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外國語文學系外國文學與語言學碩士班

碩士論文

《桑青與桃紅》與《海神家族》中的創傷與生命書寫

Writing Traumas, Writing Lives in

Mulberry and Peach and *Mazu's Bodyguards*

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摘 要

本論文嘗試以跨學科研究方法探討個人創傷與集體創傷在聶華苓的《桑青與桃紅》與陳玉慧的《海神家族》中的再現。論文第一章將兩部小說及其作者的生命經驗自述並置，藉此研究兩位作者如何在其作品中描繪己身創傷記憶，並且也比較兩部小說成型的時代脈絡如何影響作者對創傷的再現。聶華苓與陳玉慧以小說形式再現創傷的做法呼應了多位創傷研究學者的論點：創傷為受創者所帶來的極大壓力將導致創傷無法被全然感知且無法被精確呈現，因此創傷敘事中敘述者的角度無法絕對化且敘述者需要對創傷事件進行再創造。這個再創造的過程呼應敘事治療的基本理念。敘事治療作為後現代取向的心理諮商學派，強調每位案主的敘事皆是在特定脈絡下建構而成；在諮商過程中，案主在諮商師協助下解構原先的敘事並進一步創造出「替代故事」。因在《桑青與桃紅》與《海神家族》中，兩位作者分別將個人、家族創傷與國族創傷事件交織呈現，且皆持女性觀點，本論文提出此兩本小說在兩方面可被視作其作者的「替代故事」：首先，兩位作者在文本中融合生命經驗敘事與虛構元素，以此作為自身創傷記憶的「替代故事」；另外，兩位作者以女性觀點所創造出的「替代故事」也構成可抗衡主流國族敘事中的男性中心觀點。論文第二章分析《桑青與桃紅》與《海神家族》中的女性角色刻畫，探討其作者如何避免讓這些背負歷史創傷的女性成為父權體制下的絕對弱者；此章借用胡克絲（bell hooks）以邊陲作為策略性反抗空間的觀點，提出兩位作者使文本中的受創傷女性形成「自邊陲發出的顛覆性聲音」，也因此提供了對抗主流論述的觀點。

關鍵詞：《桑青與桃紅》、《海神家族》、聶華苓、陳玉慧、創傷書寫、生命書寫、個人創傷、集體創傷、敘事治療、國族敘事、邊陲

Writing Traumas, Writing Lives in *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards*

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an interdisciplinary scholarly attempt to explore how individual traumas and colletive traumas are represented in Hualing Nieh's *Mulberry and Peach* and Jade Y. Chen's *Mazu's Bodyguards*. In Chapter One, I juxtapose the two novels with Nieh's and Chen's accounts of their lived experiences, in order to investigate how Nieh and Chen transfer their traumatic memories into their literary works, and how the historical and social contexts they were in affected their artistic representation of traumas. As Nieh and Chen represent traumas in the novelistic mode, their deeds correspond to a crucial point held by many trauma studies scholars: since the overwhelming power of trauma leads to its impossibility of being fully perceived and accurately presented by people, in trauma narratives too definite positions of recounting the traumatic experiences should be avoided and recreating the traumatic events is needed. This recreation process corresponds to the basic philosophy of narrative therapy, a branch of postmodern psychotherapy approaches. Narrative therapy suggests that the story told by every client is constructed within certain context; during the treatment, the predominant problematic story should be deconstructed and replaced by "alternative stories." Due to the fact that in both *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards* the two authors reveal their individual and family traumatic stories embedded in national traumatic events through the female perspective, I consider that there are two aspects in which the two texts constitute their authors' "alternative stories." First, by interweaving depictions of their lived experiences with fictional elements in the texts, Nieh and Chen tell the "alternative stories" as substitutes for the traumatic memories that have been haunting them in real life. Moreover, Nieh and Chen provide "alternative stories" to counter the male-dominated discourses in mainstream national narratives. In Chapter Two, I examine how Nieh and Chen, as witnesses to women's sufferings during national unrest, eschew symbolically re-victimizing those female bearers of historical traumas in their "alternative stories." Borrowing bell hooks' theory about the margin as a

strategic space of resistance, I consider that Nieh's and Chen's portrayals of those traumatized women constitute "the subversive voices from the margins" that can provide counter-perspectives against the predominant discourses.

Key Words: *Mulberry and Peach*, *Mazu's Bodyguards*, Hualing Nieh, Jade Y. Chen, writing traumas, writing lives, individual traumas, colletive traumas, national narratives, margin

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Chapter One
Introduction

Twentieth-century China and Taiwan marked a time of continuous traumas. In addition to a series of wars, events such as being invaded or colonized, and dictatorship that brought political oppression and even atrocities can all be recognized as the nation's traumatic experiences. Many literary and cinematic works have been produced to portray the distressing life amidst national calamities;[1] the two texts investigated in this thesis—Hualing Nieh's *Mulberry and Peach* (*Sang-qing yu Tao-hong*) and Jade Y. Chen's *Mazu's Bodyguards* (*Hai shen jia zu*)—are certainly included in this category of literature.[2] This thesis is an interdisciplinary scholarly attempt to explore how Nieh and Chen, as trauma victims themselves, represent individual and collective traumas in their semi-autobiographical novels. In my study of the two important works in modern Sinophone literature, I will not only draw on theories of trauma studies in the humanities, but also borrow some concepts from the psychotherapy field, particularly narrative therapy.

"Trauma," a term that has been widely deployed in scholarly research especially in recent decades, is in fact an interdisciplinary concept itself. As it is known, the term can be used in both somatic and psychological aspects: a clinician

[1] Michael Berry makes reference to David Der-Wei Wang, Yomi Braester, Ban Wang, and Xiaobin Yang in the introduction chapter to *A History of Pain: Trauma in Modern Chinese Literature and Film*, claiming that these critics "have established historical trauma and the manifold responses to that trauma as a central theme in modern Chinese literary and cultural studies" (2). In this book, Berry investigates literary and cinematic works capturing major historical traumas of Taiwan, China and Hong Kong in the twentieth century, including Musha Incident in Taiwan (1930), the Rape of Nanjing in China (1937-38), the February 28 Incident in Taiwan (1947), the Cultural Revolution in China (1966-76), Tiananmen Square Incident in China (1989) and the Handover of Hong Kong (1997).

[2] The English name of *Hai shen jia zu* "*Mazu's Bodyguards*" is the official translation shown on the cover of the reprinted Chinese version of *Hai shen jia zu* (Taipei: Ink,2009). Since the English edition of *Mazu's Bodyguards* has not yet been published, all the translations of the excerpts from the novel are mine. In addition, besides those quotes specifically mentioned as others' translations, all excerpts from Chinese sources cited in this thesis are translated by me.

may use "a trauma" to indicate a physical injury, a psychologist or sociologist may apply the term while studying a catastrophic personal or social event. Kai Erikson, a sociologist, probes into the definition of trauma in his essay "Notes on Trauma and Community." Erikson mentions that the meaning of trauma has been extended from its initial usage: from "the *blow*" (184) that stirs people's negative reaction to "the *state of mind*" (184) that is incurred by a certain stimulus. He proceeds to give definitions of "individual trauma" and "collective trauma," which I would like to borrow in this thesis. According to Erikson, individual trauma is "a blow to the psyche that breaks through one's defense so suddenly and with such brutal force that one cannot react to it effectively" (187), while collective trauma is "a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality" (187).

Concerning the origination of trauma theories, Ruth Leys in *Trauma: A Genealogy* regards Sigmund Freud as "a founding figure in the history of conceptualization of trauma" (18). In *Understanding Trauma: A Psychoanalytical Approach*, psychologist Caroline Garland combs through the evolution of Freudian notion of trauma, contending that Freud's conception of trauma has progressed in line with the developmental history of psychoanalysis. Initially there was Freud's study of hysterics in 1893, in which the patient's condition was considered to be the repression of painful memory, and it was not until the memory came to the consciousness together with the patient's original feeling of distress could the "catharsis cures" happen. According to Garland, two ideas later proposed by Freud, including the three mental functioning modes (namely the id, the ego, and the superego) in 1923 and the derivation of anxiety within the ego in 1926, significantly contribute to the present knowledge of trauma. Following the illustration of automatic anxiety that is "experienced in an *actual* situation of danger" (16) and signal anxiety "experienced

when danger *threatens*" (16), Garland then offers her own conclusion— "*the ego, once traumatized, can no longer afford to believe in signal anxiety in any situation resembling the life-threatening trauma: it behaves as if it were flooded with automatic anxiety*" (17; emphasis in the original). At this stage we can grasp the kernel of Freud's idea of trauma, which centers on the nature of trauma as being repressed and continually repeating itself.

Although psychiatric researchers nowadays do not necessarily base their studies of trauma upon Freudian theory,[3] there have been many contemporary trauma theorists making efforts to develop their ideas within the frame of psychoanalysis.[4] One of the prominent figures in today's trauma studies is Cathy Caruth, who in her discussion underscores the delayed appearance of trauma. In the introduction to her edited volume *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Caruth points out the denotation of trauma while investigating the diagnostic criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD): "The pathology consists [. . .] solely in the *structure of its experience* or reception: the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated *possession* of the one who experiences it. To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event" (4-5; emphasis in the original). Caruth later refers to Freud's writing about the recurrence of dreams in traumatic neurosis and describes the repetitive dreams as "the literal return" (5) of the traumatic event to the victim who has undergone it and been unwillingly to experience it again. For Caruth, it is due to its "literality" and "insistent return" (5) that one's trauma can testify to the existence of the shattering event. Thereby Caruth argues that PTSD can

[3] In fact, as Kali Tal notes, "Most [contemporary medical studies of trauma] begin with the observation that trauma places extraordinary stress upon an individual's ordinary coping mechanism" (*Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* 135).

[4] The reason may lie in what Caroline Garland states in the introduction to *Understanding Trauma: A Psychoanalytical Approach*: "The psychoanalytic approach…investigates, and tries to shift or modify, these internal object relations and the corresponding state of the internal world, rather than focusing primarily upon symptomatology and classifiable mental disorder"("Introduction: Why Psychoanalysis" 4).

be considered as "a symptom of history" (5), and that "the traumatized…carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess" (5). The impossibility of history, according to Caruth, lies in the trauma's being perceived as "a temporal delay" (10), which indicates its inaccessibility to be grasped at the immediate moment; moreover, rather than being repressed for good, the trauma reappears to the victims' minds, urging to voice itself (that is, to come to the consciousness of the victim in order to be recognized), and eventually be voiced by the victim. In her conclusion, Caruth writes that "the history of a trauma, in its inherent belatedness, can only take place through the listening of another" (11).

Dominick LaCapra responds to Caruth's discussion of trauma by stating that "[t]rauma indicates a shattering break or cesura in experience which has belated effects" (186) in the ending chapter of *Writing History, Writing Trauma*.[5] Reflecting upon Caruth's claim that literature and psychoanalytic theory resembles each other in dealing with "the complex relation between knowing and not knowing" (3),[6] he gives further elaboration on the representation of trauma in literary works. According to LaCarpra, a historian, there is a distinction between "writing about trauma" and "writing trauma" (186). While "writing about trauma" operates within the historiographical domain that tends to be objective, the act of "writing trauma" implies a distance away from trauma and engages "processes of coming to terms with traumatic 'experiences,' limit events, and their sympathetic effects that achieve articulation in different combinations and hybridized forms" (186). Literary works, as a form of art, serves to demonstrate the whole process in which traumas give voice to themselves, get voiced, to finally get listened. However, far from being merely an

[5] Caruth's discussion on trauma that LaCarpra makes reference to is from "Introduction: The Wound and the Voice," in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History.*

[6] See Note 5.

agency to give witness, literature of trauma bears elements that documentary works do not. While literature entails much freedom in narrative, it provides the reader possibilities of interpretation instead of the absoluteness of truth claims; it presents "a precise form to opacity" (188) in LaCarpra's term.

Kali Tal, a literary critic and the author of *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma*, argues for the vital role of literature in "the reconstruction and recuperation of traumatic experience" (17). Similar to Caruth and LaCarpra who are concerned about trauma's belatedness in their discussion, Tal suggested that the overwhelming power of trauma leads to its incapability of being perceived and represented by people. For Tal, "[a]ccurate representation of trauma can never be achieved without recreating the event" (15), and the essential task of the critic, is not only to recognize and analyze the works by certain traumatized groups, but also to "deconstruct the process by which the dominant culture codifies their traumatic experience" (18). Here, Tal's address that the voice bearing witness to the traumatic experience should be carefully examined relates to the issue of representation. As Stuart Hall writes in "The Work of Representation" that "[r]epresentation *is* an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. It *does* involve the use of language, of signs and images which stand for or represent things. But this is a far from simple or straightforward process…" (15; emphasis in the original), it is this "far from simple or straightforward process" that is worth our examination.

In this thesis, I aim to explore how the acts of writing trauma (as defined by LaCarpra) are demonstrated and how individual and collective traumas are represented in *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards*. I choose *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards* to analyze, for in both semi-autobiographical novels the authors reveal their own individual and family traumatic stories embedded in

national traumatic events through the female perspective.

In regard to female trauma writing, Suzette A. Henke sets a research example in *Shattered Subjects: Trauma and Testimony in Women's Life-Writing*, in which she investigates several pieces of female writers' life-writing about personal traumatic experiences. In her introductory chapter, Henke maintains that for those traumatized women, doing life-writing may contribute to their own psychological recovery, as personal narrative grants the victim "the tantalizing possibility of reinventing the self and reconstructing the subject ideologically inflected by language, history, and social imbrication" (xv). While it may seem audacious for Henke as a literary critic to claim so,[7] her idea corresponds to clinical perspectives in the realm of psychotherapy to a great extent. For example, in "Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening," psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Dori Laub asserts that in order to be set free from the entrapment of one's traumatic memories, "a therapeutic process—a process of constructing a narrative, of reconstructing a history and essentially, of *re-externalizating the event*—has to be set in motion" (69; emphasis in the original). Indeed, writing is one of the various channels through which the traumatized can perform the therapeutic process stated by Laub. More significantly, when elaborating her point mentioned in the above, Henke further proposes:

> Because the author can instantiate the alienated or marginal self into the pliable body of a protean text, the newly revised subject, emerging as the semifictive protagonist of an enabling *counternarrative* is free to rebel against the values and practices of a dominant culture and to assume an

[7] Henke mentions that at the Convention of the Modern Language Association in 1985, she delivered a research paper connected with scriptotherapy, proposing that "[a]utobiography could so effectively mimic the scene of psychoanalysis that life-writing might provide a therapeutic alternative for victims of severe anxiety and, more seriously, of post-traumatic stress disorder," yet "[t]he ideas may have struck…[the] audience as more psychoanalytic than literary, and even somewhat marginal to the field of critical theory"(xiii).

empowered position of political agency in the world. (xv-xvi; emphasis added)

Henke's notion of "counternarrative" can be read together with the basic philosophy of narrative therapy, a branch of counseling therapy that is marked as using postmodern approaches. Stories play a vital part in the therapeutic procedure, for they "actually shape reality in that they construct and constitute what we see, feel, and do" (397), as psychologist Gerald Corey states in the widely-circulated *Theory and Practice of Counselling and Psychotherapy*. Narrative therapists should avoid judgment and subjective interpretation but assist the clients in "deconstructing" their narrative and "externalizing" the problems from themselves,[8] and further creating alternate life stories (401). In *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends*, Michael White and David Epston, psychotherapists and the forerunners of narrative therapy, build their theory upon Michel Foucault's discussion about power and knowledge,[9] suggesting that the story told by every client is constructed within certain context. During the treatment, the original story should be deconstructed and replaced by "alternative stories" (15). These concepts will be used to examine the two trauma narratives *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards* in my thesis. Although strictly speaking, the process of writing traumas I discuss in this thesis do not involve counselors who assist the traumatized subjects in constructing their narratives, it cannot be denied that writing itself constitutes an act of "*re-externalizating the event*" in Laub's statement mentioned previously. Moreover, since in narrative therapy the counselors are suggested to be non-judgmental helpers rather than supervisors—

[8] In the field of psychological counseling, the word "client" is used to indicate the person who is given the therapy.

[9] One of the paragraphs White and Epston quote from Foucault is from *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980): "[W]e should try to discover how it is that subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted through a multiplicity of organisms, forces, energies, materials, desires, thoughts, etc. We should try to grasp subjection in its material instance as a constitution of subjects" (qtd. in White and Epson 23).

which means that they are supposed to take a neutral stand in general—it can justify we link the role of readers of trauma literature with that of the counselors, for basically they act as the "listeners" of the traumas.

Here, I would like to refer to Tal's remark about writing trauma, which tallies with Henke's perspective and, in the meanwhile, stresses the importance of reading trauma literature with an interdisciplinary approach. In her discussion, Tal draws on the concepts of the "national [collective] myth[s]" and "personal myth[s]" (117) to elaborate her idea. According to Tal, a national myth functions in the public domain and is in the process of change as new concepts continue to be created in the social and cultural realm, a personal myth exists within every individual and is the base of his or her perceptions and reactions to particular situations. Tal adopts psychologist Daniel Goleman's point that a personal myth forms with schemas that "operate at the level of the unconscious" (116) to state that "[g]rand revision of a personal myth must always spring from a traumatic experience" (116). Writing trauma, as stated by Tal, engages both "the development of alternative national myths through the manipulation of plot and literary technique" and "the necessary rebuilding of shattered *personal* myths" (117; emphasis in the original). Furthermore, Tal suggests that in order to recognize "the specific effects of trauma on the process of narration," critics of trauma literature should extend their academic views beyond literary criticism, here Tal specifically mentions psychology and sociology as the realms of knowledge that the critics should also study (117).

Both Henke's and Tal's statements remind us that besides affecting the writer's personal domain, writing trauma may also bring effects to public realm; or, when the traumatized give voices to their own traumas, they may not only want to articulate themselves but also expect to bring effects to their readers in an attempt to undertake a mission of social justice through writing. In fact, long before the emergence of

trauma studies in the twentieth century, the concept of "catharsis" stated in Aristotle's *Poetics* has already suggested the psychological effects that artistic displays of tragic subjects may bring to the audience. When discussing tragedy in *Poetics*, Aristotle first brings up the idea of "catharsis" but does not elaborate much on its meaning, which leads to the existence of various interpretations of the concept nowadays. Yet, as Gerald Else puts as a footnote in his translation of Aristotle's *Poetics*, almost all the definitions of "catharsis" "have in common a focus on pity and fear which are aroused *in the spectator*. These are to be somehow either 'purified' (reduced to beneficent order and proportion) or 'purged' (expelled from his emotional system) by the play" (97; emphasis in the original). Indeed, the Aristotelian notion of "catharsis" does not limit to the domain of drama studies but can be extended to other studies of arts, including literature.[10] To provide a modern clinical perspective, I would like to turn to what psychoanalysts Barbara Almond and Richard Almond present in *The Therapeutic Narrative: Fictional Relationships and the Process of Psychological Change*. While examining several novels, they find that a similar therapeutic mode can be found between clinical treatment and literature. They argue that literature is not only a source of "self-curative endeavors" (21) for creative writers, but also proposes that reading occurs in "a transitional space" (169), in which people may find identification with the fictional characters and further relate the narratives to their own life stories. In view of the foregoing, one of the aspects I shall be concerned about in my study of *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards* is what the two texts of trauma literature may possibly bring to their readers.

When it comes to national/collective traumas in Taiwan, the issue of ethnic

[10] Interestingly, Chen has once stated that for her, writing is somewhat like having psychotherapy, but sometimes writing is like going through the process of catharsis and that when she was writing *Mazu's Bodyguards*, she seemed to be in the theater of cruelty, being able to sympathize with the characters ("Before Becoming a Husband, He Was a Wife" ["Zhang fu yi qian shi qi zi"] 323).

identities should be brought up. As it is widely known, Taiwan has been a state composed of multiple ethnic groups because of migration and colonization. According to the currently widespread categorization of Taiwanese ethnic groups, there are four major ethnic groups in Taiwan, which include the Minnan (also known as Hokkien or native Taiwanese), the Hakka, waishengren (or the mainlanders) and Taiwanese aborigines. While this classification may be rough, it has been commonly used to categorize the population in Taiwan since 1945 when Japan surrendered Taiwan to the Republic of China (ROC) military forces which initially had its base in China. As the ROC government began to exercise sovereignty over Taiwan, the tensions between the so-called native Taiwanese and the newly arrived mainlanders came into existence.[11] The "228 Incident" happened in 1947 marked the flashpoint of the conflicts between the Taiwanese civilians and the new government, which later led to the "White Terror," Kuomintang's suppression of its political dissidents under the martial law from 1949 to 1987. Under the sovereignty of Kuomintang dictatorship, there generated disaffection among Taiwanese people. In both *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards*, there contain depictions of major traumatic events happened in the above-mentioned political and social contexts of twentieth-century Taiwan. In the following, I am going to present the basic information about the two novels.

Hualing Nieh, known for her founding and directing the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa with American poet Paul Engle, has been a significant literary figure in the contemporary age. In her long literary career, she has also been engaged in writing, translating, editing and teaching. Born in 1925 in China, Nieh grew up in an era of unrest. She fled to Taiwan in 1949 and lived on the island for more than a decade, during which time Taiwan was ruled under Chiang Kai-shek.

[11] Yet, not until 1949 when being defeated by the Chinese Communist Party in China did Chiang Kai-shek, the then leader of Kuomintang, evacuate the ROC government to Taiwan. During that period of Kuomintang's retreat, approximately two million mainlanders fled to Taiwan.

Holding an editorship of the dissident intellectual magazine *Free China Fortnightly*, Nieh was then oppressed by the Kuomintang government, which resulted in her exile to the United States in 1964. Nieh has published dozens of literary works, among which is the best-known and widely-translated *Mulberry and Peach*. Originally published in Chinese in the 1970s, *Mulberry and Peach* was banned under the governmental censorship.

The novel opens with the scene in which a woman named Peach is investigated by a man from USA Immigration Service in her house. Peach's personality has been clearly revealed as vigorous, obstinate, and even indecent. Divided into four parts, the main body of the novel is composed of Mulberry's diary written in different periods of her life. The subtitle of the English edition, "Two Women of China," somehow obscures the theme that Mulberry and Peach are in fact the split personalities of one person. From 1945 to 1970, Mulberry has gone through the turmoil in war-time China, the political persecution and oppression in the "White Terror" period of Taiwan, and the chase by the USA Immigration Service. Prior to each part of the diary is the letter to the immigration officer written by Peach while she is on the road to avoid being arrested. Ever since leaving home at the age of sixteen, Mulberry has begun a life of fleeing and exile, from the southern region to the northern region within China, from China to Taiwan, from Taiwan to the United States, and finally among the states in the U.S. Although it can be readily found that the female protagonist's experience in the novel overlaps with the author's in real life, *Mulberry and Peach* does not appear to be a memoir-like writing to its readers but a work that is infused with avant-garde narrative techniques.

During these decades after its publication, *Mulberry and Peach* has remained as a classic of contemporary Sinophone literature and attracted much scholarly attention. As Sau-ling Cynthia Wong puts, *Mulberry and Peach* can be classified as "modern

Chinese literature, overseas Chinese literature, literature by writers from Taiwan, literature of exile, diaspora literature, Asian American literature, feminist literature, border-crossing literature, and more"("Afterword" 210). The complexity of *Mulberry and Peach*, according to Wong, has led to multifarious ways to read the novel. Among Wong's list of the various aspects from which one can approach the text, "China, Chinese in America, the Chinese diaspora," "trauma, witness, testimony and survivorhood," "language and representability," and "feminism, lesbianism, gender transgressions" are those related to my study of *Mulberry and Peach* in this thesis ("Afterword" 209-10).

Pin-chia Feng in her "At Home and Elsewhere: Diaspora Imagination and Transnational Migration in Nieh Hualing's *Mulberry and Peach*" regards Nieh's writing trauma as an act "to overcome what Shoshana Felman terms 'failure of translation': to speak or write to a listening party in order to lift repression and to translate one's experience, thereby at least partially overcoming a linguistic barrier" (130). Quoted from Felman's *Writing and Madness*, the "failure of translation" in its original context stems from the gap between the ones in madness and those who are not. To extend the notion, this "failure of translation" can be regarded as existing in every piece of writing, between its writer and readers. The main concern of this thesis lies in how trauma writing can contribute to counter the "failure of translation," and further find the nexus between those traumatized, whether they can make their voices heard or not.

Unlike Nieh's identity as "a survivor of historical traumas" (Feng 130), Jade Y. Chen writes *Mazu's Bodyguards* from a descendant's perspective. Chen, a former correspondent for Taiwan's *United Daily News* in Europe, has been active in creative writing, theater acting and directing. *Mazu's Bodyguards* is one of Chen's representative works; the novel has received wide acclaim since its first publication in

2004 and has been translated into German and Japanese. In 2009, it was adapted into a Taiwanese opera and performed on stage.

Often seen as a family saga with autobiographical traits, *Mazu's Bodyguards* begins with the homecoming of the narrator with her German boy friend. The novel tells the turbulence within the family throughout three generations, starting with the Japanese grandmother leaving her hometown Ryukyu Islands for Taiwan. Grandma Ayako initially plans to marry her countryman who is sent to Taiwan by the Japanese government as a colonial policeman. However, due to the Wushe Incident (or the Musha Incident), the rebellion against Japanese colonial forces in Taiwan evoked by Taiwanese tribal natives, Ayako's fiancé has been murdered before she arrives. Knowing nothing about the massacre, Ayako comes to Taiwan and then meets Lin Cheng-nan, whom she later marries. Henceforth, the fate of Lin's family has been interwoven with the turmoil in the period of intense warfare. Lin goes to Japan to attend the flight school and then becomes a "Japanese soldier" in the battlefield in southern Asia during World War II. As the Japanese government announces the unconditional surrender in 1945, it also ends its colonization of Taiwan, and then comes the Kuomintang troops. Natsuki, Ayako' s first daughter, is married to Er-ma, a refugee from China and later gives birth to five daughters, including the narrator. A key feature of *Mazu's Bodyguards* is the absence of the male characters from the family: Ayako's husband Lin volunteers to join the Japanese army at the front line; Chih-nan, the younger brother of Lin, flees to Brazil during the period of "White Terror"; Er-ma leaves home for extra-marital affairs and then is put to jail for being charged as a "communist bandit."

Significantly, both *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards* depict the individual and family stories full of miseries yet indicate something greater beyond that—the national history of suffering. Many scholarly observations have identified

the tight connection between the familial narrative and the national discourse in Chinese literary tradition. As Chia-ling Mei points out, the imaginary tie between the family and the nation in Chinese culture is grounded in the traditional patriarchal socio-political system, which can be traced back to ancient China. Even in this era of cultural fusion of the East and the West, the predominant concept still has a great influence. Following the analysis of several Taiwanese novels written by male writers in the postwar era, Mei further poses a question in the final part of her essay: "Aside from those 'sons,' may there be 'daughters' who are eager to redefine or rewrite the familial/ national story in the future"[12] (399)? Since in *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards* their authors use the female perspective to construct national narratives, here I consider the two texts aptly demonstrate a positive answer to this call for daughterly texts.

Indeed, both *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards* have caught much scholarly attention in the field of literary studies. As quoted from Wong, *Mulberry and Peach* has been considered representative of many different categories of literature and thus there exist various resources on the novel. Although *Mazu's Bodyguards* was published later and has not been translated into as many languages as *Mulberry and Peach* has been, a considerable number of studies in the field of Taiwanese literature investigating *Mazu's Bodyguards* have been published. These studies mainly deal with identification issues, female subjectivity, overseas literary writing, female familial narrative in the novel. Here in my thesis, I focus on trauma issues in the novel through an interdisciplinary perspective; moreover, by paralleling it with *Mulberry and Peach*, I explore the different ways in which the two novelists represent collective traumas of

[12] See"Gu er? nie tz? ye hai zi? zhan hou Taiwan xiao shuo zhong de fu zi jia guo ji qi lie bian" ["Orphans? Sons of Sin? Wild Childs? The Patrilineal Home-country Narrative and its Changing in Postwar Taiwan Novels"]. *Wen hua, ren tong, she huei bian qian: zhan hou wu shi nian Taiwan wen xue guo ji yen tao hue* [*Culture, Identity, and Social Change: International Conference on Postwar Taiwan Literature*]. Taipei: Council for Cultural Affairs, 2000. 363-99.

Taiwanese people.

In this introduction, I have presented the theoretical components that will be used in this study. It is worth mentioning that while seeking to combine concepts about trauma from both the humanities and clinical fields in my analysis, I caution myself not to ignore the fact that the two texts are "literary works." As suggested by Geoffrey H. Hartman, it is essential "to rethink our relation to literature without superseding it in the fervor of our commitment to social justice" (549).

Treating *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards* as acts of writing traumas, in Chapter Two I juxtapose the plots in the two semi-autobiographical novels with those in Nieh's and Chen's life-writing,[13] in an attempt to investigate how Nieh and Chen transfer their traumatic memories into fictional writing. As Nieh and Chen artistically represent individual and collective traumas in the novelistic mode, their deeds correspond to what scholars of trauma studies, such as Cathy Caruth, Dominick LaCapra and Kali Tal, have stated about the representation of trauma: since the overwhelming power of trauma leads to its impossibility of being fully perceived and accurately presented by people, in trauma narratives reconstruction of traumatic events is needed. By using fundamental concepts of narrative therapy to examine Nieh's and Chen's acts of writing traumas, I view *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards* as the "alternative stories" that the two authors produce in lieu of the predominant problematic ones in their self-therapeutic efforts. In addition, agreeing to Tal's contention that trauma narratives may make alterations to both national myths and personal myths, I also discuss what roles *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards* may take within the context of Taiwanese society in which identity issue

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[13] Nieh has published her literary biography *San sheng san shi* [*Three Lives, Three Ages*] in 2004, which was later extended into the memoir *San bei zi* [*Three Lives*] in 2011. Aside from fictional writing, Chen has published several volumes of prose writing, in which she writes much about her life.

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has been controversial and conflicts between different ethnic groups have been significant.

In Chapter Three, I examine how Nieh and Chen, although portraying their female characters as bearers of historical traumas in the "alternative stories," undermine those traumatized women's identities as victims in their fictional writings. Notwithstanding most women in *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards* are placed on the margins of patriarchy and simultaneously are compelled to face the external oppression in times of unrest, they counter the male-dominated power system in their own ways. Borrowing bell hooks' theory about the margin as a strategic space of resistance, I consider that Nieh's and Chen's portrayals of those traumatized women constitute "the subversive voices from the margins" that can provide counter-perspectives against the predominant discourses.

The final chapter offers a brief summary of my observations concerning *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards* as well as some reflections on my study in this thesis. In my study of literature, I have been concerned about not only the literary elements in texts but also how literary works interact with history and society. Trauma literature, indeed, gives me an access to pursue my research interest. As Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub point out, the study of trauma literature can be defined as the exploration of "how art inscribes (artistically bears witness to) *what we do not yet know of our lived historical relation to events of our times*" ("Foreword" xx; emphasis in the original). While *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards* provide me with two examples of Taiwanese literature to learn what Felman and Laub state about trauma narratives, I see that in order to de-marginalize the voices of various traumas on this island, more texts that belong to the different traumatized/oppressed groups are to be critically explored in my future study.

Chapter Two

Writing Traumas in *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards*

Before I begin my discussion in this chapter, I would like to quote what Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson point out in *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* to explain the concept of semi-autobiographical fictional narratives. According to Smith and Watson,

> the boundary between the autobiographical and the novelistic is, like the boundary between biography and life narrative, sometimes exceedingly hard to fix. Many writers take the liberties of the novelistic mode in order to negotiate their own struggles with the past and with the complexities of identities forged in the present. (12)

Their idea can be aptly applied to my studies of *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards*, since I regard the two novels as products of the two authors' acts of writing traumas; that is to say, it is "the liberties," or poetic license, that enable Nieh and Chen to mingle autobiographical and fictional elements in their writings of traumatic experiences, in an attempt to "negotiate their own struggles" and further represent them. Hence, the aim of this chapter is to explore how Nieh and Chen take "the liberties of the novelistic mode," in the two novels. In other words, I intend to examine how Nieh and Chen represent traumas in the fictional mode in *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards*, and how their acts of writing traumas contribute to their "negotiation" with their own psychological struggles.

Belonging respectively to two different generations, Nieh and Chen employ distinct narrative tactics in the two semi-autobiographical novels representing traumas. First published in 1970s, Nieh's *Mulberry and Peach* has been considered a highly experimental work compared with Chinese novels that were contemporary with it. As

"a hybrid of the picaresque, the diary/epistolary, and the psychological novel" (Feng 132), *Mulberry and Peach* also displays surrealistic and fantasy elements within the story. In her preface to one of the reprinted version of *Mulberry and Peach*, Nieh states that being a "rule-abiding" writer, she has written *Mulberry and Peach* as her first attempt to "go beyond the bounds"(1).[14] The bounds, although not clearly stated by Nieh in the article, can be regarded to be not only artistic but also political, as Taiwan had been under the Kuomintang dictatorship when Nieh was writing *Mulberry and Peach*. In the afterword, Nieh later alludes to Kafka's "Metamorphosis" to elaborate her viewpoint that one should not arbitrarily equate the fictional world with the real world, although some elements of the two worlds may inevitably overlap. As Nieh is a writer who has first-hand experience of political oppression, the above statement by her somewhat reveals her voice of protest against the fact that the Kuomintang government put a ban on *Mulberry and Peach* when the novel was first published.

Unlike Nieh, Chen wrote her *Mazu's Bodyguards* at a time when the martial law in Taiwan was already lifted and both free speech and publication were allowed. As literary critic Kuo-wei Chen notes, there have been abundant works by Taiwanese writers of different ethnicities published since the martial law was lifted, and through telling stories from perspectives of the ethnic groups they belong to, those writers may possibly re-form the domain of ethnic politics, in other words, reposition the privileged ethnic groups and the marginal ones (3); *Mazu's Bodyguards* is certainly among those works mentioned by Kuo-wei Chen.[15] We can observe that in contrast with Nieh, Chen can explicitly express her concern about Taiwanese politics through

[14] The version I refer to here is the one printed in 1988 by Han Yi Se Yen Publisher, Taipei.

[15] Chen has once stated that while writing *Mazu's Bodyguards*, "I hoped I could study Taiwanese history with an objective point of view,…,I was much certain that the roles of oppressors and victims could be dislocated, overlapped, or mutually converted, thus generated those tragedies in history" ("Before Becoming a Husband, He Was a Wife" 334).

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plain narrative in her writing. Moreover, Chen's narrative reflects a particular style that has sprung from her own artistic experience. Chen has once stated that influenced by European films, she intentionally employs narrative devices such as stream of consciousness, montage and collage in her prose writing;[16] likewise, we can also find traces of this influence in *Mazu's Bodyguards*.

Notwithstanding *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards* were written within different political and social contexts and thereby demonstrate distinct narrative styles, both authors display non-linear narratives in their story-telling. As Nieh tells the story by alternately presenting Peach's letters and Mulberry's diary entries, Chen unfolds the whole picture of the family's story by interlacing each family member's story from different historical contexts. Through their use of fragmented narratives, Nieh and Chen challenge the conventional linear narrative not only in terms of forms and aesthetics, but also in regard to the historical discourse constructed within the narrative. Jui-fen Chang, a critic of contemporary Chinese literature, applies Michel Foucault's prominent concept of "rupture" proposed in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* to argue that *Mazu's Bodyguards* challenges the "linear extension" of prevalent male-dominated historical discourse (131).[17] Here, I would like to submit that *Mulberry and Peach* can be analyzed in this way as well.

In both *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards*, many of the female characters' traumatic experiences are related to the marginalization of women in the patriarchy system. While reading the two novels along with Nieh's and Chen's life-writing, one can note that a considerable part of the two authors' depiction of

[16] In the interview script included in *Selections from Chen Yu-huei* (*Chen yu-huei jing xuan ji*), Chen has mentioned that in some of her prose essays, there can be found the impacts European films have had on her narrative devices, including stream of consciousness, montage and collage (19).

[17] See "Kuotsu, Chiatsu, Nuhsing— Chen Yu-huei, Shih Shu-ching, Chung Wen-yin chinchi wenben chung de kuotsu/chia" ["Nation, Family, Females—Nation/Family in Recent Texts by Chen Yu-huei, Shih Shu-ching and Chung Wen-yin"]. *Hu Lan-cheng, Chu Tien-wen yu "San-san": Taiwan dandai wenxue lunchi.* [*Hu Lan-cheng, Chu Tien-wen and "San-san": Collection of Critiques of Taiwanese Contemporary Literature*]. (Taipei: Hsiu-wei, 2007) 123-60.

female marginalization in their fictional writing are transferred from what they have experienced or witnessed in real life. By giving voice to those female traumas in their semi-autobiographical novels, Nieh and Chen not only enable the marginalized voices of women be heard to counter the dominant patriarchal discourse, but also verbalize the repressed voices of their own traumas. In view of this, I consider that some key concepts of narrative therapy from the realm of psychotherapy can be used in my exploration of both Nieh's and Chen's acts of writing traumas.

Characterized as a branch of postmodern psychotherapy approaches, narrative therapy is developed upon the premise that one's cognition of reality is constructed within specific social and cultural context, and the stories one tells are actually products of that certain context. In their *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends*, the forerunners of narrative therapy Michael White and David Epston quote from Michel Foucault— "Let us ask [...] how things work at the level of ongoing subjugation, at the level of those continuous and uninterrupted processes which subject our bodies, govern our gestures, dictate our behaviours, etc." (qtd. in White and Epson 23)— to illustrate the fundamental of narrative therapy. The main task of a narrative therapist, therefore, is to assist the client deconstructing his or her own narrative during the treatment and further creating "alternative stories" (White and Epson 15) to replace the one that has previously dominated, or "subjected," the client's perspective of the world.

There are two aspects in which I consider Nieh's and Chen's acts of writing traumas can be discussed with the above-mentioned principles of narrative therapy. Firstly, as it is suggested by Jui-fen Chang that masculine narrative constitutes the mainstream of national historical discourses in Chinese and Taiwanese literature, Nieh and Chen indeed provide "alternative stories" to counter the "subjugation" by the dominant masculine perspectives with their semi-autobiographical novels while

providing female perspectives to mirror the national history. Moreover, by interweaving depictions of their lived experiences with fictional elements inside the texts, Nieh and Chen tell the "alternative stories" as substitutes for the traumatic memories that have been haunting them in real life.

In the following, I am going to present the autobiographical components in *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards* through juxtaposing the two novels with Nieh's and Chen's life-writing as well as their personal statements concerning the composition of the two novels. By doing so, I would like to illustrate my argument that through creating "alternative stories" in their semi-autobiographical novels, Nieh and Chen not only demonstrate their resistance to the dominant patriarchal familial-national discourses but also tentatively relieve the pain from their own traumas.

I. *Mulberry and Peach* and Hualing Nieh's Act of Writing Traumas

In the interview conducted by Yu-huei Liao entitled "Tao yu kun" ("Fleeing and Being Trapped"), Nieh has claimed that by writing *Mulberry and Peach*, she wanted to portray "the predicament of mankind—always fleeing and always being trapped," since "one can be trapped in many aspects, such as spiritual, psychological, political and personal." She has also pointed out how the specific events that she went through in the unrestful era affected her:

> I was a refugee student growing up during the war of resistance against Japanese aggression, who had been fleeing all the time. I ran away from my home town in my teens; the Japanese people came to Wuhan when I was fourteen, so we just ran, ran, and ran! After China's victory of the anti-Japanese war, I went to Peiping, then the Communist Party came and I had to run again. Finally when I arrived in Taiwan, I thought I did not have

> to run anymore! But I still had to run when living on the island.

From the above statement, one can gain a rough understanding about Nieh's personal experience of diaspora in the midst of national upheavals.

The route of migration the female protagonist takes in *Mulberry and Peach* resembles the one Nieh had in her life: from the southern region to the northern region within China, from China to Taiwan, and from Taiwan to the United States; moreover, the major political events in twentieth-century China and Taiwan that are intertwined with the storyline of *Mulberry and Peach* also reflect Nieh's first-hand experience in the tumultuous era.

In Part I of *Mulberry and Peach*, the Chu-t'ang Gorge on the Yangtze River is where the boat that carries Mulberry and other refugees gets stranded during the Anti-Japanese War. According to Nieh, the grandeur of Chu-t'ang Gorge, which she had witnessed in her journey of escape during the Chinese civil war, suddenly emerged in her mind when she was writing the first part of *Mulberry and Peach* (*Three Lives* 140). In Part II of the novel, Mulberry, the only passenger on the plane from Nanking to Peking, arrives in the then besieged city to visit the Shens. During the time when Mulberry stays in Peking, she gets married to Chia-kang and witnesses how Peking becomes completely occupied by the Communists. Nieh makes her female protagonist's experiences in Part II of the novel parallel closely with her own during 1949. In the chapter entitled "The Besieged City" ("Wei Cheng") in *Three Lives*, Nieh writes:

> As it turned out, I was the only passenger on the plane.
>
> And it was the last plane that flew from Nanking to Peking. Peking was surrounded by the Communists. At the time when the plane landed, the Communists occupied the airport.
>
> Suddenly I was lost in a big family in the North. And suddenly I got

> married….We could hear the thunder of guns when the wedding ceremony was being held. (142)

In the end of the section, Nieh writes, "On February 3, 1949, I saw the People's Liberation Army walk unhurriedly into downtown Peking" (143). Here we can see how the story backgrounds of Part I and Part II of *Mulberry and Peach* echo with Nieh's earlier life in China.

As a writer who experienced the "White Terror" in Taiwan, Nieh represents the force that oppresses people during the political turmoil by creating the attic scene in Part III of *Mulberry and Peach*. In *Three Lives*, Nieh recalls a past event in her childhood before recounting the whole story of "The *Free China Fortnightly* Incident."[18] In 1929, she and her family fled to the Japanese concession in Hankou. She described that her father during that period "was like playing the hide-and-seek; once he got bored in the hiding place, he sneaked out" (179). One night Nieh woke up and was told that there was someone hiding on the rooftop. Nieh's mother then went out to look for Nieh's father who had been out during that night. Nieh wrote in the passage that "I was so scared that I remained still on the bed…Father would not be able to come back, and neither would Mother. As it turned out, Father was hiding in an attic of a Japanese nurse's house. That was my first taste of fear [in life]" (179). From the above excerpt from Nieh's memoir, we can observe that Nieh seems to intentionally build the link between the horrific experience in her early life with her involvement in "The *Free China Fortnightly* Incident" in her narrative. We can also note that while the attic serves as a literary symbol in *Mulberry and Peach* for Nieh to depict the plight of those oppressed, the attic was once the hiding place for the author's father to escape from political oppression in reality.

[18] Four people related to *Free China Fortnightly* were arrested in 1960 due to the criticism against the Kuomintang government published in the magazine. Lei Chen, the general editor of *Free China Fortnightly*, was then charged with treason and later jailed for ten years.

In Nieh's narrative about how she and other editorial staff at *Free China Fortnightly* were persecuted by the then totalitarian Kuomintang government, the author straightforwardly expresses her regret and helplessness in facing the oppressive force:

> Mother and I glanced at each other; we did not talk. We both understood what was going on, even without saying a word. The only thing I knew was to remain still, being not afraid. Nine-year-old Lan-lan began playing her mini piano; she sat on the floor, playing "My Mother."
>
> I felt weak all over; I sat on the chair, completely motionless. They planned to catch us one by one…They were coming, so I decided to just sit there and wait.
>
> Lan-lan stopped.
>
> Play, play, Lan-lan, just play. I told her.
>
> She continued playing. This time, she was playing "White Christmas" at a brisk and lively tempo. (189)

While it might be coincidental that Nieh's daughter played the joyful song "White Christmas" on the piano when the policemen were searching her house, Nieh's portrayal of the scene in "September 4, 1960" in *Three Lives* certainly constitutes a rather ironic display in her narrative. Here, the irony lies in the contrast between the harsh oppression they encountered in reality and the heartwarming atmosphere revealed by the lively melody as well as by the lyrics of "White Christmas," such as the line "May your days be merry and bright." As I have pointed out Nieh's attempt to string together one of her past traumatic experiences in her childhood with her experience of the "White Terror" in later years, she also includes her daughter's encounter with the "White Terror" as a child witness in her narrative:

> Lan-lan repeatedly played "White Christmas." Suddenly she stopped,

> asking, "Ma-ma, what are they doing?"
>
> Just leave them alone, Lan-lan. Keep playing the piano.
>
> Lan-lan continued to play, but grew weary of her playing as it went on.
>
> I looked at her, thinking, if only the next generation will not suffer this kind of fear. (190)

The narrative method Nieh adopts here calls attention not only to the fact that the history of twentieth-century China and Taiwan is composed of continuous traumatic events, but also to the fact that trauma does not solely operate on an individual level but will affect the ones who are close to the traumatized and even bring about transgenerational effects.

Significantly, as in reality Nieh's daughter inevitably witnessed the traumatic event in the world of adults, in *Mulberry and Peach* Mulberry's daughter Sang-wa has no alternative but to be imprisoned in the attic with her parents. Chia-kang's word, "[Sang-wa] was born at the wrong time" (134), well indicates the hardship that Sang-wa must face as a child of victims of fierce oppression. However, when Mulberry finally tries to take Sang-wa out of the attic, "[Sang-wa] says being outside the attic makes her tired. She has never stood straight up like this on the ground before" (153). Nieh's portrayal of Sang-wa indeed corresponds to what she has stated as her motivation of writing *Mulberry and Peach*, that she wanted to depict mankind's being constantly trapped in life's predicaments. Furthermore, by creating an extreme case of a child witness whose life becomes completely dysfunctional due to traumatic experience, Nieh highlights the aftermath for children who witness traumas.

Markedly, the acts of writing trauma—to represent traumatic experiences "in different combinations and hybridized forms" (LaCarpra 186) — occur both outside and inside Nieh's text. Not only Nieh, a victim of historical traumas, writes the semi-autobiographical novel through the female protagonist's perspective, the

traumatized child Sang-wa in the text also writes stories through integrating reality and fictive elements in her diary. As I have mentioned previously, Nieh is widely acclaimed for demonstrating multiple literary devices in *Mulberry and Peach*. Similar to Nieh's mingling various narrative forms to represent traumatic experiences in her novel, Sang-wa, as a child who has been physically and mentally suppressed while suffering the long-term imprisonment, displays her outrageous fantasies in her fragmented personal narratives. For example, in one of Sang-wa's diary entries, a large portion of her writing is about brutal and bloody scenes which somewhat conveys a sense of paranoia. Beginning with the narrator's mother going out every night to eat men, the story is then filled with cannibalism and killing. The narrator "I" claims to be persecuted by people eaters who try to hurt and catch her through making the attic roasted by the sun and blown by the typhoon, yet she eventually escapes the cruelties by transforming into other creatures, including bugs, fly and dragon. Later, after the people eaters and her parents are all dead, the narrator is terrified to find that her belly grows big. What is noteworthy here is that after the narrator cuts the big round ball of meat that comes out from her body, the little balls also go through a series of metamorphoses, turning into stones, clouds, white birds and snakes with people heads. Accordingly, the metamorphosis constitutes the maneuver for both the narrator and the creature-like meat balls to survive the life-threatening conditions in Sang-wa's story; however, all their attempts are in vain. Just as the narrator "I" can never free herself from the external force, eventually the constantly changing creatures cannot escape their doom, according to what Sang-wa writes in the end of the story: "A black cloud sucks the snakes with people heads in and they turn into rain. It's raining outside the attic" (149). Here, we see a sudden shift from the fantasy world to reality, which may imply not only Sang-wa's disorderly thinking but also the chaos inside an imprisoned mind. The continuous series of hazards Sang-wa and the

creatures encounter in the story may symbolize the unceasing oppression that Taiwanese people must face during the dictatorship. It can thus be argued that by having the ten-year-old girl write a grotesque, bloodthirsty story interweaving fantasy and reality, Nieh successfully represents the mental tumults of victims of authoritarian oppression in her novel. In addition, the in-text story written by Sang-wa also reflects what Nieh proposes as the theme of *Mulberry and Peach*—"fleeing and being trapped" as the universal predicament for all human beings, and importantly, as it is through transforming into another identity can the female protagonist in *Mulberry and Peach* counteract the chaos of her life, it is also via metamorphosis can the narrator and the creatures coming out from the narrator's body find their ways to survival in Sang-wa's story.

To regard *Mulberry and Peach* as a demonstration of writing trauma through a female perspective, one may observe that Neih's delineation of women's traumatic experiences relates not only to wars and exile, but also to patriarchy. Since Nieh has once admitted that there might be a tendency toward feminism in her fictional writing, here I also want to examine how Nieh's experience in the Chinese patriarchy has affected her writing.

Firstly, Nieh reveals many Chinese patriarchal components in the first two parts of *Mulberry and Peach*. We may gain a picture of the traditional Chinese patriarchy from each character's personal narrative given in the stranded boat in Part I. As polygamy is one of the significant characteristics of Chinese patriarchal society, the Refugee Student's description of his father—a domineering man who treats his seven wives equally with repressive rules—provides an example of Chinese patriarchy. Another illustrative example can be drawn from Peach-flower Woman's case. Indeed, Peach-flower Woman, as a woman who speaks and acts in a rather uninhibited manner in the stranded boat and who disobeys her mother-in-law by running away

from home with her baby son to look for her husband in Chungking, does not characteristically demonstrate conventional submissive attitudes of women in her times. Nevertheless, her earlier life experience still represents a typical fate of many traditional Chinese women: becoming a child bride (a girl adopted into a family as their future daughter-in-law) at a young age, being responsible for taking care of her husband who is junior to her as well as all works in the household, yet living in her husband's family with an inferior status and being ignored by her husband. As for Part II, the early life experience of Aunt Shen, a woman with bound feet in her sixties, marks how vital it is for a woman to bear sons in order to gain favor and power in a traditional Chinese family.

By reading Nieh's autobiographical narrative about her early life in *Three Lives*, we can know that she has already observed and been familiar with the patriarchy inherent in traditional Chinese culture ever since she was in her teens. In the chapter "Mother's Monologue" ("Mu chin de zi bai"), Nieh writes about her mother's regrettable life with her mother as the narrator: she was arranged by the elders in her family to marry Nieh's father; she strived to support her husband's family by taking on the roles as a good wife and an obedient daughter-in-law, yet one day she knew accidentally that her husband had been a bigamist, and years later found that he had an extramarital affair with another woman; eventually, she did not choose to end the marriage although feeling resentful towards him. Nieh ends the chapter with her mother sighing, "Alas, it is such a worthless thing to be a woman" (46). In another chapter in *Three Lives* "Chen-chun," Nieh writes about a girl who was sent to the Niehs not long after Nieh's father died on the battlefield. Chen-chun, a mentally challenged girl, was claimed to be a new maid of her grandfather but in fact was intended to bear a son for the old man. It is noteworthy that the tone Nieh employs in her narratives about her mother and Chen-chun somewhat implies her position as an

"innocent child witness" to the Chinese patriarchy in her childhood, and her specific accounts of the events in her memoir many years later display her concern about women's inferiority in a traditional Chinese society. Interestingly, by paralleling *Three Lives* with *Mulberry and Peach*, one can readily note that Chen-chun is exactly the prototype of Joy, the retarded young maid sent by Aunt Shen to Hsing-hsing's grandfather as concubine in Part II of *Mulberry and Peach*.

As for Nieh's own experience related to the patriarchal system, our reference may be the unhappy marriage she had with her ex-husband who fled to the U.S. alone in 1957, leaving Nieh and their two daughters in Taiwan. Although Nieh does not directly mention much about her first marriage in *Three Lives*, she quotes from Paul Engle's account of their first lunch date in his memoir:[19]

> You have been working so hard. I said, providing for your mother, raising your children. And you do not complain.
>
> What is the use of complaining?
>
> No woman can do so many things like you; especially your husband is not at home.
>
> He has left for six years. Without him, I feel even happier.... (286)[20]

Significantly, as Nieh accepted Engle's invitation to Iowa and started her new life there, her protagonist in *Mulberry and Peach* also "discovers" her new identity in the United States. Nieh later married Engle in 1971 and "spread out the branches and

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[19] Lisa Schlesinger, the director of the stage play *Learner than Light: 12 Frames of Paul Engle*, in her "A note from Playwright" writes, "At the end of his life, Paul Engle was working on a memoir called *Paul Engle Country*...." The memoir Nieh refers to must be the one mentioned in Schlesinger's statement, yet remains unpublished. The only one memoir written by Engle that can be found is *A Lucky American Childhood*, an autobiographical account of the poet's childhood, in which all the pieces of writing were collected by Nieh after Engle's death. Since the original quote from Engle is not available, I try to translate the words quoted by Nieh from Chinese into English.

[20] In the documentary *One Tree Three Lives* (2012), Nieh mentions her relationship with her ex-husband: "We were not compatible….I was confused and lonely while he was studying in Chicago." (The original statement is in Mandarin; here the lines are quoted from the English subtitles of the documentary.)

leaves” in the foreign land.[21] However, instead of making her protagonist’s life in the novel a replica of hers, Nieh designs the protagonist as a schizophrenic who constantly sways between the old identity and the new one.

Indeed, both Nieh and her protagonist are bearers of historical traumas. While submitting that PTSD is more “a symptom of history” than “a symptom of the unconscious,” Cathy Caruth suggests that the traumatized may “become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess” (“Trauma and Experience: Introduction” 5). As Caruth further points out, the existence of the symptom is closely associated with “a question of truth” (5) which “arises not only in regard to those who listen to the traumatized” but “occurs rather and most disturbingly often within the very knowledge and experience of the traumatized themselves” (5). Accordingly, Nieh’s act of writing trauma can be regarded as an attempt to counter the overwhelming power of her own traumas, as well as to unveil the “impossible history within [her]” (“Trauma and Experience: Introduction” 5) in a highly artistic way.

To conclude this section, I would like to further probe into what Caruth calls as “an impossible history within [the traumatized]” (5) and use the concept to examine Nieh’s act of writing trauma in *Mulberry and Peach*. The word “impossible,” according to *Oxford Dictionaries Online*, is used to describe either something “not able to occur, exist, or be done,” or something “very difficult to deal with.” In the original context within which Caruth brings up the concept of the “impossible history,” we see that Caruth writes much about the belatedness of traumas, which leads to the inaccessibility for the traumatized subjects to grasp their traumas without delay. This belatedness eventually causes what Shoshana Felman proposes as the “crisis of truth” (qtd. in Caruth 6), a crisis explained by Caruth as “[extending]

[21] In the preface to *Three Lives*, Nieh writes, “I am a tree./ I have my root in China./ My trunk in Taiwan./ My branches and leaves in Iowa” (3).

beyond the question of individual cure and asks how we in this era can have access to our own historical experience, to a history that is in its immediacy a crisis to whose truth there is no simple access" (6). In this way, one may use the first definition of "impossible" offered by *Oxford Dictionaries Online*, to state that the "impossible history" is, as such, a history "not able to occur, exist, or be done." Nevertheless, here I would like to also consider the "impossibility" of history by borrowing the second definition quoted from the dictionary. By doing do, I see that Nieh's portrayal of the pathological symptoms of Mulberry/Peach implies a symptom of the "impossibility" of traumas, namely the extreme difficulty the traumatized may continually encounter. To be more precise, as Nieh's motive for writing *Mulberry and Peach* was to depict what she considered as mankind's lifelong predicament—"always fleeing and always being trapped"—her making the female protagonist a schizophrenic afflicted with both the past and present traumatic experiences does vividly present the overwhelming power of traumas.

In *Mulberry and Peach* we see a literary portrait of a Chinese woman undergoing the national unrest in the middle period of the twentieth century and thereby living as a woman in diaspora. Markedly, the female protagonist in the novel simultaneously bears traumas in regard to the national upheavals as well as traumas resulting from the marginalization of women in the patriarchal system. While paralleling Nieh's portrayal of the female protagonist in *Mulberry and Peach* with her own life narrative, we can observe that a large portion of Nieh's writing in *Mulberry and Peach* reflects the author's own lived experience. Such portrayal, indeed, not only provides a novelistic representation of a wounded woman's life, but also constitutes a literary record of collective sufferings shared by many twentieth-century Chinese people who have gone through wars, forced immigration, political oppression, etc.

II. *Mazu's Bodyguards* and Jade Y. Chen's Act of Writing Traumas

Mazu's Bodyguards is undoubtedly a family saga written not only to tell the family's trans-generational traumatic experiences, but also to mirror the national upheavals in twentieth-century Taiwan. Concerning her integration of "the private history" and "the public history" in the novel, Chen has once stated: "The private history is like a scroll, and the public history is like the roller of that scroll; when the scroll is open, the contour of the private history becomes clearer, and the properties of the public history may be enhanced because of the disclosure of the private history" ("Before Becoming a Husband, He Was a Wife" ["Zhang fu yi qian shi qi zi"] 333). While Chen's attempt to depict the sufferings of both her family and the nation over the past decades is clear, it should also be noted that writing *Mazu's Bodyguards* serves as a way for Chen to find her identity as a daughter of both the family and the nation, and thus to alleviate the pain from her own traumas.

Chen has once claimed that she writes *Mazu's Bodyguards* out of her deep concern for her family; while some parts of the novel are written according to her family's real experiences, some are invented ("Before Becoming a Husband, He Was a Wife" 327). Importantly, when describing how she started writing her family's story, Chen has presented a direct connection between her writing *Mazu's Bodyguards* and psychoanalysis in her answer:

> Homelessness (or home) is one of my life lessons. Five years ago, I invited my parents to stay with me for a while in Germany, but it was really hard for me to get along with them during that period. I took an attitude of censure toward them, making them feel embarrassed. Later I fell into deep depression, so I decided to re-register for psychoanalytic treatment. One day, the psychoanalyst put two chairs in front of me, asking me to talk to my parents. Initially, it was somewhat difficult; however, when I started talking

> to the chairs, the characters in my novel began their opening remarks.
>
> ("Before Becoming a Husband, He Was a Wife" 326-27)

As it is known, psychoanalytic therapy is intended to help the clients bring out elements on the unconscious level to the conscious level of their minds. According to Gerald Corey, a counseling practitioner, the aim of psychoanalytic therapy is to have "a deeper probing into the past to develop the level of self-understanding that is assumed to be necessary for a change in character" (65). Thus, one's experiences in his or her early life play a vital part in psychoanalysis; through psychoanalytic therapy, the clients' understandings about their past experiences are therefore "reconstructed, discussed, interpreted, and analyzed" (Corey 65). Since trauma in psychoanalysis is essentially what has been unconsciously repressed in one's mind due to his/her shattering experience in the past, the psychoanalytic therapy Chen had gone through made her "conscious of" her own traumas, which certainly contributed to her act of writing traumas afterward.

As it can be observed in many pieces of Chen's life-writing, Chen's personal traumas are much related to her being born and raised in a dysfunctional family. Here, it is noteworthy that according to Chen, she first had the idea of writing her family's story when she was a college student, yet it was not until twenty years later did she really start writing it ("Before Becoming a Husband, He Was a Wife" 327). Under such circumstances, having psychoanalytic therapy is indeed the key to Chen's "re-cognition" of her lived experiences, which also paves the way for her writing *Mazu's Bodyguards*.

In my study of how Chen has transferred her traumatic memories into *Mazu's Bodyguards*, Chen's family experiences in her early life would be one key aspect for my examination. In his interview with Chen, Michael Cornelius has pointed out that the subject in most of Chen's prose essays is *heimatlos* (homeless). Using music to

describe Chen's writing, Cornelius has suggested that loneliness is the theme of Chen's writing, and further likened Chen's essays and short stories to nocturnes, and her *Mazu's Bodyguards* a symphony ("Before Becoming a Husband, He Was a Wife" 330).

Cornelius' point is highly appropriate when we refer to some of Chen's prose essays. For example, in "My Spirit Feels Huge Hunger" ("Wo de ling hun gan dao ju da de e"), an essay written in 1993, Chen builds her narrative upon her experience of seeking medical advices from a physician to bring out the subject of this essay— a lack of love experienced by the author during her childhood which has led to her "spiritual hunger" later in her life:

> I recalled returning to the home on the outskirts of Taipei when I was over six years old, I remembered the single-story house away from markets. Father was always not at home, there was a long distance between my room and Mother's; every night I was so afraid of the evil spirits…I always woke up secretly, went to the door of Mother's room, Mother might be listening to the music, or she might be sleeping, I did not dare to wake her up, and went back to my room. Now, I have realized that my room had been really far away from Mother's, I had been really far away from her as well…. (*Selections from Chen Yu-huei* [*Chen yu-huei jing xuan ji*] 129)[22]

Markedly, as Chen uses rooms to indicate the spaces that separate her and her mother both physically and psychologically in the above passage, she employs the same literary image in *Mazu's Bodyguards*. However, as in *Mazu's Bodyguards* the narrator's storytelling is simultaneously a journey for her to explore the traumatic history of her family, the rooms in the novel that initially serve as the symbolic

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[22] Punctuation marks in the translated passage here are directly copied from the original Chinese version. In many of her works, Chen uses continuous commas but no period until the end of each paragraph.

barriers between each family member later become spaces in which the family members (re)connect with each other.

There are four separate chapters in *Mazu's Bodyguards* that have rooms as the narrative backgrounds. As the narrator "I" comes back to Taiwan and (re)visits each one of the elders' rooms with her German boy friend, those rooms thus become not only the significant "opening-up spaces" in which understanding and even reconciliation among the family members are possible, but also where the hidden details of the family's story are unveiled to the readers. It is told by the narrator "I" that when she was a child, she considered Grandma Ayako's room "the room of a foreigner" (66), and her mother's room was a space that she did not dare to approach; yet both women's earlier lives are unfolded and understood as the narrator "I" combs through the intricate story of her family in the novel. On her return to the old house, the narrator "I" also finds that the room which used to be hers has been changed into "Granduncle's room" and that all objects related to Granduncle have been stored in the room. Seeing all those objects, she is thereby exposed to the secret of the family. Among these four rooms, the only one room that does not fall into the category of "the room of memories" (65) is the one in the nursing home where the narrator's father stays. Yet as the narrator visits her father who suffers from Parkinson's disease there, this "Father's room" in the nursing home becomes where the narrator feels the unrevealed love from her father for the first time, thus the room can also be regarded as a space that brings reconciliation between the narrator and her father.

From many of Chen's works dealing with her childhood experiences, we can readily observe that Chen's childhood traumas have resulted largely from the detached parent-child relationship in the dysfunctional family. Chen's narrative about her family experiences in her "Travel Journal 1998" ("1998 lu xing shou zha") can provide illustrative examples here. In the essay, Chen states in a rather plain way that

"I have never chatted with my father….He said that he had no home. His statement [concerning home] was exactly the same as mine. My mother used to reproach me for no reason, saying: You have no attachment to our family..." (*Selections from Chen Yu-huei* 152). Later, Chen writes, "[M]y parents were not like parents, not like others' parents, or, they were not parents, they were just two people who needed love but did not know how to get it and did not know how to interact with people…" (153). By paralleling the above quotes from Chen's life-writing with *Mazu's Bodyguards*, one can find a rather strong autobiographical trait in Chen's portrayal of the relationship between the narrator and her parents in *Mazu's Bodyguards*.

As a daughter who "has been seeking for a father and a mother" ("Before Becoming a Husband, He Was a Wife" 332), Chen represents the anguish over homelessness and rootlessness by drawing an analogy between her life and Taiwan's national fate in *Mazu's Bodyguards*. In fact, this analogy has been appeared in Chen's other works as well. For example, in "In a Nameless Country" ("Zai wu ming de cheng shi"), an essay published two years earlier than *Mazu's Bodyguards* was, Chen expresses her sorrow for the personified Taiwan (and also for herself):

> You had no father and no mother, even no name. All the things in your basket were things that nobody needed. You pushed the cart along the streets to promote the things in your basket; you walked to the other side of the street, waiting for the green light. I was also waiting for the green light. You tried to find a way out… I just stood by your side, but the green light never came on." (*Selections from Chen Yu-huei* 258)[23]

Whereas in "In a Nameless Country" Chen does not make Taiwan, namely "you" in the text, gender-specific, she intentionally writes her Taiwanese familial-national

[23] The essay was first entitled as "A Letter to Taiwan" ("Gei Taiwan de yi feng xin") when it was first published in *The Blue Light in Bavaria* (*Bafaliya de lan guang*) (Taipei: Er-Yu, 2002) 304-19.

narrative *Mazu's Bodyguards* based on women's historical experiences. In addition to the fact that the tumultuous history of twentieth-century Taiwan is presented through the shattered lives of female characters in the novel, the opacity of Taiwan's national identity is mirrored by the narrative of the first-person narrator, a daughter who has been uncertain about her own identity and thereby been searching for a sense of belonging.

In "Sometimes I Feel Like I Have Killed My Father" ("You shi wo jue de wo yi ba fu chin sha si le"), one of the most notable chapters in *Mazu's Bodyguards*,[24] the narrator "I" recalls how her father has been desperate for a son but has only daughters. The father in her narrative is a violent man and a traitor who brings miseries to the whole family. Yet, ironically, the narrator is told by her mother, "A Chinese father should not reveal his feelings to his children; a father has his own dignity….A father should act like a father" (191). What the narrator asks then—"He is living in Taiwan, isn't he? Why call him a Chinese father?" (191)—certainly has complex implications. First, the narrator's questions reflect Chen's attempt to bring awareness to the controversial Taiwanese identity issues in her novel. Second, Chen's feelings of homelessness and abandonment apparently have come largely from her identity as a daughter in a patriarchal family, for births of daughters are essentially not looked forward to by the elders and thus are marginalized in the family. In this way, Chen's making *Mazu's Bodyguards* a feminine text somewhat draws a parallel case for the marginalized status of Taiwan. Furthermore, by having the narrator question her mother's statement, Chen challenges the conventional patriarchal values in which the authority of father is indisputable. While discussing the subject of patricide in *Mazu's Bodyguards*, Chen states that having an authoritative father herself, she also considers

[24] It is the only chapter of *Mazu's Bodyguards* that is selected to be put in *Selections from Chen Yu-huei*.

it intolerable that the Chinese government frequently reproaches Taiwan in the way of an authoritative father; these stimulate her to rebel ("Before Becoming a Husband, He Was a Wife" 331). By drawing an analogy between the image of her father and that of the Chinese government, Chen then claims that "I thought, without killing these father images [in my mind], I could not grow to be a whole person" (331).[25]

Writing the family saga as a descendant of the family, Chen deploys a panoptic perspective in her story-telling. By doing so, Chen skillfully unveils how the characters' traumatic experiences are intertwined as the narrative goes on. Here, it is noteworthy that although all family members do carry wounds from their past life experiences, each of them remains silent on his/her own traumas in the story. Correspondingly, Chen has stated that when she was writing *Mazu's Bodyguards*, she oftentimes had to search for writing materials on her own since people in her family were not outspoken about the past and regarded telling too many details about the family as a taboo ("Before Becoming a Husband, He Was a Wife" 328). Those traumatized elders without voices in the family, therefore, possess personal/family trauma histories that are inaccessible to others; or, in Caruth's words, each of the traumatized in the family "carry an impossible history within [him or her]" ("Trauma and Experience: Introduction" 5).

Nevertheless, since essentially traumas never disappear but will remain repressed and unceasingly repeat themselves, one significant phenomenon we can note in the novel is that the traumas of those voiceless victims continue to have effects on the subsequent generations in their family. As psychologist Maria P. P. Root points out in "Reconstructing the Impact of Trauma on Personality," one type of "insidious trauma is the transmission of unresolved trauma and attendant defensive behaviours and/or

[25] Chen then tells Cornelius, "But you know my father is still alive" ("Before Becoming a Husband, He Was a Wife" 331).

helplessness that is transmitted transgenerationally as the result of an ancestor's direct trauma…" (241). Similarly, Gabriele Schwab in the introduction to *Haunting Legacie* draws on Nicolas Abraham's, Maria Torok's and Jacques Derrida's theories to elaborate the concept of transgenerational trauma, proposing that "[t]raumatic silences and gaps in language are, if not mutilations and distortions of the signifying process, ambivalent attempts to conceal" and may "express trauma otherwise shrouded in secrecy or relegated to the unconscious"(4); further, "[i]t is through the unconscious transmission of disavowed familial dynamics that one generation affects another generation's unconscious" (4). In *Mazu's Bodyguards*, readers can readily observe this type of "insidious trauma" that both Root and Schwab are concerned about in the above quotes; in fact, one can even consider that it is one of the main focuses in Chen's writing traumas.

An important trait embedded in Chen's portrayal of the trans-generational effects of traumas in *Mazu's Bodyguards* is that the daughters in the family are the only ones who have to bear the negative impacts of traumas of their previous generation. To illustrate this observation, I shall begin with the relationship between Grandma Ayako and her first daughter Natsuki. As a widow whose husband has gone missing in the 228 Incident, she remains silent on the absence of her husband, "as if something extremely horrible will happen immediately when she mentions his name" (*Mazu's Bodyguards* 154). Natsuki then becomes the only child victim in the family who suffers not only from the loss of her father in the political catastrophe but also from being neglected by her mother; she then looks forward to finding a man who can "take her away from her mother and her sorrowful life" (*Mazu's Bodyguards* 155). Yet, when the eighteenth-year-old Natsuki falls in love with Er-ma, a refugee from China,

their relationship is forbidden by Ayako due to Er-ma's identity as a "a san na."[26] Markedly, Natsuki, who later becomes Er-ma's wife and a mother of five daughters, parents her daughters with nearly the same indifferent attitudes that Ayako showed in treating her. Moreover, Natsuki eventually goes through the similar experience as Ayako has had, that is, becoming an afflicted wife whose husband encounters misfortune due to political reasons. Being a woman who undergoes continuous betrayals and troubles brought by her husband, Natsuki has no thoughts of taking care of her children, as the narrator recalls years later in the chapter "In Mother's Room": "I think there had been no one who ever comforted her, she had such an yearning heart that she had to resolutely resisted [others], I know that she needed to treat me heartlessly, if she had unwittingly revealed her longing for love, she would have become more apprehensive, more sentimental…"(140).

Reading the above excerpt from the novel, one can argue that as a victim suffering from trans-generational effects of traumas in the family, the grown-up narrator begins to gain understanding of the traumatized members in her family by combing through the family story entangled with national upheavals over several decades, and thereby finds her way to forgiveness. Correspondingly, having the narrator as a projection of herself in the novel, Chen's dealing with her agony over her traumatic memories with her family in *Mazu's Bodyguards* paves the way for her reconciliation with her family, as it is clearly presented in her claim:

> [W]riting *Mazu's Bodyguards* is like receiving psychotherapy to a certain degree…. I have also seen the latent influences of family secrets on a person. In the past, there were many problems between my parents and me. I thought, they not only did not understand their children but also did not love

[26] "A san na" ("the guy from mountains") was a contemptuous way of calling Chinese soldiers who came to Taiwan with Kuomintang. How Natsuki's neighbor describes Er-ma— "an uncultured gangster" (157)—can somehow be used to explain the latent meaning of "a san na."

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> their children. Through writing, I started to realize that since my parents had been busy making a living and dealing with the psychological conflicts and ambivalence within themselves then, how could they find time to love their children?...And the most miraculous thing is that after I finished *Mazu's Bodyguards*, I finally knew that people's feelings and the acts can be inheritable, even destinies can be inheritable. And I completely understood that perhaps both my parents have never really loved me, but who had ever loved them anyway? This understanding has made me fully accept them, and also has made me have fewer doubts about life, and become more tolerant. ("Before Becoming a Husband, He Was a Wife" 324)

III. Different Positions of *Enunciation*

In the above discussion, I have tried to highlight the autobiographical elements in *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards*, in order to explore how Nieh and Chen have transferred their traumatic memories into their fictional writings. While in both two semi-autobiographical novels the portrayals of individual and family traumas are interwoven with the delineation of tumultuous national history, those traumas represented by Nieh and Chen in their works may resonate with different ethnic groups' traumatic experiences in Taiwan. I personally agree with Kali Tal on her remark that "[e]ach author [of literatures of trauma]…affirms the process of storytelling as a personally reconstructive act, and expresses the hope that it will also be a socially reconstructive act…" (121). Hence, in the last section of this chapter, I aim to compare the positions from which Nieh and Chen tell their stories concerning collective traumas in Taiwan, and further explore what effects the two novels may bring to the traumatized as well as the non-traumatized in Taiwan.

I would like to borrow the concept of "positions of *enunciation*" from Stuart Hall

to present my comparison of the positions from which Nieh and Chen represent the national/collective traumas. In his essay "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," Hall reflects upon the representation of cultural identity in cinematic works and contends that identity, rather than "an already accomplished historical fact," is a on-going "'production'" that is always formed within representation (392). "The practices of representation," Hall suggests, "always implicate the positions from which [the creators of certain works] speak or write—the positions of *enunciation*" (392; emphasis in the original).

Indeed, Nieh and Chen demonstrate to us distinct "positions of *enunciation*" while intending to mirror collective sufferings of Taiwanese in the twentieth century in their semi-autobiographical novels. Significantly, the positions from which Nieh and Chen narrate the trauma stories not only reflect the two authors' individual perspectives rooted in their own ethnic backgrounds but also reveal the collective traumatic memories held by the ethnic groups they belong to. As Nieh's *Mulberry and Peach* displays the exile journey of a refugee woman from China, it epitomizes the exile experience shared by thousands of Chinese refugees who had no choice but to flee to Taiwan in the era of unrest: although successfully escaping from the political and social tumults in their hometown, they inevitably had to live in an atmosphere of political oppression in the foreign land. By contrast, Chen's *Mazu's Bodyguards* portrays the story of a native Taiwanese family—although composed of a mixture of ethnicities—whose traumatic experiences are intertwined with the national upheavals in twentieth-century Taiwan; the most notable examples may be the conflicts between the civilians and the governments during both the periods of Japan's colonization and the Kuomintang's one-party dictatorship.[27]

[27] Since its publication, *Mazu's Bodyguards* has been widely recognized as a national allegory written by a "Taiwanese daughter." In my thesis, I also emphasize this major characteristic of the novel. However, it should not be neglected that the refugee experience of the narrator's father Er-ma, a

Nevertheless, both Nieh and Chen have expressed that although they have embedded the private traumatic stories into the public traumatic events, they do not aim to focus on portraying the sufferings of any particular group of people, but would like to represent the conditions of all those who are being oppressed so that their readers can reflect upon the trauma issues in Taiwanese history.[28] What is so significant about this concern shared by Nieh and Chen is that instead of reinforcing the dichotomy which many people tend to employ when dealing with Taiwanese history and literature,[29] both authors stress that while trauma issues have been ubiquitous throughout history, oftentimes they are perceived partially or even distorted by people due to ethnic stereotypes and political ideologies.

What have motivated the two authors to bring the above reflection among their readers may be attributed to the intricacy of their family histories and lived experience, which has made them aware of the ambivalence of identification. In Nieh's preface to her memoir *Three Lives*, she has written that throughout her life, her identity has been changing but never been apart from the word "wai" (namely "out" in English) (12). In addition, when being asked about her political leanings, Nieh has claimed that she supports neither the left nor the right due to her father's being killed by the Communists and her being oppressed by Chiang Kai-shek's government; ironically, it

mainlander, occupies a considerable portion of the novel; Er-ma is also the victim of Kuomintang's oppression.

[28] Nieh has even claimed that by writing *Mulberry and Peach*, she wanted to depict the predicament that every human being on the earth may experience; see the interview "Tao yu kun" ("Fleeing and Being Trapped") conducted by Yu-huei Liao. As for Chen's case, see Note 15.

[29] Kuo-wei Chen borrows the political and cultural critic Yang Zhao's observation to remark that after the lifting of martial law, the public in Taiwan has been separated into "we" and "they," that is to say, the so-called Taiwanese is considered as the group of people who identify with Taiwan while the "waishengren" (the mainlander) is regarded as the opposite (*Xiang xiang Taiwan: Dang dai xiao shuo zhong de tsu chun shu xie* [*Imagining Taiwan: Writing Ethnicity in Contemporary Fiction*] 9-10; emphasis in the original). Besides the opposition quoted from Chen, there exist other common binary oppositions that are parallel to the local Taiwanese (the "real" Taiwanese) /the mainlander, such as the oppressed/ the oppressor, the victim/the privileged, etc. Similarly, in the realm of Taiwanese literature, there has sprung literary sectionalism through which some critics judge whether a literary work is "Taiwanese" or not. Under the circumstance, the factors that those critics may consider while determining the "Taiwaneseness" of a work include the author's ethnic identity, the subject of the work, the language that the author employs, and so on.

was because her fathers' death under the communist regime that the Kuomintang government did not arrest her while Lei Chen and three others were arrested in "The *Free China Fortnightly* Incident."[30] As for Chen, she has stated in the interview conducted by Cornelius, "Coming from an ethnically mixed family, I have been taking a rather ambiguous attitude toward the issue of identity, later I have found that I have always been a bystander, but not a silent bystander.... I think I have been making the inquiry 'Who am I?' throughout my whole life…" ("Before Becoming a Husband, He Was a Wife" 334).

Despite the fact that both *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards* do not go far beyond their autobiographical contexts—that is, *Mulberry and Peach* centers on a mainlander woman's life story and *Mazu's Bodyguards* delineates mainly the traumatic experiences of native Taiwanese and mainlanders while omitting those of other ethnic groups—the two novels, I think, still contribute to what Tal calls as the "socially reconstructive act[s]" (121) of trauma literature writers. The voice of an individual's wound, as Caruth asserts, is not only about his or her own past, but also about "the way in which one's own trauma is tied up with the trauma of another… through the very possibility and surprise of listening to another's wound" (*Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* 8). Here in this comparative study of *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards*, I consider that the two novels, as written by authors having different "positions of *enunciation*," can illustrate Caruth's idea about how one's trauma relates to another's within the context of Taiwanese society. More precisely, since the two novels display collective traumatic memories belonging to different ethnic groups in Taiwan, they enable readers from different backgrounds on this island to gain understanding of how each ethnic group's

[30] See "Hualing Nieh Engle Talks about Her 'Three Lives' and the Founding of the UI International Writing Program" by Jennifer Feeley; http://fulltilt.ncu.edu.tw/Content.asp?I_No=45).

traumatic experiences have been interwoven into Taiwan's traumatic history and thereby treat Taiwanese history with a more impartial angle, which, can be considered as a starting point for reconciliation and justice.

In this chapter, I have discussed Nieh's and Chen's acts of writing traumas in their semi-autobiographical novels, and further explore the different "positions of *enunciation*" they possess when representing national/collective traumas in Taiwan. Here, it is worth mentioning that Nieh and Chen, while living outside their homelands, both have claimed that their roots are their mother tongue and their acts of writing about their native lands are greatly connected with their experiences of living abroad.[31] To read the two authors' statements within the domain of trauma studies, one can refer to the kernel of trauma theory—the belatedness and repressiveness of trauma. As Caruth points out, "the attempt to understand trauma brings one repeatedly to this peculiar paradox: that in trauma the greatest confrontation with reality may also occur as an absolute numbing to it, that immediacy, paradoxically enough, may take the form of belatedness" ("Trauma and Experience: Introduction" 6). Being "numbing" to the traumatic events, the victims were thereby unable to verbalize their traumas at the immediate moments when the events occur. For both Nieh and Chen, it was by staying away from the very "traumatic space" for a certain period of time could they write their semi-autobiographical novels representing traumas.

While I have interpreted Nieh's making of the traumatized female protagonist as

[31] In her essay "At Home and Elsewhere," Feng has translated a quote from Nieh's "*Sangqing yu Taohong* liu fang xiao ji" ("Note on the Exile of *Mulberry and Peach*"; *Sangqing yu Taohong* 271): "When I moved to Iowa from Taiwan in 1964, for some years I could not write a single word. Because of this uncertainty about my roots, my creative pen had been suspended between Chinese and English. During those years, I read; I lived; I experienced; I meditated; I explored. Finally I discovered only by writing in Chinese about the lives and affairs of the Chinese could I feel at home and set free. Then and there I knew that my mother tongue is my roots. China is my native. Iowa is my home" (qtd. in Feng 129-30). Similarly, in her interview with Cornelius, Chen has stated that "I think that it is by staying a certain distance away from one thing that I can see it clearly…my root is my mother-tongue culture, but not a place…" ("Before Becoming a Husband, He Was a Wife" 324).

a schizophrenic in *Mulberry and Peach* with Caruth's idea of the "impossible history" carried by the traumatized, the concept can also be applied to examine Nieh's and Chen's composition of their trauma narratives here. According to the two definitions of the word "impossible" cited before, the "impossible history" not only can mean the history that is unable to exist (as it should be referred to in Caruth's original statement), but also can describe the fact that the traumatic past which is "very difficult to deal with" may recur to the traumatized subject. It is when Nieh and Chen, as traumatized subjects themselves, reveal their difficult pasts can they make the telling of their histories no longer impossible.

Significantly, in both *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards*, confined spaces are among the important settings where the two authors' "impossible histor[ies]" are unveiled. While studying the liminal spaces in *Mulberry and Peach*, Feng quotes from Mihai Spariosu to explain the idea of liminality in anthropology and literary studies. As an anthropological term, the liminal means a transitional period of a rite of passage during which the existing community norms are "inverted or dissolved" ("At Home and Elsewhere" 139). When the concept of liminality is applied to literary studies, Spariosu regards "literary discourse as a mediating, neutral space where new discursive games of power are being ceaselessly (re)created and old ones, constantly tempered" (qtd. in Feng 139). The liminal spaces in the novel that Feng has discussed include the stranded boat in Part I, the besieged city in Part II, and the attic in Part III. As a conclusion, Feng argues that "liminality is the most prominent *modus operandi* of [*Mulberry and Peach*'s] spatial representations because it corresponds to the psychological mappings of the protagonists and the author" (144; italics in original). Likewise, as mentioned previously, in *Mazu's Bodyguards* Chen purposely makes the rooms of different family members as the spaces in which the characters were entrapped mentally and emotionally at first; however, later the rooms

become the settings where the traumatic pasts become known to the narrator in the text as well as us as readers.

For both Nieh and Chen, adopting the semi-autobiographical novelistic mode to represent their traumas is essential. As suggested by Schwab, who in *Haunting Legacies* studies several works about transgenerational trauma of Holocaust survivors written in different narrative modes, "Memoirs often bear the traces, gaps, and lacunae of trauma like raw scars; fiction, poetry and film can create a more protected space to explore the effects of violence from within multiple voices embedded in imagined daily lives" (5). To extend Schwab's point, we can state that for victims who attempt to verbalize their psychological wounds, writing in the fictional mode may provide them with the "more protected space" to deal with their own struggles.

In addition to serving as a more psychologically secure way for the traumatized to voice their wounds, the fictional mode of trauma narrative, as some literary critics maintain, may also be more suitable for representing traumas. This idea is elaborated in Anne Whitehead's *Trauma Fiction*. According to what Whitehead has quoted from Nicola King, Jean-François Lyotard and Cathy Caruth, in trauma narratives a too definite position of recounting the traumatic experiences should be avoided, for it may undermine the very essence of trauma—possessing force so overwhelming that people cannot fully understand.[32] Based on what the above three critics have cautioned, Whitehead argues that compared with literary realism, the fictional mode of narrative may be more apt "to articulate the resistance and impact of trauma" (87).[33]

Since both Nieh and Chen have indicated the connection between their acts of

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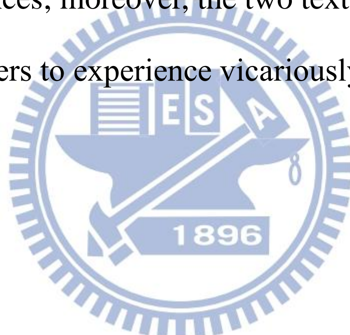
[32] In fact, as I have mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, Dominick LaCapra and Kali Tal also express this concern about the representation of trauma in literary works. See page 4-5 in Chapter One.

[33] When examining several contemporary novels categorized as postmodernist and postcolonial fiction, Whitehead further claims that "the more experimental forms emerging out of postmodernist and postcolonial fiction offer the contemporary novelist a promising vehicle for communicating the unreality of trauma, while still remaining faithful to the facts of history" (87).

writing traumas and their attempts to find a way out of sufferings,[34] *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards* certainly demonstrate to us not only the authors' artistic accomplishments, but also the routes through which they attempt to attain relief from their afflictions. In addition, by inserting public history in their storytelling, Nieh's and Chen's narratives reverberate with collective traumas shared by different groups of Taiwanese people. As Tal notes, "[w]hen trauma is written as text, it transcends the bound of the personal. It becomes metaphor; yet, when such texts are read, they are once again personalized, assimilated somehow by the reader" (132). Based on my discussion in this chapter, *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards* can be regarded as literature of traumas that assist their authors seeking relief from their past shattering experiences; moreover, the two texts go beyond the realm of self-healing, prompting readers to experience vicariously about others' wounds.



[34] When being asked how she survived during the two years of isolation after "The *Free China Fortnightly* Incident," Nieh answered: "From writing and translation" ("Hualing Nieh Engle Talks about Her 'Three Lives' and the Founding of the UI International Writing Program" by Jennifer Feeley; http://fulltilt.ncu.edu.tw/Content.asp?I_No=45). Chen has straightforwardly stated that "Writing can help me be withdrew from psychological and spiritual tumults…" ("Before Becoming a Husband, He Was a Wife" 322).

Chapter Three

The Subversive Voices from the Margins:

Fictional Representations of Traumatized Women in

Mulberry and Peach and *Mazu's Bodyguards*

In the previous chapter, I have examined how Nieh and Chen perform acts of writing traumas in *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards* respectively. As mentioned, I consider that by writing their semi-autobiographical novels from the female perspective to represent traumas in both personal and public domains, Nieh and Chen not only create their own "alternative stories" which may help them be relieved of their painful memories but also offer "alternative stories" to counter the male-dominated national discourses in Taiwanese literature. In this chapter, I aim to study the writing strategies Nieh and Chen employ in telling their "alternative stories," and also explore what may be indicated by the ways Nieh and Chen construct the texts.

As suggested by the title of this chapter, I consider that the two novels can be read as "the subversive voices from the margins." This idea is derived from "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness," in which the feminist theorist bell hooks regards the margin as a strategic space of resistance. According to hooks, the margin is far from being merely "a site of deprivation" (149) but actually provides "radical openness and possibility" for the marginalized individuals (153); to be more specific, the margin enables one to gain perspectives and identity to produce "a counter-hegemonic discourse" (149). What is noteworthy is that hooks does not suggest that the marginalized should waive their rights or stop striving to move to the center; instead, it is particularly in the margin that one can witness and experience the marginalization, create counter-perspectives and then make the voice of the

marginalized be heard by others.

One related concept worth mentioning here is the "double-voiced discourse" proposed by Elaine Showalter. In "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness," Showalter asserts that women's writing constitutes "a double-voiced discourse that always embodies the social, literary and cultural heritages of both the muted and the dominant" (263). Indeed, to construct such "double-voiced discourse," the writer should first identify the position of those muted, namely the margin. In other words, it is through recognizing how the muted develop their identities and perspectives as the minority in contrast with the dominant can a writer include elements of both the marginal and the center. In this way, Showalter's idea correlates with hooks'.

Undoubtedly, in *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards* most of the female characters are marginalized—being inferior, deprived of rights and free will and even oppressed—while living in patriarchal societies. As I have presented by juxtaposing the two novels with Nieh's and Chen's accounts of their lived experiences, the two authors' depiction of the marginalization of women in the novels actually reflect what they have witnessed or experienced in real life.

In regard to portrayals of women in modern Taiwanese literary works representing national sufferings, I would like to turn to Sylvia Li-chun Lin's theorization of female victimization in *Representing Atrocity in Taiwan: The 2/28 Incident and White Terror in Fiction and Film*. While discussing fictional representation of national sufferings in modern Taiwanese literature, Lin argues that "when a great majority of those executed or disappeared are men, women become a thematically convenient and narratalogically expedient symbol in the portrayal of injustice" (8). In the chapter entitled "Engendering Victimhood" she examines several short stories and further lists some "quasi-archetypes" of female victims—"self-sacrificing wife, madwoman, prostitute, and grieving mother"

(95)—that tend to be employed by Taiwanese writers to portray national unrest.[35] She then analyzes "The Devil in a Chastity Belt," in which the prominent feminist novelist Li Ang writes about a grieving mother and nonetheless demonstrates the possibility of creating the "subversion of the definition of victimhood" in her storytelling (92). Although the list of the "quasi-archetypes" of victimized women that Lin proposes in her study of Taiwanese literature is surely not a thorough one,[36] it is still applicable to my study of *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards* here. In my reading, *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards*, although ostensibly having their female characters as self-sacrificing wife, madwoman and grieving mother, subvert "the definition of victimhood" as well. Markedly, as Lin compiles the list of the "quasi-archetypes" of female victims in reading three male writers' works, the literary works Lin and I consider to be the examples that demonstrate the power to subvert the so-called definition of victimhood are done by female writers. While this contrast between male and female writers' portrayals of women is certainly not a universal pattern, the observation here somewhat corresponds to hooks' idea that oftentimes female writers, being familiarized with the marginalization of women in patriarchy in reality, are able to develop and voice the counter-perspectives against the dominant discourses.

In the following, I am going to study how Nieh and Chen demonstrate the "double-voiced discourse" by making their female characters articulate repressed voices from the margins and simultaneously delineate traditional Chinese/Taiwanese patriarchy. Moreover, as most of the women in *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards* fall within Lin's "quasi-archetypes" of female victims, I will analyze how

[35] The short stories Lin examines in this chapter include Chen Yingzhen's "The Mountain Road," Lin Shuangbu's "A Minor Biography of Huang Su" and Yang Zhao's "Flower in the Smoke."

[36] My reason is that Lin only presents in this chapter three stories as examples to illustrate her ideas about the "quasi-archetypes" of female victims. Yet, for Lin, the list is not an exhaustive one for she thinks that "literary works generally exclude female activists and Communists" (96).

"the definition of victimhood" of those seemingly inferior women is challenged in Nieh's and Chen's narratives.

I. *Mulberry and Peach*: The Woman in the Attic Unbound

I would like to begin my examination of *Mulberry and Peach* by discussing Mulberry's being entrapped in the attic with her husband Chia-kang and her daughter Sang-wa in the third part of the novel, "Mulberry's Notebook—an Attic in Taiwan." While drawing on "the concept of the liminal" ("At Home and Elsewhere" 139) to interpret *Mulberry and Peach* as a literary text representing diaspora, Feng describes the attic as "a potent symbol of the human mind and a fitting place for internal turmoil" (142).[37] Feng's explanation of the attic's symbolic meaning provides me with a point of departure to go further into my analysis.

What draw my attention here are the contrasting attitudes and behaviors of Mulberry and her husband toward their immurement. In Mulberry's record of their life in the attic during the summer of 1957 (the beginning of Part III), Chia-kang's passivity can already be observed. When the police appears in Ts'ais' house for census check, "Chia-kang suddenly turns over and sits up. He lies down again and then sits up. / They've come? They've come? Have they finally come? He can't stop mumbling" (124). After the check is over, Mulberry writes:

> Chia-kang lies back down. I am still sitting by the window. He reaches out and tries to pull me over to his *tatami* mat….
>
> He wants to sleep. He wants to forget. It will be all right when the night is over. He mumbles and writhes under the blanket. I pull aside the blanket and lie down beside him. I let him crawl on top of me. With one jerk he wets my thighs like a child squirting urine.

[37] A clearer explanation has been offered on Page 46-47 in Chapter Two.

Finally he falls asleep. (125)

In the passage, Chia-kang is so overwhelmed with fear that he cannot do anything to tackle the crisis but only tries to escape reality. On the contrary, Mulberry is the observer who peeks out of the window in an attempt to know the situation outside the attic. As men are conventionally regarded as those who are endowed with force and are responsible for providing protection, Nieh's portrayal here displays the reversal of the traditional patriarchal concept. What may seem even more ironic is that the family members need to hide themselves in the attic because of Chia-kang's crime of embezzlement, yet he is at a loss and can only lean on his wife when the danger approaches. In addition to being the guardian, Mulberry also needs to comfort Chia-kang in the midst of terror.

As suggested by Serena Fusco, Mulberry in Part III "is simultaneously the guardian *and* the betrayer of a universal moral order" (10; italics in original). As Part III is usually regarded to be the transition of the story in which Mulberry starts to reveal the signs of schizophrenia, there can also be found hints of her swaying between being a traditional loving and caring wife and a "guilty" woman. For instance, in the record of her communication with Chia-kang through writing on her palm, they write (beginning with Chia-kang): "I LET YOU DOWN/ I CHOSE THIS/ YOU'RE NOT A CRIMINAL/ I AM/ WHAT CRIME?/ HARD TO SAY" (117). Then in their later conversation, when Chia-kang writes "I'LL GIVE MYSELF UP," Mulberry keeps her role as the supporter of her husband: "NO/ WHY NOT/ SINCE WE ARE HERE, ACCEPT IT/ IF I GIVE MYSELF UP, WHAT WILL YOU DO/ WAIT/ HOW LONG/ UNTIL YOU GET OUT/ GOOD WOMAN/ BAD/ BAD GOOD WOMAN"(119). Even when being asked by Ts'ai whether she is innocent or not, the "bad good woman" continues to offer an ambiguous answer: "Both, I say. And neither. You should call me an innocent criminal" (144). The vagueness in Mulberry's

response somehow reflects Mulberry's uncertainty about her own identity, or to be more specific, a marginalized woman's doubts about her identity.

Here we may need to ask: what are Mulberry's "crimes" as a woman in a patriarchal society? One of the significant examples can be found in the very beginning of the novel when Mulberry is still a sixteen-year-old girl who runs away from her family, and at the same time, escapes from the patriarchal social structure. As Feng observes, "Mulberry rebels against this patrilineal law of inheritance by first stealing the griffin, then breaking it in an apparent accident, and finally giving half of it to the Refugee Student, with whom she has no blood tie, but with whom she engages in her first sexual intercourse" (137). While Chia-kang shows his irritation with the fact that Mulberry is no longer a virgin in their wedding night, he again reveals it with a more outward emotional expression in Part III: "He blames me for destroying his whole life. I wasn't a virgin, he married a 'broken jar'….Then Chia-kang brings up the subject of Refugee Student in Chu-t'ang Gorge" (141). It is noteworthy that Chia-kang says these words when he is given an enema by Mulberry: "He squats over the spittoon. He wants me to look between his legs at his bottom. Has it come out? Has it come out yet? He is asking over and over. I want to turn around and vomit. He wants me to stick it in again. Stick it in. He shouts at me" (141). Indeed, Mulberry is a rebel against the patriarchal orders by having sexual relationships with men other than her husband; yet her act of giving the enema to Chia-kang obediently even when feeling nauseated somehow reveals that she is still bound by the conventional rules set for wives. Moreover, facing the accusation from her husband in both Part II and Part III, Mulberry does not defend herself, which makes her carry the blame for being an "impure" woman.

However, it is through the sinful, impure deeds that Mulberry finds her ways to survive in the immurement. When Mulberry first expresses her wish to go out of the

attic, Chia-kang tells her that Ts'ai is "a notorious old sex fiend" (138) and he will be put into danger once she goes outside; he would rather choose to let the attic filled with the pungent odor of the urine than allow Mulberry take the spittoon outside. Although Mulberry's definite motive of going outside is not clearly stated in the novel, there are some clues in Part III suggesting that Mulberry wants to leave the attic due to her desire for freedom. For example, while Mulberry's initial intention is to see Aunt Ts'ai who is sick, she tells Uncle Ts'ai "I would like to live a normal life: going out during the day, coming home at night. Coming home to the attic" (144) after Aunt Ts'ai dies. What Mulberry does outside the attic that can most represent a "normal life" is her social engagement with Ts'ai's friends. Notably, she gains her "new life" (147) by taking the roles of Ts'ai's "maid, housekeeper and mistress" (147). The multiple roles Mulberry performs both inside and outside the attic in Part III allow her to escape the imprisonment of her body and identity. As Tina Yih-Ting Chen asserts in "Bodily Negotiations: The Politics of Performance in Hualing Nieh's *Mulberry and Peach*":

> Nieh's text is largely concerned with an identification and critique of the ways in which the female body has been constructed as a signifier of the difference and powerlessness ascribed to women living under the control of national and cultural authorities who refuse to assign legitimacy to their identities. (107)

With the above observation, Chen argues that the female protagonist in *Mulberry and Peach* strategically uses bodily performance and impersonation to "invoke the possibility of creating a self that fights against stagnation and disappearance within the body" (112). In this way, the female protagonist's schizophrenia and sexual acts are regarded by Chen as the maneuvers for a marginalized woman to go beyond the limits and gain power. Based on Chen's idea, I will put emphasis on how

Mulberry/Peach counters the oppressive power through sex and being schizophrenic in the following discussion.

Markedly, sexuality appears in several parts of *Mulberry and Peach* to symbolically suggest the characters' personal power. What Gayle Rubin states in "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of The Politics of Sexuality" can be taken as a reference here to talk about sexual politics:

> The realm of sexuality…has its own internal politics, inequities and modes of oppression. As with other aspects of human behaviour, the concrete institutional forms of sexuality at any given time and place are products of human activity. They are imbued with conflicts of interest and political maneuvering, both deliberate and incidental. In that sense, sex is always political. (267)

In many parts of *Mulberry and Peach*, readers can see how sexuality constitutes one of the key elements ingrained in Chinese sexism. While a man's power and identity may be recognized through his demonstration of virility or sexual urge, a woman is not encouraged, or even allowed, to reveal personal desire related to sexuality. I shall present some examples from the novel to illustrate this point then.

Firstly, the sexist perspective in traditional Chinese society is displayed in Lao-shih's words when she urges Mulberry not to return home but to continue her runaway journey in Part I. After mentioning the violent acts of Mulberry's mother, Lao-shih describes the powerlessness of her father: "[W]hat kind of a man is he, anyway? …He lets her get away with everything while he sits in his study, the old cuckold, mediating….However you look at it, he's not a man" (18), and then she teasingly mentions that Mulberry's father "wounded his 'vital part' during the campaign against the warlords" (18). Following that, Lao-shih talks about the family's simultaneous loss of their daughter and the precious family heirloom, and

concludes by saying "This time your mother might stop and think. Maybe she will change her ways" (20). Here, it is worth mentioning that if directly translated from the original Chinese version, Lao-shih's statement should be put as "She should change her behaviors, making herself a good woman." Certainly, Lao-shih's definitions of "a real man" and "a good woman" reflect a traditional patriarchal understanding of male and female virtues—that a real man should be the head of the family and be able to demonstrate his potency while a good woman should be the one who submits herself to her husband always. While it is rather ironic for Lao-shih, an unconventional girl who likes to rebel against the conventional male-dominated society, to say so, the fact that Lao-shih actually voices the sexist viewpoint in the story somewhat implies how deep-rooted the view is in the traditional Chinese society.

Chia-kang's case can be offered as another example while we discuss the tight connection between virility and masculinity in Nieh's portrayal of the Chinese patriarchy in *Mulberry and Peach*. When he was about to get married to Mulberry, Chia-kang was told by his dying mother, "You played around with the maids and Hsing-hsing because you wanted to be a man. But you couldn't escape your mother's clutches. Now you're a real man…" (88). Nevertheless, the "real man" Chia-kang ends up being an outlaw entrapped in an attic in a foreign land and unable to demonstrate his masculinity any more. When Mulberry begins to experience the "new life" (147) outside the attic during their immurement, it is recorded in her diary: "Chia-kang sleeps twenty hours a day./ He bitches four hours a day./ When he isn't bitching, he masturbates under the covers" (147-48). Reading Chia-kang's behaviors here together with what Mulberry writes previously, that the pungent smell of the urine reminds him of sex so he would rather let the room filled with the smell (138), we can infer that Chia-kang's sexual impotence somewhat epitomizes his pessimism as someone who cannot do anything about his life in Part III.

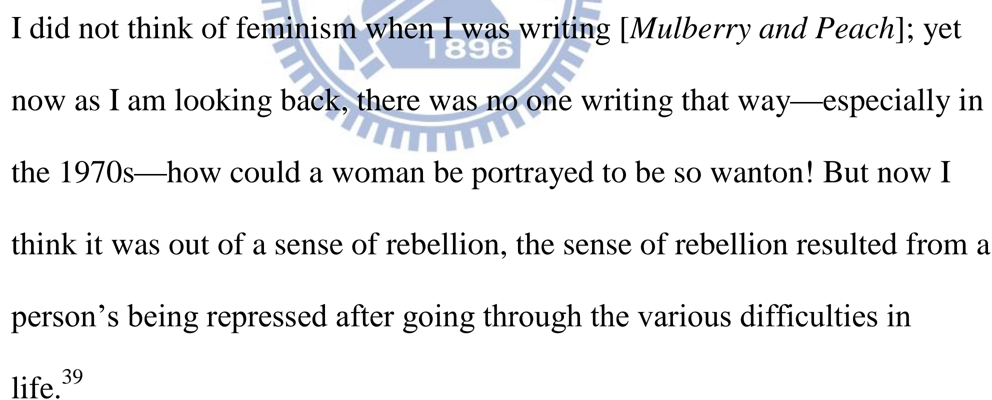
While virility in *Mulberry and Peach* is considered to be one of the most important signs of a "real man" in Chinese patriarchy, being sexually attractive, however, is never an acceptable trait when it comes to women. What Aunt Shen's description of Mulberry—"Your eyes are too watery. You're a girl who dreams wild and ridiculous dreams. You try to seem clean and pure, but in your heart, you're like a snake or a scorpion" (87)—clearly illustrates how a sexualized woman would be labeled from a patriarchal perspective. However, as mentioned, after Aunt Shen, the symbolic figure of "the traditional order in its dying throes" (*Mulberry and Peach* 66) eventually dies,[38] it is the "impure" woman Mulberry who survives in the midst of upheavals when Chia-kang can no longer be the "real man." As in Part III Mulberry attains her freedom through having sex with Ts'ai, she displays even more outward sexuality after her new identity Peach appears in Part IV. As suggested by Chen, the female protagonist (as both Mulberry and Peach) demonstrates "a dangerously double-edged mode of escape" (109) by being overly sexual—it is "a patriarchal understanding of sexuality works to reduce women into nothing more than bodies while the eroticism of female desire provides a way to break free, however briefly, from the boundaries erected by the flesh" (109). Hence, the female protagonist's outrageous sexual expressions and behaviors carry dual meanings while the ultimate aim is to subvert the existing power system.

Being schizophrenic can be considered as the female protagonist's attempt to subvert the dominant as well. Before examining how madness is depicted in the story, I would like to discuss the significance of Nieh's portrayal of a schizophrenic woman in her writing. When it comes to the analysis of the madwoman as a literary image, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's "The Madwoman in the Attic" published in 1979 is widely regarded as a vital reference for the succeeding research of feminist

[38] Quoted from the introduction of characters in Part II.

literary criticism. Investigating several Victorian novels written by female writers, Gilbert and Gubar proposed that it was by "projecting their anger and dis-ease into dreadful figures, [and] creating dark doubles for themselves and their heroines" (79) did the female writers in the nineteenth century counter the male-constructed literary discourse, in order to "legitimize [their] own rebellious endeavors" (50). Although Gilbert and Gubar focused on Victorian literature in "The Madwoman in the Attic," and their study was later challenged by many feminist critics in terms of their approach and Anglo-American perspective, I agree with their observation that for women writers depicting the "witch-monster-madwoman becomes so crucial an avatar of the writer's own self" (79) that such depictions are vital to their response to social marginalization, which fits into my reading of *Mulberry and Peach*.

In Nieh's interview with Liao, she has mentioned her feminist rebellion in the novel:



> I did not think of feminism when I was writing [*Mulberry and Peach*]; yet now as I am looking back, there was no one writing that way—especially in the 1970s—how could a woman be portrayed to be so wanton! But now I think it was out of a sense of rebellion, the sense of rebellion resulted from a person's being repressed after going through the various difficulties in life.[39]

Although in Nieh's statement she mainly mentions the female protagonist's wanton deeds, it should be aware that Mulberry's outrageous erotic behaviors and the signs of her schizophrenia begin to emerge almost simultaneously in Part III and become obvious in Part IV. Nieh's design of the madness, in one way or another, works to justify the amorous woman's acts in the text. Thus I consider that both eroticism and schizophrenia in the text present the sense of rebellion proposed by Nieh.

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[39] See "Tao yu kun" ("Fleeting and Being Trapped").

Furthermore, the rebellion is revealed not only in the author's motive for writing but also in her portrayal of the female protagonist. For Serena Fusco, *Mulberry and Peach* "is, in many ways, orchestrated around the protagonist's transgressions and on a growing impossibility to draw recognizable boundaries according to ethical standards, an impossibility that leads to several acts of self-censoring" (5). Nevertheless, this kind of self-censorship does not exist in the identity of Peach, a point that can be illustrated by the following quote from Peach when she is talking to Mulberry, her alter ego:

> You're dead, Mulberry. I have come to life….You want to keep the child because you want to redeem yourself. I want to keep the child because I want to preserve a new life. You don't want to see Chiang I-po anymore because you are scared of the Immigration Service agent; I ignore him because I despise him. When you're with Teng you feel guilty, when I'm with him I feel happy….I hope you won't come back, then I'll be completely free. (183)

It can be noted from the above passage that the female protagonist is rather conscious of her own two separate identities and their different thoughts. Significantly, Peach differs from Mulberry in that Peach is not that tightly bound by the moral rules as Mulberry is. In addition, the female protagonist's pursuit of freedom is also clearly exhibited in the passage. Hence, the female protagonist performs the rebellious deeds in order to unfetter herself from the dominant patriarchal world and such motive is embodied by her transformation from Mulberry to Peach.

To argue that the female protagonist's schizophrenia can be regarded as her rebellious attempt, I would like to also refer to the prologue of the novel and Peach's letters to the Immigration Service. In the prologue, Peach's words and behaviors in response to the man's query reveal her unrestrained lasciviousness. As for the letters,

Peach's messages are written in such a fragmentary manner that the information may be obscure and senseless to the agent. Hence the agent is not able to properly proceed with his official duty. Here we see that Peach's anomalous behaviors and expressions shown in her interaction with the government officer actually constitute her personal strategies to resist the authority. Significantly, as the authority in the novel is represented by a male officer, Peach's disobedience may also be interpreted as an act to counter the male-dominated power system.

Reading Nieh's portrayal of the female protagonist in *Mulberry and Peach* with Lin's ideas of the "quasi-archetypes" (95), one can observe both the images of self-sacrificing wife and madwoman in it. Initially a wife who demonstrates traditional female virtues, Mulberry suffers imprisonment and is willing to give comfort and support to her husband. Later the self-sacrificing wife becomes unfaithful to her husband in order to struggle for her own freedom. As for her madness, it is considered her maneuver to counter the external oppression as well. What Mulberry says to Ts'ai while being told that she may be a threat to the people outside the attic—"I live all my days threatened like that. They should feel threatened, too" (144)—can pertinently illustrate the female protagonist's attempt to be a wanton and insane woman in order to rebel against the oppressive force.

As I begin this part of discussion with Mulberry and Chia-kang's imprisoned life in the attic in Part III, here in the end I would like to bring it up again and extend the notion of "the attic" by borrowing Mulberry's words to Sang-wa—"The earth is a huge attic. The huge attic is divided into millions of little attics, just like ours" (129). The attic in Part III is indeed representative of all kinds of cruelty in life. As Nieh claims that the main concern in her writing *Mulberry and Peach* is to present the

predicaments that belong to all mankind, not just to certain groups of people,[40] both male and female characters in the novel are imprisoned in their own sufferings. However, it is the woman—who resists the persecution from the margin—eventually becomes liberated in the story, whereas the man ends up dying in the attic or being locked up in jail.

II. *Mazu's Bodyguards*: "Public Men" and "Domestic Women"

The main concern of my following discussion will be how the "domestic women" in *Mazu's Bodyguards*, although being seemingly powerless victims in the social and political upheavals, overcome various trials to keep the family/nation together while the men in the novel are always out of their homes/homelands. As Lisa Bernstein points out in "Mothers and Motherlands," the introduction to *(M)Othering the Nation: Constructing and Resisting National Allegories through the Maternal Body*, "the 'mothers' stories'—experiences of actual women—are often missing within the discourse of national motherlands"(1). This omission can be noted in Taiwanese literature as well.[41] Through writing *Mazu's Bodyguards*, Chen not only articulates the marginalized voices of Taiwanese women but includes these women in the national discourse.

While *Mazu's Bodyguards* is undoubtedly a familial-national narrative constructed from the female perspective, Chen does not make those women in her novel as female activists who voluntarily take part in public affairs. A major feature of Chen's storytelling is the polarization between the "public men" and the "domestic women." However, those women who have no understanding of the public affairs are eventually involved in the political struggles caused by men. What Dong-chin,

40 See "Tao yu kun" ("Fleeting and Being Trapped").

41 I have quoted Chia-ling Mei's observation to elaborate this literary phenomenon on page 13-14 in my introduction chapter.

Er-ma's Chinese wife from an arranged marriage, soliloquizes in the story—"People usually say that women know nothing, but how come now not even women can escape from the fight?" (234) —provides a thematic description of Chen's portrayals of those female characters in *Mazu's Bodyguards*.

Telling from the perspective of the first-person narrator, the family saga is built upon the story of the maternal side of the narrator's family. Markedly, the phenomenon of the absence of men in the story is revealed as early as Grandma Ayako's arrival in Taiwan, prior to which her Japanese fiancé has been murdered in the Wushe Incident. Although Ayako later marries the Taiwanese Lin Cheng-nan and resides in Taiwan, her husband leaves home to pursue his dream of flight and then voluntarily joins the Japanese army. Even Lin's younger brother Chih-nan, who Ayako has an extramarital affair with, has to escape Kuomintang's political oppression and ends up fleeing to Brazil. Each of the three men is away from home due to their participation in public affairs, yet none of them succeeds in the deeds. By contrast, after Lin leaves home, Ayako is the one who takes charge of the family store and keeps everything in order in Lin's extended family while Chih-nan, who becomes the only man in the household, is enthusiastically engaging in political activities. By interweaving the family story with major national incidents, Chen reveals the tumultuous national history of Taiwan in her storytelling. Furthermore, Chen's depiction of men's failures in the public realm mirrors her view that it is not men but women who have been taking the major role in sustaining the family as well as the nation in the history of Taiwan.[42]

Indeed, Ayako and many other female victims in the novel represent the typical domestic women under patriarchy. As Rey Chow points out, "[o]ne of the functions

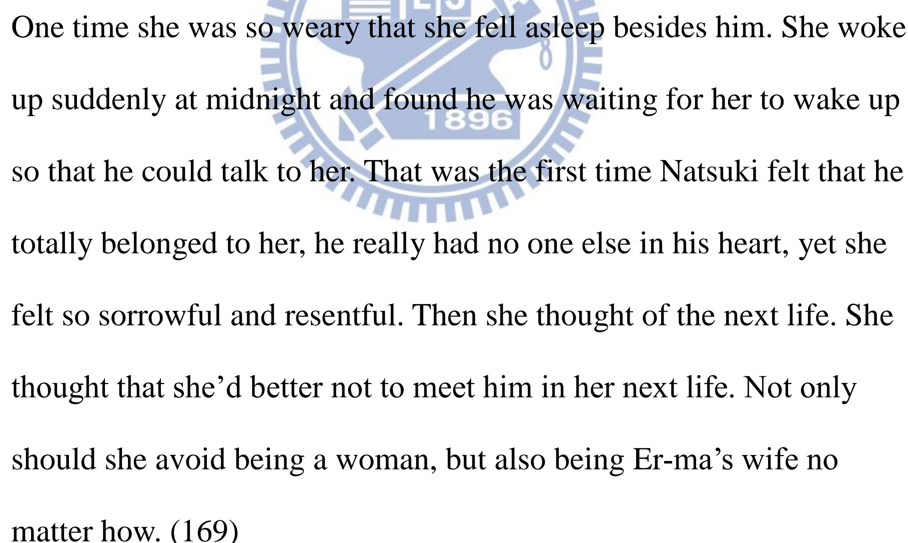
[42] See the interview held in 2004 by Kang-yung Tsai in the program *Jintian bu dushu* [*Today is the Day of No Reading*] on Taiwan Public Television Service; the interview script can be found at http://web.pts.org.tw/~web01/tuesday/t_051.htm.

of the patriarchal organization of society—in particular traditional Chinese society—is the consignments of women to domesticity. Domesticity should therefore be seen as a predominant, if not the only, paradigm under which many Chinese women's thinking operates" (91). Although it is mainly the traditional Chinese society that Chow refers to in the statement, I consider that Chen's portrayals of most of the female characters in *Mazu's Bodyguards* echo with Chow's observation here.

Influenced by her mother-in-law, Ayako, who initially knows nothing about Mazu, begins to worship the patron goddess widely worshipped by people living in the south-eastern coastal areas of China and Taiwan after her husband leaves home: "She worships Mazu for her husband Cheng-nan, and also for the family. She decides to live in the same way as her Taiwanese family, and is willing to be like that" (40). To borrow from Sylvia Lin's term, the character Ayako in the story reflects the image of "self-sacrificing wife" (95). In fact, "self-sacrificing wife" is a recurring image that can be found when we examine the female characters in the novel. Another illustrative example worth noting here is Ayako' s first daughter Natsuki. After eloping with her lover Er-ma, a refugee from China, Natsuki gives birth to five daughters but no son. Having no son thus becomes one of the excuses for Er-ma to have adultery with other women. Although facing Er-ma's repetitive infidelity ever since the beginning of their marriage, Natsuki is portrayed as a woman who wants nothing but her husband's love and return, as the narrator recalls:

> Every time when Father left home for a long while, Mother would feel extremely upset, wearing no smile on her face. Now as I can recall, she must have been suffering from depression during that time…. /…I knew Father had beaten Mother before, by throwing the chair at her or whipping her with the leather belt. But Mother never reacted against his acts….I did not understand why Mother never resisted…. (191-92)

It is when her unfaithful husband is jailed for being charged as a "communist bandit" that Natsuki stops being suicidal, starts working to support the family and tries everything she can to get her husband out of jail. In Chen's portrayal of the relation between Er-ma and Natsuki, the man ceaselessly betrays the family and the woman always acts as the savior of her husband. In this way, Natsuki plays the role as Er-ma's patron saint who redeems him on every occasion through her self-sacrificing behaviors in the story. The last time Natsuki rescues Er-ma from his trouble is when Er-ma finds himself being cheated by his relatives in China and fells seriously ill after he determines to leave his family in Taiwan and returns to China. According to the narrative, it is because "she could see that he was scared" (169) that Natsuki decides to again take care of Er-ma after agonizing over the situation:



> One time she was so weary that she fell asleep besides him. She woke up suddenly at midnight and found he was waiting for her to wake up so that he could talk to her. That was the first time Natsuki felt that he totally belonged to her, he really had no one else in his heart, yet she felt so sorrowful and resentful. Then she thought of the next life. She thought that she'd better not to meet him in her next life. Not only should she avoid being a woman, but also being Er-ma's wife no matter how. (169)

When considering Natsuki's being simultaneous the self-sacrificing wife and the savior in the novel, we can possibly correlate Natsuki with the legendary goddess Mazu. Although there exist diverse versions of the legendary tales, all versions share the major plot. Mazu, or Lin Mo-niang (meaning 'silent woman'), had a vision of her father and brother (or only brothers without the father) drowning one night when she was weaving at home and the men were fishing out

at sea during a storm. Mo-niang tried to rescue them through spiritual power while staying at the loom. As a result, Mo-niang's father (or brother[s]) returned back home alive, yet her brother (or one of her brothers) drowned. It was Mo-niang who, after few days of searching into the sea, found the dead body of her brother in order to bury him at home. Lin Mo-niang has been then worshipped as Mazu posthumously, especially by fishermen who seek guidance and protection. As the legend reveals, the woman without voice in a patriarchal society eventually acts as the rescuer of the men who encounter difficulties. Similarly, Natsuki in *Mazu's Bodyguards*, although fated to be the woman who is devoiced and sacrificial under patriarchy, saves Er-ma in every tribulation.

In the novel, as women play the most significant part in supporting the family, Mazu, the goddess that the Lin family has been worshipping through generations, is considered as the deity who watches over the whole family. Nevertheless, just as women's sufferings and contributions are usually not included in orthodox heroic histories, neither is the goddess Mazu always recognized by the family members in *Mazu's Bodyguards*. The following extract from the novel may exemplify this. Shortly after being released from prison, the then converted Christian Er-ma destroys the home altar which has been put and maintained by Natsuki:

> "Do not worship the idols," he said in a serious tone as if he were a pastor. Mother was so nervous. She then put all the statues and candles in a box and decided to start giving offerings in the temple on the first and the fifteenth of each lunar month. She said, "Your father has such ridiculous thoughts. Ridiculous! He doesn't know that it is all because of the blessing from Mazu that he can get early release from prison." Father did not know, and did not want to know. One day he saw the

> statues accidentally, and threw all of them away in the garbage can. I happened to be there at the moment. I secretly put the statues away, and even took two of them abroad.
>
> The two statues are Thousand-Mile Eye and Wind-Accompanying Ear. (195)

The passage provides important hints concerning Chen's use of female perspective in writing the novel. As it is widely considered, Christianity is a religion that holds patriarchal values at its center. Although in Taiwan Christianity has never been one of the major religions of the locals, it was claimed to be the religion of the then Taiwan's political leader Chiang Kai-shek and his family. In this regard, we can possibly draw an analogy between Er-ma's dominant position in the family with Chiang's autocratic leadership in the country. Similar to Chiang's suppression of dissenting voices during that time, Er-ma's removals of the goddess and her bodyguards, the "idols" in accordance with the monotheism in Christianity, somewhat suggests the marginalization of women and the negation of female voices under patriarchy. By furtively keeping the statues, the narrator enables the family story to be continued; indeed, it is through her recording that the "herstory" of the family can be passed down.

In addition to the "self-sacrificing wife," readers can also observe the image of "grieving mother" (Lin 95) in the novel. The chapters that record a series of events happening to Er-ma's family in China present both types of female figures. Er-ma's family, once the "'feudal landlord'" (178), becomes the target of criticism and destruction in the Communist struggle sessions against class enemies, during which time there remain only women in his house. Here, we see that just as what Natsuki has done for Er-ma in Taiwan, Er-ma's mother Lu Guei-mei and his wife Dong-chin act as the protectors of Er-ma's family in

China. As the novel presents, the fact that Er-ma has run away to Taiwan makes him be labeled as a "reactionary" (230) and causes Lu Guei-mei and Dong-chin great difficulties in the Communist regime. Significantly, the two domestic Chinese women, although being self-sacrificing wife and grieving mother of Er-ma respectively, are not sorrowful women who cry behind the scene but confront the real struggles and guard the root of the family—the only daughter—during the most tumultuous decades in twentieth-century China. Chen's portrayal of the calamities in Er-ma's hometown again highlights one of the major characteristics of Chen's storytelling in *Mazu's Bodyguards*: men's absence from home versus women's efforts to sustain the family. Lu Guei-mei and Dong-chin thus become the only family members who can legitimately testify to the traumatic events that strike the family as well as the nation during the time when the men were all gone. The two women's first-hand experiences of political and social upheavals, in this case, consist the whole of Chen's representation of historical traumas during the tumultuous period in China. Apparently, here Chen purposely makes women become the sole bearers of historical traumas in Er-ma's family in China, and thereby creates another familial and national narrative through the female perspective in the text. It is noteworthy that upon Er-ma's return to China, he is rejected by his own daughter Hsiao-di, the child who his wife was pregnant with when he left China; moreover, in the end the sick man Er-ma has no choice but returns to Taiwan due to the painful experience of being cheated by his relatives during his five-year stay in China. In this regard, we can state that the non-existent husband and father is destined to be excluded from the woman-centered family heritage.

As a female familial-national narrative, *Mazu's Bodyguards* centers on women's traumatic experiences in times of national unrest. While all these

women initially belong to only the private realm of domestic life, they eventually are embroiled in traumatic events in the public realm and thus become victims of historical traumas. In this section, I have discussed several examples of Chen's portrayals of the female victims in the novel. It is rather ironic that these domestic women, while being absent from the public scene and thereby marginalized in the patriarchal societies, eventually are compelled to bear the brunt in the public realm at first hand; furthermore, while the men fail in their deeds and are overwhelmed by their traumatic experiences, the women somehow become the ones who overcome tribulations and maintain the families. It is through displaying the above-mentioned feature in *Mazu's Bodyguards* that Chen strategically enables those marginalized women's experiences to be the foreground in her familial-national narrative. Importantly, Chen demonstrates different narrative models of framing these female victims' traumatic stories. To best illustrate this difference, one may parallel the case of Natsuki and that of Dong-chin. By portraying Natsuki as the indirect victim of the "White Terror" in Taiwan and Dong-chin as the survivor of Communist struggle sessions in China, Chen represents the major national traumatic events in her novel. Although both women are the self-sacrificing wives of Er-ma, they suffer for the husband in different ways: while Natsuki acts as a supportive, though oftentimes resentful, wife behind the scenes who saves Er-ma from every trouble caused by himself, Dong-chin has no choice but to struggle to survive and protect Er-ma's family in the real political scene. Moreover, in both cases, we see that women are not merely victims but are simultaneously the ones who resolve difficulties. Consequently, we may state that Chen's portrayals of these two female bearers of historical traumas reflect what Sylvia Lin proposes: "the definition of victimhood is in fact never transparent" (96).

While women's experiences constitute an integral part of national histories, their voices are conventionally negated in dominant national discourse. By drawing on women's bodily experiences to capture the national traumas in twentieth-century Taiwan (and China) in their works, Nieh and Chen enable these marginalized voices of women to be heard. According to my analysis of the representation of the traumatized women in the two novels, Nieh and Chen do not portray these women as victims who are doomed to be overwhelmed by the traumatic incidents; rather, they make these seemingly inferior women as the ones who eventually find their own ways to deal with (or help the men deal with) the predicaments. In other words, these female victims in each of their cases are not only the ones who *should* bear the burdens of life but also the ones who *dare to* confront the life challenges. Given this characteristic shown in both *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards*, we can state that Nieh and Chen, as witnesses to women's sufferings during national unrest, eschew symbolically re-victimizing those female bearers of historical traumas in their fictional narratives, and thereby avoid "exploit[ing] women in the name of nationalism, even though women often exist on the margin of national discourse" (Lin 75). Rather, Nieh and Chen "empower" these traumatized women in their story-telling as a means of producing what hooks terms as "counter-hegemonic discourse[s]" through the female perspective. In this manner, the two writers' efforts well illustrate what is stated in the introduction chapter of *Between Woman and Nation*: "Women are both of and not of the nation. Between woman and nation is, perhaps, the space or zone where we can deconstruct these monoliths and render them more historically nuanced and accountable to politics. The figure of 'woman' participates in the imaginary of the nation-state beyond

the purview of patriarchies" (12).

Chapter Four

Conclusion

Adopting an interdisciplinary approach in this study has enabled me to delve into not only the two textual representations of trauma in *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards* but also the makings of the narratives (or, in Kali Tal's words, "the specific effects of trauma on the process of narration" [117]). Although sometimes being perplexed by trauma studies' "mythic fantasmagoria," as described by Geoffrey Hartman,[43] this thesis project certainly provides me with an opportunity to experience the multiple facets of trauma studies, including how it has developed at the intersection of different disciplines, and how it has related to other subjects in literary studies.

While in the introductory chapter a literature review of notable trauma theories is presented, its coverage is limited. However, as discussed, most critics have centered on the essence of trauma—its delayed yet recurring appearance that results from the impossibility for it to be grasped at the very moment when the shattering event happen—to further their theorization of trauma in literature. Consequently, many of the critics, including Cathy Caruth, Dominick LaCapra, Kali Tal and Anne Whitehead,[44] argue for the necessity to recreate the traumatic events in order to represent them in literary works.

Hartman, while commenting on trauma and literary studies, contends that the nexus between literature and mental functioning exist in three specific areas: "reference," "subjectivity" and "memory or story." By saying reference, Hartman

[43] In "On Traumatic Knowledge and Literary Studies," Hartman points out a paradox concerning trauma studies: "Any general description or modeling of trauma […] risks being figurative itself, to the point of mythic fantasmagoria" (537).

[44] Anne Whitehead's argument is mentioned in Chapter Two.

means the "*reality*" of the narrative; subjectivity, the "*bodily integrity*" of the traumatized subject; memory or story, the "*identity*" of the narrator (547; emphasis in the original). Hartman's point well illustrates what have been discussed in Chapter Two. In reading *Mulberry and Peach* along with Nieh's personal narratives, I have observed that Nieh, as a Chinese refugee traumatized by wars, forced migration, political persecution and exile, embodies the national traumas in her novel. As for Chen, she portrays in her family saga the turmoil in the twentieth-century Taiwan through the eyes of a descendant of the victims. While in *Mulberry and Peach* the female survivor recounts her first-hand traumatic experiences along the way, Chen's narrative in *Mazu's Bodyguards* presents depictions of transgenerational traumas within the traumatized family. The two authors' acts of externalizing their own traumas in the fictional mode also correspond to the basic principle of narrative therapy: during narrative therapy, the clients are to deconstruct the old problematic stories that have been haunting them, and further construct "alternative stories" (White and Epson 15) to substitute for those previous ones. Hence, Nieh and Chen, while articulating their own traumas in their semi-autobiographical novels, find their ways to alleviate pains from those traumatic experiences.

As Nieh and Chen verbalize individual and collective traumas through the female perspective in their fictional narratives, the two authors in the meanwhile portray the marginalization of women in the Chinese patriarchy. Interestingly, in both *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards* the female protagonists secretly take their family heirlooms while leaving home: Mulberry steals the jade griffin, which for generations has been passed down only to the sons in their family; the narrator in *Mazu's Bodyguards* takes the statues "Thousand-Mile Eye" and "Wind-Accompanying Ear," the two bodyguards of the goddess Mazu and carries them during the years when she is abroad. As in each text the female protagonist' theft

of the family heirlooms is essentially a tabooed act and represents a subversive deed, Nieh's and Chen's acts of writing the novels can be regarded as their resistance to the conventional patrilineal narrative outside the fictional world. This textual feature shared by *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards* prompts me to consult feminist literary theories to perform my textual analysis on the two works. In Chapter Three I propose that Nieh's and Chen's narratives demonstrate what Elaine Showalter terms as "double-voiced discourse[s]" (263), which enable women's repressed voices to be heard. As Nieh and Chen make their female characters demonstrate subversive power from the margins, they reverse the conventional link between men and heroes as well as that between women and victims in mainstream historical narratives. In this way, they also produce the "counter-hegemonic discourse[s]" (149) in bell hooks' words. Based on the above discussion, in *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards* their authors exemplify how trauma literature can tentatively voice positive defiance against the dominant power system.

Since Nieh's and Chen's efforts demonstrate the articulation of repressed/marginalized voices of women that epitomize collective traumas of different ethnic groups in Taiwan, this comparative study of *Mulberry and Peach* and *Mazu's Bodyguards* includes merely the literary representation of the traumatic experiences belonging to two major Taiwanese ethnic groups, namely the native Taiwanese and mainlanders. In considering that literature of trauma contributes to the articulation of injustice, I recognize the necessity of including other negated voices of traumas—especially those of the minority groups' in terms of ethnicity, gender, and more, in my further study of historical traumas in the Taiwanese context. In this way, I hope to make my study reflect one important point about trauma studies submitted by Caruth in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*: since one's trauma is always bound up with another's, it is through listening to another's trauma can the

history of one's own trauma be recognized (8).

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