

University of Alberta

From Silence to Heteroglossia:
The Development of Feminine Self in Li Ang's Fiction (1983-2005)

by

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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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Fall 2013
Edmonton, Alberta

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Abstract

This thesis examines the development of feminine self in Li Ang's fiction during different stages of her writing. Beginning in the 1980s, the rise of Taiwanese women writers has been one of the most significant phenomena in the history of Taiwanese literature, fundamentally challenging what has traditionally been a male domain. Women writers demanded to be regarded with the same respect as male writers. Also, they focused their concern on female inferiority in a patriarchal society. Li Ang is one of them. Not only does she illustrate the issues of women being repressed by patriarchy, but also she has worked out a feminist solution to those issues. In this thesis I will focus my discussion on three of Li Ang's representative works, *The Butcher's Wife*, *The Labyrinth Garden*, and *Bewitching Love*, to examine how Li Ang has re-established the female "Garden of Eden", namely feminine self, in her fiction.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 FOCUS OF THE RESEARCH	1
1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW ON LI ANG.....	7
1.3 SHORTCOMINGS OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH.....	10
1.4 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH.....	10
1.5 THE STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH	13
CHAPTER 2 THE SITUATION OF WOMEN: OBJECTIFIED, GAZED AND MARGINALIZED	14
2.1 <i>THE BUTCHER’S WIFE</i> : OBJECTIFIED WOMAN UNDER PATRIARCHY	15
2.2 <i>THE LABYRINTH GARDEN</i> : THE FEMALE UNDER MALE GAZE.....	22
2.3 <i>BEWITCHING LOVE</i> : THE MARGINALIZED LESBIANS	28
CHAPTER 3 REBUILDING THE FEMININE SELF: A FEMINIST SOLUTION	34
3.1 DENIAL OF PHALLUS: SYMBOLIC CASTRATION IN TEXT	36
3.1.1 <i>The Killed Husband in The Butcher’s Wife</i>	38
3.1.2 <i>The Castrated Father and Husband in The Labyrinth Garden</i>	43
3.1.3 <i>The Female-only Lesbian World in Bewitching Love</i>	51
3.2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF FEMININE SELF	55
3.2.1 <i>Food/Sex Relationship: Extreme Repressed Woman in The Butcher’s Wife</i>	60
3.2.2 <i>The Growing Feminine Self in The Labyrinth Garden</i>	64
3.2.3 <i>The Ultimately Independent Women in Bewitching Love</i>	69
3.3 VOICE IN TEXT: FROM MUTED GROUP TO HETEROGLOSSIA	71
3.3.1 <i>The “Muted” Woman in The Butcher’s Wife</i>	74
3.3.2 <i>The Decline and Growth of Female Voice in The Labyrinth Garden</i> ...	78
3.3.3 <i>Heteroglossia of Women in Bewitching Love</i>	85
CHAPTER 4 CONCLUSION	87
4.1 SUMMARY.....	87
4.2 LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES	88
BIBLIOGRAPHY	90

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Focus of the Research

Li Ang is one of the most controversial Taiwanese writers in recent decades: her works receive positive reviews overseas while being rejected in her own country. Li Ang mentions this in the preface to *The Labyrinth Garden* [迷園 miyuan]: “For a long time being in Taiwan, I have to tolerate endless vituperation and misunderstanding.”¹ This is not too difficult to understand. Since she published her first short story “The Flower Season” [花季 huaji] at the age of 16, Li Ang has been continually challenging her readers with bold portrayals of sex. In “The Flower Season”, she illustrates a teenage girl’s journey towards her “secret sex garden” in a typically existentialist² manner. However, Li Ang only expresses the sexual anxiety and growth of a teenage girl in “The Flower Season” without mentioning the feminine self. Later in her “Curvaceous Dolls” [有曲線的娃娃 you quxian de wawa] published in 1970, she began to mention the feminine self a little. In this story, Li Ang described a woman who is always trying to find a way to fill in the blank of losing her mother when she was very young. Although

¹ Li Ang, “Before the Labyrinth Garden”, in *The Labyrinth Garden*, (Taipei: Rye Field Publications, 2006), p.5.

² Existentialism is a term applied to the work of some philosophers in late 19th- and 20th-century. They shared the belief that philosophical thinking begins with the human subject. It is not merely the thinking subject, but the acting, feeling, living human individual (see John Macquarrie, *Existentialism*, New York, 1972, 14–15). In existentialism, the individual's starting point is characterized by what has been called “the existential attitude”, or a sense of disorientation and confusion in the face of an apparently meaningless or absurd world (see Robert C. Solomon, *Existentialism*, McGraw-Hill, 1974, 1–2).

largely Li Ang wrote this story using a typical existentialist thinking the same as “The Flower Season”, consciously or unconsciously, she has begun to mention the feminine self through the female protagonist’s self –examination to her mental world. Her next work, *The Butcher’s Wife*, is her first conscious attempt to the feminine self in Taiwanese society³. In this fiction, she illustrates how the patriarchal society eventually causes the death of a woman. This is the first time Li Ang discusses feminine self in her fiction. Later in her subsequent works, Li Ang’s writing matures year after year: she continues to examine different female issues as if no one else can, yet she also resolves these questions along with explicit sexual portrayals, which makes her a heterodoxical⁴ writer in her time.

Li Ang does not write as gracefully and decorously as boudoir literary⁵ writers. As Chiu Kuei-fen observes, Li Ang is quite different from other contemporary women writers. Chiu claims that Li Ang’s works have greatly changed the traditional writing style of romantic love stories in Taiwanese feminine writing in which women are described as princesses of Snow White. Chiu also claims that Li Ang is always trying to solve the real problem of the relationship between sex and love⁶. It is true that Li Ang seldom writes works which portray emotional and doleful women. Instead, she addresses the most

³ According to what Li Ang said in a conference in 2012. See “Bright Li Ang versus Dark Li Ang”, in *The Flower Season that Never Wither: Collection of Papers on Li Ang’s Conference*, (Taipei: Unitas Publishing Co., Ltd, 2012), p.23.

⁴ Here I use this word “heterodoxical” to emphasize the huge difference between Li Ang and other Taiwanese women writers.

⁵ *gui ge pai* [閨閣派], also is known as *guige wenxue* [閨閣文學], is a typical feminine writing style in traditional Chinese patriarchal society, especially in the 1970s Taiwanese literary history. Boudoir literature is usually a sentimental genre, written by women who depict stereotypical female characters and their daily lives in accordance with patriarchal requirements and imagination of women.

⁶ See Chiu Kuei-fen, *Noises of Females of (Not) Same Nation: Interviews of Contemporary Female Writers in Taiwan*, (Taipei: Yuanzun Culture, 1998), p. 92.

critical problems of women who receive unfair, even miserable treatment from their families and society. Li Ang also shows how these women struggle against the patriarchal society and finally find their feminine identities. It is the essence of Li Ang's works that she always has her characters reveal the problems instead of moaning and face the unfairness instead of evading them.

However, Li Ang does not represent female issues through a usual way of writing; instead she uses erotic portrayals of sex to uncover the pain and struggle of women who eventually find their feminine identities. This is the reason her works have been attacked so viciously, for Taiwanese society is not ready to accept her and her works. Considering that at the time Li Ang was writing in the 1980s when Taiwanese women were still being dominated by patriarchy, it is not surprising that *The Butcher's Wife* is so controversial. In the 1980s, Taiwanese society was still dominated by the traditional Confucian thinking, which repressed women deeply. Since the 17th century when the Qing dynasty set Taiwan as its administrative area, more and more Chinese peasants emigrated from Mainland China to Taiwan, bringing with them their traditional culture, especially Confucian beliefs. In the following decades, with the increase of Han Chinese in Taiwan, Confucianism gradually became the mainstream in Taiwanese society. During the Japanese occupation, the status of Confucianism declined a little. However, after the Kuomintang began to govern Taiwan in 1945, the Kuomintang government launched policies promoting and enhancing traditional Chinese values and ethics, mainly Confucianism. Being used as main norms of the Chinese feudal culture for more than 2,000 years, Confucianism imposes rigorous

requirements on women. The most popular idea in Confucianism is “Three Obediences and Four Virtues for Women [三從四德 san cong si de]”, which requires a woman unquestionably to obey her father as a daughter [未嫁從父 wei jia cong fu], her husband as a wife [出嫁從夫 chu jia cong fu], and her son in widowhood [夫死從子 fu si cong zi]. Women also have to pay specific attention to their morality [婦德 fu de], proper speech [婦言 fu yan], modest manner [婦容 fu rong] and diligent work [婦功 fu gong] as their “Four Virtues”. Women have the lowest social status and control no discourse in a patriarchal society. Particularly, Taiwanese women are under double repression by colonization and patriarchy.

The social discourse of Taiwanese people was under repression until 1987. From 1895 to 1949, Taiwan was occupied by Japanese colonizers. 50 years’ Japanese domination squashed Taiwanese people’s freedom of speech. The Japanese government wanted to establish a new “Japanized Taiwan,” not only politically but also culturally. Along with controlling the Taiwanese economy by making Taiwan Japan’s main source for the production of rice and cane⁷, the Japanese government also controlled Taiwan politically by using various policies including Doka [同化] and Kominka [皇民化]⁸ which required all Taiwanese people to speak Japanese, dress in Japanese-style clothes, and become the “real” Japanese people. These policies had a significant effect on Taiwanese society that

⁷ Take the production of rice for example: after Eikichi Iso, the Japanese agricultural expert had improved the quality of Taiwanese rice, the scale of rice planting in Taiwan doubled in 1944 from the original 320,000 hectares in the 1900s. Similarly, the productivity doubled, too, and more than 60% of the rice production was sent to Japan.

⁸ Also known as the “integration period (1917-1937)” and the “subjects of the emperor period (1937-1945).” The “integration period” is more focused on educating Taiwanese people to understand the same role and responsibilities as Japanese people, while the “subjects to the emperor period” is more focused on transforming Taiwanese people into “real” Japanese with “real” “Japanese spirits (大和魂)” and Japanese identities.

the Taiwanese lost their national identity. In 1945, after the Kuomintang government regained its dominance over Taiwan, the Taiwanese people were supposed to have their freedom. However, this time, they were imposed in a new form of repression from their fellow citizen: martial law, beginning in 1949. Under endless arrest, torment and imprisonment, without a doubt, the repressed discourse of the Taiwanese people under the Japanese occupation was not improved. Finally, after Chiang Ching-kuo lifted martial law in 1987, liberating the Taiwanese people from the “white terror,” there was prosperity in every aspect of Taiwanese society, especially in literature. Taiwanese writers could not express themselves under strict ideological control for nearly a century by both the Japanese and the Kuomintang, and finally they were able to control their discourse without any restraint. Also, literature was no longer stipulated strictly as an instrument of political propaganda. However, at that time, women writers did not have much privilege to speak. Only male writers were writing about history and current experience, which meant that anyone wanting perspective on either topic was limited to reading about it from a masculine perspective only: this makes sense, as women’s voices were muted in such a patriarchal society.

Women possessed no power to express themselves; they were the silent ones.

To regain their control of discourse, Taiwanese feminists began their fight against the society that did not recognize them. When Annette Lu [呂秀蓮] first put forward the idea of feminism in Taiwan in the 1970s, the notion of women’s rights was still unfamiliar to Taiwanese society. The male-dominated society considered the feminist movement radical and outrageous; therefore it strongly

rejected the movement. Thus, main-stream early feminine writing⁹ tended to be milder. For example, the boudoir literature mentioned earlier did not sharply question the authority of the male domination, but detoured to portray the romantic stories and feelings of women. Then in the 1980s, some female magazines and small communities began to appear, such as the Awakening Women Press [婦女新知雜誌社 Funtü xinzhi zazhishe] founded by Li Yuan-chen [李元貞] in 1982. Later, with the process of globalization in Taiwan, more women began to challenge the traditional ethics of patriarchal society. Women were becoming educated along with the modernization and urbanization of Taiwanese society during the economic boom in the 1980s, which made the emergence and development of women writers possible in the following decades. Educated women required the same social status and freedom of speech as men. This fact ultimately generated significant changes in Taiwanese society. Later feminine writing in Taiwan became more focused on women's fight against patriarchal society. It rethought the image of marginalized women in the patriarchal society and rewrote women in literature from a female perspective.

After decades of effort, Taiwanese women have finally established their importance in literature. They have more control of discourse than ever before, and have profoundly enriched the perspective and added a new dimension to Taiwanese literature, exactly as Lu Cheng-hui claims in his article, "The Mainstream of Taiwanese Fictions in the 1980s". He thinks that the emergence

⁹ Feminine writing is also known as "women's writing". It is a feminist literary theory originated in France. Hélène Cixous first mentioned this in her essay "The Laugh of Medusa": "Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies."

and prevalence of women writers is one of the most profound phenomena in Taiwanese literature during the 1980s¹⁰. However, even though feminism began to emerge in Taiwan, the social status of Taiwanese women still improved little. Thus it is not difficult to understand why Li Ang's works are viciously attacked by most critics, even when she published *The Labyrinth Garden* in 1991. Although her fiction has received negative reviews in Taiwan, Li Ang has certainly developed a new style in feminine writing.

1.2 Literature Review on Li Ang

Li Ang's works have been discussed frequently in both Taiwanese and Western scholarship. As early as the 1990s, theses have discussed her fiction. However, at that time, the research about Li Ang in Taiwanese scholarship was combined with that of other women writers. For example, Chiang Pao-chai 江寶釵 discusses Li Ang and five other women writers in the magazine *Modern Literature* in her PhD dissertation "A Discussion on Women Writers of *Contemporary* magazine: From the Perspective of a Feminine Theme [論《現代文學》女性小說家：從一個女性主題出發 Lun xiandai wenxue nüxing xiaoshuojia cong yige nüxing zhuti chufa]" in 1994¹¹. Chiang examines the history of the feminist movement in Taiwan as well as the unique features and themes of these women writers from the beginning of their writing. Her argument is based on western literary theories such as modernism, existentialism, psychoanalysis and

¹⁰See Lu Cheng-hui, "The Mainstream of Taiwanese Novels in the 1980s", in *Flight Leeway in the End of Century: A Discussion on the Taiwanese Literature during the 1980s*, (Taipei: Shibao, 1990), p.271.

¹¹ These women writers are Yu Li-hua (於梨華), Tsung Su (叢甦), Chen Jo-hsi (陳若曦), Ouyang Tzu (歐陽子), Shih Shu-ching (施叔青) and Li Ang (李昂).

feminism. In the seventh chapter, Chiang discusses Li Ang's most influential works from "Mixed Choir" [混聲合唱 Hunsheng hechang] to *The Labyrinth Garden*. She considers Li Ang as a writer who concerns herself with the development of the female, both consciously and systematically. By analyzing female protagonists in these works, Chiang concludes how women in Li Ang's fiction eventually achieve their self-identity.

Later, at the end of the 1990s, more theses begin to focus exclusively on Li Ang. Hung Shan-hui's [洪珊慧] master thesis, "Sex, Women, Humanity—Research on Li Ang's Fiction" [性·女性·人性—李昂小說研究 Xing nüxing renxing Li Ang xiaoshuo yanjiu] is the first monographic study of Li Ang in Taiwan. Hung divides Li Ang's writing into four periods and discusses them separately. Hung emphasizes the significant influence of Li Ang's hometown in her fiction and analyzes the developmental feature of Li Ang's writing in different periods. However, Hung does not explore to what extent the sex, women and humanity affect Li Ang's works, which limits the scope of her thesis.

Besides dissertations, some journals and articles are also devoted to Li Ang's works. Some controversy surrounds Li Ang's works. Some examples are found in Chin Heng-chieh's criticism in *Unitas Literary Monthly* and *Contemporary* magazines. He considers *The Labyrinth Garden* too shallow as fiction. He also strongly disagrees with the story's portrayal of sex. In spite of these negative comments, some critics have viewed Li Ang's work in a positive manner. Peng Hsiao-yen 彭小妍 greatly praises Li Ang in "Erotic Writing and Political Narrative of Woman Writer: An Interpretation of *The Labyrinth Garden*"

[女作家的情慾書寫與政治論述——解讀《迷園》 Nüzuojia de qingyu shuxie yu zhengzhi lunshu jiedu Miyuan] in *Chung Wai Literary Monthly* [zhongwai wenxue] in 1995. She discusses how Li Ang combines love relationship with politics in Taiwan by employing a feminist point of view. She considers *The Labyrinth Garden* a political metaphor of Taiwan through which Li Ang has successfully reconstructed Taiwanese history.

Li Ang has received attention not only in Taiwan, but also overseas. In fact, although Li Ang has experienced lots of attention and controversy in Taiwan, she still receives positive reviews overseas. Some of her works—especially her novella, *The Butcher's Wife*—have been translated into English, Japanese, French and German. As early as the late 1980s, some articles began to discuss Li Ang's works as part of Taiwanese literature. Later, Sheung-Yuen Daisy Ng wrote a series of short articles about Li Ang between 1987 and 1988. In her article, "Feminism in the Chinese Context: Li Ang's *The Butcher's Wife*," she presents an extremely detailed discussion about *The Butcher's Wife*, employing a feminist point of view. By introducing the emergence and development of the Taiwanese feminist movement beginning in the 1970s, she argues that *The Butcher's Wife* presents the sexual depredation of women in a patriarchal society and reveals the socio-economic nature of women's victimization. Ng also argues that Li Ang has closely related hunger to sex, and underpins the economic nature of the suppressed female in *The Butcher's Wife*. Ng is the first scholar in the West who focuses exclusively on Li Ang. Later in the last two decades, more and more scholars begin to notice the importance of Li Ang in Taiwanese literary history.

They have published more than 100 articles and essays about Li Ang in recent decades, and these works have greatly contributed to an expanded body of overseas research.

1.3 Shortcomings of Previous Research

Although Li Ang has received attention and sparked controversy both in Taiwan and overseas, there are still some shortcomings in previous research. First of all, few theses exclusively focus on Li Ang. Scholars have always compared Li Ang to other women writers, considering Li Ang as one of the women writers rather than an independent individual. Secondly, although Li Ang is famous for exploring feminine self in her works, current research mostly focuses on her single fiction and discusses female characters independently. For example, there are discussions about single female character in *The Butcher's Wife*, or in *The Labyrinth Garden*, yet no scholar has ever noticed the development of feminine selves of these female characters in Li Ang's works diachronically.

Until now, there is still no thesis focusing exclusively on her most important feature in her writing, namely how women in her works have developed their feminine selves in more than 30 years since Li Ang began publishing *The Butcher's Wife*.

1.4 The Significance of the Research

The intriguing issue that has attracted my attention is the development of feminine self in Li Ang's works during different stages of her writing. Women in her works have no awareness of their inferior social status at the beginning and

eventually have developed their feminine identities in the end. Female characters finally liberate themselves from patriarchy. Li Ang's feminine writing has developed alongside with feminist movement in Taiwan. Thus her works can be considered as epitomes of the developmental history of the Taiwanese feminist movement.

Li Ang is quite aware of the social status of women and their struggle with the patriarchal society. However, in the beginning of her writing, Li Ang did not have any awareness at all. She concludes her early works as "didn't have the slightest concept of gender."¹² Later she had more opportunity to meet with different women in her life and to experience the development of the feminist movement in Taiwan. In her own words, "It wasn't until I wrote *The Butcher's Wife* that I intentionally sought to engage with the predicament of women."¹³ Since then, women have become the main concern in her works. In different stages of her writing, Li Ang shows her developmental solutions to the questions she has put.

My thesis aspires to address the essence of Li Ang's works through a detailed analysis of her works. In her 30 years of writing, Li Ang has published more than 30 novels and short stories, almost all of which focus on female issues. Therefore, in the following chapters, I plan to choose three of her main works to discuss how she has developed feminine self in her fiction. Specifically, I plan to use *The Butcher's Wife*, *The Labyrinth Garden* and *Bewitching Love* as my main

¹²Li Ang, "Bright Li Ang versus Dark Li Ang", in *The Flower Season that Never Wither: Collection of Papers on Li Ang's Conference*, (Taipei: Unitas Publishing Co., Ltd, 2012), p.23. Here I borrow the translation of this article by Terence Russell in *Chinese Literature Today*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2011, 14-23.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.23.

research subjects. These three works, separately published in 1982, 1991 and 2001, respectively, best represent different stages of the development of feminine self in Li Ang's fiction, along with the development of Taiwanese feminist movement. They exhibit different questions that women have encountered in different periods of their feminine selves and the development of Li Ang's writing in different historical periods.

While greatly indebted to different scholars' remarkable studies about Li Ang, I want my thesis to be distinct from previous scholarly works. I plan to arrive at a detailed conclusion to the development of feminine self Li Ang has focused on in 30 years. I will summarize Li Ang's development of feminine self through her concern with sex and exploration of female experience in sexuality. I hope my thesis can be the first to systematically discuss the most important feature of Li Ang's works, namely the development of feminine self. I hope my research can contribute to current research on Li Ang.

My thesis will exclusively focus on Li Ang and her three representative works, each of which was published 10 years after the other and can therefore best show the development of her ideas about female issues. I will further investigate the development of Li Ang's feminist point of view in the text, and its relationship to the development of the Taiwanese feminist movement since the 1970s. This thesis plans to be the first to research the developmental history of feminine self in Li Ang's fiction, and aims to contribute to both feminist literary criticism and individual studies of Li Ang.

1.5 The Structure of the Research

Chapter 1 has so far discussed the focus of the research, the literature review on previous research and its shortcomings, and the significance of this research. I will discuss in Chapter 2 what questions Li Ang puts into the text. I plan to discuss, separately, the pain, desperation, and struggle of women and the reality of their social status in Li Ang's three representative works. In Chapter 3, I plan to discuss how Li Ang solves these questions in her own feminist way and how women in her fiction eventually find their feminine identities. I will focus more on how Li Ang rebuilds the female "Garden of Eden" and uses a feminist solution to achieve the self-completion of women. I am going to discuss this issue from three aspects. Firstly, I plan to discuss how Li Ang reconstructs the female issues through the deconstruction of male authority as represented by the phallogocentric symbol. Secondly, I will examine how Li Ang reconstructs the feminine self in her works. At last, I will discuss women's voice in the text. I plan to use feminism to analyze how Li Ang constructs her own style of feminine writing.

Chapter 2 The Situation of Women: Objectified, Gazed and Marginalized

To discuss how Li Ang has gradually created developing feminine self in her fiction, it is necessary to consider what questions she has asked in the text. After Li Ang completed her master's degree at the University of Oregon and returned to Taiwan later that year, she had already begun to focus on female topics, trying to discuss the social status of women in a patriarchal society. In fact, long before she published *The Butcher's Wife*, Li Ang had already begun writing about women, in her first short story "The Flower Season." However, the theme of "The Flower Season" is much closer to French existentialism, especially the thought of Jean-Paul Sartre, than it is to feminism. Li Ang did not have enough awareness to examine Taiwanese female issues at that time and instead primarily focused on the sexual curiosity and anxiety of adolescence. Finally, after several years' study abroad, Li Ang was able to rethink Taiwanese society from a different perspective. In her later writing, Li Ang thought more critically about the patriarchy in Taiwan.

All three works that I am going to discuss focus on individual women's situations in different historical periods of Taiwan. Also, they reveal different stage in the development of feminine self in Li Ang's works. The first fiction I am going to discuss, *The Butcher's Wife* published in 1982, is Li Ang's first writing to deal with the predicament of women in a patriarchal society. In her own words, she is trying to show that "without the means to establish financial independence,

a woman's fate could be wretched."¹⁴ She depicts a typical female protagonist, Lin Shi, living in a small, traditional Taiwanese fishing village who is almost sold to her husband, a butcher, by her uncle. After Lin Shi is married to the butcher, she suffers abuse from her husband both mentally and physically. Finally, she chops her husband into pieces using his sharp butcher's knife, just as the husband does to the pigs in a slaughterhouse. In this story, Li Ang focuses on the objectification of women, and their miserable situation in a traditional patriarchal society, especially when they are in a small, traditional village where patriarchy has the most power. The second fiction I am going to discuss is *The Labyrinth Garden*, published in 1991. The female protagonist here is quite different from the poor Lin Shi in *The Butcher's Wife*. In *The Labyrinth Garden*, Li Ang is beginning to pay extra attention to how a woman finds her feminine identity in her relationship with other men. And the third fiction, *Bewitching Love*, Li Ang's most recent book is even in accordance with the queer theory to develop feminine self which has tremendous importance to feminine writing in Taiwan. From Lin Shi in *The Butcher's Wife*, who has no feminine self at all, to independent lesbians in *Bewitching Love*, consciously or unconsciously, Li Ang becomes the explorer of feminism, in her own way.

2.1 *The Butcher's Wife*: Objectified Woman under Patriarchy

What drew Li Ang to write this story is the time she happened to see a short news report named "Mrs Zhan-Zhou Killed Her Husband" [詹周氏殺夫 Zhan zhou shi sha fu] in *Chun Shen Old Stories* [春申舊聞 Chun shen jiu wen] written

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

by Chen Ting-shan [陳定山]. Shortly after, Li Ang began writing her own version of that story, using the title “A Woman Killed Her Husband” [婦人殺夫 Furen sha fu]. Because she was unfamiliar with Shanghai, the place where the news report “Mrs Zhan-Zhou Killed Her Husband” happened, Li Ang stopped writing the story shortly after she went back to Taiwan in the same year. The final version of that story, *The Butcher’s Wife*, was not published until several years later.

Meanwhile, the setting of the story changes from Shanghai to Taiwan. In the preface, Li Ang explains why she changes the setting of the location:

...but since I knew virtually nothing about Shanghai, I abandoned my plans. It wasn’t until seven years later, after I had returned to Taiwan, that I decided to move the setting of the story to my hometown of Lugang, a small seacoast town in central Taiwan that had once been the island’s second largest city but was now just another small town that retained the flavor of “old Taiwan”.¹⁵

Setting the story in Lugang was a smart choice for Li Ang. Lugang is one of the oldest cities in Taiwan. The earliest historical records of Lugang can be traced back to the Ming dynasty in the 17th century. It was once the region where many aboriginal people lived, and was later gradually occupied by Han emigrants during the Qing dynasty. In the Xianfeng [咸豐] Period of Qing, merchants built Chongxi Harbor [沖西港 chong xi gang] in Dawujun [大武郡 da wu jun], which made Lugang into a prosperous harbor for a long time. However, with the increase of sediment accumulation in the harbor, Lugang gradually lost its role as a port city. Although later it functioned as a city, it would never again be a

¹⁵ Li Ang, “Author’s Preface”, *The Butcher’s Wife*, (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1986), p.iii.

prosperous harbor city. Cities like Lugang which have a long history usually retain the deepest patriarchy norms. Thus, by setting the story here, Li Ang can criticize the restriction of women under a traditional culture.

Taiwanese society experienced a radical transformation in the late 20th century. Both the old patriarchal feudalism and newly born capitalism suppressed women and prevented them from liberating themselves. Many Taiwanese women writers criticized the inferior social status of women and used this as a main theme in their works, a theme that continues to be used even today. The excellence of *The Butcher's Wife* is due less to its writing technique than the penetrating questions Li Ang has asked. In *The Butcher's Wife*, Li Ang confronts and accuses the objectification, or commoditization of women in a patriarchal society, and the exchange of sex for food and survival between men and women. When Li Ang published *The Butcher's Wife*¹⁶, the feminist movement in Taiwan was just at the beginning; thus this story has significantly challenged the traditional male discourse and caused an uproar when it was first published in *United Daily News* in 1983. Despite these endless vituperative critiques, *The Butcher's Wife* is remarkably successful as Li Ang's first effort at conscious feminine writing.

As the female protagonist in *The Butcher's Wife*, Lin Shi is weak and small, unable to control her destiny. Her father died when she was young, and her uncle forcibly occupied their house and kicked out the poor mother and fatherless child. Lin Shi and her mother have to beg for food, and live in a tattered temple near

¹⁶ The novella, *The Butcher's Wife*, was first published by Lian-ching Publishing Co. in 1982. Later in 1983, it was republished along with *Lucheng Stories*.

their former home. It is wartime, and Lin Shi's mother is unable to make a living, so the two women are always extremely hungry. Nobody in their family takes care of them. Later when Lin Shi's mother is raped by a soldier for some food in the temple, the young Lin Shi is so afraid that she asks her uncle for help. The men in the Lin family all come to the temple to judge Lin Shi's poor mother. Her uncle, who once kicked Lin Shi and her mother out of their house, now pretends as if he is a man of honor with a strong sense of morality:

Just then, to everyone's surprise, Lin Shi's uncle pushed his way through the crowd, stood right in front of the soldier, and slapped him soundly twice. Then trumping his own chest, he proclaimed that the Lins were, after all, an honorable family at all, she would have resisted to the end and died a chaste woman. Who knows, they might even have erected a memorial arch in her honor¹⁷.

It seems that when the uncle forcibly occupied the house and kicked out Lin Shi and her mother, he never noticed the existence of the "memorial arch". It is notable that when Lin Shi's father died, the uncle makes excuses, saying that "sooner or later the widow will remarry,"¹⁸ and takes the only property away from the poor mother and daughter. He considers himself to be the defender of traditional ethics, and therefore he is the appropriate person to judge others. In a word, Lin Shi's uncle is the stereotypical hypocrite in traditional community who represents the dominance of patriarchy over women. These male norms require women to maintain absolute obedience and chastity to their husbands and fathers, even at the price of their lives. Women are considered as men's personal

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8-9.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

possessions, similar to what Simone de Beauvoir argues in her book, *The Second Sex*:

When she becomes a young girl, the father has all power over her; when she marries he transfers it *in toto* to the husband. Since a wife is his property like a slave, a beast of burden, or a chattel... The husband can put away his wives at his caprice, society according them almost no security... On the contrary, when woman becomes man's property, he wants her to be virgin, and he requires complete fidelity under threats of extreme penalties¹⁹.

It is true enough that men in a patriarchal society consider women to be their personal possessions. They objectify and commoditize their wives, daughters and other women. "One fundamental to preindustrial, patriarchal states: unlike men, women were more like things than people."²⁰ Men who support the family own women, especially their wives, and this is also what Li Ang tries to indicate in *The Butcher's Wife*.

By setting the story in Lucheng²¹, the most significant patriarchal seacoast town in Taiwan, Li Ang vividly depicts the miserable situation of women like Lin Shi who suffer the most significant objectification in patriarchal society. Lin Shi is the typical image of objectified woman in a patriarchal society. She has no ability to make a living, whether raised up by her uncle in her childhood or married to Chen Jiangshui later; thus her fate is always controlled by others, especially by men. After Lin Shi's mother disappeared from the village, Lin Shi's uncle reluctantly adopts her. He does not give Lin Shi enough food, and makes

¹⁹ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, (London: Lowe & Brydone, 1956), p. 107.

²⁰ Hill Gate, "The Commoditization of Chinese Women", *Signs*, Vol. 14, No. 4, p. 799.

²¹ Lucheng is the same as Lugang in Li Ang's fictions.

her do hard labor. What's more, the uncle is always trying to find a chance to sell Lin Shi to a man so that he can get some economic benefit. He "had always had plans for her [Lin Shi], and if it hadn't been for the other clansmen, he would have sold her on a number of occasions."²² Finally, he forces Lin Shi to marry a rude butcher, who has an unsavory reputation and is more than 20 years older than Lin Shi. The uncle here plays the role of father, the representative of patriarchy. By selling Lin Shi to the butcher, the uncle has made himself a pretty good deal. During times of need and food, "every ten days or two weeks, Pig-Butcher Chen was to send over a pound of pork."²³ In this marriage, nobody ever asks Lin Shi about her own opinion. She has no power to decide her life. The only value Lin Shi has in a patriarchal society is equal to some pork, or even lower. Simply, in a word, Lin Shi's feminine self is totally denied by patriarchal society.

After Lin Shi is married to Chen Jiangshui, her ownership passes from her uncle to her husband. Chen Jiangshui treats her even worse than her uncle did. He never considers Lin Shi as his wife, a woman who is equal to him; instead he treats her like a personal possession, or rather a sexual toy which he has bought for the price of some pork. He uses food to control Lin Shi, and abuses her both physically and mentally. Their marriage is merely the relationship between sex and food. Every time Chen Jiangshui treats Lin Shi as the object of his bestial sexual desire, he always gives her some food in exchange. As Li Ang has pointed out, what she tries to reveal is some "larger issues of humanity, such as hunger,

²² Li Ang, *The Butcher's Wife*, (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1986), p. 80.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

death, sex.”²⁴ Lin Shi is a commodity for trade rather than a human being, and he can thus abuse her, beat her, and harass her as an object without any limitations. Lin Shi’s painful screams when Chen Jiangshui is sexually abusing her become Chen Jiangshui’s proof of his sexual prowess, and also the source of malicious rumors about Lin Shi among the women in the small fishing village where she lives.

Besides treating Lin Shi as his sexual object, Chen Jiangshui also frequently weakens Lin Shi’s feminine identity. He is not concerned about Lin Shi’s feeling, and all he needs to do is bringing food back home and having sex with Lin Shi. In Chen Jiangshui’s opinion, Lin Shi is equal to a prostitute, or even worse. Also, he never asks Lin Shi about her opinion. In the end of *The Butcher’s Wife*, after Chen Jiangshui sexually abuses her during her menstrual period, he becomes enraged, and since then he never brings any food home. Lin Shi is starving again, and has to go out for food. When Chen Jiangshui hears this, he thinks Lin Shi is trying to humiliate him. So he goes back home, not only to mercilessly beat Lin Shi, but also to kill her ducks, which are her last hope for food and the future. Under such objectification, Lin Shi is frightened all the time and under extreme psychological distress. Thus, it is not surprising that Lin Shi finally kills Chen Jiangshui.

Lin Shi is the sacrifice of patriarchy domination. She is sold and bought like commercial goods, and is abused as a personal possession of men. Li Ang points out, “without the means to establish financial independence, a woman’s fate could

²⁴ Ibid., p. iv.

be wretched.”²⁵ Woman without the ability to make a living under the traditional economic structure in Chinese society is doomed to be inferior in society, to be objectified by men who have property and can make an income. Li Ang uses the most extreme, deviant story of a woman who kills her husband, to criticize the situation of women in a patriarchal society.

2.2 *The Labyrinth Garden: The Female under Male Gaze*

The concept of gaze, or to put it more precisely, the male gaze, has been developing in feminism for decades. When Jacques Lacan first mentions the concept of gaze, it is a concrete appearance of “objet petit a,” the projection of self-recognition to the counterpart which has to be excluded from the self. French feminists later adapt this idea to criticize the male oppression towards women. Especially, Laura Mulvey elaborates and re-interprets this idea in her article, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”. She argues that under traditional male dominance, the relationship between men and women is more like “women as image, men as bearer of the look.”²⁶ “In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female.”²⁷ She further considers that “the woman displayed has functioned on two levels: as erotic object for the characters within the screen story, and as erotic object for the spectator within the auditorium.”²⁸

²⁵ Li Ang, “Bright Li Ang versus Dark Li Ang”, *The Flower Season that Never Wither: Collection of Papers on Li Ang's Conference*. (Taipei: Unitas Publishing Co., Ltd, 2012), p. 23.

²⁶ Laura Mulvey, Eds, Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, (New York: Oxford UP, 1999), p. 837.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 838.

For a long time in the history of literature, mostly in Chinese literature, the function of the image of women was supplying the reading pleasure and obscenity gaze for male readers. Also, the image of women in literature was depicted exclusively by male writers. In their works, the image of women was usually functioned as the accessory of heroes, or the unnamed proponent of male success. As Simone de Beauvoir describes, “Men have shaped for their own exaltation great virile figures... Woman has only a secondary part to play in the destiny of those heroes... Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with absolute truth.”²⁹ Besides, women were depicted as the model to teach other women. For instance, the concept of chastity pervades in literary works. In *The Butcher's Wife*, Lin Shi's mother is considered as unchaste under male norms, for she did not resist being raped. Also, women were displayed as the sexual object for entertainment, especially in erotic works written by male writers. In a word, women were the objects under male gaze for a long time in Chinese literary history.

Finished in 1991, *The Labyrinth Garden* represents a whole new stage of Li Ang's feminism. The female protagonist in this story is no longer the weak, helpless one in *The Butcher's Wife* who is repressed under patriarchal rules; instead she walks away from the conventional town and moves to modern city, living her life in a new way. As mentioned in the introduction, Taiwanese society became liberated after the lifting of martial law in 1987. However, the emergence of feminism was much earlier. As early as in the 1970s, Annette Lu had already

²⁹ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, (London: Lowe & Brydone, 1956), p. 162.

introduced feminism into Taiwanese society. With the effort of many Taiwanese feminists, later in the 1980s, feminism in Taiwan finally became a massive action that eventually liberated the women in the truest sense. With the idea of sexual equality, more and more women began to use writing as their strategy to share the social discourse with men. Not only did they reshape the images of women in traditional male literature, they also tried to rewrite the male-dominated literary history by combining political and historical factors with gender equality from a female perspective. Some of their works were considered as outrageous and were not accepted by that time. However, these works recorded the truest image of women at that very time. Although Li Ang explains later that *The Labyrinth Garden* is “not only intended to be part of the discourse on ‘nation [guo zu 國族]’”³⁰, she still closely ties together the story between Zhu Yinghong and Lin Xigeng to the Taiwanese society. As David Der-Wei Wang claims in his article, Li Ang’s works convey the meaning and changes of time³¹.

When Li Ang wrote *The Labyrinth Garden*, she was more sophisticated than when she wrote *The Butcher’s Wife*. Instead of merely describing the miserable situation of women as in *The Butcher’s Wife*³², now Li Ang is fully prepared to explore the feminine self. She illustrates woman’s fate—whether

³⁰ Li Ang, “Bright Li Ang versus Dark Li Ang”, *The Flower Season that Never Withers: Collection of Papers on Li Ang’s Conference*, (Taipei: Unitas Publishing Co., Ltd, 2012), p. 19.

³¹ See David Der-wei Wang, “Preface: Sex, Scandal and Aesthetic Politics: On Li Ang’s Sex Fiction”, *The Bei Gang Incense Burner*, (Taipei: Rye Field Publications, 1997), p. 9-42.

³² Li Ang has described this in “Author’s Preface” of *The Butcher’s Wife*. “I cannot deny that I approached the writing of *The Butcher’s Wife* with a number of feminist ideals, wanting to show the tragic fate that awaited the economically dependent Taiwanese women living under the rules of traditional Chinese society.” See *The Butcher’s Wife*, (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1986), p. vi.

miserable or blessed—and her development of self-consciousness through pain and conflict in her relationships with men. As Li Ang observes:

The Butcher's Wife had already touched upon the question of women and their external environment. Now I wanted to turn to the uncanny internal world of women. I wanted to examine whether there was a “feminine self [女性本我 nǚxìng běn wǒ]” that had never been overly conditioned by society.³³

However, as a rebellious woman writer, Li Ang does not consider these questions in a usual way of feminine writing. Although *The Labyrinth Garden* tells a story about how the female protagonist finally finds her feminine self through pain and frustration in her relationship with men, the way Li Ang depicts the journey of the female protagonist to her feminine self is extremely tortuous. As Li Ang writes, “it was also intended to highlight yet another, even greater, core issue: decadence. In their decadence, father and daughter each employ a different and extremely ornate means of achieving a kind of destruction.”³⁴ Zhu Yinghong, the female protagonist has been always struggling from the beginning to the end in the story. There are times that she controls other men as her object under her gaze; likewise, sometimes she also has lost herself in relationship with some men. Although tortuous, she is finally able to win the battle between women and men.

Despite Zhu Yinghong in *The Labyrinth Garden* is no longer the weak Lin Shi in *The Butcher's Wife*, it is clear that the social status of women still has not progressed much. In the beginning of *The Labyrinth Garden*, Li Ang carefully

³³ Li Ang, “Bright Li Ang versus Dark Li Ang”, *The Flower Season that Never Wither: Collection of Papers on Li Ang's Conference*, (Taipei: Unitas Publishing Co., Ltd, 2012).

³⁴ *Ibid.*

arranges Zhu Yinghong's first encounter with Lin Xigeng in a dinner of commercial magnates in Taipei, where women are considered as objects which can supply those magnates with visual pleasure under male gaze. In fact, Zhu Yinghong, as well as what other girls sing in that dinner, is helpless in that place. They cannot control their destiny and are doomed to be the objects of male gaze from the beginning. Zhu Yinghong is quite aware of this. She knows clearly that women at that place are "doomed to be abandoned"³⁵ by these men, and thus she has to abandon herself to love. However, she still has lost herself with Lin Xigeng in that dancing hall.

Zhu Yinghong's relationship with Lin Xigeng is a complex combination of love and mutual benefits: she is attracted by his handsomeness, and also by his great wealth and a possible future of being his wife. Similarly, for Lin Xigeng, having a relationship with Zhu Yinghong is a win-win: not only because she is beautiful and elegant, but also she was born into an aristocratic family will greatly help him with his business in the future. In Lin Xigeng's opinion, women are only his objects and no women can control him: "How can I let a woman control my whole life... They should be obedient to me, not me."³⁶ He has illicit relationships with many other women at the same time when he is dating Zhu Yinghong. For him, Zhu Yinghong is simply another sexual object among all the women around him, and his love for her is not genuine. So when Zhu Yinghong wants to be his only one, he immediately makes his decision to escape from her:

³⁵ Li Ang, *The Labyrinth Garden*, (Taipei: Rye Field Publications, 2006), p. 47.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

“I will be your most reliable elder brother. If your boyfriend treats you badly in the future, I will punch him in his face for you.”

“我做妳最有力的大哥，以後你的男朋友膽敢對你不好，我替妳去揍他。”³⁷

It is clear that Lin Xigeng never takes women seriously. Instead, he treats women as objects, displaying for his visual pleasure. From the beginning of the story, he views Zhu Yinghong as an object. He praised Zhu Yinghong in the dancing hall:

You seem like to be born in the last century... You possess the serenity [of women]... the traditional virtue of Taiwanese women who are chaste, quiet, well-behaved, and docile.

妳好像生在……生在上個世紀……你有那個時代的女性的那種安靜……那種傳統台灣女人的美德，像貞潔、柔順、有家教、乖巧……³⁸

Although Zhu Yinghong no longer lives in a small town where patriarchal norms restrain her (like Lin Shi), she has to face a new discrimination towards women: the male gaze treating women as objects. The words Lin Xigeng says to Zhu Yinghong and the way he looks at her show his attitude towards her, namely, as an object that is under his male gaze and provides him with visible pleasure. For him, Zhu Yinghong is not a woman, not even a human being, but more like a vase full of flowers for him to appreciate. Lin Xigeng considers her as an icon, which is “the woman as icon, displayed for the gaze and enjoyment of man.”³⁹ He

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.48.

³⁹ Laura Mulvey, Eds. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen. “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.” *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, (New York: Oxford UP, 1999), p. 840.

is extremely fascinated with her exquisite silk lingerie, simple but elegant outerwear, and long straight hair, just to get his visual pleasure of women. Throughout the text, Lin Xigeng views Zhu Yinghong from different perspectives: her beautiful looking and her sexual submission. At the same time, Zhu Yinghong even lost herself in the beginning of this relationship. She is not aware of the fact that she has become Lin Xigeng's object of gaze. Although unlike Lin Shi who is not aware of her miserable situation under a patriarchal society, Zhu Yinghong has nonetheless lost her identity as a woman in the beginning. In the latter part of *The Labyrinth Garden*, she begins to use her intelligence to fight back not only to Lin Xigeng, but to the whole male dominance. Through her victories and setbacks, she is finally able to find her most important feminine self.

2.3 *Bewitching Love*: The Marginalized Lesbians

A different but brave attempt to female issues, *Bewitching Love* was rejected by three presses before it was published in 2005. It was rejected for violating of the *Measure Governing the Rating Systems of Publications and Pre-recorded Video Programs* [出版品及錄影節目帶分級辦法 chubanpin ji luying jiemudai fenji banfa]. To publish this fiction, Li Ang even brought her badge of the French Order of Arts and Letters to question the government officer who had levied the charges against her. Finally, *Bewitching Love* is published by Locus. This time Li Ang does not only aim to discuss women's situation in a patriarchy society, but tries to get involved in recent lesbian issues by employing the perspective of a straight woman, Lin Yunyuan in *Bewitching Love*.

Li Ang has mentioned homosexual love in her previous works. For example, at the beginning of *The Labyrinth Garden*, a gay man named Xiao Shen is raising money in a bar for another gay man, their manager Charlie, who is infected with AIDS. Xiao Shen is discriminated against and excluded by all the people in the bar. From the moment he walks into the bar, people begin to judge and despise him and his gay friends for their sexual orientation. They ridicule the gay man, saying that “his infection AIDS is the God’s punishment. You should thank God for not sending you to jail. You even have no sense of shame to asking us for money.”⁴⁰ “You know, they are ‘that’ kind of person. Horrible, it is terrible, the world’s up side down.”⁴¹ It is clear that homosexual relationships were marginalized at that time, and thus Xiao Shen’s retort seems to be unconvincing. “Charlie is the first AIDS in Taiwan, and it is historical. We will find a new way for all gay men in Taiwan by using this opportunity.”⁴² His argument is weak, and in the end he has to leave the bar humiliated.

Unlike a heterosexual relationship that is generally considered as romantic, a homosexual relationship in Taiwan is considered forbidden, immoral and even disgusting. Homosexuality appeared very early in human history, but was considered as betraying faith in God and was strictly forbidden during the medieval period. Later, in the beginning of the 20th century, homosexuality was considered a kind of mental illness. In recent decades, because of various protest movements, the social status of gay people has gradually begun to improve in the western world. However, in the old and conservative eastern world, homosexual

⁴⁰ Li Ang, *The Labyrinth Garden*, (Taipei: Rye Field Publications, 2006), p. 12.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

love is still considered a taboo. Unlike gay people in western countries who have the courage to fight and to protest, gay people in Taiwan seldom fight back. Also, their low social status even makes this kind of activism impossible. Not only are they excluded, discriminated against by the people around them, they are also marginalized by the whole Taiwanese society. The reaction of people in the bar described in *The Labyrinth Garden* is a truest picture of discrimination towards gay people in Taiwan at that time.

In such a conservative society where gay people are discriminated, it is not difficult to guess that the lesbians receive more discrimination. Similar to the black women in the western feminist movement who have to fight against not only sexual discrimination but also racial discrimination, lesbians in Taiwan also have to deal with double discrimination: as women and as gay people. They are rejected by their families, marginalized by the society, and can only stay in their own lesbian communities in their lives.

Bewitching Love is about the tangled story of four women, and also about their love, pain and feelings. Li Ang does not directly illustrate how they are marginalized by society; quite on the contrary, they look like ordinary people who have normal jobs. For example, Fang Hua is a photographer, and An Ya works as a model. These women seem to have normal lives in the story. Only by examining the text more closely do we find out that these women rarely have a relationship with the “outside world.” The outside world, in which the majority of people are straight, is the opposite of their lesbian world. The male norms of the outside world do not apply in the lesbian world. In the lesbian world, they have their own

lives and feelings. Their love stories with each other are inconceivable from an outside point of view. In this lesbian world, these female characters are no longer restrained by any norms; they make their own norms. Their colorful ways in which they exist in their world are in notable contrast with their detached situations with the outside world. In the outside world, people do not accept homosexual love, and also have no interest in understanding how colorful the lesbian world is. In a word, the female characters in *Bewitching Love* are marginalized by straight people.

Meanwhile, the female characters also cut themselves off from their past. We cannot collect any information about their history from the narration; we can only imagine their past lives and what they have encountered. These women seem to live in an imaginary world rather than a real world. They never talk about their past. For example, An Ya, the mysterious, beautiful and attractive woman in the story, only talks about herself. “Lin Yunyuan have never seen a person, no matter male or female, so obsessed with him/her. An Ya only talks about herself, and most of the time, her love story only.”⁴³ Li Ang does not directly describe how the society excludes these lesbians; instead, she illustrates their situation of being discriminated against. Society has a hostile attitude towards them, for they are “the heterodox people and the society does not know how to face them. The simplest way is to keep distance from them, or to exclude them from the society.”⁴⁴

⁴³ Li Ang, *Bewitching Love*, (Taipei: Locus, 2005), p. 35.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

Li Ang uses the perspective of Lin Yunyuan, who was a straight woman but slowly comes to embrace life as a lesbian, to discuss their actual position. “About the deep love between women, since I have gotten involved in it, I gradually have begun to understand the love without recognition from our society is hard to be blessed.”⁴⁵ As described in the novel, the reason that these lesbians do not have any past is simply because these women are rejected. They have to pull together, create their own world, protect themselves, and meanwhile, break any of their relationships with the outside world, even with their families. It is possible that they have a miserable memory about their families at the same time that their families are disgusted by their homosexual choice. In the novel, after Fang Hua has committed suicide in her bathroom, her family appears for the first time. However, the behavior of her family vividly describes their aversion to these lesbians:

The middle-aged man comes a little earlier than the police, without particular astonishment. He introduces himself as the elder brother of Fang Hua. Clearly he knows An Ya, and he never disguises his disgust towards her,

“Please go back. It’s none of your business.”

After saying that way, he seems like not to scold enough,

“We do not want to see you anymore.”

較警察早一步到來的是一個見過世面的中年男人，沒什麼特別的震驚與意外，表明是方華的大哥。顯然認得安雅，一看到在門口的安雅，全然不隱瞞如此嫌惡的一揮手做了個送客的姿勢：

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

“你請回，這裏沒你的事。”

然後還嫌不夠，加上說：

“我們不希望再看到你。”⁴⁶

An Ya is rejected by Fang Hua's family while Lin Yunyuan, is accepted as the heterosexual one. Fang Hua's dilemma is normal for a lesbian. Not only had the society excommunicated these lesbians, but their family had done the same. They are the “perverse” ones compared with others, wandering on the edge of gender and sex.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

Chapter 3 Rebuilding the Feminine Self: A Feminist Solution

Li Ang does not build her female “Garden of Eden” in one day. At the end of *Bewitching Love*, she concludes her 30 years’ writing on female issues in her essay, “Women in My Fiction.” From “having utterly no concern on sex/gender”⁴⁷ in the beginning, to later “realizing maybe sexual issues are my destiny that I cannot evade in my works”⁴⁸, Li Ang uses 30 years to explore the feminine situation in a patriarchal society and to question the patriarchy. Finally, she is able to reconstruct feminine self that has been repressed and objectified for a long time in a patriarchal society.

Although women in her works finally achieve their feminine selves, their way to this liberation is far more difficult, even bloody. Despite the inspiring theme of feminism in her works, there is still a depressed, even desperate feeling pervading the text. In Li Ang’s own words, this feeling is the “darkness” of her fiction. The bloody scene after Lin Shi kills her husband, the bewildering relationship between Zhu Yinghong and Lin Xigeng, and the death and decadency of lesbians, all of these give us a desperate feeling. Li Ang has admitted this clearly that “in that sense I am a ‘dark’ writer”⁴⁹ who is different from other women writers. She describes her writing as a “different shade of darkness,” and also mentions this in a recent academic conference:

⁴⁷ Li Ang, “Women in My Fiction”, in *Bewitching Love*, (Taipei: Locus, 2005), p.224.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Li Ang. “Bright Li Ang versus Dark Li Ang”, *The Flower Season that Never Wither: Collection of Papers on Li Ang's Conference*, (Taipei: Unitas Publishing Co., Ltd, 2012), p.17.

As far back as when I wrote my earliest stories, “Flower Season” (“hua ji” 花季) and “Curvaceous Dolls” (“you qu xian de wa wa” 有曲線的娃娃), I was beset by fear, unease, and confusion. Then “doubts” were introduced in the story “Looking Back” (“hui gu” 回顧). *The Butcher’s Wife* (sha fu 殺夫) was full of blood and gore, and *Dark Night* (an ye 暗夜) was a study in immorality. Then, with *The Lost Garden* (mi yuan 迷園) came decadence. All that frustration and apprehension might ultimately have led to the sort of renewed self-affirmation that comes after a bloodbath, and maybe I approached it all in a thoroughly feminine way. What I accomplished was definitely not blissful harmony or political correctness in a conventional sense⁵⁰.

To describe Li Ang’s writing style with the term “darkness” is the most accurate. For instance, Zhu Yinghong in *The Labyrinth Garden* finally marries the man she once loved and regains the Han Garden at the end. However, when Lin Xigeng proposes to her, she feels that it seems like she has never loved him. Desperate feeling—or even doubt—always permeates in Li Ang’s works, and one may suspect that even if these women actually get their happiness and identity. However, this is more likely based on the “different shade of darkness” that Li Ang has described. The “she” in Li Ang’s fiction is more like a phoenix in the old legend that dies in flames and then is reborn. Compared with female characters in other women writers’ works, even in male writers’ works, women in Li Ang’s works always reconstruct their feminine selves through pain and conflict, and their way always seems to be more tortuous.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

3.1 Denial of Phallus: Symbolic Castration in Text

Li Ang has repeatedly mentioned women's social status in a patriarchal society, and how the patriarchal society has fettered women both mentally and physically. She sharply questions male dominance throughout her writing, and also gives a clear solution to all questions she has raised.

The phallus is the symbol of male domination in the patriarchal society for a long time. At the beginning of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud⁵¹ considers women to be castrated and incomplete since they do not have penises. Freud thinks women envy men (hence his term "penis envy") because men possess real penises. Freud further explains his idea of castrated women in his "On the Sexual Theories of Children." In this article, Freud asserts that women have a "deficiency" because they do not have the real penises. It is quite clear that Freud has constructed his psychoanalysis from a male-centric point of view: women are deficient while men, who possess penises, are perfect and complete. Freud's viewpoint towards women presents the phallogentric patriarchy in the west. Later, Jacques Lacan⁵² revises Freud's idea of penis envy. He no longer uses the word "penis" to represent some kind of male dominance, but carefully chooses "phallus" as the symbol of male dominance. In his famous speech "The Significance of the Phallus", Lacan considers the phallus as "a signifier, a signifier whose function, in the intrasubjective economy of analysis, may lift the

⁵¹ Sigmund Freud (1856 - 1939), an Austrian neurologist who is generally considered as the founding father of modern psychoanalysis.

⁵² Jacques Lacan (1901 - 1981), a French psychoanalyst and psychiatrist, made great contributions to both psychoanalysis and philosophy. He has been called as "the most controversial psychoanalyst since Freud." See "Introduction" in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (London 1994), p. xiv.

veil from the function it served in the mysterious.”⁵³ He then further articulates that “the structures that govern the relations between the sexes”⁵⁴ are nothing more than “a being and a having”⁵⁵ “since they refer to a signifier, the phallus.”⁵⁶ For women, he considers “it is in order to be the phallus—that is, the signifier of the Other’s desire—that a woman rejects an essential part of femininity, namely, all its attributes, in the masquerade.”⁵⁷ Although he has slightly changed Freud’s concept of real “penis” into the symbolic “phallus,” Lacan’s idea is still a phallogocentric point of view. Men, who “have” the phallus, are more superior to women who can only “be” the phallus without “having” it. From real “penis” to symbolic “phallus,” men have the ultimate control over everything, including women. Thus, Lacan concludes society has constructed itself based on the culture of the phallus.

Following this, the phallus is the most prominent symbol in a male-dominated society, which becomes the cause of women’s inferior positions and men’s dominant positions. As one feminist has pointed out, “the phallus is the crucial signifier in the distribution of power, authority and a speaking position, a kind of mark or badge of a social position.”⁵⁸ It is clear that the men in Li Ang’s works possess a sense of superiority over the women simply by the fact of their “having phallus.” Li Ang repeatedly mentions the objectification of women and the male gaze all of which based on the issue between “to be” and “to have” the

⁵³ Jacques Lacan, “The Significance of Phallus”, *Ecrits: A Selection*, (London: Routledge, 2001), p.275.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Elizabeth Grosz, *Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction*, (London: Routledge, 1990), p.125.

phallus. After she has insightfully pinpointed the cause of female inferiority in her text, she shows her unique way of resolving. Since the phallus is the symbol and center of a male society, Li Ang uses a most radical solution by castrating men who possess the phallus and strengthening the identities of women in a textual sense. She “kills” them, “castrates” them, and finally “deletes” them from her works. The image of men is declining while the image of women is rising. By reversing the images of men and women, Li Ang has successfully allowed women to triumph in her text.

3.1.1 The Killed Husband in *The Butcher’s Wife*

Chen Jiangshui, the butcher in *The Butcher’s Wife*, is a typical male character in the phallogocentric patriarchal society. He establishes his authority and dominion over Lin Shi, his wife, based on his “having” the phallus.

As has already known in the text, Chen Jiangshui makes his living as a butcher, the lowest job at the bottom of society. Also, according to the text, he has an unsavory reputation and no women would like to marry him. Later he “buys” Lin Shi from her uncle as his wife, and his marriage is merely a business deal with Lin Shi’s uncle. To Chen Jiangshui, Lin Shi’s value equals that of the pork that is cut by him every day. As such a small person at the bottom of society who is despised by others in his social circle, Chen Jiangshui belittles his wife. He abuses Lin Shi frequently: he scolds her for no reason and frequently abuses her sexually. He slaps Lin Shi in the face for her close relationship with Awangguan, threatens her by saying “I’ll cut out your tongue with my butcher knife,”⁵⁹ and forces her to

⁵⁹ Li Ang, *The Butcher’s Wife*, (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1986), p. 41.

have sex with him at any time. Chen Jiangshui gets the same pleasure from an orgasm that he does from killing pigs. Every time he has cut a pig deeply through the belly, he always feels like he is experiencing his sexual orgasm. Li Ang describes his feeling as:

As the knife was withdrawn and the blood spurted forth, he was infused with an incomparable sense of satisfaction. It was though the hot stream coursing through his body was converted into a thick, sticky white fluid spurting into the shadowy depths of a woman at the climax of a series of high-speed thrusts. To Chen Jiangshui, the spurting of blood and the ejaculation of semen had the same orgasmic effect.⁶⁰

Clearly Chen Jiangshui is proud of his “having the phallus”, and tries to maintain his masculinity by his sexual violence towards Lin Shi. Every time he forces Lin Shi to have sex with him, Lin Shi suffers severe pain both physically and mentally. “She knew only that he filled her up down there, that his weight pressing down on her made her gasp for the breath, that the pain would be so unbearable she could only scream and moan.”⁶¹ His sexual violence becomes Lin Shi’s nightmare. The mornings, when he forces Lin Shi to satisfy his beast-like sexual desire, become “the most unendurable part of the day”⁶² of Lin Shi. He considers his constant sexual desire a representation of his masculinity. In a word, he constructs his male dominance through his sexual violence towards Lin Shi, and his beast-like intercourse with his wife becomes the effective method. At the

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁶² *Ibid.*

beginning of the story, when Lin Shi is newly married to him, he immediately begins his abuse:

...exhausted and famished, she was close to collapse.

Drunk though the groom was when he came to bed, he insisted on fulfilling his conjugal obligation, causing Lin Shi to exhaust with pitiful scream what little energy she had left. Her screams of pain were so loud and lasted so long... When it was over, Lin Shi was nearly in a dead faint⁶³.

From the beginning, Chen Jiangshui is trying to establish his authority as the husband. Despite his low social status, he still wants to show his mastery of women to make himself look taller. During his marriage to Lin Shi, he often verbally abuses her, calling her a “bitch,” and even extends the abuse to her dead mother. It is true that in traditional Taiwanese society, women have no ability to make a living. As Li Ang describes at the beginning of *The Butcher’s Wife*, Lin Shi considers Chen Jiangshui the man whom she can rely on for all of her life. In fact, women are merely the stuff sold and bought between men in such a patriarchal society. They have no feminine selves and no right to choose their lives. Chen Jiangshui is the source of Lin Shi’s food and money, and their marriage is the binary relationship of sex/food. “On the days that Chen Jiangshui wanted her, he would come home with fish, oysters, and, now and then, some meat.”⁶⁴ Chen Jiangshui even uses food as a weapon to control Lin Shi:

“When whores want to eat, they have to work. You willing to work?”

“Doing what?” Lin Shi asked, hesitantly, timidly.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.13.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.42.

“You just moan a few times, like before, and if I find it satisfactory, well, I’ll reward you with a bowl of rice.”⁶⁵

After Chen Jiangshui forces Lin Shi to have sex while she is in the midst of her menstrual period, he feels a bad luck. The superstitious fears haunt him that he has missed quite a few times when he cuts the pigs in that morning. After that, he begins to hurt Lin Shi more than ever. Not only does he give her no food, he kills the ducks that are her only hope for future food and survival. Under such abuse, Lin Shi is mentally damaged by fear of hunger, sexual violence and the supernatural beings that has haunted her for a long time. She is about to collapse and Li Ang finally gives her answer after arranging so many suffering to Lin Shi:

The broad-backed, thin-edged knife was extraordinarily heavy. Lin Shi gripped it with both hands and stabbed downwards. In the surrounding darkness, the face of a man in a soldier’s uniform flashed into view—there was a scar running from his eyebrow to his chin. Then it was a squealing, struggling pig with a butcher knife buried at an angle in its gullet, buckets of dark red blood gushing from the wound...

The geysers of blood began to converge, and for a brief moment, what looked like a single bloodred pillar penetrated the inky darkness. I must be dreaming. Lin Shi rubbed her eyes. Suddenly the convulsions started, crumbling the pillar, and sending its thick blood splattering in all directions.⁶⁶

The pillar, as a symbol of the penis in psychoanalysis, collapses in the end. The weak woman, Lin Shi, eventually kills her husband with violence and blood.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.126.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.138.

This is the initial stage of Li Ang's feminism. In this stage, female protagonist is repressed by the patriarchal society all the time, and under such repression she finally liberated herself with violence and blood, although with the price of her life.

Female characters in Li Ang's fiction in the 1980s have little self-consciousness in this stage. Firstly, they are not aware of the cause of their tragedy and have no consciousness about patriarchy. They only consider that their fate is decided by god, and they have no power to control or change this situation. Secondly, these women only know they have to be obedient to men; they cannot fight, even when they are abused. Whether the man in question is their father or husband, he has absolute superiority. The women are totally unaware of their objectification. The only way for women to free themselves is using violence against violence at the price of their lives. For example, at the end of *The Butcher's Life*, Lin Shi kills her husband and is sentenced to death. This is Li Ang's solution to female issues when she wrote this story, as the beginning stage of her solution to women issues. In *The Butcher's Wife*, the female protagonist "kills" the butcher in the text, and her way to deconstruct the male dominance is simple, violent and bloody. Lin Shi is extremely suppressed to the most from the beginning of *The Butcher's Wife*, and finally all of her little feminine self suddenly bursts out. Thus it is not strange at all that she finally chooses the most violent and extreme way to break this phallogentric patriarchal society.

3.1.2 The Castrated Father and Husband in *The Labyrinth Garden*

In *The Labyrinth Garden*, Li Ang's writing technique becomes more sophisticated than in *The Butcher's Wife*. She uses a wiser and milder way to solve female issues under the phallogentric discourse. Although Li Ang has partly deconstructed the male authority in *The Butcher's Wife* in the most violent way, this time she tries a different solution: brainpower. In *The Labyrinth Garden*, Zhu Yinghong, the female protagonist begins to realize her hidden potential after she has received more education, and uses her intelligence to fight against the male domination.

Traditional male dominance is represented by two main images: that of the father and that of the husband. As mentioned in previous chapter, the traditional male norms require women to obey the "Three Obediences and Four Virtues for Women." Most of the time, the fathers and the husbands are the cause of women's inferior position in a patriarchal society. Thus, in *The Labyrinth Garden*, Li Ang solves the female issues by deconstructing male supremacy. She also reconstructs feminine self by showing the painful growth and struggle of Zhu Yinghong. In *The Labyrinth Garden*, the female protagonist becomes more independent. She has her unique intelligence and tries to liberate herself from the men. Unlike the simple and violent ending in *The Butcher's Wife*, in *The Labyrinth Garden*, the female protagonist begins to know her feminine self in an ingenious way. Li Ang here deconstructs the phallogentric male society by illustrating the feminine father and the impotent husband.

3.1.2.1 Castrated Father

Zhu Zuyan is Zhu Yinghong's father. He was born into a wealthy family and studied abroad in Japan in his youth. Unlike other classmates who chose medicine as their profession, he studied politics, which few people studied at that time (when Taiwan was under Japanese occupation). After his study in Japan, he went back to Taiwan as the elite group of Taiwanese society. In the beginning Zhu Zuyan is ambitious and energetic, and he wants to contribute to the Taiwanese society with his knowledge he has learnt in Japan. However, he is forced by the Kuomintang government to do nothing at such times. He tried his best but failed to promote the democratization of Taiwan's social and political structure, and he then was in prison for a while. After he was released from prison, he is put under house arrest and has to spend the rest of his life completely under surveillance in Han Garden.

Zhu Zuyan is the image of the frustrated father in the novel; also he is the victim of times. As a Taiwanese who was ruled by the Japanese and studied in Japan for some years, Zhu Zuyan has a mixed feeling towards the Japanese invaders and Japanese culture. He has been struggling between Chinese and Japanese cultures all his life. He requires his family to speak Japanese at home and even gives his daughter Japanese name, Ayako. Meanwhile, he still hopes his children can stick to the traditional Chinese culture. In fact, he is unable to do anything to promote the development of Taiwanese society under such complicated social condition. After he is set free from prison, he has to confine himself in Han Garden for the rest of his life. At the end, he becomes disappointed with the Kuomintang government and has given up his dream to change the

Taiwanese society under such political pressure. He began to fall in to decadence and began to squander his money on extravagant purchase of cameras, cars and old vinyl record players. Finally, he is unable to maintain the Han garden for he has spent all his money. Unlike the traditional image of father with authority, Zhu Zuyan is always the image of a weak and feeble father.

For a long time, male/positive and female/negative was always considered as a binary until Judith Butler subverted this classic binary in her book, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. She argues that:

The presumption of a binary gender system implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it. When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male.⁶⁷

In keeping with Butler's theory, the father and daughter in the Zhu family are the gender role reversal in *The Labyrinth Garden*: the feminine male and masculine female. Zhu Zuyan lacks the masculinity as a male and as a father. In a patriarchal male writing, the image of a father is always powerful; the father always has the ultimate authority. He plays the role of dictator, having the power to rule over all family members. He is supposed to be the symbol and essence of patriarchy. However, in *The Labyrinth Garden*, the image of the father changes from a masculine father into a feminine father:

⁶⁷ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (London: Routledge, 1999), p.10.

Father as morbid. In the beginning of the story, Zhu Zuyan is the “healthy father” as the elite of the nation. He is ambitious after his study in Japan, and tries to promote the development of Taiwanese society. However, after he is released from prison, he is forced to stay in Han Garden under endless surveillance and finally becomes the “morbid father.” In the eyes of Zhu Yinghong, her father, once bright and affable, suddenly becomes an old man who has a “swollen and dead-pale face”⁶⁸ and “emaciated, unshaped feet”⁶⁹ after being released from prison. Zhu Zuyan has lost his passion after serving time in prison time and has to confine himself in Han Garden for the rest of his life for political reasons. He is extremely depressed for the latter of his life and always shows his family with his morbid appearance.

Father as incompetent. In the whole text, Zhu Zuyan is nearly unable to do anything that he wants. He wants to promote the democratization in Taiwanese society, but he is intimidated, imprisoned and after being released from prison, under surveillance throughout his life. He has inherited the Han Garden from his family, but cannot hold onto it because he didn’t have the money for upkeep. After being released from prison, he begins to devote all his time to endless luxury consumption which has no meaning. At the end, after his death, he has left his family nothing but expensive cameras, old vinyl record players and cars. He has spent all his family’s wealth and his wife has to sell the Han Garden to satisfy his consumption and pay their debt. In the whole text, Zhu Zuyan, the father does nothing except squander his wealth that he has inherited from his ancestry. He is

⁶⁸ Li Ang, *The Labyrinth Garden*, (Taipei: Rye Field Publications, 2006), p.66.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

presented in the text as an incompetent father, not as the traditional powerful father.

Father as feminine. As mentioned previously, the feminine male and the masculine female represent the father and daughter in *The Labyrinth Garden*. The father, Zhu Zuyan is forbidden to achieve his ambitious promotion of democratization in Taiwan by the government. His daughter finally regains possession of their Han Garden property since her father has been too incompetent to hold onto it. The Han Garden, passing from father to offspring, represents the distribution of power in the family/patriarchy. However, the father's authority is lost here. The fact that the daughter regains their garden is a metaphor for the power transferred from father to daughter. The image of the father is that of a man castrated: Zhu Zuyan becomes the feminine father. The daughter gains the power and eventually becomes the masculine daughter. The binary of father/masculine and daughter/feminine now becomes father/feminine and daughter/masculine.

3.1.2.2 Castrated Husband

If Zhu Zuyan is the feminine male, then Lin Xigeng looks like his opposite: the powerful, resolute image of the male. Unlike Zhu Zuyan, he comes from a poor family in the southern part of Taiwan. He takes full advantage of the economic boom in the 1970s and becomes a successful real estate magnate with considerable wealth. At the beginning of *The Labyrinth Garden*, Lin Xigeng has a strong attraction to women because of his wealth and masculinity. "When he looks around, he is proud and even arrogant. From the beginning to end, he has

become the focus of the crowd at that dinner.”⁷⁰ He only considers women as his objects, and is never controlled by women. Compared to the broken image of the feminine father, his masculinity seems to be more confident and powerful.

Lin Xigeng is the typical character of the phallogocentric authority. In the beginning, he appears in front of Zhu Yinghong as “a billionaire who has numerous sexual rumors with females in the entertainment industry.”⁷¹ His handsomeness and wealth have greatly attracted Zhu Yinghong. His male superiority can be observed from his behavior, speech and attitude towards others, especially Zhu Yinghong. Also, he is extremely proud of his experience with different women, as well as his sexual prowess. In the beginning, when Lin Xigeng and Zhu Yinghong meet each other for the first time at a dinner of business magnates in Taipei, he is strong enough to control Zhu Yinghong. When Zhu Yinghong is planning to leave the banquet, Lin Xigeng stops her and asks her for a dance. He flirts with Zhu Yinghong in that seductive atmosphere of the dancing hall, and Zhu Yinghong has a strange feeling about him:

With such an absentminded mood, I cannot stop thinking if at the same moment Lin Xigeng knows and understands what I am considering, I am willing to go anywhere and do anything with this handsome, tall and strong man.

Never, ever, would I have such strong desire for a man whom I just have known for a few hours.

恍惚中我止不住地想，那片刻中只要林西庚知曉並懂得，我會願意同這高壯美麗的男人，到任何地方做任何事情。

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.36.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.42.

從來不會，我對一個剛認識幾個小時的男人有如此強烈的渴求。⁷²

As Lin Xigeng has expected, Zhu Yinghong feels a passionate sexual desire to be conquered by him. She wants to have a serious relationship with him forever. However, for Lin Xigeng, Zhu Yinghong is merely another of the women he has sex with, and he never means to be genuine with her. When Zhu Yinghong wants to be his only one, he felt that Zhu Yinghong is trying to control him and he decided to be her “reliable elder brother” instead of her lover. Even on the night he has decided to keep a certain distance from Zhu Yinghong, he is still eager to prove his masculinity through his “having the phallus.” Lin Xigeng is undoubtedly using his sexual prowess, namely the symbolic phallus, as his weapon to attract and then conquer women. His “having” the phallus constructs his superiority towards Zhu Yinghong:

She is crouching at first, and later she moves and kneels before the height of it. Her kneeling strengthens the power of his manliness, and arouses her usual obedience and submission to him. She is astonished and appreciating, while he stands erect calmly, telling her with proud:

“This is the most cherished possession of a man, the best weapon. How can I show it to others so easily? Unless it will be of great use.”

她原是蹲著，時間稍久她轉換姿勢，跪下正臨它的高度，那雙膝著地的姿勢加強他站立的雄踞氣勢，也引發出她一貫對他的屈服與屈從，她深深被吸引並發出讚歎，他則坦然挺立，驕傲自許的說：

“這是男人最寶貴的東西，最好的武器，怎麼可以輕易拿出來，拿出來一定要有用。”⁷³

⁷² *Ibid.*, p.47-48.

It is clear that Lin Xigeng constructs his authority and superiority by his “having” the phallus in a symbolic sense. Thus, to show how the female protagonist has developed her feminine self in *The Labyrinth Garden*, Li Ang has to give the readers her final solution to this. Li Ang combines the decline and growth of Lin Xigeng’s sexual prowess—his phallus—with his influence on Zhu Yinghong. At the beginning of the novel, he is almost proud, confident about his sexual prowess when he can grow erect in front of her calmly. Later, after their relationship goes further, he finds out that he cannot manage the sexual prowess as he used to. His masculinity and male supremacy begin to break down with his sexual impotence, and he has to make excuses to reduce his embarrassment that he “must have too much sex before.”⁷⁴ This is the beginning of his “castration” in the text. Li Ang shows the decline of the phallus through the perspective of Zhu Yinghong. In the text, Zhu Yinghong “immediately feels his change”⁷⁵ when Lin Xigeng does not spend a lot of time to provoke her sexual arousal as usual. Instead, he becomes incompetent, and their intercourse is always in haste. Lin Xigeng is anxious about his incompetence. He feels that he is going to lose his phallus (as well as his masculinity and male authority), and is also going to lose Zhu Yinghong. He has to have sex with Zhu Yinghong constantly in different locations to stimulate his erection which presents his authority of the phallus. Whether he is having sex with Zhu Yinghong in a hot springs hotel with a blind masseur present, or in the back seat of a limo in the streets of a foreign country, he no longer possesses the sexual superiority over Zhu Yinghong. As happened to

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

Zhu Zuyan, Lin Xigeng begins to lose his masculinity and becomes the “castrated,” or the feminine male. He is even unable to control his subordinate, Masao, who sexually harasses Zhu Yinghong. At last, when he is in the old Han Garden, he almost has lost himself in that mysterious garden. In his relationship with Zhu Yinghong, he eventually becomes the impotent male and is symbolically castrated in the text by the female protagonist at the end of the novel, forever losing his male dominance.

3.1.3 The Female-only Lesbian World in *Bewitching Love*

By weakening and castrating the males in the text of *The Labyrinth Garden*, Li Ang has totally denied the phallus and phallogentric male dominance by using the images of a morbid father and a sexually impotent husband. However, this is not her ultimate feminism solution to her female issues. On the contrary, it is a new beginning for Li Ang’s construction of feminine self. In *Bewitching Love*, Li Ang totally “deletes” the existence of the phallus and constructs a female-only lesbian community as her most radical denial to the phallogentric society and the men.

As mentioned in previous chapter, in a society where only the heterosexual relationship is considered normal, people usually consider homosexual relationship unusual and thus marginalize homosexuals. In particular, lesbians experience a double repression because they are both female and homosexual. In *Bewitching Love*, Li Ang has made her boldest attempt at female issues by totally deleting the image of the males from the female world and reconstructing a world without men. Unlike those men who are textually “killed” and “castrated” earlier

in her fiction, here Li Ang tries a straightforward solution: to “delete” the image of the males. Using the perspective of a straight woman, Lin Yunyuan, Li Ang observes and portrays a whole new female world. In this female world, or female community, women are no longer under the male gaze as objects and are not repressed by the patriarchy. They have the ability to make their own decision about their lives, and even their deaths.

Li Ang has totally canceled the necessity of the existence of the phallus. The women in *Bewitching Love* no longer rely on men to get food as in *The Butcher’s Wife*, or feel frustrated in a sexual relationship with men as in *The Labyrinth Garden*. These women have their own jobs to make a living and enjoy their lives; thus the role of men in a traditional culture is diminished to its lowest point. Women in *Bewitching Love* no longer need the presence of phallus and are sexually attracted by other women who possess the same body with them. The function of the phallus is entirely diminished in the text. For these lesbians, making love with another woman is “the most ultimate ceremony to relate with another woman sexually.”⁷⁶ The phallus that used to cause female suffering and jouissance now only leads to the feeling of filth. The only thing that “can interact with each other, is the clitorises that they all have.”⁷⁷

This novel can be considered as Li Ang’s ultimate solution to her 30 years’ writing of female issues. Women conquer everything in Li Ang’s new world. Men, however, are considered as the cause of women’s pain. Women in this world “delete” the image of men, and they will never experience sexual violence or any

⁷⁶ Li Ang, *Bewitching Love*, (Taipei: Locus, 2005), p. 114.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

other hurt from men. Instead of the males who continually abuse the females, here the women choose lesbian lovers. As one of the lesbians says in the text, “why girls would like to be together with female under such social pressure? It is clear that they want to avoid the harm from the male.”⁷⁸

Also, they do not debase themselves on account of their sexual orientation. They are proud of themselves and are trying to live in their unique way. In this novel, the sight of the gaze transfers from men to women. Women replace men as the exclusive gazing side. Men in the novel are the drag queens in a gay bar who have totally lost their masculinity and are feminized. When Lin Yunyuan and Fang Hua sit in that gay bar and look around, one of the men they observe is “nearly 180 cm tall with seductive appearance. Their legs are taller and more beautiful than most women, all of which made them the most beautiful people that no women can compare with.”⁷⁹ The gaze relationship that Laura Mulvey once described as “women as image, men as bearer of the look⁸⁰” now becomes “men as image, women as bearer of the look.” *Bewitching Love* is the triumph of female, for they no longer need the phallus and the discourse around the phallus. On the contrary, “a woman regains her feeling towards this world through another woman.”⁸¹

For a long time, the patriarchal society has established itself based on the phallus. Men define their male discourse as the phallus and can only define themselves through the binary relationship of male/dominant/superior and

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

⁸⁰ Laura Mulvey, Eds. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen. “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.” *Film Theory and Criticism :Introductory Readings*, (New York: Oxford UP, 1999), p. 837.

⁸¹ Li Ang, *Bewitching Love*, (Taipei: Locus, 2005), p. 8.

female/submissive/inferior. They establish a complete patriarchal society by controlling the discourse. As Jane Gallop claims, “The Lacanian’s desire clearly to separate phallus from penis, to control the meaning of the signifier phallus, is precisely symptomatic of their desire to have the phallus, that is, their desire to be at the center of language, at its origin. And their inability to control the meaning of the word phallus is evidence of what Lacan calls symbolic castration.”⁸² The entire male dominance is a single phallus—discourse—authority trinity ring which generates the objectification, gaze and violence towards women. Men can only confirm their supremacy with women as the “Other.” As Jacques Lacan describes:

It must be posited that, as a fact of an animal at the mercy of language, man's desire is the desire of the Other. [This formulation] concerns a quite different function from that of the primary identification ... For it does not involve the assumption by the subject of the insignia of the other, but rather the conditions that the subject have to find the constituting structure of his desire in the same gap opened up by the effect of the signifiers in those who come to represent the Other for him, in so far as his demand is subjected to them⁸³.

From *The Butcher’s Wife* to *Bewitching Love*, Li Ang has finally achieved her initial intention to address female issues over a 30-year writing career. By using the text as her most powerful weapon, Li Ang has deconstructed the patriarchal society based on the meaning of the phallus. From the bloody

⁸² Jane Gallop, “Beyond the Phallus”, in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 57.

⁸³ Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: A Selection*, (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 264.

slaughter of man in *The Butcher's Wife*, to the castrated and feminine male image in *The Labyrinth Garden*, to deleting the image of the male in *Bewitching Love*, Li Ang has completed the feminine self and found the female identity by such means. Her textual solution is the most straightforward answer to female issues that she questioned. By the metaphor of killing, castrating or cancelling, the phallus is totally denied. Also, the male discourse and the patriarchal society are denied.

3.2 The Development of Feminine Self

While castrating the image of the males in her works, at the same time, Li Ang has also re-established feminine selves beginning with *The Butcher's Wife*. Li Ang uses her unique feminine feeling and thought to illustrate the female experience. She deconstructs the male experience and fights with female inferiority in a patriarchal society. Through her feminine writing, Li Ang clearly shows the difference between the men and the women, and also the exclusive existence of the women as a whole.

Beginning with *The Butcher's Wife*, Li Ang gradually switches her attention exclusively to feminine self. Li Ang is quite different from her fellow women writers, such as Chu Tien-hsin [朱天心]⁸⁴ who writes gracefully. In addition to portraying women's inferior social status both in society and their families, Li Ang is more concerned about women's sexual issues. Li Ang never spares any words but boldly and erotically portrays the female body and women's sexual experiences, and she is thus extremely criticized by some critics. After *The*

⁸⁴ Chu Tien-hsin (1958-), one of Taiwan's leading women writers.

Labyrinth Garden was published, some critics satirized Li Ang with harsh comments:

Novels like *The Labyrinth garden* lack challenge for a professional critic, let alone how shallow the story is.

像《迷園》這樣的小說，對一個評論者來說，所欠卻的是挑戰性；何況在文字上，在內容上又是那麼粗糙……⁸⁵

About the sexual scene in the novel:

Nowadays in Taiwan, nobody can possess the talent as Miss Li Ang who can write the sex organs so vividly... Why not, let us just say, *The Labyrinth Garden* is Li Ang's "labyrinth garden," Zhu Yinghong and Lin Xigeng are the protagonists of a shameless sexual intercourse clip as a slut and adulterer.

在今天的台灣，幾乎可說沒有一人有和李昂女士一樣高的才能，能將男女性器及其官能如此有聲有色地用文字呈現出來。……何不昂然地說，《迷園》就是李昂的《迷園》，朱影紅和林西庚就是蕩婦和偷夫的性愛場景的主角⁸⁶

The reason that Li Ang's sexual portrayals in her works receive fiercely attack is not only because of the "moral decadency" that critics descried, but actually because she touches the edges of patriarchal society and its phallogocentric discourse. Li Ang's works attract attention for these depictions, yet also encounter scorn. It is just as another critic described:

⁸⁵Chin Heng-chieh, "Sex and Money: The World of Nobel Zhu Yinghong-A Comment on *The Labyrinth Garden*", *Unitas Literary Monthly*, 1992:2, p. 107-110.

⁸⁶Chin Heng-chieh, "Several Explanations about Miss Li Ang's 'Echo'", *Con-temporary*, vol. 73, No.5, 1992, p. 132-138.

Obviously Li Ang cannot keep on writing her sexual topics in her works. Or, more accurately speaking, it is our society/culture that cannot accept such topic on sexual issues. They play the role of judge, gazer or supervision, to suppress Li Ang.

李昂顯然無法堅持如此看待她所擅長的有關性的題材。或者，更確切地說是我們的社會/文化不肯如此看待有關性的題材。它化成眾多的訪談者、審判者、窺(監)視者，逼壓著李昂。⁸⁷

There are also some male writers who have such concern about sex, yet they have never been attacked as Li Ang has. Since men have constructed the patriarchal society based on the discourse of the phallus, the relationship of women and men in this erotic scene shows their exact place in society. Men dominate the entire journey of sex while women can only be the “receiver” of penetration. In traditional Chinese novels that contain sexual depiction, women always appear in the negative position in such a traditional male/positive and female/negative binary. As Kate Millet, writes in *Sexual Politics*, criticizing the erotic scenes in Henry Miller’s novels:

What the reader is vicariously experiencing at this juncture is a nearly supernatural sense of power- should the reader be a male. For the passage is not only a vivacious and imaginative use of circumstance, detail, and context to evoke the excitations of sexual intercourse, it is also a male assertion of dominance of a weak, compliant, and rather unintelligent female. It is a case of sexual politics at the fundamental level of copulation. Several satisfactions for the hero and reader alike

⁸⁷ Liu Yu-hsiu, “The Mystery of Li Ang and Women”, Taipei: *China Times*. 1994.1.1

undoubtedly accrue upon this triumph of the male ego, the most tangible one being communicated in the following: “She had a small juicy cunt which fitted me like a glove.”⁸⁸

In such an unbalanced sex differentiation, if women want to take the initiative, they have to achieve their feminine identities first. To stop the male/positive and female/negative binary means to re-establish a new binary order of female/positive and male/negative. In the phallogocentric society, the path for women to achieve their identities is the development of women to succeed in the sexual competition with men. Women must take the lead in a sexual relationship, which is an obvious metaphor of their female discourse.

Li Ang explains and questions the social position of the female in her works. She tries to find a new way for women to realize their feminine identities and to regain them. She has always been trying to uncover in her works the hidden meaning of female issues. It is thus inevitable that her works frequently touch on the lowest of social taboos: sexual issues.

Although Li Ang is often severely insulted for her sexual depictions, she has insisted on her own writing standards. The sexual portrayals in her works do not only represent the repressed female in a patriarchal society, but more importantly, help women to deeply explore their unique identities. From the negative female character in *The Butcher's Wife*, to the positive female protagonist in *The Labyrinth Garden*, then finally to the exclusive female jouissance in *Bewitching Love*, Li Ang has depicted the painful but positive growth of feminine self. As she describes in an interview with Chiu Kuei-fen, another feminist in Taiwan:

⁸⁸ Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics*, (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000), p. 6.

Li Ang emphasizes the role of “sex” in her works: it helps women to explore their inner self, and also has a special purpose related to the society and history. Li Ang concludes the “sex” in her story that “What I want to illustrate is not the regular sexual desire, on the contrary, essentially it is related to the development of society.” This is probably the greatest difference between the erotic descriptions in Li Ang’s works and in other male writers’ erotic writing.

李昂也強調，「性」在她小說裡所扮演的角色，不僅是幫助女人開發內心深處的自我；「性」在李昂小說中往往有其社會歷史脈絡。李昂歸納她小說裡的「性」：「我走的不是一個單一的情慾問題，「性」基本上還是會跟社會的脈動有關。」這點恐怕是李昂小說的「性」題材與其他當代流行的「情慾書寫」最大的分野。⁸⁹

Li Ang’s sexual depictions closely relate to the rise of feminine identity in her fiction. She tries to portray the struggle and pain of female independence under patriarchal discourse by describing the decline and growth of power between men and women. Since men have been dominating women under phallogocentric norms for a long time; if women want to liberate themselves, they must take the lead in a sexual relationship with men. That is the essence of Li Ang’s concern with sex.

⁸⁹ Chiu Kuei-fen, *Noises of Females of (Not) Same Nation: Interviews of Contemporary Female Writers in Taiwan*. (Taipei: Yuanzun Culture, 1998), p. 93.

3.2.1 Food/Sex Relationship: Extreme Repressed Woman in *The Butcher's Wife*

The female protagonist in *The Butcher's Wife* has a negative image. Li Ang illustrates a weak woman named Lin Shi who plays the role of the victim in her community. Lin Shi almost has no resistance to unfortunate things that happen to her. In the text, she suffers triple repression from her uncle, her husband and other women in her community.

Lin Shi's uncle plays the role of father after the death of Lin Shi's father. He becomes the new representative of father and controls Lin Shi's fate. He evicts the poor mother and fatherless daughter from their home, and then exchanges Lin Shi for lots of pork by marrying her to a butcher. Here, in the traditional patriarchal sense, the uncle/father has completely controlled over all the female members in the family. From the beginning to end, Lin Shi is completely dominated and repressed by the males in her family.

The female community is also an accomplice of the patriarchal society. Under the mind control of patriarchy, which strictly requires women to be chaste, sexual issues are always taboo for women. Women are afraid of sex, and also feel the topic is too shameful to discuss. Women in patriarchal society passively accept this phallogocentric order, and even inhibit other women with the idea of sexual repression. The unseen violence between women is particularly severe. For instance, Awangguan, another female character in *The Butcher's Wife*, has been widowed for quite a long time. Awangguan is a typical woman in patriarchal society. On one hand, she represses her strong sexual desire and pretends to be the

defender of the male norms, while at the same time she is upset about her own unsatisfied sexual desire. She has to satisfy her sexual desire by sneaking in to watch the sexual intercourse between Lin Shi and Chen Jiangshui. She is the cause of those vicious aspersions towards Lin Shi. In a word, Awangguan is the true hypocrite in that female community.

Besides her uncle and the female community, Lin Shi's experience as a female becomes worse after she is married to Chen Jiangshui. Lin Shi suffers frequent sexual violence at the hands of her husband. During the first night of Lin Shi's marriage, the relationship between her and her husband becomes an exchange of sex for food. Chen Jiangshui only gives her food after he has sex with her, thus sex and food are inseparable for Lin Shi, who lives during war time, when food is extremely insufficient. The only reason for Lin Shi to live is her desire for food to survive. On her wedding night, Lin Shi is exhausted and nearly dead after Chen Jiangshui has sexually abused her. At that time Chen Jiangshui "went into the living room and came back with a big piece of pork, dripping with fat, which he stuffed into her mouth, skin and all."⁹⁰ Lin Shi has forgotten what she just suffered, and the only thing for her is the satisfaction of food. "With bloated cheeks, she chewed on the pork, making squishing noises as fat oozed out the corners of her mouth and dribbled down in rivulets to her chin and neck, all greasy and wet."⁹¹ To Lin Shi, having food for survival is the most important thing in the world. She devotes nearly all her energy to finding food, and has no

⁹⁰ Li Ang, *The Butcher's Wife*, (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1986), p. 13.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

consciousness to consider the true cause of her miserable status, let alone her feminine self.

Lin Shi suffers sexual violence from Chen Jiangshui with the exchange of food. After he abuses her, she realizes that “in the days to come this was what her life was going to be like, day in and day out.”⁹² Every time Chen Jiangshui forces Lin Shi to have sex with him, it is a torment for Lin Shi both physically and mentally:

For Chen Jiangshui this was going to be a quick one. He was merely toying with Lin Shi, trying to humiliate her. Seeing a woman howling in pain beneath him gave him immense pleasure, as the satisfied glint in his eye and the mirthless laugh proved...

The pain in the lower part of her body forced Lin Shi to prop herself up. A slight touch, and her hand came away with bright red blood. There were dark spots of blood, already congealed, on the blackish brown planks of the bed. Next to the spots of blood lay an even more menacing object—a shiny, long, sharp blade, Chen Jiangshui’s butcher knife, which he had casually set down before climbing into bed.

Lin Shi crawled to the side of the bed, as far away from the knife as possible, and lay down again. Blood seemed to be still trickling down her legs...⁹³

Chen Jiangshui’s sexual violence becomes Lin Shi’s nightmare. Her sexual intercourse with him, which is supposed to be a jouissance experience, now becomes her most horrible experience in the world. In the story, after suffering sexual violence from her husband, Lin Shi is “dimly aware that this was the man

⁹² *Ibid.*, p.82.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.21.

who was to be the mainstay of her life, or so people said. But just what did that mean? She wasn't sure."⁹⁴ She is totally unaware of her situation and the cause of all her sufferings, and considers that what she suffered is merely because of her bad luck or poor destiny.

Lin Shi is a typical female character in the early stage of Li Ang's writing, one who has no consciousness of feminine self. She has nothing but her constant pursuit for food to survive. She takes Chen Jiangshui's sexual violence for granted just to get some food. Under the male norms, men dominate the whole family, because women have no ability to make money and thus have to unconditionally obey their husbands. The objectification of women is the obvious result under such male norms. Lin Shi has to rely on her husband for food to survive. For Lin Shi, the only satisfaction she experiences is merely the satiety of food. She is not aware of the cause of her status in the society, and it does not occur to her to revolt against her husband and the whole notion of patriarchy. She resigns herself to adversity and accepts that this is what her life should be. Li Ang here thus penetratingly points out the harsh devastation of feminine self in such a patriarchal society. The food/sex relationship between the men and the women clearly impedes women from liberating themselves.

Despite the single food/sex relationship in *The Butcher's Wife*, the female protagonist in the text still has a chance to rebel against the patriarchal society. Lin Shi has resisted Chen Jiangshui's sexual violence several times although she suffers more violence than ever. At the end of the story, Lin Shi chops her

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.25.

husband into pieces, and she is also sentenced to death. Lin Shi's death is her silent but most violent protest to the patriarchal society.

3.2.2 The Growing Feminine Self in *The Labyrinth Garden*

The Labyrinth Garden is the second stage of feminine self in Li Ang's fiction. Zhu Yinghong, the female character, no longer plays the role of the sexual victim in a patriarchal society. Although sometimes she still struggles in her relationship with Lin Xigeng, in the end she finds her feminine self and decides to be herself. Her relationship with Lin Xigeng is all about her pursuit of feminine self, and she is finally able to obtain it. The gender role reversal between feminine male and masculine female shows the way that the female protagonist eventually finds her identity. Before a woman can achieve her feminine identity, she has to experience the growth and decline of her power. The female protagonist has progressed, and also has retreated in her relationship with men. Sometimes she even has lost herself. In *The Labyrinth Garden*, neither Lin Xigeng nor Zhu Yinghong can truly take the initiative of their relationship. Only through ongoing progressing and retreating, has Zhu Yinghong finally become the masculine female and achieved her feminine self.

Zhu Yinghong comes from an aristocratic family and receives a good education both in Taiwan and abroad. She is not the superstitious and ignorant woman of the type portrayed in *The Butcher's Wife*. Instead, she lives in modern city, and uses her intelligence to do what she wants to. However, her way to feminine self is not always successful. In her relationship with Lin Xigeng,

sometimes she has submitted to him and almost lost her identity while sometimes she also takes initiative.

Zhu Yinghong's journey to her feminine self can be divided into three stages. In the first stage, she has entirely lost her identity and submits to Lin Xigeng. Her first encounter with Lin Xigeng takes place at night, at a dinner of magnates in Taipei. Besides Zhu Yinghong, there are other girls at the dinner, who play the role of prostitutes. As a modern, educated woman, Zhu Yinghong is quite aware of a woman's situation in a relationship and seems to have foreseen her future relationship with Lin Xigeng that she is "doomed to be abandoned."⁹⁵ Although she is quite aware of herself in the relationship with Lin Xigeng, who only considers women as his enjoyment but not soul mates, she still inevitably falls in love with Lin Xigeng. Her feminine self gradually becomes pale and weak. As with other women who are in love, Zhu Yinghong tries her best to please Lin Xigeng painstakingly. She begins to wear delicate silk lingerie and speak as what Lin Xigeng has expected. She feels like she is submitted to Lin Xigeng, and she enjoys that. Zhu Yinghong is objectified by Lin Xigeng's in the beginning. She becomes the complete feminine female who only wants to be the docile woman of Lin Xigeng, and is "completely submitted to the high-wattage aura that Lin Xigeng has projected."⁹⁶

In the next stage of her feminine identity which combines pain with accomplishment, Zhu Yinghong begins to realize her power and wisdom as a woman born with an aristocratic family. She has victory in this stage, and also has

⁹⁵ Li Ang, *The Labyrinth Garden*, (Taipei: Rye Field Publications, 2006), p. 47.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

setback. When Zhu Yinghong has finally realized that Lin Xigeng is just playing with her without any sincerity, she decided to stop this relationship with him immediately. She asks him “not to call her again”⁹⁷ so that she can forget him. In the following part of *The Labyrinth Garden*, Zhu Yinghong has made her decision to strike back, for “since now there is no man who can leave her time after time, and even without a notice.”⁹⁸ She is no longer the woman she used to be and begins to be the conqueror of her world. She has decided that she will use all methods to get Lin Xigeng back: “She wants him, by all prices and all means.”⁹⁹ She objectifies Lin Xigeng as her personal possession, and plans to hunt this “prey”.

To fully prepare for her revenge to Lin Xigeng, Zhu Yinghong carefully chooses Teddy Zhang from all the men she knows. She takes advantage of Teddy who can keep a secret relationship with her without being noticed by others, and can also satisfy her sexually which actually calms her down. Zhu Yinghong takes full control of her relationship with Teddy, and Teddy is used as her sexual object to calm her down from the previous failure with Lin Xigeng. She asks Teddy to meet her once a week to satisfy her sexual desire, and she “leaves immediately after having sex with him, without staying with him for a while.”¹⁰⁰ For Zhu Yinghong, Teddy is only an object under her female gaze, and she can do everything to him that she wants, even take the initiative in their sexual intercourse. Instead of being penetrated by a man, this time she takes the initiative.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

“She feels like she is attacking...part of her body is expanding and is fully prepared for the male erection.”¹⁰¹ Finally after she has achieved her goal, she immediately abandons Teddy: “she rejects his request to meet her, and also avoids meeting him again.”¹⁰² Zhu Yinghong even hangs up the phone call from Teddy which has greatly humiliated his authority as a man.

Although Zhu Yinghong gets her triumph from Teddy, her relationship with Lin Xigeng is quite complicated. She has fully prepared for her revenge, “she knows she is finally able to begin her hunting.”¹⁰³ However, after she has Lin Xigeng back, again she soon loses herself in love with Lin Xigeng. She falls in “extreme pleasure” and has forgotten all her previous plans. She has entirely lost her identity again, and even hopes her pregnancy can help prompting her marriage with Lin Xigeng. Although Lin Xigeng has gradually begun to lose his sexual prowess, he still has his masculinity at this stage. He can control Zhu Yinghong’s destiny, deciding whether or not to marry with her. However, at this stage, both Lin Xigeng and Zhu Yinghong cannot take the initiative in their relationship. Lin Xigeng begins to lose his control of Zhu Yinghong, and sometimes he is even controlled by Zhu Yinghong. When Lin Xigeng takes a business trip to LA, he even greatly relies on Zhu Yinghong. “Her fluent English...her beauty...and good upbringing, all of which have greatly made Lin Xigeng mysterious.”¹⁰⁴

At the beginning of the third stage in achieving her identity, Zhu Yinghong is humiliated by Teddy Zhang after she abandons him and later wants to have sex

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 204.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

with him again. In a deep depression, Zhu Yinghong begins to consider her relationship with Lin Xigeng. She finally understands their positions in this relationship and resolutely aborts Lin Xigeng's unborn child. It is at this time that Zhu Yinghong realizes she is the independent individual, not someone's shadow. "However, in such vague feeling, there is yet another sober self that hiding somewhere in my body, clearly and resolutely telling me: this is absolutely not what I am going to do."¹⁰⁵ Her lost feminine self encourages her to leave Lin Xigeng and be her true self. When Zhu Yinghong's feminine self begins to rise, Lin Xigeng feels some crisis: "clearly she no longer considers him as the whole of her life, nor acts everything in harmony with him... Also, she no longer speaks in the way he likes. She even does not care what he is talking about."¹⁰⁶ Eventually, Zhu Yinghong has made her decision to be her real self and leave Lin Xigeng permanently. At that time, Lin Xigeng feels great fear that he is going to lose her. He no longer has total control over Zhu Yinghong, and along with his sexual impotence and his dependence on Zhu Yinghong in the end, he eventually becomes the feminine male while Zhu Yinghong is in control of everything as the masculine female. At the end of the story, Lin Xigeng proposes to Zhu Yinghong, and she agrees to marry him. However, at that very moment, "Zhu Yinghong stares at the man standing in front of her. What she is thinking at that time is that it seems she has never loved him."¹⁰⁷ In the end, Lin Xigeng loses Zhu Yinghong, and gets lost in the Han Garden, while she finally achieves her identity.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 261.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.265.

Zhu Yinghong's struggle in her relationship with Lin Xigeng is her development of feminine self. She regains her feminine identity and conquers male dominance in the end. Zhu Yinghong constructs her feminine self through her relationships with different men. In the beginning, she wants to be conquered by Lin Xigeng, and is even willing to become his slave. Later she realizes what she wants is not Lin Xigeng's love, but her true identity in this relationship. In the second half of the story, she keeps on pursuing her identity and finally gets it. Although her way to achieve her identity is filled with struggle and pain, finally she is able to become the masculine feminine.

3.2.3 The Ultimately Independent Women in *Bewitching Love*

In *Bewitching Love*, Li Ang no longer focuses her attention on the decline and growth of feminine self in their relationships with men. Instead, the women in *Bewitching Love* have already possessed their feminine selves, and Li Ang only pays attention to the inner world of the four women through their struggle with non-lesbians and their relationships with lesbians.

The sexual depiction in *Bewitching Love* is more attractive and off-limits than Li Ang has illustrated before. Unlike the usual sex scenes between men and women, Li Ang exclusively depicts the sex between women in *Bewitching Love*. There is no need to have or to be the phallus. There is only the existence of the lesbian phallus which "crosses the orders of having and being it both wields the threat of castration (which is in that sense a mode of 'being' the phallus, as women 'are') and suffers from castration anxiety (and so is said 'to have' the

phallus, and to fear its loss).”¹⁰⁸ They have established a new order of female discourse:

It is the same clitoris possessed by another woman that touched her clitoris, the most delicate being. None of their lips or even the male glans is delicate enough.

The only thing that can only interact with each other, is

The clitorises.

That they all have:

Irreplaceable¹⁰⁹.

而觸著自身陰蒂的是那女人同樣也有的陰蒂，廝磨，那最細緻敏感的所在。不要說是手（男人的手，女人的手）過於粗糙，連雙方的唇，甚至龜頭，都還不夠細膩。

能相互彼此壓擠廝磨纏綿直至天荒地老的——

只有彼此都有的：

陰蒂。

無可取代。

Li Ang cancels the necessity of male presence, as well as male discourse.

Women have their own identities in this female-only world. Unlike the female protagonist in *The Butcher's Wife* who suffers sexual violence without resistance, or the female protagonist struggles with sexual relationships with men in *The Labyrinth Garden*, these women here have their own jouissance with the lesbian

¹⁰⁸ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 84.

¹⁰⁹ Li Ang, *Bewitching Love*, (Taipei: Locus, 2005), p. 122-123.

phallus which represents their new order of discourse. Women cancel the image of men in their world and deconstruct the phallogentric society permanently.

3.3 Voice in Text: From Muted Group to Heteroglossia

In narratology, narrative voice, as one of the most crucial aspects for portraying characters in text, controls the direction of social discourse. To what extent can a character “speaks” in that specific text represents to the extent to which they can control the discourse.

It is clear that narrative voice is important to a character. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan describes the importance of narrative voice in *Narrative Fiction*: “A character’s speech, whether in conversation or as a silent activity of the mind, can be indicative of a trait or traits both through its content and through its form.”¹¹⁰ Unlike “point of view”, voice “refers to the speech or other overt means through which events and existents are communicated to the audience.”¹¹¹ Voice, as the most direct route for readers to understand the situation and attitude of the characters, is not sufficient enough for us to understand what the text is going to tell thoroughly. What we can hear from the text is not the whole sounds the text contains. Thus, in narratology theory, there is also an implied author besides the visible narrator and the narratee: the sound we can hear in the text. According to Seymour Chatman, the implied author “is not the narrator, but rather the principle that invented the narrator. It instructs us silently, through the design of the whole,

¹¹⁰ Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, 2nd Edition, (London: Routledge: 2002), p.65.

¹¹¹ Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), p. 153.

with all the voices, by all the means it has chosen to let us learn.”¹¹² Most importantly, “the implied author establishes the norms of the narrative.”¹¹³ The voice, or narrative voice that we can hear, is actually the silent voice of the implied author who has the higher power to *speak* in the text, to control the meaning of text, and to determine the allocation of discourse of characters. In a word, voice is the embodiment of the implied author in the text.

There is the silent voice of the implied author everywhere in Li Ang’s fiction. At the beginning of *The Butcher’s Wife*, there is a news report that Lin Shi chops her butcher husband into pieces and secretly tries to throw the scattered body into the river. At first glance, this news seems to have no relationship to the main text body. However, in a formal but indifferent tone, the news report accuses Lin Shi of killing her husband. Although Lin Shi “responded that he had been a cruel, brutal man who went out to drink and gamble every day, then came home and amused himself by yelling at and beating her”¹¹⁴, the voice of delivering the news report never recognizes the fact. On the contrary, the news report considers “Chen Lin Shi’s confession defies reason and logic, for, since ancient times, a murder of this sort has always been the result of an adulterous affair.”¹¹⁵ This report believes “the killing of a man by his wife is a moral issue that affects all of society; such an offense cannot be condoned by reason of insanity”¹¹⁶, and later even uses a triumphant tone to announce that “she was nonetheless sentenced to

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 148.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

¹¹⁴ Li Ang, *The Butcher’s Wife*, (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1986), p. 3.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

death for the heinous crime of killing her own husband.”¹¹⁷ There might be some confusion after reading the entire story that Lin Shi described in the news report at the beginning of the story is exactly the opposite of the following fiction text. In fact, the two different voices in the news report exactly shows the conflict between male voice (the news report) and female voice (Lin Shi’s confession) in a patriarchal society.

In a traditional social structure, men dominate everything and control the discourse. They control the direction of language in the metaphor of the phallus. “Woman is said to be ‘outside the Symbolic’: outside the Symbolic that is outside language the place of the Law, excluded from any possible relationship with culture and the cultural order.”¹¹⁸ Language, or discourse, exclusively belongs to men, and therefore it is not surprising that men also control the voice in text. Men record history through their writing, and spread the patriarchal norms through their voice in the text. Women, however, are only allowed to write under male norms, but are not allowed to *speak* in the text. That is to say, women writers can only write within the permission of male language in accordance with male norms as a supplement to male writing. As Cixous concludes, “it is said, in philosophical texts, that women’s weapon is the word, because they talk, talk endlessly, chatter, and overflow with sound, mouth-sound: but they don’t actually speak, they have nothing to say. They always inhabit the place of silence, or at most make it echo with their singing. And neither is to their benefit, for they remain outside

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Hélène Cixous, “Castration or Decapitation?” *Signs*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (autumn, 1981), p. 45-46.

knowledge.”¹¹⁹ From silent Lin Shi, to lesbians who never stop their talking, the voice in Li Ang’s fiction thus shows from another side how women regain their right to speak which is another representation of their female identities.

3.3.1 The “Muted” Woman in *The Butcher’s Wife*

Lin Shi seems to be a silent character throughout the whole text while her butcher husband, Chen Jiangshui, attracts more attention. In the whole story, Chen Jiangshui appears everywhere and speaks continuously while Lin Shi, as the female protagonist, speaks little. There are numerous descriptions about Chen Jiangshui, most of which detail his abuse of Lin Shi. In contrast, Lin Shi is a silent woman who rarely has much to say. Whenever she tries to talk to someone else, her speech is often ignored by the whole community and she is totally “muted” by them. Lin Shi’s real voice cannot be heard since it is too weak and low. Of the few times she talks in the text, there are three scenes that show Lin Shi’s voice is so low that eventually nobody can hear it:

The first scene is the first time Lin Shi has her menarche. She is so scared that she screams out, “Save me, I’m bleeding to death,”¹²⁰ which later becomes the source of ridicule among the other women. After that, she dreams a strange dream about “several pillars, so tall they impale the clouds, disappearing into a pitch darkness that stretches on endless.”¹²¹ She tries to shake her fear by sharing this frightening dream with other members in her community; however, she is mercilessly laughed at again. The female community around her has deprived Lin

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.49.

¹²⁰ Li Ang, *The Butcher’s Wife*, (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1986), p. 10.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

Shi's privilege to speak, and she finally has nothing to say. After too much of this treatment, she "grew taciturn, often raising her long face in the middle of her work, deep in thought about something only she could fathom."¹²² She finally becomes a silent woman.

The second scene is when Lin Shi hears from other women that Chen Jiangshui always gambles after work, she urges him to stop gambling immediately since she believes "people who prey on others die without heirs."¹²³ In the beginning, she speaks to Chen Jiangshui with some fear, but soon her attitude "gradually becoming somewhat more resolute."¹²⁴ Chen Jiangshui feels this is so disobedient that "his face underwent a complete transformation as he turned on her savagely."¹²⁵ Under his despotic behavior, Lin Shi has to stop talking as soon as possible to avoid his violence.

The third scene is in the small female community in the fishing village where Lin Shi lives. Even in the small community of women washing their clothes around the well, Lin Shi is always the silent one. She rarely speaks in front of these women, and only listens. Nobody is interested in what Lin Shi says, and her existence is almost ignored.

Michel Foucault argues that discourse can be exclusively defined as "systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, courses of action, beliefs and practices that systematically construct the subjects and the worlds of which they

¹²² *Ibid.*, p.11.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

speak.”¹²⁶ As the female protagonist in *The Butcher’s Wife*, Lin Shi seldom talks; she has almost no voice because others deprive her privilege of speaking in her society. The patriarchal society endows other people with the privilege to speak in the text. However, Lin Shi, as the inferior woman, is not endowed with such privilege. This is the secret norm in such society. Men control the privilege of discourse while women are expelled from the center of discourse. Male discourse dominates all speaking, as Beauvoir describes: “A myth always implies a subject who projects his hopes and his fears towards a sky of transcendence. Women do not set themselves up as Subject and hence have erected no virile myth in which their projects are reflected; they have no religion or poetry of their own: they still dream through the dreams of men.”¹²⁷ Lacan also considers that “speech confers a meaning on the functions of the individual; its domain is that of concrete discourse qua field of the subject’s transindividual reality, and its operations are those of history insofar as history constitutes the emergence of truth in reality.”¹²⁸ Discourse means the power distribution in society; those who have more privilege to speak clearly hold more power in society. Lin Shi, as the weak female character, will never have much chance to really *speak*.

Compared to Lin Shi who never has much voice in the story, Awangguan, another female character in *The Butcher’s Wife*, seems to possess the privilege of speaking in public and being heard:

She stopped in her tracks and listened closely...She found she could hear
much better.

¹²⁶ Lessa, I., “Discursive struggles within social welfare: Restaging teen motherhood”, *British Journal of Social Work*, Vol. 36, 2006, p.287.

¹²⁷ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, (London: Lowe & Brydone, 1956.), p. 162.

¹²⁸ Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: A Selection*, (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 214.

Auntie Ah-Wang¹²⁹ was still talking: “Take me, for instance. I was prepared to kill myself if that’s what it took to show I had the courage of my convictions. That’s all a person needs to get by in this world.” The tone of her voice became contemptuous: “A person doesn’t have to moan and groan all the time to try to make people believe she’s having a good time. It’s people like that who give all women a bad name. But I guess I’m just wasting my breath talking about her.”¹³⁰

Awangguan talks a lot, even incessantly. She considers herself as the defender of patriarchy, and her power over women is equal to that of any man in the community. She judges other women by using patriarchal norms, regardless of her own proper place in the whole patriarchal society. However, even if her voice is so loud in the text, she does not “actually speak” for she has “nothing to say”. Her words are the representations of male discourse. She is merely the shadow, the supplement, or even the executioner of patriarchal society without a bit of self-consciousness. She is only able to “talk” without possessing any real meaning, but is not able to “speak” as a real man who has the phallus in such phallogocentric discourse.

Lin Shi’s space of discourse is forcibly muted under male domination. Her only voice—screaming—is ignored and will never become the discourse in the text. In *The Butcher’s Wife*, the silent Lin Shi only “talks” when she suffers sexual violence at the hand of her husband. She screams out with pain and sorrow, which is her non-word/silent accusation to the patriarchal society. Every time Chen

¹²⁹ Awangguan(阿岡官)is also translated into Auntie Ah-Wang in the 1986 version published by North Point Press.

¹³⁰ Li Ang, *The Butcher’s Wife*, (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1986), p.100-101.

Jiangshui sexually abuses her, she has to try her best to resist him and scream loudly. Finally, under the pressure of unexpected but vicious rumours from the female community whose members laugh at her painful scream, she can only moan in an extremely low voice. Meanwhile, her voice becomes horrible. In the whole text, the patriarchal society is always trying to mute Lin Shi. Lin Shi, as a weak female, has no privilege to speak and no feminine self. She is repressed all the time and has no awareness of why she is inferior.

3.3.2 The Decline and Growth of Female Voice in *The Labyrinth Garden*

Beginning with *The Labyrinth Garden*, with the improvement of women's situation in the Taiwanese society, women writers begin to gain more privilege to *speak* independently without becoming the supplement of male discourse. In *The Labyrinth Garden*, Li Ang has granted Zhu Yinghong, the female protagonist more privilege to *speak*. Zhu Yinghong's utterance through first-person narrative in the text is loud and audible which clearly shows her inner self to us.

Comparatively, the male voice, once the authoritative voice in a patriarchal society, has slowly faded in *The Labyrinth Garden*.

At the beginning of *The Labyrinth Garden*, Li Ang has made a strong contrast between the male voice and the female voice. The contrast between gay people and Zhu Yinghong in the beginning represents the male voice is inhibited to its minimum. In the square, there are 36 giant televisions in a row reporting the old mysterious Han Garden and its owner Zhu Yinghong who has just donated it to the country, while at the same time these gay people are discriminated in a bar. Compared with the great contribution that the female protagonist Zhu Yinghong

has made, the castrated men seem weak and silent. They have lost their phalluses while at the same time, they still have their penises:

“You are Xiao Shen working for Lighting House!” She says, after a small pause, continuing her words:

“Isn’t Charlie your manager?”

“Yes, and he is now in hospital...”

A girl who is serving alcohol suddenly shrieks in a horrible voice and stops Xiao Shen’s words:

“Ah! He is the one who had AIDS!”

“你是 Lighting House（燈塔）的小沈嘛！”她說，稍略停頓又接著道：“Charlie 不是你們的經理？”

“是啊！他現在在醫院裏……”

一個端酒的小妹不待小沈說完，突地大聲叫出：

“唉啊！不就是得 A.I.D.S.的那個！”¹³¹

As a male, but nothing more than a gay man, Xiao Shen is symbolically castrated in the text. In addition to being deprived of his masculinity, his voice is interrupted by women. Xiao Shen is women mockery of men. Although he tries to argue “the first AIDS in Taiwan has its historical significance,”¹³² he is finally ridiculed and has to leave the bar with few humiliated donations. The “deep hatred in his eyes” eventually becomes “a panic appearance” which is “lowly and pathetic.”

The same as Xiaoshen, Zhu Zuyan, as the “father” in the text, talks frequently; however, his voice has no power. Unlike the traditional image of the

¹³¹ Li Ang, *The Labyrinth Garden*, (Taipei: Rye Field Publications, 2006), p.11.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p.12.

father who firmly possesses the power of discourse, in *The Labyrinth Garden*, Zhu Zuyan is always a weak man. Besides continually telling Zhu Yinghong the past glory of their family, his only words lament his frustration as a frustrated intellectual:

“I have been thinking recently that I am exactly one of those Taiwanese people born after Sino-Japanese war, those who were repressed and have no freedom of speech.” He seems to bring something into his consideration, stopping abruptly, however immediately continues, “I have been hoping that there can be some Taiwanese spirit, no matter how small it is.”

“我最近總想，我正是生在甲午戰爭後的台灣人，那款受到壓迫，苦著開不了口的台灣人。”父親仍似有所顧忌，生硬的停下來，卻立刻又接道：“總還希望，還能有一點台灣人的風骨，那怕只有一點點……”¹³³

“It is so ridiculous that I finally find out, they [the government] are not the foreigners, but are more merciless than them; they are not the aggressors, but are crueler than them. So once again, I use that foreign language to teach my children.”

“可笑的是有一天我發現，不是異族，但比異族還殘酷，不是侵略者，但比侵略者還血腥，所以，我又用了異族的語言，而且來教導自己的小孩。”¹³⁴

The voice of Zhu Zuyan is weak and virtually silent. He cannot say anything that he actually wants to say. In his youth, his country is dominated by Japanese

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.199.

invaders and he lives as a slave who also is deprived the privilege of discourse¹³⁵. In his middle age, again he is politically “muted” by the contemporary government. Throughout the text Zhu Zuyan cannot actually *speak* in the text, and his voice is repressed politically by the Kuomintang government.

Lin Xigeng, as the successor of patriarchy after Zhu Zuyan, makes a loud sound when he first appears in the novel. He becomes very rich in the 1970s’ economic boom in Taiwan. Although he comes from a small village in southern Taiwan, he is confident to control everything, especially to control women. His words are confident and resolute, full of masculinity, in the beginning. He considers women as his prey while he is always the strong male predator. His voice is so confident under such a phallogentric society which represents the voice of the patriarchy. Lin Xigeng is the representative male character in a patriarchal society who always objectifies women through his male gaze, considering “woman as icon, displayed for the gaze and enjoyment of man.” However, with the decline of his sexual prowess, his right to *speak* is also inhibited by the real author. It does not mean that his sexual prowess is related to his discourse; Li Ang only uses this as a metaphor of the patriarchal society which is based on the meaning of the phallus. The process of the gradual incompetence of Lin Xigeng’s sexual prowess represents the decline of patriarchy. In the latter part of *The Labyrinth Garden*, Lin Xigeng becomes sexually incompetent, and consequently

¹³⁵ As I mentioned at the beginning of this paper, under the Japanese occupation through 1895 to 1945, the freedom of speech of Taiwanese people was strictly inhibited by Japanese governors. More writers even gave up their writing during that period for if they wanted to write something, they couldn’t write the pain that Taiwanese people were going through, instead they had to write as tribute to the Japanese colonizer.

his voice starts to turn weak. Although he still brags, it is merely to disguise his embarrassment:

She can hear Lin Xigeng's voice is bragging himself near her ears:

“See, I must have brought you passionate orgasm, right? You must have no such feelings before.”

Then he continues with his own explanation,

“I've been incompetent recently. Maybe I had too much sex before, and now I can only make more effort on foreplay...”

卻是耳邊聽得林西庚的聲音，自得的，誇耀的在說：

“看，我把妳弄得很舒服吧！妳一定沒有這樣被弄過。”

然後，以他一貫的開始說後便會再自動加以解釋的方式，繼續道：

“我最近那方面不太行了，以前玩太多。現在只有在這上面下功夫……”¹³⁶

Finally, his once powerful voice has faded away at the end. Along with his symbolic castration in text, his voice cannot be heard in the Han Garden, which is a metaphor of the maternal body. Han Garden, where Zhu Yinghong has spent most of her time, represents Zhu Yinghong's feminine self and her massive maternal body. Lin Xigeng once considers he will never lose his direction in Han Garden, but eventually he loses himself there. In the end when he is so scared of losing Zhu Yinghong, his voice in such a vast maternal body seems so powerless and ironical since he has forever lost his sexual ability to have children:

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

Your father let you be born and grow up here in this garden. And I, I will help you repair the whole place. In the future, our children will also be born, and grow up, in this Han Garden.

妳父親讓你生在這個園子，在這個園子長大。而我，我要幫妳把這個園子整個修復，以後，我們的孩子，也會生在“菡園”，在“菡園”裡長大。¹³⁷

Lin Xigeng's voice is finally muted along with him; he becomes the castrated man. As the counterpart, Zhu Yinghong's voice rises with the process of finding her feminine self. Women now become more independent than they are in *The Butcher's Wife*. The first-person narrative of Zhu Yinghong endows her with the privilege to *speak* in the text.

In the beginning, Zhu Yinghong is inferior to Lin Xigeng. She wants to be in a committed relationship with him while Lin Xigeng only considers her as one of his numerous women. The night Zhu Yinghong has made her mind not to see Lin Xigeng anymore, however, she cries out her deepest fear of not seeing him again:

When he has left, I did not get a chance to say goodbye yet. I shut the door and walk into my house, but soon I desperately want to see him again....I have to look at him again. I probably will never see him again in the future. I cannot just let him disappear in my life; at least I have to take a look at him at last.

當他真正要離去，我不曾說再見，徑自關上門進入屋內，然後，立即興起再看他一眼的念頭。……無論如何我得再看他一眼，往後我或將

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 265.

永遠見不到他，這樣的一個男人，我不能任著他就此從我的生命中消失，我至少得再看他一次。¹³⁸

Through her pain and growth, finally Zhu Yinghong decides not to become the shadow of Lin Xigeng. Her final word shows her feminine identity as an educated woman:

In such vague feeling, I even get to understand why women think of or actually try using children to maintain their relationship with men. That may be the last thing we can rely on. However, in such vague feeling, there is yet another sober self that hiding somewhere in my body, clearly and resolutely telling me: this is absolutely not what I am going to do.

與模糊的、一切俱遲緩鈍悶的思緒中，我居然還想到，我算終於明白，何以女性們會渴想、或確實可行的以小孩維繫彼此間的關係。那或許是我們所能有的最終的依賴。可是甚至在意識遲濁的其時，仍有一個冰清徹骨的清醒的我，藏躲在自身的隱蔽某處，清晰而決然的肯確在說：這絕不會是我要做的。¹³⁹

Finally, after Zhu Yinghong has experienced so much, she begins to notice her feminine self that hides inside her. She has made her decision not to gain advantage of her child to force Lin Xigeng to marry her. Thus, she aborts her child with Lin Xigeng and goes back to Han Garden in her hometown. She will never dress the way Lin Xigeng likes, nor speak the way Lin Xigeng orders her to. Finally, these unexpected changes in Zhu Yinghong give Lin Xigeng fears, and then the realization of her nobility. At last, Zhu Yinghong decides to be herself.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 255-256.

Zhu Yinghong eventually achieves her feminine self and her female voice becomes louder than the males.

3.3.3 Heteroglossia of Women in *Bewitching Love*

Li Ang's solution to the repressed female voice becomes complicated within the text in her different stages of writing. Women become more and more independent in her works. Finally, in *Bewitching Love*, there is no existence of the male voice, only the four female characters' different voices echoing everywhere in the text.

This is a reversal of sound between men and women from *The Butcher's Wife* to *Bewitching Love*. In *The Butcher's Wife*, the male characters in that story repress Lin Shi's voice, denying her speech in the text. The female voice is muted in such patriarchy. However, *Bewitching Love* unconditionally reverses this situation. Men are excluded from this female-dominated society. They have lost their discourse here, let alone their phalluses. This is a world of the clitoris instead of the phallus.

Li Ang tries to re-establish the repressed female voice through her narration, which also has been developing for 30 years in her writing. The discourse represents the power distribution in each society, so by gradually strengthening women's voices and weakening men's voices in the text, Li Ang has ingeniously created a new way, to make the female actually be able to *speak* in the text without any repression from the male domination. This is the volcanic effect of feminine writing as Cixous describes in "The Laugh of the Medusa":

A feminine text cannot fail to be more than subversive. It is volcanic; as it is written it brings about an upheaval of the old property crust, carrier of masculine investments; there's no other way. There's no room for her if she's not a he. If she's a her-she, it's in order to smash everything, to shatter the framework of institutions, to blow up the law, to break up the "truth" with laughter¹⁴⁰.

¹⁴⁰ Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa", *Signs*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (summer, 1976), p. 888.

Chapter 4 Conclusion

4.1 Summary

This thesis examines how Li Ang uses more than 30 years to build the female “Garden of Eden”: the feminine self. For more than 30 years, Li Ang has been exploring the issue of female inferiority in patriarchal society. From the inability of *The Butcher’s Wife*, to the developing feminine self in *The Labyrinth Garden*, and finally to a female paradise in *Bewitching Love*, Li Ang has finally found the way to female liberation in a patriarchal society. She is a woman writer whose writing has so far beyond the meaning of her time.

For centuries, Chinese society was built on the concept of male dominance in which men held the supreme power to control everything as their personal possessions, especially women. Li Ang’s works criticize the repression of female voices under the male norms and the mental fetter that the male society has put on women. Li Ang systematically uses her writing to stop this imbalance between male and female. Phallus, once as the meaning of language and origin of social order, is castrated in her works. At the same time, Li Ang gives women more opportunity to express themselves.

For a long time, feminine self was inhibited and repressed under the patriarchal society. Whether as a feminist or not, Li Ang has successfully deconstructed the phallus and the phallogocentric meaning of language. She gives women more chances to re-establish their feminine identities, and she even

establishes the feminine selves through bold sexual portrayals as a metaphor that the women ultimately control everything. Although she is satirized and criticized for her writing, she has stepped a new way to re-establish the repressed female in a patriarchal society and gives us an alternative solution to female issues.

Through examining these essential features of Li Ang, my thesis concludes different stages of feminine self in her fictions. Li Ang is a developing writer whose works always evolve with the most popular female issues. By analyzing her developmental feminist point of view, my thesis has also examined how Li Ang combines the newest female issues into different stages in her writing, and achieves the ultimate feminine self.

4.2 Limitations of Research and Directions for Future Studies

This thesis is the preliminary stage of my research of Li Ang's writing experience, and there are some limitations on my current research.

One limitation of this thesis is lacking the analysis from other works of Li Ang. Limited to the length of this thesis, I could only choose some of her most representative works, which might affect the comprehensiveness of my argument here.

A second limitation is I did not fully explain Li Ang's works by employing other important literary theories that might be useful. In my thesis, I mainly used feminism. I consider that my research has not yet reached the stage where I can extend my topic more comprehensively.

For future studies, I plan to choose two or three more works to enhance my argument, and try to get a more precise conclusion of how exactly women

have developed their identities. Also, I plan to employ more theories, such as geocriticism and psychoanalysis, to further support my argument.

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