

I. Ethnicity and Atrocity

“ETHNICITY,” AS ANTHROPOLOGISTS HAVE OBSERVED, is a term that “invites endless and fruitless definitional argument among those professional intellectuals who think that they know, or ought to know, what it means.”¹ This sense of frustration is understandable, since anthropologists have been searching for decades for answers to how and why a particular group of people consider themselves to have the same ethnic origin. The array of theories is dazzling. The primordialists argue that there is an “‘overpowering’ and ‘ineffable quality’ attaching to certain kinds of ties, which the participants tend to see as exterior, ‘coercive,’ and ‘given.’” The instrumentalists, however, “treat ethnicity as a social, political, and cultural resource for different interest- and status-groups,”² with a particular focus on the elite. There also are the transactionalists, who believe that “ethnic groups must be treated as units of ascription, where the social boundaries ensure the persistence of the group,” which, in turn, is perpetuated by symbolic “‘border guards’ (language, dress, food, etc.).” The social psychological proponents focus on “differential estimations of group worth, and on their collective stereotypes,” whereas the ethnosymbolists are mainly concerned with “the persistence, change, and resurgence of *ethnies* [*sic*], and with the role of the ethnic past or pasts in shaping present cultural communities.”³

Even though these definitions are quite different, they share a trait in that they “repeatedly raise points about symbolism, meaning, and identity and about cohesion, solidarity, and belonging.”⁴ Considering their central concerns together, we can conclude that

ethnicity is a sociocultural construction used to categorize people who interact within the same sociopolitical arena into different groups. Various distinctive features or social markers may be used to make these categorizations, but the emphasis is neither on physical nor political characteristics; rather, it is on multiple factors that reflect the general sociocultural circumstances in which social interactions take place.⁵

In the case of Taiwan, ethnicity, often translated into Mandarin as *zuqun*, is constructed on three principles: patrilineality, locality, and language. Understandably, in a largely patriarchal society like Taiwan, “people’s ascribed ethnicity is inherited from their father’s social category.”⁶ In regard to ethnic conflict, locality and language play much more important, and sometimes more detrimental, roles. The inhabitants of Taiwan, largely shaped by immigration history, can be roughly divided into (1) the Yuanzhumin (literally, “the original inhabitants,” conventionally rendered as “the indigenous people”)⁷ of Austronesian ethnicity, (2) the Hoklo (or Minnan, Southern Hokien) and Hakka speakers of Han Chinese descent who immigrated mainly from southern China before 1949, and (3) the Chinese who fled the Communist rule around 1949. The latter two groups have been respectively identified as *benshengren* (people with a local/Taiwanese provincial background), or Taiwanese, and *waishengren* (people from other provinces outside Taiwan), or mainlanders.⁸ As is evident in the various anthropological approaches, ethnicity and ethnic identity are not scientific categories, and ethnicity in Taiwan begs further explication.

First, in a peculiar fashion related to Sinocentrism and Han Chinese immigration, the Yuanzhumin are relegated to a status that is neither *benshengren* nor *waishengren*. When residents of Taiwan speak of *benshengren*, they usually are referring to the Hoklo and Hakka speakers. Second, the Hoklo and Hakka speakers are not identical groups with indistinguishable cultural practices, nor do they even speak the same language. Although these two groups are put in the same category, *benshengren* or *Taiwanren* (Taiwanese, the people), *Taiwanhua* (Taiwanese, the language) refers exclusively to Hoklo, not to both Hoklo and Hakka. Third, the *waishengren*, who came to Taiwan from different parts of the mainland, do not necessarily share the same language or customs: “In addition to the group’s superior position over Taiwanese,

their history and personal trauma—combined with shared material and ideological interests—bonded this diversified group of mainlanders from different provinces together. They thus became ‘constructed’ as a single mainlander group—*wai-sheng-jen* [*waishengren*].”⁹

This picture of ethnicity was formed largely by a historical accident. Japanese colonialism intensified the lack of cultural exchange between Taiwan and the mainland, and later the Nationalist government’s policy helped solidify the provincial divide: “What makes *sheng-chi* [*shengji*, provincial origins] an ethnic factor is neither about provincial origins per se alone, nor interpersonal relations; rather it is the asymmetrical positions of the groups in collective interaction—that is, a principle by which group identities have emerged via intersecting historical trajectories.”¹⁰ Hence, it is not surprising that Hoklo and Hakka speakers are sometimes placed in the same ethnic category as Taiwanese and that at other times they are identified as two separate ethnic groups. In any case, irrefutable differences and unbridgeable divides have formed along the line of provincial origins. But “cultural differences alone do not ethnicity make; culture, or cultural difference, becomes ethnicity if and when a group takes it up and uses it in certain specific and modern ways. Naturally, too, ethnicity does not always or necessarily make for conflict; certain kinds of ethnicity in certain situations with certain catalyzing events make conflict out of ethnicity.”¹¹ The catalyzing event in Taiwan was the 2/28 Incident, in which the Hoklo and Hakka speakers, as *benshengren*, were involuntarily pitted against Governor-General Chen Yi and his mainland officials/soldiers as the *waishengren*, thus cementing the provincial divide as a manifestation of ethnic difference.

Since martial law was lifted in 1987, investigations into the historical background, causes, impact, and repercussions of the 2/28 Incident have produced numerous works, ranging from conference volumes to personal memoirs. Understandably, the causes of an incident of such devastating magnitude and continuing (maybe even increasing) after-shocks have been the focus of official, scholarly, and popular research, in which ethnicity is, without fail, identified as the pivotal factor. Although the causes of the incident should best be left to historians and political scientists, ethnicity, or *shengji* (provincial origins), remains a core problem in contemporary Taiwanese society and politics and an important trope in literary works dealing with the island’s past.

The issue of provincial divide appears prominently, for instance, in Yang Zhao's "Yanhua," in which a young, nameless Taiwanese woman's intimacy with a mainland man, Jin Hongzao, is interpreted as a gesture to erase provincial differences.¹² In the story, Jin Hongzao's wife, a mainlander, dies in the melee along with the Taiwanese, which seems to point to a kind of pan-victimhood. Li Ao has vociferously reminded the Taiwanese that many mainlanders also were killed in the immediate aftermath of the incident.¹³ Of course, the issue should never be about numbers—how many died—or which ethnic groups suffered more. Nevertheless, the fact that some people believe that the deaths of mainlanders need to be emphasized proves how pernicious and persistent ethnic conflict remains in Taiwan. Indeed, ethnicity continues to be a contentious issue in the ways that Taiwanese citizens approach history and contemporary politics, for "politics is more than just the arena of interests or of social transformations. Politics is also the arena of passions, where emotions can be readily mobilized behind one's own flag, and against another group."¹⁴

Although ethnicity is not interchangeable with race, what Henry Louis Gates Jr. cautions regarding the need to analyze how race is intricately connected to writing is relevant. Substituting "ethnic" for "racial," we must examine "how attitudes toward racial differences generate and structure literary texts by us *and* about us. . . . But we must also understand how certain forms of difference and the *languages* we employ to define those supposed differences not only reinforce each other but tend to create and maintain each other."¹⁵ This chapter is devoted to literary portrayals of ethnicity and ethnic relations set against the 2/28 Incident and the White Terror. In literary texts, ethnicity is deployed to condemn atrocity, to promote peaceful coexistence, and to explain the consequences of historical events, sometimes at the risk of degenerating into reinforcing ethnic stereotypes or of dispensing with the past by privileging "closure."

"INTOXICATION" AND "UNDER THE SNOW":
GENDER STEREOTYPE AS ETHNICITY

In an essay on "Indians" in America and the problem of history, Jane Tompkins wonders whether "it is an accident that ways of describing

cultural strength and weakness coincide with gender stereotype.”¹⁶ The answer to her question is self-evident, for the axis of the Manichean oppositions “provides the central feature of the colonialist cognitive framework and colonialist literary representation: the manichean allegory—a field of diverse yet interchangeable oppositions . . . good and evil, superiority and inferiority, intelligence and emotion, rationality and sensuality, self and Other.”¹⁷ Indeed, this scheme, dramatized as gender differences, offers convenient paradigmatic shortcuts to unambiguous contrasts of different groups, whether ethnic or racial. In “Intoxication,” one of the earliest stories written about the 2/28 Incident, ethnic differences used as gender stereotypes are manipulated to indict the ill treatment of the Taiwanese by the mainlanders. Forty years later, “Under the Snow” adopts a similar narrative strategy but reverses the gender roles to convey the author’s criticism of the White Terror. Both stories feature a romantic relationship between a Taiwanese and a mainlander, but with different outcomes that entail evolving strategies to exploit ethnic relations in writing injustice.

“Intoxication,” written by Ou Tansheng, a mainlanders who went to Taiwan to teach in February 1947, was published in a left-wing Shanghai journal, *Wenyi chunqiu*, on November 15, 1947.¹⁸ A rather melodramatic story, “Intoxication” features a young Taiwanese woman, Ajin, who nurses a mainland man, Mr. Yang, back to good health after he is beaten by an angry mob on the day he arrives in Taipei, February 28, 1947. Ajin falls in love with Mr. Yang, but he merely takes advantage of her; and when he finally recovers and grows tired of her, he leaves, promising to send for her later. The bulk of the story involves her frantic search for the ship that purportedly is taking him back to Xiamen, China, and her tumultuous, alternating emotional states of despair and hope. By all accounts a cheap tale of innocence lost and love without reciprocation, this story is seriously flawed in its focus on Ajin’s unrequited love, “turning it into an account of a passionate girl jilted by a heartless man, thus diminishing its potential for social criticism.”¹⁹ But as a case study of ethnic interaction, “Intoxication” sheds light on the configuration of ethnicity in the immediate aftermath of the 2/28 Incident.

Melodrama aside, noteworthy here is the employment of (non)romance to narrate ethnic relations and the political implications of such a portrayal. First, it is precisely the 2/28 Incident that

brings the Taiwanese woman and the mainland man together. Second, the plot highlights the fact that he is an innocent bystander victimized by the angry mob that attacks any mainlander in sight. Intriguing, however, is how the victim of ethnic assault then becomes a victimizer himself, misleading Ajin and then abandoning her. When the story opens, Ajin's hope for a happy marriage is already dashed, for Mr. Yang is leaving. It is hard not to read this metaphorically as a comment on the relationship between Taiwanese and mainlanders. In virtually all the studies and memoirs of the 2/28 Incident, the Taiwanese are described as ecstatic at first when Japan was defeated and Taiwan was to return to China; but their elation quickly turned into disappointment and then to anger over the attitude, behavior, and acts of malfeasance by the soldiers and officials from the mainland.²⁰ The "intoxication" in the title refers to both the extratextual sentiment of the Taiwanese in the wake of the Japanese surrender and the textual infatuation Ajin feels for Mr. Yang. It is significant, then, that the story starts in this fashion, for the parallel between a despondent Ajin and the helpless Taiwanese highlights the core reality of Taiwan at that time.

The disillusioned Taiwanese are not unlike the abandoned Ajin, who believes in Mr. Yang's sincerity and amorous feelings for her. She never suspects for a moment that Mr. Yang is treating her like a plaything, even at the end of the story after all her attempts to locate him have failed miserably. She is further deceived by Mr. Zhu, Yang's friend, also a mainlander, into believing that Yang will soon send for her. The deception comes in the cruelest form: Yang has written a letter to Zhu asking him to lie to Ajin so that she will stop pursuing him. When she pleads with Zhu to tell her Yang's whereabouts, Zhu gives her the letter, knowing full well that she cannot read Chinese. Zhu then misrepresents its contents, even lying that Yang misses her and wishes to marry her at the earliest possible opportunity. Her failure to "read" Yang's intention is the original cause of her self-deception, and her inability to comprehend written Chinese aggravates the severity of her situation, both reminding us of the language barrier between the Taiwanese and the mainlanders during this period. We also recall that it is precisely Yang's inability to speak and comprehend Taiwanese that makes it possible for the Taiwanese to identify and attack him. Although Yang suffers for his inability to understand Taiwanese, he

later gains Ajin's confidence and devotion, whereas Ajin's language difficulty only sends her farther down the road of deception. In other words, in the battle over language, the mainland man commands a superior position.

In addition to drawing a parallel between Ajin's nonromance and the Taiwanese's false hope, the story is full of gender and ethnic stereotypes. Throughout the story, Ajin is portrayed as naive, kindhearted, hardworking, and filial but easily deceived. The narrator constantly reminds us that she is just like the majority of Taiwanese women, and it is difficult for readers informed of postcolonial theory not to regard her as a symbol for Taiwan, the quintessential subaltern. None of the mainlanders is cast in a positive light: Mr. Yang is a philanderer; Mr. Zhu derives great pleasure from lying to Ajin for his friend's sake; and the master of the house where Ajin works as a maid also is a womanizer who harasses her. Ajin falls victim to all these men, who take advantage of her kindness and naïveté. More important, all three mainland men occupy a higher social and economic status, for they all are civil servants, while Ajin is a lowly maid.²¹ Reminiscent of the Manichean opposition mentioned by Abdul JanMohamed, the *conqueror* is cast as male, intelligent, and wealthy, and the *conquered* is designated as female, weak, and poor.

But ethnicity presented as gender stereotype would lose its intensity if the portrayal stopped at the dichotomized opposition of good versus evil. Accordingly, Ajin is depicted as not entirely innocent, as she also reveals an ulterior motive to be involved with a mainland from a higher social class. The author inserted the following comment describing Ajin's psychology:

For today's Taiwanese girls, owing to the fact that the Taiwanese were highly restricted in their chances of getting a higher education in the colonial time, it is difficult to find a man with prominent social status. Hence, even under normal circumstances, the girls would congratulate themselves and feel secret elation if they occasionally found a man with some status showing interest in them, let alone the fact that the man was an unmarried civil servant from the Mainland appearing before them as a citizen of powerful country. Therefore, it was no accident that this eighteen-year-old girl [Ajin] fell so easily for him.²²

The inherently imbalanced power structure between men and women, as well as between the mainland and Taiwan, is important to the narrator's observation. Ajin, in other words, is attracted also to the external "value" added to Yang's identity as a mainlander, for later on we read about her fantasy that reveals her wish for a better life:

She fantasized about how they'd get married and what kind of peaceful and quiet life they'd spend together. People would actually call her Mrs. Yang. He might even take her to the mainland. Of course Mother and Sister would go too. She imagined that the situation there must be very good and she'd be absolutely happy with her life. There's no poverty, no hunger; everything is better than Taiwan, even better than Japan; otherwise, how come Japan was defeated this time?²³

Although we might find her dream of a good life to be legitimate, we cannot help but be struck by the slippage between personal/feminine desire and national/political discourse. The displacement of private happiness with a longing for the all-powerful China corresponds to the substitution of gender stereotype for ethnicity that runs through the story. In the end, no one fares well, for Mr. Yang is a philanderer who likes to haggle, and Ajin pins her hopes for a better life on an undeserving man while looking down on a friend who is reduced to prostitution in order to survive. The author, however, must portray Ajin as irrational, foolish, and gullible in order to accentuate Yang's abuse of her, even though the author is obviously sympathetic to her situation. But when describing ethnicity in these gender terms, the portrayal becomes self-defeating in that it magnifies the stereotypical binary opposition of superiority versus inferiority.

Serendipitously, Lin Wenyi's "Under the Snow," published in the winter of 1987, the year martial law was lifted, denounces the Nationalist government's disregard for human rights and bears uncanny similarities to "Intoxication." Told by a first-person narrator to a reporter, the story relates a romance between the Taiwanese narrator and a second-generation mainland woman who meet in New York. During their time together, the narrator, dismayed by the woman's lack of knowledge and understanding of Taiwanese culture and history, tries to instill a Taiwanese consciousness in her. When she returns to Taiwan

with the intention of telling her parents about her relationship with the narrator, she is arrested at the airport. Sentenced to fourteen years in prison for an “intent to subvert the government,” she is released after seven years. While the romantic relationship between them, unlike the story of Ajin and Mr. Yang, is genuine, “Under the Snow” also relies heavily on gender stereotype in its depiction of ethnicity, but with various reversals.

On six separate occasions, the woman in the story is referred to as “a frail, tender, delicate woman.”²⁴ Her physical appearance is underscored to highlight the contrast between the man’s height (six feet) and his inability to help her and, more important, between his earthy, masculine Taiwanese-ness and her elite, effete mainland heritage. He is a farm boy from Jiayi in southern Taiwan, and she, the daughter of a general, has spent virtually all her life in the northern city of Taipei. In a way, this story is an exemplary text of the periphery writing back, for the two characters represent the center and the margin of the power structure in Taiwan, and the many reversals symbolize the Taiwanese desire to take back the discursive power of ethnic relations. The divide between north and south and its concomitant implications²⁵ are further reversed in the two protagonists’ relationship, in that he plays the role of a mentor guiding her through a journey of Taiwanese history. For instance, at their first meeting, he criticizes her for not being able to speak a word of Taiwanese, even though she was born in Taiwan. Later he inculcates in her the need to identify with Taiwan, “a place that has nurtured her for over two decades.” He is, in a word, a male Taiwanese chauvinist.

That conclusion may seem harsh, for it is, after all, legitimate for him to demand that she speak Taiwanese and identify with Taiwan. Moreover, she herself does, in fact, gradually come to agree with his view and asks him to teach her Taiwanese. What is disturbing is the rhetoric of ethnicity in which the Other is described in terms of *lack*, and the gender and ethnic Other seems always to play a passive role. Whether intentional or not, the author’s employment of a first-person narrator gives the Taiwanese male absolute subjectivity as the agent who controls all the information, for he not only teaches her what he thinks she needs to know about Taiwan but also relates her story to us. Conversely, the story can be regarded as a kind of textual recuperation of Taiwanese subjectivity, for the political reality in

Taiwan before martial law was lifted required everyone to identify with the mainland and everything associated with that place “that you cannot even visit.”²⁶ It thus is only through the man’s monologue and his instruction to her about Taiwan that Taiwan’s legitimacy can be confirmed.

The woman’s ignorance of Taiwanese history was politically engineered by the Nationalist government’s policy of segregation and suppression of Taiwanese consciousness. Many mainlanders and their families lived in tightly knit, closed-off compounds that formed their own little worlds, isolated from the rest of Taiwanese society. Hence, it is significant that the two people meet in New York, for the political atmosphere in Taiwan would not have allowed them to discuss Taiwanese politics freely. Even so, she has come under suspicion, for during the White Terror no one could escape the insidious Nationalist government’s surveillance of its people, in Taiwan and even overseas, by spies who disguised themselves as students or by students who worked for the Nationalist government’s monitoring apparatus: “They probably said she watched movies from Communist China in school, listened to their symphonies, or read a few books.”²⁷

It is unclear to the reader whether the woman in fact had read the “forbidden” books or watched movies from the mainland, for the narrator is vague about why she is arrested, except that “they said she had a roll of film negatives with her when she arrived at the airport.”²⁸ But it is precisely this vagueness that accentuates the pernicious nature of the White Terror, as the Kafkaesque lack of specific charges is symptomatic of the omnipresent, omnipotent government censorship at work. The narrator also comments explicitly on the suppression of dissent: “I don’t understand why I’m exiled just because I have my own views and opinions. This is really inhumane.” “Could a newspaper in Taiwan publish the full content [of what I just told you]? I heard that sometimes an article is changed so much that it turns into a completely different essay.”²⁹ He even has a confrontation with an overseas Taiwanese who accuses him of promoting Taiwan independence, during which his left arm is broken. All these incidents are intended as criticism of government persecution and the pervasive power of the White Terror, as even average people were sometimes willing to serve as accomplices and inflict even more injury on the victims.

As we will see in chapter 3, women serve as more powerful and convenient tropes for victimhood in that their perceived biological inferiority can more easily incite sympathy and outrage. In Lin Wenyi's story, the mainland woman is repeatedly described as delicate and tender, which is clearly meant to stress the injustice she experiences. But the ethnic power structure narrated in gender terms is not altogether unproblematic, as the first-person narrative renders her silent; that is, a Taiwanese male speaking for a mainland Other makes female agency impossible. While that may help the author achieve the goal of censuring the White Terror, it defeats the purpose of transcending ethnic divisions. The mainland woman is powerless to defend herself and speak her own mind. In a word, ethnicity is subsumed under the overriding agenda of indicting the government's persecution of real or imagined dissidents. In addition, the theme of romance between a Taiwanese man and a second-generation mainland woman inevitably begins with ethnic unity and ends with an unsettling sense of hope:

I'm waiting for her here. I'll take her to the Hudson River, to see the Taiwanese painter. . . . No matter how heavy the snow, how cold the night, I'm taking her there, my beloved woman who has suffered so much, so that she'll never, ever disappear from my side again. Isn't that so? I often feel that, even if the wind is strong and the snow heavy, there must be the seeds' intense anticipation for spring buried in the soil under the deep snow, and that is life, love, and hope.³⁰

While it is difficult to argue against such an optimistic, uplifting tone, the hopeful ending nonetheless elides the issues and advances the agenda of collective amnesia that was so often advocated by government officials and criticized by activists.³¹

ANGRY TIDES: FAILED MARRIAGE AS ETHNIC CONFLICT

Angry Tides, by the renowned Hakka writer Zhong Zhaozheng, is a family saga that starts at the end of World War II when members of the Lu family return to Taiwan from Tokyo and Manchuria. Clearly intended to invoke a chaotic political situation and the sentiments of

the Taiwanese after the Nationalist government takeover, the novel ends with the 2/28 Incident, during which one of the Lu sons dies while attacking an airport and another is arrested and imprisoned for forty days, even though he did not participate in the uprising. The novel was published in 1993 to critical acclaim, seen by some as a breakthrough in the fictional rendition of Taiwanese history.³² The emphasis on Taiwanese history should come as no surprise for a writer with two trilogies on the same subject. Zhong's earlier work, published during the martial-law era, focused on the colonial period. *Angry Tides*, written in the relaxed political atmosphere of the 1990s, tackles the 2/28 Incident, in which ethnic conflict is shown in the form of a failed marriage between a Hakka man and a mainland woman.

The couple is Lu Zhilin, a former medical student at Tokyo Imperial University, and Han Ping, who comes to Taiwan with her sister, who is married to a Hakka man. As someone from Beijing, a cultural and political center, Han represents not only mainland China but also Chinese civilization. Lu, in contrast, is a colonized Taiwanese; in fact, he is a Taiwanese steeped in Japanese culture. Both are displaced in postwar Taiwan: she is out of place in Taiwan, and he is a remnant of the colonial past. Lu Zhilin is someone with a triple consciousness: Taiwanese, Japanese, and Chinese.³³ His attraction to Han is doomed from the beginning, as her allure is fraught with unstable ethnic consciousness, which "following Hegel, is a function of knowing rather than a quality of being; identity is static and determined existence, whereas consciousness is becoming and desire."³⁴ In other words, owing to his triple consciousness, Lu has no fixed identity; instead, he is always desiring and becoming (from Taiwanese to Japanese to Chinese). Symbolically, his desire for Han Ping is a desire for a Chinese identity. But the colonized's attempt to mimic the colonizer (whether the Japanese or the mainland Chinese) always ends in failure.³⁵

On a textual level, Lu Zhilin's attraction to Han Ping, a mainland woman from Beijing, is a way for the author to comment on postwar, postcolonial Taiwan, where all the Taiwanese must now identify with China, a mysterious, remote land that has suddenly burst into their consciousness. Consequently, Han is portrayed as an enigma, and the narrative, presented solely through Lu's perspective, invites the reader to perceive the mainland woman as incomprehensible and yet in total control of the dynamics. When, for instance, Lu is first introduced to

Han, she “casually stood up and took a step forward, extending her right hand toward the three young men who were bowing at their waists, first to Zhilin.”³⁶ The greeting styles signal their cultural differences but, more important, underscore the disparity between them, which is conveyed through the vivid image of a Taiwanese man continuing the Japanese custom of bowing at the waist, greeting a woman from the mainland who is standing upright. In a symbolic way, it is the colonized Taiwan bowing to the victor of World War II. Later, during the dinner party, Lu is once again put in a passive position, when, through interpretation, Han asks him questions, a novelty, since Taiwanese women are discouraged from initiating exchanges with a (male) stranger. His inability to comprehend China, characterized as an inability to speak and understand Mandarin, only intensifies his desire for her.

The asymmetric dynamics of their interaction continue throughout the novel. He agrees to be her tour guide, alternating between English and written Chinese as a means of communication; the tour of Taipei also serves as his tutorial sessions in Mandarin Chinese. But whereas he learns to speak Mandarin, she learns virtually no Hakka from him. The lopsided relationship is carried into their marriage, when one day he realizes that not only has she completely disrupted his family structure, but his entire family, including his parents, has become subservient to her whims and desires. His father’s submissive attitude even reminds him of how his father treated the Japanese during the colonial era. The Taiwanese regarded the arrival of the Nationalist government as merely the substitution of one colonial government, the Chinese, for another, the Japanese. What is intriguing is the way in which this national strife is carried out in the domestic milieu, in which the mainland woman represents the new colonial government.

This strife-ridden domestic relationship finally reaches a breaking point after the 2/28 Incident, during which ethnic differences and the potential for violence they represent are configured in the form of a broken marriage. Lu Zhilin and Han Ping are one-dimensional figures representing two different ideologies and interpretations of the 2/28 Incident. Han favors the official explanation that the Taiwanese, slaves to the Japanese colonial rule, initiated a barbaric attack on the mainlanders. Even though he disagrees, Lu lacks the linguistic ability to express his objections. His inability to express his views and defend

his position on the incident can be regarded as an implicit comment on the voiceless Taiwanese and their linguistic inferiority. The limited amount of English they share only lands them in a quagmire of debating between words like “revolt” and “riot.” Han insists that the incident was a Taiwanese revolt against the government, and Lu believes that it was a riot against injustice. In the end, the now pregnant Han decides to return to the mainland, thus ending a brief marriage based more on superficial harmony derived from incomprehension—an infatuation with the Other—than on mutual understanding. The failure of this marriage demonstrates the impossibility of peaceful coexistence as long as the Taiwanese suffer injustice and ill treatment.

Furthermore, if Han’s pregnancy signifies the potential for a future of ethnic harmony, then the subsequent loss of the baby carries multiple meanings for this allegory of ethnic relations. For one thing, Han’s departure is described in a cryptic, almost dismissive manner. Although she hints earlier to her sister that Taiwan is too dangerous for her and that she may return to the mainland, the reader does not learn of her return until the last chapter, when Lu Zhilin is leaving for Japan to resume his studies. Similarly, the loss of the baby is mentioned only in passing:

Zhilin recalled a line in Han Ping’s letter from Beijing that said, “Unable to keep the baby, I feel deep regrets.” Zhilin had trouble interpreting the meaning of such a phrase. No, he really couldn’t understand what she meant and could only speculate and conclude that the baby was gone. Whether due to abortion or miscarriage, he didn’t know.³⁷

But if the baby is to represent the future of ethnic harmony, then the cause of the loss becomes extremely important; that is, an abortion would represent a willful and violent termination of that future, whereas a miscarriage would imply a hopeless situation beyond human control. The author provides no answer, but it is significant that the opportunity for future ethnic harmony is irrecoverable.

At the risk of overinterpretation, the failed marriage deserves further discussion. If we regard it as a futile attempt at ethnic harmony, we also must consider the implications of Lu’s journey to Japan at the end of the novel. Han Ping’s return to the mainland is inevi-

table, for her fears and her sense of superiority do not allow her to remain in Taiwan; moreover, removing her from Taiwan symbolizes the unbridgeable gap between the mainlanders and the Taiwanese. What does it mean, then, for Lu Zhilin to return to Japan, and how are we to interpret the author's position regarding Taiwanese ethnicity? Before boarding the ship for Japan, Lu Zhilin says to his cousin and niece who have come to see him off, "You should find a place where you truly belong and walk down that road toward tomorrow. That's all we can do, right?"³⁸ Apparently, Lu believes that Japan is where he belongs. The significance of a former imperial subject of the Japanese colonial government returning to Japan is open to discussion, to be sure. We could argue that Lu Zhilin fails to shed his colonized self and willingly submits to further colonization. But if we place his decision in the context of the 2/28 Incident, we see that the choice is inevitable, that it is his only recourse, that the incident ultimately drives the colonized back to the former colonizer.

"THREE SWORN BROTHERS OF XIZHUANG":
AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF ETHNIC RELATIONS

Published in March 1986, Lin Shenjing's "Three Sworn Brothers of Xizhuang" reads like a detective novel in that it unravels an entangled ethnic past and reveals the circumstances surrounding acts of violence only at the end of the story.³⁹ It takes place in the present, several decades after the event—the 2/28 Incident in this case—and hence offers an implicit or explicit comparison of past and present. Moreover, this story is permeated by an ambiguity concerning the perpetrators of suffering, implying that it is the ordinary people, not the government, who inflict pain on others or themselves.

The story begins with a group of teenagers, one of them a second-generation mainland boy, playing baseball. A home run sends the ball into a secluded area behind a temple, a place forbidden to the village children. The owner of the baseball is thus caught between his desire to retrieve the ball and his fear of the place. Then his mother appears and orders them all home, but not before scolding the old man guarding the temple for leaving the place accessible to the children and posing a danger to them. Next the reader is introduced to a scene in "Qiu's

Clinic,” in which a Taiwanese man’s complaint about his toothache is being translated by the doctor’s son, Qiu Dawei. Because Dr. Qiu is from Shandong, China, he speaks poor Taiwanese and relies on his wife and son as interpreters. The rest of the story revolves around the three boys—Qiu Dawei, Lin Mingshan, and Wang Junhui—the sworn brothers of Xizhuang. When Lin Mingshan, who is good at carving, wishes he had a better knife, Qiu Dawei, a more privileged boy, offers to buy it for him but is turned down. In a conversation with an older villager, Wang Junhui discovers the secret behind the secluded area: a madman, a mainlander (*waishengren*) is locked up in a small room behind the temple. Wang then goes in and retrieves the baseball. When the topic of a carving tool comes up again, the three boys decide to steal the donation money from the temple. After the villagers discover the theft, Wang persuades the other two boys to release the madman in order to divert the villagers’ attention from their search for the thief. During the villagers’ confusion when they discover that the madman has disappeared, Lin Mingshan’s family is notified by the village head and the chief of police that Lin’s grandfather will soon be released from prison.

The mysterious disappearance of Lin’s grandfather is finally revealed: After the 2/28 Incident, Grandfather Lin, Wang Junhui’s grandfather, and a third man (the father of a clerk in the Farmers’ Association), also sworn brothers, took over a radio station to broadcast news of the attack on Taiwanese. The clerk’s father was killed, and Lin Mingshan’s and Wang Junhui’s grandfathers were arrested. Wang’s grandfather later died in prison, but Lin’s is now being released. In the final episode, the villagers find the body of the dead madman. The secret of his imprisonment also is revealed: when the sworn brothers of the earlier generation were arrested, the villagers suspected that the nameless mainlander was a government spy who had reported the sworn brothers’ whereabouts, so they captured him. Unable to understand the mainlander’s language but unwilling to set him free, the villagers imprisoned him in a room they built behind the temple and entrusted the old man to care for him. In an epilogue-like final section, the three present-day sworn brothers of Xizhuang are seen going to visit the graves with flowers in their book bags.

Careful readers of this text would likely notice the lengthy description of the contemporary Taiwanese village and the friendship of the

three boys. Eventually it becomes clear that the boys' present-day life is meant to serve as a contrast with the excavated past. Indeed, we can detect a representational tendency in works (literary and cinematic) on Taiwan's history to set up a contrast between past and present. Often the past is cast in a heroic and idealistic light, while the present seems to be dwarfed by comparison. The contrast highlights sacrifices made by members of the earlier generation or underscores their unjust deaths. In Lin Shenjing's story, however, past and present are so shrouded in ambiguity that we cannot help but suspect that the author is torn between wishing for a better tomorrow and lamenting the loss of a glorious yet irretrievable past. This dilemma is caused by two dissimilar but equally unsatisfactory approaches to representing atrocity.

The first approach emanates from a political/ideological teleology, a contrast deriving from the author's intention to comment on Taiwan's political realities. After four decades of White Terror, many young Taiwanese were estranged from the past by their parents passively admonishing them to keep politics at arm's length, while the government actively suppressed dissent, and any investigation of historical events like the 2/28 Incident was forbidden. As a result, to better indict political suppression, the younger generation of Taiwanese is described as obsessed with sensual gratification and material comfort. The subtext of this representational strategy seems to be the assumption that the young Taiwanese would have behaved differently had they known their history. Blaming a lack of historical memory is a seductive way out of the problematic juxtaposition of a better past and a degenerated present, but it does not explain why the lack of historical memory would necessarily lead to the pursuit of materialism.

The second approach involves narratorial expediency. Through a stereotypical portrayal of contemporary Taiwanese youths as hedonists with a lax sense of morality, writers and filmmakers can more easily ensure that the sacrifice and heroism of the earlier generation shines through brightly. In other words, the need to idolize and idealize those who fell prey to acts of government brutality demands that the next generation be inferior to the previous generations in every respect. Lacking political conviction and caring only about material comfort, the young Taiwanese are forever living in the shadow of their elders, with little hope of ever becoming their equals. Narrative of this nature

inevitably simplifies the complex historical factors shaping Taiwan's current cultural state while creating one-dimensional characters.

When the ideological teleology of censuring the government is conveyed through such narratorial expediency, a narrative that clearly promotes ethnic harmony becomes disjointed, even self-defeating. In "Three Sworn Brothers of Xizhuang," the most immediately discernible juxtaposition of past and present is the two sets of sworn brothers. The earlier trio are Taiwanese villagers who, according to Lin Mingshan, during the conflict between mainlanders and Taiwanese, "took over the radio station in town so they could broadcast [the 2/28 Incident]; in the end one of them was killed and my grandfather and Ahui's [Wang Junhui's] grandfather were arrested."⁴⁰ In contrast, the present-day sworn brothers are engaged in delinquent, not heroic, activities: they steal money from the temple and, in order to cover up their crime, release the madman, thus causing his death. Even before the villagers discover the release and subsequent death of the madman, we learn of the higher esteem in which the people hold the older trio: When Wang Junhui's father complains to Li Tiansong, whose brother was the slain man of the earlier trio, that the three young boys are lazy loafers who went to the temple to swear an oath of brotherhood, Wang's father states that they need to be taught a lesson:

"What's wrong with swearing an oath of brotherhood?" Tiansong said. "Back then my brother, your father, and Mingshan's grandfather were also sworn brothers."

"Tiansong, how could you make that kind of comparison," the village head said. "What they did back then was different."⁴¹

While the younger sworn brothers are described as inferior in comparison with their grandfather's generation, the relationship between the young Taiwanese and the second-generation mainlander is depicted in a positive way, even though the description is fraught with a questionable, lopsided power structure. Early on we encounter an amicable scene in which the Taiwanese farmer asks Dr. Qiu, who is not a dentist, to help relieve his toothache. Dr. Qiu, as we have seen, speaks Taiwanese with a Shandong accent but nonetheless is able and willing to communicate with the Taiwanese farmer,

with help from his son. The obligation of a medical doctor is to cure people's illnesses and alleviate their suffering. It is therefore all the more ironic that at the same time that Dr. Qiu, a mainlander, is helping a Taiwanese farmer, another mainlander has been locked up in a small room by the Taiwanese villagers for something for which he very likely was not responsible. Contrary to the earlier image of mainlanders as outsiders who inflicted pain on the Taiwanese, Dr. Qiu is now an integral part of the Taiwanese village, someone who helps ease their physical pain.

The asymmetric power structure is most evident in the interactions of the young trio, even though the three sworn brothers of the present time are meant to represent improved ethnic relations. Whereas the older trio was made up of three Taiwanese; the younger trio consists of two Taiwanese and one boy, Qiu Dawei, whose father is from the mainland. But Dawei is clearly the wealthiest boy, whose father is a doctor, and the other two are farmers' sons, one of whom has even lost his father and grandfather. Dawei is described as generous, having offered money to Lin Mingshan to buy carving tools.⁴² But Wang Junhui, the second Taiwanese boy, is the one who persuades the other two to release the madman in order to cover up the theft. This may seem to be only a teenage prank, but it actually is a criminal act with grave consequences.

Even though the mainland boy, Qiu Dawei, goes along with Wang's plan, this picture of peaceful, harmonious ethnic relations is unsettling, particularly in the final scene when the villagers discover the madman's body:

"Ai!" Tiansong said. "A man's life is over just like that. Now that I think about it, I feel it's so unjust."

The village head also sighed. "Ai! When a person dies, burial is the best solution." He turned to Jinfu and said, "Jinfu, go tell the funeral service people to come take care of this mad—this outsider's burial, after they perform the rites for your father."

Jinfu nodded.

"One more thing," the village head continued. "These two died because of our Xizhuang, so I hope the tombstone will be carved in the name of the whole village. I'll go talk with everyone, and hope they will all agree."⁴³

There is a sense of denouement in the conversation between Jinfu and the village head but virtually no feeling of Aristotelean catharsis. It is as if the unjust death of two men and the decades-long imprisonments (of the madman in the village and of Mingshan's grandfather in an offshore island prison) are simply water under the bridge. When dealing with the suppressed 2/28 Incident and its disastrous effects on the common people, who turn against an outsider, the characters in this story seem more interested in a peaceful resolution and harmonious ethnic relations. To be sure, we could argue that their unwillingness to delve into the past is the result of the White Terror characterized by suppression, as we will see in Hou Hsiao-hsien's *Good Men, Good Women*. But we cannot overlook the fact that the villagers, young and old, contributed to the death of the nameless mainlander, even though their actions are caused by either suspicion or negligence, not by willful viciousness. That is, the villagers might have been ignorant perpetrators of a crime at a highly charged moment; still, especially when compared with the lengthy narrative on the current ethnic harmony, the ending is unsettling, because "certain wounds, both personal and historical, cannot simply heal without leaving scars or residue in the present; there may even be a sense in which they have to remain as open wounds even if one strives to counteract their tendency to swallow all of existence and incapacitate one as an agent in the present."⁴⁴

With the mainlander victim and the Taiwanese martyr buried—coincidentally or, perhaps, ironically—side by side, given the symbolic power of tombs and burials, we could argue that the villagers are burying their past, although the reader is not privy to their inner world and hence is unable to discern whether that past is viewed as ignominious or painful or both. Indeed, at first, little of the past is revealed to the young trio or to the reader, and when it is, the revelation elicits questionable responses from the characters. For instance, when the village head explains to the young boys how the mainlander came to be imprisoned and subsequently went mad, we are given only Dawei's reaction: "'Damn,' Dawei said. 'This is crazy!'"⁴⁵ It is reasonable to expect Dawei, the son of a mainlander, to be the one who exclaims his bewilderment and indignation, but the phrase seems inadequate and weak.

The narratorial haste to deal and dispense with the past is closely tied to the author's intention to illustrate the current, improved state

of ethnic relations. When, for instance, past events and the secret about the madman are mentioned, issues of ethnicity quickly take over, as though they are an antidote to the poisonous past. After Wang Junhui reveals that he has asked around but that no one is willing to tell him anything about the madman, the following dialogue ensues:

“Someone has to know,” Dawei said.

“They say he’s a mainlander [*waishengren*],” Junhui said.

“Damn it!” Dawei said, “So what if he’s a mainlander? So am I.”⁴⁶

At the end when the past is finally revealed to the younger generation, the process seems anticlimactic, the listeners’ reaction vapid. When Mingshan relates the actions taken by his grandfather and his sworn brothers, Dawei reacts by saying, “How come I didn’t know any of this?” Junhui replies, “It isn’t in the textbooks, so of course you didn’t know.”⁴⁷ We might reasonably expect the youths to respond with more than just a brief question and answer about the (in)accessibility of historical knowledge in textbooks.

To be fair to Lin Shenjing, this story exemplifies an attempt to break through the dichotomized stereotype of the mainlander as the perpetrator and the Taiwanese as the victim. The mainland madman in the story is a victim of misunderstanding and distrust, while the older Taiwanese sworn brothers sacrifice their lives to protest against injustice. In the final analysis, both ethnic groups are victimized, for the highly charged atmosphere of suspicion following the 2/28 Incident turned ordinary citizens into irrational agents of revenge. The author’s overriding intention to address this effect of the incident turns the story into a kind of glorification of closure, with its emphasis on final resolution and harmonious ethnic relations, thereby giving a misguided assertion about “the possibility of total mastery or full dialectical overcoming of the past in a redemptive narrative or . . . a stereotypically Hegelian overcoming and reconciliation—wherein all wounds are healed without leaving scars and full ego identity is achieved.”⁴⁸ Without a sincere, unflinching look at the roots of ethnic strife, past and present, reconciliation may be temporarily satisfying but the wound will always be festering beneath the surface of peaceful coexistence and continue to be manipulated for political gains.

“NOTES OF TAIMU MOUNTAIN”:

TOPOGRAPHIC IMAGINATION OF HISTORY AND ETHNICITY

The story “Notes of Taimu Mountain” is based on a real-life character, Lü Heruo, a midcentury writer, musician, and member of Taiwan’s Communist Party. In the aftermath of the 1947 incident, the Nationalist regime cast its net wide to arrest anyone suspected of antigovernment activities.⁴⁹ Lü was forced into hiding on Luku Mountain in northern Taiwan and was not heard from again. His death remained a mystery until historians, through eyewitness accounts, finally ascertained that he had died of snakebite.⁵⁰ The last days of Lü’s life were then re-created in Li Qiao’s “Notes of Taimu Mountain,” which opens with Lü, now called Yu Shiji, leaving his hideout on the plains to look for a friend, Wayong, of the indigenous Tso tribe. With help from his friends in the tribe, Yu Shiji sets out to look for Taimu Mountain, a sacred place in the tribe’s mythical universe. On his way, he encounters a mainland Chinese bounty hunter, who, enticed by a huge sum for Yu’s death, forces him into an area infested with poisonous snakes. Yu is bitten and then tricks the bounty hunter into also being bitten. Before perishing with his prey, the mainland bounty hunter shoots Yu in the shoulder. The story ends with the dying Yu Shiji spreading seeds of acacia, a resilient tree indigenous to Taiwan, around them both.

Taimu Mountain plays multiple roles in revealing the reality of and possible solutions to ethnic conflicts in Li Qiao’s story (and perhaps in Taiwan as well). Immediately discernible is the shelter it provides for Yu Shiji. It is the mother of all mountains, mysterious, mythical, and dangerous, guarded by poisonous snakes. The locals believe it is a *walking* mountain that will evade an unwelcome climber. While stressing that respect for the mountain is the only map to it, the local elders also warn Yu not to climb to the top of the mountain, for the guardian snakes will kill any trespasser. Yu faces an apparently irresolvable dilemma: he will either be captured by agents of the Nationalist government on the plains or be killed by snakes on the mountain. He chooses the latter and fulfills the elders’ predictions, mirroring the fate of the real-life figure, the writer Lü Heruo. But the cause of the death of the fictional character Yu Shiji serves to locate the three major groups of residents (the Yuanzhumin, the Taiwanese, and the

mainlanders) in a metaphorical Taiwan. Moreover, Yu's death at the hands of the bounty hunter enables the author to rewrite a personal history that is implicated in national history.

One of the functions of Taimu Mountain is its microcosmic role, a miniature of Taiwan, where the Yuanzhumin, the original inhabitants, are chronologically joined by the Taiwanese and finally by the newly arrived mainlanders. The bloodshed on the mountain is an oblique reference to the 2/28 Incident. But this demographic typology is full of tension, owing to the author's questionable portrayal of the three major characters: Wayong, Yu Shiji, and the nameless bounty hunter. A clear hierarchy is discernible in the way these three characters are presented. Wayong is a peace-loving warrior who helps Yu escape to the mountain. While it is debatable whether or not Wayong can or should be characterized as someone akin to Rousseau's noble savage, his affinity with nature—specifically, Taimu Mountain—is indisputable: “Wayong comprehends what the mountain peaks are saying and hears the laments of the rivers. Wayong is always saying that the Earth tells him lots of secrets.”⁵¹

In the story and in real life, the Yuanzhumin speak both their tribal language and Japanese, and Yu Shiji, like many Taiwanese of that time, is fluent in Taiwanese and Japanese, the latter used only sparingly in the story. Wayong's awkward speech—often punctuated by pauses, as if he were incapable of forming complete sentences—is obviously intended to imitate the pattern of someone not fluent in Taiwanese, but the effect is an image of a stammering non-Han Chinese, rather like the caricatured representations of American Indians in early Hollywood movies:

“You, words, not serious.”

“People, hard to avoid, a place, save life.”

While it is tempting to view this simulation as demeaning, it actually illustrates the difficulty of representing ethnicity through linguistic differences: “It is clear that we do not yet have a vocabulary, beyond the moralistic one, in which to examine the space in between: the ambiguous middle area in the continuum between egregious *stereotypes* on the one end and the strategic deployment of *types* (tropes by which we recognize ourselves [or the Other]) on the other end.”⁵²

Indeed, the representation of ethnic differences often runs the risk of well-intentioned typecasting that can easily slip into stereotype, of which Li Qiao's text is a good example.

Yu Shiji is a Taiwanese intellectual who plays the violin, a sign of his advanced education, thus inviting the reader to regard Wayong and Yu as a binary opposition of nature versus culture. In a conversation with Wayong and his cousin before his flight, Yu jokingly proclaims himself to be a shallow humanist. He also is a leftist whose activities eventually lead to his own death and contaminate the indigenous sacred mountain. In her introduction to the collection in which this story appears, Xu Junya calls attention to Yu's vicious scheme to trick the mainlander into revealing the dark side of human nature and Yu's own eventual enlightenment: "In the face of nature, the struggle and hatred among humans seems so laughable. But Yu Shiji finally understands this absurdity just before he dies, an enlightenment that his opponent, who shows no regret, even when he is breathing his last, cannot attain."⁵³ In Yu Shiji's case, although he is not a man of nature, his death is his salvation, and the act of spreading the acacia seeds redeems his crime, thus making him nearly as lofty a character as Wayong, Li Qiao's noble savage.

The mainland bounty hunter, in contrast, is beyond salvation; he has no redeeming qualities. Greed drives him to kill: "Of course I'm not going to give up. You're worth a hundred thousand yuan. A hundred thousand! Do you hear me?"⁵⁴ The fact that he has no name renders him relatively insignificant. The bounty hunter mistakes Yu for Lin Shuangwen, the ringleader of a violence-ridden protest in another city. Through Yu Shiji's comment that the bounty hunter is "a dog that knows nothing," the author draws attention to the bounty hunter's ignorance of Taiwanese history, which is compounded by his greed in the pursuit of a Taiwanese rebel who could be either Lin Shuang [first tone] wen, Lin Shuang [third tone] wen, or Yu Shiji.⁵⁵ Compared with Wayong, who understands nature, and Yu Shiji, an idealist, the mainlander appears greedy, cruel, and obsessed with senseless killing. Moreover, after being tricked into a den of snakes and bitten, "the man reholstered his gun and sat there dazed for a while. Then he started to sob, a deep, heart-rending sob that came from the very bottom of his soul, choking on despair."⁵⁶ He is, in a word, a greedy coward, placed at the bottom of Li Qiao's ethnic hierarchy.

Yu's death on Taimu Mountain is a narratorial device for Li Qiao to fill in a blank page not only in Lü Heruo's life but also in the Taiwanese people's collective memory. Like many idealistic intellectuals who died as a direct or an indirect result of the 2/28 Incident, Lü Heruo's only crime was his leftist ideology, his earlier naive belief in the Nationalist government's sincerity in reuniting Taiwan with the motherland, and his disillusionment that led to participation in possible armed rebellion.⁵⁷ He perished in the mountains for his belief, and even his death was a taboo. As Lan Bozhou's fieldwork and interviews reveal, Lü's death was in fact witnessed by at least one person and known to several more. But for years, his whereabouts remained a mystery to many, including Li Qiao, who wrote his story in 1984. We should not assume that had he known, Li Qiao would have written the story differently. On the contrary, it is quite possible that Li Qiao's re-creation of the last days of Lü Heruo's life could very well have been the same, for even though he was writing fiction and not history, he clearly intended to restore a missing page to Taiwan's history.⁵⁸

The attempt to counter a heretofore monolithic, hegemonic national history with the re-creation of a personal story, however, is not unproblematic. On the narrative level, in the opening paragraph of the story, Yu Shiji is a decidedly unheroic character:

Yu Shiji hid out in the Jiukeng area of Xizhi for four months, until early June. On one early morning, the temperature dropped sharply and a fog started to enshroud the mountains, sign of an imminent typhoon, so he decided to flee the area.⁵⁹

In other words, he is on the run even before the story begins, and the development of the plot shows him going farther and farther away from safety, ending eventually in his death. To be sure, Li Qiao is re-creating the last days of Lü Heruo's life, and so much of the story centers on the end rather than the beginning. Lü's life before his escape is described in a few lines: he studied the violin in Japan and returned to teach at Jianguo High School in Taipei:

Then when he went back to his hometown, he happened to [*ouran*] meet Zhang Xinyi and others; after that came the incident, then his own changes. He set off on a path he could not have imagined; the

meaning of life and the journey of his life changed completely. In the end, it was unavoidable flight, hiding out, and more flight.⁶⁰

There are later references to his membership in a Communist Party branch, in which his duties are mainly writing propaganda. In short, the author refers elliptically to Yu's activities before his flight. "Did I really do all those things?" Yu asks himself at one point.

It could well be the lack of sufficient biographical material and/or the fear of censorship that forced Li Qiao to stress the end of Lü's life.⁶¹ But whether it is the former or the latter or a combination of the two that has shaped the story, it resulted from the government's suppression of dissent, which for decades silenced the witnesses to Lü's death. Yet by glossing over the activities that led to Lü's flight, the author has, ironically, created a victim of the relentless government crackdown, not a hero of the uprising. Li Qiao's Lü Heruo is a victim who wavers between ideological conviction and domestic happiness. In privileging victim over heroic figure, the author has succeeded in commemorating the 2/28 Incident and condemning the ensuing arrest and execution of Taiwanese intellectuals. As a result, the perpetrator of the killing is portrayed as a bounty hunter, not someone convinced that Yu's activities are harmful to national security.⁶² Therefore, the life-and-death struggle between Yu and the bounty hunter is not ideologically driven; rather, it is intended as criticism of the earlier, biased, official interpretation of the 2/28 Incident as a subversive riot instigated by underground Communists in Taiwan.

That said, the story should not be read simply as one writer's attempt to recuperate another writer's life or as a new rendition of historical events in order to right wrongs. Instead, it is an idealistic, if not unrealistic, evocation of peaceful coexistence among ethnic groups. Zhang Henghao argued that

Li Qiao uses a macroscopic approach to reflect on the entangled relationship among the Taiwanese, the mainlanders, and the Yuan-zhumin, with ultimate concern for the relations between humans and Nature, as well as for humans and the land. The author stresses the themes of using love and tolerance to resolve/counter opposition and hatred, of respecting each ethnic and provincial group to live in harmony, and of identifying with the land of Taiwan.⁶³

Zhang believes that Li Qiao is implying that ethnic/provincial tensions will cease to be an issue once everyone in Taiwan truly identifies with the island. He cites two incidents in the story to corroborate his assertion. The first occurs when Wayong is showing Yu Shiji the escape route to Taimu Mountain: “Don’t lose heart, be confident of yourself, you must believe in Taimu Mountain. Must love! Do you hear? Love.”⁶⁴ The second instance occurs at the end of the story, after the bounty hunter has died of snakebite and Yu knows that he also is near the end of his life. He spreads acacia seeds, originally part of his disguise as a vegetable seed peddler, around him and the mainlander, with some of the seeds falling on their faces and their chests:

When the rains come, some of the seeds will sprout. When spring comes, there will be a grove of cassia around here. The moment I stop breathing is when I return to the great earth; my body will become one with the great earth and I will return with the saplings of Spring.⁶⁵

Zhang’s interpretation posits an intriguing reading of Li’s story; that is, Li Qiao is more interested in the future than in the past, and his rewriting of a personal story serves less to commemorate a victim than to imagine a better, brighter future of ethnic/provincial harmony. Sue Vice terms this characteristic “back shadowing”—that is, constructing a narrative with the privilege of hindsight, of already knowing the outcome of an event.⁶⁶ In light of the continuing conflicts among different groups in Taiwan, it is understandable that Li Qiao wishes to promote tolerance and love, as evidenced in his portrayal of Taimu Mountain and the snakes (of hatred). But such writing itself poses a danger to the ultimate goal of redressing atrocity, as Dominick LaCapra has observed:

Being responsive to the traumatic experience of others, notably of victims, implies not the appropriation of their experience but what I would call empathic unsettlement, which should have stylistic effects or, more broadly, effects in writing which cannot be reduced to formulas or rules of method. . . . At the very least, empathic unsettlement poses a barrier to closure in discourse and places in

jeopardy harmonizing or spiritually uplifting accounts of extreme events from which we attempt to derive reassurance or a benefit.⁶⁷

In Taiwan, the unsettlement is not an obstacle to the future of ethnic harmony but a necessary pause in the all too hasty effort to move forward without proper consideration for the victims. Li Qiao's determined effort to emphasize the power of love in transcending this ethnic divide, although admirable, ultimately privileges the future and obscures the past.



From the stories and the analysis presented here, we discern narrative patterns and their pitfalls emerging in the portrayals of ethnicity and ethnic relations. Perhaps as a convenient narratological device, romance and marriage are employed metaphorically to describe the impossibility of ethnic harmony. Set against the background of the 2/28 Incident and the White Terror, the failed relationships between a mainlander and a Taiwanese serve a more significant, symbolic function. Under this premise, characters often are imbued with metonymic qualities to represent two separate ethnic groups, and gender stereotypes inevitably arise in these portrayals. Moreover, the need to heal the historical wounds of ethnic strife often finds writers caught in a dilemma. For instance, Lin Shenjing's intention to highlight the effects of the 2/28 Incident on the average Taiwanese is compromised by a more urgent pacifist agenda of ethnic harmony. A similarly uplifting tone can be detected in "Under the Snow" and "Notes of Taimu Mountain," in which a better tomorrow is hinted at or anticipated. This "redemptive token" is the pitfall of such a subgenre, for a fiction writer "must think in terms of resolutions and completion. But what, after having surrendered his characters to their fate, can he suppose those resolutions and completions to be?"⁶⁸ Ou Tansheng's "Intoxication," written immediately after the incident, is an exception. Obviously, without the vantage point of hindsight, Ou was more interested in reporting the incident and its impact than analyzing its causes and implications. While it is pointless to favor one over the other, it is important that the commitment to ethnic harmony not override the obligation to remember.