

University of Alberta

The Subject-Formation of the Mainlanders in *Taipei People*

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Chinese Literature

Department of East Asian Studies

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Spring 2013

Edmonton, Alberta

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Abstract

Bai Xianyong's writing has two dimensions; one is "decline", and the other is "youth". Rooted in the fracture of historical trauma experience, "decline" refers to the last mainlanders. However, the theme of *Taipei People* is not limited to the decline of a class, but rather "after the ending"; that is, how to face historical burden and newly establish and control subjectivity. The "after the ending" is just before the 1970s, during which Taiwan's awakening of self-consciousness had begun. The rise of Taiwan's self-consciousness during the 1970s did not come into being overnight. The 1960s was a period full of struggle and anxiety before the birth of the subject consciousness. In *Taipei People*, Bai Xianyong uses different stories to offer a multiform examination of the phenomena of historical anxiety associated with mainlanders in Taiwan. This thesis argues that the anxiety is rooted in their identity as the "last mainlanders." During the transformative period of the 1960s and 1970s, these "Taipei people" solve the problem of how to face the historical trauma through compulsively "tailing" the past. In contrast to the context of "Youth Writing" in the 1960s, Bai Xianyong pushes readers to face their historical anxiety through writing its declining years.

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Introduction

Reminiscence, Nostalgia and Fatalism

On the flyleaf of *Taipei People* is an inscription by the author: “To the memory of my parents and the time of endless turmoil and anguish through which they lived.” He cites the poem “Raven Gown Alley” by Liu Yuxi:

By Vermilion Bird Bridge

the wild grass flowers;

Down Raven Gown Alley

the setting sun lingers.

Of old, swallows nested

in the halls of the Wangs and Hsiehs;

Now they fly into the homes

of commoners.

朱雀橋邊野草花，

烏衣巷口夕陽斜。

舊時王謝堂前燕，

飛入尋常百姓家。

The poem comes straight to the point: sadness touched by the changes of human life. Bai Xianyong’s personal experiences play a key role in *Taipei People*. As the son of the top brass Bai Chongxi, Bai Xianyong experienced great historical change in 1949. The vicissitudes of Bai’s family are at the center of the lyrical

narration. However, it will impede us to find the breadth and depth of *Taipei People* if we merely interpret it from the perspective of the author's personal experiences. It is only through taking the detour of Bai's individual distinctiveness and putting his personal literary experience into the broader historical context that can we discover the connotations of this story cycle. The historical sadness of life decline stems from, as Ouyang Zi points out:

The author's exclamation of national vicissitudes and tremendous social changes, the nostalgia of traditional Chinese culture that faces a crisis, but the fundamental one is the eternal melancholy of the limited life, the impossibility of being forever young and stopping the river of time. (2000: 195)

We can see that behind this historical sadness lurks a layer of anxiety, which is repressed by the excessively reminiscent mood. However, time lapse, national changes and personal fortunes are not resistible to individuals, by which the perspective of fatalism was extended. Ouyang Zi firmly believes that Bai Xianyong is "a negative fatalist":

He obviously doesn't trust that one's personal destiny is manipulated in his own hands. Reading *Taipei People*, we frequently meet the words of "evil", "curse", "horoscope crossed" and so on,...The granny Wu who was able to foretell the future and avert misfortune called Yin Xueyan "demon"...The above-mentioned examples, derived from either the dialogues of protagonists, or the consciousness of them, in no way representing the perspectives of Bai Xianyong....Bai Xianyong seems to deem that personal

“evil” which could never be got rid of is inherited from our ancestors,
destined once born. (2008: 27-28)

Influenced by the doctrines of “reminiscence”, “nostalgia” and “fatalism”, in
“The Death Awareness and Its Depth Analysis in Bai Xianyong’s Fictions”, Shi
Yilin further illustrates that an ancient Eastern mysterious fatalism runs
throughout *Taipei People*:

Bai Xianyong’s dense fatalism made most characters in his works have a
sense of powerlessness of life. The web of cause-effect that you can’t throw
off all your life further filled Bai’s works with tragic consciousness and
bitter struggle of life. (213-214)

Cao Ming straightforwardly expressed the opinion that

The figures in Bai Xianyong’s writings more or less carry on the negative
factors that everything is uncertain, life is like a dream; so that they either
were at the mercy of fate, or destroyed themselves because of being unable
to find a new way to move on with their life. There are few [characters] who
positively struggled with unfortunate fate; thereby his fictions are always
shrouded in fatalism. (34)

However, this thesis has discovered another feature of the characters, important
though weak. It is not easy to perceive the voice as it is drowned by the stronger
one that thunders, and anchors in details of these short stories. If it is not noticed,
the strong voice of being at the mercy of life will consequently become the only
feature of those figures in *Taipei People*. But if the latent voice is discovered, the
symbolic meaning of “Taipei People” will be more sophisticated than the

monolithic theme as mentioned above. This thesis asserts that the strong voice expresses the author's intention, or rather, the belief that everything in the world is uncertain, and life is like a dream. While the latent narration indicates the author's anxiety, doubt and deconstruction of such belief, by no means are the characters in *Taipei People* resigned; they resist through "compulsion to repeat", the only way to save them from the inevitable destiny of being the "last mainlanders".

Beyond such previous viewpoints as reminiscence, nostalgia and fatalism, David Wang far-sightedly emphasizes the layer of anxiety in Bai Xianyong's stories:

The reason why Bai Xianyong's "Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream" [遊園驚夢 Youyuan Jingmeng] is touching is not merely because of its mourning for an Era. Beyond the visible historical events, his stories are more likely to manifest the anxiety of his generation when confronting the time, especially the "modern", through his dramatic brushwork. (2004)

Therefore, this thesis further proposes that the anxiety of time not only stems from literary aesthetics, but even more from a sort of political unconscious of Taiwanese society as a whole. Historical anxiety is more penetrable than reminiscence and nostalgia when considering Bai Xianyong's writing mythology. Therefore, this study aims to examine the historical connotations of Bai's writing, from the perspective of historical anxiety.

***Taipei People* and Previous Studies**

Taipei People consists of fourteen short stories. The first story, “The Eternal Snow Beauty” [永遠的伊雪艷 Yongyuan de Yin Xueyan], was published by *Modern Literature* in 1965. Bai Xianyong successively published other stories in *Modern Literature*, in order: “A Touch of Green” [一把青 Yiba Qing] (1966), “Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream” [遊園驚夢 Youyuan Jingmeng] (1966), “New Year’s Eve” [歲除 Sui Chu] (1967), “The Dirge of Liang Fu” [梁父吟 Liangfu Yin] (1967), “The Last Night of Taipan Chin” [金大班的最後一夜 Jin Daban de Zuihou Yiye] (1968), “A Sea of Blood-red Azaleas” [那血一樣紅的杜鵑花 Na Xue Yiyang Hong de Dujuan Hua] (1969), “Ode to Bygone Days” [思舊賦 Sijiu Fu] (1969), “A Sky Full of Bright, Twinkling Stars” [滿天里亮晶晶的星星 Mantian li Liangjingjing de Xingxing] (1969), “Love’s Lone Flower” [孤戀花 Gu Lian Hua] (1970), “Glory’s by Blossom Bridge” [花橋榮記 Hua Qiao Rong Ji] (1970), “Winter Night” [冬夜 Dongye] (1970), “Autumn Reveries” [秋思 Qiu Si] (*China Times*, 1971). The final article, “State Funeral” [國葬 Guo Zang] came out in 1971, the same year *Taipei People* was compiled by Chen Zhong Press. This book has attracted wide public attention since its first publication, along with diverse critiques.

Re-examining the critiques of *Taipei People*, it is easy to see that many are akin to brief reviews of newspapers and periodicals, which are academically informal. Most scholars focus on the linguistic artistry and aesthetics of Bai Xianyong’s fictions. In general, critiques of *Taipei People* can be divided into two

categories. One category explores its literary style, rhetorical techniques, expression skills, narrative strategies, and aesthetic values. Amongst these, *Swallows Nested in the Halls of the Wangs and Hsiehs* [Wang xie tang qian de yanzi 王謝堂前的燕子] by Ouyang Zi is the representative work. Two dissertations have dealt with the theme of *Taipei People*: “The Fictive World of Bai Xianyong” [Bai Xianyong de xiaoshuo shijie 白先勇的小說世界] and “The Realistic Framework and The Thematic Awareness of ‘Glory’s Blossom Bridge’” [Hua qiao rong ji de xieshi goujia yu zhuti yisi 《花橋榮記》的寫實構架與主題意識]. The former initially promoted the view that “Bai Xianyong is quite a negative fatalist” (2008: 7-29); the latter presented the theme of “*jinfeixibi*” 今非昔比 (things aren’t what they used to be); “*shengsizhimi*” 生死之謎 (the riddle of life-and-death); and “*lingrouzhizheng*” 靈肉之爭 (the struggle between soul and flesh) (2008: 163-181). The last twelve articles only involved such rhetorical strategies as symbolization and imagery, and went no further systematically analyzing its deep-rooted themes. Hereafter the thematic or artistic exploration on *Taipei People*, generally speaking, carried forward the viewpoint of Ouyang Zi and further developed it through meticulous analysis. Some such examples include Ye Yinong’s “The Fascination of Red and White—An Analysis on the Colorific Images in ‘The Eternal Snow Beauty’ by Bai Xianyong” [Hong yu bai de meihuo—xilun Bai Xianyong yongyuan de Yi Xuyan zhong de secai yixiang 紅與白的魅惑——析論白先勇《永遠的伊雪艷》中的色彩意象]; Chang Huiwen’s “Study on the Artistic Techniques of *Taipei People* by Bai Xianyong”

[Bai Xianyong taibei ren chuanguo jifa yanxi 白先勇《台北人》創作技法研
析] (66-69); and Zhang Jingru's "The discord between ideals and reality: On the
Coping Strategies to Frustrations of 'Taipei People' in Bai Xianyong's writings"
[Lixiang yu Xianshi de chongtu: lun Bai Xianyong bixia taibei ren de cuozhe
yingdui zhi dao 理想與現實的衝突：論白先勇筆下「台北人」的挫折應對之
道] (122-145); but none of these addressed the thematic issues of *Taipei People*.

In fact, there has been a critic who has been investigating the integral theme
of *Taipei People* since the late 1960s. In 1969, Xia Zhiqing published
"Discussion on Bai Xianyong" [Bai Xianyong lun 白先勇論], reviewing the
sensation of history owing to the author's personal historical consciousness in
Bai's fictions. Xia initially made the proposition that *Taipei People* could be
seen as the history of the Republic of China. Yu Lihua is the first scholar to
concern herself with the female images in *Taipei People* and portray them in her
article "Female Images in Bai Xianyong's Writings" [Bai Xianyong bixia de
nüren 白先勇筆下的女人]. With the increasingly powerful influence of
feminism, Wu Aiping examined the female figures of *Taipei People* in "The
'Other' in the Patriarchal Society—Re-discussion of the Female Protagonists in
Taipei People" [Nanquan shehui de tazhe—ye tan taibei ren zhong de nüxing
xingxiang 男權社會的「他者」——也談《台北人》中的女性形象], and
concluded that, regardless of what kind of women they were, these protagonists
could not get rid of the situation of "the other" in which they were unequal to
men. Turning away from feminism to excavate the awareness of death in Bai's

fiction, Shi Yilin noticed a theme of ancient eastern mysterious fatalism running throughout *Taipei People* in her essay “The Death Awareness and Its Depth Analysis in Bai Xianyong’s fictions” [Bai Xianyong xiaoshuo zhong de siwang yishi ji qi shenceng fenxi 白先勇小說中的死亡意識及其深層分析] (212-214). Meanwhile, the influential motif of Taiwanese literature, nostalgia, led Japanese scholar Yamaguchi to compare *New Yorker* with *Taipei People* in “The Nostalgia in Bai Xianyong’s Fictions”, whose theme is that, unlike “the nostalgia for space” presented in *New Yorker*, *Taipei People* conveyed a sort of “nostalgia for time”. Lü Zhenghui’s “The Legend of *Taipei People*” [Taibei ren chuanguqi 《台北人》傳奇], on the contrary, examined *Taipei People* from the standpoint that the author’s “wrong sympathy shielded his authentic cognition of the protagonists [...] broke the balance of artistry, meanwhile, lost the most valuable essence of artistry” (96-101).

The Hidden Histories of *Taipei People*

Although these critics may be very perceptive, there has not yet been anyone who has taken the theoretical approach that I am hoping to use to interpret *Taipei People*. In an interview to explain the moral value systems he was trying to build in *Crystal Boys*, Bai Xianyong says, “Freud has a book called *Civilization and Its Discontents*; in this book he noted that civilization engendered after the sublimation of the long-term suppressed human instincts. It doesn’t mean that his doctrine influenced me, but [my fictions] verified his” (Liu 213). In fact,

Bai's cognitions of death instincts, repression and homosexuality as represented in *Crystal Boys* are all consistent with Freud's.

Many characters in *Taipei People*, such as Juan Juan in "Love's Lone Flower" (孤戀花) and Wang Xiong in "Ode to Bygone Days" (思舊賦), have the same experience of repeating their miserable memories. Bai explains that Juan Juan's desperate act marks the return of her original nature. He thinks that Juan Juan "returns to her original innocence after getting mad...she transcends the bounds of time and space, transcends the history, and surmounts her suffering" (Liu 199).

It makes sense to repeat pleasurable experiences, but nobody knows exactly why we would want to repeat miserable experiences. Freud uses a vague concept, the death instinct, to explain this impulse, but it can be perceived as a despairing attempt to recover or rewrite the past. In other words, we try once, we try again, and we try some more, always wishing that this time the ending will be different.

Here again, Bai's own understanding of repetitive behavior, a despairing attempt to recover or rewrite the past, coincides with Freud's understanding of such behavior as a restoration of an earlier stage of things. Although Freud's theory has attracted controversy, its interpretation of trauma, homosexuality, and abnormal sexuality provides significant references to understand Bai Xianyong and his fictions. Therefore, in this thesis, the framework based on "compulsion-to-repeat", which even the author perceived to be consistent with his own themes, is well reasoned.

In order to analyze *Taipei People* in a more theoretical way, I explore the subject of the historical anxiety of the last mainlanders in chapter one. My theorizations of the historical situation reveals that “the last” does not mean “the end of history”, but fragmented experience under historical trauma. Fractured experiences remain, spread throughout one’s memory, and become a deeply anxious and diffuse existence, thereby leading to the historical decadence of “the last”. In summation, it is the Taiwanese political unconscious of this class in the 1960s, with a core of anxiety over the “last existence” that Bai Xianyong’s writing has explored.

Chapter two continues to discuss the subject-formation within the historical situation. The characters in “Autumn Reveries” (秋思), “A Sky Full of Bright, Twinkling Stars” (滿天里亮晶晶的星星), “New Year’s Eve” (歲除), “The Dirge of Liang Fu” (梁父吟), and “The Eternal Snow Beauty” (永遠的伊雪艷) are all stubborn and unwilling to give up their once-glorious identities. Nevertheless, it is inevitable for these Taipei people to confront their historical burden and establish their subjectivity.

Here I refer to the conception of “compulsion to repeat” derived from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Freud proposed a special conception, analogous to Aristotle’s catharsis of tragedy in *Poetics*, closely related to literature in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. When studying the common “war neurosis” (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) after the First World War, he found that the patients frequently had recurring dreams of the disgusting and miserable scenes of the battlefield, which had caused their neurosis. In order to explain this

psychological phenomenon, he proposed a series of theories assuming that there did exist a behavior of “compulsion to repeat” beyond the pleasure principle.

According to Freud, these repetitions “are endeavoring to master the stimulus retrospectively, by developing the anxiety whose omission was the cause of the traumatic neurosis” (Freud 1961: 26). One of the functions of “the compulsion to repeat” is “developing the anxiety” (Freud 1961: 29). More importantly, “each fresh repetition seems to strengthen the mastery they are in search of” (Freud 1961: 29), which does not betray the pleasure principle but is for the sake of it. Amongst the compulsive behaviors on display is the sadism of the characters. In “Instincts and Their Vicissitudes”, Freud further demonstrates that sadism could be transformed into masochism by the subject through “identification of himself with the suffering object” (Freud 2008: 82). Auxiliary and necessarily, textual analysis of the fictional works “The Last Night of Taipan Chin” (金大班的最後一夜), “State Funeral” (國葬), “Winter Night” (冬夜), “Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream” (遊園驚夢), and “Love’s Lone Flower” (孤戀花), reveals that the protagonists in *Taipei People*, as the last mainlanders, were resisting through compulsive repetition.

Meanwhile, in nationalism studies, Stuart Hall de-essentializes the conception of identity. He advocates that questions of identity are questions of representation. Identities “are always questions about the invention, not simply the discovery of tradition” (Hall 5), and they are narratives that involve silencing something in order to allow something else to speak. Through excavating the self-construction process of the representative personages, the identity the

figures were inclined to approve is manifested. Re-examining “Winter Night” (冬夜), “New Year’s Eve” (歲除), “State Funeral”(國葬), “A Touch of Green” (一把青) and “Love’s Lone Flower” (孤戀花), I am inclined to assert that *Taipei People* seemingly constructed a homeland for Mainland groups in Taiwan, but in practice, simultaneously de-constructed the pattern of homeland.

A case study, youth and age, in the subject formations is examined in Chapter Three. The postmodernist theorist Matei Calinescu offers an effective approach to talk about the correlation between young and old in *Taipei People*. In *Five Faces of Modernity—Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism*, Calinescu asserts that decadence is not a structure but a direction or tendency—“progress is decadence, and decadence is progress” (Calinescu 155)—which makes it promising to justify that young and old in *Taipei People* are in an astonishingly homogeneous construction process. The analysis of texts indicates that the two superficially profound opposite extremes—young and old—are amazingly coherent. The declining years become the portrayal of the youth. It places the flabby and hard youth at the forefront of history. This process is by nature anxious, depressed, floundering and agonizing, which reflects on the sexual abnormality of some Taipei people. Therefore, the third portion of Chapter Three further examines how, in many cases, the abnormal sexualities are provoked or motivated by the temporary circumstances or the permanent institutions of society. *Taipei People* actually opens the prelude of historical narrative of “Young Taiwan” with its historical dimension of “decline”.

CHAPTER ONE

The Last Mainlanders: The Subjects of Historical Anxiety

First of all, the main subject of the historical anxiety is “Taipei people”. They felt anxious because of their identification as the “last mainlanders”. What Bai Xianyong describes in his fiction are the mainlanders who were forsaken and wandered to Taipei after experiencing the “Big River, Big Sea” in 1949. *Taipei People* describes the “appearance of living beings” on this significant historical occasion. Superficially, the characters cover various strata in Taipei: from the geriatric but forceful general Pu in “The Dirge of Liang Fu” (梁父吟) to the retired maid Aunt Shun’en in “Ode to Bygone Days” (思舊賦); from the upper-class Mrs. Dou in “Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream” (遊園驚夢) to the underworld ‘commander in chief’ in “Love’s Lone Flower” (孤戀花). The characters also include intellectuals such as Professor Yu in “Winter Night” (冬夜), merchants such as the proprietress in “Glory’s by Blossom Bridge” (花橋榮紀); servants such as Wang Xiong in “A Sea of Blood-red Azaleas” (那血一樣紅的杜鵑花); soldiers such as Lai Mingsheng in “New Year’s Eve” (歲除), socialites such as Yin Xueyan, and under-class dance hostesses such as Jin Daban. These “big” people, ordinary people and less-powerful people came from different provinces or cities of Mainland China (Shanghai, Nanjing, Sichuan, Hunan, Guilin, or Beiping.)

In “The Eternal Snow Beauty” (永遠的伊雪艷), Yin’s house becomes a gathering place for old friends and new acquaintances. These old friends talk of the glory days in a nostalgic mood in front of Yin Xueyan, “as if she were an eternal symbol of the Paramount days, a living witness to the luxuries of their Shanghai life” (Bai 10).

In “The Last Night of Taipan Chin” (金大班的最後一夜), Jin Daban quarrel with Manager Tong, and comfort herself through deprecating Nuits de Paris that can not compare with the Paramount on the Mainland:

What a cheap creep! Nuits de Paris, Nuits de Paris indeed! It may not sound polite, but even the john at the Paramount must have taken up more room than the Nuits de Paris dance floor! Why, with a mug like T’ung’s you couldn’t even have gotten a job scrubbing the toilets at the Paramount. (Bai 118)

好個沒見過世面的赤佬！做一個夜巴黎，右一個夜巴黎。說起來不好聽，百樂門里那間廁所只怕比夜巴黎的舞池寬敞些呢，童得懷那副臉嘴在百樂門掏糞坑未必有他的份。

Madame Qian, in “Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream” (遊園驚夢), see her *qipao* (旗袍) in the mirror, but somehow she always thinks “Taiwan materials coarse and flashy; they hurt your eyes, especially the silks. How could they compare with Mainland goods—so fine, so soft?” (Bai 323) When she is tasting the *huadiao* (花雕) wine, she always feels that “Taiwan hua-tiao was not

nearly as good as what you used to get on the mainland, not that smooth and mellow—it felt a little scratchy on your throat” (Bai 358).

The similarities between these characters are that they were all born in Mainland China, and followed the KMT’s retreat to the small island of Taiwan. Interestingly, we find that the Western calendar as well as the “*minguo*” 民国 (Republic of China) calendar rarely appear in *Taipei People* after re-examining the multiple timelines. Only the declining calendar, the lunar calendar, and the former *minguo* calendar, were faintly emitting historical signs, and witnessing the changing of life and death. Conversely, a new timeline Christmas emerged in *New Yorker* [Niuyue ke 纽约客], which declares the coming of modernism. Several important anniversaries, “*wusi*” 五四 (May Fourth), “*beifa qianxi shishi*” 北伐前夕誓师 (On the Eve of the Battle Oath for the Northern Expedition), “*xinhai geming*” 辛亥革命 (the Revolution of 1911), and “*tai'er zhuang zhanyi*” 台儿庄战役 (Tai'er Zhuang Campaign), run through the story cycle. Individual destiny, occasionally, is overwhelmed by the intricate history of the Republic of China.

These characters were youngsters when they left Mainland China; they became old people, if not middle-aged, after fifteen or twenty years in Taiwan. They all had an unforgettable “past”, by which their present lives were directly and profoundly influenced. The reason why “the last” is “the last” is that the past inevitably dissipates and cannot recur in the future. Therefore, it is reasonable to say that they exist as the “last mainlanders.”

At the same time, the term “last mainlanders” does not equal a simple regional identity, but contains more complicated history and class-consciousness, without which we cannot seek out the source of the anxiety. “The wandering Chinese” is Bai Xianyong’s name for that generation of Mainlanders who migrated to Taipei. This common fate of exile and wandering labels those characters in the same way: they are old souls, shadowed by a paradise lost. Everywhere, the Minguo calendar reminds readers of the loss and failure of the individual and history. The memory of the old Republic of China carries the glory of the past. It is the unbearable “fracture” and “ending” that comes after the glory days. Their glorious past burned to ashes, the individuals have lost themselves. Bai Xianyong became an aphasic child when going through the rain of bullets. Taipei, this temporary dwelling, has not yet gained Bai Xianyong’s emotional and psychological recognition. He even mentions:

Taipei is the most familiar place to me, truly familiar. You know, I grew up, and attended school here. However I don’t think Taipei is my home; Guilin is not either; none of them is. Maybe you don’t understand that I was particularly homesick in America. That is not a concrete “home”, a house, a place, or anywhere; but the memory of China within these places. (Lin 605)

Just as Chen Xiaoming said, “What Bai Xianyong wants to write is neither a kind of reminiscent memory, nor a representation of the former glory, but a vivid historical context within this memory” (34-35). The most prominent features of Bai Xianyong’s stories are his explorations of the class structure and vested interests beneath the two extremes of daily life and legendary career. The old

social structure was inundated with chaos when the KMT government fell back to Taiwan with its million-soldier army during the historical change in 1949. The oppressed, misrepresented class, in the context of a counter-attack on Mainland China, became the invisible internal view, which was buried in Taipei. It is the Taiwanese political unconscious of this class in the 1960s, with a core of being anxious about their “last existence,” that Bai Xianyong’s writing has excavated.

“The last” does not mean “the end of history” and “the last man” in the sense of Fukuyama, but the fragmentation of experience produced by historical trauma. “The last”, which is compelled to crack diachronically, is a shocking experience that breaks off from modern time and is hard to pacify. It is the unbearable heaviness of being that isolates the past, present, and future.

The Freudians tell us that the consequence of trauma is not the immediate response of the subjects, but a deferral of a hurt, a last and repeated recall and “stripping away”, which is created by the original scene that is unable to face (Freud 1953-73: 275). Traumatic experience is not an ultimate disaster but a lasting illness difficult to heal, which can constantly transcend history and space-time to twist the sufferer’s mood and cast a shadow over real life. This fractured experience remains within the sufferer’s memory and becomes a deeply anxious and diffuse existence, which leads to the historical decadence of “the last”.

What Bai Xianyong manifests first in *Taipei People* is the “fracture”. David Wang uses “the subsidence of time” to describe the fracture. Ouyang Zi has said that Bai Xianyong’s fictions has three themes, all of which point to the subsiding of a certain time in life caused by irreparable trauma, all the things that are not

what they used to be, the riddle of life and death and the struggle between soul and flesh. (1983:1-29) The so-called “subsidence” is just an irreparable and irreversible fracture.

Where is the central agent of the subsidence of time? To Bai Xianyong, the break of Kuomintang-Communist Cooperation is the moment at which the historical trauma emerged. This subsidence is an “absent presence” which is elaborately masked by rhetoric and narrative. However, the subsidence somehow seems to be fateful and inevitable, and lingers like a ghost as it is conversely presented in the form of “permanence”. The first sentence in the opening story, “The Eternal Snow Beauty” of *Taipei People*, “Yin Hsueh-yen somehow never seemed to age” (Bai 2), fully reveals the mythology of this class. “In the crowds she seemed a crystalline ice-spirit, her frosty charm a dangerous force” (Bai 6) and “looked like the Goddess of Mercy” (Bai 22).

From Shanghai’s Paramount Ballroom to her house, Yin Xueyan goes through one man after another, and there is even a rumor about her horoscope, “that it was dominated by an evil curse, that in it the White Tiger Star was ascendant, and that whoever came near her would lose at least his fortune, if not his life” (八字帶著重煞，犯了白虎，沾上的人，輕者家敗，重者人亡。) (Bai 4). But her woers and admirers do not stop pursuing her. Strangely enough, this well-publicized curse makes her doubly attractive to Shanghai’s fashionable men. Their wealth and leisure prompts them to adventure, to try their luck with this evil star. Yin Xueyan’s house appears to be a Shangri-la, which closes the door to historical vicissitudes. She stops the carnival for just one or two days

when her suitor dies. Yin's Mahjong game restarts on the night when people are mourning for Xu Tuzhuang, one of her admirers. The Mahjong game has become a classic symbol in *Taipei People*. It is a class satire as well as an infatuation. The endless Mahjong game, which seems like Charles Baudelaire's gambling, was capturing "the moments of eternity, and the eternity of moments". These Taipei people fill up the hollows of experience and escape the untouchable abyss of experience through gambling.

Hu Shi's "Mahjong" [Majiang 麻将] explains Mahjong as follows:

The Mahjong game is merely the patent of our "spiritual civilized" Chinese who do nothing, and do not cherish the time... It becomes so complicated, and ingenious that better throws dust in the eyes of the public. All the men and women, regardless of rich and poor, irrespective of day and night, of the land ruin their vigor and time on the hundred and thirty six [Mahjong] tiles.

(Hu 58)

What Bai Xianyong has pointed out is the common experience of this class. In fact, the historical trauma, by which an experience vacuum is created, is hidden by "normalcy" of these Taipei people. Thus, Yin Xueyan never seems to age, and her words inspire her guests with almost religious awe. In *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Benjamin views history through an allegorical lens:

Everything about history that, from the very beginning, has been untimely, sorrowful, unsuccessful, is expressed in a face—or rather in a death's head. And although such a thing lacks all 'symbolic' freedom of expression, all classical proportion, all humanity—nevertheless, this is the form in which

man's subjection to nature is most obvious and it significantly gives rise not only to the enigmatic question of the nature of human existence as such, but also of the biographical historicity of the individual. This is the heart of the allegorical way of seeing, of the baroque, secular explanation of history as the passion of the world...The greater the significance, the greater the subjection to death, because death digs most deeply the jagged line of demarcation between physical nature and significance. (Benjamin 166)

Here again, one is confronted with the unreadable enigma of history as incomprehensible wilderness, bereft of human interest and intention. The skull does not emit any aura: to the staring human gaze, the death's head stares back, unresponsive, vague and blank. At the Mahjong table, Yin Xueyan was watching these once-powerful men and once-beautiful women, some complacent and some despondent, some aging and some youthful, fighting each other with condescending sympathy.

The stories of Bai Xianyong can be portrayed in a similar manner. In the past, history loses its narrative lines. Day in and day out, there is a cycle of suffering, dehumanizing punishment and death. The worst consequence of historical trauma is the crumbling of the word of life. These Taipei people's "past history" cannot offer a clue through which the present is oriented and understood. These mainlanders cannot integrate into a group because they lack reliable ideology and social values maintaining their existence and identity. They feel overwhelmed and panicky.

Therefore, the author's elegy of "the last mainlanders" is based on huge psychological barriers—the crumbled history and the fragmented experience. The historical situation, the burden of the past experience, politics and culture, of the characters left them with a feeling of repressive decadence.

CHAPTER TWO

The Subject-Formation within the Historical Situation

2.1 “After the Ending”, “Before the Beginning”: Historical Origins of the Anxiety

“The last mainlanders” is not nostalgia for the historical period of transition. We can see it in a subtler dimension when we put it in the context of literary history. When discussing Taiwanese literature, we tend to concentrate on the time point of 1971, when communist China won representation in the United Nations and the ROC Government was deprived of its seat. The Taiwanese felt that they had been betrayed by the truth that the ROC government was the unique legitimate government authorizing the mainland in China, which they had believed for more than twenty years. Under the concussion of the shattered mythology, the Taiwanese realized that “Taiwan” does not equal to “China”; “Taiwan” is merely “Taiwan”, creating a sense of ‘native-ness’. Taiwanese de-emphasized “Chineseness”¹ by turning the horizon to the native to explore this “beauty island”. However, we have placed so much stress on the resplendence of the historical moment that the “Eve” of the moment is ignored. The 1970s marked the growing process of the new generation of Taiwanese. A more subtle historical narrative was constructed in the 1960s. The mainlanders who fled to Taiwan in 1949 gradually became “the last mainlanders” who were weighed

¹ “Chineseness” is a very complicated concept. Allen Chun elaborates (though a little exaggeratedly) on the concept of Chineseness, and I will not repeat his words here. “Chineseness” is generalized in this essay as any characteristic that is associated with Chinese people or identity. It can be something internal or external or even delusory. See “Fuck Chineseness: On the Ambiguities of Ethnicity as Culture as Identity.” *Boundary 2* 23.2 (1996): 111-138.

down by the historical burden and awaiting the problem of what course to follow. Were they to transcend the fracture of history to obtain survival and reinvent themselves? Beyond “exile” and “diaspora”, how could they hold their subjectivity? These questions are closely linked to the rise of Taiwanese consciousness. *Taipei People* precisely provides testimony of the secret history.

Here on, we must pay attention to the fact that Bai Xianyong could hardly propose Taiwanese consciousness. It was impossible for him to come up with a concept of Taiwanese consciousness in those days. What Bai Xianyong has done is present the proposition of “after the ending”, that is, how to face the past, the present and the future? How to face the huge fracture? How to face the rack and ruin of experience? How to face the nothingness of value? Further, is there a possibility of making up for historical trauma? Bai Xianyong has talked about these questions in *Taipei People*. How to face trauma, as it were, is the main theme of *Taipei People*. The question of how to tackle with historical trauma informed the subtle collective mind of Taiwanese during the important historical reforming period of the 1960s and 1970s.

2.2 Stubbornness and Resistance

Forced by the ghosts of historical trauma, the question of “how to face” shows a sharp philosophical overtone of existentialism. The characters in *Taipei People* are always stubborn and unwilling to give up.

In “Autumn Reveries” (秋思), the hundred or more chrysanthemum plants in Madame Hua’s garden in Taipei are all the famous variety Handful of Snows,

transplanted from the Mountain of Evening Glow, which is located in Nanjing. Mrs. Hua is stuck nursing the delicate chrysanthemums, and even tells the gardener to mulch them with chicken-feather ashes all spring long to help the dying flowers come back to life again. The story ends with Madame Hua's mutter, "Go and trim those chrysanthemums a little; quite a few have already wilted" (你去把那些菊花修剪一下，有好些已經殘掉了。) (Bai 308).

Likewise, this sort of insistence on dignity is presented in "A Sky Full of Bright, Twinkling Stars" (滿天里亮晶晶的星星):

The Guru dragged his feet along heavily, with great dignity, step by step; eventually he made it to the stone balustrade at the end of the terrace. He stood there by himself against the balustrade, his white, unruly head lifted up high, his tall, gaunt silhouette jagged and erect, ignoring the whispers and snickers buzzing around him. (Bai 324)

他一個人，獨自佇立著，靠在欄杆上，仰起了那顆白髮蓬蓬的頭，他那高大削瘦的身影，十分嶙峋，十分傲岸，矗立在那裡，對於周圍掀起的一陣竊竊私語及嗤笑，他都裝作不聞不問似的。

For Zhu Yan (the Guru), as challenging as reality can be, everything is not over yet.

In the story "New Year's Eve" (歲除), the old soldier Lai Mingsheng keeps his dignity and refuses to bow to reality. In the past, he was most proud of the "Tai'er Zhuang Campaign" (台儿庄战役). His force was guarding the garrison, taking responsibility of defending against the assaults of Japanese troops. Greatly outnumbered in terms of weaponry and soldiers, the Chinese army could

use only their bodies to fight the Japanese enemy. The war was horrifying and caused heavy casualties. Lai constructs himself as a hero who shoulders the responsibility of rescuing China from national crisis.

Lai Mingsheng constantly stresses his suffering for the sake of the nation-state. On the right side of Lai's chest is the vivid imprint of a blood-red scar, shiny, round, the size of a rice bowl. He sees this mark rather than a "Blue Sky and White Sun" (青天白日). With this on him, Lai thinks that he is qualified to give others a lecture on the "Tai'er Zhuang Campaign". Lai Mingsheng adds some sacredness to his suffering through the scar, and mentally acquires a sense of sublimity. The light of reminiscence is used to illuminate his aging life: "You really think too little of me. Although I am getting somewhat advanced in years, this frame of mine is still made of iron" (你也太小看你大哥了。你大哥雖然上了點年紀，這副架子依舊是鐵打的呢。)(Bai 106).

"The Dirge of Liang Fu" (梁父吟) tells a story of an old general recalling his military life after attending his sworn brother's funeral. Interestingly, the author avoids writing the memorial service in the funeral, but represents the Revolution of 1911's resplendence. Unexpectedly, General Pu's little grandson is able to recite the poem "The Song of Liang-chou":

A fine grape wine in the cup of jade
that gleams in the night!
I long to drink—the horsemen charge,
spurred onward by the lute.
Should I lie drunk on the battlefield,

sir, do not mock me.

Since ancient times, how many have returned

of those who went off to fight? (Bai 220)

葡萄美酒夜光杯，

欲飲琵琶馬上催。

醉臥沙場君莫笑，

古來征戰幾人回。

He expresses his wish to return via his grandson's mouth. Meanwhile, his sworn brother expresses a last wish before death: in the future when they fight their way back to the homeland, no matter what, his body must be returned to his birthplace. To General Pu, everything in the present seems like a battle that is still going on. He tells the Commissioner who is playing Chinese chess with him, when one of Commissioner Lei's corners is besieged and completely cut off, "Why don't you keep today's latest position in mind. The next time you come, we'll finish what's left of the game" (那麼你把今天的譜子記住。改日你來，我們再收拾這盤殘局。) (Bai 222), General Pu is too reluctant to admit that the tide was unlikely to turn back; he is escaping the cruel fact that the KMT had lost the Chinese civil war and had retreated to Taiwan. Therefore, General Pu never seems to be willing to end the game. He is still awaiting new chances to turn the battle around, waiting to fight back for the Mainland. The story concludes with Bai Xianyong's idiomatic metaphor of plants:

The orchids had already finished blooming; the three or four withered blossoms that still hung on the dried, brown stalks gave out a faint wisp of

cold fragrance. Only their sword-blade leaves still stood green and shining. General Pu stood in contemplation before the sparse orchids for a long time, his hands clasped behind his back, his full silvery beard unfurling in the wind. Reminiscences of long-forgotten episodes from the Year of Hsin Hai half a century ago came floating back to him again... (Bai 226)

蘭花已經盛開過了，一些枯褐的莖梗上，只剩下三五朵殘苞在幽幽的發著一絲冷香。可是那些葉子確一條條的發得十分蒼碧。樸公立在那幾盆蕭疏的蘭花面前，背著手出了半天的神，他胸前那掛豐盛的銀髯給風吹了起來。他又想起了半個世紀以前，辛亥年間，一些早已淡忘了的佚事來……

“After the ending”, General Pu sturdily faces the brutal reality as the withered blossoms with sword-blade leaves surround him.

The stream of cars before Yin Xueyan’s house is always uninterrupted, as if it has a rare attractive force to those guests. Even if a person’s title had been abolished for many years, the way Yin Xueyan greets her guests sounds like a royal summons, and is so warm and cheerful that it restores one’s feeling of superiority. So every rebellious guest continues to pay a visit to the “Evil Star” to re-experience his glories. Some of them firmly say, “I just don’t believe my fate should be worse than anybody else’s!” (我就不信我的命又要比別人差些!) (Bai 14). On more than half of the days in the year, Yin Xueyan’s house is bustling with Mahjong activity. At the Mahjong table, Yin Xueyan watches these once-mighty men and once-beautiful women, some complacent and some despondent, some aging and some still youthful, fighting each other to the death.

Walter Benjamin, who undertook an in-depth study on gambling, defined it as “a stock diversion of the bourgeoisie” (178-79); for gamblers:

It is obvious that the gambler is out to win. Yet one will not want to call his desire to win and make money a wish in the strict sense of the word. He may be inwardly motivated by greed or by some sinister determination. At any rate, his frame of mind is such that he cannot make much use of experience. A wish, however, is a kind of experience. “What one wishes for in one’s youth, one has in abundance in old age,” said Goethe. The earlier in life one makes a wish, the greater one’s chances that it will be fulfilled. The further a wish reaches out in time, the greater the hopes for its fulfillment ... The narcotic effect that is involved here is specified as to time, like the malady that it is supposed to alleviate. Time is the material into which the phantasmagoria of gambling has been woven. (198)

“At the Mahjong table, where one’s fate was all too often beyond one’s control” (Bai 18), customers all draw on Yin’s auspicious predictions to restore their confidence and reinforce their will to fight. Whenever Mr. Wu begins to lose, he blinks his festering eyes and cries out in an invocatory voice to Yin Xueyan to seek opportunities to tip the balance: “The earlier in life one makes a wish, the greater one’s chances that it will be fulfilled” (Benjamin 198). Mr. Wu does have extraordinary luck at the very evening of Xu Tuzhuang’s funeral: he gets “Four Happiness at the Gate” (四喜臨門), North, South, East, West, plus a “Self-drawn Final Pair” (自摸雙), which is a rare hand that bodes ill for the winner. Interestingly, Mr. Wu stubbornly believes that “since I’ve been down on my luck

all my life, winning this hand may well change my fortune for the better. Come, Baby, look at this hand—isn't it lovely? Isn't it fun?" (我倒霉了一輩子，和了這副怪牌，從此否極泰來。阿冏、阿冏，儂看看這副牌可愛不可愛？有趣不有趣？) (Bai 32).

This happens to coincide with the rebellious Zhu Qing, in "A Touch of Green", who completely disregards her lover's death, cannot wait to set up the Mahjong table after dinner and laughs, "Today I'll have everything going for me again" (今天我的風頭又要來了。) (Bai 76): "The further a wish reaches out in time, the greater the hopes for its fulfillment" (Benjamin 198). Zhu Qing's luck helps her again on the Mahjong table: by the time the eighth round begins, she has vanquished all three others; the chips in front of her have piled up to her nose.

The premise of being "unwilling to end" is that the "Taipei people" all know the past is already gone. Exactly as Benjamin indicates, experience can be established only through connecting the present with the past. For these "Taipei people", the past has become history, and stubbornness has become the unique means of temporarily disgusting their anxiety.

2.3 How to Face Historical Trauma?

No matter how unwilling the Taipei people are, they cannot avoid facing historical trauma in the process of establishing subjectivity. First, the question of how to face historical trauma does not have an active and self-conscious orientation, but is passive and forced. In the oscillation created by trauma, the

“past” occurs in the “present” again and again, which forces the “Taipei people” to confront that past. Superficially, the question of “how to face” is tinged with fatalism in such a hopeless situation. Just as with the evacuation of this class in 1949, facing the trauma is inevitable since there was absolutely no way to retreat on the occasion of backing to the Pacific Ocean. Such scenes repeatedly occur in Bai Xianyong’s stories. The “past”, the “absent presence”, represses the existence of “present”. As Homi Bhabha points out in *The Location of Culture*, remembering is not a quiet recall of previous experiences, but a forceful tool to understand the trauma of the present:

Remembering is never a quiet act of introspection or retrospection. It is a painful remembering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present. (Bhabha 63)

How can the “Taipei people” make up for their historical trauma and control their subjectivity in a new environment? These “Taipei people” solve the problem of “how to face” by “tailing” the past. In “The Last Night of Taipan Chin” (金大班的最後一夜), Jin Daban’s attitudes shift from anger to sympathy in pity of Zhu Feng’s bitter suffering, which recalls her memory of falling in love with the young undergraduate Ru Yue. Thus, she generously gives Zhu Feng a big one-and-a-half-carat diamond for supporting her giving birth to an illegitimate child. Further, Jin Daban thinks she should be rewarded with the virginity of a shy man like Ru Yue, whom she had seen several years ago as a bashful young man watching the dance floor. For this reason, “She embraced the young man, her cheek close to his ear, and counted softly and tenderly, ‘One two,

three—One two, three—’ ” (說完她便把那個年輕的男人摟進了懷裡，面頰貼近了他的耳朵，輕輕的，柔柔的數著：一二三——一二三——) (Bai 144).

The “first night” of two young men, living in different ages, overlaps at the end of the story. Only her possession of Ru Yue’s virginity is a construction. She believes that all the contamination and abuse she had taken from other men’s bodies in the past has been washed away. At that moment, she constructs herself; she becomes a “heroine” to herself at the moment of possessing Ru Yue. Her present anxiety is resolved through tailing, or continuing the warm memory of the past.

A similar scene of paying tribute overlaps traces of past experiences in “State Funeral” (國葬). When Qin Yifang hears the commanding officer’s order “Sa-lute!”, he recalls the year the Anti-Japanese war was won and they had moved back to Nanjing, the former capital. The General had gone to the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum on Purple Mountain to pay tribute to the Father of the Country. It was on that day, “he was the one who served as captain of the General’s aides, he with his riding boots, white gloves, a wide belt buckled so tight it held his back straight...” (那天他充當長官的侍衛長穿了馬靴，戴著白手套，寬皮帶把腰桿子紮得挺挺的……) (Bai 444). In front of the Mausoleum the military guard stand in formation, waiting. As they approach, a thunderous chorus burst out: “Sa—lute—”. This continuation of the past seems to redeem Qin Yifang’s soul and momentarily resolve his anxiety.

In “Winter Night” (冬夜), Yu Qinlei’s lost notebook symbolizes the lost past. The ambitions of “May Fourth” in his early life had been abandoned for many years due to the pressures of a weary life. But he regards the notebooks, which contain his own inspired reflections on the English poet, written more than twenty years before when he was teaching at Peking University, as a great treasure that contains warm memories of his past. No one dared touch any of the mountainous pile of books in his living room after a sheaf of notes left between the pages of Byron’s *Collected Poems* were lost. In his woebegone dormitory, he hastens to lock the windows and gives the books that had become wet with rain a quick wipe with his sleeves. He protects this “memory” elaborately from the invasion of reality.

The scene in which Junyan appeared reverses time and space. Wu Zhuguo sighs, “I would have thought your father had been restored to his youth! Ch’in-lei, you looked just like Chün-yen here when you were at Peida” (我一定還以為你父親返老還童了呢！崑磊，你在北大的時候，就是這個樣子！) (Bai 414). Wu Zhuguo deeply deplores the disillusionment of his academic ideal. He lives desperately in a foreign land. He feels he is not as successful as Prof. Yu believes, became known all over the world and vindicated them in the scholarly world. Only by talking about China’s past glories could he comfort his lost soul:

“I don’t have to feel ashamed at all when I tell my students: In its time, the T’ang Dynasty built the most powerful and culturally the most splendid empire in the world—just like that, I’ve been thundering forth these pronouncements all these years abroad. Sometimes I can’t help laughing to

myself and feeling, when I talk to these foreigners, like one of the Emperor Hsuan-tsung's white-haired court ladies who never ceased boasting about the glories of T'ien-pao Era—" (Bai 404-406)

「我可以毫不汗顏的對我的外國學生說：『李唐王朝，造就了當時世界上最強盛，文化最燦爛的大帝國。』——就是這樣，我在外國喊了幾十年，有時也不禁好笑，覺得自己真是像唐玄宗的白髮宮女，拼命在向外國人吹噓天寶遺事了——」

And right on cue, Junyan asks him about a fellowship to study physics in America: "Chün-yen's youthful face gleamed with envy" (俊彥年輕的臉上，現出一副驚羨的神情) (Bai 414), when he knew there were more scholarships available in the sciences than in the humanities. His father sighs, "We all went out for 'Mr. Science' in our day, didn't we. And now 'Mr. Science' has practically snatched the food from our mouths" (從前我們不是拼命提倡「賽先生」嗎？現在「賽先生」差點把我們的飯碗都搶跑了。) (Bai 414).

Yu Junyan is exactly the continuation of the unfulfilled dreams of his fathers, the scientific ideal of the May Fourth Movement.

Similarly, at the end of the story, the past occurs in the present once again. Through the wooden slats, Yu sees that the light is still on in his son's room, and Junyan is sitting at his window. Professor Yu is somewhat taken aback; for an instant he thinks he is looking at himself as a young man. At a time, "he could vaguely hear the sounds of mah-jong tiles being shuffled and the women laughing and chattering next door" (他聽到隔壁隱約傳來一陣陣洗牌的聲音

及女人的笑語。)(Bai 421). This touching lyrical reminiscence of Ya Xin is the warm memory that redeems his soul.

Bai Xianyong uses a more exquisite writing technique to weave a phantom interlacing of past and present in “Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream” (遊園驚夢). The author’s mastery of stream-of-consciousness writing draws support on the appearance of *kunqu* 昆曲 (Kun Opera). “Toast each other” in the Tow villa, the scene Madame Qian sees makes her feel as if she was at the performance in Nanjing several years ago. The stories of the past interweave with the present ones; everything is obscure, yet looks real. Time and space crisscross, intertwining of Taipei and Mainland China, as reality and memory flow in Madame Qian’s mind, producing the implication of doomed uncertainty.

The story of “resurrection” in *The Peony Pavilion* (牡丹亭) implies ghostly memory running into the present and once again highlights the foreordination in desperation:

The glorious purples
the enchanting reds
once everywhere in bloom
Alas that these must yield
to broken wells
and crumbling walls
原來姍紫嫣紅開遍
似這般都付與斷井頽垣

(Bai 368)

This class portrayed in *Taipei People* feels oppressed by the fracture of historical experience, which seems destined, unavoidable and ghostly wandering. In the latter part of “Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream” (遊園驚夢), a similar overlap of past and present occurs. Mrs. Qian imagines the banquet Gui Zhixiang held for her in Taipei as the one she did for Gui Zhixiang in those Nanjing days. The lady wearing a red satin *qipao* (旗袍), Madame Dou’s sister Jiang Biyue, becomes a counterpart to Mrs. Qian’s little sister Yue Yuehong who was in a flashing red and gold satin *qipao*. These two beautiful women, living in different ages, coincidentally say the same words to Mrs. Qian, “sister, you won’t do me the honor” (姊姊到底不賞妹子的臉。) (Bai 358). General Dou’s aide-de-camp, Mr. Cheng, at the Dou villa in Taipei looks like Mr. Zheng, the Colonel of General Qian; when proposing a toast they both say, “it’s my turn now, Madame” (這下輪到我了，夫人。) (Bai 360). At this moment, Biyue is like Yuehong; they are both doing the same thing, seducing their elder sister’s men. Through an inebriated haze, Mrs. Qian sees the desire conveyed between Colonel Cheng and Jiang Biyue:

Chiang Pi-yueh’s red *qipao* flared up like a globe of flame, catching Colonel Ch’eng’s body in a flash... the two faces confronting her at once, showing their even white teeth, smiling towards her, the two faces so red they shone slowly closing in on each other, merging, showing their white teeth, smiling towards her. (Bai 366)

蔣碧月身上那襲紅旗袍如同一團火焰，一下子明晃晃的燒到程參謀的身上……兩張臉都向著他，一起咧著整齊的白牙，朝她笑著，兩張紅得發油光得面靨逐漸地靠攏起來，湊在一塊兒，咧著白牙，朝她笑著。

The same *huadiao* (花雕) wine, the similar love triangle between sisters and the gentle Colonel, and the voice of Madame Qian, interlace to link the two generations. Herein, the analogous experience, Madame Qian's loving Colonel Zheng was tempted by Yue Yuehong at the banquet on the Mainland, now re-emerges in her eyes in Taipei. It is endeavoring to justify the predestined prophecy—"It's always your own younger sister, your flesh and blood, who'll do you in!" (是親妹子才專揀自己的姊姊往腳下踹呢。)(Bai 358).

"Love's Lone Flower" (孤戀花) associates Wu Bao with Juan Juan. These two narratives that ought to be parallel constantly interlace, linking two protagonists who live in different ages and have never met, and making it difficult for the reader to distinguish between the reality and the illusion.

In a manner of speaking, Wu Bao is the predecessor of Juan Juan, and Juan Juan is the reincarnation of Wu Bao. Wu Bao was kidnapped from the Yangchow countryside by a white slaver. When she was sold to the Myriad Springs Pavilion, she was only fourteen. On the night of her initiation, "the dude who copped her cherry was an army man, strong as an ox" (Bai 244). Finally, she died on Hua San's opium couch with her mouth stuffed with opium scum. Juan Juan is also extraordinarily unfortunate: her mother is a madwoman, and her father deflowered her when she was just fifteen. After descending to the life of a winehouse girl, Juan is frequently violated and raped by drinkers due to her

submissive personality. A under-world chief, Ke Laoxiong, forces himself upon her. Every time after she served Ke Laoxiong, “she was all bruises, her arms were full of needle marks” (Bai 250). Juan falls victim to Ke’s sexual perversion. The abuses Juan suffered are atrocious; yet, she somehow never shows an intention to escape the evil hands of Ke Laoxiong. Oddly enough, despite Ke’s everlasting torment, Juan even seems casually unconcerned with her mistreatment:

Ever since she got mixed up with Yama, it’s as if her soul was snatched away. Whenever he came to the Mayflower to pick her up she’d go along meekly; every time she came back she was all bruises, her arms full of needle marks. (Bai 250)

自從她讓柯老熊纏上以後，魂魄都好像遭他攝走了一般；他到五月花去找她，她便乖乖的讓他帶出去，一去回來，全身便是七癆五傷，兩雙膀子上盡扎著針孔子。

As “the Ghost Festival” approaches, past and present completely overlap in Yun Fang’s mind, which also shows the counterpart relationship between Juan Juan and Wu Bao. Juan Juan is Wu Bao, and Wu Bao reincarnates into Juan Juan for revenge on Laoxiong because Laoxiong maltreated Juan Juan when she was alive. Wu Bao was being maltreated in the same manner before her suicide: “Hua grabs her by the hair and keeps twisting her head around as if he’s turning a handmill; the copper opium pipe in his hand slashing down at her, sending out a shower of gold sparks” (華三揪住她得頭，像推磨似的在打轉子，手上一

根煙槍劈下去，打得金光亂竄), which confirms Baby Five's swearing: "I'll turn into a ghost and hunt him down!" (我要變鬼去找尋她!) (Bai 252).

We have every reason to believe that Juan Juan is a masochistic character who experiences the sensations of pain that trench upon sexual excitations and produce pleasurable feelings. Freud indicates that the task of the higher strata of the mental apparatus (compulsion to repeat) is to bind the instinctual excitation reaching the primary process: "These dreams are endeavoring to master the stimulus retrospectively, by developing the anxiety whose omission was the cause of the traumatic neurosis" (Freud 1961: 26). Obviously, one of the functions of the "compulsion to repeat" is "developing the anxiety". More importantly, "each fresh repetition seems to strengthen the mastery they are in search of" (Freud 1961: 29), which does not betray the pleasure principle, but is for the sake of it:

A failure to effect this binding would provoke a disturbance analogous to traumatic neurosis; and only after the binding has been accomplished would it be possible for the dominance of the pleasure principle (and of its modification, the reality principle) to proceed unhindered. Till then the other task of mental apparatus, the task of mastering or binding excitations would have precedence—not, indeed, in opposition to the pleasure principle, but independently of it and to some extent in disregard of it. (Freud 1961: 29)

It is clear that the greater part of what is re-experienced under the compulsion to repeat must cause the ego unpleasure, since it brings to light

activities of repressed instinctual impulses. That, however, is unpleasure of a kind we have already considered and does not contradict the pleasure principle: unpleasure for one system and simultaneously satisfaction for the other. (Freud 1961: 14)

Furthermore, all instincts tend towards to the restoration of an earlier stage of things (Freud 1961: 31). In other words, these dreams, or compulsive behaviors, are endeavoring to re-construct the disgusting situations in order to allow new chances to make up for old failures. Juan is re-experiencing the masochism so as to seek a chance to take revenge on Ke Laoxiong. In contrast to her previously being taken away meekly by Ke Laoxiong, this time her temper makes an astonishing reversal:

[Juan] raised a black flatiron in her two hands and hammered it down on Yama's skull. Thump, thump, thump, one blow after another [...] Yama's skull split open, his grayish brains, like beancurd dregs, splashed all over the floor... (Bai 254)

雙手舉著一隻黑鐵熨斗，向著柯老雄得頭顱，猛錘下去，咚、咚、咚，一下接一下……柯老雄得天靈蓋給敲開了，豆腐渣似灰白的腦漿撒得一地……

Viewed from the angle of Yun Fang, her love for Juan Juan is a continuation of her love for Wu Bao. Yun Fang and Wu Bao even make a wish together: “in days to come, when we saved up enough money, we'd buy a house, live together, and make it our home” (日後攢夠了錢，我們買一棟房子住在一塊，成一個家。) (Bai 242). When Yun Fang and Juan Juan are called out to the banquet

performance, they would sing the song from the opera *Lovers Reincarnate* together. Their wish of living together is verified by the emergence of Juan Juan—“Baby Five died early, so that wish of ours never came true. I spent half my life knocking around until I met Dainty; only then did the idea of building a home come back to me” (五寶死的早，我們那樁心願一直沒能實現，漂泊了半輩子，碰到娟娟，我才又起了成家的年頭。) (Bai 242). Again, to Yun Fang, the problem of how to face historical trauma is solved by “tailing” the past.

In “A Sky Full of Bright, Twinkling Stars” (滿天里亮晶晶的星星), despite Jiang Qing’s death, the Guru sometimes still unconsciously speaks to others as if he is talking with Jiang:

“Why didn’t he listen to me? ‘Son,’ I said, ‘you’re a genius; whatever you do, don’t ruin yourself.’ The first time I laid eyes on her I knew Lin P’ing was bad luck! Imagine, the little witch was thrown clear, not a hair on her was injured; and later on she even became a top star at the Supreme Studios. And him? He was burned to a lump of charcoal sitting in the sports car I gave him. They wanted me to claim the body. I refused to acknowledge it. That heap of charred flesh was not my Prince Charming—” (Bai 318-320)

「為甚麼不聽我的話？『孩子，』我說：「你是個天才，千萬不要糟蹋了。」第一眼我就知道林萍是個不祥之物！那個小妖婦拋到地上連頭髮也沒有傷一根，而且她還變成了天一大紅星哩！他呢？他坐在我送給他的那部跑車里燒成了一塊黑炭。他們要我去收屍，我拒絕，我拒絕去認領。那堆焦肉不是我的白馬公子——」

The reminiscence of Jiang Qing leads Zhu Yan to act indecently towards a schoolboy, which gets him arrested and sent to prison. Jiang Qing runs after the boy and asks him if he wants to be a movie star. Jiang hugs the boy and mumbles, “Luoyang Bridge! My Prince Charming!” which recalls the day “Luoyang Bridge” premiered at the Grand Theater in Shanghai. It is Jiang Qing who is wearing a robe of sea-green silk astride a white horse. Everybody calls Jiang Qing “Zhu Yan’s Prince Charming”. Essentially, what the Guru longs for is the shadow of the past, and his unremitting attempts of reviving his dead artistic life upon Jiang Qing is his own subjection and fictitious thinking all the while. In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault points out that

A real subjection is born mechanically from a fictitious relation [...]. He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribed in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. (202-203)

This can be traced back to the day “Luoyang Bridge” premiers. The moment Jiang Qing appears on the stage, the Guru hears himself cries out in his heart, “Chu Yen lives again! Chu Yen lives again!” (朱燄復活了！朱燄復活了！) (Bai 318). The Guru is not infatuated with Jiang Qing himself, but simply wants to recall the dignity of a great star he used to have. Xia Zhiqing states that there is an important archetype present in Bai’s works, and the author is infatuated with the “Adonis” (Xia 1-3). This archetype has homosexual orientations, so

Adonis cannot understand amorous feelings, and is not patient with the female's tangle. In the world of Adonis, there is no separation between love and death, or each of his pursuers, who, self-proclaimed as the Venus, in fact is a boar with fangs after unmasking the truth. Obviously distinct from Adonis on the surface, but similar in nature, are the dwarf-type older men. They develop the habit of being surrounded by women because of a congenital deficiency, or because they clung to their mothers, grandmothers, and maidservants in childhood. Maybe they are gay, but they never undergo typical homosexual experiences; they want to enjoy lifelong security from the opposite sex, as they were hugged by their mothers or grandmothers in their early days.

Xia Zhiqing's insight coincides with modern psychoanalysis. These two archetypes, "Narcissism" and "the Oedipus Complex", are two sides of the same coin for gay people. According to Freud's description of "Sexual Object of Inverts":

It is true that psycho-analysis has not yet produced a complete explanation of the origin of inversion; nevertheless, it has discovered the psychological mechanism of its development, and has made essential contributions to the statement of the problems involved. In all the cases we have examined we have established the fact that the future inverts, in the earliest years of their childhood, pass through a phase of very intense but shortlived fixation to a woman (usually their mother), and that, after leaving this behind, they identify themselves with a woman and take themselves as their sexual object. That is to say, they proceed from a narcissistic basis, and look for a young

man who resembles themselves and whom they may love as their mother loved them. (Freud 2000: 10-11)

In other words, the Adonis that frequently appears in Bai Xianyong's stories precisely reflects the inverse sexual objects of homosexuals. It would be justifiable to assert that the Guru's love for Jiang Qing proceeds from a narcissistic basis. The Guru was a well-known star in Shanghai in the 1930s, but had been at his peak only a short time; once the talkies came into Taiwan, he was eclipsed because, as a Southerner, he could not speak Mandarin. The Guru inscribes himself into the subjection relation, in which he simultaneously plays both roles. When he rememorizes Jiang Qing's death, being burned to a lump of charcoal in a sports car, he becomes unintelligible and says, "burnt to death—we both got burnt to death—" (燒死了——我們都燒死了——) (Bai 320). His dream of being a movie star is gone as Jiang Qing, who in the Guru's mind is born to be a great star, dies. Meanwhile, what happens after the Guru gives up the acts of compulsively remembering Jiang Qing? Unfortunately, it is impossible for him to rid himself of his obedience to compulsion; he finally finds another channel, imagining a schoolboy as Jiang Qing, to continue to perform his ceremony:

Patients suffering from compulsive acts are remarkably devoid of anxiety...

If we try to hinder them in the performance of their compulsive acts... or if they themselves dare to give up one of their ceremonials, they are seized with terrible anxiety that again exacts obedience to the compulsion. We

understand that the compulsive act had veiled anxiety and had been performed only to avoid it. (Freud 1920: 349)

Those acts of continuation are self-compulsive and are performed in order to avoid anxiety. How to connect the past, present and future under the fractured experience is the ultimate proposition of Bai Xianyong's writings. Recalling their past is the unique spiritual ceremony for the "Taipei people". Exactly as Rao Zi and Fei Yong advocated in *Out of Mainland—On the Marginal Modern Chinese Literature*, the writing of an author who has been living abroad is a "spiritual activity" (Rao and Fei 25), indicating that the soul of the author has returned home from a journey of discovering the spiritual homeland. The author feels that he belongs neither to the place where he was born nor to the place in which he is now living.

Bai Xianyong is also seeking his spiritual homeland, but he does not make a comparison between Taipei and America. The image of America in *Taipei People* is obscure and hidden within the historical narratives. Bai is seeking a spiritual habitat between Taipei, the realistic home, and the Mainland, the idealistic home.

2.4 The Formation of Identity

Seeking a spiritual habitat between Taipei and the Mainland, the author's attitude on identity is not unequivocal. Bai's attitude is straightforwardly reflected in the sigh of the boss lady operating the "Glory's by Blossom Bridge" in Taipei:

And it was no wonder. Back home there were green hills everywhere—your eyes’ll grow brighter just by looking at them—and blue waters—you wash in them and your complexion turns smooth and fair. Those days I never dreamed I’d ever live in a dump like Taipei—a typhoon one year, an earthquake the next. It doesn’t matter what kind of beauty you are, this weather is enough to ruin *anybody’s* looks. (Bai 266)

也難怪，我們那裏，到處青的山，綠的水，人的眼睛也看亮了，皮膚也洗得細白了。幾時見過臺北這種地方？今年颱風，明年地震，任你是個大美人胎子，也經不起這些風雨得折磨哪！

Although obscure, the problem of identity in “Winter Night” can be explored by tracing Yu Qinlei’s retelling of the May Fourth Movement. The sophisticated historical facts in Prof. Wu’s words have been filtered. He mentions nothing about the profoundly influential New Culture Movement, but only talks about the anti-Japanese, patriotic student movement to avoid admitting to the deficiencies of the movement: “The leader of those Chinese students who beat up the envoy to Japan is standing right here in front of you” (下監那群學生當中領頭打駐日公使的，便是在下。) (Bai 398). Prof. Wu speaks profoundly to his American students who sit up and listen to him with awe. However, no matter how humiliated he feels, being a deserter abroad for so many years, Prof. Wu can not even stand up to speak for the May Fourth Movement, and chooses to keep silent when he hears the paper entitled “A Re-evaluation of the May Fourth Movement,” which re-evaluates May Fourth as follows: “these young Chinese, ignorant of the current conditions in China, blindly worshipped

Western culture and had a superstitious belief in Western democracy and science” (這些青年，昧于中國國情，盲目崇拜西方文化，迷信西方民主科學，造成了中國思想界空前的大混亂。) (Bai 404).

According to Stuart Hall:

The questions of identity are always questions about representation. They are always questions about the invention, not simply the discovery of tradition. They are always exercises in selective memory and they almost always involve the silencing of something in order to allow something else to speak.

Silencing as well as remembering, identity is always a question of producing in the future an account of the past, that is to say it is always about narrative, the stories [in] which cultures tell themselves about who they are and where they came from. (Hall 5)

Therefore, avoiding talking about the deficiency of “the May Fourth Movement” precisely justifies Mr. Wu’s self-identification with the Mainland.

The question of identity in “New Year’s Eve” is also hinted in Lai Mingsheng’s narrations. Lai constructs his glorious history in drunkenness, completing the image-building process of the giant, which covers up many historical facts. Facing a national crisis, Lai is sent to the front by his Battalion Commander. However, to Commander Li, he merely hopes to revenge his being “cutting the boots” (Bai 96) on Lai using Japanese gunfire. Lai Mingsheng is not really willing to volunteer for the army, and to dedicate himself to the county. So he still holds a grudge against Commander Li even after time has passed. He

thinks that his commander has become suspicious and intentionally sends him “to an early death at Tai’er Zhuang”, which contradicts his claim that “a soldier’s solemn duty is of course to serve the country” (軍人的天職當然是盡忠報國) (Bai 92). The scar on his chest is caused neither by charging into battle nor as the result of furious fighting, but by a sporadic cannonball from the Japanese enemy. Lai’s horse is hit in the belly by a shell, and Lai is “blown off” his horse, then the shot blows off half his chest. In the process of sober and moderate narration, the resplendent history constructed by Lai Mingsheng is subverted, and the heroic halo with which he endows himself is eliminated.

Lai Mingsheng’s insane self-image construction profoundly affects his manners in the “present”. Presuming on his seniority, he rudely orders the young student whose cup is still half full to drink up. He even points his finger at the cadet as if “he had been insulted”. Lai is deemed to be lonely since he is out of place; he has always lived in the “past”, but the younger generation who were born in Taiwan are living in the “present” world, without the “past”. Not being able to resonate with the youngsters, he seems to be a spiritual outsider. “Brother Lai looks so funny when he’s high” (賴大哥喝了酒的樣子真好玩) (Bai 108); the young even laugh at his speech. Regardless of Lai’s feelings, the youngsters are excited to watch the Kongming Lanterns when he is groping for some heroic words to describe the “Tai’er Zhuang Campaign”.

In spite of the endless bitter waiting years, Wang Mengyang in “The Dirge of Liang Fu” (梁父吟) and Lai Mingsheng in “New Year’s Eve” (歲除) are still yearning for the realization of the mythology of recovering the Mainland.

Dignified as a General, Wang Mengyang requests his bosom friend Mr. Pu, no matter what, to send his body to his birthplace after his death. Inebriation uncovers what is concealed in Lai's heart: "When we fight our way back to Szechwan one day, your Brother Lai may not be good for much else, but he can still carry eight or ten rice pots for sure!" (日後打回四川，你大哥別的不行了，十個八個飯鍋頭總還是抬得動的。) (Bai 108). Here, the author does not shy away from expressing that it is Sichuan, essentially the hometown, hiding in the hearts of these characters.

As for the young generation who are de-essentializing the historical identity in "State Funeral" (國葬), the author condemns them through Qin Yifang's words. The story portrays the young faces in brand-new uniforms, through the eyes of Qin. Each of the new generals is sleek and clean-cut, wearing full-dress uniforms emblazoned with splendid decorations; but there is no one Qin recognizes. When the funeral begins, the presiding general pronounces the eulogy with a sonorous Zhejiang-accented voice, reading in rhythmic cadence. The representatives come forward one after another to pay their respects, from the headquarters of the three armed forces, the government ministers, and the legislature. But from the perspective of Qin Yifang, these young men are a group without individuality, who are faceless and stereotypical. Lacking the real sorrowful emotion for a funeral, the officers come to lament as a matter of routine. Meanwhile, knowing nothing about how to take care of the General, not one newcomer is around to help the General the night he suffers a heart attack. So the General cannot even leave one last word behind. When Qin Yifang stares

at those young aids, anger flares up inside him like a fire, and he declares accusingly, “The General was as good as murdered by these bastards!” (長官簡直是讓這些小野種害了的!) (Bai 426).

Nevertheless, it is those figures who treat the “past” with unqualified approbation, fully identify with the Mainlanders and fully survive the recurrence of the “past” in the “present” that eventually become deadlocked, as if it is no future at all to choose the identity of a Mainlander, as the author believes. Such consciousness does not begin with *Taipei People*, but has been apparently manifested in Bai Xianyong’s early stories, especially the finale of *Youth*. In this story, an old painter attempts to retrieve his lost youth through the process of portraying a naked young boy. The boy nevertheless escapes, whilst the old painter himself dies on the rocks while tightly holding a dead and bleached crab in the sunshine, thus allegorically announcing the destiny of the afterwards numerous “Taipei people”.

Therefore, the spiritual and mental pursuit merely justifies the delusion of returning home, the well-designed journey of rescue converted into a shelterless escape: “They would find no escape on the road of death, if they could not face the reality, and insisted on adhering to the past” (Mei 2001). Supposing from the contrary situation, that is, completely silencing their memory, cutting themselves off from the “past” and living in the “present”, the author yet shows an ambivalent gesture between approval and criticism to those characters.

On the one hand, he portrays Wang Jiaji in “The Dirge of Liang Fu” (梁父吟) tinged with reproach from General Pu’s words, “To see the way the younger

generation behaves nowadays, sometimes it chills one's heart" (看見晚輩們行事，有時卻不由得不叫人寒心呢。)(Bai 216). But on the other hand, he expresses his agreements with the younger generation going abroad to study: "Well, that's the trend all right" (這也是大勢所趨。)(Bai 414).

Similarly, at first glance, the author constantly shows snide attitudes to the characters who present their trauma as extreme normalcy. In "A Touch of Green" (一把青), Mrs. Zhou has been married four times. Zhou's present husband and the three before him are in the same squadron. Zhu Qing bewilderedly sighs, "But how can they still talk and laugh like that?" (可是她們還有說有笑的?)(Bai 52). She is just skin and bones, her face ashen, when she hears that her husband, an airman, crashed and was dashed into pieces. Ironically, the same destiny—"When one died the next took over, and so on, one by one" (一個死託一個，這麼輪下來的)(Bai 52)—befell her. Zhu flees the War to Taipei, and several years later, her new lover Mr. Gu, an airman, crashes over the Taoyuan Air base. Unexpectedly, she invites her *shiniang*² to taste her hot-pepper beancurd and asks her, "You think it's spicy enough?" (可夠味了沒有?)(Bai 76). Completely disregarding Gu's death, she even sets up the Mahjong table after dinner and laughs, "Today I'll have everything going for me again" (今天我的風頭又要來了。)(Bai 76).

But the problem of identity becomes more intricate, and the author's identification shifts from the Mainland to Taiwan in "Love's Lone Flower" (孤

² Literally "teacher-mother," *shiniang* is a term of affection and esteem used by students to address the wife of their teacher.

戀花). The story ends up with Juan Juan's revenge; she raises a black flatiron in her hands and hammers it down on Yama's skull. The questions come down to the affective identification of the patriarchal figure, Ke Laoxiong, and matriarchal figure, Yun Fang. The reason Yun Fang represents the mother figure even despite the lack of blood relationship between Fang and Juan is that Yun Fang once caught Wu Bao to her bosom, and gave her a couple of kisses. From then on she "grew to feel a maternal pity and tenderness for her" (便對她生出了一股母性的疼憐來。) (Bai 242).

Speaking of the authority of the patriarchal and matriarchal society, Erich Fromm links patriarchy with the principle of order, obedience and hierarchy. In *The Forgotten Language*, Fromm modifies the term of the "Oedipus Complex" coined by Freud, and formulates a new hypothesis, namely, that the myth of the "Oedipus Complex" "can be understood as a symbol not of the incestuous love between mother and son but of the rebellion of the son against the authority of the father in the patriarchal family" (Fromm 202). Two principles, for which Creon and Antigone stand, are characterized as the patriarchal against the matriarchal principle:

The matriarchal principle is that of blood relationship as the fundamental and indestructible tie, of the equality of all men, of the respect for human life and of love. The patriarchal principle is that the ties between man and wife, between ruler and ruled, take precedence over ties of blood. It is the principle of order and authority, of obedience and hierarchy. (Fromm 222)

However, the author tells us little about Juan's real mother, except that she is a madwoman, and Juan's father puts an iron chain around her neck and locks her in the pigsty. They do have a blood relationship, but when Juan tries to stroke her mother's face with her hand, she grabs Juan in one swoop, and her teeth are already sinking into Juan's throat before Juan can make a sound.

Here the identity crisis is complicated. But one thing is certain: Juan Juan's final revolt against the principle of obedience is nothing more than a rite of rebellion against the values of the fathers. Yun Fang, her mother without blood relationship, carries the principle of respect for human life and of love. Bai Xianyong does emphasize the identity crisis of the first generation after the Chinese Civil War:

The growing post-war generation is facing a world where the dawn hasn't come and is full of variability.... We don't take any responsibility for the historical merits and demerits of the Mainland, because we were still in childhood. But we must undertake the tragedy of the failures on the Mainland together with our fathers and brothers. In fact, the old world built by our fathers' generation in the Mainland is already crumbled. We could no longer identify with the old world that has disappeared and only exists in memory and legend. On the one hand, we got growth under the protection of our fathers and brothers; on the other hand, we have to get rid of the values originated from the old world imposed by our fathers and brothers in order to achieve independence of personality and thought. (Bai 2004: 275-276)

Yun Fang's narration implies Ke Laoxiong's identity of a mainlander. The boss at the Mayflower is impressed with her because Yun has plenty of experience and knows how to handle people. So the boss sends her specially "to take care of honorable gents from the Mainland and sing a few arias to keep them happy" (去伺候那些從大陸來的老爺們) (Bai 233). Juan Juan is mistreated by her father: "He grabbed me and began knocking my head so hard against the headboard my head swam and I blacked out" (他揪起我的頭在床上磕了幾下，磕得我昏昏沈沈的，什麼事都不知道了。) (Bai 244). Juan, "the only one who was not born on the Mainland among the main characters in *Taipei People*" (Ouyang 2000: 158), eventually kills Ke Laoxiong in the same manner. So we have reason to believe that the old values of the Mainland built by the fathers, represented by Ke Lao Xiong, have been stifled. Bai's attitude seems to change from identification with the Mainland to be inclined to identify with Taiwan. But what is the destiny of the child, who eventually kills her father and achieves spiritual independence? Juan Juan's case never goes to court because "she had gone completely insane"(她完全瘋掉了) (Bai 254). Apparently, the author makes no acknowledgement of an unequivocal gesture; *Taipei People* both constructs and deconstructs the idea of homeland for Mainland groups in Taiwan.

Thus, on the surface, *Taipei People* seems to portray the looks of all flesh in the society of Taipei from the perspective of sociology. Indeed, what Bai Xianyong wants to present is a specific historical and class-consciousness, which can be captured in the troublous social images. It also proves from the opposite direction that this class exists as the subject of society and history through

presenting a breakdown of social order. The core of *Taipei People* is that the existence of these “Taipei people” who are out-comers as well as indigenous citizens depends on whether they could bear the “exiled” history and the bitterness of being “out of family-country”. Facing a historical fracture, this class has had to think about the problem of “continuation” for almost twenty years.

In the revolutionary context of Socialized China, the bourgeoisie has been devastated in Mainland China since the Civil War in 1949. “Taipei people”, the class Bai Xianyong belongs to, led a wandering life in the flames of war. He questions whether this class only existed nominally on the island of the Pacific Rim, in the mansions, dancing halls and alleys after the diaspora; whether this class has the ability to control their subjectivity, the national and family fate; whether they could continue their former glorious life under historical fracture.

Therefore, Bai Xianyong’s proposition is not confined to the decline of a class, but further discusses how to confront their historical burden and establish subjectivity. Taiwanese historical experience depends on the sense of being “after the ending”, which is just “before” the 1970s, during which the awakening of Taiwanese self-consciousness began.

CHAPTER THREE

Youth and Age: A Case Study in Subject Formations

Bai Xianyong labels the generation of Mainlanders who migrated to Taipei the “last mainlanders, due to their fragmented experiences of historical trauma producing deeply anxious and diffuse existences, leading to the historical decadence of “the last”. Bai Xianyong’s writing explores the Taiwanese political unconscious of this class, with a core of anxiety over the “last existence” brought on by the psychological barriers of crumbled history and fragmented experience, in the 1960s.

How to face trauma is the main theme of *Taipei People*. This question has also informed the collective mind of the Taiwanese during the important historical reforming period of the 1960s and 1970s. During the process of subject-formation, the main characters, Madame Hua in “Autumn Reveries” (秋思), the Guru in “A Sky Full of Bright, Twinkling Stars” (滿天里亮晶晶的星星), the old soldier Lai Mingsheng in “New Year’s Eve” (歲除), General Pu in “The Dirge of Liang Fu” (梁父吟), the once-mighty men and once-beautiful women in “The Eternal Snow Beauty” (永遠的伊雪艷), and Zhu Qing in “A Touch of Green” (一把青), are all stubborn and unwilling to give up their once-glorious identities. They resist through “compulsion to repeat”, the only way to save themselves from the despicable destiny of being the “last mainlanders”. This process is by nature anxious, depressed, floundering and agonizing.

Unlike in his previous stories, Bai turns his attention to old age in *Taipei People*. Beyond the visible historical events, his stories further manifest the anxiety of his generation when confronting the times, especially the “modern”, through his dramatic work. The anxiety of time can be examined by his writings about young and old people.

In *Taipei People*, old age can be defined, not as the physical senium, but as a unique crisis with an intensity that is unknown before; as time is running short, it becomes very important to do something. From the perspective of the rapidly approaching end of time, every single instance can be decisive. So Bai Xianyong’s view of old age shows an acute and anxious sensation of urgency. The consciousness of old age brings about internal restlessness, anxiety, and a need to make vigorous efforts to turn the situation around. Bai uses the declining years as the backdrop to his portrayal of youth. Declining years places the flabby and hard youth in the forefront of history. Therefore, the issue of youth and age is an appropriate case study with which to demonstrate how subject formation actually plays itself out.

3.1 Youth Writing

On the one hand, Bai Xianyong’s writing concerns the cruelty of youth; on the other hand, it keeps a watchful eye on the decline of age. The result is a surprisingly well-blended mix of young and old.

“The Lonesome Seventeen” (寂寞的十七歲) is a magnum opus of Bai Xianyong’s “Youth Writing”. Living in the boundless anguish and depression of

youth, the protagonist Yang Yunfeng is lonely, wordless, has no companions and no bosom friends at school. He wanders hopelessly through the streets of the city like a ghost and suffers from sadness and autism. Therefore, when he is bored at home, he takes his headphones and talks to himself for hours. Sometimes he writes to himself, and he feels his “heart begin to beat as if he receives a love letter” (就如同得到情書一般，心都跳了起來) (Bai 2004: 70) when he receives the empty envelope. Yang becomes the center of public outcry and mockery after his intimate contact with Tang Aili. He gives up his college entrance examination and spends these pivotal two days of his lifetime in a park. Or rather, what he lost is far more than the two days; it is his prospects and aspiration for his puberty, life and future. Finally, Yang says:

Mum is coming, she is certain to force me to attend my graduation ceremony, she will weep in front of me again. I have made up my mind that I will never go to Nanguang any more. I really want to become a monk if dad kicks me out of home. (Bai 2004: 91)

妈妈就要上来了。她一定要来逼我去参加结业式，她又要在她面前流泪。我是打定主意再也不去南光了，爸爸如果赶我出去，我真的出家修行去。

In the sense of “after the ending” and “before the beginning”, Bai Xianyong’s writing and Taiwanese political unconscious in the 1960s were in a homogeneous construction process. The sense of loneliness and isolation of being “the Orphan of Asia” became the dominant social emotion. Yet Taiwanese could find themselves alone consciously precisely because their subjectivity had

taken an initial shape. In the 1960s, Taiwan was in a formidable transformative stage, which is on the way to the birth of subject consciousness.

Figuratively speaking, Taiwanese subjectivity in the 1960s is similar to the young seedling that had not yet broken through the soil. The process of sprouting is filled with affliction due to the historical burden, which is as heavy as the soil block. The young seedling Taiwan could not sprout without external forces in the 1970s. In *Taipei People*, Bai Xianyong more than once hints at the emergence of the unstoppable forces of the new birth. In “Ode to Bygone Days” (思舊賦), the Li residence is a sign of tradition, and the “modern apartment of gray concrete” stands for the modernity that is sprouting forth. The repressive tradition was hemmed by the rising subjective consciousness. The Taiwanese subjectivity in 1960s was springing out like the wild grass.

The Li residence was the only old house in the lane; on all sides modern apartment buildings of gray concrete towered over the wooden one-story house, hemming it in. The Li house was quite dilapidated, some of its roof-tiles were broken or missing, and tufts of wild grass sprang out of the crevices in the ragged eaves. (Bai 176)

李宅是整條巷子中唯一的舊屋，前後左右都起了新式的灰色水泥高樓，吧李宅這棟木板平房團團夾在當中。李宅的房子已經十分破爛，屋頂上瓦片殘缺，參差的屋簷，縫中長出了一搓搓的野草來。

After listening to the story of the glorious “Tai’er Zhuang Campaign”, the sound of firecrackers reminds Lizhu and Yu Xin of a fresh start for Taipei:

In the roar of cheers, each child scrambled to light his own firecracker, and streak after streak of light broke through the dark sky. The sound of firecrackers all around grew louder and more urgent as New Year's Eve drew to an end and another New Year descended on Taipei. (Bai 110)

小孩子們都七手八腳的點燃了自己的煙炮，一道道亮光衝破了黑暗的天空。四周的爆竹聲愈來愈密，除夕已經到了尾聲，又一個新年開始降臨到臺北市來。

Waking from the dream, the mind of Madame Qian comes back to the real word, the real Taipei, and she cannot help sighing, "It's changed so I hardly know it any more....They've put up so many tall buildings" (變的我都快不認識了一起了好多新的高樓大廈。) (Bai 382).

Lü Zhenghui summarizes the mainstream of Taiwanese literature in the 1960s as "the suppressed juvenescence and the distressed 'self'" (Lü 2010: 49-67). Such a summary is very accurate, since it is undoubtedly depressing and frustrating before subjectivity comes into being. On the one hand, during the 1960s, Taiwan had to struggle to free itself from the depressive 1950s. On the other hand, it had to confront an unpredictable future without any directions. So at this moment, Taiwanese writers were more vulnerable to perplexity, depression, and anxiety. Therefore, the subtle adolescent emotion happened to coincide with Taiwanese social conditions in the 1960s. "Youth Writings" by nature involved personal emotion and prospect, and at the same time were influenced by conservative social conditions. But the movement should be investigated in its whole historical context.

In the 1960s when the old forms were giving way to new forms, the mental and environmental circumstances the author faced were similar to those of “May Fourth”. Facing the challenges of Western culture and civilization, the young writers’ hearts were filled with passion and idealism. As Bai Xianyong often mentioned in public, “the so called ‘Identity Crisis’ is quite serious at that time” (Bai 1966: 350). “We don’t identify with the society of our fathers”, he writes, “we have to get rid of the shackles of old society”, “we are factually standing at the turning-point of Taiwanese history, facing the intersection of cultural transformation”, and “however, we have to abandon the traditions behind us and the burdens from the old generation” (Bai 2000: 97). Hence, the younger generations are starting to “establish a new value system that accords with Taiwanese reality (Bai 2000: 98).

The reason “youth” could be a pervasive writing topic is dependent on the fact that Taiwanese political unconscious and “Youth Writing” was in the homogeneous construction process in the context of modernization during the 1960s. “Youth” stands for Taiwan trying to escape the shadow of fatherhood and historical burden of Mainland China. The father already had one foot in the grave, while the son was growing his vernal flesh. That was why, at this historical moment, in the dimension of modernity, Taiwanese were living in a state of juvenescent anxiety. Certainly Bai Xianyong is not an exception.

3.2 Declining Years: The Portal of Historical Anxiety

Yang Yunfang's youth was filled with endless anguish and anxiety. In contrast to his "Youth Narrative", Bai Xianyong concentrates on the old in *Taipei People*.

In "Ode to Bygone Days" (思舊賦), the old infirm maid Mrs. Shun'en had been retired for several years, but she insists on visiting the old, worn-down Li residence even with a great illness. The story is permeated by death images: "A blast of winter evening wind swept through; it set all the tangled, untended wormwood in the courtyard to hissing..." (一陣冬日的暮風掠過去，滿院子那些蕪蔓的蒿草都蕭蕭瑟瑟抖響起來……) (Bai 194-195).

In "The Dirge of Liang Fu" (梁父吟), the protagonist Mr. Pu, who had participated in the Revolution of 1911, is also a septuagenarian. The atmosphere of mourning for death looms over the story with the poem, "Since ancient times, how many have returned of those who went off to fight?" (古來征戰幾人回?) (Bai 220).

"State Funeral" (國葬) deals more directly with fate and death. The advanced adjutant Qin Yifang goes to the funeral parlor in Taipei to express his condolences to Commander Li Haoran in a chilly morning in December. The two extremes—youth and age—become the most gorgeous aria in Bai Xianyong's writing.

The stream of consciousness in "Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream" (遊園驚夢) conveys Madame Qian's wish for eternal youth. When she raises her head and first meets Colonel Zheng's eyes, she is covered like a net by

those slender eyes of the young officer. The secret tryst with her dream lover Colonel Zheng in the Sun-Yat-sen Mausoleum, an obscure and fanciful lovmaking scene, is the vitality she desires, as Du Liniang and Liu Mengmei's romantic love story in *The Peony Pavilion* haunts Madame Qian's ears:

Liu Mengmei:

(To the tune of Shantaohong)

With heaven and earth as our bridal room,

We sleep on grass and bloom.

Are you all right, my dear?

[...]

Please never forget the day when we

Lie together side by side,

Make love for hours and hours,

And hug as man and bride,

With your face red as flowers.

Du Liniang:

Are you leaving now, my love?

Liu Mengmei, Duliniang:

It is absurd,

That we seem to meet somewhere before,

But stand here face to face without a word? (Tang 135-136)

【山桃红】

[生]这一霎天留人便，

草藉花眠。

小姐可好？

[……]

小姐休忘了呵，見了你緊相偎，

慢廝連，

恨不得肉兒般團成片也，

逗的個日下胭脂雨上鮮。

[旦]秀才，你可去呵？

[合]是那處曾相見，

相看儼然，

早難道這好處相逢無一言？

Here, Du and Liu's tryst in the author's writing is directly transformed into the lingering sex scene between Mrs. Qian and Mr. Zheng:

His eyebrows turned dark green, his eyes smoldered like two balls of dark fire, beads of sweat came running down his forehead to his flushed cheeks [...]. Those tree trunks, so white and pure, so smooth, shedding their skin, layer after layer, unveiled their tender naked flesh [...]. The sun, I cried, the sun has pierced my eyes. And he whispered in a gentle voice: Madame.

General Qian's lady. General Qian's aide-de-camp. (Bai 372)

他的美貌變的碧青，眼睛像兩團燒著了的黑火，汗珠子一行行從他的額頭上流到他鮮紅的顴上來……那些樹杆子，又白淨，又細滑，一層層的樹皮都卸掉了，露出裡面赤裸裸的嫩肉來……太陽，我叫道，太

陽直射到人的眼睛上來了。於是他便放柔了聲音喚道：夫人。錢將軍的夫人。錢將軍的隨從參謀。

The beautiful eagerness that is repressed in their bodies exhibits youth from a modern scope. Madame Qian's unforgettable lover Colonel Zheng represents the youthfulness that she is longing for. The author emphasizes the legitimacy of the pursuit, which is analogous to marital infidelity, through the old General Qian's voice. In her hallucination, Mrs. Qian imagines the doddering General stretching out his black, bony hand and telling her, "Poor thing, you're still so young. Worldly glory, wealthy, position—only it's a pity, you've got one bone that's not quite right" (可憐你還這麼年輕。榮華富貴一只可惜你長錯了一根骨頭。) (Bai 372).

Compared to Du Liniang's resurrection, and finally marrying her dream lover, Liu Mengmei, in the Kun Opera "Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream"³, what is left after Madame Qian's "waking from a dream" is her hoarse voice that prevents her from singing, and her sweetheart, Mr. Zheng, snatched away by her little sister, Yue Yuehong.

"A Sky Full of Bright, Twinkling Stars" (滿天里亮晶晶的星星) is the

³ "Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream" is based on the classic Ming drama *The Peony Pavilion* by Tang Xianzu (1550-1616). This is a poetic romance that celebrates the triumph of love over death. In Southern Song Dynasty, the heroine Du Liniang, the young daughter of a government official, has been taught ancient classics by an old pedagogue in her parents' home. Du Liniang's naughty maid Chunxiang persuades Du Liniang to take a stroll in the back garden. The stroll in a bright spring day rouses Du Li Niang's eagerness for love. She takes a nap near the Peony Pavilion and dreams a strange dream, in which she meets her ideal lover, Liu Mengmei, and falls in love with him. Haunted by the dream, she falls ill and draws a self-portrait in her illness as a keepsake for Liu. She dies of her lovesickness and is buried under the plum tree in the back garden. But the dream lover exists in reality, the young scholar Liu Mengmei. After many adventures, Liu strolls in the garden one day, and happens to discover Du Liniang's portrait. He dreams a dream, in which Du Liniang says that she can be revived. On the second day, he prays with Sister Stone, opens the grave and Du Liniang revives. The lovers marry, and the play ends happily.

first homosexual story of this period. The story is narrated by the first person who calls the group “our,” referring to the gay community that gathers together in the park at night. Among them are the Primitive man, Ah Xiong whose muscles bulge all over his body; a self-important man, Dark-and-Handsome; and the most important protagonist, the Guru of “the Cult of the Spring Sacrifice”, Zhu Yan.

“When you stop to think about it, who but the Guru could be our Guru [of the Cult of the Spring Sacrifice]? Sure, he belongs to our grandfathers’ generation...” (除了他，你想想，還有誰夠資格來當我們祭春教的教主呢？當然，當然，他是我們的爺爺輩……) (Bai 314). We could explore the time proposition of the story, Spring Sacrifice. Why did these gays elect an old man with hoary hair, deep wrinkles on his forehead, and a bowed back as the Guru of “the Cult of Spring Sacrifice”? “Spring Sacrifice”, in other words, represents sacrificing youth as the best illustration of gay aspiration for youth. When the followers call the Guru by his professional name, Zhu Yan, he abruptly raises his forbidding finger and vehemently roars, “Chu Yen? Did you say Chu Yen? —He died a long time ago!” (朱燄？朱燄嗎？——他早就死了！) (Bai 314). The Guru is mourning for his art career. Even though there are plenty night sprites that outrank Zhu Yan in seniority, they lack “the kind of style our Guru has that somehow inspires awe in people” (像教主那麼一點服眾的氣派) (Bai 314). Nothing can demonstrate the desire for youth better than letting an old man who has a unique and glorious past act as Guru of “Spring Sacrifice”.

However, Bai Xianyong's work is not a self-contradiction, because the two superficially profound opposite extremes of young and old show an amazing coherence. Young and old alike in his fictions take part in an astonishing homogeneous construction process. In *Five Faces of Modernity—Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism*, Matei Calinescu shows that “progress” and “decadence” are homogeneous:

Decadence is therefore not a structure but a direction or tendency. We also note that the usual associations of decadence with such notions as decline, twilight, autumn, senescence, and exhaustion, and in its more advanced stages, organic decay and putrescence—along with their automatic antonyms: rise, dawn, spring, youth, germination, etc. —make it inevitable to think of it in terms of natural cycles and biological metaphors. These organic affinities of the idea of decadence explain why progress is not its unqualified opposite... As a consequence—and by now this has become almost a truism—a high degree of technological development appears perfectly compatible with an acute sense of decadence. The fact of progress is not denied, but increasingly large numbers of people experience the results of progress with an anguished sense of loss and alienation. Once again, progress is decadence and decadence is progress. (Calinescu 154-155)

Bai Xianyong's view of old age shows an acute and anxious sensation of urgency. If old age were defined, not as the physical senium, but rather as a unique crisis with an intensity that is unknown before; and, as time is running short, it becomes of the ultimate importance to do something. In the perspective

of the rapidly approaching end of time, every single instance can be decisive. The consciousness of old age brings about internal restlessness, anxiety and a need to make vigorous efforts to turn the situation around.

The declining years, which Bai Xianyong presents to his readers to push them to face the historical and class dimensions, “after the ending”, as “the ending”, is the dilemma of time. The foundation of “after the ending” lies in “before the beginning”; that is, how Taiwanese can face the rack and ruin, and continue or recast their subject consciousness. The declining year becomes the backdrop of the portrayal of the youth. It places the flabby and hard youth in the front of history. This process is by nature anxious, depressed, floundering and agonizing.

Taipei People actually opens the prelude of historical narrative of “Young Taiwan” (青春台湾) with its historical dimension of “decline”. The rise of Taiwanese self-consciousness during the 1970s did not come into being overnight. Before that was the 1960s, marked by the struggle and anxiety that precedes the birth of the subjective consciousness. Bai Xianyong was witnessing these historical vicissitudes.

3.3 Death: The Disillusionment of Returning Home

It is inevitable to deal with the theme of death when depicting age and the passage of time.

Mr. Lu in “Glory’s by Blossom Bridge” (花橋榮記) has always confronted the furious conflicts between soul and flesh, between sensibility and rationality. Mr. Lu devotedly waited for his fiancée in the Mainland for fifteen long years, even after several years living in Taiwan. Marrying Miss Luo, who has been in love with him since they were little, is the dream of his entire life. This ambition is a spiritual pillar that supported his real life in Taipei. Mr. Lu has very refined manners, always quiet and unassuming. However, he became furious when the Boss-Lady of the rice-noodle shop that he often visited would like to be a go-between, to get him and Xiuhua together.

If he was not interested in Xiuhua, he would not blush when the Boss-Lady egged him on to drink a toast with Xiuhua and be so flustered that he could not say a word when asked, “Well, Mr. Lu, what do you think of our Hsiu-hua?” (盧先生，你看我們秀華這人怎麼樣？) (Bai 274).

When his brother simply pocketed the money that he had been saving for fifteen years to pay some big operator in Hong Kong to smuggle his fiancée out of the Mainland, Mr. Lu lost all interest in food and drink. Ironically, not long after, Mr. Lu moves in with a washerwoman with boobs like “a pair of mallet-heats”, rump “like a drum” (Bai 282), as if he were not the same person. His relationship with the vulgar, ugly, and libertine washerwoman is tinged with sensual overtones. Indulging himself in venting his repressed sexual desire, he dies of “Heart Failure.” His death is so enigmatic that the coroner examines his body for hours without being able to find anything wrong.

The reason for Mr. Lu's decline and abnormality is complicated. To a great degree, being unable to reunite with his fiancé, and accomplish his goal of true love causes Mr. Lu to seek compensation, and anesthetization, simply through eros. Sexual desire, as Freud believes, is a human instinct providing humanistic basis of free sex. What is going to happen if human nature is repressed? Freud's idea of abnormal psychology points out that abnormal psychology is correlated to the unfulfilled sexual desire restrained by civilization and social taboo. The deficiency of normal sex directly leads to these abnormal sexual behaviors. By no means can the internal mechanism give rise to those abnormalities without the auxiliary of external obstacles. On the one hand, the external circumstances prevent abnormal sex being satisfied; on the other hand, the internal mechanism dares not take an opponent to the externalities. Therefore, sexual desire fulfills its satisfaction through an abnormal path:

You have heard that a neurosis may develop from the denial of normal sexual satisfactions. Through this actual denial the need is forced into the abnormal paths of sex excitement.... You certainly understand that through such "collateral" hindrance, the perverse tendencies must be come more powerful than they would have been if no actual obstacle had been put in the way of normal sexual satisfaction. As a matter of fact, a similar influence may be recognized in manifest perversions. In many cases, they are provoked or motivated by the fact that too great difficulties stand in the way of normal sexual satisfactions, owing to temporary circumstances or to the permanent institutions of society. (Freud 1920: 268)

Undeniably, the mental stress from the hopelessness of “returning home” plays a prominent role in these external circumstances. It is the political situation since the 1949 division, and more specifically the failure of smuggling, that brings out Mr. Lu’s dark side and leads to his abnormal sexuality. Furthermore:

It seems, then, that an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things, which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external disturbing force; that is, it is a kind of organic elasticity, or to put it another way, the expression of the inertia inherent in organic life. (Freud 1961: 30)

The death theory indicates that death is an intrinsic feature of life: “the aim of all life is death and, looking backwards, that inanimate things existed before living ones” (Freud 1961: 32); and “All instincts tend towards to the restoration of an earlier stage of things” (Freud 1961: 31). The scene in the photograph “I” take in Mr. Lu’s room is the spiritual home Mr. Lu is chasing. Standing with the Guilin girl he is engaged to by the River Li is deemed to be a delusion, which is justified by Lu’s death, an ultimate way of returning home.

Similarly, in “A Sea of Blood-Red Azaleas” (那血一樣紅的杜鵑花), Wang Xiong had been engaged at an early age before he left Mainland China. He may have loved his little Sissy, who was white and plump, a very silly little girl, so much that he transferred his love to Xiao Li, who was similarly white and plump. After Xiao Li rejected his kindness, and cried out, “Let go of my arm!” (放開我的手!) (Bai 168), Wang Xiong became a mortally wounded beast. The innocent Xi Mei died from his sexual abuse—“Her skirt ripped to shreds, naked

to the waist, her breasts covered with bruises and scratches, a ring of finger-marks around her neck” (她的衣裙撕得粉碎，上體全露了出來，兩隻乳房上，斑斑纍纍，掐得一塊一塊的瘀青，她頸子上一轉都是指甲印。) (Bai 172).

Wang Xiong’s predicament is also the impossibility of returning home. He believes in the legend of the “zombie-raiser” undoubtedly. In his native Hunan countryside, when people died outside and had some kinfolk at home, those zombies would run home rapidly. The story happens to coincide with the statement that death intrinsically tends towards to the restoration of an earlier stage of things. So Wang Xiong ends his life by drowning himself in the sea. Looking backward to his conversation with Young Master-Cousin:

“Young Master-Cousin,” Wang Hsiung once asked me, as if something were on his mind, “Can you see the mainland from Quemoy?”

I told him that through a telescope you could practically see people moving on the other side.

“That close up?” He stared at me, disbelieving.

“Why not?” I said. “Very often bodies of people who have died of hunger drift over to our side.”

“They come over to look for their kinfolk,” he said. (Bai 158)

「表少爺，你在金門島上看得到大陸嗎？」有一次王雄若有所思的問我道。我告訴他，從望遠鏡里可以看道那邊的人在走動。

「隔得那樣近嗎？」他吃驚得望著我，不肯置信得樣子。

「怎麼不呢」我答道，「那邊時常還有餓死得屍首飄過來呢。」

「他們是過來找親人得。」他說道。

Wang Xiong's tragedy originates from the curving, shallow strait that separates him and his beloved Little Sissy. On the one hand, it is the flame of desire that plagues them; and on the other, the contemporary political situation manipulates numerous people into doing things they were not willing to. Wang Xiong and Mr. Lu both show sadistic orientations on the surface, but are controlled by the masochistic instincts in nature. A sadist takes no account of whether he inflicts pain, nor does he intend to do so. But when once the transformation into masochism takes place, the pains are very well fitted to provide a passive masochistic aim:

For we have every reason to believe that sensations of pain, like other unpleasurable sensations, trench upon sexual excitation and produce a pleasurable condition, for the sake of which the subject will even willingly experience the unpleasure of pain. When once feeling pains has become a masochistic aim, the sadistic aim of causing pains can arise also, retrogressively; for while these pains are being inflicted on other people, they are enjoyed masochistically by the subject through his identification of himself with the suffering object. (Freud 2008: 82)

In other words, the desire of torture becomes self-torture and self-punishment. Wang Xiong and Mr. Lu identify themselves with the suffering objects to enjoy the sensation of pain. Their deaths are the result of the befuddlement of existence within the historical context of national splitting. The perplexity of thought and psychological puzzlement originates from the disillusion of the belief supporting them to survive.

In *The Theory of The Novel*, Georg Lukács connects madness with social order, and the supra-personal system of values:

Madness can be the symbolic expression of an end, equivalent to physical death or to the living death of a soul consumed by the essential fire of selfhood. For crime and madness are objectivations of transcendental homelessness—the homelessness of an action in the human order of social relations, the homelessness of a soul in the ideal order of a supra-personal system of values. (61-62)

In this layer of meaning, the madness and sadism of Wang Xiong and Mr. Lu stem from the collapse of the system of ideal values. These two characters can be regarded as avengers of the real world, because they deeply feel themselves to be the victims of reality. Although Wang and Lu at first hate society, they indeed hate themselves even more. Under the surface of national history, a spontaneous libidinal agony lurks in the mythology of their death. Their madness and death claim the delusion of returning home, the well-designed journey of rescue converted into a shelterless escape. Here again, *Taipei People* simultaneously constructs and de-constructs the pattern of spiritual homeland.

Conclusion

The mainlanders who retreated to Taiwan in 1949 gradually became the “last mainlanders” who were weighed down by their historical burden and faced the problem of what course to follow. Were they to penetrate the fracture of history to survive and reinvent themselves? Beyond “exile” and “diaspora”, how could they hold on to their subjectivity? These questions are closely linked to the rise of Taiwanese consciousness. *Taipei People* provides a testimony of this secret history; it explores the Taiwanese political unconscious of this class in the 1960s, with a core of anxiety over the “last existence.”

Here on, we must pay attention to the fact that Bai Xianyong could hardly propose Taiwanese consciousness. It was impossible for him to come up with a concept of Taiwanese consciousness in those days. What Bai Xianyong has done is present the proposition of “after the ending”; that is, how to face the past, the present and the future. He further asks if there is a possibility of making up for historical trauma. In *Taipei People*, Bai Xianyong has discussed all of these questions and made them into the main theme of *Taipei People*, as the Taiwanese collectively faced the questions of tackling historical trauma during the period of reform in the 1960s and 1970s.

Taipei People portrayed the “last mainlanders” living in the endless turmoil and anguish of the 1960s. Beyond expressing nostalgia, Bai Xianyong examines historical anxiety, how to connect past, present and future, under the fractured experience. Here, recalling and continuing the past, as a means of resistance,

becomes a unique spiritual ceremony resolving the dilemma to those “Taipei people” living in this transformative historical period. The historical anxiety, as a unique crisis with an intensity that is unknown before, is reflected in Bai’s depiction of the old. Turning his attention to the declining years, which occurs as part of his portrayal of the youth, *Taipei People* opened the prelude of historical narrative of “Youth Taiwan”.

My discussion of Bai Xianyong’s shifting attitude of identity affords a reference to study his later stories. His ambivalent attitudes continue in *New Yorker*. As he shifts the setting from Taipei to New York, we can perceive the implication of the disharmony between Chinese culture and Western culture in stories such as “Banished Immortal” (謫仙記), “Danny Boy” and “Tea for Two”.

Bai says of *New Yorker*:

“The New Yorker” has been delayed for decades. I come up with one or two stories occasionally, and now nearly a century has passed. In my mind, “New York” gradually becomes “Mordor” with its gate wide open to embrace endless loitering souls. (Bai 2007: 213)

Based on this claim, scholars such as Liu Jun have argued that Bai Xianyong has apparently developed a cosmopolitan outlook, and treats universal problems in the world without distinctions between China and the West in *New Yorker*.

However, the problem of identity is not as simple as Liu believes, a fusion of the East and the West:

Identities are never completed, never finished; that they are always as subjectivity itself is, in process. That itself is a pretty difficult task. Though

we have always known it a little bit, we have always thought about ourselves as getting more like ourselves everyday. But that is a sort of Hegelian notion, of going forward to meet that which we always were. (Hall 47)

Ironically, his protagonists are not Taipei people, though residing in Taipei, or New Yorker, though living in New York. Essentially, they could be characterized as “wandering Chinese”. Inspired by the analysis of *Taipei People*, I would ask whether, like the quest for a spiritual habitat between Taipei, the realistic home, and the Mainland, the idealistic home in *Taipei People*, Bai portrays New York as a marginalized, vague, and delusory frontier, fragile and full of difficulties, yet a place where “loitering souls” can seek ephemeral harmony.

It is highly possible that *New Yorker* represents different voices rather than provides an unmistakable view of the problems between China and the West, and charts a definite future course. After all, literature is not the best vehicle for standard answers, but a space where conflicting voices can coexist. As David Bleich asserts, “If a literary work is deliberately associated with its author, its proposed meaning is still validated by the reader and by the prevailing standards of knowledge in his interpretive community” (David 214).

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