

# 國立交通大學

外國文學與語言學研究所文學組

## 碩士論文

Looking for Chien-Chi Chang: Traverse the Fantasies  
in I Do I Do I Do, The Chain and Double Happiness

尋找張乾琦：穿越《我願意》、《鍊》、《囍》的幻見

研究生：陳思穎

指導教授：林志明 博士

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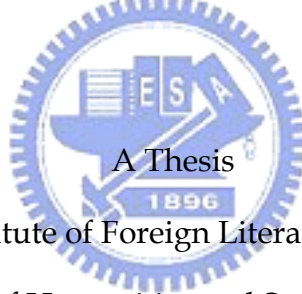
指導教授：林志明 博士

Advisor : Dr. Chi-Ming Lin

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學生：陳思穎

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## 摘 要

本文以斯拉維·紀傑克對幻見的闡釋來閱讀張乾琦三本攝影書《我願意》、《鍊》、《囍》中的攝影作品。不同於一般評論者著重討論展覽中的照片，本文的研究對象是攝影書中的照片，將之視為檔案。攝影書本身所提供的閱讀脈絡主要來自張乾琦個人的立場與關懷，企圖將影像重新脈絡化而賦予影像意義。

過去對張乾琦攝影作品的討論著重於鍊的隱喻，但並未深入探究此隱喻背後的意義，這或許與討論未被脈絡化有關。本文企圖從攝影書提供的脈絡來分析張乾琦的作品，一方面讀出其作品的主题，看他如何藉由此主题來回應所關懷的議題，以攝影影像對社會作症狀式閱讀，穿越社會幻見並挑戰拍攝照片的幻見；另一方面，在讀出此主题時，也企圖貼近張乾琦作品的核心，看他如何耕耘其影像領域，並在此過程中試圖回應其自身的問題。

關鍵字：張乾琦、攝影、幻見、紀傑克、婚紗、龍發堂、越南新娘

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Student : Ssu-Ying Chen

Advisors : Dr. Chi-Ming Lin

Institute of Foreign Literatures and Linguistics  
National Chiao Tung University

ABSTRACT

This thesis studies the photographic works of Chien-Chi Chang in his three photobooks I Do I Do I Do (2001), The Chain (2002) and Double Happiness (2005) with Slavoj Žižek's notion of fantasy. Instead of focusing on the photographs in exhibitions, the main text here is the photographs in the photobooks, which are considered as archive. Formed by Chang's own concerns, the photobooks re-contextualizes the photographs so as to extract the meaning of the images.

The previous commentaries on Chang's photographs emphasized on the chain metaphor but stopped while shedding light on it without careful discussion. This research analyzes Chang's photographs within the context provided by the photographic books. Firstly, it studies the theme of Chang's works to see how he does the symptomatic reading towards the society with the photographic images, in which he traverses the social fantasies and challenges the fantasy of taking photographs, so as to present his concerns. Secondly, it aims at accessing to the core of Chang's works to see how he cultivates his territory of images and reflects on his own questions in the process of photographing.

Keyword: Chien-Chi Chang, Photography, Fantasy, Slavoj Žižek,  
Wedding Pictures, Long Fa Tang Temple, Vietnamese Brides

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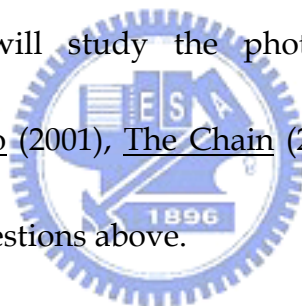
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The titles of the figures are given by Chien-Chi Chang.

## Chapter One: Introduction

### 1.1 Preface

This thesis aims at reading the photographs in the three photobooks of Chien-Chi Chang to see how his works traverse the social fantasy.<sup>1</sup> How shall we read the photographs in the photobooks? In the process of reading the books, can we see how the photographer situates his photographs in certain context so as to present his concern? Is it possible for us to trace the theme and characteristics of his work? Entitling this thesis “Looking for Chien-Chi Chang,”<sup>2</sup> I will study the photographs in Chang’s three photobooks I Do I Do I Do (2001), The Chain (2002) and Double Happiness (2005) to respond to the questions above.



### 1.2 The Photographs in the Photobooks as Archive

This study situates the photographs in Chang’s photobooks on the position of “archive.” Firstly, according to Allan Sekula, the photographic books share “the authority and illusory neutrality of the archive” (“Reading” 119), in which “pictures are atomized, isolated in one way and homogenized

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<sup>1</sup> The Chinese translation of the word “fantasy” follows Lee-Chun Chu’s translation.

<sup>2</sup> I borrowed this title from Al Pacino’s film Looking for Richard. The original play is William Shakespeare’s Richard III. Al Pacino says in the film that the purpose of “looking for Richard” is to communicate the passion for and the understanding of Shakespeare to other people.



in another" ("Reading" 118). To construct a photobook is to reduce the original social-historical context of the images and situate them in the context of this book so that their meaning is extracted. Secondly, according to Martin Parr and Gerry Badger, there is a difference between photographic book and photobook: the photobook is "a statement of intent" that the commonplace photographically illustrated book has achieved without any self-conscious attempt being made (8). Since "the meaning of any photographic message is necessarily context-determined" (Sekula, "On the Invention" 85) and "photographs are texts inscribed in terms of [...] 'photographic discourse'" (Burgin 144), the photographs contained in one photobook are situated in certain context which constructs some specific discourse with the attempt or intention of the photographer. To study the photobooks carefully help to access to the context of images the photographer tries to construct or situate.

When it comes to the process of the production of his books, Chien-Chi Chang says,

While I'm working, I am looking at different aspects of the subject. I'm not so much thinking about narrative, as about trying to crystallize my photographic voice. [...] When I feel I have done

that, I will look at what I've got, and put the pictures together.

Every picture individually and the body of work as a whole has to contribute to this voice. ("Chien-Chi Chang" 83)

The production of Chang's books is a discursive act through which the meaning of the photographs points to the "voice" he articulates and the messages he indeed brings out in the images. Since Chang usually exhibits his photographs in the museums and galleries, he tends to be considered as an artist, who has close connection with art space. But this study tries to approach from a different perspective, which focuses on the photographs in his photobooks. In the museums or galleries, the photographs are set in a new discursive field but it "depends [much] on the curator and the space" (Bright 27), rather than on the photographer himself. However, in the photobooks, the photographer would have more control (than in the exhibition) on how to situate his photographs, such as editing and arranging the sequence of the images.<sup>3</sup> To study Chang's photobooks helps to see how he situates his photographs so as to present his viewpoints.

As for Chang's photobooks, there are two key points here. First, Chang

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<sup>3</sup> A photobook is also a commodity, which shall go through certain process of the mechanism of production and commercialization. The photographer's intentional choices occupy partly but not totally. However, compared with that in the exhibition, the cost for publishing a book is much less and the mechanism of publication may not be tangled with the definition (or recognition) of art. Thus, it seems to be easier for the photographer to present more of his viewpoints.

pays much attention on his books since he agrees that a successful photobook can easily have a bigger audience than that of the exhibition.<sup>4</sup> He takes care of every detail, especially the quality of printing and the words juxtaposed by the photographs. He even makes the sample book by himself to let the editors, designers and publishers know exactly how he wants the book to be. Thus, reading the photographs in his photobooks helps to access to the messages Chang's images bring out. Secondly, with the photobook, the distance between we readers and the photographs is different from that in the exhibition. We can "personally interact with the books—hold them, touch them, feel the woven paper, turn the pages, lift the flaps" (Hagan 21). In a closer relation with the books, it is possible for us to have intimate relation with the photographs and with the messages left by the photographer.

If Chang leaves some messages in the photographs so as to crystallize his photographic voice, what are these messages and what is this voice brought out by them? How does he situate the photographs, helping the readers to trace the messages and access to the voice? If there are many voices, is there any correlation or correspondence among them? These are the questions I

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<sup>4</sup> Chang, address. Further, the importance of photobooks shall not be neglected: "Unlike exhibitions—or indeed mass-media journal—which literally come and go, photographic monographs are always around, convenient and portable expressions of a photographer's works that have the potential for rediscovery and reproduction at any time, anywhere" (Parr and Badger 10).

plan to discuss further. I will not discuss the photobook itself since it is an object of study. The binding, the jacket, the typography, the paper, the printing and the design are all important factors of a photobook. It is a “three-dimensional object” (Parr and Badger 7). Under such circumstances, the focus of studying will be different and that is another complicated problem that I will not deal with in this thesis. The subject in this study is the photographs in Chang’s three photobooks. From the study I try to argue that Chang does the symptomatic reading towards the society with his photographic images and meanwhile, taking photographs is also the way for him to deal with his own questions.



### 1.3 Literature Review

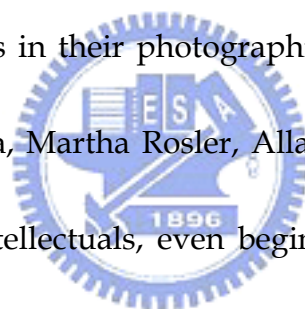
Before studying Chang’s photographs, I tend to find out how come the photographer can present his own viewpoints in a photobook from two aspects: one is the historical background of contemporary documentary photography; the other is the agency of Magnum Photos, in which Chang is the first Taiwanese full member.<sup>5</sup> These two aspects also help to figure out

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<sup>5</sup> Before becoming a full member in Magnum Photos, one needs to become a nominee member first. One can apply by submitting a portfolio and half of the members must agree by vote to nominate him/her. As for the nominee member, there is no binding commitment but the photographers have a chance to know one another and the new members can get an opportunity to join in Magnum. In the next two to four years, some

Chang's position.

Since the blossoming development of mass media in the 1950s, television replaces the position of photography to inform and record, and the use of images in newspaper and magazines are mainly controlled by the editors or decided by the stance of the publishers. The photographers, who take pictures, cannot decide how the photographs are edited or published. Thus, some photographers, such as Mary Ellen Mark and Eugene Richards, exhibit their works in museum and gallery or publish their books as the ways to present their own opinions in their photographic works (Marien 400-5). In the mid-1970s in California, Martha Rosler, Allan Sekula and Fred Lonidier, as the politically active intellectuals, even begin to use photography as the means to do social critiques (Marien 416-21). The meaning and position of documentary photographs vary.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the meaning of the images is not only tangled with historical and practical discourse but also related to the




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new portfolios need to be reviewed and two-third of the members must vote to agree this person as an associate member. The associate member does not have the rights to vote but still enjoys the facilities and is bound by the rules in Magnum Photos. Another two years later, the associate member needs to submit some new portfolios and two-third of the members must vote him/her to be a full member (or vote him/her out). The full membership in Magnum Photos is for life or as long as the photographer chooses. All of the full members have the rights to decide the matters and issues of Magnum. It is not owned by one person only. See the details in the official website of Magnum. "Magnum Membership." Magnum Photos. < <http://www.magnumphotos.com/c/htm>>. Path: About Magnum; General Information; Magnum Membership.

<sup>6</sup> Chi-Ming Lin responds to this complicated question and relates the issue to the context of the documentary photography in Taiwan. Lin, "Report" 4-19.

social-political aims of the images.<sup>7</sup> It is under such circumstances that we see Chang's photographs in his photobooks as the way to present his own viewpoints.

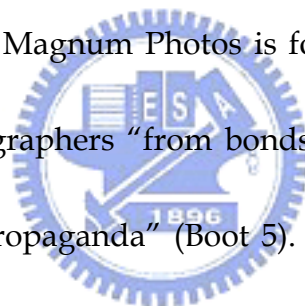
Then, to be more specifically, Chang learns photography in America and he is indeed influenced by the trend of the photographers in the postwar period. The representatives, such as Robert Frank (who is deeply influenced by Walker Evans), Lee Friedlander, Garry Winogrand and Diane Arbus, do not seek to report social events or call for social reform with their photographic images, but work "in extensive series based on life experiences" (Marien 355) as a way for personal reflection or expression. They spend much time observing the subjects and take some series of photographs rather than just a few photographic images. "The scope of these series, dramatized by the photographer's unique perspective on how to order the images, propelled the photographic book into prominence" (Marien 355). This trend has a lasting impact on the photographers such as Mary Ellen Mark and

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<sup>7</sup> Abigail Solomon-Godeau clearly points out that documentary photographs, as "historical construction" (170), is necessarily examined from its discourses, practices and uses; that is to say, what are important to note is not only the context in which the subjects matter in reality situate historically, but also the mechanism which the images are produced and presented (or published). Such are also Buchloh's points of referential meaning and contextual meaning of photographic images. Richard Bolton remarks that the photographic meaning is affected by "the exercise of power" (xii) and the understanding of documentary photography depends on how "its social and political aims" (xvi) are understood.

Eugene Richards, who show the plight of unfortunate people but seldom present sentimental images. Further, they tend to rely on text, which is an integral part of the work, to contextualize the photographs. Chang, who proceeds with a long-term working process and produces some series of photographs, appears to inherit or be influenced by such a trend. His photographs are not taken for social change but for denoting his personal concerns.

Secondly, it is irresistible to notice the mechanism and atmosphere in Magnum Photos agency. Magnum Photos is founded in 1947<sup>8</sup> and aims at the idea of free the photographers “from bonds of loyalty to any particular journal and its brand of propaganda” (Boat 5). Photographers in Mangum Photos own, control and market the copyright of their images; every member in this agency has his own projects.<sup>9</sup> Different from other photojournalists, the members in Magnum Photos try to have their individual viewpoints present rather than tell the stories according to the direction and stances of the editors, the publishers or the founders. The staffs find out markets for the




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<sup>8</sup> It is founded by Robert Capa, Henri Cartier-Bresson, George Rodger, and David “Chim” Seymour. For the detailed history of Magnum, please check the official website of Magnum Photos. “History of Magnum.” Magnum Photos. < <http://www.magnumphotos.com/c/htm>>. Path: About Magnum; History of Magnum.

<sup>9</sup> Alex Majoli, who joined Mangum in 1996, says, “When I came into Mangum, I saw that everyone was doing their own big projects, so I wondered about doing the same” (Majoli 291).

pictures taken by the members, instead of interfering in their projects or telling them how they should photograph. The agency is a window for the photographers to connect with the market, such as museums, galleries, magazines, publishers and the readers. On the official website of Magnum, there is a category of “photographers,” in which the names of the photographers in Magnum are listed. When we get from the list into one photographer’s page, we will read the simple introduction of his/her life, working experiences and the photographic monographs. We can read the photographs in the books online and we can purchase the books through Magnum. By promoting the photographic monographs to show the uniqueness of each member, the mechanism of the organization provides a mediate platform for the interaction between the photographers and the market, and helps the photographers to keep their own ideas and present them in their photographic works.



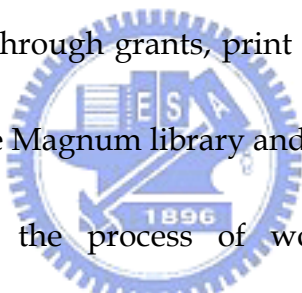
In the organization itself, Chang appear to be in the core group, in which the individual voices of the photographers seem to be stronger than those of the other members. As Chris Boot<sup>10</sup> introduces in the book Magnum Stories,

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<sup>10</sup> Chris Boot is an independent writer, curator and editor on subjects relating the photography. He joined Magnum Photos in 1990 and then worked for eight years, becoming Director of Magnum London in 1993 and Director of Magnum New York in 1996. During this time, he gained a comprehensive and intimate knowledge and understanding of Magnum’s photographers. Boot, Magnum Stories the jacket.



[A] Core of group within Magnum retains a recognizable relationship to the idea of the photo story, producing long-term essays on issue-based themes [...]. Their approach is usually characterized by personal interests and their relationship to particular themes and subject matter [...]. For the majority, the book has become a far more important print vehicle for their photography than the magazine, and while editorial assignments may contribute to their work on a given subject, they are more likely to be financing it through grants, print sales, 'stock' sales from their photographs in the Magnum library and other ancillary sources. (9)



For these photographers, the process of working lasts long and the photographs produced are numerous. To publish in the form of book is the best way to put so many photographs together. Among them, Chang also does the projects of his own. The photographic voice in Chang's books comes from his concerns of the society and the characteristics of his photographic images. Whether he tries to observe the situation of others or to express his own viewpoints, he sees the issues he is interested in his own position so that he can touch the singularity in different issues. Thus, if we want to know about Chien-Chi Chang, it is necessary for us to study the

photographs in his photobooks, which is the access to his individual stance and concerns.

#### 1.4 The Previous Commentaries on Chang's Works

The previous commentaries of Chang's photographs try to find out the characteristics of his images; most of them focus on the chain in Chang's works.<sup>11</sup> Among these critics, Fumio Nanjo and Patricia Brown are the representatives. The former illustrates the visible chain in the photographs and the invisible bondage in reality with a Foucauldian perspective. The later profiles the works as to explore and reconcile some cross-cultural questions. However, they seem to stop on the chain metaphor or on the key points of cross-cultural experiences. One of the reasons for their pauses is likely to be that their discussions are based on exhibitions mainly so that there are other factors which influence the photographic discourse, such as the curators and the space for exhibition. Although Fumio Nanjo mentions "Letter of a Madman," the text in Chang's book The Chain, he does not see it as part of the context to situate the photographs in "The Chain." Their discussion does not situate Chang's photographs in certain context so that

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<sup>11</sup> Tsai, 99-101; Frazier; Cheng 330-3; Chang, Fang-Wei 38-42.

there is likely to be some difficulties to access to the messages left by Chang and the voice Chang tries to develop. Although they try to connect the different series of photographs with the same metaphor, they do not carefully discuss them so that they do not see the core of the chain has much to do with “family.” Thus, turning the discussion to the photographs in Chang’s books help keep closer to what he says with the photographic discourse he tries to construct.

The previous concerns shed light on the chain metaphor but they do not discuss Chang’s careful cultivation in the long-term working process. Chang indeed shows his cool but careful observation on the society he concerns. He tries to look at the subject matter with a different perspective. However, how he looks at and represents the subject matter has not been discussed. Under such circumstances, it is necessary to study Chang’s photobooks carefully to see how he presents his stance and concerns in his photographs, whether there is some theme in his works and how he responds to the society or issues he cares about. Responding to the questions is the way of looking for Chien-Chi Chang.

## 1.5 Žižek's Notion of Fantasy

Chang tries to look at the reality with different perspective, from which he sees what is present outside but easily (or usually) ignored. He discovers the contradictory situation that we take for granted. This is similar with Slavoj Žižek's notion of fantasy. In Žižek's words, Chang's photographs traverse the social fantasy. In the following paragraphs, I will firstly discuss how Žižek interprets the notion of fantasy and then try to study Chang's photographs with it to see how Chang does his symptomatic reading towards the society with his photographic images.

In popular understanding, fantasy is opposed to reality: it may be either the mental projection towards the reality, or the desire which is forbidden by the law but is satisfied or realized in fantasy. However, Žižek does not consider the relation between fantasy and reality as internal illusion versus external reality. He sees fantasy as "the materialization of ideology" (Žižek, "Seven" 4). In order to understand his words, I will discuss two aspects: one is his reflection on the Marxian definition of ideology; the other is his adoption of the notion of fantasy by Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. Based on these two aspects, we will have a better understanding of Žižek's notion of fantasy.

When Žižek mentions fantasy for the first time in The Sublime Object of Ideology, he tries to illustrate how Marx defines ideology. When ideology is considered as false consciousness, it is based on the Marxian formula that people do not know it but they are doing it. Žižek asks a question: where is the place of ideological illusion, in the “knowing” or in the “doing” in the reality itself? He takes an example: when people use money, they know very well that there is nothing magical about it; they understand that money is simply an expression of social relation in its materiality. In other words, people know that money is an illusion but they are still using it as if they do not know. Thus, what they do not know is not reality (the materiality of money) but the illusion that structures their reality (money represents the exchange value, which structures the social reality). They do not know that their social reality is guided by an illusion, which Žižek then calls “ideological fantasy” (Žižek, Sublime 28-33). Thus, fantasy is not a mental projection but the materialization of ideology, which structures the social reality.

Žižek clearly points out that “the function of ideology is not to offer us a point of escape from our reality but to offer us the social reality itself as an escape from some traumatic, real kernel” (Žižek, Sublime 45). Fantasy, as the materialization of ideology, is the primordial form of narrative, which

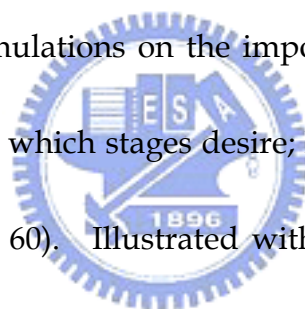
“emerges in order to resolve some fundamental antagonism by arranging its terms into a temporal succession” (Žižek, “Seven” 10-1). Here we see the parallel between Žižek’s notion of fantasy (as the primordial form of narrative) and Fredric Jameson’s arguments on literary and aesthetic texts. Jameson sees all literary and aesthetic texts as ideological texts, which are “resolutions of determinate contradictions” (Jameson 80). He illustrates with Claude Lévi-Strauss’ analysis on the facial decoration of Caduveo Indians and argues that Lévi-Strauss’ work suggests all cultural artifacts are to be read as symbolic act while its resolutions to the real problems remain imaginary ones that leave the real untouched. Thus, Jameson considers the aesthetic act ideological: “the production of aesthetic or narrative form is to be seen as an ideological act in its own right, with the function of inventing imaginary or formal ‘solutions’ to unresolvable social contradictions” (Jameson 79).

Based on Jameson’s words, we can understand what Žižek means when he defines fantasy as the “primordial form of narrative” (Žižek, “Seven” 10). We may suggest that fantasy is exactly the symbolic acts to face the unsolvable problems in reality; only through fantasy can we get close to the real situation. Then, it appears that Žižek tries to push the ideological acts further in two aspects. Firstly, fantasy, as the materialization of ideology,

not only appears in cultural artifacts as Jameson mentions but also supports and structures our social reality; that is to say, reality is itself a fantasy-construction and we can trace how fantasy works right in our social reality. Secondly, Žižek's notion of fantasy follows the psychoanalytic theory of Freud and Lacan, which have the closest link with desire.

Although fantasy (phantasy) in Freudian theory does not have a clear and determined definition, in so far as desire is articulated through fantasy, fantasy is the locus of defensive operations (Laplanche and Pontalis 315).

Lacan accepts Freud's formulations on the importance of fantasy and on its visual quality as a scenario which stages desire; he emphasizes the protective function of fantasy (Evans 60). Illustrated with the dream of "the burning



child,"<sup>12</sup> he sees the father's awake as his escape into reality to avoid the Real of his desire and to be able to maintain his blindness.<sup>13</sup> The death of his child implies the fundamental guilt of the father so that he awakes to escape into reality. In other words, he escapes into reality, which is sustained by fantasy, so that he maintains his existence in the symbolic order, or his symbolic universe would be de-constructed into nothing.

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<sup>12</sup> The dream is told by Freud's patient. The detail of the dream is described by Freud in The Interpretation of Dreams. Lacan reinterprets the dream in his seminar eleven. Freud, "Chapter VII" 509-11; Lacan 53-78.

<sup>13</sup> Žižek interprets Lacan's words in his book. Žižek, Sublime 44-6.

Thus, when we come back to Žižek again, it is clear that he tries to point out two main aspects of the function of fantasy in The Plague of Fantasies: on the one hand, fantasy stages our desire; on the other hand, fantasy screens the unbearable situation. Firstly, what fantasy stages is not a scene in which our desire is fully satisfied, but a scene that stages the desire. The realization of desire does not consist in its being fulfilled but coincides with the reproduction of the lack that constitutes desire (Žižek, Looking 6-8). Fantasy appears as an answer to “Che Vuoi?” (What does the Other want from me?): it constructs the frame enabling us to desire something; this desire is not ours but the desire of the Other. In other words, the original question of desire is not “what do I want” but “what do others want from me?” (the Other’s desire).

On the other hand, fantasy is also a defense against “Che Vuoi?": if the Other has desire, then the Other has lacks (so that it desires). This Other is the symbolic order with which the society is constructed, and the lack is some repressed antagonism, some unbearable trauma around which the symbolic order is structured. We consider that the symbolic order is complete but actually it has a lack, which cannot be faced directly, or the symbolic order would disintegrate. Fantasy bears witness to this lack: it is a screen that



protects us from getting too close to the lack, the object cause of our desire. If we get too close to it and thus losing the lack itself, anxiety is brought on by the disappearance of desire (Žižek, Sublime 114-8, 126). Thus, fantasy maintains a distance towards the explicit symbolic texture sustained by it and at the same time functions as the inherent transgressions (Žižek, "Seven" 18-27). It is through fantasy that we can see how the lack functions in our social reality since fantasy can neither hide nor solve this lack.

Žižek emphasizes this lack much when he explains it as *sinthome*. The notion of *sinthome*<sup>14</sup> has much to do with the meaning of "existence." Firstly, only what is symbolized fully "exists." Secondly, it is the existence that is an *ex-sistence*, as the impossible-real kernel resisting symbolization, as a leftover of enjoyment beyond meaning. "Symptom, conceived as *sinthome*, is literally our only substance, the only positive support of our being, the only point that gives consistency to the subject" (Žižek, Sublime 75). Symptom is the way we avoid madness, the way we choose something (symptom-formation) instead of nothing (the deconstruction of the symbolic universe). Thus, to access to the lack of the symbolic order, the object cause of our desire, we shall examine how fantasy works in our social reality so as

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<sup>14</sup> Žižek explains it in different essays. Žižek, Looking 136-40; Žižek, Sublime 74-5.

to traverse the fantasy. As we understand how fantasy works, it is then possible for us to see the sinthome and know the lack of symbolic order. From here shall I commence the study on Chang's photographs in his photobooks.

## 1.6 The Following Chapters

Chang tries to look at the reality with a different perspective and discovers the real situation that we take for granted. His photographs traverse the social fantasy and help us reader to see how fantasy works in our social reality. As we carefully read the photographs in his photobooks, we shall see how he deals with the social fantasy with his own voices in different issues he concerns.

In the second chapter "Looking Awry at the Wedding Rituals in I Do I Do I Do," I try to see how Chang looks from an angle at the fantastic screen in Taiwan's wedding rituals. His observation on the local wedding culture appears to include two levels of looking awry so as to form an ironic look, which constructs the tension between looking straight and looking awry. He sees the wedding pictures (the local visual culture) and public wedding rituals (the new local wedding rituals) as fantasy, in which people try to fulfill

the other's desire in order to be recognized in the symbolic order. He also deals with the social meaning of taking photographs. However, the photographs still appear as fantasy to help him ask more questions so as to produce the lack for himself.

Chapter three is entitled "Meet the Real Contradiction in The Chain." I will study how Chang's photographs deal with the real contradiction of the society in Taiwan by traversing the fantasy of "the chain." By the theme of chain and split, he shows us that the chain is "an illusory problem with a real cause" (Caudill 97), which has much to do with the unbearable disintegration of family relationship in reality. Through reading this book, on the one hand, we have a chance to identify with the sinthome. On the other hand, the photographs construct a fantastic space which prevents the real awakening in reality although we actually have been awakened and have met the real situation in the process of reading this book.

In the fourth chapter, which is "Discovering the Split in Double Happiness," I will study how Chang discovers the split so as to interpret the cross-cultural marriage between Taiwanese men and Vietnamese women in the series of photographs. By the theme repetition and superimposition, we see that they escape the fantastic explosion into reality in order to deal with

the real problems that cannot be solved. Chang shows us the structure of fantasy and the gaze of marriage; we also see that marriage is gazing at him while reading this book.

Finally, in chapter five, I will conclude this thesis by studying the relation among the three photobooks. Chang de-contextualizes the “referential meanings” (Buchloh 195) of the subjects matter from the social historical background; meanwhile, he re-contextualizes them in his photobooks. This comes from Chang’s intentional choices. His photographs distanciate our conventional way of seeing and understanding of the issues. I plan to see how he, by traversing the social fantasy, tries to establish the archive of the chain/disintegration of family and how he challenges the fantasy of photography so as to cultivate his “territory of images” (Sekula, “Reading” 116).

## Chapter Two: Looking Awry at the Wedding Rituals in I Do I Do I Do

### 2.1 Preface

In this chapter, I study how Chang looks awry at the wedding rituals in Taiwan. The main text here is the book I Do I Do I Do,<sup>15</sup> which focuses on how the wedding goes on in Taiwan. Through reading this series of photographs, which look from an angle at the fantastic scene in Taiwan's wedding rituals, we see how fantasy works.

The series of photographs are taken in six years between 1994 and 2000, starting on Chang's coming from New York back to Taiwan for his sister's wedding.<sup>16</sup> In this book, Chang photographs the process of taking wedding pictures, some scenes in weddings, group weddings, and the post-reception games or parties. There are mainly two observations in this book: the industrialized wedding pictures and the public wedding rituals, in which Chang presents his stance against the local visual culture and the new local




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<sup>15</sup> According to the format by Parr and Badger, the details of this book are as follow:

Ivy Liu/Premier Foundation, Taipei, 2001.

Hardback, clothbound, 120 pages.

10.25x10.25 in (260x260 mm).

56 b/w photographs.

Photographs by Chien-Chi Chang. Essay by Cheryl Lai. Forward by Sarina Yeh.

<sup>16</sup> This is about a personal project of Chang himself. As the only son in a traditional family in Taiwan, he sustains his parents' expectation of his marriage. "My parents asked me to get married, and I had to do something to channel all this traditional family pressure. So I did this project to say to them, 'I do I do I do,' to stand back and look at the whole, strange industry" (Brown 49). Actually, Chang is not anti-marriage. "In fact, I think marriage is good, but the difficult part is living together afterwards. I had to do something to protest" (Roberts 40). Chang himself gets married in 2004 at a small family dinner (Lehan 79).

wedding rituals in Taiwan.

In the previous studies of the wedding pictures in Taiwan, Yu-Ying Lee considers that the wedding industry is a cultural industry since the wedding boutique “not only takes pictures but also offers almost all other services a couple may need, including wedding gown and formal dress rental services, bridal make-up design and hairdressing services” (Lee, “Bride” 217). According to Lee’s study, before 1970s in Taiwan, the newlywed couples have their wedding pictures taken on their wedding day in order to memorize the holiness of their wedding ceremony; however, by providing a whole package of services for wedding since 1980s, the photo shops successfully turn this purpose into showing how lovely the couple is to their friends and relatives. The whole industry not only teaches the society how the wedding pictures should be but also establishes a new rite: people have to take wedding pictures at a bridal shop before the wedding so that they can show the pictures to their friends and relatives on their wedding day. The places of taking wedding pictures, such as the park, the studio, the beach, or some scenic spots, have nothing to do with the wedding ceremony; the pictures are expected to show the “beautiful” ideal images of the couple with dandy taste by make-up, design, spotting, and retouch. The previous concerns towards

this issue usually look from commercial, aesthetical or gender perspective,<sup>17</sup> publishing in essays or theses. Under such circumstances, Chang's reflection of the local visual culture in Taiwan with photographic images is worth carefully discussing.

I will argue that Chang's photographs show us how fantasy works in the contradictory tension between looking straight and looking awry. According to Žižek, there are two levels of looking awry (Žižek, Looking 11-2). On the first level, while we look at a thing straight on, we see it "as it really is;" however, the gaze puzzled by our desire – that is, looking awry – gives us a distorted and interested image. On the second level, while we look at a thing straight on, we see nothing but a formless spot; the object appears clear and distinctive only if we look at it at an angle, with an interested view distorted by desire. Chang's looking awry at the wedding rituals appears to include these two levels. Besides, while Chang stands outside witnessing the rituals as something null, he also seeks to answer his own questions in the process of shooting camera.

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<sup>17</sup> Wen-Ke Chiu's and Hsu-Hsin Yu's studies start from commercial perspective. Most of the previous commentaries of this issue have much to do with this perspective since the blossoming wedding photo shops begin highly developed for business concern. Fu-Feng Hsu sees the wedding photography from aesthetic perspective. Yu-Ying Lee's critique in the essay about female gaze deals with the issue from gender perspective, studying how the women gaze at themselves in the wedding photographs.

## 2.2 The Theme of the Book I Do I Do I Do

The theme of the book appears in the contradictory tension between looking straight and looking awry; the photographs in this book are to some extent de-contextualized. Except the preface by the publisher Premier Foundation, the book is divided into six sections. The first section is the article “The Vow” by Cheryl Lai which helps the readers to situate the subsequent photographs; in the rest, Chang puts a poem or a maxim preceding the photographs. From Lai’s article, we roughly learn the situation of the blossoming wedding album industry in Taiwan around the new millennium. Although Chang’s photographs are taken in six years and situated in Taiwan’s industrialized wedding boutiques, he does not narrate particular events so that his photographs do not involve with particular point of time and specific places in Taiwan. What we see in the photographs seems to keep taking place. Instead of the events, it is the issue that matters since Chang does not simply “report” some events but rather work on a photo-essay, and what Chang tries to say may be revealed in the contradictory tension between looking straight and looking awry.

Elizabeth Roberts, as the representative in the previous critics, suggests that Chang’s ironic look appears in these photographs. However, she does



not point out that the irony indeed comes from this tension between looking straight and looking awry, which not only appears in the photographs but also in the contrast between words and photographs. It is from this tension that we can see how irony Chang's look is.

From the front cover, we feel the tension develops on the contrast between word (the title) and photograph which influences how we read the photographs. On the red front cover, there is a black-and-white photograph which shows the back of one groom and two brides on the upper left part and a black column under this photograph.<sup>18</sup> The subjects in this photograph actually pose for a group wedding picture while Chang takes the scene from their back without catching their countenance. The title "I do I do I do" appears in the middle on the right side. It seems that Chang sees the auspicious wedding at an angle so that the general appearance of the scene is cut and we then see what we used not to find out: in the case here, it seems that the three people are getting married. The repetition of "I do" for three times as the title not only suggests that this book deals with the moment of marrying, but also indicates that the photographs may outlast the marriage<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Chang, Chien-Chi. *I Do I Do I Do*. Book cover. *Magnum Photos*. <<http://www.magnumphotos.com/c/htm>>. Path: Photographers; Chang Chien-Chi; *I Do I Do I Do*.

<sup>19</sup> Chang points out: "A few couples I came across had their wedding photographs taken and then decided at the last minute not to get married – and they didn't know what to do with the album!" (Roberts 44).

since the certainty of a serious promise seems weakened as being repeated. It seems that he is asking the three parties in this photograph “To whom do you say ‘I do’?” This is Chang’s ironic look, which comes from his looking awry at the scene.

In the rest parts of the book, the tension between words and photographs lasts. In the second section, Chang puts William Shakespeare’s poem in A Midsummer-night’s Dream in front of the photographs of the brides who are preparing before taking wedding pictures or the wedding ceremony. The section could be seen as the preface of the photographs in this book. The poem,<sup>20</sup> which comes from a comedy, situates the book in an easy atmosphere. It describes the blindness of love in which people cannot see their choices clearly. Thus, since the beginning of the book, Chang seems to challenge the presence of romantic love relating to wedding. It seems that he is telling us the photographs in the following deal with the love, which appears to be blind.

In the third section, it is Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s words, saying, “To love is not to look at one another, but to look together in the same direction.”

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<sup>20</sup> “Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind, /And therefore is wing’d Cupid painted blind. /Nor hath Love’s mind of judgement taste; /Wings and no eyes figures unheedy haste, /And therefore is Love said to be a child, /Because in choice he is so oft beguil’d” (Chang, I Do I Do I Do N. pag.).

The following pages are the photographs presenting the scenes in which the couples are taking their wedding albums. Their “looking in the same direction” is directed by the photographers who take their wedding pictures, and sometimes even the people, who just pass by, follow the direction of their eyes, too. Thus, Chang sees their taking wedding pictures with ironic eyes: their “love” appearance seems to be directed and performed rather than spontaneously overflowed.

In the fourth section, it is W. B. Yeats’ poem “Adam’s Curse”<sup>21</sup> followed by the photographs of some scenes presenting the ritual of wedding ceremony, and the brides who are waiting on their wedding day for the grooms, for the ceremony or for the banquet. In this poem, the moon, as the image of love, wanes by the flow of time; it is impossible to fulfill the longing for perfect love.<sup>22</sup> Under such circumstances, in Chang’s book, it appears that the brides, who keep waiting on their wedding days for so many rituals, could not sustain the effect of time so that their beauty and joy are worn away.

In the fifth section, Matthew K. Free’s words, “Two hearts are stronger

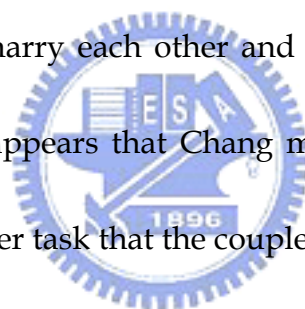
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<sup>21</sup> “I had a thought for no one’s but your ears; /That you were beautiful, and that I strove/To love you in the old high way of love;/That is had all seemed happy, and yet we’d grown/As weary-hearted as the hollow moon” (Chang, *I Do I Do I Do* N. pag.). It is an extracted version here. The complete poem is included in the poem “In the Seven Woods” (Yeats 51-5).

<sup>22</sup> Actually, the narrator in this poem is “poetry,” which is personalized (Greaves 26-67).

than three, but only if you instill your inside of me,” are laid in front of some photographs of group weddings. Free says “two” hearts are stronger than three but Chang contrarily puts the photograph of “three”<sup>23</sup> right after it; it appears that Chang sees the group wedding critically rather than approvingly.

In the last section, Chang chooses the poem “Cho Mou” from Book of Odes and he mainly shows us the photographs on the post-reception games or parties. The poem describes that at the wedding night, the newlywed couples are surprised to marry each other and show the sign of uneasiness about their marriage. It appears that Chang mocks that the post-reception games or parties are a harder task that the couples have to take up.



Thus, from the contrast between words and photographs, we can find out that Chang’s critique of the wedding rituals in Taiwan is quite sharp. By looking keenly at the public wedding rituals, he shows us the scenes that are “visible but unseen” (Krauss 217). By looking awry from an angle at people’s taking wedding pictures, we see the scenes that ordinary wedding pictures do not present. It is through Chang’s camera that we see how fantasy works in the wedding rituals in Taiwan.

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<sup>23</sup> Chang, Chien-Chi. I Do I Do I Do. (NYC10467) Magnum Photos. <<http://www.magnumphotos.com/c/htm>>. Path: Photographers; Chang Chien-Chi; I Do I Do I Do; slide 30.

### 2.3 The Fantasy in Wedding Rituals

In the series of photographs, we see the process of the couples' taking wedding pictures first, which show us how the wedding pictures are taken. In the studio, the bride is posing according to the direction of the photographer, who not only composes the pictures and shoot the camera, but also tells the brides how to pose (Fig. 2.1). Aside this photograph, Chang juxtaposes another one<sup>24</sup> with a similar plot: in both cases, the brides' poses and dress styles are similar, too. Here, the photographers' hands, appearing as a shadow, seem to dominate the process of photo-taking while the brides appear as dolls, who do not show their mobility at all. We see that generally in wedding pictures, the brides' differences are not presented; their names and individual stories are lost in the process of idealizing the images. In another photograph, the couple, who stand in front of a fake background, look up happily with their hair blown by the wind from the electric fan in order to achieve the desired effect.<sup>25</sup> Under Chang's camera, it seems that the big fan is going to engulf them. From this photograph, we see how the

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<sup>24</sup> Chang, Chien-Chi. I Do I Do I Do. (NYC10438) Magnum Photos. <<http://www.magnumphotos.com/c/htm>>. Path: Photographers; Chang Chien-Chi; I Do I Do I Do; slide 4.

<sup>25</sup> Chang, Chien-Chi. I Do I Do I Do. (NYC10450) Magnum Photos. <<http://www.magnumphotos.com/c/htm>>. Path: Photographers; Chang Chien-Chi; I Do I Do I Do; slide 7.

wedding pictures lie, so as to produce the expected images, which might fulfill our desire to become the protagonists in the so-called fairytale dream.

Nevertheless, we see the wedding industry works as fantasy: the photographer is one of the agents in this industry; the fan, the background and the spot light are the instruments helping him. As he mentions the relation between symbolic order and fantasy, Žižek tells us that fantasy does not help us to realize the desire that is prohibited by the symbolic order (Žižek, "Seven" 13-5). On the contrary, fantasy works as the very act of the establishment of symbolic order, the installation of Law. Illustrated with the story of Paradise Lost, Žižek tells us that Adam disobeys God's words and eats the apple so that he loses what he disobeys in order to keep it (jouissance); he even finds out his decision rather than makes it. It is because fantasy works here so that Adam cannot see that his desire is taught by fantasy, which offers him an empty gesture to make his own decisions.

In the case of the photographs here, although most people know that in wedding pictures, their images are idealized and they can choose how they want to be looked at or who they want to become, they do not understand that they have no free choices at all: they have to pose according to the photographer's direction; they spend lots of money and take at least one

whole day off to take pictures in order to look special (jouissance) in their wedding album but it is by so doing that they lose their names and individual love stories with their mates are lost in due course. Their uniqueness is unified with someone else's. Chang's photographs show that instead of their own choices, their fairytale dream is a commercially-determined one: the wedding boutiques strengthen the fairytale dream, constructing the scenes to teach the couples how to make the dreams come true in the wedding albums. Thus, Chang's photographs lead us to look awry at an angle, with an "interested" view, so that we see the ritualized wedding industry work as a fantasy: the wedding industry indeed installs the Law that teaches us how the wedding pictures should be. In the process of taking wedding pictures, we think we have totally free choices to decide how we look but actually it is an empty gesture fantasy is offering.

After the fantasy of wedding pictures has been traversed by looking awry, the straight photographs we used to see in wedding rituals become sharply contrasted as a formless spot. Chang firstly shows us the looking awry scenes, which not only immediately represent the fantasy of wedding pictures but also challenge our straight perspective by leading us to look awry at surprising angles. Then, when we see the straight scene ("as it really is")

later, we do not read it as usual but the gaze puzzled by our desire and anxieties gives us a distorted, blurred image. The way we used to see things is changed.

In this book, besides reflecting the local visual culture and the wedding industry, Chang also pays attention to the new local culture, which is the group wedding ceremony,<sup>26</sup> and the ritual of post-reception games or parties<sup>27</sup> in Taiwan. In this photograph, on the group wedding to celebrate one elephant's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday at zoo, the grooms are asked to kiss the brides when the elephants, named Lin Wang and Ma Lan, watch in the back (Fig. 2.2). Except the facial characteristics, we can hardly tell the differences between the couples. The kiss on group wedding means to be an extremely publicized vow belonging to each couple. The elephants' blessing, which draws the elephants into the symbolic order, appears to recognize the couples' marriage. Besides, there is a double repetition in this photograph. Firstly, one characteristics of ritual is repetition:<sup>28</sup> the couples going through




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<sup>26</sup> Group wedding ceremony is recently developed in Taiwan and becomes quite popular. It is often held by city government and can consist of as few as 6 couples or as large as 100. People usually do not know one another. The couples gather at some spot, go through a ceremony hosted by the mayor, and they are asked to kiss for some minutes; finally they receive some presents and leave on their own way.

<sup>27</sup> The post-reception games or parties are held after the wedding banquet. Usually, it is the couple's close friends or relatives who join in. The couple has to play some games demanded by their friends or relatives.

<sup>28</sup> "[The Rites] are fixed modes of actions" (Durkheim 36). "[The] real function of a rite consists [...] in a general action [which] remain[s] always and everywhere the same"



the wedding ceremony are repeating the ritual of marrying. Then, each couple repeats the same ritual (together) without presenting their personal differences; that is the second repetition. The double repetition strengthens the point that they show their happiness towards the public, the camera, and even the elephants to prove their happiness as well as their social roles as newlywed husbands and wives.

Such is also the case in the post-reception games, in which the couples have to do what their friends and relatives demand. In one photograph, the bride with a blindfold is asked to touch the calf of participants to tell which one is her husband.<sup>29</sup> Her head is in the center of the photograph while the others stand around looking at the “performance;” one of them even holds a video camera to record it, which is likely to be shown to the people who are not present now. Žižek tells us that fantasy teaches us how to desire and “the original question of desire is not directly ‘What do I want?’ but ‘What do others want from me? What do they see in me? What am I to others?’” (Žižek, “Seven” 9). The photographs of wedding scenes are indeed the very case in which the couples try to fulfill the other’s desire, instead of their own

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(Durkheim 286).

<sup>29</sup> Chang, Chien-Chi. *I Do I Do I Do*. (NYC10491) *Magnum Photos*. <<http://www.magnumphotos.com/c/htm>>. Path: Photographers; Chang Chien-Chi; *I Do I Do I Do*; slide 49.

ones, in order to be recognized in the symbolic order, proved as husband and wife. Through rituals, their identities are recognized by the society, satisfying the social expectation, so that they themselves become the objects of desire of the society.

#### 2.4 The Photographic Fantasy

Rather than the rituals and the process of getting married, Chang seems to challenge the cultural value of taking pictures. In the photograph of people's taking pictures, Chang catches the scene that when the camera holder shoots the camera, the group in the frame stands still smiling towards it while the group out of the frame looks at the camera without pretending or hiding their instant emotion (Fig. 2.3). In his study, Pierre Bourdieu clearly points out that

The meaning of the pose adopted for the photograph can only be understood with relation to the symbolic system in which it has its place, and which, for the peasant, defines the behavior and manners suitable for his relations with other people. Photographs ordinarily show people face on, in the center of the picture, standing up, at a respectful distance, motionless and in a dignified attitude. (80)

The social meaning of taking pictures emphasizes the relations between individuals rather than the clearance of each figure. “Striking a pose means respecting oneself and demanding respect” (Bourdieu 80). Such is exactly the case that Chang tries to deal with here. People on the left side stand still and keep their face on smiling towards the camera, which is held by a man at a respectful distance so that it catches their frontal images to bear witness of their presence at someone’s wedding. On the other hand, the images of the people on the right side are out of the social definition of photographic function. These people are not on stage so that they do not have to perform their social roles as those on the left side. Camera shows how people want to be rather than who they are. Taking pictures thus represents a kind of value and Chang’s photographs appear to challenge it.

The way he chooses to traverse the fantasy of the determined social function of taking pictures is to look from surprising angles and take a different approach of shooting camera. He does not tell the subjects matter how they should pose. Contrarily, he follows them, observes them and composes the photographs. By looking awry, Chang catches the images which traverse the fantastic screen so that we learn how fantasy works in the wedding pictures, wedding celebration and the social function of taking

pictures. From Chang's book, we see that the wedding, the possible beginning of a new family, is based on the photographic fantasy. It is the wedding pictures and the performance of rituals that prove the marriage. In other words, it is the photographic fantasy as an illusion that structures and decides the real social activity.

Chang not only leads us to look at an angle so as to traverse fantasy, but also presents his critical stance and distant observation against the wedding rituals in Taiwan. The process of photographing lasts long. It seems that Chang is seeking the answers of his questions on the wedding pictures and wedding rituals in Taiwan through his long-term observation of the prospective couples. It is worth noting that he does not represent the complicated traditional wedding rituals but focuses on the modern ones, mostly on the industrialized commercially-orientated pictures, the group weddings, and the post-reception games or parties. Also, he sticks to his single perspective most of the time but sometimes seems to be attracted by the scenes he sees. For instance, this photograph appears soft and special: the father, who covers the bridal veil for his daughter, who is leaving her parents to establish another new family with her husband, looks at her affectionately (Fig. 2.4). It appears that Chang, not so critical at this moment, is observing

the complex vertical familial love on the threshold of a new family.

Following Chang's camera, we do not feel the joy for marriage most of the time when we read the book. The shift of perspective may mean something. Although Chang does the project to solve his questions of the wedding rituals in Taiwan, it is possible that the more he reveals in his photographs, the farther he runs away from the answering keys, which is likely to be the family relations in reality. This occasional shift of perspective might be the presence of his anxiety. When he somehow gets too close to the object-cause of desire, which might be the complex vertical familial love, the anxiety would raise since it is possible to lose the lack, which is the cause for him to desire and to photograph. What is somehow avoided in the photographs might be this cause, which seems to lie in the material aspects of the social fantasy. For instance, when he shows us the photographs which traverse the fantasy of public wedding rituals, he does not present the complicated social-historical background of these phenomena, the rite of wedding ceremony itself, the influence for the couples' original families and the change of their relationship. It appears that marriage for the couples exists at the level of modern rituals rather than the older ones, without the psychological or emotional aspects. In the process of photographing,

Chang's relation with the social fantasy is not fixed. He seems to keep looking for his own position, observing these wedding occasions from different angles. Thus, as he tries to figure out his questions of the wedding rituals, he seems to seek the answers by asking more questions so as to avoid anxiety, which might exist somewhere in the social reality.

## 2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I study the photographs in I Do I Do I Do to see how Chang looks awry at the wedding rituals in Taiwan. As his first book, this series of photographs show us the scenes of taking wedding pictures and those of wedding rituals, which in fact deal with the threshold of a new family. The couples get married, leaving their original home and starting a new one hereafter with their mates. They go through the rituals in which fantasy works, so that their relation can be recognized in the symbolic order. By traversing the fantasy, we see that their marriage is decided by illusion and they seem not to appear as lovely couples under Chang's camera. The connection between them appears to be alienated and their close relation seems to be split since the beginning.

Chang has "to do something to channel all this traditional family

pressure” (Brown 49) from his parents so that he does this project; he appears to be confused of the wedding rituals in Taiwan so that he tries to seek answers with the photographic images. His confusion is likely to come from some bigger questions, which have much to do with the family relationship in reality. Marriage, as a possible foundation of a new family, thus becomes the question Chang tries to look into. However, as he seeks answers with his photographic images, he runs away to avoid the answers so as to keep asking questions towards the complex family relationship.



## Chapter Three: Meet the Real Contradiction in The Chain

### 3.1 Preface

In this chapter, I study how Chang's photographs deal with the real contradiction of the society in Taiwan. Through a close reading of Chang's book The Chain,<sup>30</sup> I will discuss the main theme in this book in order to traverse the fantasy of "the chain."

In his most famous work<sup>31</sup> "The Chain," Chang shoots the vertically composed, frontal whole-length portraits of the mental patients in Long Fa Tang Temple, a mental asylum in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. He spends almost six years discontinuously from 1993 to 1999, getting admission to take photographs as well as observing the life of the 700 patients, who are shaved and chained two by two with "the Chain of Compassion" and who work everyday from five o'clock in the morning to six o'clock in the evening on the twenty-hectare chicken farm, taking care of one million chickens. The photographs we see today are taken in one afternoon in October 1998 as these

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<sup>30</sup> According to the format by Parr and Badger, the details of this book are as follow: Trolley, London, 2002.

Hardcover, 106 pages.

5.5x7.75 in (145x210 mm).

48 duotone images.

Photographs by Chien-Chi Chang. Essay by Cheryl Lai.

<sup>31</sup> This series of photographs has been exhibited in Taipei Fine Art Museum in 2000, 2001 La Biennale di Venezia, 2002 Bienal de São Paulo, and the First ICP (International Center of Photography, New York) Triennial of Photography and Video in 2003.



patients, who just finish lunch, stop a little while on their way back to work for Chang to shoot with camera. In this chapter, I argue that the chain in these photographs appearing as fantasy, is applied to be a symbolic resolution of the unbearable situations in reality for the society in Taiwan. From studying the theme of the book, the fantasy would be traversed so that the cultural meaning of these photographs would be revealed.

The former concerns on Long Fa Tang Temple mostly focus on questioning its legal stages as a mental institution and the human rights of these mental patients.<sup>32</sup> The researchers clarify this problem from the perspective of the mental patients' families, of the society, and of the psychiatrists. However, they do not show their attempts to learn how the mental patients may feel. As for the photographic images, Ben-Chi Chou and Tsung-Hui Ho, who have photographed this subject in 1980s, take the scenes of the life in Long Fa Tang Temple. Chou pays attention to the scenes that would raise sympathy: he focuses on their life and shows us how they live. In the photographs (Chou, Ben-Chi 18-31), the patients appear as passive victims: they live in a dirty place; some of them are naked, sitting on the ground; some of them are confined or chained; some of them are fed since

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<sup>32</sup> Here are some examples: Huang, Ting-Chun; Huang, Jine-Shing; Shen, Hsien-Cheng.

they do not have the ability to take care of themselves. They seem to wait for the society to save them and offer them better treatment. Chou places his own article along with the photographs he takes. In this essay, he describes his own experience of visiting Long Fa Tang Temple, which raises his sympathy and pity towards the patients; he also questions the laws in Taiwan which do not protect the mental patients so that they cannot receive good medical treatments. Ho presents us the dim images of the mental patients. The commentaries on Ho's work mostly emphasize his personal artistic creation, separating his work clearly from the reportage photography.<sup>33</sup> Since he neglects the facial expression but focuses on the body languages of the mental patients, we cannot learn the social-historical context from his photographs but encounter with the shock of *puctum*.<sup>34</sup> Compared with the two photographers' works, Chang's photographs show us the clear frontal whole-length portraits. His work is not only artistic creation, but also reportage photography since the article in the book provides the historical background and the preliminary understanding of the life in Long Fa Tang Temple. I shall study the photographs in his book to see how he deals with this issue.

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<sup>33</sup> See Han-Dee Huang's and Ben-Kuan Yu's articles.

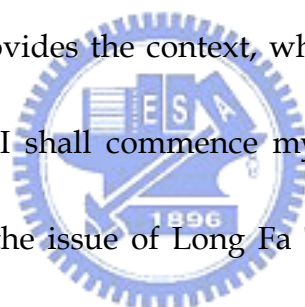
<sup>34</sup> Yu-Ling Chou discussed the *puctum* of Ho's photographs in her thesis.

In the previous critiques, there are mainly two arguments, which see the chain as a metaphor, but they seem to be chained by it, too. Firstly, Fumio Nanjo clearly points out that the visible chain in the photographs – the Chain of Compassion which binds these mental patients, and the invisible chain in reality – our desire, are both what Chang’s photographs invite us to pay attention to. Not only these patients in photographs, but also all of us, are bound by the chain, the bondage in marriage, family, and society which is not only connection but also restriction. In other words, if they are chained for their madness, we may somehow be mad as we are chained by the invisible bondage. Secondly, the photographs bring out the issue of panopticon. Fumio Nanjo argues that the chain in the photographs is the postmodernist panopticon in which each of the patients watches over the other one. This kind of control and demand is similar to that in reality, especially in marriage. Pei-Chun Tsai considers that Chang does a “double reflection” on the double imprisonment of the chain as the rationalized disciplinary means by the asylum’s authority and of the photograph as the confinement of reality by photographer. Fang-Wei Chang interprets the panopticon in the other form: the artist (photographer) as the spectator, the photographed as artists, and the spectators as the ones who are being looked by the subjects in photographs so



that the mechanism of power is reversed. It is the spectators who are watched by the subjects in the mechanism of panopticon.

Thus, they consider that in the photographs Chang tries to tell us that we are also mad to some extent. Both of the viewpoints argue that it is the social madness that Chang's photographs are asking. However, they stop while shedding light on the relation between the chain and the society so that they appear to be chained by the chain metaphor in their analysis. This series of photographs shall not be read independently. The article "Letter of a Madman" in this book provides the context, which helps us to situate these photographs. From here I shall commence my study and I aim at seeing how we can approach to the issue of Long Fa Tang Temple and its mental patients through Chang's photographs in the book The Chain.<sup>35</sup>



### 3.2 The Theme of the Book The Chain

The main text I want to discuss is, instead of the exhibitions, the book The Chain, whose theme appears to be somewhere between chain and split, where fantasy works. On the front cover of the book,<sup>36</sup> we see the body of a person

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<sup>35</sup> The book won the Best Photography Book in the 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Pictures of the Year International (POYi) in 2003, and the third prize at the Gruppo Redattori Iconografici Nazionale (GRIN) Awards in 2004.

<sup>36</sup> Chien-Chi Chang. The Chain. Book cover. Magnum Photos. <<http://www.Magnumphotos.com/c/htm>> Path: Photographers; Chang Chien-Chi; The Chain.

with a chain on his/her waist; at the level of his/her legs, we read the title of the book “The Chain,” which tells that it is a book about “the chain,” which is not for animals, vehicles or machines, but for human beings. The chain connects to the back cover and the other side of it is worn on another person who is laughing. Thus, since the start of the book, we feel the tension of the chain.

The grey book cover contrasts the glossy black photographs, which are framed by white margins, that is, the clear cut boundary of the photographs. They are intended to be viewed one page after another from left to right. However, if we read reversely from right to left from the first page, we would find that all of the pages are black with one darker line across from the first page to the last one without stop or break. Thus, the book can have many pages as well as only one. The mental patients are chained two by two and to some extent in this book, they are chained all together with another darker chain in the back. The text “Letter of a Madman” is put after the photographs. The last page is stuffed into the back cover and it can be pulled out so that all of the photographs are “exhibited” in front of the readers. Each of the photographs has a break with another one by the white frame; however, in the back of them, it is still connected with the other

photographs by the dark line. Thus, all of the photographs can be read as a whole but each of them is unique. Further, every pair of the patients has their own relation and each patient has his or her own stories. They are unified as the mental patients in Long Fa Tang Temple but Chang finds out their distinctiveness.

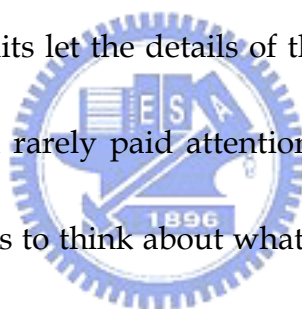
In these photographs, some elements are repeated, some are varied. For instance, the black background, the rough floor, the bags in the far back, the chain and the frontal whole-length form of the photographs are the elements repeated. Different people with different clothes, shaved heads, and expressions are the elements varied continuously. The rhythm between repetition and variation activates the similar frontal portraits with variations: it provides a sequence of photographs for us to read; it also forces us to read them as a whole.

As a sequence of frontal, whole-length portraits, each photograph is de-contextualized. It can hardly be recognized where the mental patients are situated in and who they are. The visual focus is concentrated on the figures since the background is dark and dim. Whether the subjects matter are male or female, they are shaved, dressed up in similar shabby clothes and they wear a chain with a lock on it, which chains them two by two in front of the

camera. Although we do not know what the camera means for them, they seem to be aware of its existence: there is someone who points the camera at them. Some stand still; their facial expressions vary (Fig. 3.1). Some appear not willing to be photographed: they do not look at the camera, they move when the photographs are taken, or parts of their bodies are out of the photographic frame since they move or do not stand exactly in the same position (Fig. 3.2 and Fig. 3.3). The whole-length portraits catch the power of the whole bodies, which show to the greatest extent how two people may be when they are chained together and how they may react towards a camera: bewildered, performed, evasive, indifferent, earnest, resistant, provocative, and so on. It seems that in these photographs we feel all possible emotion and reaction when two people are chained and when they face the camera. Although they appear as complete beings in the photographs, they are unified so that their individuality is dismissed because of the chains on their bodies. Thus, Chang's photographs not only catch the different relations between and among them but also show us their uniformity.

As a whole series of photographs, it is the theme of chain and split that we shall pay attention to. From this theme, the chain in these photographs seems to show that the relations among them are located somewhere between

break and connection, or, between chain and split. In other words, the relations between two patients, the relations between one and the rest of the group and the relation between the subjects and us are swayed between chain and split. It seems that the chain works in order to prevent the relations from split, or, that it is because the relations have split so that the chain exists to maintain or conceal the real situation. From Chang's book we could tell that the interaction between chain and split may continuously be repeated and varied in different relations among individuals in the society. The frontal whole-length portraits let the details of the patients' figures show up, which are hardly seen and rarely paid attentions to; further, because of the chain, they force the readers to think about what happens out of frame which Chang's photographs do not represent. This comes from Chang's intentional choice. The photographer does not shoot from a lower or higher angle but holds the camera at waist level as if the patients are standing right in the front, as if they are of the same status with us.<sup>37</sup> He does not restrict their movement. He does not give up the unclear photographs. He provides them space to express partly freely in front of the camera. Since they are rarely seen or heard except in news reports, the photographs become the




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<sup>37</sup> In the exhibition, this series of photographs are presented life-sized (42 × 62 inches) with 15 degree angle of depression. It is much easier for the spectators to feel that they are staring at us (Chang, Fang-Wei 41).



space they can be present.

### 3.3 Traversing the Social Fantasy

The de-contextualized photographs enforce the discourse that the book tries to form. The only text provided to situate the photographs is “Letter of a Madman,” which is a fictional letter the first disciple of the Master Shih Kai Fong, the founder of the sanctuary, writes to his mother, who takes him to the Master because she feels shamed of having a mad son. From this letter, we can grasp the history of Long Fa Tang Temple developing from a little thatched hut to probably the biggest chicken farm in the world; we see the transformation of the chain from straw rope, nylon rope, iron chain to steel chain; we learn the establishment and performances of the Long Fa Tang Big Band, which helps to propagate the achievement of the asylum.

Before discussing this letter further, it is necessarily to mention “Diary of a Madman,” which is published earlier (in 1999) in Photographer International. This diary is written in a third person narrative with omnipotent viewpoints. Besides describing what the mental patients do in Long Fa Tang Temple (taking care of the chicken farm mainly), we also learn the opinions of the governor of the asylum, of the psychiatrists, of the patients

who run out of the asylum, and of the patients' family. From this diary, we get a preliminary understanding on this issue from different perspectives. We see that one of the governors of the asylum, who has no license to treat mental patients, does not think that the mental patients have human rights (Lai and Tedards, "Diary" 16-7). The governors take their chaining the patients as the best way to make the patients' behaviors stable, and their teaching the patients how to work and how to play instruments as the highest achievement of their "treatment."

In "Letter of a Madman," we see the possible positions of the patients' family, of the governor, and of the patients who run out of the asylum, and get the preliminary understanding of the life in Long Fa Tang Temple from the mental patient's words only. The first person narrator is easier to raise our identification and compassion than the third person narrator in "Diary of a Madman." However, we do not see different perspectives; we can only judge the situation from the known addressor. But this addressor does not exist in reality since the mental patients cannot articulate the well-structured language in terms of writing a letter to his mother. Thus, the "I" in this letter is the author Cheryl Lai herself.<sup>38</sup> What she tries to do with this fictional

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<sup>38</sup> Here, I try to respond to Nanjo's question of this text.

letter is not to guess how the mental patients may think and feel since we can never really understand them. Rather, it seems a possible way helping us readers to think about how we differentiate, exclude, or alienate them and how we understand them. Since it is a letter, there is an addressee: the words are not one's own murmur but those to be spoken out to be heard. Although it is with a single perspective, it is sharper than the "Diary of a Madman" with the ironic tone which sometimes shakes the readers.

The letter and the repetition of similar photographs sharpen the de-contextualized photographic images: both of them help to think about what happen out of the photographic frame. The repetition of photographs reminds us that photographs are abstraction and the letter provides us the context to situate the images. The patients are chained and confined within Long Fa Tang Temple; they are not treated as human beings but as animals, or even monsters.<sup>39</sup> Their humanity is reduced. The "Chain of 'Compassion'" in this sense seems to imply their monstrosity: it is applied to control the monstrosity that we cannot deal with. Their performance (Long Fa Tang Big Band in particular) is the "exhibition," which calls for the social attention on their disciplined monstrosity (disciplined by the chain). The

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<sup>39</sup> Foucault has carefully discussed the monstrosity of mental patients in the medieval centuries in Europe (Foucault 177-208).

patients then appear as social sinthome,<sup>40</sup> that do not completely belong to the symbolic order but an excess of the society. While they are in the asylum, they are neither alive nor dead. If they come out of the asylum, they seem to need to fit into a certain identity, such as that of the singers or players of Long Fa Tang Big Band for people to watch. If they do not have such identities, the society may not know how to face them directly.

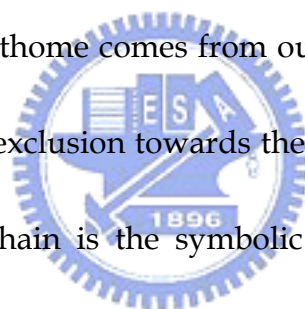
Such is exactly the case here: Chang shows us their frontal whole-length portraits, which radically present them clearly for us to watch. Chang does not emphasize these mental patients' hard life in the asylum but leads us to see directly what we cannot bear. In front of these photographs, the visual shock seems to bring us to a stage that we can hardly tell either we are looking at them or they are looking at us, a stage that we somehow sustain the emotion of being chained and being looked at. It is very likely that we see them with the same countenance as they see us and that we interact with others around us as they do. Under such circumstances, the gaze seems to be near. The gaze is not the eyes that look back but is somewhere around the chain with a lock that impales our view. On the one hand, we are attracted by the beauty of the photographs; on the other hand, we want to run away

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<sup>40</sup> Žižek explains the notion of sinthome, which has much to do with the meaning of existence (Žižek, Looking 136-40).

since it is too tough to look at directly: it is not because the images are attacking us, but because they seem to chain and freeze us by showing us the chain as fantasy. We somehow become the objects watched by them in the process of reading this book.

The existence of the physical chain is not to connect the relation of the patients and the world but a symbolic resolution to deal with the social sinthome that we do not know how to solve. Chang's photographs lead us to a stage that we become the objects watched by them. It seems that he tries to tell us that the social sinthome comes from our own monstrosity, our own excess, and our gesture of exclusion towards them. In other words, Chang's book shows us that the chain is the symbolic resolution to solve illusory problems (the patients' irrational behaviors, such as playing with fire as "Letter of a Madman" says) with a real cause (the fear of their pointing out our monstrosity).<sup>41</sup>



### 3.4 Photographs Form a Fantastic Space

Although the photographs are able to traverse the social fantasy, they are themselves fantasy as they form a rhythm of repetition and variation. On

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<sup>41</sup> "Social hysteria is not only a real problem (false accusation) with an illusory cause (fear of a "psychical" reality) but an illusory problem (witches, child abusers) with a real cause (fear of social disruption)" (Caudill 97).

the one hand, the photographs with the repetition of chain stage the desire for the stable social order: we chain them in order to maintain the order in reality since we do not know how to solve the problems of the mental patients. Further, the repetition of the photographs stages the desire to understand, or to connect with them through taking and reading photographs.

In taking photographs, Chang faces the photographed, devolving part of his authority, providing the space for mental patients to pose themselves in front of the camera. The statement "When I push the shutter, it's me, but it's them, too" (Kobersteen 11) can be transformed as "When the camera is shot, it is they as well as Chang who are speaking." On the one hand, they speak while they express themselves partly free in front of the camera; on the other hand, Chang speaks while he chooses the way to point his camera and shoot. This takes place in the process of photographing and remains in the photographic fantastic space. In other words, what cannot be confronted directly in reality can be envisaged in the process of taking and reading photographs.

On the other hand, the repetition of the images also screens the social antagonism that we pretend it does not exist. We think that the society would be safe by chaining these mental patients. However, Chang's

photographs traverse the social fantasy; at the same time, he constructs his fantastic space, preventing the real awakening<sup>42</sup> in reality to take place. The repetition of photographs forms a fantastic space to keep the unbearable real situation (our realization of the chain as fantasy) from being present directly in reality but leave the traces of it in the photographic images. It is an inherent transgression that not only traverses the social fantasy but also keeps us safe in reality.

Thus, photography and fantasy create each other. As Chang shoots the frontal, whole-length portraits, the behavior of framing is the result of fantasy. He traverses the social fantasy by showing us the sinthome and meanwhile avoiding the institutional aspects of this issue and the imagination of Long Fa Tang Temple, which is alienized by the society. Meanwhile, Chang's photographs lead us to see the social fantasy since they leave the traces of it. Since Chang spends about six years working on this project, he must have learned many problems of this issue. However, he intentionally chooses to present the photographs with minimal elements to bring out the complicated incongruity of this issue for us readers to think about hereafter.

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<sup>42</sup> In the Seminar of the Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, Jacques Lacan develops the notion of fantasy through an interpretation of the well-known dream about the 'burning child.' Žižek interprets the meaning of the dream. "[The father awakens in order to] escape the Real of his desire, which announces itself in the terrifying dream. He escapes into so-called reality to be able to continue to sleep, to maintain his blindness, to elude awakening into the real of his desire" (Žižek, Sublime 44-5).

### 3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I study the photographs in The Chain to see how Chang's photographs deal with the real contradiction of the society in Taiwan. As his most famous work, this series of photographs are de-contextualized but presented with frontal whole-length portraits of the mental patients, who are a social sinthome for Taiwan's society. The theme of chain and split is activated by the repetition and variation of the photographic images, helping us to see how the chain works as fantasy in reality.

It is worth noting that in "Letter of a Madman," the addressee is the patient's mother and he keeps calling her to bring him back home since he is a well-disciplined squad leader now. Similar to the clinical psychoanalytic approach, Chang catches the beginning of the chain in family relationship: part of the reasons for the chain in Long Fa Tang Temple to be set up is due to the social and familial exclusion (or abandonment). It binds the mental patients, excludes them, and meanwhile maintains the invisible chain of family in reality. In the asylum, the governor considers these patients as family members;<sup>43</sup> but this family is based on the physical chain. Thus, the

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<sup>43</sup> "While the religious character of Lung Fa Tang has been weakening, its household character has been increasing. Besides Hieh Kai Fang, there are now more than 20



family of Long Fa Tang Temple is already disintegrated. As for the patients' family, because they send the patients to the asylum, their family chain is then incomplete. Thus, the chain in this series of photographs is the split family chain.



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monks and nuns serving as 'Brothers' and 'Sisters' and more than 700 patients, of how around 150 are 'squad leader,' qualified to lead others on the Chains and to be team leaders. Hieh Kai Feng says, 'I don't treat them as patients.' Hsin Hsien refers to them as 'students' or 'Lung Fa Tang's children'" (Lai and Tedards, "Diary" 19).

## Chapter Four: Discovering the Split in Double Happiness

### 4.1 Preface

In this chapter, I study how Chang discovers the split in the photographs of Double Happiness.<sup>44</sup> Through a close reading of the book, I shall see how Chang interprets the cross-cultural marriage between Taiwanese men and Vietnamese women in the series of photographs.

As for the issue of cross-cultural, transnational marriage between Taiwanese men and Vietnamese women, the journalists usually report the situation of the Vietnamese women in Taiwan as social problems (Lim and Chang 187-213). The researchers deal with this issue by field study or statistics to analyze the reasons for these women to marry a stranger in Taiwan<sup>45</sup> and to illustrate the results and problems of this cross-cultural marriage. As for the photographic images, Shu-Zi Ho takes the photographs of the 19 Asian brides, who move to Taiwan from Vietnam, Indonesia, Cambodia, and Thailand after marrying Taiwanese men. When Ho exhibits

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<sup>44</sup> According to the format by Parr and Badger, the details of this book are as follow: Aperture, New York, 2005.

Hardcover, clothbound, 160 pages.

9.25×6.5 in (235×165 mm).

125 duotone images.

Photographs by Chien-Chi Chang. Essay by Claudia Glenn Dowling.

<sup>45</sup> These women are mostly daughters of fishermen and farmers. They want to marry Taiwanese men to improve their standard of living and send money back to Vietnam. This economic concern is the main reason for them to accept the brokered marriage. Dowling; Hsiao.

her photographs, she puts one clear photograph of the woman with her children aside from another similar but dimmer images. On the second photograph, the woman's words are printed: she narrates her own experiences of cross-cultural marriage in Chinese. Thus, Ho still takes some kind of anthropological approach and deals with the results and problems of cross-cultural marriage from the perspective of the brides. However, Chang takes a different perspective: he is not only concerned with the reasons, and is now tracing the results,<sup>46</sup> but also keeps the observation close to the way the couples decide to get married with each other, which is seldom paid attention to. He takes six trips to Ho Chi Minh City with four different marriage brokers and Taiwanese grooms between March 2003 and May 2004 (Lehan 74-9). I will study this latest book to see how he interprets the cross-cultural, transnational marriage with photographs so as to catch his perspective on this issue.

The book Double Happiness focuses on the process for Taiwanese men to pick up Vietnamese women and get married in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, within around three days. These photographs are either whole-length and three-fourth-length portraits, or mug-shot style portraits, which are similar

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<sup>46</sup> He keeps contact with the seven couples in the last part of this book and takes their photographs after they are married.

with those in The Chain; the book is about marriage, which corresponds to the subject in I Do I Do I Do. There are mainly six sections in this book, which include the photographs of the process from selection, checking ID, counseling and wedding celebration, the essay “The Pursuit of Happiness” by Claudia Glenn Dowling and seven cases of brokered marriage. The essay is a third-person narrative and the narrator seems to follow the men from Taipei to Vietnam, to choose their brides. From this essay, we catch some details in the whole process mainly from the experiences of three men, who are named Betel Nut, Kid and Chubby Guy according to their characteristics. This essay helps us to situate the photographs and to keep close to what Chang may try to present. In this chapter, I argue that Chang discovers the split in the theme of the book. Through studying the book, we shall see from this split, the structure of fantasy, which leads the cross-cultural, transnational marriage between Taiwanese men and Vietnamese women.

#### **4.2 The Theme of the Book Double Happiness**

The theme of the book is repetition and superimposition, from which the split of “double happiness” is discovered. First of all, the front cover of the book shows the hands which are posting the print “Double Happiness” on the

wall<sup>47</sup> while the back cover clarifies the meaning of Double Happiness as Chinese symbol for denoting the union of two families on the couple's wedding day. Double Happiness, *Shuang Xi*, is the repetition of *Xi*: the latter one is not only the repetition of the former but the variation, which brings differences. Although the book symbolically has a double "happiness," which is about marriage, it is not happy at all: the faces in the book hardly wear a smile, and the least atmosphere is joy for marriage. Thus, through repetition, the meaning would be evaluated and deferred since repetition and variation take place at the same time. Since the beginning, double happiness is the split between a double happiness; that is, two individuals from two different cultures.

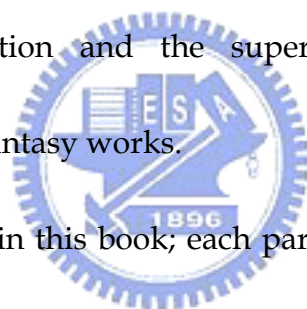


Before the book start, there is one photograph, which shows the images of many women, who sit before going through the process of selection, according to the preface of the book (Fig. 4.1). These women appear to anticipate the process; some of them even wear a smile. There seems to be some people standing or sitting in front of them. Chang takes this photograph from those people's position and we readers are carrying to this position, too. In this photograph, there are two subjects present. When we

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<sup>47</sup> Chang, Chien-Chi. Double Happiness. (NYC36289) Magnum Photos. <<http://www.magnumphotos.com/c/htm>>. Path: Photographers; Chang Chien-Chi; Double Happiness; slide 1.

read the photograph, we look at the subjects in the photograph from the position of the people in front of them. We not only see the reaction of the subjects in the photographs but are also forced to think on the position where we occupy – the position of the subjects (the brokers, the men and their family members) present out of the photographic frame. Through Chang's photograph, we see that the women are studied by the men. Afterwards, we would see the overlap of the repetition and superimposition: the repetition of the fixed mode indicates that this brokered marriage is similar to the assembly-line-like production and the superimposition leads us to a meta-position to see how fantasy works.



There are six sections in this book; each part constitutes an introductory page (white words printed on pink paper), and the photographs, which look similar: the plot is similar, the angle of shooting is almost the same, but the people in the photographs are different. The first part, which includes the photographs of the women who line up for men to be picked up, occupies almost half of the book (Fig. 4.2). Chang takes their whole-length or three-fourth-length portraits while they are waiting in the selection process. It is not these women who decide but the men. In the previous commentaries on this book, both Joanna Lehan and Bryan Walsh agree that

Chang's photographs force us to stand in the men's position. However, they do not notice that the eyes of these women do not look at the camera but focus on the same direction elsewhere. We readers are outsiders who just observe the process aside. It is hard for us to identify with either of them. If "to photograph people is to turn people into objects" that can be symbolically possessed (Sontag 14), the way the men do to the women is more violent than the way Chang takes their photographs since they not only look at them but also choose them to be their brides, who should "wed and bed" (Dowling).



When the women go through this process, they seem to be items for the men from a richer country to buy within a package offered by marriage brokers. Their physical and psychological mobility is extremely restricted since they are objectified themselves first through fantasy, in which they believe it will bring them happiness. When they go through the selection, it is their physical features that are highly noticed and cared about. However, Chang catches their eyes and body languages; their psychological mobility somehow present in Chang's photographs. Chang notices their differences: it seems that their reaction towards the process and the relation of themselves appear different among individuals or among groups.

As for the men, at first, we think they, who sit or stand in front of these women, can freely choose one from so many to marry since the previous concerns of this issue seldom mention the male perspective. However, Chang's photographs force us to stand beside their positions so that we find out that the decision might have been discovered rather than made. The repetition of the photographs lasts too much for us to remember how each of the women is different. Based merely on a single, several-minute meeting with the women from different cultures, the right to choose freely is likely to be mediated by the arrangement of the brokers. The Taiwanese men are absent in the photographs in this part. It is very likely that their physical and psychological mobility is no more than that of the women. The essay by Dowling strengthens this point by describing the decision of the three men: the Kid's wife is mostly chosen by his grandmother, the Chubby Guy's is decided by the broker (but he is not aware of it), and Betel Nut does not know how to choose and somehow follows the suggestion of the broker, too. Through repetition, Chang's photographs traverse the fantasy of the men's power of totally free choices. The superimposition of perspective leads us to occupy a meta-position so that we can see how fantasy works around them.



### 4.3 Traversing the Structure of Fantasy

The second part shows the mug-shot style portraits of the couples, who, just deciding to get married, have their IDs checked so that the women can apply visas to Taiwan (Fig. 4.3). Chang shoots the photographs from the window and we see the clear faces of the couples, generally with the innocent baby-faced women and sharply contrastive older men. The repetition shows us that although they are in the same condition, the relations of each couple are already developing differently. Seeing through the screen of the window, it seems that they are restricted in the frame, which appears as the chain in another form, forced them to connect with each other. However, the psychological chain between them appears to be split since they neither show any eye contacts nor present their joy for marriage. Such is a similar case in the next section. The photographs in the third part present us the scenes in which the Taiwanese officials counsel the couples about the possible problems of cross-cultural marriage.<sup>48</sup> The couples sit with their faces and bodies turning towards different directions; they do not have eye contacts and seem not to carefully listen, either. Chang keeps his camera very close so as to catch their facial expressions, body language, and their eyes, which appear

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<sup>48</sup> Chang, Chien-Chi. Double Happiness. (NYC36352) Magnum Photos. <<http://www.magnumphotos.com/c/htm>>. Path: Photographers; Chang Chien-Chi; Double Happiness; slide 73.

detached from their mates.

In both cases, people seem to be numbered in the repetition of the same plot. It appears that what we see keep taking place with different people involved. We are on the position of the Taiwanese officials. The superimposition draws the distance between the subjects and us readers. It is hard for us to identify ourselves with them. The brokered marriage is settled down as they proceed with the official document, which is already a fantastic screen since the paper cannot be equal to the real situation: although the women apply for visas to Taiwan, they know little about this island and their husbands; although the officials counsel the possible problems of cross-cultural marriage, their words do not help to improve the future real circumstances in marriage. Thus, these official processes offer an empty gesture for the couples, who are pushed by fantasy. This fantasy support their reality and make them legal husband and wife. However, the alienation that a true happy marriage cannot sustain is clearly present and Chang successfully shows it in his photographs.

The fourth part is the photographs taken on the couple's uniform wedding banquet with the section of kissing for the photographing session and fake champagne (Fig. 4.4). Their stiff bodies and unfamiliar kiss show

their uneasiness. They appear as robots who act according to the other's direction rather than their own ideas or emotion. The arranged wedding celebration becomes performance, which can never hide their alienation. Although there are dates on the background, time seems not important at all. No matter when the photographs are taken, the scenes look almost the same. From the repetition, we learn that what we see could keep taking place in the same mode with different people involved. At this stage, the couples turn into reality, having their wedding ceremony held and the photographs taken to prove they are husband and wife. The excess of fantasy—their alienation—is too tough to face directly so that they “turn into reality in order to control, to stifle, the fantasmatic explosion” (Žižek and Daily 112). By escaping to reality, they are able to avoid the real problems that fantasy cannot deal with so that they can be identified as husband and wife in the symbolic order; yet the real split cannot be sutured.

#### **4.4 The Gaze of Marriage**

The last part includes seven couples' photographs from the process of selection to the agreement and marriage. Each couple has three photographs taken: the first is the women lining up for selection, the second is the couple

who just agree to get married, and the third is taken on the couple's wedding ceremony.<sup>49</sup> Here, we review the process we see in the previous sections, which are narrowed down to seven cases. In each case, Chang identifies their names, takes their photographs in casual clothes after they decide whom to marry, and shows the scene of their own wedding.

In the first photograph among the three, we see the selection process again so that the previous impression is strengthened. In the beginning, both of them enter into fantasy—the marriage brokered in order to pursue happiness—so as to seek resolutions of the real problems in family: the women want to improve the standard of living and the men are pressured by the expectation of marrying and bearing children. As they are in the process, they understand at first that there is something in them more than themselves which their possible mates want; that is to say, they learn that what their mates desire are not they themselves but something in them. The fantasy of the marriage based on romantic love does not happen on either side or they will not accept the brokered and assembly-line-like marriage. Thus, they somehow traverse the fantasy of love-based marriage so that they can go through the process of selection.

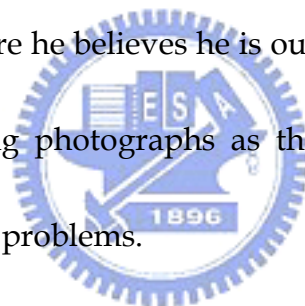
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<sup>49</sup> Chang, Chien-Chi. Double Happiness. (NYC36328; NYC36361; NYC36367) Magnum Photos. <<http://www.magnumphotos.com/c/htm>>. Path: Photographers; Chang Chien-Chi; Double Happiness; slide 103-5.

As they do so, they appear to enter another fantasy: they believe that marriage helps them to pursue happiness. In the second photograph among the three, we see their relation is establishing but we are not sure how it is and how it will be. Yet the woman in the second photograph looks different from that in the first one: she appears from being immobile to attaining mobility. While presenting the couple together, Chang's photographs do not restrict in dealing with the gender hierarchy that usually mentioned in the concern of this issue, but show us that although they go through the uniform process, their relations can be non-fixed and the couples' relations in these seven cases are different, too. Nevertheless, their unfamiliarity cannot hide under Chang's camera. When they really get one to marry, they encounter another real problem that fantasy cannot deal with—the alienation between two individuals from different cultures. On facing the real problems again, they also choose to run into the symbolic order: the wedding celebration and the wedding pictures provide the structure of fantasy for them. In the third photograph among the three, we see that the couples pose for pictures; sometimes there is another man helping them to do the “performance,” to show how lovely a couple they are. Although they know what their mates long for are not themselves in the beginning, they still try to believe that it is

possible for them to become a lovely couple in the near future. This is indeed the structure of fantasy, which works around them.

However, the fundamental fantasy seems to lie in Chang himself. When he observes and represents these processes, he pretends that his look is a neutral one which is not influenced by the fantasy, which works around these people. His fixed attitude and sharp critiques in this sense seems to offend the industrialized cross-cultural brokered marriage. In these photographs, it is hard for us to see the complexity of the cross-cultural marriage. However, it is very likely that the more he believes he is outside of the fantasy, the more it is possible for his taking photographs as the way to seek the symbolic resolution towards the real problems.



Žižek interprets Lacan's words on the gaze thus: "The gaze is [...] a point at which the very frame (of my view) is already inscribed in the 'content' of the pictures viewed" (Žižek, Looking 125). In other words, when we look at a picture, we are already gazed at by the object; that is the stain on the picture. This object seems to be decided first before we look at it. It appears that I only see part of the picture without noticing the stain but I am totally and thoroughly gazed at by the stain, which is the object of the Other's desire. Thus, when Chang stands outside of the fantasy of such a brokered marriage,

the gaze is not his gaze at the couples but the gaze of cross-cultural marriage that gazes at him first from the photographs he takes. The stance of the photographs is one-dimensional because that Chang understands the complexity of cross-cultural experiences and tries to show us that both the brides and grooms know nothing about it and because that when he stands outside witnessing these processes, he seems to have many questions on how they could decide to go through and accept such a brokered marriage relation. His one-dimensional perspective appears to consider the marriage violently and he himself strongly rejects it. It is possible that he tries to avoid the appearance of the gaze, to escape from the object, which may lie in the social fantasy of the brokered marriage, such as the reasons for Taiwanese men to pick up Vietnamese women (rather than the other countries), the economic and psychological pressure and expectation from the couples' families and societies, the role of the brokers, and the problems of social class, birth rates and the population structure relating to this issue. He avoids the complicated levels of the social fantasy to avoid the gaze of the cross-cultural marriage. Thus, photographs appear to be the symbolic resolution to his unsolvable situation and he seems quite sure of his own position when he faces the interlacing of the social fantasy of the brokered marriage and his

own fantasy of the cross-cultural union.

#### 4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I study the photographs in Double Happiness to see how Chang interprets the cross-cultural marriage between Taiwanese men and Vietnamese women. As his latest book, Chang shows us how fantasy supports this brokered marriage. Through the theme repetition and superimposition, we see that the couples do not have free choices in the process. Even when they decide who to marry, the alienation between two persons from different cultures cannot hide under Chang's camera. Nevertheless, fantasy works around them so that they somehow believe it is a way for them to pursue happiness.

Among Chang's three books, two of them deal with marriage, which is the possible foundation of a new family. In the book Double Happiness, this question is more complicated. It is not only about brokered marriage, but also about cross-cultural encounter. There are indeed two chains and two boundaries: one is marriage, which is a possible foundation of a new family and the boundary from strangers to husband and wife; the other is cross-cultural experiences, which is the challenge of different cultures and the



boundary between Taiwan and Vietnam. Double happiness is thus double boundary and double chain of family and of culture. This complicated problem of family and cross-culture seems to be an important concern of Chang.



## Chapter Five: Conclusion

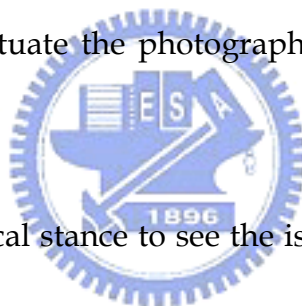
### 5.1 Preface

In this chapter, I aim at concluding this study in three aspects: first, I plan to discuss the de-contextualized photographs in the three photobooks; then I will try to illustrate the theme of chain/disintegration in Chang's photographs; finally, I wish to see the characteristics of Chang's photography.

### 5.2 The De-contextualized Photographs in the Three Books

In the three photobooks, we see that the referential meanings of the photographic images are de-contextualized; meanwhile, Chang re-contextualizes the images in his photobooks by arranging the sequence of images and providing the text to situate the photographs. In I Do I Do I Do, although Chang observes the local visual culture and new local rituals of wedding in Taiwan in the late 1990s, the photographs do not present particular social-historical background. The article by Lai helps us to situate the photographs in Taiwan's blossoming wedding boutiques. However, there is no particular event concerned. What we see in the photographs seems to keep taking place with different people involved. It appears that time is not of the primal importance; it is simultaneously of the moment and

timeless. Thus, it is the issue that matters rather than particular events. In The Chain and Double Happiness, the visual impact of the de-contextualized photographs is strengthened by the features of repetition and variation of the photographic images. In The Chain, the same plot repeats throughout the book; in Double Happiness, it seems that different individuals are numbered and filled in these plots respectively. There is almost no background, which indicates the environment and the social historical context. Under such circumstances, it is the articles in the two books that provide the context, which not only helps to situate the photographs but also reinforce Chang's critical stance.



Chang occupies a critical stance to see the issues in Taiwan's society and he presents it with the de-contextualized photographs. Whether it is straight images or it looks from an unusual angle, it is Chang's looking awry, which distanciates our conventional way of seeing and understanding of the issues. Chang traverses the social fantasy and successfully reads out the social symptoms, which lies beyond the original social context. However, Chang does, and have to, re-contextualize his photographs in his photobooks since "photographs, in themselves, are fragmentary and incomplete utterances" (Sekula, "Reading" 117). From the connection of these series of photographs,

we shall access to Chang's critical stance and form a discourse to read his photographs.

### 5.3 The Theme of Chain/Disintegration of Family

The theme of chain/disintegration of family keeps appearing in Chang's works; it seems that Chang tries to establish the archive of the chain/disintegration of family relationship in cross-cultural perspective by traversing the social fantasy. In I Do I Do I Do, he challenges the fantasy of wedding rituals in Taiwan by looking awry at the scenes in wedding. He shows that there is no free choice for the couples to decide how their wedding pictures are; further, their going through public wedding rituals is indeed the act to fulfill the other's desire in order to be recognized in the society, instead of making their fairytale dreams come true. Thus, if marriage is the possible foundation of a new family, it is split already since it is established on fantasy. It is likely that part of the reasons for the fantasy to be traversed is because that Chang, who has lived abroad for about five years when he starts the project, is to some extent an outsider of the new local wedding rituals in Taiwan. There is a distance between his stance and the new local culture of wedding.

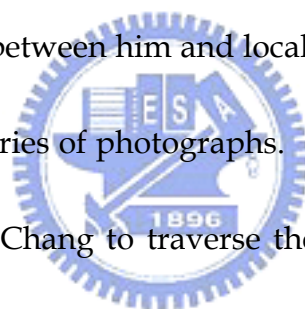
Such is a similar case in Double Happiness, in which Chang deals with the beginning of the cross-cultural marriage between Taiwanese men and Vietnamese women. The marriage is already a split with two strange individuals from two different cultures and societies. They run into the structure of fantasy in order to solve the real problems that can not be dealt with in reality. They try to establish a new chain of family but this chain is split when it is connected. The object of their desire appears and is lost at the same time<sup>50</sup> since they are in the structure of fantasy. Thus, marriage, as the possible foundation of a new family, appears to be split in Chang's works.

If in the two books mentioned above Chang presents that the chain has been split since the beginning, in The Chain, Chang shows that the chain as fantasy, is to control the social monstrosity and sustain the disintegrated society. The patients in Long Fa Tang Temple are chained by the Chain of Compassion, which forces them to live together like families. Chang presents the social sinthome in these clear, frontal whole-length portraits so that we readers meet the real contradiction in the society. He sees the core of the chain as the sustentation of their disintegrated family, which sends them

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<sup>50</sup> "This coincidence of emergence and loss, of course, designates the fundamental paradox of the Lacanian objet petit a which emerges as being-lost—narrativization occludes this paradox by describing the process in which the object is first given and then get lost" (Žižek, "Seven" 13).

to the asylum in order to keep the family as a whole, and that of the new family, in which they are forced to be chained together. Chang leads us to see the paradox: for the former, it is because their families send them to Long Fa Tang Temple that their original family is not complete; for the later, it is this iron chain that proves this family is forced to connect physically without based on blood and psychological connection. Chang starts this project when he has been away from home for four or five years; he is curious about the life in this local asylum and he wants to find out the situation by himself (Juan 7). The connection between him and local Taiwan<sup>51</sup> is re-established in the process of taking the series of photographs. And it is very likely that the distance in between leads Chang to traverse the social fantasy and sees the issue with a new perspective.



The theme of family can also be seen in “Family Album”<sup>52</sup> and the series of photographs relating to Chinatown: in both cases, the chain is split. In “Family Album,”<sup>53</sup> Chang takes photographs on the family trip back to Wuri

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<sup>51</sup> Chang says, “When I finished my studies in America in 1993, I really felt like coming back to Taiwan because I had been away from home for 4 or 5 years. The existence of Lung Fa Tang, a very special phenomenon, indicates some problems hidden in the dark corners of Taiwan” (Juan 7). The previous commentaries do not mention this relation between Chang and the environment so that I clarify this point here.

<sup>52</sup> Some of the photographs have been published in *Time Asia*. The series of photographs has been exhibited in Taipei MOMA Online from 6 Dec. 2003 through 15 Jan. 2004. Lin, Chi-Ming has written a commentary on this series of photographs. Chang, “Time Bends” 72-7; Chang, “Family Album”; Lin, “Feeling” c8.

<sup>53</sup> Since this series of photographs is not published in book form, I do not discuss it

village, where he was born and lived till six years old (Chang, "Vanished").

In this series of photographs, we do not see the stereotypical images of harmonious family gathering but meet the scenes cut from an angle. It seems that Chang does not want to face the village and his family directly since what they are is no longer what they were. As he lives in the United States for more than ten years, he is likely to be the outsider in his family.

The chain is split in the cross-regional (from Wuri to Taichung City) and cross-cultural (from Taiwan to America) experiences and the photographs

somehow appear as the chain to connect what is split in reality. As for the

project of Chinatown, Chang starts in 1992 and he is still working on it.<sup>54</sup>

Chang entitles the series of photographs "Divided Lives,"<sup>55</sup> which photograph the lives of some families on different lands: one side is the illegal

immigrants (mostly men) who live in the tenements in the Chinatown in New



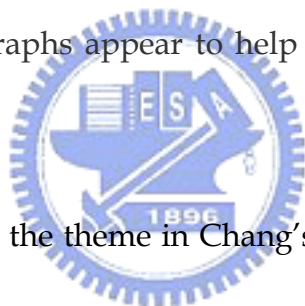

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carefully in this study. However, it is worth for future researchers to pay attention to. Chang shoots this series of photographs in 2003, after he is famous and becomes the full member of Magnum. At this stage, he starts to look back at his family and his hometown. It is an obvious beginning of his self-reflection.

<sup>54</sup> Since this project has not been done, I can not include the detailed discussion in this study. I really recommend the future researchers to study carefully this series of photographs. It is Chang's long-term concerns. Thus, in this series of photographs, we may tell how Chang's photographs change from making efforts on composing and framing the pictures to presenting simple portraits. Then, the subject of Chinatown seems very important for Chang himself. Chang says, "Mentally, Chinatown was the most difficult" (Lassiter 20). "Ever since I was a kid, I had heard about New York's Chinatown. It's a very mysterious place—almost a nation unto itself—so I knew it would be a difficult place to photograph. But I also felt that I shared a kind of loneliness with the people there" (Brown 49).

<sup>55</sup> Chang showed some of the photographs in his address.

York City, earning a living and sending the money back to China; the other side is their families (the immigrants' wives and children) who live in Mainland China with the money sent back from New York. Chang's photographs directly show that the chain between the two sides is disconnected and each side establishes the other chain (as fantasy) to sustain themselves. Most importantly, Chang's photographs seem to be another chain that comes to connect the family members in different lands. Some of the persons even see their family in the other continents through Chang's photographs. His photographs appear to help them re-establish the family chain again.



There is a repetition of the theme in Chang's works. Although he takes so many photographs to reflect different issues, all of them have much to do with the chain/disintegration of family. Also, when each time the theme repeats, it involves different people, different conditions, different interrelationship, and different chain/disintegration. I Do I Do I Do and Double Happiness deal with marriage, in which the chain is split since the beginning; The Chain concerns the non-families who are forced to live together like families by the iron chain; "Family Album" and "Divided Lives" focus on the family, in which the chain has disconnected in the cross-cultural



experiences but re-establishes in/by photographs. If the symptom is a “return of the repressed” (Freud, “Repression” 154) and it would keep returning, the repetition of the theme can be the symptoms of the society, which present similar problems or fantasies in different conditions. Chang, by the symptomatic reading of the society, traverses the social fantasy, which considers the family and the society as a whole, and reveals the condition in each issue based on his own observation. In other words, while the social fantasy tells us that the chain is connected, Chang’s photographs traverse the fantasy so that we see the chain as split.



#### 5.4 The Characteristics of Chang’s Photography

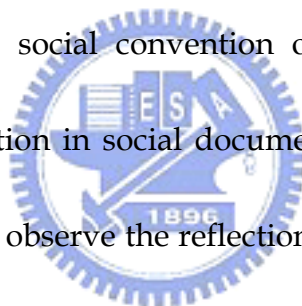
Chang not only traverses the social fantasy but also challenges the fantasy of taking photographs, which comes from the social convention of photography’s function. In I Do I Do I Do, Chang concerns the differences between people who are under camera and those who are outside of the camera. The fantasy lies in that people have their wedding pictures taken in order to prove their happiness. They strike a pose which objectifies themselves before the camera is shot. However, when they are not aware of their presence under camera, they do not “perform” their social roles at all.

If the social meaning of taking pictures emphasizes the relations between individuals in the symbolic system, this relation appears to be split here since the people in Chang's photographs do not perform their social roles. By taking such photographs, Chang seems to criticize the social meaning of taking pictures.

In Double Happiness, he presents the stance more radically with an ironic look. In the fourth section in this book, he takes the photographs of the couples' kissing for pictures on their wedding; in the last seven cases, he also photographs the wedding celebration of the seven couples. When the photographs in the two plots are compared, in both cases the couples know that someone is pointing a camera at them. However, we see that in the former plot, the couples are uneasy and their alienation can not be hidden under Chang's camera while in the later plot, the couples pose and smile for photographs in order to show how lovely couples they are. Here, Chang sees the social convention of facing a camera with an ironic eye: he not only criticizes this convention, but also strengthens the split state of the chain by showing us these contrastive scenes. It appears that Chang criticizes people's pose and performance in front of camera by showing the images which are not expected. Besides, he also takes different approach of

shooting camera. He does not ask the subjects how to pose; he just follows them, observes aside and shoots camera at certain angle. He neither victimizes the subjects matter nor presents his pity in his photographs (especially in The Chain). As he takes photographs, he not only thinks about the subjects matter, presenting his concerns and stances towards the issue, but also reflects on the meaning and approaches of taking pictures, re-thinking about "photography." Thus, his photographs traverse the fantasy of social meaning of taking pictures and he himself practices it in the three books.

Besides criticizing the social convention of photography, Chang also reflects the common condition in social documentary photography. In The Chain in particular, we can observe the reflection on this aspect. The mental patients in Long Fa Tang Temple are easily victimized in an event when their photographs are taken to either call for reform or record them and their life inside. However, Chang does not base on these purposes. He just wants to see "how they live inside" (Juan 8) as he starts this project. Chang neither shows us the environment of Long Fa Tang Temple nor presents some sensational images to achieve visual impact, which is another way to raise sympathy. He neither reports an event nor victimizes the subjects matter but shows us the clear, frontal whole-length portraits. He takes traditional



approach of documentary: he spends much time with his subjects matter, he takes straight photographs, and he adopts the frontal portraits, which is one of the earliest forms of images, to present his opinions. He does not emphasize the neutrality of his camera nor hide its existence. He presents what he sees with his photographic language and is clearly aware of the mediation of his camera. He agrees that learning to shoot camera and learning the feeling of being photographed<sup>56</sup> are both important. Although he stays with his subjects matter for a long period of time observing them, he presents us the cool (rather than passionate), de-contextualized (rather than with specific social event) images. Thus, through close reading of the photographs in Chang's photobooks, we see that Chang appears to cultivate his "territory of images" (Sekula, "Reading" 116), which concerns the chain/disintegration of family in cross-cultural perspective. He not only keeps close to the core of each issue, but also tries to draw a distance in order to stay cool to present the social fantasy in his photographs. He also challenges the social documentary by the de-contextualized photographic images, which reduce the eventness (the event dimension of the context of the images) but construct the photographic discourse to present his own

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<sup>56</sup> When he teaches students now, he will ask them to feel the feeling of being photographed. Chang, address.

viewpoints.

### 5.5 Chang's Fantasy?

There is one more question: if the theme of chain/disintegration of family keeps appearing in Chang's works, is it possible that what Chang expresses in his photographs is his own symptom? In a recent address, when Chang was asked this question, he denied. However, in the book Magnum Stories, Chang writes,

Something bothers you until you do something about it, and taking pictures is what I do. I just go in. I don't have a preconceived plan. I don't know what's going to come out of the end of the tunnel, but I just launch in and experience it. (83)

We can still tell from his words that photography is the way out for him to deal with his problems.

It seems that his own fantasy leads him to concern the theme of chain/disintegration of family. However, while he tries to deal with this theme, he avoids the complicated social reality in different issues. It is worth noting that the family in Chang's photographs appears to be horizontal, instead of vertical. It is easy for us to recognize the chain and the split of the

chain but hard to see the complex connection between or among different generations.<sup>57</sup> It appears that what he cannot face directly lies in the vertical aspect of each issue. In Chang's photographs, the subjects appear alienated; the chain among them is split. However, although they appear alienated in photographs, it does not mean that their relations are always alienated in reality. To some extent, their alienation seems to come from Chang's distance or his alienation from the subjects. In other words, the chain between Chang and part of the world appears to some extent split. The repetition of the same theme in different series of photographs appears to be the chain for him to connect the split chain and the photographs he takes seem to be a fantasy that stands as his symbolic act to deal with his personal contradiction with reality. As he keeps taking photographs, he seeks to answer his questions; meanwhile, he seems to ask more questions to produce the lack, to avoid the gaze, and to keep seeking answers so that he may maintain his existence in the symbolic order.

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<sup>57</sup> Here, I point to the three photobooks. Perhaps we can see the complex connection among generations in the photographs in "Family Album" and "Divided Lives" later.

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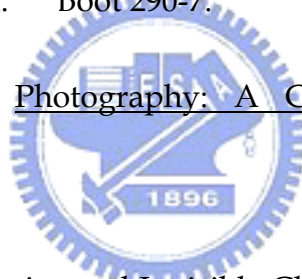
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## Figures

Chien-Chi Chang and Magnum Photos do not authorize the online publication of the photographs. Please check the hard copies of this thesis.

























## Appendix A: About Chien-Chi Chang

Chien-Chi Chang was born in 1961 in central Taiwan. He graduated from the Department of English Languages and Literatures at Soochow University (Taiwan) in 1984, and the Institute of Instructional Systems Technology at Indiana University (the United States) in 1989. Photography, for him as a hobby in the past, drowned him into its field since he joined the students' newspaper at Indiana University, which offered him the chance to learn the works in newspaper with other schoolmates, who came mostly from the Department of Journalism. After graduation, he worked as a photography intern for Seattle and National Geographic in 1990, a staff photographer at the Seattle (Washington) Times from 1991 to 1993, and at the Baltimore (Maryland) Sun in 1994. Thus, he is well-experienced in the work of newspaper. Besides, he also joined the Missouri Photo Workshop in 1989 and Eddie Adams Workshop in 1991, learning photography from some seniors (such as Eugene Richards) in this field. However, he chose to quit the job, becoming a freelancer, in order to shoot the subjects he is interested in and to present the images in the way he wants rather than following the assignment of the editors.

Chang decided to be a photographer in his graduate study but he soon

received many prestigious awards, such as the First Place in the category of “Daily Life” in World Press Photo (Holland) in 1999 and the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual W. Eugene Smith Grant in Humanistic Photography. He was nominated to join Magnum Photos in 1995 and became a full member in 2001. The books he has published are I Do I Do I Do (2001), The Chain (2002), and Double Happiness (2005). He now lives and works in Taipei and New York.

