

“An Analysis of Postmodernism and Its Influence on Li Ang”
An Investigation into the Intricacies of the Postmodern Condition through
an Analysis of Li Ang’s Most Recent Work

by


Rita Hsia-yi Lin
B A , Univeristy of Victoria, 1998


A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS


in the Department of Pacific and Asian Studies

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard


Dr Harry Hsiao, Supervisor (Department of Pacific and Asian Studies)


Dr Richard King, Departmental Member (Department of Pacific and Asian Studies)


Dr Gregory Blue, Outside Member (Department of History)


Dr Nicholas Galichenko, External Examiner (Department of Slavonic Studies)

© Rita Hsia-yi Lin, 2000

University of Victoria

All rights reserved This thesis may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by
photocopy or other means, without the permission of the author

Supervisor Dr Harry Hsiao

ABSTRACT

Some commentators are puzzled by the degree of Li Ang's familiarity with postmodernism. On the one hand, it appears that she is familiar with a number of key concepts and practices of postmodernism. On the other hand, there are very obvious discrepancies between Li Ang's tertiary style and the deeper contents of her story. Her style of writing quite often seems to be an application of postmodernism. However, the deeper contents do not appear to be bound by the dictates of postmodernism. Therefore, the relations between her work and postmodernism are ambiguous and controversial. Perhaps the best way to describe her views is to take the metaphor of a kite tied to the ground. She sees the world as a chaotic and fragmented arena in which nothing is solid or substantial but is mitigated by the anchor of community.

Examiners



Dr. Harry Hsiao, Supervisor (Department of Pacific and Asian Studies)



Dr. Richard King, Departmental Member (Department of Pacific and Asian Studies)



Dr. Gregory Blue, Outside Member (Department of History)



Dr. Nicholas Galichenko, External Examiner (Department of Slavonic Studies)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One: Introduction	1
1.1 The Author	1
1.1.1 Li Ang	1
1.1.2 Enfant Terrible	3
1.1.3 Existentialism	4
1.1.4 Nativist Literature	4
1.2 The Novel	5
1.2.1 Pei-kang Incense Burner	5
1.2.2 Misogyny or Sisterhood	6
1.2.3 From Feminism to Postmodernism	7
1.3 Overview of Postmodernism	9
1.3.1 Deconstructivism and Reconstructivism	9
1.3.2 Community and Locality	11
1.3.3 Baudrillard's Conception of Postmodernism	16
1.3.3.1 Postmodern View of History	16
1.3.3.2 Representation vs. Simulation	17
1.3.4 Fragmentation	19
1.3.4.1 Uncertainty	19
1.3.4.2 Pleasure-seeking	20
1.3.4.3 Erosion of Individual Identity	21
1.3.4.4 Ephemerality and Volatility	22
1.3.4.5 Collage and Collapse	23
1.3.5 Conclusion	25

Chapter Two Simulacrum in Baudrillard and Li Ang	27
2 1 Introduction	27
2 2 Simulation of the Body	30
2 2 1 Meaning-making	31
2 2 2 Truth or Falsity	35
2 2 3 Value Judgment	38
2 2 4 Photos of Death	39
2 3 Simulation of Memories	41
2 4 Simulation of History	45
2 5 Conclusion	51
Chapter Three Fragmentation	53
3 1 Introduction	53
3 2 Collapse	57
3 2 1 Collapse in Visual Arts	57
3 2 2 Collapse in Literature	57
3 2 3 Collapse in Li Ang	58
3 3 Collage	60
3 3 1 Collage in Visual Arts	60
3 3 2 Collage in Li Ang	62
3 4 Conclusion	66
Chapter Four Conclusion	69
Bibliography	71

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The Author

1.1.1 Li Ang

Li Ang has long been known as an author who is not afraid of writing about shocking topics formerly considered taboo in Taiwanese society. From her first publication, *Flower Season* (*Huaji*), through *The Butcher's Wife Stories about Lu Kang* (*Shafu lucheng gushi*), and on to her latest fiction, *Everyone Puts Their Incense Sticks in the Pei-kang Incense Burner* (*Pei-kang xianglu renren cha*¹), her personality and her works have always been the center of attention within discussions on Taiwanese society.

Li Ang, originally named Shi Shuduan, was born in Lu Kang, Taiwan, in 1952. She received her B.A. in philosophy from the College of Chinese Culture in 1974 and her M.A. in theater from the University of Oregon in 1977. She is one of the most controversial writers in Taiwan today. Much of her recent works have been criticized for its explicit treatment of sex and harsh exposure of decadence among upper-class Taipei citizens. Her novella *The Butcher's Wife*, which has been highly praised for its literary merits, and her novel *Dark Night* (*Anye*) (one of the ten best-sellers in Taiwan, 1985) have been made into popular films. Collections of her short stories include *Mixed Chorus* (*Hunsheng hechang*) (1975), *Experiments of Love* (*Aiqing shiyan*) (1982), *The Butcher's Wife Stories about Lu Kang* (1983), *Their Tears* (*Tamende yanlei*) (1984), and *Flower Season* (1985). Her two elder sisters, one a critic (Shi Shu) and the other a

¹ The Chinese words in brackets will all be in Hanyu pinyin, excluding proper names of people, places and publications that have some other conventionally accepted romanized form, i.e. Pei-kang.

novelist (Shi Shuqing), initially affected Li Ang's literary consciousness² Li Ang often carries a strong sense of social criticism. She once commented that

Hiding and covering the reality of politics, human beings, and society and pretending that problems never existed is the most immoral action. If reality touches the dark element, a writer should not consider the morality of society or a conflict of interest as sufficient reason to give up the courage to take on the responsibility of reflecting the real world. Especially within this nation that has five thousand years of culture and politics, where people tend to develop a habit of creating "white lies", the first lesson that a writer should learn is how to manage reality³

Li Ang gave an analysis of her earlier writing directions and expectations

Starting from the age of sixteen when I wrote *Flower Season* till now, I have passed through several stages of conflict within these many years. The best example could be found in *Mixed Chorus* where it was filled with self-explorations and the search for the meaning of existence, using the techniques of psychoanalysis and stream of consciousness in the ten short stories. From that point till *Living World (Renjianshi)*, and *The Butcher's Wife*, I attempted to return to the human world with social concerns, leaving the past behind, I alienated myself and watched from a distance⁴

As Li Ang says, her work can be divided into two eras. Before the series of short stories such as *Living World* and *The Butcher's Wife*, Li Ang detached herself and watched from a distance. During this era, she was mostly concentrating on the style of writing and the expression of her thoughts and feelings. This was the period in which her female protagonists lacked self-determination in the patriarchal society of her stories, and the period in which Li Ang portrays the women's bodies with a playful tone

² Shi Shu, "Wenzi migong" (The Maze of Writings), *Everyone Puts Their Incense Sticks in the Pei-kang Incense Burner*, (Taipei: Maitian, 1997), p. 221

³ Quoted in Gu Jitang, *Taiwan xiaoshuo fazhanshi* (The History of the Development of Taiwanese Fiction), (Taipei: Wenshizhe, 1989), p. 391

⁴ Li Ang, *Qunxiang* (Group Images), (Taipei: Dahan, 1976) p. 13

1.1.2 Enfant Terrible

In addition to being a prolific writer, Li Ang is always bold in expressing the innermost desires of a human being's subconscious. The consistently high caliber of her work is indicative of her firm grasp of contemporary literary trends. Li Ang started her writing career at the early age of sixteen. The nature of her first novel, *Flower Season*, was influenced by existentialism, which was dominating Taiwanese intellectual circles in the late 1960s. David Der-wei Wang points out that Li Ang played the role of "enfant terrible", bravely leading the reader to grope in the unspeakable world of sex, emotions, and subconsciousness.⁵

She later surrounded herself with the works of many famous Western writers and philosophers, such as Freud, Sartre, Kafka, and Camus⁶. Her works, such as *The Wedding (Hunli)* and *Long Distance Runner (Changpaozhe)*⁷, were experiments in writing influenced by modernism. According to her eldest sister Shi Shu, Li Ang was "helplessly bewitched and fascinated" by various western literary trends⁸. Aware of her superior literary creativity, Li Ang "emerged fearlessly as an intruder into the contemporary Taiwanese literary society"⁹.

⁵ Wang Der-wei David, "Xulun xing chouwen yu meixue zhengzhi" (Preface Sex, Scandals, and Aesthetics), *Everyone Puts Their Incense Sticks in the Pei-kang Incense Burner*, (Taipei: Maitian, 1997), p. 12.

⁶ A group of intellectuals, including Bai Xianyong and Chen Ruoxi, founded *Modern Literature* at the National Taiwan University in 1960. According to Shi Shu, Taipei appeared to Li Ang as the world of Albert Camus' "*L'Etranger*". Shi Shu, p. 221.

⁷ These two short stories were categorized along with *Flower Season* as Li Ang's early experiments. They were published as a collection in Li Ang, *Hunsheng hechang* (Mixed Chorus), (Taipei: Hongfan, 1975).

⁸ Shi Shu, p. 222.

⁹ Lin Yijie, "Panni yu jiushu" (Defiance and Rescue), *Tamende yanlei* (Their Tears), (Taipei: Hongfan, 1984) p. 203.

1.1.3 Existentialism

In the 1960s, many Taiwanese youth tended to use the concepts of existentialism and Freudian psychoanalysis to understand life. Under pressure from society, the educational system and the conservative atmosphere, most writers at that time found an outlet through the technique of stream of consciousness. Yang Zhao believes that the “special time and environment contributed to Li Ang’s unique angles of viewing the societal standards and regulations”¹⁰. However, fearing the danger and culpability of touching the topics of subconsciousness, most writers limited their characters to males. Even some female writers, such as Ouyang Zi¹¹ and Shi Shuqing¹², could not avoid looking at women and gender issues from the perspective of men, based on the traditional moral standards. Li Ang’s special contribution to the 1960s literary circle was to offer the value of female identity in the male-dominated trend of subconsciousness.

1.1.4 Nativist Literature

By 1977, Taiwanese literature was being overwhelmed by the Nativist Literature (*xiangtu wenxue*) style, to which Li Ang contributed with *The Butcher’s Wife*. Inspired by an actual event, it portrays the tragedy of a rural Taiwanese family caught in the grip of domestic violence, sexual perversion, and the oppression of women. Li Ang’s influence has expanded internationally since translations of *The Butcher’s Wife* made her exquisite and deep descriptions of human nature accessible to readers in other languages. Along with heightened exposure, Li Ang had been subjected to increasingly fervent

¹⁰ Yang Zhao, “Yingxiong zhuyi yu xieshi zhuyi de xianjing: xiaolun Li Ang” (A Trap Between Heroism and Realism: A Small Discussion about Li Ang), *China Times*, 1997, Aug 23, p. 41

¹¹ Ouyang Zi, *Quye* (Autumn Leaves), (Taipei: Chenzhong, 1970)

¹² Shi Shuqing, *Baidang de ren* (The Undetermined Person), (Taipei: Hongfan, 1965)

attacks by conservative Taiwanese who considered her notorious for her open and forward depictions of sex. Li Ang's work created an uproar of opposing opinions in Taiwanese literary circles in the late 1970s and her previous works along with her latest work, *Everyone Puts Their Incense Sticks in the Pei-kang Incense Burner*, remain the subject of argument.

1.2 The Novel

1.2.1 *Pei-kang Incense Burner*

Li Ang's work appeared to veer in a strikingly different direction in 1997, when she published her most recent work of fiction, *Everyone Puts Their Incense Sticks in the Pei-kang Incense Burner*. Her characters shifted from passive domestic housewives, vulnerable and dominated by men in the 1970s, to aggressive working women struggling for power in the male dominated political society of the 1990s.

Everyone Puts Their Incense Sticks in the Pei-kang Incense Burner, contains four different novellas. They are "The Devil With A Chastity Belt", "The Empty Mourning Hall", "Everyone Puts Their Incense Sticks in the Pei-kang Incense Burner", and "Colorful Cosmetics and Bloody Ceremony"¹³. These four stories reflect Li Ang's self-examination as a woman participating in opposition movements throughout the 1990s.

Each story deals with one or several female protagonists involved in politics in the patriarchal society of different times in Taiwan. They include a sorrowful wife who resolutely takes over her husband's political mission during the period of White Terror ("The Devil With A Chastity Belt"), a widow who is still continuously harassed by the

¹³ The Chinese titles are "Dai zhencaodai de mogui", "Kongbai de lingtang", "Pei-kang xianglu renren cha", and "Caizhuang xiejie".

authoritarian government after her husband's death ("The Empty Mourning Hall"), a beautiful legislator who advocates the strategy of using women's bodies to subvert men ("Everyone Puts Their Incense Sticks in the Pei-kang Incense Burner"), and a woman who has lost both her husband and son in the anti-government movements ("Colorful Cosmetics and Bloody Ceremony") Li Ang wishes to raise the point that throughout the process of democratization, women sacrificed no less than men, but their significance was often ignored or even negated. Li Ang delineates the multiple relations between women, sex, and politics and the interactions between them.

1.2.2 Misogyny or Sisterhood

Ironically, regardless of the changes in time, place, and societal standards, the Taiwanese women depicted in Li Ang's fiction all suffer. Despite the misery experienced by these women, readers are immediately struck by the unsympathetic tone she takes towards them in her 1997 work, in stark contrast to her previous work. In her latest work, Li Ang's focus on women has been maintained. However, it seems that she sees woman, body, and violence from a completely different perspective. This new perspective is mocking, ironic, and perhaps even derisive. Even though Li Ang has never openly admitted that she is a defender of feminist theories, she does little to discourage the assumption that she is¹⁴. This discontinuity between people's expectations of Li Ang's viewpoint, and the surface feeling represented in the novel has led to a great deal of consternation amongst readers. This results in Li Ang's true message appearing to be quite ambiguous. Many readers have regarded Li Ang's shocking narration as an insult

¹⁴ Ping Lu, "Xujiade yangju, zhenshide xingtai" (Fake Genitals, Real Gallows), *China Times*, 1997, Aug 18, p. 41

to women, women's bodies, and female politicians. Writer Wang Haowei thinks that "Li Ang's cruelty and innuendo towards the female protagonists seems to exhibit a sense of misogyny that one would expect to see from chauvinist male writers"¹⁵

In fact, Li Ang criticizes the oppression and degradation imposed on female sexual desires by society through the method of negation. While reading her novel, one could easily arrive at the mistaken conclusion that Li Ang has a strong streak of misogyny, ruthlessly attacking women who refuse to play traditional roles. This surface comprehension of sarcasm and aggression hides the underlying sympathetic tone that a closer reading reveals. Instead of calling Li Ang a misogynist, David Der-wei Wang points out that "through her portrayal of abusive sex and language, Li Ang expresses her feelings for how the female body, law and economic status is dominated by the male-oriented society"¹⁶. Li Ang brought the reality of unfair gender relations to the attention of modern Taiwanese despite the fact that this subject had often been neglected or discounted.

1.2.3 From Feminism to Postmodernism

Li Ang's works, from the very beginning of her writing career, have been dominated by feminist concerns¹⁷. The concept of postmodernism does not seem to have been clearly and systematically articulated in her later works. The impact that postmodernism has had on Li Ang may often be overlooked by readers who expect a

¹⁵ Wang Haowei, "Jieyou Pei-kang xianglu renren cha" (Analyzing *Everyone Puts Their Incense Sticks in the Pei-kang Incense Burner*), *China Times*, 1997, Sep 25, p. 41

¹⁶ Wang Der-wei David, *Ibid* p. 22

¹⁷ Liu Kai-ling, "To Whom Is the Letter Sent?--A Subversive Chinese Love Letter", *Fiction and Drama*, 10 (1998), p. 55. "Reacting against the male-centered critics who take for granted that 'pure sentimental love stories' are the domain of female writers, Li Ang plays with the authenticity of this so-called 'women's

dogmatic and pedestrian display of postmodern concepts. However, upon close examination, there are many passages that show a subtle, yet definite postmodern influence.

Feminism tended to be the main theme of her previous works. It does not seem that Li Ang intends to preach postmodernism in her latest work. However, some of the issues that attract postmodernists' interest happen to be addressed by Li Ang. Since the early years of her career, a substantial portion of Li Ang's work has been devoted to the description of the local way of life, history, and a sense of local community.¹⁸ Here, we observe a field of interests commonly shared by Li Ang and postmodernists.

Looking at Li Ang's works over her entire career, we can see the changes that took place from her early days of experimenting with modernism, to her pioneering work as a feminist writer, and then as a practitioner of postmodernism. Shi Shu points out that Li Ang's novel is not deserving of acclaim for her writing technique, but rather for her unique perspective, which illustrates the problems of women in society.¹⁹ Thus, rather than reading her work from a moral standpoint or with a sense of justice, it is more worthwhile to observe how she structures the problems her female protagonists face as an aspect of a postmodern social force.

With respect to the postmodern concepts of space and time, more specifically the aspects of "dissemination" and "spectacleization", Li Ang plays the role of "shaman" and "showman"²⁰ with her forward and multi-layered sexual narrations to women. Her works

genre'. Furthermore, Li Ang reacts by 'authoring' the comments that male critics made—integrating those comments into her stories—so that she changes her passive role as a criticized woman writer."

¹⁸ Li Ang wrote a series of works about her hometown of Lu Kang, which is located in the middle of the western coast of Taiwan. Seeking her own roots, she discusses the problems of a small town during the rapid socio-economic transitions in Taiwan with a very critical and sarcastic style.

¹⁹ Shi Shu, pp. 199-200.

²⁰ Wang Der-wei David, p. 13.

are now accompanied by postmodern viewpoints rather than the existentialism that colored her earlier works, mirroring the Taiwanese literary trend of moving away from existentialism and towards postmodernism. In the following section, I will briefly introduce the various concepts of postmodernism that will be analyzed in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

1.3 Overview of Postmodernism

1.3.1 Deconstructivism and Reconstructivism

Since postmodernists have little interest in confining the length and breadth of postmodernism, the boundaries are becoming frayed and indistinguishable. This results in the considerable proliferation of postmodern concepts.

These numerous characteristics are piled up together just as many small pictures may be arranged on a canvas to form a collage. These characteristics have been divided into two groups by Hassan²¹, one group is related to deconstructive tendencies while the other is related to reconstructive tendencies.

The deconstructive tendency is a negative aspect of postmodernism. It undermines the existing model and order. This aspect of postmodernism is characterized by uncertainty, ephemerality, volatility, fragmentation, lack of principle, erosion of individual identity, lack of depth, pettiness, and non-expressiveness.

The reconstructive tendency of postmodernism is characterized by irony, collapse of images, collage of fragments, simulacrum, imitation of traditional artifacts, pleasure-

²¹Ihab Hassan, *The Right Promethean Fire: Imagination, Science, and Cultural Change*, (Urbana University of Illinois, 1980), p 110

seeking and ecstasy, social action and participation, constructionism, community identity, and local history

Some of the concepts listed above appear to be incompatible with each other. Commentators and scholars of postmodernism have identified a few points of contention among the diverse features of postmodernism.

For instance, the concept of individual identity is a direct contradiction to the concept of the erosion of individual identity. The attention given to community, ethnicity, and locality is a contradiction to the idea that the group has been dissolved into individuals, and an even greater dichotomy develops when such attention is compared to the belief that the individual is fragmented. And again, the attention given to community history is incompatible with the idea of the ephemerality and volatility of incidents.

In the early phase of the postmodern period, the themes of diversity, uncertainty, volatility, and fragmentation were more dominant than the theme of solid identity. As noted by Jameson²², from the mid-1960s onwards, rapid capitalist penetration resulted in people turning to the provision of very ephemeral services in consumption. According to Harvey, the consequence of this general speed-up in the turnover times of capital has been to “accentuate volatility and ephemerality of fashions, products, production techniques, labor processes, ideas and ideologies, values and established practices.”²³ Thus, for those pairs of postmodern concepts in contention, fragmentation and uncertainty tended to win out over more stable concepts. However, in the later phase, an opposite reaction emerges, which emphasizes personal and collective identity. Harvey

²² Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 34. Jameson believes that postmodernism is nothing more than the cultural logic of late capitalism. He also argues that we have moved into a new era since the early 1960s in which the production of culture “has become integrated into commodity production generally.”

believes that “it is exactly at this point that we encounter the opposite reaction that can best be summed up as the search for personal or collective identity, the search for secure moorings in a shifting world”²⁴ An example of this shifting emphasis is best seen in the search for community and local identity

1 3 2 Community and Locality

One important feature of postmodernism is its reluctance to pass value judgments upon different “ways” Modernism presumed a universal principle applicable to all nations, all ethnic groups, and all societies, and attempted to transform and convert the customs of various ethnic groups so that they would conform to the “universal” principle of modern European and North American ideals Postmodernism, on the other hand, would rather water down the distinction between these customs, or between the “normal” and the “abnormal”, “right” and “wrong”, “truth” and “falsity”, etc²⁵ It would be reluctant to decide which of the many realities is “more real”²⁶

The role of community, history, and roots plays a major role in postmodernism In contrast to the modern search for universality and the effort to reshape non-Western ways of life after the pattern of western rationalism, some postmodernists reject the search for universalism and assimilationism in favor of parochialism, community, one’s own local roots, the soil, and local histories

²³ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers Inc, 1990), p 285

²⁴ Harvey, p 302 See also, Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), p 253 Jameson, p 146

²⁵ Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodernity and its Discontents*, (New York: New York University Press, 1997), p 25, 125

²⁶ Bauman, p 102 Harvey, p 291

As Carl Schorske points out in his *Fin-de-siecle Vienna*, overcoming fragmentation and providing a community life-outlook is “a specific reaction to commercialization, utilitarian rationalism, and the insecurities that typically arise under conditions of time-space compression”²⁷ Richard Rorty sums up the mood of the bereaved, and proceeds to praise the ethnocentrism and to advise us that rather than wasting our time in the vain search for objectivity and universal standpoints, we should apply ourselves to the questions, “with what communities should you identify?” and “what should I do with my aloneness?”²⁸

Sometimes the search for community identity/history and local roots/history are in contention with some other postmodern preoccupations. Practitioners of postmodernism may not always embrace all of the major features of postmodernism. Those who embrace the concepts of community identity/history and local roots/history may not be keen on the idea of disruptive time and space, and vice versa. It is believed that the dominant postmodern concepts of the erosion of identity, fragmentation, and disruptive time and space would undermine the concepts of community identity/history and local roots/history. The postmodernists who place an emphasis on the concept of disruptive time and space stress the ideas of “cutting the present off at both ends,” so as to “sever the present from history”²⁹ and can rarely tolerate the concept of community history and local history.

However, the problem of incompatibility has not particularly disturbed the practitioners of postmodernism. Many of them do not usually embrace all of these

²⁷ Carl Schorske, *Fin-De-Siecle Vienna: Politics and Culture*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), p. 72

²⁸ Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativity and Truth: Philosophical Papers*, vol. 1 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 13-4

²⁹ Bauman, p. 89

concepts as their credo. Instead, they embrace only a few, which may form a system of coherent themes amongst themselves.

However, even coherency is not necessarily something that is highly cherished by postmodern writers and artists. For them, fragmentation, disruption, discontinuity, uncertainty, inconsistency, and incoherence are the things that distinguish postmodernism from modernism, and therefore are characteristics to be sought after.

As we can see, the concepts of fragmentation, ephemerality, and disruptions of time/space are in contention with the concept of community identity. Some scholars and commentators on postmodernism who cannot evade these contentions and contradictions offer two explanations on how these concepts may co-exist:

(1) The chaos of signs and of the competing portents and messages of postmodern landscapes suggests a condition of fragmentation and uncertainty. This chaos is the result of “recycling, the fusion of levels, discontinuous signifiers, the explosion of boundaries, and erosion.”³⁰ Fragmented spaces and ephemeral incidents may induce a fragile sense of identity. However, despite the emphasis placed upon ephemerality, volatility, and erosion of identity, “there is also an overwhelming sense of some hidden organizing power—power of law and order when necessary to establish control.”³¹

Harvey points out that the greater the ephemerality, the more pressing the need to discover some kind of eternal truth that might lie therein. The revival of interest in basic institutions, such as the family and community, and the search for historical roots are all signs of a search for more secure moorings and longer-lasting values in a shifting world. As a result, “place-identity” becomes an important issue. Knowing one’s place, in a

³⁰ Wang Yuechuan, *Houxiandai zhuyi wenhua yanjiu* (Cultural Studies of Postmodernism), (Taipei Shuxin, 1992), p. 67.

world of shifting ideas and perspectives that overlap and intersect one another in an endless collage helps to maintain social order

(2) Bauman, on the other hand, offers a different explanation for the co-existence between the concept of disruptive space and time and the concept of community and locality. He notes that liberals, the conservatives, and followers of other political persuasions all discovered “community” as something crucially important in the postmodern period and consequently revised the corresponding parts of their former ideologies along the line of community, locality, and ethnicity. According to Bauman

[T]here is a genuine emancipatory chance in postmodernity, the chance of laying down arms, suspending border skirmishes waged to keep the stranger away, taking apart the daily erected mini-Berlin Walls meant to maintain distance and to separate. This chance does not lie in the celebration of born-again ethnicity and in genuine or invented tribal tradition—but in bringing to its conclusion the ‘disembedding’ work of modernity, through focusing on the right to choose one’s identity as the sole universality of the citizen/human, on the ultimate, inalienable individual responsibility for the choice—and through laying bare the complex state—or tribe-managed mechanisms aimed at depriving the individual of that freedom of choice and that responsibility. The chance of human togetherness depends on the rights of the stranger, not on the question who—the state or the tribe—is entitled to decide who the strangers are.³²

Community identity, ethnic identity, and local identity are not fixed, but are rather in a process of change. Bauman is of the opinion that

The new, characteristically postmodern and possibly unprecedented aspect of present-day diversity is the weak, slack and underpowered institutionalization of differences, and their resulting elusiveness, pliability and short life-span. If since the time of ‘disembedding’, and throughout the modern era of ‘life project’, the ‘problem of identity’ was the question how to *build* one’s identity, how to build it consistently and how to give it a universally recognizable form—today the problem of identity arises mostly from the difficulty of holding to any identity for long, from the virtual impossibility of finding such a form of identity-

³¹ Harvey, p 311

³² Bauman, p 33

expression as stands a good chance of lifelong recognition, and the resulting need not to embrace any identity too tightly, in order to be able to abandon it at short notice if need be. It is not so much the co-presence of many kinds that is the source of confusion and anxiety, but their fluidity, the notorious difficulty in pinpointing them and defining—all this harking back to the central and most painful of anxieties: one that is related to the instability of one's own identity and the absence of lasting, trustworthy and reliable reference points which would help to render the identity more stable and secure.³³

Bauman observes an emergence of community and ethnic identity in the postmodern era. He also points out that this resurgent identity is not a born-again ethnicity which restores the contents of the essence of an ethnic tradition, but is rather a kind of identity which is constantly under the process of recreation. Thus, the contention between the erosion of identity, erosion of individuality, disruption of space and time on one side, and the emergence of community identity on the other, is resolved.

While modernism always ostensibly asserted the values of internationalism and universalism, it could never properly settle its account with parochialism and nationalism. Community, tradition, the love of one's own, the pride of one's kind, the roots, the blood, the soil, the nationhood—they stand condemned no more. On the contrary, it is their critics and detractors, the prophets of universal humanity, who are now challenged to prove their case.

Some of Li Ang's previous works, such as *The Butcher's Wife* and *Lost Garden (Miyuan)*, diligently raised the issue of nativism and parochialism despite the condemnations of conservative modernists. It is not my intention to discuss further whether Bauman's interpretation or Harvey's is closer to literary reality. My primary concern is to establish what kind of Taiwanese identity is presented and implied in Li

³³ Bauman, p. 123

Ang's most recent work and how Li Ang deals with the contention between the erosion of individuality and the emergence of community identity

1.3.3 Baudrillard's Conception of Postmodernism

Simulacrum also plays an important role in postmodernism. Simulacrum is a state of near perfect replication in which the difference between the original and the copy becomes almost impossible to spot. Many contemporary artifacts are made so as to make it difficult to distinguish the originals from the simulacra. The production of images as simulacra is relatively easy, given modern techniques. In order to grasp the meaning of simulacrum, we must first understand the postmodern conception of history.

1.3.3.1 Postmodern View of History

The modernists believe in the progressive nature of time and history. They are convinced that "the time-flow has a direction, that whatever comes later is (must be, ought to be) also better, while everything receding into the past is also worse—backward, retrograde, inferior"³⁴. For instance, the avant-garde modernists perceived themselves as "the stormtroopers of advancing history", devoting themselves to a revolutionary task³⁵.

In contrast, the postmodernists reject the concept of the progressive nature of history and time. They are ready to accept old things, old institutions, old ideas, old styles, and old genres as well as new things, new styles and genres. Whether something is accepted or rejected is not conditional upon the time it was made or that it emerged, but rather on some criteria which are applied equally to new and the old things alike.

³⁴ Bauman, p. 96

³⁵ Bauman, p. 101

Thus, history is valued by some postmodernists, not because of its recordings of development from backward to advanced stages (the modernist concept of history), but rather because the old could be as valuable as the new, and history which elucidates old things is as valuable as current events (the postmodernist conception of history) Bauman comments that

The multitude of styles and genres is no longer a projection of the time arrow upon the space of cohabitation. Styles do not divide into progressive and retrograde, forward-looking and outdated. New artistic inventions are not meant to chase out and replace extant ones, but to join the others, finding some elbow room for themselves on the notoriously overcrowded artistic stage. In a setting where synchrony replaces diachrony, co-presence takes the place of the succession and the perpetual present replaces history—competition takes over from the crusades. No more talk of missions, of advocacy, prophesying, of the one and only truth bound to strangle all pseudo-truths. All styles, old and new alike, must prove their right to survival applying the same strategy, since they all submit to the same laws that rule all cultural creation, calculated—in George Steiner’s memorable phrase—for maximal impact and instant obsolescence.³⁶

As for Bauman’s point that history has been replaced by the perpetual present, the word “history” is to be understood in terms of the modernist conception of history rather than the postmodern conception that views history as something living in the present as an ingredient of contemporary life. The concept of co-presence is that all things, old and new alike, would be allowed to exist side by side as long as they could prove their own merits. The postmodernists’ preference for synchrony and co-presence is based on the assumption that truth and falsity, right and wrong, are not easily distinguishable.

1.3.3.2 Representation vs. Simulation

³⁶ Bauman, p. 100

Representation had been a central concern of modern writers and artists. Modernists were brave in rejecting traditions, challenging the conventional ways, and seeking new codes and new techniques. They believed that “the truth” which was temporarily hidden by extant traditions and conventions could be discovered and represented better than before. The modernists were fired with revolutionary enthusiasm trying to reshape the world along the lines of a universal rationalism. They assumed that the truth which needed to be captured by the work of art lay in hiding out there in the non-artistic, waiting to be found and given artistic expression. What they did not do, however, was to question the value of representation as such.

On the other hand, postmodern artists are interested in simulation rather than in representation. As Jean Baudrillard put it, “images do not represent, but simulate”³⁷. Instead of representing and reflecting life, postmodern artists are hoping to add something to the contents of life through simulation. Simulation refers to the world without reference, from which all reference has disappeared. Art creates not just the images, but their meanings as well. It gives a meaning or a sense of identity to something which is meaningless, which has no identity. All meanings are suggestions, standing invitations to discussion and argument, to interpretation and reinterpretation, no meanings are made definitely, and none is definite once made. Postmodern art is liberated from the authority of reality as the genuine and the image claims in the ongoing bustle of meaning-making. According to Bauman, the goal of postmodern art is to stimulate the process of meaning-making and guard it against the danger of ever grinding to a halt.

³⁷ Jean Baudrillard, *Baudrillard Live: Selected Interviews*, ed. Mike Gane (London: Routledge, 1993) p. 165

Instead of reasserting reality as a graveyard of untested possibilities, postmodern art brings into the open the perpetual incompleteness of meanings and thus the essential inexhaustibility of the realm of the possible. One may even go a step further, and suggest that the meaning of postmodern art is deconstruction of meaning, more exactly, revealing the secret of meaning, the secret which modern theoretical practice tried hard to hide or belie—that meaning exists solely in the process of interpretation and critique, and dies together with it³⁸

As Baudrillard suggests, the arts share the plight of postmodern culture as a whole, which is a culture of simulacrum, not representation. “Contemporary arts have elevated themselves into *sui generis* reality and a self-sufficient reality at that”³⁹. Art is one of many alternative realities. Postmodern artists are not particularly interested in representing social reality. This is especially true for postmodern artists who have reached a degree of independence from non-artistic reality of which their modernist predecessors could only dream.

1.3.4 Fragmentation

1.3.4.1 Uncertainty

A feeling of uncertainty dominates postmodern men and women. In the modern period, uncertainty was viewed as “a mere temporary nuisance, which with due effort might be either mollified or altogether overcome. The postmodern world is bracing itself for life under a condition of uncertainty which is permanent and irreducible”⁴⁰. Cultural media also spread a message of the essential indeterminacy

In this world, bonds are dissembled into successive encounters, identities into successively worn masks, life-history into a series of episodes whose sole lasting importance is their equally ephemeral memory. Nothing can be known for sure, and anything which is known can be known in a

³⁸ Bauman, p 107

³⁹ Baudrillard, p 165

⁴⁰ Bauman, p 21

different way— one way of knowing is as good, or as bad (and certainly as volatile and precarious) as any other. Betting is now the rule where certainty was once sought, while taking risks replaces the stubborn pursuit of goals. And thus there is little in the world which one could consider solid and reliable, nothing reminiscent of a tough canvas in which one could weave one's own life itinerary.⁴¹

Many factors of contemporary living are responsible for this feeling of uncertainty. The new world devoid of visible structure and logic, the erosion of identities, the universal deregulation—the priority awarded to the irrationality and moral blindness of market competition, the tearing up of the socially woven safety nets, all have contributed to an intensification of the feeling of uncertainty.

1.3.4.2 Pleasure-seeking

Indulgence in happiness, pleasure, and sensations is a direct result of a sense of uncertainty. Unlike modern men and women who were willing to observe “reason-dictated rules and regulations”, postmodern men and women have shifted their preference to sensations of happiness and the freedom of pleasure-seeking.⁴² It is believed that people need to be capable of being seduced by the infinite possibility and constant renewal promoted by the consumer market, of rejoicing in the chance of putting on and taking off identities. They indulge themselves in a never-ending chase after even more intense sensations. They “exchange[d] a portion of their possibilities of security for a portion of happiness.”⁴³ The discontents of modernity arose from a kind of security which tolerated too little freedom in the pursuit of individual happiness. The discontents

⁴¹ Bauman, p. 24

⁴² Bauman, p. 3

⁴³ Bauman, p. 14. See also Michel Foucault, “The Moral Problematization of Pleasures”, *The History of Sexuality Vol. 2*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), pp. 35-52.

of postmodernity arise from a kind of freedom of pleasure-seeking which tolerates too little individual security

1.3.4.3 Erosion of Individual Identity

Concerning the issue of individual identity, we observe two opposing opinions. On the one hand, some postmodernists point out that the institutions, organizations, groups, and collectives established in the modern period are disintegrating, and have “become fragmented to the point where every individual constitutes a mini-state”⁴⁴ However, on the other hand, there is also a view that emphasizes a fragile sense of individual identity⁴⁵ The latter appears to be more influential than the former among the postmodernists

According to this latter view, an individual is seen as a series of related but different masks, or a collection of snapshots, rather than a solid entity. The imagery of snapshots would have pictures of an individual doing different things being taken at intervals with a still camera. There are discontinuities, disruptions, and differences among these shots. When they are not placed chronologically, the disruptions are especially obvious. Each of these images has to “conjure up, carry and express its own meaning, more often than not without reference to other snapshots”⁴⁶ The imagery of masks is often illustrated by a skillful actor or actress who presents different personae with different masks to the point that the audience can hardly discern that the same person performs them.

⁴⁴ Harvey, p 316

⁴⁵ Harvey, p 318

⁴⁶ Bauman, p 24

Both the imageries of snapshots and masks are used to illustrate that the postmodern concept of individual identity is often broken up into discontinuous and disruptive images. Each of these images carries its own meaning without sufficient reference to other masks or snapshots, but the person behind these masks or snapshots is after all the same person, and thus there will be links relating these masks or snapshots to one another, forming a fragile identity. The act of masking and disguising and the technique of snapshots are also employed to suggest special fragmentation and alienated individualism.

This concept of an erosion of individual identity into snapshots or masks is described by Bauman with reference to Milan Kundera as a matter of relations among episodes in postmodern literature.

The episode is a self-enclosed event. Each new episode is, so to speak, an absolute beginning, but equally absolute is its ending. 'not to be continued' is the last sentence of the story (even if, to make the plight of the unwary yet more bitter, it is written in invisible ink). The problem is, though—as Kundera hastens to add—that the decision about the finality of the ending is itself never final. One would never know whether the episode is truly over and done with. All the effort to prevent it notwithstanding, past events may return to haunt the future presents.⁴⁷

Like snapshots and masks, each of the episodes remains independent of other episodes in the same literary work, and yet at the same time there is also some sort of mutual impact among episodes, so that these episodes could constitute a loosely related but not well structured literary work.

1.3.4.4 Ephemerality and Volatility

⁴⁷ Bauman, p. 91.

The most startling fact about postmodernism is its acceptance of ephemerality, volatility, fragmentation, and discontinuity. One of the direct consequences that has flowed from the general speed-up in the turnover times of capital is the accentuation of volatility and ephemerality in fashions, products, production techniques, labor processes, ideas and ideologies, values, and established practices. A sense of ephemerality and volatility overshadows the postmodern conception of time. Everything is seen as remaining in the process of changing and floating. Nothing is viewed as solid and unchanging. The pace of change is felt to be extremely fast and ungraspable.

1 3 4 5 Collage and Collapse

Parallel to the concept of brevity in time is a concept of fragmentation in space. The concept of fragmentation has been widely employed by artists and writers to the point that it has become an outstanding feature of postmodernism. Because of the reluctance to pass value judgment, some postmodernists feel that “there are no standards except those of grabbing more, and no rules, except the imperative of ‘playing one’s cards right’... The advice to play one’s cards right suggests one should use whatever resources one can master”⁴⁸

The idea of divided spaces, fragmented spaces, isolated spaces, isolated thoughts, isolated individuals, and fragmented individuals has attracted a great deal of postmodern artists’ and writers’ attention. According to Harvey, the image of divided spaces is particularly powerful. These divided spaces or fragments are “superimposed upon each other in the fashion of montage and collage”⁴⁹. The technique of fragmentary collage

⁴⁸ Bauman, p. 41

⁴⁹ Harvey, p. 316.

practiced by some artists tends to select some fragments which are somewhat related in theme, but some other artists may select fragments which might not appear to be related in subject matter. In collage technique, these fragments are placed randomly at different spots on the same canvas.

Another favored technique is the collapsing of different images upon each other in the same space. Some artists may employ both collage and collapsing techniques on the same canvas. Whichever technique is employed, the ideas to be conveyed are diversity, heterogeneity, fragmentation, disruptive spatiality, and the fragility of individual identity.

A similar technique of fragmentation, discontinuity, and incoherence is also employed in postmodern fiction to hint at the triumph of a disruptive spatiality “over the coherence of perspective and narrative”⁵⁰. As Pfeil says of postmodern texts:

One is confronted not with a unified text, much less by the presence of a distinct personality and sensibility, but by a discontinuous terrain of heterogeneous discourses uttered by anonymous, unplaceable tongues, a chaos different from that of the classic texts of high modernism precisely insofar as it is not recontained or recuperated within an overarching mythic framework.⁵¹

Derrida considers collage and collapsing as the primary form of postmodern discourse. The inherent heterogeneity of the form in painting, writing, and architecture stimulates us to produce a signification which could be neither univocal nor stable. Thus, both the producers and consumers of artworks or texts participate in the production of significations of meaning-making.⁵²

⁵⁰ Harvey, p. 302

⁵¹ Fred Pfeil, *Another Tale to Tell: Politics and Narrative in Postmodern Culture*, (London: Verso, 1990), p. 384

⁵² Peggy Kamuf, ed., *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 142

Sometimes, postmodern artists and writers merely create fragments and elements in their artworks or writings so as to leave it open to consumers to recombine those elements in any way they wish. Harvey believes “that minimizing the authority of the cultural producer creates the opportunity for popular participation and democratic determinations of cultural values, but at the price of a certain incoherence or, more problematic, vulnerability to mass-market manipulation.”⁵³ The effect is to deconstruct the power of the author to impose meanings or offer a continuous narrative. According to Derrida, each fragment or element breaks the linearity of the discourse and leads necessarily to a double reading, “that of the fragment perceived in relation to its text of origin, that of the fragment as incorporated into a new whole, a different totality.”⁵⁴ Thus, continuity is given only in the trace of the fragment as it moves from production to consumption.

1.3.5 Conclusion

Along with a brief review of postmodernism, I hope to analyze Li Ang’s *Everyone Puts Their Incense Sticks in the Pei-kang Incense Burner* within the context outlined above. McHale points out that “the essential trope of fiction is a technique that requires suspension of belief as well as disbelief.”⁵⁵ In postmodernism, there is little effort to sustain a continuity of values, beliefs, or even disbeliefs. The loss of historical continuity with regard to values and beliefs is a prominent theme throughout Li Ang’s work. The emphasis she places on discontinuity and allegory poses many problems for aesthetic and critical judgment. In the next chapter, we will explore the concept of

⁵³ Harvey, p. 51

⁵⁴ Kamuf, *Ibid.*

simulacrum and its various subsets such as meaning making and the distinction, or lack thereof, between truth and falsity. This chapter will also deal with specific examples from Li Ang's latest work representing simulation of the body, simulation of memories and simulation of History. The third chapter will focus on the major concepts of fragmentation and ephemerality and the techniques used by postmodernists to illustrate those ideas both in visual and literary media. Here, the usage of collage and collapse and how these aspects of fragmentation manifest themselves in postmodern literature will be identified with examples from Li Ang's latest work.

⁵⁵ Brian McHale, *Postmodern Fiction*, (London: Methuen, 1987), pp. 27

Chapter 2—Simulacrum in Baudrillard and Li Ang

2.1 Introduction

It is a world of simulations rather than representations, intolerable to both rightists and leftists because it renounces the fiction of concealed truth, because it undermines the exercise of power

Jean Baudrillard⁵⁶

The concept of simulacrum is a powerful and thought-provoking aspect of postmodernism. It challenges the very fabric of reality as it forces the individual to take responsibility for the interpretation and dissemination of meaning. At times it seems to embody all of the aspects that separate postmodernism from other schools of thought, becoming a self-fulfilling paradox. It brings the quest for truth to its knees by defining a world without judgment and reduces the individual to fragments of personality and distorted perspectives.

According to Baudrillard, to the resident of the postmodern world, all beings appear in the modality of simulacra.⁵⁷ The simulacrum is the work of simulation, but simulation is not to be confused with feigning, or pretending that some attributes are present which in fact are not. According to Baudrillard, “feigning or dissimulating leaves the reality principle intact: the difference is always clear, it is only masked, whereas simulation threatens the difference between ‘true’ and ‘false’, between ‘real’ and ‘imaginary’.”⁵⁸ The postmodern form of “concealment” is not simply hiding the truth of

⁵⁶ Jean Baudrillard, *Jean Baudrillard, Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster (Cambridge: Polity, 1988), p. 166

⁵⁷ Baudrillard, *ibid.*, p. 167

⁵⁸ Baudrillard, *ibid.*, p. 168

existence behind the falsity of existence. It is more about blurring or washing away altogether the distinction between truth and falsity.

Writers and artists from different backgrounds express their views towards classical or traditional themes in their work. Conservative writers and artists tend to describe the respectable, valuable and worthy side of ancient objects, revealing nostalgic tendencies. Modernist writers and artists tend to emphasize the backward, ridiculous, rigid, autocratic, and constrictive side of the classical arts. Writers and artists of a more multicultural bent often use the postmodern technique of simulacrum to depict the original art works of different regions and ethnic groups.

There are a number of paragraphs in Li Ang's work that describe old castles, historical remains, original clothing, ancient customs, and classical dances. The primary question to be asked is whether Li Ang uses simulacrum in a conscious attempt to follow the structure of postmodernism.

The focus of this chapter will be to determine whether we should categorize her descriptions as postmodern simulacrum, or simply as the depiction of ancient things. Excerpts from two stories will be analyzed to determine whether they exhibit the characteristic of simulacrum. This chapter will be divided in three sections: simulation of the body, memories, and history. The primary characteristics of the postmodern concept of simulacrum will be discussed in depth with insights from perhaps the foremost authority on simulacrum, Jean Baudrillard. His analysis of cultural reality states that to live in the postmodern world is to be overwhelmed not merely by consumerism, but more by media reproduction. Rather than living in a culture that values knowledge, we are sublimated by the culture of simulacrum. This is the essence of hyperreality wherein

models replace what is real and thereby become the real. Thus all meaning collapses into a mass of simulacra.

In addition, simulation of history and memory will be addressed with the help of insights from Fredric Jameson. Jameson suggests that the postmodern representation of history is depthless, with an infinite number of perspectives inhabiting the surfaces of history. The erasure of the distinction between what is real and what is not real becomes the basis of the simulation of history.

Li Ang does not specifically reveal her attitude towards the postmodern practice of simulacrum in her latest work, *Everyone Puts Their Incense Sticks in the Pei-Kang Incense Burner*. Li Ang is after all a creative writer rather than a commentator on literary theories, art theories, or cultural theories. As a result, it is difficult for us to establish precisely what the role of postmodernism is in her works.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, a subtle and ambiguous operation of postmodernism can be observed in Li Ang's work. It is quite probable that Li Ang has been exposed to a number of postmodern writings or works of art or has heard some postmodern discourses and has incorporated these concepts and practices, such as the concepts and techniques of collage and collapse, into the reservoir of her creative writings.

To explore this issue, we should first ask to what extent postmodernism has exerted its influence on Li Ang. This is a question to which one can hardly offer a definite answer. Li Ang makes no reference to the word "postmodernism" in her works. However, this omission is not sufficient for us to judge whether or not she is familiar with postmodernism.

2.2 Simulation of the Body

The discussion of the following excerpt will be geared towards the analysis of the description of simulacrum in Li Ang's fourth story, "Colorful Cosmetics and Bloody Ceremony" (*Caizhuang xiejī*). The story presents a widow who meticulously repairs her husband's incomplete corpse after he has been brutally murdered by the authoritarian government. A unique tale of romantic love of the wife for her husband is effectively crafted. Meanwhile, the account of this personal tragic love is presented in the context of the tragedy of the massacre during the 228 Incident.⁵⁹ The weight of individual tragedy is intensified through its association with the great Taiwanese tragedy of the mid-1940s. Thus, the narrative becomes an overwhelming account.

In one night, rumors began to quietly coalesce like a snowball rolling downhill. The victim's wife was not limited to ordinary pins and scissors that could be found in any household, but also used hemp threads, normally used for repairing shoes, to sew the openings of the wounds together. Furthermore, she used ordinary cosmetic foundations to cover up every single spot of the sewn area, attempting to hide all the marks.

Rumors also described this woman's usage of rice from the kitchen to create a rice ball the size of an eye when she attempted to reconstruct the shattered corpse. Her husband's eye had been cut away with a sharp blade leaving an empty hole. She repaired the collapsed eye socket by filling the empty hole with the rice ball.

Detailed rumors pointed out that in order for the new eye to seem realistic, the wife recreated the pupil on this rice ball by drawing a pupil-sized black dot with a pen at the center of it. She hoped that her husband would be able to see with this object during his afterlife.

When it came to the bullet holes that were not repairable, this clever wife covered the holes with sticky rice dough that she created

⁵⁹ On February 27th, 1947, two policemen beat a woman peddling cigarettes to unconsciousness and then killed an innocent bystander. On the next day, February 28th, thousands of people went to the government offices to protest this action but the military police fired into the crowd and killed many people. Afterwards, Taiwanese people in every district formed local militias and confiscated weapons from the local police in an attempt to arm themselves in anticipation of further clashes with government troops. On the night of March 8th, the 21st division of the KMT Nationalist Army landed in Taiwan beginning a reign of terror and oppression lasting till May 16th. Elites were a prime target but other innocents were killed as well. A large number of merchants, workers, even porters and train station workers were all killed.

overnight, using the red coloring used for the celebration red rice balls during festivals to create a flesh tone

The wife made small patches with the soft sticky rice, covering all the wounds that could not be repaired like a new layer of skin

The rumors even mentioned that the wife replaced the missing reproductive organs that the husband had lost during his suffering with the same material. He had been castrated while being tortured

In this way, the wife tried to express her deepest love and memory to her husband by repairing his body, until it was fully recovered, as vivid as if it were real. It was then that she had completed the last set of the "Photos of Death."⁶⁰

In the postmodern era, artifacts are made imitating ancient objects to the point that it is not easy to distinguish the originals from the simulacra. The reproductive organs and mutilated skin repaired with sticky rice are attempts to recreate the original body

2.2.1 Meaning-making

It is very difficult to imagine the wife using the sticky rice to repair her husband's severely wounded body. It is difficult to knead sticky rice into small patches. It is even more difficult to do an accurate job using the sticky rice patches to repair her husband's body. Yet the reproductive organs of her deceased husband had been reconstructed with sticky rice paste so meticulously by her that they looked as if they were genuine. Furthermore, the reconstruction of the organs is not an isolated repair task, but rather one portion of the entire repair project of the whole body. If the repair were limited to the reproductive organs alone, it would give the readers an impression that the focus is merely sexual.

On the other hand, if the narration of the repair project were limited to the general area of mutilated and injured skin alone, the erotic element would be more or less hidden

⁶⁰ Li Ang, *Everyone Puts Their Incense Sticks in the Pei-Kang Incense Burner*, pp. 213-4

Here, in Li Ang's narration, the repair of the reproductive organs is carried out within the context of the repair of the whole body. The profound love of the wife for her victimized husband, as expressed through her repair of his skin, has now been extended to a romantic love with sexual connotations through a description of her meticulous repair of his reproductive organs.

The image of the husband in the mind of the wife appears as an archetype, a subjective image combining reality, fantasy and memory. This engenders, more or less, a separation between the original body of the victim, and its image in the mind of the wife. It would then follow that a separation would exist between the original body and its simulacrum. Baudrillard writes the following: "simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin in reality: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it. Henceforth, it is the map that precedes the territory—precession of simulacra—it is the map that engenders the territory."⁶¹

The postmodern era is a gnostic world wherein maps may precede their territories because map and territory have become the same. Here the "territory" is the vision in her mind of what her husband should look like and the "map" is the result of her work. If the wife had simply copied her husband's body from photos, the work would become a simple matter of representing what was lost. According to Bauman, "simulation refers to a world without reference, from which all reference has disappeared."⁶²

Since the wife does not have photos of the deceased husband, she does most of the work of simulation through her imagination. Without guidance, she becomes an artist

⁶¹ Baudrillard, *Jean Baudrillard, Selected Writings*, p. 166

⁶² Bauman, p. 106

making her own choices as to what is right and what is wrong. Thus, the accuracy of the simulation is questionable. However, regardless of the accuracy of her simulation, her recreation becomes a unique work of art and further cements its status as a simulacrum. According to Bauman, “since each act of creation is unique and unprecedented, and refers to no antecedents except by citing them, that is, tearing quotations out of their original site and thus ruining, instead of reasserting, their original meaning”⁶³

With her intent to document the state of her husband’s body and disseminate those documents, her work of repairing the mutilated husband becomes an exercise in meaning making. This is where postmodernists differentiate themselves from modernists with the idea that, rather than representing a hidden meaning in reality, the simulacrum generates its own meaning. Yet the essence of the simulation is that it holds no meaning beyond its own interpretation. The simulacrum fulfills its purpose as those who view the result interpret the meaning. Did she do it for herself or for others? Each question begins and ends the meaning of the work since, as Bauman states, “meaning ‘exists’ solely in the process of interpretation and critique, and dies together with it”⁶⁴

Li Ang’s vivid descriptions have breathed life into the corpse of a tortured and mutilated victim. The extreme devotion of the female protagonist (the surviving wife of this victim) to a project of restoring the mutilated corpse to its original appearance is superbly described by Li Ang. From the perspective of the protagonist, the restored corpse has been endowed with a living aura. She concentrates her complete attention on the repaired body as if she were facing her resurrected husband. When her concentrated emotion reaches its peak, the sticky rice which is used by her to repair her husband’s

⁶³ Bauman, p 105

⁶⁴ Bauman, p 107

corpse seems to have been transformed into living skin. This makes the process of simulation not only real, but hyperreal, since it exists solely for the purpose of generating its own meaning.

Nevertheless, sticky rice is after all lifeless material, and her husband's body is after all a corpse and will remain a corpse. The disillusionment from the fantasy of an enlivened body is painful. The sadness emerging after the disillusionment cuts deeply. Regardless of how much care and attention the wife gives to creating the artificial eye, it will never see. No matter how meticulously the wife simulates the reproductive organs, they still can not function. Yet, in the postmodern world, reality and imagination are given the countenance of equality. They cannot be judged from a point of objectivity because one does not exist. And the idea that truth lies hidden in reality is abandoned. This gives rise to the practice of simulation, where art does not represent what is, but rather what can be. Here the unreal becomes real, and generates its own meaning from meaninglessness. But simulation does not create a product but rather creates a vessel for an identity that changes with every interpretation. So not only does it become real, it becomes "hyperreal."

"Hyperreal" is a word sheltered from the imaginary, and from any distinction between the real and the imaginary, leaving room only for the orbital recurrence of models and the simulated generation of differences. In the postmodern era, it is now "impossible to isolate the process of the real, or to prove the real."⁶⁵ Baudrillard believes that "we surrender to a hysteria of production and reproduction of the real. Instead of producing goods and commodities, we disseminate the hyperreal"⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Jean Baudrillard, "Simulacra And Simulation", *Simulations*, (New York: Seimiotech(e), 1983), p. 41

⁶⁶ Baudrillard, *ibid.*, p. 42

2 2 2 Truth or Falsity

It is not clear to the reader whether this is a factual narration or a fictitious story made up by Li Ang. Since no one has found a similar account or story in documentary records or in folk oral tradition, it seems most likely that the narrative above is a fictitious construct by Li Ang.

Li Ang herself introduces a sense of doubt toward the end of her narration of this episode. It may be possible that such a legend is circulated among a small group of people, but it is also equally possible that Li Ang constructs this fictitious story with a rhetorical question to offer a hint to her readers:

(Was there really such a kind of wife who used such a method to capture the last looks of her husband? When photos carried the concrete proof that a crime existed, the government would use even a single group photo to arrest all the people who might be related to it. During this period when a large number of photos were being burnt in order to prevent any unwanted problems from spreading, could a woman who used all her efforts to capture the last images of her dead husband really exist?)⁶⁷

She speaks from the character of the female writer, to express her skepticism. The reader can see that Li Ang is raising the spectre of “truth” and “falsity”—did the wife’s repair of her husband’s corpse really happen? With this, she hints at an influence from postmodernism by demonstrating the uncertainty that plagues postmodern reality.

During the 228 Incident, the military and political authorities arrested a large number of innocent people and killed them without any legal procedures. Before the victims were murdered, they were often forced to endure brutal physical abuse. Although the story may be fictitious, the historical background is real. It does not matter whether

⁶⁷ Li Ang, *Everyone Puts Their Incense Sticks in the Pei-Kang Incense Burner* p. 214.

or not this specific victim's wife did indeed undertake such a project. What matters is that the political and social background of mid-1940s Taiwan is genuine.

As Baudrillard insists, simulation is not faking or false pretence, it is rather akin to a psychosomatic disease, where the patient's pains are quite real and the question of whether his illness is also real does not make much sense since the pains must be treated in any case.⁶⁸ This background forces the reader to accept the story of the devoted wife as a paradigm of dignity and love in the face of atrocity. This unique expression of the deep-seated love of the victim's wife for her deceased husband is crafted through the reproduction of meaning and identity.

According to Bauman, art creates not just the images but their meanings as well. The repair of the husband's mutilated body gives a sense of meaning and a sense of identity. The importance of the simulation of the husband's body does not lie in the reality of it, but instead in the recreation of the identity of the husband as a human being. The simulacrum she creates is of both a victim, and a survivor. Bauman believes that "art and reality operate on the same footing, as meaning creators and meaning holders, in a world notorious for being plagued simultaneously by paucity and excess of meanings."⁶⁹

The present-day arts care next to nothing about the shape of social reality. More precisely, they have elevated themselves into a self-sufficient reality. In this respect, the arts share the plight of postmodern culture as a whole—which, as Jean Baudrillard puts it, is a culture of simulacrum, not representation.⁷⁰

Art is now one of many alternative realities and conversely, so-called social reality is one of many alternative arts, and each reality has its own set of tacit

⁶⁸ Baudrillard, "Simulacra And Simulation", *Simulations*, p. 44

⁶⁹ Bauman, p. 106

assumptions and openly proclaimed procedures and mechanisms for their self-assertion and authentication.

It is increasingly difficult to ask, and even more difficult to decide, which of the many realities is “more real”, which is primary and which is secondary, which is to serve as the reference point and criterion of correctness or adequacy for the rest. Even if questions like these continue to be asked by force of habit, it is not clear where to start the search for an answer.

According to Bauman, “it is left now to the work of fiction to unconceal this particularly postmodern variety of concealment, to put on display what socially produced reality tries hard to hide—those mechanisms which take the separation of truth and falsity off the agenda, render pursuit of sense irrelevant, unproductive and increasingly unattractive.”⁷¹ With postmodern artwork, it serves no purpose to determine the difference between true and false because there is no absolute measurement of the difference. However, in the field of fiction, the writer has the power to determine what he means to be true or false in his own creative literary work.

Ultimately, the truth or falsity of the incident becomes irrelevant. For in the scope of the story, and the meaning it attempts to create, it is real. We will not attempt to determine whether the story is true or whether the meticulous reparations of the husband by the wife actually took place, since the postmodern concept of reality denies the relevance of distinguishing truth from falsity. Here the goal is to determine whether Li Ang utilizes the concept of simulacrum in the above passage and to discover from the

⁷⁰ Baudrillard, “Simulacra And Simulation”, *Simulations* p. 42

⁷¹ Bauman, p. 126

postmodern viewpoint the meaning of the simulacrum Li Ang wished to express in her work

2.2.3 Value Judgment

After forcing the reader to come to grips with the 'truth' or 'falsity' of the story, Li Ang then questions the value of the wife's creation

Furthermore, would this image, and especially this face, be able to link together all the memories of an individual or an entire group?⁷²

Original works of art, imitations of classical works of art, modern artifacts, and contemporary artifacts all have equal merit in the eyes of postmodernists. They can be viewed as having equal value

There is no attempt to judge whether an original artifact of antiquity, or its simulacrum, is better than the other, nor whether classical works are better than modern works. The postmodernists profess a lack of certitude in determining whether the original artifact of antiquity or its simulacra is more valuable, whether classical works or modern works are more valuable, or whether a classical artifact or a modern artifact is more valuable. The postmodernists who are interested in simulacrum would not attempt to make value judgments between any of the above

If the postmodernists must place one artifact above another, judgment is usually based on the quality of the object itself, rather than the time it was produced. In contrast, most modernists accept the progressive nature of time and history. They believe the later a product appears or is produced, the more valuable it is. Old objects are regarded as backward or inferior while new objects are viewed as progressive or superior. This

⁷² Li Ang, *Everyone Puts Their Incense Sticks in the Pei-Kang Incense Burner* p. 214

implies that pictures of the husband before his death would prove far less effective than the photos after his death and simulated resurrection.

Postmodernists usually reject the concept of the progressive nature of time and history and would not automatically assume that the husband's image was more or less valuable before or after his death. It is difficult to apply this particular postmodern characteristic to this passage because the original was not produced artificially, unlike its simulacrum. One is a living original, while the other is a lifeless model. There is little room for this kind of comparison between the two.

The definition of the real is that of which it is possible to provide an equivalent reproduction. According to Baudrillard, "it is a contemporary of science, which postulates that a process can be reproduced exactly within given conditions, with an industrial rationality which postulates a universal system of equivalences"⁷³. At the end of this process of reproducibility, the real is not only that which can be reproduced, but also that which is always already reproduced: the hyperreal. In this passage, the reader may find that Li Ang's use of simulacrum lies beyond the boundary of postmodernism. The wife in the story was not trying to recreate the same model as her deceased husband, but instead she was trying to repair her husband's incomplete remains.

2.2.4 Photos of Death

The element of the "Photos of Death" appears repeatedly in the story as it carried deep and significant meaning. The "Photos of Death" were taken by the victim's wife before and after she tried to repair her husband's shattered face with needle, thread, rice,

⁷³ Jean Baudrillard, "The Order of Simulacra", *Symbolic Exchange And Death* (London: Sage, 1993), p. 73.

and cosmetics. Rumors suggested that these photos were taken with an air of serenity, the pictures had been taken from head to toe, covering the entire body using long, medium, and close-up shots. The people who circulated these rumors added that the wife must have been insanely calm in order to bear the pain of handling her husband's bone-shattered arm. The wife, who took the photos of her husband's broken body, left a record of images depicting the horrifying torture and damage in morbid detail as she attempted to recreate the original appearance of her husband.

Grasping for the truth in history, the rumors of the "Photos of Death" instead spread frightful stories of the damage done to a human body after being subjected to inhuman torture and execution, forging a connection between people and awakening primal fears within a person or group. Each reiteration of the rumors added different details and assumptions. In the end, these "Photos of Death" concentrated all the horror, fear and shock that dwelt within the hearts of the people. The numerous aspects of the rumors may reflect the personal images within each narrator's heart, not the distance between imagination and truth that repeatedly appears when describing the "Photos of Death". Therefore, it is possible to suggest that when the mutilated body could not be repaired, history could not be rewritten.

Because the "Photos of Death" never appeared before the public, they contained unlimited possibilities at the time of the 228 Incident. Rather than defining the truth of history they simply caused the most fearful tales and most extreme exercises of imagination regarding the "Photos of Death" to be reflected in the eyes of the people. Furthermore, there are two examples that could illustrate the impossibility of determining the truth in history. The wife of the victim tried to repair the victim's mutilated body,

hoping to reconstruct the “original appearance” before his death. However, it would seem useless to use sticky rice to recreate the eye since the victim could no longer see. Also, it would seem futile to rebuild the reproductive organs since they could no longer function. All these could be possibilities of the truth, but definitely not the truth itself.

The face of history reveals a different aspect according to different people’s memory or when being interpreted from different perspectives. Since history is obscured by differing accounts, interpretations of the same historical incident would seem incongruous, causing the true face of history to become a mystery. In the end, a disruption in the continuity of history would seem to be inevitable.

Li Ang’s description of the creation of a unique and powerful piece of art, which has no meaning beyond the interpretation of its witnesses, is a clear case of simulacrum. Going beyond mere representation, the wife of the victim creates a powerful statement with the repair of her husband. Then she proceeds even further, turning it into an accusation by photographing the result. Li Ang offers hints at postmodern influence by forcing the reader to come to terms with the questions of value and reality. Showing that neither is necessary to validate the work of the devoted wife, she makes it clear that the story finds its home in a postmodern reality.

2.3 Simulation of Memories

The following two excerpts are from the first story “The Devil With A Chastity Belt” (*Dai zhencaodai de mogui*). The story centers on a woman’s trip to Europe, mingled with descriptions of the tortuous and complicated process by which she became a female legislator.

The plot of “The Devil with a Chastity Belt” focuses on a female legislator in the opposition party who takes the place of her jailed husband by participating in Taiwanese politics. The female legislator had just turned thirty-two when the “Great Arrest” (*da daibu*)⁷⁴ took place that Christmas. She was a music teacher in a secondary school who, in her spare time, was learning the Japanese arts of tea ceremony and flower arrangements.

When her husband was arrested and sentenced to 15 years in prison, she felt compelled to take over her husband’s role in order to fulfill his political agenda. Thus, she was transformed from a simple and unambitious high school music teacher into an outstanding and capable Parliament legislator. In the government, she made effective use of her personal tragedy. By playing the role of a victim of political atrocity, she exploited the sympathy for her personal history in order to gain respect from the majority of native Taiwanese citizens. As a result, she was called the “Sorrowful Mother of the Nation” (*aishang de guomu*). Li Ang gives this role swapping the historical and significant term “*daifu chuzheng*”⁷⁵

Judging from Li Ang’s narration, the legislator was the kind of woman who grew up watching foreign movies like “Fantasia.” She would imagine a palace-like ballroom made of marble with crystal chandeliers where she dreamed of walking down a spiral staircase in a long dress and dancing a waltz with a man dressed in a swallowtail tuxedo at a party.

⁷⁴ The arrest of most of the opposition leaders in the aftermath of the Formosan Incident in December, 1980.

⁷⁵ The term “*daifu chuzheng*” has been in popular use since the 1980’s Parliamentary election, which took place in the aftermath of the Formosan Incident (*Meilidao* Incident), in which the wives of arrested opposition leaders successfully won the election in place of their husbands. They won the election mainly because of their appeal to sympathy based on the ill-treatment inflicted upon their husbands by the KMT.

The biggest dream in my life was to own a house like that by the water, to walk down the spiral-shaped staircase, dancing waltzes in the ballroom⁷⁶

The female legislator was saddled with an image of being grave, serious, and solemn. She was expected to act as a political character, rarely showing her personal feelings. However, when she traveled to Europe and was captivated by the ancient house by the water, the desires hidden in her heart towards non-political artworks were immediately awakened.

Inside the ancient castle, tall walls and small windows could be found everywhere. Small pieces of tile covered the floor while there were no decorations on the gray and dull walls. This absolute simplicity created the illusion of a ghostly seal, as if there really were souls that were frozen and sealed, souls that were waiting for their release.⁷⁷

The image of a young girl dancing a waltz in a long flowing dress encourages the reader to imagine an early modern archetype of beauty. However, when compared with contemporary pop-culture, it appears to become a kind of classical elegant beauty. While not immediately invoking the image of a simulation, we can see that these passages at the very least relate to a sense of nostalgia and longing related to simulacrum. Jameson states “when the real is no longer what is used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning.”⁷⁸ There is a proliferation of myths of origin and signs of reality, of second-hand truth, objectivity and authenticity. There is an escalation of the true, of the lived experience, a resurrection of the figurative in which the object and substance have disappeared.

⁷⁶ Li Ang, *Everyone Puts Their Incense Sticks in the Pei-Kang Incense Burner* pp 61-2

⁷⁷ Li Ang, *ibid* pp 70-1

⁷⁸ Patricia Waugh, ed., *Postmodernism a Reader*, (New York: Routledge, 1992) p 127

From the above passages, we observe the following sub-themes outlined in a parallel fashion: the longing for art, the care for a political image, the sense of political mission, and the yearning for an emotional life.

The above excerpts mention an old castle, archaic clothing, dance, and customs. The emphasis on a yearning for the past in the above passages coincides with the concept of nostalgia. However, the descriptions involving simulacra are few. It is questionable whether we should view the old castles, houses, clothing, dances, and customs as simulacra.

Jameson treats postmodernism as a particular form of mimesis, a particular way of representing the world. He argues that contemporary works of art are “particularly depthless, and drained of real emotion”, that they are, “instead, filled with an overwhelming dedication to the disintegration of the self, relating to other works only in the form of mimicry or collage.”⁷⁹ This merely creates a fake sense of nostalgia, taking the place of any real connection with the past, while any critical distance from the present is canceled.

The belief that nostalgia is always connected to nativism, and to a lack of critical distance from the sources of cultural identity, may not be a completely valid viewpoint. According to Debora Battaglia, nostalgia may actually be a source of knowledge and enlightenment, rather than a simple desire to recover something that has been lost. The practitioner of this type of nostalgia is “left with the choice of either attaching the appropriate feelings toward their own histories, products, and capabilities or detaching

⁷⁹ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, pp. 85, 86, 88.

themselves, and even actively resisting the disempowering conditions of postcolonial life”⁸⁰

One aspect of nostalgia that may yet be explored is the incoherence of the images and memories as they crowd together to form a new impression of reality and meaning. Are the sub-themes of this literary work written with a coherent unity, or are they written together without harmony, similar to the sub-themes represented in a postmodern work of art? Does Li Ang’s writing give the impression of small pictures being painted in a number of small spaces without a conscious attempt to harmonize them?

There may be some incoherence on the surface of Li Ang's work. There may also be a certain amount of incoherence even in the deeper layers of her work, but the phenomenon of incoherence on this deeper layer is not immediately noticeable. Also, this passage is primarily focused on the yearning for classical beauty deeply felt by the female protagonist. Imitation and simulacrum do not seem to be a major concern. Therefore, this passage does not appear to be a representation of simulacrum in Li Ang’s work.

2.4 Simulation of the History

The following excerpt is taken from the story “Colorful Cosmetics and Bloody Ceremony”. The passage is focused on a special event memorializing the 228 Incident on its fiftieth anniversary. An actress was assigned to the place where the 228 Incident took place to play the role of the cigarette-peddling lady, Lin Jiangmai.

Obviously the young girl, somewhere in her early twenties, was trying to emulate the “old time” fashion. She was wearing a slanted chest cloth, tight at the waist, with bellbottom trousers that exposed her ankles. The

⁸⁰ In Debora Battaglia, ed. “On Practical Nostalgia: Self-Prospecting among Urban Trobrianders”, *Rhetorics of Self-Making*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995) p. 77

fabric was made of cotton while the cloth itself was covered with an exaggerated pattern of red flowers and green leaves, the same kind of patterns that was used as a comforter case in the countryside in the past. She also wore a straw hat on her head. There were also supposed to be a pair of Japanese wooden sandals on her feet, but one of them had been kicked off far away. She was holding a few packs of cigarettes in her hands.

The young actress, with the over-exaggerated pose that seemed to resemble a turtle exposing its belly, repeatedly acted out the struggle and fear to the group of demonstrators. Her dress was fashioned to duplicate the past, revealing every memory and imagination related to that era on her body.

As the group of demonstrators walked past this site where the historical event took place, everyone had their own image of Lin Jiangmai—the cigarette-peddling lady who ignited the whole incident. Although the image of Lin Jiangmai might vary slightly in each person's heart, it was still more or less an image of a woman dressed in gray clothes, weak and poor, with a solemn expression on her face full of sadness from the pressure of living.

Everyone had their own image of "Lin Jiangmai", the cigarette-peddling lady who was beaten on the head by the police inspector from Mainland China with his pistol during that evening about fifty years ago:

Fresh red blood burst out from her forehead

(It was definitely not some kind of tomato juice)

She fell on the ground after being hit, passing out after she lost too much blood

(She definitely did not fall like a turtle, lying on the ground exposing its belly with its arms flapping and its legs kicking)

Although the young actress' clothing and acting skills would never be acknowledged as being that of Lin Jiangmai, her eye-catching look and the location where the incident took place fifty years ago, made her a visible mark that could not be ignored.

However, many people in the group of demonstrators could not help asking the question, "Did the cigarette-peddling lady really look like this?"

Unfortunately, the actress who failed to resemble Lin Jiangmai could not return to being herself while wearing this makeup and these clothes that attempted to mimic the past. Nevertheless, her image, which did not represent the past or the present, had leapt between the currents of time, placing her at a safe spot on the edge of history.

Lin Jiangmai could not reappear as she was fifty years ago. The Pegasus teahouse standing at the spot where the incident happened did not appear the same. Nor could the actress, struggling on the ground by herself, resurrect Lin Jiangmai through simple mimicry.⁸¹

⁸¹ Li Ang, *ibid* pp 190-3

The above passage indicates that it is not easy to practice the imitation of an historical event. It would be impossible to express the burden and misery of Taiwanese through the suffering of Lin Jiangmai without a clear understanding of the ways of life, customs, folk culture, and the political and economic conditions of Taiwan, particularly the suffering and misery surrounding the 228 Incident. The ridiculous performances that catch neither the past nor the present serve as a testimony to the difficulty of historical simulacrum. Li Ang's narrative of this poor act of simulation is thus significant.

On the surface, the performance seems to be counter to the concept of simulacrum being a work without reference, since it obviously relates to something that did occur in reality, but the mere existence of reference does not preclude the validity of simulation. According to Jameson, representation begins with the idea that the original and the representation are equivalent, even to the point of a perfect replication. In contrast, simulation begins at the point of perfect replication, from the point of the cancellation of the value of the replication, from the point of the replication becoming the antithesis of every reference.⁸² Representation attempts to overwhelm simulation by calling it false representation, simulation embraces the whole of representation as a form of simulacrum. While the actress's performance would appear, upon first impression, to be a poor recreation of an historical incident, it proves itself to be a simulation by going beyond mere representation to invoke an interpretation of history and political power in its audience.

Since the original face of history could not be faithfully duplicated, the incident in the past was not represented by the performance of today. Although this seemed to awaken a sense of closeness and urgency, it simulated the days in the past that were gone.

forever. Even though the performance took place right before the eyes of the crowd, it succeeded mostly in emphasizing its distance from history. The twenty-year-old actress who played Lin Jiangmai continued to use costumes and actions that simulated the tragedy of Lin Jiangmai, collapsing near the spot where that incident took place approximately fifty years before. Although being performed in the same place that the earlier incident had taken place, the flow of time could no longer call back the history that drifted away. Perhaps this meant that the incident would seem forever closed to the people in memory while the duplication of the images seemed far away and could never match the facts in history.

The actress did not try to portray Lin Jiangmai as she was in the past, nor did she try to be herself in the present. Her exaggerated performance that was from neither the past nor the present actually found its shelter at the edge of the history, since even the Pegasus teahouse was no longer the same. It was impossible for a second appearance of Lin Jiangmai to take place after fifty years, the only thing that remained was the actress who simulated her through performance, exaggeratedly struggling with herself at that spot.

In the postmodern world, the fragmented and disjointed perspective of history is viewed as being unreliable and nearly impossible to represent or to recreate. Time and space have become not only infinite, but also omnipresent. Jameson believes that trying to represent events in a linear fashion “as they happened” becomes problematic as every individual brings their own flavor of “truth” and certainty to the stage.⁸³ This does not

⁸² Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* p. 66.

⁸³ Jameson, *ibid* p. 54.

mean that history should be abandoned, as something beyond description, but that it should instead be defined by events that create the concept of history

When speaking of memories regarding history, “the speaker’s position” is undoubtedly the most important issue needing clarification. The unique perspectives of each character would create different attitudes towards history. Taking into consideration the unreliability of memory and the problems with controlling memory when revising history, “collective memory” is in fact difficult to identify. Even in circumstances not suffering from political control of the government, personal memories would still be corrupted to different degrees from a variety of influences. Therefore, there is a definite relationship between the reconstruction of personal historical memory, or a country’s collective historical memory, and the definition of a person’s identity.

According to Wang Yuechuang, “once the memory is mentioned, it is commonly followed by the questions—who awakens this memory, what are the circumstances surrounding it, and what is it struggling against?”⁸⁴ At this point, it would be possible to bring the circumstances leading to the 228 Incident and the relationship between it and the current performance. It would also cast doubts as to whether it should be viewed strictly from the text of the witness during the actress’ performance or whether the motive present in Li Ang’s mind should be questioned.

Different levels of meaning and interpretation produce distinctive viewpoints among different people according to their relative perspectives, creating corruption of the “facts” that are presented by history. As Jameson remarks, one sometimes believes—especially in the area of culture and cultural histories and critiques—that an infinite number of narrative interpretations of history are possible, limited only by the

ingenuity of the practitioners whose claim to originality depends on the novelty of the new theory of history they bring to market⁸⁵

It seems that historical memories are essentially detailed searches for the original facts of history that people already acknowledge, yet it would be difficult to isolate a sequence of events pertaining to a country or a person from the memories tainted by a social or political point of view. Therefore, when revising historical incidents, the re-exploration would definitely require ratification from the people and the culture. Also, the conflicts and power struggles between historical memories in historical texts demonstrate the functioning structure of politics.

History is not the past needing to be rescued from the abyss of forgetfulness, but rather it is a construct of the present, and serves as the fundamental basis of the future. The actress in “Colorful Cosmetics and Bloody Ceremony” attempted to portray Lin Jiangmai—an old woman who was beaten to unconscious by a corrupt policeman. The actress continued to strengthen the image of the old woman being beaten up and tortured until collapsing on the ground in order to awaken the emotions and commiseration of the people.

Li Ang acknowledges that the historical tragedy had caused injuries that can never be healed. She also suggests that the resulting emotions should not be exploited by the “speaker”(the actress) to widen the wound and transform it into an historical image that served political machinations. The politics of “Colorful Cosmetics and Bloody Ceremony” seem easy to interpret from an exterior perspective as the “suppression of nativity by the alien” point of view. By portraying the Taiwanese as a group of

⁸⁴ Wang Yuechuan, p 135

individuals being suppressed by a collective, Li Ang reconstructs history. She hopes to call Taiwanese to join the task of establishing Taiwanese nationality through an “integral and concrete” recreating of Taiwanese history.

Through the meta-language employed by Li Ang in her presentation of “Colorful Cosmetics and Bloody Ceremony”, we realize that historical memory and national identity are inseparable, and that a reconstruction of history is an indispensable element for ethnic identity. Ethnic identity is a foundation upon which a discourse on a nation-state can be built. We can see a chain connecting historical memory, ethnic identity, and national discourse moving through the openings of history. What we should seek in our quest for historical memory is not for a re-appearance of history, but rather for a recreation or recrafting of history with human ideology.

Therefore, the purpose of invoking historical memories, while not revealing the full spectrum of that history, would be to attempt the reconstruction of the state of mind of the people and situations in and around the historical characters. Li Ang clearly demonstrates a familiarity with these concepts as she portrays the simulation of history through the performance of the young actress.

2.5 Conclusion

Among the concepts embraced by postmodernists, the concept of simulacrum may be the most nebulous. The line between representation and simulacrum has no beginning and no end and is nearly impossible to define with any certainty. However, the essence of a simulacrum is that it contains its own purpose and meaning beyond any

⁸⁵ Fredric Jameson, “Periodising the Sixties”, *The Ideologies of Theory: Essays 1971-1986*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), pp. 53-55.

reference to the real world. When the real becomes more than it was, then nostalgia asserts itself. We are subjected to the propagation of legends and indications of reality, recycled truth, objectivity and ratification. We experience an inflation of the true, of the lived experience, a resurgence of the emblematic where the object and substance have disappeared. With successive reiterations of the real we are then confronted by the hyperreal, which then supplants the real, becoming that which it was meant to simulate. By its very nature it exemplifies fragmentation, ephemerality, volatility, and the futility of judgment. Li Ang's descriptions of the "Photos of Death" and the actress, while not explicitly presented as simulacra, fit within the scope of this postmodern concept.

Nevertheless, it is possible for us to say, in very general terms, that the analysis of the 'Photos of Death' in this chapter suggests that she understands the postmodern concept of simulacrum fairly well. Or at least one may say that this passage unintentionally conforms to the practice of simulacrum, illustrating the postmodern preoccupation with image and presentation. Even passages that seem at first simply to be descriptions of ancient things, appear to follow the postmodern concept of nostalgia, using fragments of memories and dreams to reflect upon the state of a life lost to duty and responsibility. Here also postmodernism creates a crisis in the belief in realistic self-expression or objective rationalization. As Li Ang introduces a sense of uncertainty regarding the truth or falsity of reality and the impossibility of recreating history, she shows a greater sense of intent to use examples of simulacrum. As a result, she reveals a growing presence of postmodernism in her work.

Chapter 3—Fragmentation

3.1 Introduction

The postmodernist only disconnects, fragments are all he pretends to trust. His ultimate opprobrium is "totalization"—any synthesis whatever, social, epistemic, even poetic. Hence his preference for montage, collage, the found or cut-up literary object, for paratactic over hypotactic forms, metonymy over metaphor, schizophrenia over paranoia.

Ihab Hassan⁸⁶

The most startling fact about postmodernism is its total acceptance of ephemerality, fragmentation, and discontinuity. Fragmentation, indeterminacy, and an intense distrust of all universal or totalizing discourses are the hallmark of postmodernist thought. Postmodernists such as Foucault and Lyotard explicitly attack any notion that there might be a meta-language, meta-narrative, or meta-theory through which all things can be connected or represented. They believe that universal and eternal truths, if they exist at all, cannot be specified. Condemning meta-narratives as totalizing, they insist upon the plurality of "power-discourse" formations (Foucault), or of "language games" (Lyotard).

Foucault openly condemns the ideas of meta-narratives. In emphasizing the pluralism of worlds that coexist within postmodern fiction, McHale finds Foucault's concept of a heterotopia a "perfectly appropriate image to capture what that fiction is striving to depict."⁸⁷ By heterotopia, Foucault means the coexistence in "an impossible space of a large number of fragmentary possible worlds or incommensurable spaces that are juxtaposed or superimposed upon each other."⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Ihab Hassan, *The Postmodern Turn*, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1987), p. 168

⁸⁷ Brian McHale, p. 54

⁸⁸ Cited in David Harvey, p. 48. See also, Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1984). Foucault emphasizes "polymorphous correlations in place of simple or complex causality."

Lyotard makes a similar assertion, though on a somewhat different basis. Lyotard defines the postmodern simply as "incredulity towards meta-narratives"⁸⁹ He proposes a notion of "language games" which testify to the existence of different orders of utterance. Since each language game has its own properties and rules specifying the uses to which it can be put, it would be "terroristic" to judge the claims of one language game by the procedures of another.⁹⁰

Lyotard takes the modernist preoccupation with language and pushes it to extremes of dispersal. While the social bond is linguistic, it is not woven with a single thread but by an indeterminate number of language games. Each of us lives at the intersection of many of these games and we do not necessarily establish stable language combinations. And the properties of the ones we do establish are not necessarily communicable. As a consequence, the social subject itself seems to dissolve in this dissemination of language games.

Some postmodernists tend to accept a rather different theory as to what language and communication are all about. According to Colin Falck

Language, we have traditionally been taught by those philosophers who have addressed themselves to the question, is in its primary function the means to our expression of our understanding of how things are. But language is also, as we have only recently come to be in a position to recognize, an expression of how things are for us, and must be an expression of the whole range of pre-conscious emotions, and of our sense of our own nature and powers, which we have found ourselves able to incorporate into our language-based behavior at the conceptual level.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p. xxiv

⁹⁰ Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 9

⁹¹ Colin Falck, *Myth, Truth, and Literature: Towards a True Postmodernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 39. Falck believes that since the time of Plato and Aristotle we have become accustomed to the idea of the human mind as making use of the concepts which we possess in order to understand, or to represent, the true nature of the world which we experience and within which we live.

Deconstructionism is less a philosophical position than a way of thinking about and "reading" texts. Writers who create texts or use words do so on the basis of all the other texts and words they have encountered, while readers deal with them in the same way. Cultural life is viewed as a series of texts intersecting with other texts, producing more texts "including that of the literary critic, who aims to produce another piece of literature in which texts under consideration are intersecting freely with other texts that happen to have affected his or her thinking" ⁹²

What deconstructionism has in common with much of postmodernism is its attempt to mirror "an unruly world subject to unfocused moral, political and economic systems" ⁹³. But it does so in such a way as to be "disorienting, even confusing" and so to break down "our habitual ways of perceiving form and space" ⁹⁴. While deconstructionism seems to be orderly, fragmentation, ephemerality, and chaos remain central themes of postmodern discourse.

Besides Foucault and Lyotard, Richard Rorty's rediscovery of pragmatism in philosophy, ⁹⁵ new developments in mathematics emphasizing indeterminacy, and the reemergence of concern in ethics, politics, and anthropology for the validity and dignity of "the other" are all indications of a rejection of "meta-narratives" ⁹⁶. According to Terry Eagleton:

Postmodernism signals the death of such "meta-narratives" whose secretly terroristic function was to ground and legitimate the illusion of a "universal" human history. We are now in the process of waking from the nightmare of modernism, with its manipulative reason and fetish of the

⁹² Harvey, p. 51

⁹³ Harvey, p. 98

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980).

⁹⁶ Harvey, pp. 8-9

totality, into the laid-back pluralism of the postmodern, that heterogeneous range of life styles and language games which has renounced the nostalgic urge to totalize and legitimate itself⁹⁷

It can be seen from this that the postmodern antipathy to totality is bound up with a politics of resistance. It claims to be a commitment to enabling those who have been silenced to speak. Hence according to Foucault, postmodernism's association with movements such as feminism and ecology groups that arose in response to the oppressions of liberal ideology⁹⁸. Postmodernism privileges heterogeneity and difference as liberative forces in the redefinition of cultural discourse.

With an understanding of the postmodernists' aversion to totality, the primary focus of this chapter will be to discover whether it was Li Ang's intention to express an overwhelming sense of fragmentation and a rejection of a unifying, or "totalizing" narrative technique on her latest work—*Everyone Puts Their Incense Sticks in the Pei-kang Incense Burner*. In her texts, she broadly adopts the postmodern techniques of collapse and collage. It seems almost natural for a reader to see Li Ang's various disruptive narrations as being inspired by the postmodern concept of fragmentation but whether these are conscious attempts to resist the universal and embrace the ephemeral is yet to be fully explored.

⁹⁷ Terry Eagleton, "Awakening from Modernity", *Times Literary supplement*, (20 Feb 1987), p 21. See also, Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996)

⁹⁸ Foucault's work with homosexuals and prisoners was not aimed at producing reforms in state practices, but dedicated to the cultivation and enhancement of localized resistance to the institutions' techniques and discourses of organized repression. Foucault evidently believed that it was only through such a multifaceted and pluralistic attack upon localized practices of repression that any global challenge to capitalism might be mounted without replicating all the multiple repressions of capitalism in a new form. See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), pp 25-57

In this chapter, I will first concentrate on discussing Li Ang's frequent usage of collapse and collage and how they relate to postmodernism. I will then examine what the concept of fragmentation is and how it may have had an influence on her work.

3.2 Collapse

3.2.1 Collapse in Visual Arts

Postmodern artists, both literary and visual, often use collapse and collage to express the concepts of fragmentation, discontinuity, incoherence, the fragmented individual, and disruptive space. The artist in visual arts often collapses the lines of various images into the same space. These collapsed images may represent completely different themes, but more often than not they are different images on the same or a similar theme. The collapsing and crossing of these images illustrate the various aspects of the body/object, which are multi-faceted, multi-angular, multi-perspective, uncoordinated, incoherent, disintegrated, incomplete, and fragmented.

3.2.2 Collapse in Literature

In literary creation, collapse is much more difficult to use than collage. It is very difficult to describe in writing the collapsing of varying images in the same space. It may be possible in poetic works, but it is very difficult for prose. In postmodern fiction, characters no longer contemplate how they can unravel or unmask a central mystery, but are forced to ask, which world is this? What is to be done in it? Which of myself is to do it? It seems impossible that these multiple worlds should exist in the same space, and

the central character moves between them, unsure which is the true reality, until the two worlds collide in a terrible denouement

Was it possible, using the narrative structures of realism, to write anything other than a parochialist and hence to some degree unrealistic novel in the face of all this spatial simultaneity? According to Harvey at least, realist narrative structures "assumed, after all, that a story could be told as if it were unfolding coherently, event after event, in time " Such structures were inconsistent with a reality in which two events in quite different spaces occurring at the same time could so intersect as to change how the world worked ⁹⁹

3 2 3 Collapse in Li Ang

Unlike the art of collage, the art of collapse has not been a popular technique among writers. Readers are able to observe recurring examples of collage in Li Ang's latest work, but only a few passages in her work appear to represent the usage of collapse. These passages may not necessarily be written with the technique of collapse in mind, but in terms of content, they certainly contain the concept of collapse. For example

In the studio dominated by the color black, under the small spotlight surrounded by the long shot weak lights, the female writer sees two visions of her own images, one before makeup and the other after makeup, moving closer and closer in search for the possibility of collapsing ¹⁰⁰

Here we see a clear example of two images overlapping each other on the same space. Li Ang tries to create an effect of collapse through the female writer who imagines that two of her images appear as if they were overlapping. This is one of the most effective

⁹⁹ Harvey, p. 48

¹⁰⁰ Li Ang, *Everyone Puts Their Incense Sticks in the Pei-kang Incense Burner*, p. 174. Li Ang chose the word *chongdie*—a perfect Chinese translation for collapse.

techniques of collapse in literary work

According to Harvey, the act of masking and disguising connects with spatial fragmentation and alienated individualism "The image of divided spaces is particularly powerful, and they are superimposed upon each other in the fashion of montage and collapse"¹⁰¹ Li Ang overcomes the difficulty of expressing collapse through literary work. She presents a process of dynamic movement of two images collapsing together

Although it is difficult to use collapse in literary creation, a reader can occasionally find collapse practiced together with collage

Since the bloody memories of the 228 Incident were about fifty years old, most of the opposition political characters on the stage, lacking a true talent for performance, simply sang some pop songs or did some Macarena dancing

Only Lin Lizhi had the bravery to reveal her provocative songs and dances at the social evening party. Little rumors began to spread out when she appeared on the stage in an evening gown with a low collar and no sleeves. When she exposed her entire naked back as she began to spin with her dance moves on the stage, the crowd began to erupt in turmoil.

The evening gown carved away all the fabric from the top of her back to her waist, in an extremely large curve shape. Half of her soft, white body was exposed on the stage near a chain of one-foot tall photos that hung in the background. Those were the photos of victims who were executed or went missing during the 228 Incident. Suddenly, two different dimensions were forged together in an anachronistic manner, the horrifying looks of death from victims seemed to form a new collage with the naked back of the woman, creating a new type of ghostly atmosphere.¹⁰²

This passage contains the concepts of both collage and collapse, which is very unusual in literary works. On the one hand, the image of Lin Lizhi in the evening gown collapses with the photos of the victims of the 228 Incident in the background. On the other hand, the photos of the 228 Incident victims form a new collage with Lin Lizhi's exposed body added on the stage.

¹⁰¹ Harvey, p. 316

It seems impossible that these two images should exist in the same space. However, postmodernists usually tend to "collage together incompatible source materials as an alternative to choosing between them"¹⁰³ The overlapping of Lin Lizhi's half-exposed body and the victims' photos in the background indicates the intersection of time and space between the past and the present.

3.3 Collage

3.3.1 Collage in Visual Arts

In visual arts, an artist paints various pictures upon the small spaces of a canvas. An artist will most commonly divide a canvas into several spaces and paint a picture/image into each space. The themes of these small spaces on the canvas may be different or irrelevant, but somewhat associated. An artist will usually place these images of different themes, relevant or not, within the different spaces of a large canvas so that the images can be presented in a fragmented, incoherent and discontinuous form.

In the field of visual art, it was "precisely collage and other devices of anti-painting that first announced the idea of a break with modernism proper, according to postmodernism, as far back as 1912."¹⁰⁴ Picasso in particular—by any standards a modernist of the pre-war generation—abandoned painting in 1912 to turn to an art of fragments. There was a breakthrough in Picasso's work to a new level of affective feeling in which the explicit form of the female body is all but abandoned in favor of other objects and other qualities. Picasso's collage constructions often contain themes of

¹⁰² Li Ang, *Everyone Puts Their Incense Sticks in the Pei-kang Incense Burner* p 154

¹⁰³ Brandon Taylor, *Modernism Post-modernism, Realism: A Critical Perspective for Art*, (Winchester School of Art Press, 1987), p 56.

¹⁰⁴ Taylor, p 53

his concealment of the female body within the shapes and textures of the surface

According to Taylor's analysis:

Of the several hundred images produced in the brief collage phase of early 1912 to mid 1913, there are many which rely upon an obvious analogy between the form of the guitar and that of the human head, in which the double-curve of the guitar becomes the cheek and forehead of a male head, echoing a similar double curve in the ear, or the features of a female head which sometimes doubles as her wavy hair to the left or right; in which the characteristic "f" holes in the violin have become eyes and in which (in one case) the scroll of the violin becomes a curl of hair atop of singing face. A variation on this theme makes the guitar mimic the form of the whole female body—either standing, or recumbent, or as an attribute. In these, the double-curve of the musical instrument stands for the breasts or the buttocks, the sound hole for the stomach or the vagina, and the neck and scroll of the violin for the neck and head—sometimes embellished with a pair of keys which repeat the breasts in a manner which Picasso was to pick up again in his surrealist work.¹⁰⁵

Even though Picasso soon abandoned collage as a method and continued his symbolization system within the language of texturized and immeasurably enriched painting, his collage period of works were later on admired by the surrealists when they claimed Picasso as the founding father of their experiment. His paintings fascinated the surrealists because they “juxtaposed” elements in a psychically disturbing way. Their “substitution” method was partly given birth in the collage period by Picasso, in the course of which he “pushed to its limits a series of destructive fantasies about the body of the mother, about an almost ageless conflict between “good” and “bad” experience.”¹⁰⁶

The point is that for Picasso, if not for other cubists who depended to a large extent upon the fragmentation style, cubism was an *affective* rather than a formal method, proving capable of articulating his conflicts in a visually quite novel form and that his

¹⁰⁵ Taylor, p 57

¹⁰⁶ Taylor, p 63

stature as an important artist can be attributed, here as elsewhere, to his ability to reach back to infantile modes of thinking in a compelling and authentic way

3.3.2 Collage in Li Ang

Readers can easily observe the frequent usage of collage in Li Ang's work. Fragmented content is found throughout the book. The first time collage appears in Li Ang's latest work is when the female legislator attends the secret annual meeting in Europe with the male National Assembly representative

They came to the old castle in a desolate wasteland while flowers blossomed everywhere else. This old castle was built in the eleventh century with tall limestone walls and small high windows. It was closed and forbidden, quite different from the magnificent palaces built and decorated in more recent years.

On the way here, they had been talking and laughing about some interesting things from when they were young. Ever since she had jokingly given him the nickname "Devil", it was as if his curse had been lifted. He resumed the habit of talking in the way of his generation, sarcastic and humorous. His attitude made it difficult for her to know whether to laugh or to cry.¹⁰⁷

Here, we see a clear sign of shifting elements, from case A (old castle in a desolate area) to case B (interesting things from when they were young), then to case C (the nickname, Devil). The usage of collage gets more complicated as Li Ang goes further in depth.

"I will take you to see the apartment where he was burnt to death. It is just right behind the alley of the mourning hall", said Mother Wang. "Poor guy! The KMT wouldn't even allow us to hang the elegiac couplets that people donated. Since our protest was in vain, we took down all of the funeral decorations. Poor guy! He didn't even have his name written down in his mourning hall."

People who support the opposition movements all said that she had never forgiven her husband who was burnt to ashes in that big fire. Although people didn't openly criticize her, they often complained. Her husband died in such a heroic way. Although he had done something

¹⁰⁷ Li Ang, *Everyone Puts Their Incense Sticks in the Pei-kang Incense Burner* p. 70

wrong in the past, she should not only forgive him, but also be proud of him

(Since he wanted to take this path, why couldn't he die with honor, becoming a democratic fighter worshipped by people. Why couldn't he have left no doubts for people to question?)

Lin Yuzhen does not expect to receive the same honorary treatment as the 'Lin Family'¹⁰⁸. After all, the price of the lives of an old mother and a pair of five-year-old twin daughters is too great. Lin Yuzhen was only unsatisfied that since her husband had also died in a fire, why should all of the praises fall upon one single man, the so called—

“Godfather of the Taiwanese Independence”¹⁰⁹

The fragmentation becomes more complex as the story goes on. Case A (the mourning hall without a name) is followed immediately by case B (Lin Yuzhen doesn't forgive her husband) and then by case C (Godfather of the Taiwanese Independence). The mourning hall belongs to the Godfather of the Taiwanese Independence, not the husband of Lin Yuzhen. Thus, case C is supposed to follow after case A in terms of content.

There is disruption between case A to B, and case B to C. They are lined up one after one. This is the technique of collage. Cases A, B, and C can be connected with two interpretations. From case A, to case C to case B (A, C, B) or from case A to case B to case C (A, B, C). The two interpretations have very similar themes. The passage seems to fit the concept of fragmentation on the surface. However, with close examination, the reader can find that the content is consistent and organized rather than discontinuous and incoherent. Thus, it is closer to the second technique of collage we mentioned earlier.

Here is another long and complicated example of collage:

Many representatives from numerous feminist societies gathered at a VIP dining room at a famous hotel in the eastern district of the city. They arrived at this western-styled restaurant with a long table like a conference room. They would like to publish a “White Paper on Feminine Politics”.

¹⁰⁸ Lu Xiulian, *Chongshen meilidao* (Rejudging the Formosan Incident), (Taipei: Qianwei, 1997), pp 273-90. Lin Yixiong's two twin daughters and mother had been murdered in 1979 after the Great Arrest of the Formosan Incident.

¹⁰⁹ Li Ang, *Everyone Puts Their Incense Sticks in the Pei-kang Incense Burner*, pp 86-8.

The chair of the conference was the Director of the Feminist Department of the opposition party

During the long discussion, female scholars, female lawyers, female councilors, and female leaders in charge of associations competed to express their thoughts. They attacked the patriarchal society and the male-dominated world of politics as the reason for the country's state of violence and corruption.

However, the discussion was really too long. Little pieces of paper started to be passed around by a few thirty-year-old front-line feminists regarding to the possibility of catching the next white male strip show.

These kinds of strip shows, that expose the bodies of white men (they're not totally naked) are perfectly legal. (Illegal naked male strip shows are no longer secret. There also exist some more "exciting" ones.)

Pubs, discos, piano bars and regular bars infiltrated the positions of the nightclubs, music clubs, and dance clubs or show clubs and became the center of the entertainment world in the 90s. The men who went to these places were no longer American soldiers from the Vietnam War or Japanese, but locals. The women would sing, play piano or work on other things.

Since the dyeing of hair had recently become a trend, colors must be put on the hair after the stage of bleaching out the natural dark color of the hair. Yet at the same time, all the women who sang on the stage had their hair dyed brown.

They shook their bodies on the stage. Every movement of their hands or legs carried a sense of sexiness.

It wasn't until now that Lin Lizì finally arrived. She was always late, and this time, it was even more outrageous, she was a whole hour late.

A group of "God welcomers" crossed the street. First was the small altar, then the gongs and drums, next came a dragon that was blocked by a red traffic light.

Endless lines of cars gathered on the road as they slowly moved along. The altar and the gongs and drums stopped somewhere not too far further down the road. She could almost imagine the deafening noises from the street: the noise of whistles, gongs, drums, cars, and horns. However, in this insulated room with sound proofed double glass windows, those noises were unnoticeable.

"Women need to fight for the power of authority with tactics." the representative who was giving the speech said fiercely, gathering the attention and gazes of the audiences with her voice through the microphone.

A man was inside this twelve to twenty-four feet tall statue while only revealing his legs. Comparing the size of the statue and the human figure, no matter how big the man might be, his legs and feet still seemed extraordinarily small and awkward.

Lin Lizi stared at the back of the huge statue as it was stopped by the traffic light. As if stuck to the spot, she was unable to move her sight elsewhere. Although scared by the situation, she felt determined to see the face of a man when the statue turned around.

Suddenly, she noticed that someone was calling her name. As she came back to her senses, she could clearly hear that it was her turn to give a speech on the topic of “Tactics regarding how to re-take power of authority from men.” Lin Lizi took another quick glance at the back of the statue that slowly disappeared at the edge of the glass window. Step by step, the legs and feet that seemed out of symmetry left her sight with the face that was still unknown.

Lin Lizi didn't think much before she said, “subvert men with women's bodies!”

Hatred and contempt was clearly written on the faces of the representatives from the feminist societies.¹¹⁰

This passage does not appear to contain a consistent theme. The structure of the story is fragmentary. I will list the various shifting elements as follows:

Case A: White Paper on Feminine Politics—case B: female scholars, female lawyers, female councilors, and female leaders in charge of associations competed to express their thoughts—case C: little pieces of papers began to be passed around—case D: white men's strip shows—case E: pubs, discos, bars in the 90s—case F: dyeing hair—case G: women shaking their bodies on the stage—case H: Lin Lizi arrived late—case I: a team of “God-welcomers”—case J: endless lines of cars gathered on the road as they slowly moved along—case K: the imaginable deafening noises on the street—case L: “women need to fight for the power of authority with tactics”—case M: a man inside a tall statue revealing only his legs—case N: Lin Lizi noticed someone calling her name—case O: “subvert men with women's bodies”.

From case A to case O, some paragraphs are smoothly connected and some are disruptive. However, despite the disruptive narration on the surface, the overall content

¹¹⁰ Li Ang, *Everyone Puts Their Incense Sticks in the Pei-kang Incense Burner* pp. 145-9.

is smooth and neatly structured. Once again, we demonstrate that Li Ang's work fits better with the second technique of collage.

3. 4 Conclusion

Fiction, fragmentation, collage, and eclecticism, all suffused with a sense of ephemerality and chaos, are, perhaps, the themes that dominate in today's practices of art and literature. And there is, evidently, much in common here with practices and thinking in many other realms such as social theory, psychology, and philosophy. How is it, then, that the prevailing mood takes the form it does? To answer that question with any power requires that we first take stock of the mundane realities of capitalist modernity and postmodernity, and see what clues might lie there as to the possible functions of such fictions and fragmentations in the reproduction of social life.

The technique of collage used by postmodern visual artists seems to influence Li Ang in her literary creation. Quite often, her themes may be sharply disrupted, and there appears to be no obvious continuity among the passages. However, this type of disruptive narration is also found in the modernist writing style known as "stream of consciousness." It is difficult to determine whether Li Ang actually uses the postmodern technique of collage or the modernistic technique of stream of consciousness in her latest work.

Li Ang was one of the first writers in Taiwan who boldly embraced the tool of stream of consciousness as the western wind of modernism first swept into Taiwan in the early 1960s.¹¹¹ Early in her career, Li Ang was greatly influenced by the concepts of

¹¹¹ Lucy H. Chen, "Literary Formosa", *China Quarterly*, 1963, vol. 15. "The rallying point for these new writers has been a magazine called *Modern Literature*, started at National Formosa University in 1960 by a

modernism¹¹² The literary tool of stream of consciousness is most evident in her earlier literary creations such as *The Flowering Season* and *The Test of Love*

However, Li Ang's latest work, *Everyone Puts Their Incense Sticks in the Peikang Incense Burner*, seems to follow more closely the postmodern concept of collage rather than the modernistic stream of consciousness. In addition to using the techniques of disruptive narrative, disruptive time and space, and jumping between different times and spaces, writers from the school of stream of consciousness also favor the following features: hidden consciousness, emergence of the subconscious, and ambiguity in language and action.

From the excerpts above, we see that the structure of stream of consciousness is not readily apparent in Li Ang's latest work. Therefore, it is more appropriate to consider that Li Ang's work is a product of collage rather than stream of consciousness. However, Li Ang's usage of the postmodern technique of collage is confined merely to the style of her work. In the deep content, fragmentation, disruption, and incoherence are replaced by coherence. With careful reading, the reader easily finds orderly plots and an organized structure. From this perspective, Li Ang has moved beyond the rigid doctrines of postmodernism.

As we can see, how much influence the concepts of collage and collapse have had on Li Ang is not readily apparent. She has used the words collapse (*chongdie*) (Li 1997, p. 174) and collage (*pintie*) (Li 1997, p. 154) in her work as an indication of her

group of Prof. T. A. Hsia's students after he left for America and the standards of his own *Literary Review* had rapidly declined. Edited entirely by students and recent graduates, *Modern Literature* seeks to introduce systematically to young Chinese the ideas and techniques of such writers as Lawrence, Kafka, Faulkner and Sartre", p. 83. See also, Ye Shitao, *Taiwan wenxue shigang* (An Outline History of Taiwanese Literature), (Kaohsiung: Wenxuejie zazhi), 1996, pp. 113-5.

¹¹² Yang Zhao, p. 18.

knowledge of postmodernism in visual arts.¹¹³ Li Ang touches many areas of postmodernism with her concentration on community identity and local history, which represent a clear rejection of the modernist ideas of Universality. However, one can hardly find any references to the word “postmodernism” or to the key terminology of postmodernism in her work.

Some commentators are puzzled by the degree of Li Ang’s familiarity with postmodernism. On the one hand, it appears that she is familiar with quite a few key concepts and practices of postmodernism. On the other hand, there are very obvious discrepancies between Li Ang’s style and the deeper contents of her story. The style quite often appears to be an application of postmodernism. However, the contents do not meet the qualification of postmodernism. Therefore, the relations between her work and postmodernism are ambiguous and controversial. Perhaps the best way to describe her views is to take the metaphor of a kite tied to the ground. She sees the world as a chaotic and fragmented arena in which nothing is solid or substantial but is mitigated by the anchor of community.

¹¹³ Li Ang received her Master of Arts in Theater from the University of Oregon in 1977. It is very likely that she had been exposed to the various concepts of postmodernism, especially in the field of visual arts.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

From the brief analysis provided here, postmodernism seems to be a movement suffused with contradictions and indeterminacy. Li Ang's attempts to promote a clear sense of Taiwanese history may be considered contentious with many aspects of postmodernism. However, her examples of political and socio-economic forces which work to produce their own inscrutable version of history show her familiarity with and acceptance of the postmodern idea that an objective history is possible to construct. From these roots she has also shown her familiarity with simulacrum versus representation, and the creation of things which embody their own meaning and exist solely for that purpose. Through the literary images of her characters, Li Ang has presented us with a world that has no absolutes and no sense of identity that can be fully trusted or counted on. Here she opens the door to the concept fragmentation.

Beyond circumstances experienced by her characters, Li Ang has demonstrated some familiarity and use of postmodern concepts in the structure of her writing. Her using collage and collapse and disruptive narrative unsettles the reader and gives her characters disjointed appearance. These are prime aspects of postmodernism. However, Li Ang seems reluctant to fully sacrifice linear narrative simply to fulfill a purist view of postmodern literature. The underlying basis of her work still follows a discernable path and can be understood by most readers.

This does not disqualify her work as postmodern, but simply places her work in a category of ideals which acknowledge that a completely fragmented narrative will eventually defeat itself, particularly in regard to portraying and exemplifying a strong

sense of community and history. As Li Ang further matures as a writer and commentator on social issues, it will be interesting to see if she begins to further embrace the concepts of postmodernism. This would allow the shape and form of the literary style suffused with fragmented narrative and simulated imagery to engender their own meaning beyond the political and social messages contained within them.

Bibliography

1 Works Cited in English

Anderson, Benedict Imagined Communities Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism London: Verso, 1991

Altman, Janet Gurkin Epistolarity Approaches to a Form Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1982

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds The Empire Writes Back Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures London and New York: Routledge, 1989

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds The Post-colonial Studies Reader London and New York: Routledge, 1995

Auerbach, Erich Mimesis The Representation of Reality in Western Literature Trans. Willard R. Trask. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974

Barker, Francis, ed Postmodernism and the Re-reading of Modernity New York: Manchester University Press, 1992

Battaglia, Debora, ed Rhetorics of Self-Making Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995

- Baudelaire, Charles Selected Writing on Art and Artists London Methuen, 1981
- Baudrillard, Jean “Simulacra and Simulation” in his Simulations Trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton and Philip Beitchman New York Seimiotext(e), 1983
- Baudrillard, Jean Jean Baudrillard, Selected Writings Ed. Mark Poster Cambridge Polity, 1988
- Baudrillard, Jean Baudrillard Live Selected Interviews Ed. Mike Gane London Routledge, 1993
- Baudrillard, Jean “The Order of Simulacra” in his Symbolic Exchange and Death Trans. Iain Hamilton Grant London Sage, 1993 pp. 50-86
- Bauman, Zygmunt Postmodernity and its Discontents New York New York University Press, 1997
- Bhabha, Homi The Location of Culture London and New York Routledge, 1994
- Benhabib, Seyla, Judith Butler, Drucilla Cornell, and Nancy Fraser Feminist Contentions: a Philosophical Exchange New York Routledge, 1995
- Boyne, Roy, and Rattansi Ali, eds Postmodernism and Society Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire Macmillan, 1990

- Butler, Judith Bodies That Matter on the Discursive Limits of "Sex" New York Routledge, 1993
- Butler, Judith Gender Trouble Feminism and the Subversion of Identity New York Routledge, 1990
- Campbell, Elizabeth "Re-visions, Re-flections, Re-creations: Epistolarity in Novels by Contemporary Women" Twentieth-Century Literature 41 3 (Fall 1995) 332-47
- Carver, Ann C., and Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang, eds. Bamboo Shoots after the Rain: Contemporary Stories by Women Writers of Taiwan New York Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1990
- Chang, Sung-sheng Yvonne "Three Generations of Taiwan's Contemporary Women Writers: a Critical Introduction" Bamboo Shoots after the Rain: Contemporary Stories by Women Writers of Taiwan Eds Ann C Carver and Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang New York Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1990 xv-xxv
- Chang, Sung-sheng Yvonne Modernism and the Nativist Resistance: Contemporary Chinese Fiction From Taiwan Durham Duke University Press, 1993
- Chen, H Lucy "Literary Formosa" China Quarterly Vol 15 (1963), pp 75-85
- Cohen, George "Rev of The Butcher's Wife, by Li Ang" Booklist, (Oct 1986), p 334

Cox, Shelley "Rev. of The Butcher's Wife, by Li Ang" Library Journal
(Dec 1986), p 138

Dreyfus, L Hubert, and Paul Rainbow Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism
and Hermeneutics. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983

Eagleton, Terry Literary Theory: an Introduction. Minneapolis: The
University of Minnesota Press, 1996

Eagleton, Terry The Illusions of Postmodernism. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996

Falck, Colin Myth, Truth, and Literature: Towards a True Postmodernism.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989

Faurot, Jeannette L., ed Chinese Fiction From Taiwan: Critical Perspectives.
Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980

Foucault, Michel Power/Knowledge. New York: Vintage Books, 1972

Foucault, Michel The Foucault Reader. New York: Vintage Books, 1984

Foucault, Michel The History of Sexuality, Volumes 1, 2, and 3. Trans
Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage Books, 1990

Foucault, Michel Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1995.

Freud, Sigmund Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality. Trans. James Strachey. New York: Basic Books, 1975.

Frisby, David Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer, and Benjamin. Oxford: Polity, 1985.

Furman, Nelly "The Politics of Language: Beyond the Gender Principle?" Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism. Eds. Gayle Greene and Coppalia Kahn. London and New York: Routledge, 1985. 59-79.

Galik, Marian "Interliterary and Intraliterary Aspects of the Study of Post-1918 Chinese Literature." Worlds Apart: Recent Chinese Writing and its Audiences. Ed. Howard Goldblatt. New York: M E Sharpe, Inc., 1990. 231-245.

Goldblatt, Howard, ed. Worlds Apart: Recent Chinese Writing and its Audiences. New York: M E Sharpe, Inc., 1990.

Goldsmith, Elizabeth C., ed. Writing the Female Voice: Essays on Epistolary Literature. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1989.

Greene, Gayle and Coppalia Kahn, eds. Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism. London and New York: Routledge, 1985.

Harasym, Sarah, ed. The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues. London and New York: Routledge, 1990.

Harvey, David The Condition of Postmodernity an Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change Cambridge, Mass Blackwell Publishers Inc , 1990

Hassan, Ihab The Right Promethean Fire Imagination, Science, and Cultural Change Urbana University of Illinois, 1980

Hassan, Ihab The Postmodern Turn Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture Columbus The Ohio State University Press, 1987

Hassan, Ihab Theory, Culture and Society New York Oxford University Press, 1985

Hegel, Robert E "The Search for Identity in Fiction from Taiwan" Expressions of Self in Chinese Literature Eds Robert Hegel E and Richard C Hessney New York Columbia University Press, 1985 342-360

Helmut, Martin "A New Proximity Chinese Literature in the People's Republic and on Taiwan" Worlds Apart. Recent Chinese Writing and its Audiences Ed Howard Goldblatt New York M E Sharpe, 1990 29-43

Jameson, Fredric The Ideologies of Theory Essays 1971-1986 Minneapolis University of Minnesota Press, 1988

Jameson, Fredric Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism Durham Duke University Press, 1993

JanMohamed, Abdul R. "The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature." "Race" Writing and Difference. Ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986. 78-106.

Jasper, David, ed. Postmodernism, Literature and the Future of Theology. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993.

Jauss, Hans Robert. Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics. Trans. Michael Shaw. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982.

Johnson, Barbara. "The Frame of Reference: Poe, Lacan, Derrida." The Purlomed Poe: Lacan, Derrida, and Psychoanalytic Reading. Eds. John P. Muller and William J. Richardson. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988.

Kamuf, Peggy, ed. A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds. New York: Columbia University of New York Press, 1991.

Kao, C. Hsin-sheng, ed. Nativism Overseas: Contemporary Chinese Women Writers. New York: State University of New York Press, 1993.

Kaplan, Morton, and Robert Kloss. The Unspoken Motive: a Guide to Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism. New York: Free Press, 1973.

Kern, Stephen. The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983.

Klinkowitz, Jerome Rosenberg, Barthes, Hassan The Postmodern Habit of Thought Athens University of Georgia Press, 1988.

Landry, Donna, and Gerald Maclean, eds The Spivak Reader New York Routledge, 1996.

Lee, Leo Ou-fan "‘Modernism’ and ‘Romanticism’ in Taiwan Literature" Chinese Fiction from Taiwan Critical Perspective Eds Jeannette L. Faurot and C T Hsia Bloomington Indiana University Press, 1980 6-30

Liu, Joyce C H "From Loo Port to Taipei: The World of Women in Lee Ang's Works" Fu Jen Studies 19 (1986) 65-88.

Liu, Kai-ling "To Whom is the Letter Sent?--a subversive Chinese Love Letter" Fiction and Drama 10 (1998) 55-69.

Loomba, Ania Colonialism/Postcolonialism London Routledge, 1998.

Lyotard, Jean-Francois The Postmodern Condition a Report on Knowledge Trans Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi Minneapolis University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

Lyotard, Jean-Francois The Differend Phrases in Dispute Trans Georges Van Den Abbeele Manchester Manchester University Press, 1988.

Lyotard, Jean-Francois "The Sublime and the Avant Garde" The Lyotard Reader Ed Andrew Benjamin Oxford Basil Blackwell, 1989.

McGowan, John Postmodernism and its Critics. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991

McHale, Brian Postmodern Fiction. London: Methuen, 1987.

Mills, Sara Discourses of Difference: an Analysis of Women's Travel Writing And Colonialism. London and New York: Routledge, 1991

Nicholson, Linda J., ed. Feminism/Postmodernism. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Nicholson, Linda J. The Second Wave: a Reader in Feminist Theory. New York: Routledge, 1995

Ng, Sheng-yuen Daisy. "Li Ang's Experiments with the Epistolary Form." Modern Chinese Literature 3 1&2 (1987): 91-106.

O'Brian, Geoffrey. "Rev. of The Butcher's Wife, by Li Ang." Village Voice, (Apr. 1987), p. 52.

Perloff, Marjorie, ed. Postmodern Genres. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989.

Perng, Ching-hsi, and Chiu-kuei Wang, eds. Death in a Cornfield and other Stories from Contemporary Taiwan. Hong Kong and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

- Pfeil, Fred “Postmodernism as a ‘Structure Of Feeling’ ” Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture Eds Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg Urbana University of Illinois Press, 1988
- Pfeil, Fred Another Tale to Tell Politics and Narrative in Postmodern Culture London Verso, 1990
- Pratt, Mary Louise Imperial Eyes Travel Writing and Transculturation London and New York Routledge, 1992
- Rorty, Richard Objectivity, Relativity and Truth Philosophical Papers Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 1991
- Rorty, Richard Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature Oxford Blackwell, 1980
- Spivak, Gayatri “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism ” Critical Inquiry 12 1 (1985) 243-261
- Spivak, Gayatri “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture Eds Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg Urbana University of Illinois Press, 1988 271-313
- Taylor, Brandon Modernism, Post-modernism, Realism A Critical Perspective for Art Winchester Winchester School of Art Press, 1987
- Wang Der-wei David, “Xulun xing chouwen yu meixue zhengzhi” (Preface Sex, Scandals, and Aesthetics), Everyone Puts Their Incense Sticks in the Pei-kang Incense Burner, Taipei Maitian, 1997

Wang, Der-wei David "Translating Taiwan a Study of Four English Anthologies of Taiwan Fiction" Translating Chinese Literature Eds Eugene Eoyang and Yao-fu Lin Bloomington Indiana University Press, 1995 262-72.

Waugh, Patricia ed Postmodernism a Reader New York Routledge, 1992

Widmer, Ellen, and David Der-Wei Wang, eds From May Fourth to June Fourth Fiction and Film in Twentieth-Century China Cambridge, Mass Harvard Contemporary China Series, 1993

Zhang, Yingjing The City in Modern Chinese Literature and Film Configurations of Space, Time, and Gender Stanford Stanford University Press, 1996

VITA

Surname Lin

Given Name Rita Hsia-yi

Place of Birth Taipei, Taiwan

Educational Institutions Attended

University of Victoria	1996-2000
Camosun College	1995-1996
Fu-jen Catholic University	1993-1994

Degrees Awarded

B A (with Distinction)	University of Victoria	1998
------------------------	------------------------	------

Honours and Awards

Dean's Scholarship	1998
--------------------	------

The University of Victoria Jubilee Medal for Humanities	1998
---	------

Centre for Asia Pacific Initiatives Student Research Fellowship	1998
---	------

The Gregory Heitzmann Book Prize in Japanese Studies	1998
--	------

David F Strong Scholarship in Pacific and Asian Studies	1997
---	------

Publications

“A Soul Departed Before Its Time”, in *The Oriental Decameron*, by Feng Tai, translated for publication in *Renditions*, Fall 1998 issue, Chinese University of Hong Kong pp 124-127

“The Humiliation of the Dead”, in *The Oriental Decameron*, by Fu Lujian, translated for publication in *Renditions*, Fall 1998 issue, Chinese University of Hong Kong pp 127-131

“Ties of Friendship Solid as Mountains”, in *The Oriental Decameron*, by Xin Cheng, translated for publication in *Renditions*, Fall 1998 issue, Chinese University of Hong Kong pp 131-133

“An Earnest Search”, in *Youth Equation Narratives by Fifty Female Urban Youth from Beijing*, by Zhang Ping, translated for publication in *Renditions*, Fall 1998 issue, Chinese University of Hong Kong pp 149-153

PARTIAL COPYRIGHT LICENSE

I hereby grant the right to lend my thesis to users of the University of Victoria Library, and to make single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the library of any other university, or similar institution, on its behalf or for one of its users. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by me or a member of the University designated by me. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Title of Thesis:

“An Analysis of Postmodernism and Its Influence on Li Ang” An Investigation into the Intricacies of the Postmodern Condition through an Analysis of Li Ang’s Most Recent Work

Author



Rita Hsia-yi Lin

November 15, 2000

2. Li Ang's Works Cited (arranged by the dates of publication)

- 李昂。《混聲合唱》。台北：洪範，1975。
李昂。〈我的自畫像--美麗與哀愁〉。《群像》。台北：大漢，1976。
李昂。《殺夫》。台北：聯合報，1983。
李昂。〈女作家對社會的巨視與微觀〉。《中國論壇》16.4 (May 1983)：52-55。
李昂。《她們的眼淚》。台北：洪範，1984。
李昂。〈我的創作觀〉。《暗夜》。台北：時報，1985。
李昂。《花季》。台北：洪範，1985。
李昂。《一封未寄的情書》。台北：洪範，1986。
李昂。《愛情試驗》。台北：洪範，1988。
李昂。《年華》。台北：時報，1988。
李昂。《迷園》。台北：貿騰發賣股份有限公司，1991。
李昂。《北港香爐人人插》。台北：麥田，1997。

3. Works in Chinese Language (arranged by the pinyin system of authors' last name)

- 蔡英俊。〈女作家的兩種類型及其困境--試論李昂與廖輝英的小說〉。《文星》。110 (August 1987)：96-101。
蔡兆誠。〈香爐情色與言論自由〉。《中國時報》。18 (August 17 1997)。
陳翠蓮。《派系鬥爭與權謀政治--二二八悲劇的另一面相》。台北：時報，1995。
陳芳明。《台灣戰後史資料選--二二八事件專輯》。台北：自立晚報，1991。
傅偉勳編。《徘徊在現代和後現代之間--李歐梵口述，陳建華訪錄》。台北：正中出版社，1996。
岡崎郁子。《台灣文學--異端的系譜》。葉笛、鄭清文、涂翠花譯。台北：前衛，1996。
龔鵬程。《台灣文學在台灣》。台北：駱駝，1997。
古繼堂。〈在性描寫方面最受爭議的李昂〉。《台灣小說發展史》。台北：文史哲出版社，1989。390-400。
顧燕翎編。《女性主義的理論與流派》。台北：女書店，1996。
賀淑瑋。〈性、空間與身份--論李昂小說的政治美學〉。《台灣文藝》156 (August 1996)：35-49。
胡淑雯。〈誰怕香爐吃香火〉。《中國時報》。27 (August 2 1997)。
金沙寒。〈小論李昂〈假面〉〉。《文訊》18 (June 1985)：99-107。
李歐梵。《現代性的追求--李歐梵文化評論精選集》。台北：麥田，1996。

- 李喬、高天生編。《一九八六台灣小說選》。台北：前衛，1987。
- 李漢偉。《台灣小說的三種悲情》。台北：駱駝，1997。
- 李仕芬。〈至死不渝？--女作家的愛情神話〉。《聯合文學》14 4 (February 1998) 118-126。
- 李仕芬。〈北港香爐人人插的嘲弄與顛覆〉。《中國文化月刊》220 (August 1998) 74-78。
- 林芳玫。〈女性參政的反挫力〉。《聯合報》11 (August 5 1997)。
- 林芳玫。〈《迷園》解析 性別認同與國族認同的弔詭〉。《女性主義與中國文學》。鍾慧玲主編。台北：里仁，1997 (August 1997) 271-296。
- 林瑞明。《台灣文學的歷史考察》。台北：允晨文化，1996。
- 林雙不編。《台灣小說半世紀》。台北：前衛，1987。
- 林依潔。〈叛逆與救贖--李昂歸來的訊息〉。《她們的眼淚》。李昂著。台北：洪範，1984。203-228。
- 林瑩秋。〈從反對運動情色政治文化解讀「北港香爐」事件--「北港香爐」的周圍還有很多情色故事〉。《商業週刊》530 (August 1997) 66-7。
- 劉登翰。《台灣文學隔海觀--文學香火的傳承與變異》。台北：風雲時代出版社，1995。
- 廖炳惠。《回顧現代--後現代與後殖民論文集》。台北：麥田，1994。
- 平路。〈虛假的陽具？真實的刑台？〉。《中國時報》27 (August 18 1997)。
- 平路。〈女人的戰爭，三角的習題〉。《中國時報》27 (August 1 1997)。
- 彭瑞金編。《一九八三台灣小說選》。台北：前衛，1984。
- 彭瑞金。《台灣文學探索》。台北：前衛，1995。
- 孟樊。〈爐火燒不盡：李昂 vs 陳文茜〉。《明報月刊》383 (November 1997) 108。
- 南方朔。〈作家的墮落或超越〉。《中國時報》。27 (August 18 1997)。
- 歐陽子。《秋葉》。台北：晨鐘，1970。
- 歐陽子。《現代文學小說選集》。台北：爾雅，1986。
- 齊邦媛。〈閨怨之外：以實力論台灣女作家〉。《聯合文學》1 5 (March 1985) 6-19。
- 沈國屏、吳燕玲。〈北港香爐引發兩個女人的戰火〉。《新新聞》543 (August 1997) 40-3。

- 沈國屏。〈「北港香爐人人插」小說的片斷摘要--你覺得李昂在影射誰〉。《新新聞》543 (August 1997) 6。
- 宋澤萊編。《一九八五台灣小說選》。台北：前衛，1986。
- 施淑。〈文字迷宮--評李昂《花季》〉。《北港香爐人人插》。李昂著。台北：麥田，1997。221-234。
- 施淑青。《擺蕩的人》。台北：洪範，1965。
- 舒昊。〈作家的責任 兼談李昂小說中的這一代〉。《文藝》71 (May 1975) 48-53。
- 松浪信三郎。《存在主義》。梁祥美譯。台北：志文，1997。
- 唐文標編。《一九八四台灣小說選》。台北：前衛，1985。
- 王德威。《小說中國--晚清到當代的中文小說》。台北：麥田，1993。
- 王德威。〈性，醜聞，與美學政治--李昂的情慾小說〉。《北港香爐人人插》。李昂著。台北：麥田，1997。9-42。
- 王浩威。〈解剖「北港香爐人人插」--該來看看李昂的文學成績〉。《中國時報》。41 (September 25 1997)。
- 王岳川。《後現代主義文化研究》。台北：淑馨，1992。
- 吳燕玲等。〈北港香爐人人「評」〉。《新新聞》543 (August 1997) 44-6。
- 楊和倫、康依倫。〈綠洲監獄才是施明德的「北港香爐」〉。《新新聞》550 (September 1997) 23-5。
- 楊澤編。《從四〇年代到九〇年代》。台北：時報，1994。
- 楊照。〈「影射小說」在台灣〉。《新新聞》543 (August 1997) 47-65。
- 楊照。〈英雄主義與寫實主義的陷阱--小論李昂〉。《中國時報》27 (August 23 1997)。
- 葉石濤編。《一九八二台灣小說選》。台北：前衛，1983。
- 葉石濤。《台灣文學史綱》。高雄：文學界雜誌社，1993。
- 葉石濤。《展望台灣文學》。台北：九歌，1994。
- 葉石濤編。《一個台灣老朽作家的五〇年代》。台北：前衛，1995。
- 張京媛編。《後殖民理論與文化認同》。台北：麥田，1995。
- 張寶琴等編。《四十年來中國文學》。台北：聯合文學出版社，1994。
- 張誦聖。〈當地台灣文學與文化場域的變遷〉。《中外文學》24 5 (October 1995)

128-132。

張炎憲、胡慧玲、高淑媛，採訪記錄。《悲情車站二二八》。台北 自立晚報，1993。

張炎憲、胡慧玲、高淑媛，採訪記錄。《基隆雨港二二八》。台北 自立晚報，1994。

鄭明嫻編。《當代台灣政治文學論》。台北 時報，1994。

中國時報編輯。〈小說歸小說，真事歸真實--從「北港香爐」事件談起〉。《中國時報》
3 (August 16 1997)。

鍾慧玲編。《女性主義與中國文學》。台北 里仁，1997。

周蕾。《婦女與中國現代性--東西方之間閱讀記》。台北 麥田，1995。