation between the two old men, this film generally lacks dialogue and background music. Most of the speech and melody come from the screening of *Dragon Inn*. Obviously, Tsai attempts to lay out physical or emotional fragmentation represented in the marginalized characters and to express the difficulty of communication by the deficiency of dialogue.

Besides the fall of the Taiwanese film industry, Tsai attempts to deal with the change of cityscape and the gap between old and young generations. As a matter of fact, Tsai originally planned to make *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* a short, the second half of a single film. The first half would have been *The Missing* (Bujian)<sup>30</sup>, directed by Lee Kang-sheng. However, the two shorts were finally distributed as two closely related feature films. Put together, *The Missing* and *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* become the Chinese idiom “bujian busan,” “promising ‘be there or be square’ when setting up a meeting,” in the words of Gary Gang Xu (102). However, if we read

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<sup>30</sup> At the very beginning of *The Missing*, an old lady is anxiously searching for her three-year-old grandson in a park still under construction. This old lady even goes to the columbarium where her dead husband’s ashes are stored to ask him for guidance. A truant teenager is also looking for someone missing, his grandfather with Alzheimer’s disease. Eventually, the old lady and the teenager meet each other in the park, but they still cannot find their missing family. Tired and dispirited, they squat by the lake in the park and watch their own reflections in the lake. At the close of *The Missing*, an old man and a young child walk hand in hand in a dark corner of the park. They are suggestively the missing grandfather and the missing grandson. This old man is Miao Tian. In *The Missing*, the old lady and the teenager fail to heal the split between the old and new generations, whereas the ghostlike old man and child reach a union in a gruesome way while loitering in the darkness. Later on the old man and the young child go to see the movie *Dragon Inn* in the outdated movie theater from *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*, therefore connecting the two films and bridging the gap between two generations.

“bujian” and “busan” separately, they turn out to be *missing* and *lingering*. Ironic as it may sound, the “promise of reunion” changes into “the reunion of the ghostly” (G. Xu 202). There is no authentic reunion in this sense. The ghostly reunion merely appears in the compounding of missing and lingering in *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*.

In Tsai’s films, body and space always echo each other. While the environment is undergoing a gradual urbanization, Tsai’s characters falter in responding to the process of transformation. In this sense, the ghostly body is always cleverly tied in with space, which is made for “physical and sensual revelation,” in Olivier Joyard’s classic phrase (47). In *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*, the ghostly figures are bound up with the haunted theater. It is raining hard outside, while the theater is leaking inside. Water, leaking, and the human body are closely related to one another. The gloomy darkness, water leaking, and the deficient human body grow into an intriguing triangle of body politics, thus connecting the diasporic lack to the spectral identities of the marginalized characters. Whereas the bodies seem incapable of reacting properly to the leaking and the excess of water, the characters remain silent, vacant, and insatiable. It is also important to highlight the diverse functions of the agent-body as the outlet for characters’ emotions in Tsai’s films. Tsai’s minimalist body narrative contrasts the bodily excess. Its subtle representation of body has no expression, no excess, and no affect. Characters like the Japanese homosexual man and the two old men usually stand or sit still without any excess of movements

and they use extremely diminished affective expressions. With their expressionless faces and restrained motive force, the characters seem to have something weighing on their mind, but can never find a fitting outlet for their discomfort and solitude.

Furthermore, Tsai takes into account the connection between the fluid body and (bi-/homo-)sexuality. In Tsai's films, homosexuality has always been a controversial topic, and *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*, in which Tsai juxtaposes the dismal theater and homoeroticism, is no exception. In King Hu's *Dragon Inn*, the ringleader is an evil eunuch who provides a vivid contrast to the alleged potent masculinity represented by the just and straight knights. In *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*, Tsai stages a Japanese tourist (Mitamura Kiyonobu) sneaking in the theater and watching the film. The man's real intention is to look for a homosexual encounter in this tumble-down place. The de-centered position of homosexuality represents that of Taiwanese movies, marginalized and taking place in the second-run cinema. For Tsai, homosexuality is an epitome of solitude in response to the dominant heterosexuality in modern society. In his previous films, *Vive L'Amour* (1994) as well as *What Time Is It There* (2001), homosexual desire is represented in vague but suggestive ways. In *Vive L'Amour*, the male lead kisses his sleeping male friend on the bed; and, similarly, in *What Time Is It There* the female lead kisses her female friend on the bed. In *The River* (1997), Tsai upsets the taboos of homosexuality and incest by filming a shocking scene where the father and the son have sex in a dark sauna room. The

homosexual Japanese man in *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* is very different from the homosexual characters in Tsai's previous films: he is a comic figure.

First the homosexual Japanese man is trapped in a seat between a strange old man and a pair of smelly bare feet of a middle-aged man. Then in the restroom he is trapped between two men while using the urinal. This scene lasts for about three minutes without any intrusion of music and conversation. Later in a dark passageway of the theater the Japanese man runs into a well-dressed man who is probably the most normal-looking character in *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*. They remain silent for a while as if assessing each other on homosexual desire, but this scene ends surprisingly. The well-dressed man tells the Japanese man that this theater is "haunted," and the gay tourist responds, "I'm Japanese." Then the well-dressed man says goodbye in Japanese language and leaves. The Japanese tourist resonates with the geographical and cultural displacement of a Taipei theater. His queer and foreign agent-body aggravates his incompatibility. Tsai seems to connect the displaced Japanese tourist with the history of the Taiwanese film industry which can be traced back to the Japanese colonial period. The character's failure to find a proper match symbolizes the dilemma of human connections.

It is interesting that both *Dancing Crane* and Tsai Ming-liang explore the male-female relationship beyond homoeroticism. While the queer body points to the flexibility of sexuality, the female body in Tsai's films such as *Vive l'Amour*, *The Hole*, and *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* is

laced with the lack of fulfillment, either physically or mentally. In Pin-chia Feng's opinion, Tsai always presents the "female body" as a "strong narrative element," especially when the narrative of the story is disjointed and absent; besides, Tsai's female figures demonstrate the "high power of mobility;" they are active both as an "economic laborer" and as a "pursuer of sexual desire" (104). As a result, female bodies release bodily and emotional waste like tears as the gloomy space leaks. The crippled ticket woman in *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* is a good example. Like other female characters in Tsai's films, the clerk, infused with "high power of mobility," moves from room to another in the theater despite her physical challenge.

In one scene, Tsai shows a series of reverse shots, fourteen times in total, between the clerk and the knightly woman warrior of *Dragon Inn* while the clerk is watching the screening film. At this point, the gaze of the spectator and the object of the gaze are completely female-oriented. In these reverse shots, the clerk's face is streaked with the shadow and light from the screen. The clerk is in this way linked with the woman warrior. In the Lacanian logic of the mirror stage, the dynamic woman warrior on the screen is not unlike an idealized specular image of the lame female clerk, thus demonstrating "the mirrored disposition of the *imago of one's own body* in hallucinations and dreams" (Lacan, *Ecrits* 77). While realizing the impossibility of attaining the fantasized gestalt of one's own body, the heterogeneous *I*-subject like the clerk is infused with a sense of loss. This is a psychical transformation from the identification of the specular I to that of

the social I.

Moreover, this disabled clerk seems to secretly fall in love with the male projectionist. In one scene she cuts a peach-like Chinese birthday bun in two. To give the projectionist a half of the bun, she limps through the passageways and climbs up the stairs in search of him. She eventually gives up and puts the half bun in an electric rice cooker at the ticket window. While the clerk constantly shows up in this film, the projectionist is totally absent until near the end. Finally, the projectionist appears and finds the half bun in the cooker. He runs out and rides his motorbike away, but he does not know that the disabled woman is outside the gate of the theater, watching, and lingering. While the projectionist is about to leave, the camera shoots merely part of the clerk's body at a dark corner within the same frame. After the projectionist goes away, the marginalized and fragmented female clerk walks to the center of the static frame. The only completely silent female lead in Tsai's films, the clerk gives up the only chance to express her love and desire for the projectionist. Then she puts up an umbrella and walks lamely away in the heavy rain. In the long run, the gap between the two characters is not bridged.

Whereas the imaginary and physical space of the past is fading away, the leading characters inside the space, especially the female ticket clerk and the male projectionist, seem to lose the ability to speak and to communicate—that is, a symbolic symptom of aphasia. Jacques Lacan has reminded us of the importance of language in the symbolic order, which

“distinguishes human society from natural societies” (*Ecrits* 414). Lacan believes that the human subject is dominated by the symbolic order which is a social network of linguistic interaction. To enter this symbolic phase, one needs to accept the laws and rules of human society so as to communicate with the others. And the linguistic system of the signifier and the signified serves as the first and foremost rule that one must follow. Beyond the Lacanian Symbolic Order, Tsai’s *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* demonstrates the utter lack of fulfillment for the double-layered spectatorship: the characters/spectators in the film and the audience who watch the film.

Even though the two old men talk to each other briefly, they gradually turn numb and silent in the end. In this case, the absence of speech, together with the undisciplined body, suggests the characters’ supposed immaturity and inappropriateness in tandem with the structural resemblance of the theater which misfits with the urban renewal. At this point, the interweaving of the haunting space and the dysfunctional body is fully developed through the ghostly figures’ failure to fit in the Lacanian symbolic order. Accordingly, the human body is intertwined with the sexual ambiguity and marginalized positioning, while the old theater is adapted into an imaginary site of nostalgic memories. In Lacan’s account, the “fragmented body” is situated in the phase before/of the mirror stage, in which the infant engages with the process “from insufficiency to anticipation” (*Ecrits* 78). The leading characters in this film also suffer from their fragmentary identity and desire for the totality of identification, but it seems that they are

confined in their “insufficiency” and find no route to a real completion of communication in the spatial and temporal terrains of transience.

At the end of the film, there is a shot of the big movie bulletin board of *Dragon Inn* above the theater building within this static frame. This film ends here with an old song “Can’t Let

Go”<sup>31</sup> (Liulian):

I remember, under the moon.  
I remember, before the flowers.  
So much of the past lingers in my heart.  
Half is bitter. Half is sweet.  
Year after year. I can’t let go.  
Can’t let go. Can’t let go.  
Under the moon, before the flowers.  
Can’t let go. Can’t let go.  
I’ll remember with longing forever.<sup>32</sup>

This old tune lays bare the collective motif of lingering and nostalgia. The past is fading away, and it is difficult to let it go. The last static frame goes back to Tsai’s point: something is missing and needs to be discovered, recovered, and explored. Both the queer body and the female body represent bodily desire, human emotions, and mental solitude in response to their surroundings. Fragmented and marginalized, the human body exists as the private and individual receptacle of desire and solitude from Tsai’s angle. The representational bodies of the ghostly characters in *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* display a complete lack of sexual and emotional fulfillment. It is true that

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<sup>31</sup> “Liulian” is an oldie from the 1960’s, performed by Yao Li; music by Hattori Ryoichi; lyrics by Chen Dei Yi.

<sup>32</sup> The English translation of this old song also comes from the English subtitles of the DVD of *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*.

the ghostly characters' lack differs from the psychological lack caused by Tsai's diasporic nostalgia; however, the gap here can be bridged by and woven into the haunted theater along with intricate historical, emotional, and even sexual knots behind the forward outer surface of the haunted theater.

Therefore, *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* makes visible the dysfunction of human body as well as the incompatibility between the nostalgic façade and the urban construction. The fall of the old theater in urbanization can be affiliated with Andreas Huyssen's concept of amnesia. Amnesia, Huyssen writes, is caused by "high-tech fantasies" and "the waning of historical consciousness" (9) in the (post-)modern world. This kind of [amnesia] "will have sealed the very forgetting of memory itself: nothing to remember, nothing to forget" (Huyssen 9). This film is surely wedded to the cultural amnesia and displacement as shown in the to-be-torn-down façade and to the emotional lack as expressed by the ghostly characters. Indeed, the fluid body and the ghostly façade in *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* represent a unique spectacle, fashioning the body as the agent and the theater as the memory-scape in bits and pieces. In this light, Tsai plunges into the issues of diasporic attachment, individual solitude, and interpersonal alienation. What Tsai wants to pass on to the audiences are the senses of lack and loss in relation to the discourses of diaspora and gender politics. The old theater is closed at the end of the film, but the ghostly figures are still lingering and unwilling to leave. This nostalgic film can thus be read as Tsai's attempt to

lament and defer, if not resist, cultural amnesia as well as individual aphasia through the fluid body and the memory-scape within the symbolic framework.

To conclude, both *Dancing Crane* and Tsai Ming-liang touch upon the ghostly figuration of sexual minorities but depart from the conventional sexual/gender patterns. While *Dancing Crane* creates a double-queering space between heterosexual and homosexual constructs, Tsai is ambitious enough to incorporate diverse perspectives of historical remains and sexual desire. More important, the ghostly representation of sexual minorities here goes beyond the intangible spectral entity and resorts to the abject-position of otherness within the overarching social and cultural framework. At this point, the representation of ghost haunting points to the re-imagining of history, sexuality, and eroticism, thus illustrating transformed visions in spectral politics.

## CONCLUSION

Ghost haunting represents various senses of crossing. The ghostly return mediates the gap between the living and the dead, the past and the present, and more profoundly, the absence and the presence. The literary and cinematic manifestations of haunting project the process of returning and crossing in relation to the unconscious of human psyche. Cultural productions like fiction and film convey vital messages in keeping alive the memories of trauma and reconstructing the course of history. The English word 'ghost' and the Chinese character 'gui' not only shed light on the residues of cultural heritage and historical pains, but also reflect the social imagining of gender identities. That said, the ghostly figuration can be wedded to the cultural translation and social transition in response to the diasporic, postcolonial, and sexual complexities.

This dissertation investigates the significance of specters, and more generally, of haunting, trauma, and gender politics in the ghost narratives from Chinese America and Taiwan. While Chinese American writers write in English, Taiwanese writers write in Chinese. The linguistic and cultural divide between the two traditions can be bridged by their connections with the classical Chinese ghost storytelling. Tracing the spectral images back to the classical Chinese ghost storytelling, I examine its influence on Chinese American and Taiwanese ghost narratives, and continue to explore how these two narratives depart from the original haunting. Through a

series of close readings of the Chinese ethnic works, this dissertation serves as a critical vein to engage with multiple issues of haunting, including historical trauma, ethnoscapas, feminism, and (homo-)sexuality. The spectral figuration evolves from the personal experiences of the traumatic past, but the trauma does not fade away with the dead. On the contrary, the trauma can be passed down from one generation to another and further represented in the cultural imagining and literary writing. In other words, the individual experience of oppression can be projected onto a bigger screen of the collective mentality in the contexts of Chinese America and Taiwan. Therefore, haunting is not individual, but should be approached and grasped vis-à-vis the overarching (cross-)cultural and social framework.

In Chinese American literature, the autobiographical narrative has been dominant since Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* in representing the past and the present. The domestic haunting is thus tied in with the historical oppression. Kingston's political concerns are clear enough when she stages numerous spectral figures including the Chinese ghosts, American ghosts, and Chinese American ghosts. In this light, Kingston's ghost narrative fleshes out an important process of emergence in American literature and reflects the racial and cultural impacts for Chinese immigrants and their American-born children. Of course, Kingston influenced a great number of Chinese/Asian American writers. Generally speaking, Chinese American haunting alludes to the intricate identity formations in response to in-betweenness and

marginalization. Still, writers like Amy Tan and Shawna Yang Ryan explore different ends of ghost storytelling. While Tan presents a global perspective of ghost traveling, Ryan resorts to the collective Chinese American trauma in early twentieth century. The haunting effects in Chinese American contexts are thus ushered into new dimensions of public consciousness.

Whereas the ghost narrative in Chinese American literature embarks on the cross-cultural imagination and experience wedded to the haunting past of China and the oppressive present of Chinese America, the cultural productions in Taiwan have developed multiple forms of ghost narratives due to Taiwan's multicultural, multiethnic, and postcolonial backgrounds. On the one hand, Taiwan is bound up with its ambivalent attitude—yearning for and resistance against China. On the other, the culturally hybrid Taiwan is steeped in the compromise with postcolonial discourse and gender configuration. The tropes of ghost haunting in Pai Hsien-yung, Chu T'ien-hsin, Li Ang, *Dancing Crane*, and Tsai Ming-liang go beyond the double-layered division of ethnic and cultural ghosts and venture into the ghostly appearances of the postcolonial spirits and sexual/social figuration. To put it another way, the diverse spectral representations in Taiwanese literature and cinema range from the ghostly Chineseness, the lost souls in (post-)colonial periods, the aboriginal spirits' voices, and the spectral sexual figures in the diasporic, postcolonial, and postmodern Taiwan.

Ghost haunting is always disturbing and lingering. By making the spectral figures visible

to the readers/audience, writers and film directors demonstrate the historical trauma and probe into the unknown and the uncanny state of human psyche. Moreover, the personal experiences of trauma and oppression can be relived and repeated, and the haunting effects can be reproduced diversely. Placed side by side, Chinese American and Taiwanese ghost narratives delve into intriguing twists from the imaginary Chineseness, and formulate revolutionary takes on spectral identities. Ghosts not only indicate the returning souls of the dead, but also mirror the social/gender figuration of the decentered subjects. As narratives of haunting has become a popular trend in the cultural and social imagining, the journey of the ghostly will never come to an end.

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