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Jekyll Is and Hyde Isn't: Negotiating the Nationalization of Identity in *The Mystery Garden* and "Breakfast at Tiffany's"

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The Dream of a Transparent Society

It often has been argued that the ending of *Orphan of Asia* (*Yaxiya de gu'er*) by Wu Zhuoliu (1977) is arbitrary because the tension between Hu Daming's need for a firm sense of belonging and his disappointment with the "motherland" experience he has had in Mainland China remains unresolved. Therefore, the fact that the novel ends with Hu returning to China to join the Chinese in fighting against the invading Japanese seems a bit forced to many. In real life, however, this might not have sounded so arbitrary if there had been no civil war to politically separate Taiwan from Mainland China. Sutured both by the traditional (Han) Chinese cultural identity and the identity provided by a stable modern Chinese nation state, the Taiwanese could very well have felt secure. And the "Hudamingian" confusion would have become just a curious but transient historical phenomenon with few consequences. But the civil war changed everything.

亞細亞的孤兒
吳濁流　胡大明

This is not to say that an identity problem had never surfaced in China before. But the one that is currently harrowing Taiwanese society assumes a "new" type of modality in the Chinese cultural consciousness, one that had its precedent in the May Fourth Movement.[1] That is, it pertains to the nation state. Thus, to cope with this problem, new approaches have to

[1] Prior to the Republican era, "identity disputes," if they could be so called, usually centered round whether or not a given regime was the legitimate heir of the *Daotong* [the tradition of the Way]. In other words, it was at most a problem of the elite class, and the question was always this: Who among all the "Chinese contenders of legitimacy"

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be configured on the basis of an understanding of the demands on identity imposed by the nation state. The commonsensical way of dealing with this problem is to ascribe it to the fact that Taiwan does not have a clearly defined national identity. If this were the case, then, it would naturally follow that a clear definition of this national identity would be an apt solution to the problem.

But before we accept this argument, let us first pose the following questions: What is a nation state? What kind of legitimacy does it have in the contemporary world? Why has national identity, as it pertains to the nation state, become such an urgent issue in Taiwan as well as elsewhere? And finally, can a stable national identity actually be achieved and, if so, for what purpose and at whose expense?

First of all, it should be re-emphasized that even the most private kind of identity has always been a discursive construction. This is all the more so for the "national identity" of a modern nation state, a historical product in itself. Therefore, national identity has never originated deep within human nature but is produced by the discourse on the nation state. This means that, when we talk about the issue of identity, we have to historicize it. As Stuart Hall puts it, "[p]recisely because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies" (Hall 1996: 4).

The method for acquiring (national) identity was not the same before the rise of the nation state as it is today; it changes as time goes by.[2] As a result, to historicize the issue, we will need to ask the following questions: Why does national identity

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actually had the "right identity"? Since the Republican era, however, the contestation has increasingly turned into a problem for the general populace. More on this in note 2.

[2] When Gellner discusses "high culture," he makes an insightful comparison between pre-modern and modern identity formations. According to him, the essential difference between the two resides in the fact that identity formation on the basis of the possession of "high culture" was the exclusive right of a small elite. Even though it appeared authoritative to the rest of the population, it could not be

come to present itself before us in its current manner? That is, why have we taken for granted, first, that national identity is of primary importance in an individual's identity formation, and, second, that it has to be stable and "transparent"?

Both of these two issues have to be understood in light of what gave birth to the nation state—the capitalist system. Analyzing the relationship between capitalism and the nation state, Marx points out that capitalism entails "the abstraction of the political state." Since the latter is a corollary of the capitalist system, it also is based on what is fundamental to that system, the division of labor. Being an abstraction as well as a product of the principle of the division of labor, the political state would inevitably "demand" that its citizens' subjectivity or identity be implicated in the process of abstraction and division—that is, one that is produced by alienation in the first place (Marx 1843: 81).

According to Marx, the modern subject was born from the nation state: the impact of capitalism on medieval society and its political and economic systems not only generated the political state (i.e., nation state) but simultaneously "liberated" the "individual" (1846: 72). However, since this liberation of the individual means distributing citizenship among all its subjects, "citizenship" no longer implies any special status as in the pre-modern period, but becomes an abstract identity. In other words, the modern notion of the "individual," in excluding private life, denotes only the individual in the public sphere and therefore in its abstract form. This explains why the public and private spheres became separated in the modern nation state (1846: 75).

"This [abstract] *man* is," Marx continues, "the basis, the

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imposed on them. Industrial societies popularized this high culture and forged a discourse that had to be practiced by everyone in the society (Gellner 1983: 50-51). The passage from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic fully illustrates this transformation: the empire had a very loose kind of identity formation. Some even consider it cosmopolitan. But ever since modern Turkey began its so-called "reform" based on the model of the nation state, it has adopted an identity policy so severe and inflexible that few authoritarian countries can rival it (Robin 1996: 69).

precondition, of the *political* state" (1846: 77). In this system, "a person's distinct activity and distinct situation in life were reduced to a merely individual significance," and "*the political function became the individual's general function*" (1843: 166; emphasis mine). In other words, even though the individual was born together with the modern nation state, "it is only through the state that individualism is possible" (Durkheim 1957: 64; qtd. Sayer 1991: 80). Defined and rendered abstract by the nation state, such a subject—one devoid of inner life—is what Marx calls the "modern subject."

By now there is little doubt that the birth of this modern subject is closely tied to the logic of capitalism. The nation state transformed its subjects into abstract and empty "political men" or "juridical men," with a view toward ensuring "market freedom" through the "orderly oppression of law" (Sayer 1991: 83, 73). Such "orderly oppression of law," according to Sayer, represents an attempt on the part of the nation state to suppress the private part of the individual in order to become a viable production unit that can best serve the interests of the capitalist system.

In order to be productive, the nation state has to do more than implement an "orderly oppression of law"; it also utilizes a more subtle kind of domination so that its subjects can be made to do things for it of their own accord. For instance, market freedom "rests upon a much more comprehensive moral regulation of social relations and identities, through a plethora of agencies for the reformation of character" (Corrigan and Sayer 1985; Corrigan 1990; qtd. Sayer 1991: 73). The sort of abstract individualism created is also a kind of "moral individualism" (Sayer 1991: 80). It not only prevents the individual from indulging in "egoism," but exacts unprecedented "moral" demands on the individual (more on this later).

More importantly, what seems to be the state's domination is in fact also class domination.[3] The institution of the modern nation state, itself deeply rooted in capitalism, is in fact a *burgerliche gesellschaft* formed by the bourgeoisie for its own benefit; this class created, and therefore is most at home in, the capitalist system. Consequently, the political typology of the

[3] More often than not, bourgeois domination of the nation state involves domination with respect to gender, race and age (Sayer 1991: 85-86).

nation state and its class nature are two sides of the same coin, while the above-mentioned "abstract man" is bound to be a "class individual" (Sayer 1991: 69). Nevertheless, "it is precisely because the bourgeoisie rules as a class that in the law it must give itself a general expression" (Marx 1846: 329); that is to say, it "must assert itself in its external relations as *nationality* and internally must organize itself as *state*" (1846: 89; emphasis mine). As a result, within a nation state, the subjectivity as manifested by the ruling bourgeoisie becomes the common subjectivity of everyone through the use of state apparatuses. That is why the bourgeoisie could proclaim that "the nation state itself becomes the embodiment of the 'society' and the new basis of the individuals' public identities." Since it "claims to embrace all," it follows that it also "claims the lives and loyalties of all" (Sayer 1991: 75-76).

Thus far, we have come to a preliminary understanding of the symbiotic relationship between the nation state and capitalism, as well as the fact that the nation state is in fact dominated by the bourgeoisie. But then, how does the bourgeoisie ensure its domination? Or, to put it another way, how does it make the subjects feel that the "national identity" that it provides is necessarily their primary identity? Ernest Gellner's analysis of nationalism argues strongly that it is through nationalism and its corollary, what we mentioned earlier as "moral individualism," that it does so.

According to Gellner, the identity offered by the nation state is rooted in nationalism, which in turn is based on a certain division of labor; it is a new type of "culture" born from "industrial society" (Gellner 1983: 24). The purpose of this "culture" is to satisfy the demands of an industrial society because this society is "the only society ever to live on sustained and perpetual growth" (1983: 22). In order to keep pace with its great economic growth, it can no longer function according to the strict hierarchical social system typical of an "agrarian society"; it has to achieve a certain degree of mobility and egalitarianism, characteristics that would facilitate the supply of labor which is "instrumental, optional, and renewable" (1983: 24-25). To ensure this, an industrial society must provide its citizens with a universal education which is "generic and standardized," enabling them not only to become highly mobile and re-

trainable, but to "communicate" and "exchange meaning" with ease (1983: 27-35).

Nationalism is central to the production of this kind of labor. That is why Gellner argues that, "contrary to popular and even scholarly belief, nationalism does not have any very deep roots in the human psyche" but instead is coterminous with "a kind of now pervasive social order" (1983: 34). Gellner calls this social order "universal high culture," literate and training-sustained, as opposed to the "folk culture" of agrarian societies: of these two cultures, the latter is transmitted orally and the former is sustained through universal education and the mass media. Universal high culture thus replaced "king, land, or religious faith" as the new object of loyalty for the "modern man." The fact that Adam Smith calls the nation state the "Mortall God" while Weber calls it the "nation-church-state" underscores this point.[4] Obviously "allegiance to culture" is synonymous with "allegiance to the nation state," and "high culture" is closely tied to, and shaped by, the nation state (1983: 36-38). This is where the power of the nation state lies: through high culture, it repeatedly claims to be able to "represent essential components of *individual* identities, to epitomize who we are" (Corrigan and Sayer 1985; qtd. Sayer 1991: 82).

The real, or at least the major, intent of nationalism has been all but laid bare: in order to maintain perpetual growth, an industrial society manufactures high culture and the members of the society "breathe, live and *produce* in it" (emphasis mine) (Gellner 1983: 37-38). In a word, the nation state disseminates nationalism through "culture"—in fact we can even say that the cultural intent of a nation state is to disseminate nationalism—and its subjects are made to accept the national identity supplied by the bourgeoisie as their primary identity. This is tantamount to a collective unconscious which can secure the bourgeois domination of the nation state and, consequently, perpetual growth. While, with his oft-quoted theory of "imagined communities," Anderson indeed goes further than Gellner in his

[4] In traditional societies, an allegiance to culture was not uncommon. But since high culture was usually transmitted through narrow channels and to a rather small group of elites, only the elites would pledge strong allegiance.

analysis of *how* the nation state manufactures "culture," especially with regard to "print capitalism," he does so in a basically phenomenological manner and ignores the crucial relationship, as outlined above, between the nation state and capitalism (Anderson 1991).

To understand how the bourgeoisie-dominated nation state ensures that its subjects succumb to the beckoning of nationalism and then willingly pledge loyalty and help maintain constant economic production, we need to refer to Foucault's discussion of "governmentality." It is by implementing "governmentality" that the nation state is able to monitor its subjects down to the smallest detail and make sure they will fulfil the demands nationalism imposes on them. According to Foucault, before modernity came into existence, the civic-legal (i.e., public) and spiritual (i.e., private) spheres of Western society were governed, respectively, by politics and religion. But since the sixteenth century, the modern government—or nation state—of Western society began to merge the "city game" and the "shepherd game" and form a "secular political pastorate" or "police state," turning "individualization" and "totalization" into two sides of the same coin. Such a government claims to be "of all and of each" (Burchell *et al.* 1991: 8-12). At first glance, it seems that it does so because it believes it can take better care of the people by "[enabling] every subject to have an 'economically' useful life" (1991: 12), but in fact it aims more to expand the power of state apparatuses. While the separation of the public and private spheres by the bourgeoisie-dominated nation state does not necessarily have only negative consequences, the "police state" was nevertheless definitely moving in the direction of minimizing and even eliminating the private sphere of the individual.

The police state not only instituted surveillance over the "conduct" of its subjects, but also unrelentingly encouraged them to live an "economically useful life." This then developed into the mentality of "panopticon," seeking perfect, one hundred percent control (Burchell *et al.* 1991: 25). This is what Foucault means when he speaks of the dream of a transparent society created through "techniques of surveillance, a pastoral concern with the capacities of a population, and the force of public opinion" (Donald 1996: 181). In such a society, the subjects become

servants to the state: they have to be ready to sacrifice themselves for the state. Even though capitalism eventually forsook the covert project of complete "statization" or state control, it nevertheless delegates power to private institutions which disseminate power through less conspicuous means (such as popular culture) and are often able to actually conceal or naturalize the fact of domination (Burchell *et al.* 1991: 25-27). This is what Baudrillard refers to as "simulacrum," the form of seamless cultural control in late capitalist society. Theoretically, the main difference between modern identity and pre-modern identity is that the hereditary nature of the latter has been transformed into the free choice of the former. But, in fact, in a nation state-dominated modern world, people living in a given society have little choice in their adoption of a national identity, since the concept of citizenship seems to stipulate that, while one is apparently allowed to choose, one must always make "the right choice" (Žižek 1989: 165-66).

The foregoing discussion has revealed that the severe demand of the nation state—that national identity be primary and transparent—is a product of specific historical conditions involving the domination of capitalism and the bourgeoisie. The nation state does not have enough legitimacy to make such a demand, nor can it fully disguise the fact that, in actuality, this is a system of domination. To put it in more radical terms, it does not have absolute universality. Even though Gellner has pointed out that the nation state is an institution that arose in response to an industrial society's demand for "perpetual growth," it does not necessarily follow that any society that plans to industrialize has to incorporate this institution in a wholesale manner.

During the encounter of cultures, it often was the case that the industrialized West, considering itself "more civilized," forced its institution of the nation state upon non-Western, traditional societies by means of its superior weaponry (Appadurai 1996: 141-42). At the same time, the non-Western societies were also goaded into believing that, for the sole reason of technological backwardness, they were obliged to abandon their traditional values altogether and eventually enter the trap of "[dying] precisely in the manner the West wants it to die" (Gourgouris 1996: 61). But in fact the grand wish on the part of these societies to be reborn through the institution of the nation state

was not fulfilled, because of the destruction of their traditions; this is a fact that unwittingly exposed the defects of the institution (Robins 1996). Certainly, the advent of the age of globalization also has permitted us a better understanding of the symbiotic relationship between the "national longing" and the "consumerist aesthetics" of capitalism, that is, the hyperreal nature of the nation state (Luke 1995: 94).

In view of the fact that the nation state will be here to stay for quite a while, how are we to make the most of a deeper understanding of this institution so as to minimize its negative effects, such as capitalist exploitation, class domination, communal conflicts, and gender and age discrimination? In fact, the answer is very simple. It is imperative that we de-prioritize and de-transparentize national identity. The actual implementation of these two measures requires a complete grasp of the expediency of both the "form" and "content" (in the Žižekian sense) of the identity provided by the nation state. The fact that the foregoing genealogical study of identity formation in the nation state has excavated the historicity of its "form" should be evidence strong enough to exert a de-mythifying effect on the assumption that the longing for a national identity is rooted in human nature, and hence to de-prioritize such an identity. But the "content" of national identity, which, being totemized, has led to the desire for its transparency, awaits further interrogation.

The work of "de-transparentization" must proceed from the recognition of the subject as "void" or "empty." But this implies an *awareness* of the subject's radical emptiness instead of a practice of actually emptying it out, an awareness that any content of an identity derives from discursive constructions and hence is historically situated, changing with time. On the other hand, it should also be recognized that this subject is also "constitutively antagonistic" or "lacking" (Žižek 1989: 124-27) and therefore does not have an *a priori* unity. This is as true with individual subjects as with the subject of a democratic institution. Nevertheless, understanding the subject as having no fix(at)ed or unified content exemplifies only the passive meaning of the notion of "subject as void." Its positive meaning can be seen in the fact that only through the notion of an abstract subject located in the symbolic order can we recognize, in the light of the Law, the injustice of all the various kinds of "imaginary

identifications" occupying the collective subject positions. Only on the basis of this recognition can we protect our own interests and ensure our right to become a unique individual, to the same extent that others have protected and ensured theirs (Donald 1996: 175). This is the only path to radical democracy.[5]

But to resist the hegemony of "imaginary identifications" by means of the voidness of the subject is not tantamount to saying that in daily life, we are to discard our "emotions" (what Žižek after Lacan, calls *jouissance*). Identity formation necessarily involves both "emotional attachments" and "practical concerns" which are inextricably intertwined (Smith 1997: 66-69; Liao Hsien-hao 1995; Appardurai 1996). Moreover, our daily practice actually relies on the filling in of the void of our subjectivity. Without the emotional part, the subject would not even exist, since this part is the positive condition of the void subject: "by losing the material support, the very form dissolves itself" (Žižek 1991: 165); demanding absolute rationality would in the end produce the monster of the "pure subject of Enlightenment" (Žižek 1992: 134-36). That explains why Lacan insists on the importance of the concept of *sinthome*: the part of us that is not accountable by rationality is in fact "the only support of being" (Žižek 1989: 75).[6] Therefore, the "voidness of the subject" does not imply that the subject works in emptiness; it underscores an awareness of the *expediency* of the content of all subjectivities. However, since the accretion of emotions is the only way in which the subject expresses its subjectivity, it can understand the dialectical relationship between past and future from the

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[5] Superficially, Žižek's blank subject seems no different from the abstract bourgeois subject. In fact, as its bourgeois origin makes clear, the "abstract" citizen, far from being "blank," always already has assumed a class content, which in turn is accompanied by other content elements such as gender, race, ethnicity and age.

[6] My prolonged debate with Chaoyang Liao centered round the issue of whether the void or blank could allow for the existence of emotions. Chaoyang Liao's argument was supposedly based on Žižek's adaptation of the Lacanian conception of subjectivity as void. But in fact what he tried to defend was transparency rather than voidness. See Liao Chaoyang (1995a; 1995b; 1995c; 1996a; 1996b) and Liao Hsien-hao (1995a; 1995b; 1996a; 1996b).

conflict between rationality and emotion. At the same time, the subject can learn to respect others' emotions (Donald 1996: 188). All communities and individuals could (and could only) fill in the voidness with their own emotional accretions; they should by no means be prevented from doing so. According to Donald, "[one's] enactments of citizenship embody the different ways of experiencing the impossibility of identity" (Donald 1996: 186).[7]

One word of caution, though. The fact that Žižek links "emotion" with "nation" might mislead us into thinking that "emotion" takes a singular rather than plural form. If that were the case, then "nation" would not be the support of identity but its "content," because the subject of "nation" (that is, citizenship) would no longer remain "empty." How then would it be different from the usual form of nationalism, which always acknowledges only one kind of emotion for the nation as legitimate? Žižek's concept of "nation," defined as the Lacanian Das Ding, that is, "a traumatic real object fixing our desire" (Žižek 1991:162), in fact refers to the impossible enjoyment of the nation state, one that cannot be crystallized into a coherent object and thus remains beyond the organization of the symbolic but also supports this same organization. In other words, since a state by nature contains more than one community and should be ready to accept as valid all the different emotional matrices these communities employ to support their citizenship, the praxis of citizenship inevitably produces differences. In this light, according to Donald, even Habermas's notion of a "post-traditional" cultural identity remains still on the level of "content" and does not meet the criterion of real, democratic thinking about identity (Donald 1996: 173-75).

But a nation state demands transparency of identity precisely because it does not admit that its subjects have emotions (or *jouissance*). In other words, nationalism's ultimate desire is to absolutize or essentialize the content which it has filled in the empty citizenship. Put in a different way, it

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[7] We need to communicate and negotiate precisely because our emotions are directed toward different objects. Or, in Žižek's words, we have our own enjoyment. The purpose of communication and negotiation resides in advising the parties involved to give up the impulse to completely fill in one's emotions in the empty subject.

legitimizes or "Jekyllizes" the emotions of only a part of the people of the state. The consequence of this is bound to be that emotions of other kinds will be depreciated or suppressed and, having no legitimate outlets, will eventually reappear in the form of the "return of the repressed," what Donald calls the "Hyde" phenomenon (Donald 1996: 188). Žižek is even more direct: "All attempts to fill out democracy with 'concrete contents' succumb sooner or later to the totalitarian temptation, however sincere their motives may be" (Žižek 1991: 163-64). Lacan goes even further in imagining the worst case scenario: "I love you, but there is in you something more than you, *objet petit a*, which is why I mutilate you" (Lacan 1978: 263).

But the above-mentioned exclusionary "primordial sentiments" that characterize nationalism do not belong only to "backward" or "uncivilized" communities (such as tribal peoples or underdeveloped non-Western societies). Despite their apparent spontaneity, emotions are "acquired" through learning (Appadurai 1996: 147). The "primordial sentiments" said to permeate primitive societies are even more obviously "close to the center of the project of modern nation state" (Appadurai 1996: 146). In other words, the nation state is more of a manufacturer of these kinds of sentiments than so-called primitive societies: it makes use of state apparatuses and the media (especially the latter) to consistently churn out "emotions" and seduce its subjects into identifying with them and internalizing them. The purpose of doing so is nothing other than to "suppress internal dissent, to construct homogeneous subjects of the state, and to maximize the surveillance and control of the diverse populations under their control" (Appadurai 1996: 146). Communal conflicts occur often because "large-scale identities" have been "convincingly portrayed as *primary* (indeed even as primordial) loyalties by politicians, religious leaders, and the media" (emphasis mine). The consequence is that ordinary people would "self-fulfillingly seem to act as if only this kind of identity mattered and as if they were surrounded by a world of pretenders" (1996: 155). This is what Appadurai postulates as the "treachery hypothesis," which describes an untrusting attitude toward the "aliens" living next door, one that eventually may lead to a "sense of betrayal" since the "transparency" of one's identity investment is ultimately

impossible. History has made it clear that if this "sense of betrayal" is relentlessly aggravated by politicians, it would not be long before these "aliens" are "slaughtered" because there are always any number of ways ready at hand for the "natives" to prove that these "aliens" have that "something in them more than them" (1996: 154).

The foregoing discussion has amply demonstrated how imperative it is that we "de-primarize" and "de-transparentize" the identity offered by the institution of the nation state. Then, the so-called identity problem troubling Taiwanese society will no longer be "What kind of nation is Taiwan?" (Does Taiwan have an unclear national status?), but "What kind of nation (society) do the Taiwanese want?" (Do we consent to the "primarization" and "transparentization" of national identity in our neglect of the problems of corporate exploitation, organized crime, communal conflicts, class domination, gender domination, and so on?) If we insist on pursuing the dream of a "transparent society" conceived by the nation state, it will be difficult to measure how much our social capital would be squandered. On the other hand, only by imagining a kind of "open nation"—one that allows us to have a genuine "multicultural society"—and by interpreting and re-inventing Taiwan more creatively can we dissipate the imagined urgency of the identity problem (Liao Hsien-hao 1999) and shake off the nationalist shackles on cultural development that this problem imposes.

The Abdication of the Mistress of the Estate: Woman and National Identity

There is no dearth of modern Taiwanese fictional works that deal with the issue of identity. Despite this obsession with national identity, however, reflections on the nature of the nation state as a *discourse* have been seriously lacking. Most of them cannot find an alternative to falling back on the notion of the "nation state" as a "final solution." It is as if the longing for a nation state is innate in human nature rather than the product of a mode of production. While there have been debates over national identity, as well as its nature as a product of discourse, those who participated in the debates (whether they be in favor or against, left wing or right wing) have only been engaged in

relatively crude affirmations or denunciations of the nation state, failing to offer a historicized critique of the nation state as a discourse.[8] Fortunately, in the last few years some works seem to have offered some incipient possibilities.

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In the following discussion, I will employ two fictional works—*The Mystery Garden* (*Mi yuan*, 1991), a novel by Li Ang, and "Breakfast at Tiffany's" (*Difan'nei zaocan*, 1997), a short story by Zhu Tianxin—to illustrate this new development in critical thinking on national identity in contemporary fictional writing. What is worth noting is that, although the two works presumably come from opposing camps, they seem to agree with each other in many ways. And it is in the convergence of their thinking that we can most likely see hope for the future of Taiwanese society.

朱影虹

Li Ang's *The Mystery Garden* has two parallel plots: one concerns the sexual desire of Zhu Yinghong, the daughter of a rich family in Lugang, one of the oldest townships in Taiwan; the other concerns her father, who sustained political persecution by the KMT and died with his dreams unfulfilled. The relationship between these two plots has been the focus of much critical discussion. Some critics believe that the two lines of development remain unintegrated (Jin 1993; Huang 1993). A major reason for this argument is that the author's political position—Li Ang is known to be a fervent supporter of Taiwan independence—seems to be contradicted by her sympathy for repressed female sexual desire (Huang 1993). Indeed, one of the emphases of this novel is on the issue of national identity. Li Ang's anti-Chinese political stance also leaves little room for doubt as to her political allegiance. Yet the author's feminist position is just as central to the novel. Hence, what remains to be done is to devise some way of bridging the two positions.

林西庚

The two lines of development concern Zhu Yinghong's respective relations with the two most important men in her life: her father and her lover Lin Xigeng. These two lines run parallel to each other, one concerning the sad failure of a (Taiwanese) nationalist attempt to build a nation state and the other a story of unrequited love. But in fact, they often refer to each other and

[8] In my debate with Chaoyang Liao, this was one of the major points I was trying to illustrate, which to my knowledge had never been put forward before in Taiwan.

are mutually implicated, as we can easily tell from the juxtaposition of the two men whenever they are placed in similar situations. Zhu's father and Lin Xigeng share some important qualities. Even Zhu's love-at-first-sight experience with Lin could be understood as triggered by Zhu's discovering, or, more precisely, imagining to have discovered, qualities that her father lacks, or could have had but were prematurely repressed by political persecution.

In fact, Zhu Yinghong's choice of a lover is influenced by her father in two opposing respects: she looks for someone who is similar to her father yet complements him in significant ways. Having learned from her father that he had had great and noble ambitions, which were left unfulfilled due to political persecution, causing him to idle away his life in Han Garden, Zhu vows to realize her father's dream. For her, this means marrying someone who has the ability to complete the unfinished task her father started. At first sight, Lin does seem to meet her requirements. In his handsome looks and the patriarchal (masculine) authority that he exudes, he is like her father. Once the connection between the two men is unveiled, it is quite obvious that the relationship between Zhu and Lin is more than just an erotic one. It reads more like an allegory about the political status of "Taiwan." The question is: What precisely is its allegorical meaning?

We have to begin by exploring the allegorical meaning of the relationship between Zhu Yinghong and her father. The latter at first plans to build a high school for the purpose of inculcating in the Taiwanese people enlightened, modern knowledge. But after the political persecution of the KMT, a Chinese (and thus, for him, a non-Taiwanese) regime, he comes to believe in the necessity of "constructing" a "native culture," even though he fears the opportune moment has passed him by. From his personal history, we learn that his cultural-nationalist dream is rooted in a worship of Enlightenment thinking not uncommon in his time, which has as its ultimate realization the establishment of a nation state. When political reality makes it impossible for this dream to be actualized, Zhu's father turns to Han Garden as a surrogate locale where he can comfort himself with a miniaturized, imaginary nation state.

Although Zhu's father is far from strict and uncompromising—in a way that one may be tempted to picture traditional Chinese fathers—his relationship with his daughter is nevertheless built upon a code of obedience ("[she was] always taught to obey her father unconditionally" [Li 1991: 147]). Therefore, although Zhu Yinghong has taken it upon herself to carry on her father's unfinished attempt to construct a dignified identity related to the creation of a nation state for the Taiwanese, she is nevertheless constrained by the traditional (both Chinese and Japanese) as well as bourgeois roles of a woman ("[I was] born at the end of last century" [1991: 18]), which require her to be deferential and discreet in the presence of men. In sexual terms, she has always been trained, and feels compelled, to desire a masculine man, someone who could help complete her father's incomplete project.

Judging from Lin Xigeng's looks, he does satisfy the terms that Zhu Yinghong—or rather, nationalism—has set up for the national father: he is tall and handsome, ambitious and full of energy, authoritarian and entrepreneurial. All these combine to create an image of the founding father of a nation state. To a great extent, too, he is actually representative of the age he lives in, when Taiwan was beginning to make its presence felt in the international business arena and building its foundation as an independent nation state. Besides, marriage between a man like Lin, who is from the countryside of Taiwan, vibrant and energetic, and a woman like Zhu, the well-educated and beautiful daughter of a rich and established family from a culturally sophisticated old city in Taiwan, is keenly reminiscent of the prototype of the founding marriage of all nationalist myths. There seems to be no reason for a Taiwanese not to shower it with blessings.

But Li Ang has seen through the fog of the nationalist myth (one espoused by both nationalist camps: the pre-Li Denghui KMT and the present ruling party, DPP) and hit it in its most vulnerable spot. The two occasions, on which Zhu Yinghong first unleashes her libidinal energy on Lin and then falls helplessly in love with him, are described as taking place in kitschy singing salons where businessmen strike their business deals. Presumably for a well-educated woman like Zhu, these are not the best venues in which to fall in love. In particular, Zhu

becomes immersed in the virtual reality conjured up by the sentimental pop songs and becomes helplessly infatuated with Lin. Such melodramatic falling in love is not something that happens to Zhu alone.[9] But the fact that her "love" for Lin is spurred on by pop songs fully underscores the way in which her erotic desire has been manipulated by the hyperreality fabricated by the media and technology of the capitalist system. The fact that the author purposely arranges for the rendezvous which seals their love to take place on a plot of land where Lin is going to build a housing complex lends further support to such a reading. At the point when she is totally aroused by Lin's caresses, Zhu raises her head in anticipation of full consummation of their love, only to find him "indifferent and without desire" (1991: 183). Obviously he is doing it not out of "real love," but merely by the book. Everything about their relationship turns out to have been executed within the circuit of a bourgeois discourse of love *à la* Taiwanese.

In other words, the foregoing incident virtually epitomizes how the capitalist principle of commodification has always already reduced "sacred love" (if it ever existed) to a vulgar myth of love. More importantly, insofar as love is an allegory for nation-building in this book, the above revelation about love has also exposed the "sacred" content of nationalism to be the material desires of capitalism, which is intent on ravaging the land of Taiwan. Not only is Zhu Yinghong here made a symbol of the land being ravished, but elsewhere in this story the land itself is also compared to a supple woman waiting to be ravished (see 1991: 229). Thus, the institution of the nation state is nothing but an extended claw of global capitalism reaching deep into the private areas of Taiwan. Only on such a premise can the erotic relationship between Lin and Zhu be construed as one between the colonizer and the colonized. And only through this perspective can we grasp the theme of this book.[10]

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[9] Proust's *Remebrance of Things Past* and Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, for example, are among the most outstanding literary works in which love is described as having arisen from the workings of the imagination.

[10] Xiaoyan Peng has interpreted the erotic relationship between Zhu Yinghong and Lin Xigeng as "colonial." However, unless we

While Zhu Yinghong is still entrapped in the bourgeois love discourse, she hopes she can be married to Lin in a conventional way, live an honest marital life, and eventually have kids. During this period, she is almost completely her father's (that is, nationalism's) girl, doing everything in her father's name and for her father's sake. But despite the power of patriarchal discourse as aided by capitalist commodification, her female perspective enables her to maintain an excess of consciousness, which eludes co-optation by the patriarchal traps set up by the bourgeois love discourse. She knows deep down that she doesn't really want to accept the role assigned to her under the bourgeois value system: "There's still a crystalline and sober me that hides somewhere in me which says clearly and irrefutably: This is definitely what I want to do" (1991: 283).

This is the voice that comes out of her deeper self even as she, being pregnant, is waiting for a firmer and clearer commitment from Lin. Upon hearing this voice, Zhu makes up her mind to be freed from the influences of hyperreality—the discourses of love and of the nation state in which her "love" for Lin originated—influences of which she is not unaware but which have been exerted upon her ever since she fell in love with Lin. She has an abortion. While she used to think that the perfect combination of Lin's untamed vitality and her refined upbringing would result in the birth of a new Taiwanese, one who would be the new master of Han Garden, she eventually realizes that everything about their love affair so far has been closely tailored to fit what Baudrillard calls the "models" of capitalism. The way she captures Lin is but an old-fashioned man-hunt game of a patriarchal society and one which involves no "real love." Therefore their baby pulsates with no real life.

Only after Zhu has had the abortion does she affirm her status as an independent woman. The necessity of taking this

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understand the word "colonial" in terms of the complicitous relationship between the nation state and capitalism, it makes little sense to interpret the actions of a Taiwanese who "strives to establish the national dignity of the Taiwanese" as an attempt at "colonizing" another Taiwanese. The prevailing practice in Taiwan and elsewhere of describing the relations of domination between classes and sexes as "colonial" confuses rather than clarifies. See Liao (1999).

step not only signifies an implacable conflict between an independent female subjectivity and the male-dominated institution of the nation state, but also seems to imply that there is some kind of fatalistic contradiction inherent in Taiwanese cultural nationalism—that is, a contradiction between Zhu Feng (the ancestor of the Zhu family which symbolizes the legacy of sea pirates or economical adventurousness) and Madame Chen (the wife of Zhu Feng who represents the impulse toward cultural consolidation). Looking at Taiwan from the perspective of this novel, this indeed seems to be the case. Zhu Yinghong and Lin Xigeng seem to be contemporary incarnations of these two mythic ancestors of Han Garden/ Taiwan. The seafaring pirate and the home-loving Madame had a ferocious confrontation three hundred years ago and this conflict is not mitigated a bit in our time; if anything, it has worsened. This is, however, a fact which few Taiwanese nationalists notice, except Li Ang. 朱鳳

In order to rescue Han Garden, Zhu's first vision is to try to marry Lin. But the fact that no offspring comes from their marriage signals the futility of her project. Lin's vitality now has been completely emptied out by capitalism, as he admits when speaking about his virility: "I'm no longer as good as before" (1991: 183). Worse still, he has become nothing but a henchman of capitalism. As a result, their marriage has ironically created a fatal threat to Han Garden, which eventually leads to Zhu's decision to donate it:

> "What would happen to this garden if one day I'm deprived of the title of Mrs. Lin. . ."
>
> He obviously understood what she meant, but chose to ignore it: "Perhaps I would tear down everything and build an apartment complex on it if the price is good?" (Li 310)

It seems as if they were talking about the possibility of their marriage running aground one day. But ironically, by changing his subject, Lin hits right on target. With or without a divorce, Han Garden is doomed now that one of Lin's feet is inside the door; Lin can enter the garden any time he wants, whether he is Zhu's husband or ex-husband.

At first sight, the symbolic meaning of Han Garden seems

rather clear: it is symbolizes Taiwan. But how it does so merits closer examination. Vis-à-vis Lin the henchman, it symbolizes the land (connoting nature); at the same time, though, it is also a cultural project. Having adopted the three hundred-year-old legacy of Madame Chen, Han Garden represents an effort to take root. The thing is, this effort has not even succeeded at as recent a time as that of Zhu's father. On the other hand, since this effort to take root is a cultural project, it is also constantly under the threat of "nature"; any slight negligence might allow wild nature in the garden to swallow up everything humanistic. This is why this peasant boy is chosen by Zhu because Han Garden as a cultural project needs someone who knows the soil and has more vitality.

But, to her dismay, Lin is still the pirate who appeared three hundred years ago; he is both ignorant about culture and lacks the stamina of a cultural hero. All he is interested in is pillaging and plundering. Because he is a pirate, he is so compatible with the capitalist spirit that he himself becomes a threat to the cultural project. That is why Zhu decides to let the curse of Madame Chen on the Zhu family be fulfilled: "the Zhu's family line will be extinguished and the garden donated" because Zhu would rather do that than let Lin ravage the garden through land speculation. In other words, in order not to let the bourgeois institution of the nation state exploit the garden in the name of the "nation," Li Ang would rather bring to an end the project of nation-building, which Zhu's father had held to be his life-long goal.

But we are not saying that Li Ang is therefore no longer attached to Han Garden. Her feelings for the garden are fully revealed in the last scene where Zhu looks back at the garden and sees an illusory vision of the garden in flames. But she is fully aware that her father's project of modernization/ nativization (i.e., lighting up the garden with fluorescent lights; archiving the garden with German-made cameras) has always already turned the garden into a fetish in the capitalist system. Nevertheless, this does not have to mean the end of the garden. Donating the garden may eventually prove to be a turning point, since it will be in the hands of the "people" now and no longer tied to the project of the state. Thus, donating the garden signifies a strong desire to escape from further commodification as well as the

potential for one to become a tool for the nation state. Even though Zhu is strongly attached to the land, she is not obliged to embrace the male-dominated, bourgeois institution of the nation state: "Therefore I want this garden to belong to Taiwan, to its population of twenty million and not to any oppressive government" (1991: 306-7). Han Garden may still stand a chance, but whatever ideals it signifies do not necessarily have to—they had better not, according to the book—be realized through the nation state.

The Revenge of the Female Slave: The "New Human Being" and National Identity

Whereas *The Mystery Garden* depicts the alienation of an old-fashioned Taiwanese from the (Taiwanese) nationalist establishment, "Breakfast at Tiffany's" looks at how a "new human being" (*xinrenlei*) resists the bourgeois nation state. The story depicts a young woman who has read widely in social theories by people like Marx and participated in radical social movements. But she wallows, too, in the dream of buying a diamond for herself. In allowing this dream to unfold itself, she examines, with evident irony, how bourgeois society incessantly exploits "the people"—and how social movements and cultural criticism indirectly aggravate this exploitation. More ironically, buying a diamond has somehow become the means whereby she derives her hard-won independence as a subject. 新人類

At first sight, this story looks like a direct indictment of society, but when the female protagonist's attempt to purchase a diamond is introduced and made the central plot line of the story, it begins to exude some kind of "uncanny" flavor. On the one hand, she consistently interlaces the narrative with all manner of leftwing discourses. This indicates that she is highly aware of modern man's "universal dependency" on institutions when he lives in a capitalist society (Sayer 1991: 61). But, on the other hand, she obviously seems to have deviated from the ideals she held very dearly as a student activist. In being absorbed in the project of buying a diamond to satisfy an unknown desire in herself, she seems to have totally succumbed to the consumerist aesthetic of capitalism.

Such apparently contradictory perspectives, however,

come to co-exist in the protagonist for a reason. In fact, the leftwing discourses have not at all lost their explanatory power for her. On the contrary, her newly found passion for consumerism is brought about by the powerful insights which these discourses have proffered her and which the society at large is doing everything it can to downplay. Precisely because she has thoroughly embraced these radical ideas, she can question what her fellow radical activists (including her ex-boy friend Xiao Ma) have done, for they have mostly abandoned their former beliefs and are now devoting most of their energy to the nationalist cause instead. As nationalism is, by definition, bourgeois nationalism, it would not come as a surprise if these social activists-turned-nationalists now hold an abstract rather than a concrete idea of "the people," one inherent in the trinity of the bourgeoisie, capitalism and the nation state. In other words, since the Taiwanese "democratic movement," which has come to be totally dominated by the Taiwanese nationalists, has consistently espoused as its ultimate goal the establishment of a new nation state, and has now been steeped in the consumerist aesthetic of capitalism, it is difficult for its supporters to conceive of the people as heterogeneous (Zhu 1997: 92). As a result, issues not immediately conducive to the nationalist cause such as gender, race, and class are conspicuously absent from their discourses about the nation state. Class, in particular, is banished to the farthest margins ("I don't know why Xiao Ma, who wanted to be always in the dissident camp, no longer talks about class problems" [1997: 107]). This is why Marx emphasizes that "the nation attains existence as a *notion*, a fantasy, an illusion, a *representation*—as the *represented* nation . . . cut off from the real nation" (Marx 1843: 69-70: qtd. Sayer 1991: 75). Such an institution is but "a collective *mis*representation of bourgeois society, whose real content remains the inequities of capitalism" (Sayer 1991: 83).

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At the same time, the institutions that are involved in either maintaining or creating a nation state are constantly enlisting every possible technique of governmentality to promote the "primacy" of national identity and ensure an increasing degree of "transparency." Any excess has to be clearly accounted for and assimilated. This is why, according to the protagonist who is also the narrator, even President Li Denghui "has asked the

government institutions concerned to study the 'new human beings"' (1997: 87). The famous writer and activist A, whom she interviews, also insists on clarifying "how [she] identifies herself. Is she Taiwanese? Chinese? Taiwanese as well as Chinese? Chinese but living in Taiwan?" (1997: 97)

The protagonist is aware that Taiwan's political and social movements—which bring the only hope of reform—have completely lost their bearings in their obsession with nationalism and ignored the worsening of the class situation in Taiwan ("We have become hereditary slaves without our knowing it" [1997: 106]). Precisely because of this, she turns nihilistic. From her perspective, the usual descriptions of the "new human beings" (as "consumerist" or "nihilistic") are wide of the mark. The long list of their characteristics as put together by A is derived from hearsay accounts. Zhu Tianxin believes, on the contrary, that the real reason for the emergence of the "new human beings" is the further entrenchment of capitalism in contemporary society. Granted that postindustrial capitalism's much enhanced capability to produce desire definitely affects the consuming habits of the "new human beings," their nihilistic tendencies probably have much more to do with the uneven distribution of wealth that they are confronted with after they graduate and begin working in the real world. According to the protagonist, it makes more sense to call them "new proletarians" or "new poor" rather than "new human beings," which has an air of chic-ness. Financially strapped, she is forced to become a "nomad" roaming the illegally constructed shacks on rooftops (1997: 94) and a "female slave" trapped in the professional world (1997: 89). Given a social environment that is hopelessly uncongenial to reform, she can only seek her sense of security and belonging in a diamond. In other words, the spendthrift habits of the "new humans" in fact take shape ironically in response to their own financial strappedness.

Keenly aware of her status as a slave, the protagonist believes that she "need[s] to possess a diamond in order to regain freedom" (1997: 89). But why is she so keen on possessing one since she obviously sees clearly that diamonds are nothing but hard and bright stones? While one may argue that the invincible brainwashing effects of the capitalist consumerist aesthetic might have weakened her resistance to

the desires it produces, there is more to her wish for possession of the diamond. This could in fact be construed as an act of resistance to capitalist commercial fetishism through fetishism. The ability of diamonds to produce, with the help of light, a dreamlike atmosphere which resembles so much the power of capitalist dream-making is appropriated by her as a source of self-empowerment. If the diamond cannot give her real freedom, the effects it creates will at least make the small, bleak room in the basement she has rented look warmer: "My Southern Star indeed brings an undescribable glamor to my basement" (1997: 108).

Like *The Mystery Garden*, "Breakfast at Tiffany's" also ends with the presentation of a fetish. Further, both fetishes radiate floods of irresistible charm when placed under bright light (a symbol of "modernity" or "modernization"). But in *The Mystery Garden* Zhu Yinghong in the end liberates the "land" which is increasingly being commodified, while in "Breakfast at Tiffany's" the protagonist brings home the fetish. To a certain extent, the different strategies employed reflect class differences. But there is one thing that the two works have in common: resistance against the "nationalization" of identity. *The Mystery Garden* returns the garden to the people in order to escape from the pillaging and plundering of capitalism carried out via the institution of the nation state. Seeing no way out, the protagonist in "Breakfast at Tiffany's" opts to embrace the diamond like a moth darting undauntedly into a fire. But the illusions Zhu Yinghong has of the garden when she looks back wistfully at it—lit up by a huge number of fluorescent lights, so that "in the dark night, the whole garden looks [as if it were] engulfed in flames" (1997: 312)—seems to imply that Taiwan's further incorporation into late capitalism is ineluctable. In the case of "Breakfast at Tiffany's," unless the protagonist is equipped with the "double vision" of true postmodernity and the Baudrillardian will power "to be seduced endlessly," her "Robin Hood-ian revenge" (1997: 103) on capitalism remains within the parameters of capitalism and is doomed to be futile.[11] All things

[11] Derrida's strategy of *sous rature*, through which we can cope with our limited existence in language with a "double vision," is often invoked now when one talks about postmodernity. However, it is often

considered, we can nevertheless argue that the resistances of both protagonists, predicated as they both are on a fatalistic vision, locate them among the most radical as well as clear-sighted protests against the simulated trinity of the bourgeoisie, capitalism and the nation state.

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misinterpreted as a facile surrendering to postmodern commercialism. Baudrillard's fatal strategy, developed in his later phase and predicated on the concept of "seduction," could serve well to rectify this tendency. Caught in hyperreality as we are, the only way we can survive meaningfully, suggests the later Baudrillard, is to turn the principle of hyperreality against itself. Thus, an unflagging willingness to be seduced by the meaningless "pure object" is actually what could deliver us from the overwhelming presence of commodities and commodified meanings. To be seduced involves, however, not an absorption of the subject into the object in banal fetishism, as is often believed, but going beyond what things appear to be. In other words, fatal strategies must use every means "to the superlative power" to push things beyond the critical point and result in a reversal that reveals the "pure and empty form" of naturalized reality, allowing one to grasp the truth of liminality as the void underneath. For an understanding of Baudrillard's fatal strategies, see Baudrillard (1990a, 1990b, 1994).

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