

Ghost-writing: Trauma and Queer Performativity in Taiwanese Lesbian Fiction¹

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ABSTRACT

Due to social hostility, some Taiwanese lesbian fictions appear in the form of “ghost-writing,” concerned with the ghost-status of the lesbian. Among them, I find Chiu Miao-jin’s lesbian novel *Notes of the Crocodile* and Chang Yi-shuan’s short story “The Blissful Haunted House” particularly intriguing. Both fictions are Bildungsromans retrospectively delving into the trauma of growing up lesbian; both use queer performativity to transform shame into proud self-display and thereby produce meaning and subjectivity. Drawing from Žižek’s interpretation of the Lacanian notions of the biological death and the symbolic death and the gap between them, I argue that if the patriarchal symbolic denies the existence of lesbianism and sentences the lesbian to symbolic death prior to her biological death, then the narrator of either fiction can be seen as using the public space between her and the reader to deal with the ghosting, and this also involves the Lacanian gap between the two deaths. Both narrators deploy various kinds of strategies to fight the system, presenting the lesbian as more than just a sublime ghost or a fearsome monster, for they also portray the lesbian as a child or a trickster refusing the symbolic death and mischievously donning the costumes of the ghost and the monster to terrify the straight. This paper will deal with the ghost-writing of these two fictions, exploring how the narrators alternate the tropes of the ghost and the monster with different strategies in presenting the lesbian’s trauma and queer performativity and thereby renegotiate the lesbian’s space in the symbolic order.

KEY WORDS

Taiwanese lesbian fiction, trauma, ghost, queer performativity,
Chiu Miao-ji, *Notes of the Crocodile*, Chang Yi-shuan,
“The Blissful Haunted House”



In her introduction to *Inside/Out*, a collection of essays on lesbian/gay/queer theories, Diana Fuss notes that homosexual production emerges under inhospitable conditions as a kind of “ghost-writing, a writing which is at once a recognition and a refusal of the cultural representation of ‘the homosexual’ as phantom Other” (4). Such a double vision displays a fascination with the figure of the homosexual as the specter of abjection, while it seeks to break down the binary opposition between heterosexuality and homosexuality by showing that each is haunted by the other. Since compulsory heterosexuality constructs homosexuality as interior exclusion, as the contaminated other which is incorporated inside, argues Fuss, turning homosexuality inside out exposes “not the homosexual’s abjected insides but the homosexual as the abject, as the contaminated and expurgated insides of the heterosexual subject” (3).

Some Taiwanese lesbian fiction demonstrates a similar preoccupation with the figure of the homosexual as specter, but, unlike the essays in *Inside/Out*, it is as much concerned with “the homosexual’s abjected insides” as with “the homosexual as the abject . . . insides of the heterosexual subject.”² Perhaps for the authors the lesbian’s trauma constitutes an abiding theme that carries personal, communal, and political import in a social context where lesbians remain largely invisible, unintelligible, and abjected. Another of their abiding themes is the lesbian’s resistance and subjectivity, which is shown through a refusal, a deflection, or a subversion of the heterosexual matrix, particularly through what Eve Sedgwick calls “queer performativity.” Significantly, like two sides of a coin, these two themes are often intertwined. Whereas the lesbian’s trauma, often caused by social discrimination, simultaneously intimates the lesbian’s

powerlessness and implicitly critiques compulsory heterosexuality, queer performativity produces meaning and subjectivity through transforming identity-related shame into proud self-display, thereby satirizing the fascination with the homosexual implicit in heterosexism and homophobia. At the affective level, trauma and queer performativity seem diametrically opposed but they may be interactive and complementary; the tension between them suggests the ambivalence within the lesbian subject in its relationship with patriarchal sexual and gender norms.

Among Taiwanese lesbian fiction, I find Chiu Miao-jin's lesbian novel *Notes of the Crocodile* (1994) and Chang Yi-shuan's short story "The Blissful Haunted House" (2001) particularly intriguing in presenting the figure of the homosexual as specter. *Notes of the Crocodile* is set in the early 1990s, when Taiwan's lesbian/gay/queer movements³ are still weak, while "The Blissful Haunted House" is set at the peak of the movements. Though the different settings may affect the tone, the plot, and the ending of the two fictions,⁴ both are Bildungsromans retrospectively delving into the trauma of growing up lesbian. Obsessed with the homosexual taboo, the protagonists of both fictions associate their lesbianism with death in one way or another. This linking often appears in the form of tropes but it may also be acted out in the fictions. The Crocodile in *Notes of the Crocodile* commits suicide; the narrators of both fictions mutilate themselves, and the narrator of "The Blissful Haunted House" even wants to bury herself alive, which suggests the possibility of suicide. Chang Yi-shuan's "An Erotic Story," a story in her *Breaking Down* (2001), the same collection of short fictions that contains "The Blissful Haunted House," also reveals the unbearable social pressures of heterosexual conformity. The protagonist, a junior high school female student, wants to die with her beloved the moment she finds she has same-sex desire for her: "Like a quick reflex response, just to think that we want to be together leads immediately to the thought of death" (Chang, "An Erotic Story" 100).⁵ Given that the patriarchal, heterosexual culture overtly and covertly prohibits lesbianism by presuming that it cannot or dare not exist, the young lesbian growing up alone feels that she is painfully

denied the right to exist. In real life the talented author Chiu Miao-jin has become an icon and a legend in local lesbian communities after she took her own life, a phenomenon that shows how lesbians strategically conflate Chiu with her fictional characters and use her death as a means to gain social visibility and recognition. The controversy⁶ surrounding Luo Yi-chuin's novel, *And Now She Remains in You* (2001), in which the narrator virtually takes advantage of the "Chiu Miao-jin phenomenon" by imagining himself patronizingly soothing and caressing the abject Chiu before molesting her corpse, further indicates how compulsory heterosexuality silences and outlaws the lesbian after her death—and this even during the flourishing of the lesbian/gay/queer movements in Taiwan. In both *Notes of the Crocodile* and "The Blissful Haunted House," the protagonists, unable to cope with cultural prohibition, try to repress their lesbian desire, which in turn brings about their unhappy, if not troubled, love relationship. On the other hand, both protagonists are addressing first-person to the implied reader, one in the form of a memoir, the other a public love letter,⁷ and are thus in a sense renegotiating the relationship between lesbianism and the compulsory system of heterosexuality in the public space. It is in this space that they present "a love that dares not speak its name" (to borrow Alfred Douglas's famous words). Their complex self-positioning recalls the Lacanian notions of the biological death and the symbolic death and the gap between them.

According to Žižek, for Lacan, the difference between the two deaths is the difference "between real (biological) death and its symbolization, the 'settling of accounts,' the accomplishment of symbolic destiny (deathbed confession in Catholicism, for example)" (135). And sometimes there is a gap between the two deaths. As Žižek points out,

This gap can be filled in various ways; it can contain either sublime beauty or fearsome monsters: in Antigone's case, her symbolic death, her exclusion from the symbolic community of the city, precedes her actual death and imbues her character with sublime

beauty, whereas the ghost of Hamlet's father represents the opposite case—actual death unaccompanied by symbolic death, without a settling of accounts—which is why he returns as a frightful apparition until his debt has been settled. (135)

In describing Antigone as imbued with “sublime beauty,” Žižek (together with Lacan) evokes the Kantian definition of the Sublime; as he quotes Kant, “The Sublime may be described in this way: It is an object (of nature) the *representation [Vorstellung] of which determines the mind to regard the elevation of nature beyond our reach as equivalent to a presentation [Darstellung] of ideas*” (202). As Žižek elucidates, Kant separates the empirical, phenomenal objects of experience from the transcendental, trans-phenomenal Idea; since the gap between them is unsurpassable, the Sublime is an object that enables us to experience the impossibility of the representation to reach after the Idea. The paradox of the Sublime, then, is that it makes us see the dimension of what is unrepresentable (i. e., the Idea) through the permanent failure of representation. Nature, for instance, evokes in us the feeling of the Sublime when it displays its most chaotic, boundless, and terrible aspects (Žižek 202–203). In Antigone's persistence we see “the frightening strangeness, ‘inhumanity’, *apathetic* character of her figure” (Žižek 117). She “goes to the limit,” persists “in the ‘death drive,’” and therefore becomes “frighteningly ruthless, exempted from the circle of everyday feelings and considerations” (117). In other words, Antigone awakens in us the feeling of the Sublime because she is a fearless, unbending martyr, which makes her incomprehensible to “ordinary people.” Above all, as a woman, she seems like a heretic or outlaw breaking the patriarchal laws by her fierce defiance, even though the ending of Sophocles's *Antigone* proves that she is right in pursuing social justice. It is in this sense that I think Antigone's exclusion from the symbolic community can be linked with the lesbian. For the lesbian is excluded from the symbolic community and ghosted precisely because she rejects the patriarchal laws in becoming “a woman who does not want men,” a woman who provokes intense horror and anxiety since she is unintelligible to “ordinary people.”

Nevertheless, the understanding of "ordinary people" is itself limited, shaped as it is by the patriarchal laws. "Ordinary people" have their own ignorance and prejudice, hence treating as ghosts people and things they cannot understand. When the lesbian, like Antigone, invokes social justice in pointing out the ignorance and prejudice of the laws, "ordinary people," partly understanding what she says and partly fearing the unchangeable character of the severe laws, feel her persistence in the death-drive. The lesbian, then, is turned into a sublime ghost.

On the other hand, precisely on account of the ignorance and prejudice of the laws, the lesbian is even more often seen as a frightful ghost or monster than a sublime ghost. As Monique Wittig observes, the lesbian represents a threat not only because of her refusal of the role "woman"—note that this role is always already defined as "heterosexual woman"—but also because of her "refusal of the economic, ideological, and political power of a man" (53). Terry Castle notes, "Western civilization has for centuries been haunted by a fear of 'women without men,'" hence tending to treat the lesbian as either a "non-person" or else "a sinister bugaboo to be driven from the scene at once" (5). In some European countries, while male homosexuality has been an offense punishable by death until the nineteenth century, lesbianism has seldom been proscribed, which makes the lesbian "a sort of juridical phantasm" (Castle 6). Not because they dismissed the threat of lesbianism; on the contrary, "they were afraid that by the very act of mentioning it, they might spread such unspeakable 'filthiness' even further" (Castle 6). Likewise, western literature and popular fantasy over the centuries have carried on the ghosting of lesbianism (Castle 6). In other words, by ignoring lesbianism, western culture dehumanizes the lesbian, treating her as an unspeakably filthy specter. According to Eve Sedgwick, "the simple, stubborn fact or pretense of ignorance . . . can sometimes be enough to enforce discursive power" (*Epistemology* 6). Due to the epistemological asymmetry of the laws, "ignorance and opacity collude or compete with knowledge" (*Epistemology* 4); as a result, "'closetness' itself is a performance initiated as such by the speech act of a silence" (*Epistemology* 3).

that embody, define, negotiate, or rupture human relations, especially those between the individual and the group, critiquing the complex process of their working opens up the space for queer performativity. In the performative "Shame on you," addressed to the queer, for instance, Eve Sedgwick's deconstructive reading finds that "the absence of an explicit verb from 'Shame on you' records the place in which an I, in conferring shame, has effaced itself and its own agency. . . . The verblessness of this particular performative, then, implies a first person whose singular/plural status, whose past/present/future status, and indeed whose agency/passivity can only be questioned rather than presumed" ("Queer Performativity" 4).

Queer performativity does not consist exclusively of such deconstruction. Sedgwick goes on to argue that "shame and pride, shame and self-display, shame and exhibitionism are different interlinings of the same glove: shame . . . *is performance*. I mean theatrical performance" ("Queer Performativity" 5). Using Henry James's prefaces to *The Art of the Novel* as a kind of prototype of queer performativity, Sedgwick shows how James, while being embarrassed by his past shame, eroticizes his shame in order to love his queer youth, in the same way that parents recognize their queer offspring ("Queer Performativity" 8). Thus his former self is no longer an abandoned, rejected, lonely child, but is transformed into an adored, "childlike" child, who is playfully naked in a bath, displaying "a new, pleasurable form of exhibitionist flirtation with the adults" ("Queer Performativity" 10). Through his re-imagining his queer childhood, James's writing self and his "inner child" constitute a "narcissism/shame circuit"; while the face of his writing self and its audience, like in a theatrical performance, also constitute a hyperbolic and dangerous narcissism/shame circuit ("Queer Performativity" 7, 11). These two circuits intersect, manifesting that James dramatizes and integrates shame, "in the sense of rendering this potentially paralyzing affect narratively, emotionally, and performatively productive" (11). Sedgwick's theory and interpretation indicate that there is a kind of queer performativity in which the adult queer subject seeks to address and transform the shame and stigma of his/her youth through

hyperbolic, narcissistic and childlike performance.

The Crocodile sections in *Notes of the Crocodile*, where queer performativity abounds, parody and satirize the compulsory system's attempts to annihilate lesbianism. *Notes of the Crocodile* is written in a peculiar way. It contains eight books of notes, yet the first-person writer of these notes is La-tze rather than the Crocodile. The Crocodile appears in the first entry of the first book, but the meaning of the episode is unclear; it seems to be just part of La-tze's fantasy. From there on, the Crocodile always appears in separate entries and in a third-person narrative, divided from the plotline of La-tze. The allusions in the fifth and eighth entries of Book Two to leading newspapers such as *China Times*, *United Daily News*, and a TV news program on TTV's channel show that the Crocodile is a figure for the lesbian, in particular the stigmatized lesbian. On the other hand, since the name "La-tze" also means "lesbian," the names of "La-tze" and "Crocodile" seem to refer to each other. Starting from the eighth entry of Book Two, the novel is interspersed with the Crocodile's performances as well as hyperbolic portrayals of the media's and the government's persecution of the Crocodile, both of which strongly suggest that the Crocodile sections are satirical fantasies, and that the writer should be La-tze. La-tze seems to use the Crocodile as her persona in these sections to give campy performances. The narrative strategies of these sections are quite different from those in the main plot, in that the personal details are reduced to the minimum¹⁰ in order to make the Crocodile a prototype of the lesbian living in Taiwan confronted with the discourse on the lesbian produced by the media and the general public. In other words, through the Crocodile, La-tze is responding to the public discourse on the lesbian. Using the crocodile as a figure of the lesbian is obviously to evoke the monster-figure once again, since in Taiwanese culture the crocodile is often viewed as hideous and revolting.¹¹ Nevertheless, the allusions to the cartoon crocodile in the logo of Lacoste and a plastic toy crocodile destabilize the cultural signification of the crocodile by associating it with something as cute and adorable as the Pocket Monster. Such destabilization is accompanied by a series of the Crocodile's theatrical

performances, which present her as both in the closet (in a private space without an audience) and out of it (faced with the implied reader); she seems to be both seen and not really seen. This ambiguity about her (in) visibility constitutes the most paradoxical aspect of her relationship with the public space. These ambiguous, flirtatious, and mocking performances are queer performativity, through which La-tze/the Crocodile turns identity-related shame and melancholia into self-empowering parody and satire.

These episodes give campy portrayals of the hostile conditions under which the lesbian is placed in the early 1990s. One episode refers to a real incident in March 1992, in which Chu Mei-fung, a television newswoman, created a sensation by going to a lesbian bar with a hidden VCR and giving a homophobic news report on lesbians in *TTV's News and World Reports*.¹² Apparently in reaction to this incident, the Crocodile flirts with the Taiwanese public's voyeuristic desire through an extended exhibitionist fantasy that she says she will not act out, before she satirizes the public's hypocritical attitudes toward the lesbian. She depicts the public as pretending to be contemptuously indifferent to lesbians while at the same time avidly reading the vicious, scandalous reports on lesbians in tabloids such as *Exclusive News Reports* and *First-Hand Information*. This episode ends with the Crocodile's hyperbolic, coquettish monologue: "What on earth does the public want? To be secretly loved by so many people is unbearable. I AM SO SHY!" (Chiu, *Notes* 62). In another episode, the Crocodile is in a bath while listening to television news reports. Confronted with the news commentator's tedious speech that endorses the Government Information Office's comprehensive censorship on TV news on homosexuals in the name of protecting national morals and Taiwan's international image, the Crocodile behaves like a comedian. She first displays her nakedness to disrupt the homophobic speech; once more her exhibitionism flirts with the public's voyeuristic fantasy without making her body visualized. Aside from that, she makes a noise by squeezing a plastic toy crocodile, falls asleep three times in the tub, and then blushes and pouts for having nodded. The episode again ends with her child-like, hyperbolic, and narcissistic voice musing that she had

become a national figure, and that she should not have blushed or pouted any longer. In both these episodes the Crocodile's queer performativity entails what Sedgwick calls a "narcissism/shame circuit" ("Queer Performativity" 11). As I have written elsewhere,

The Crocodile deliberately maintains a childlike tone and gesture; notwithstanding, her performativity seems to be inseparable from her old shame. Obviously she is lonely; she probably had a harrowing, queer childhood and felt powerless as a result of the stigma. Yet through loving her former self, she re-imagines that self as adored and childlike. Recalling her old shame in her psychic theater provokes her narcissism, which in turn enables her to re-write the shaming scenes. At the same time, her child-like, campy performance is targeted at the implied reader, which is virtually heterosexual society that has persisted in shaming her. Through hyperbolic and narcissistic performativity, she displays the queer subject's resistance and subversion. (Liou, "Taiwanese Lesbian Fiction" 136)

As if for fear that the Crocodile's comic behavior and facetious tone make us forget her ghost-like status in the compulsory system of heterosexuality, the subsequent Crocodile sections develop into an allegory of the persecution of crocodiles by the State Ideological Apparatuses. Whereas these parodies of the government's Crocodile-hunting and the media's Crocodile fever can be seen as satires on the public's covert fascination with the Crocodile, the viciously homophobic condition eventually overwhelms the Crocodile. She sends to the public a video tape entitled "The Crocodile's Last Words," which records her burning herself to death while asking "Will everybody keep on liking me only on condition that I disappear from this world?" (Chiu, *Notes* 283). But right before posing the question to the viewer, the Crocodile, dressed in a white hood and robe like a lovely monster, makes a narcissistic, campy, and satirical confession. The Crocodile's drastic shift from queer performativity to despair and melancholia bespeaks the debilitating effects of shame and stigma.

Despite that her queer performativity fails to make her invulnerable, the Crocodile presents herself both as a sublime apparition and a child wearing the costume of the monster in the videotape to protest and satirize the persecution by compulsory heterosexuality; hence her suicide is meant as both a protest and a defeat.

Even though the narrator of "The Blissful Haunted House" is not as comically and hyperbolically performative as the Crocodile, she, too, does queer performativity from time to time. Through writing the love letter to her beloved, she turns shame into pride to produce meaning and being. Like the Crocodile, she is an adult queer who reacts to and transforms her girlhood shame and stigma through narcissistic, childlike, and hyperbolic performances. Both the names of the "ghost" and the "Haunted House" (or "Ghost-house") signify the lesbian's pain of being ghosted, the lesbian's self-identity, and the childlike fun of donning the costume of the ghost to terrify people.¹³ Calling her beloved "my ghost," the narrator breaks a ten-year silence by confessing to her that she had felt love at first sight of her beloved at the age of twelve, a love that had felt like cutting pain. She says playfully and satirically that she is now willing to let go of the "normal" life that has always already set up a haunted house to put in and exterminate homosexuals: "Is the Haunted House a place of death? Then just treat me as someone who is already dead in this life!" (Chang, "The Blissful" 50). She offers a belated celebration of this love at first sight by describing how it had been like some kind of a swoon, in which she had felt immensely blissful. That is, the cutting pain of her amorous desire for her beloved who wore white shirts and red shorts seemed to have caused her temporary blindness, when the red of the shorts had spilled over like blood so that the narrator could see only red, a red that was at once life-threatening and seductive: "I felt that the red there would flow, run, collapse, and tangle up again, and that that red was my authentic life" (Chang, "The Blissful" 54). It is noteworthy that she appropriates shaming language into self-affirmation by declaring mischievously that her bliss was "concealment, aberration, loss, degeneration, and a twitch of a finger after a large proportion of paralysis" (56), and that the Haunted House "is permanently in a messy

disorder: It signifies failure, uselessness, decay, and waste; *it is decadent but it does not hurt your stomach*" (71, my italics).

The Haunted House is an embodiment of her spiritual and carnal lesbian love, which she feels proud to display. Like a trickster, she wants to use the Haunted House both to terrify the self-declared "straight" and to commemorate their "profound love and betrayal" of the world (Chang, "The Blissful" 65). She tells her beloved hilariously that it is now their turn to terrify others, for when they show their desire, someone is bound to behave as if she or he has seen the hell, even though "I only want to go to the Haunted House; I don't have a hell in me" (66). Speaking in a narcissistic and campy tone, she asserts that to terrify people is to give the latter lots of nutrition and flavor, and that she will take discretion in choosing the right target, since it takes so much of her effort and theatrical verve to terrify people. "The treasures of our culture," argues she, are those who are really frightened into a new awakening so that they frighten other people as well (67). She proudly tells her beloved that, even though she addresses her as "my ghost," neither of them can ever be a ghost, for no matter how they may be condemned, they, being what they are, are hard to die. Similarly, refusing her mother's old allegation that "You have a ghost in your heart," she retorts now by rewriting the sentence: "Do I have a ghost in my heart? Oh, it is nothing but a lover's soul" (73).

By deploying the trope of the ghost, both *Notes of the Crocodile* and "The Blissful Haunted House" present ambivalent lesbian subjectivity in struggle with shame and stigma. Whereas in *Notes of the Crocodile*, La-tze/the Crocodile relapses into despair and melancholia despite efforts at queer performativity, in "The Blissful Haunted House" the narrator refuses the ghost-status eventually and proudly displays her lesbianism. This difference consists in the fact that although La-tze persists in her lesbianism, her trauma from her queer childhood has caused entrenched inferiority, self-loathing, and estrangement, so that she suffers from melancholia, whereas the narrator of "The Blissful Haunted House" does not have problems with her identity, even though she too had felt estranged and had betrayed her beloved in order to comply with the system. Internalizing the

ghostly, monstrous images of the lesbian in the patriarchal, heterosexual symbolic, La-tze has been deeply traumatized so that she displays the abject interiority of a ghost. Nevertheless, it is precisely because of this that her charges against the system are all the more vehement, sharp, furious, painful, and desperate. Like a sublime ghost, she behaves in ways beyond the understanding of heterosexual society. On the other hand, her queer performativity through her persona the Crocodile both hilariously satirizes the system and sadly shows the system's comprehensive surveillance, policing, and oppression, which "treats the lesbian as a bugaboo, stigma, and phantom Other to an unbelievable degree" (Liou, "Desire" 131). Consequently, while she uses queer performativity to transform her old shame and work toward self-healing, it ironically triggers her persecution mania (Liou, "Desire" 131–33) and causes another trauma. In contrast, the narrator of "The Blissful Haunted House" had been traumatized only to a slight degree. She had felt the pain of being ghosted as a lesbian and been forced to deny her lesbianism under institutional violence, so she can also speak as a sublime ghost in launching charges against the system. Notwithstanding, her compromises with the system had been only superficial. Never deeply abjecting or disliking herself, she had hardly really seen herself as a ghost. After she joins the lesbian/gay/queer movements, then, she can turn against the system by donning the costume of the ghost to terrify the straight. Her queer performativity is therefore happier and more carefree than that of La-tze/the Crocodile.

From another perspective, if we see both fictions as intending to relate to the lesbian/gay/queer movements in Taiwan and speak for lesbians who are college students,¹⁴ the contrast between them, then, showcases the different attitudes and strategies of these lesbians between the time when the movements are at an early stage and the time when the movements are at the peak. *Notes of the Crocodile*, written in 1994, is set in 1991–1992, when the lesbian/queer movements have just started and are still weak. The novel depicts lesbians and gays on the university campus, but makes no mention of the movements at all. The novel is permeated with melancholia, despair, and anger, which are at odds with the hilarious, satirical vein of queer performativity that

intersperses the book. That La-tze/the Crocodile's queer performativity leads to the Crocodile's persecution mania and self-immolation in despair is all the more alarming. And such melancholia, anger, and satire constitute a powerful critique on the system: La-tze/the Crocodile is fighting the cruel world single-handedly. In contrast, "The Blissful Haunted House," written in 2001, is set at a time when the movements are at full swing. The last time the narrator met her beloved is when she was protesting on the street with a crowd. The narrator "joyfully shouting a slogan jumped high and landed" ("The Blissful" 65), at this very moment she was met with her beloved's "quiet and thoughtful eyes" (65). "Jumping and crying aloud" (65) vividly conveys the sense of freedom and self-confidence that she gains from the movements, whereas the "quiet and thoughtful eyes" seem to signify the old trauma. When society is becoming more and more tolerant and open, the narrator can look back upon her growing pains as lesbian from the perspective of gay pride that she obtains from the thriving movements; she even wants to terrify the straight mischievously. Despite the differences, through presenting the lesbian's trauma and queer performativity, both fictions seek to have the implied reader reflect on homophobia and heterosexism and hence renegotiate the relationship between lesbianism and the symbolic order.

NOTES

¹ An earlier and much shorter manuscript of this paper was presented in March 2003 at a workshop at National Chung-hsing University.

² Apart from the two fictions that will be discussed in this paper, the figure of the ghost also appears in Hung Ling's short stories "The Beasts' Catastrophe," "Fever," "Starlight Crosses the Li-shui Street," all of which are in her collection of short stories *The Biographies of Heretic Vampires* (1995). There are intimations of the ghost in Chen Shuei's "Looking for the Lost Wings of the Angel" (in Chen's collection of short stories *The Book of Evil Women* (1995)) and "Sleepwalking in 1994" (in Chen's collection of short stories *Sleepwalking in 1994* (1996)) (see Liou, "Taiwanese Lesbian Fiction in the

1990s"). Hung Ling, or Lucifer Hung as she calls herself, who is an activist in the lesbian/gay/queer movements, tends to appropriate the western vampire convention to satirize and subvert the heterosexual matrix with black humor in her lesbian/queer fiction. Her fiction thus best exemplifies Fuss's notion of ghost-writing (see Liou, "Taiwanese Lesbian Fiction in the 1990s" and "Hung Ling's *Beast*").

³ Prior to the 1990s, the gay movement was limited to the publication of Pai Hsien-yung's novel *Crystal Boys* (1983) and AIDS prevention. In the 1990s, the lesbian and queer movements started out as branches within feminist movement, when the activists, unable to fully come out, joined the women's movement to secretly promote gay-positive consciousness and succeeded in obtaining support from within the movement. Some of the activists split off into a separate organization in the late 1990s. As I have written elsewhere:

The first lesbian group, "Between Us," was founded in 1990 and the first sign of a queer movement took shape in the "Queer Special Issue" of the New Left journal *The Isle's Margin* in 1994, with Chi Ta-wei, Lucifer Hung [i. e. Hung Ling], and Dan Tang-mo as guest editors. Queer commentary, however, had already appeared earlier in Liang Nung-gun's book *Pleasure and Sexual Difference* (1989) and Chang Hsiao-hung's *Postmodernism/Woman* (1993). The gay movement kept a lower profile, for the activists could not disguise themselves as feminists. Since gay, lesbian, and queer discourses were introduced to Taiwan at about the same time, the trajectories of the three movements here are quite different from those in the West. Whereas the queer movement in the West was built on the success of the identity politics of the gay and lesbian movements, Taiwan's gay, lesbian, and queer movements proceeded simultaneously, with some of the activists working for more than one movement. (Liou, "At the Intersection" 192).

⁴ I'll discuss this issue at the end of the essay. For studies on Chiu Miao-jin's lesbian fiction, please see Liou, "Desire, Gender, and Writing." For studies on the relationship between Taiwan's lesbian/gay/queer movements and lesbian/gay/queer fiction, please see Liou, "Voicing from the Margins," "At the Intersection," and "Gender Crossing."

⁵ Compare this with the high school female students who commit suicide when forced by their parents to part from their lesbian lovers in Chen Shuei's short story "The Butterfly's Mark" (in Chen's *Sleepwalking in 1994* (1996)) and Tu Hsiu-lan's novel *A Bad Daughter* (1996).

⁶ See the debates in *Cultural Studies e-Monthly*, nos. 12–14 (Feb., March, April 2002). Luo's representations of Chiu so antagonized the lesbian communities that many chose to remain silent in order to show their disapproval and protest. While both Chung Hani-hui and Chiu Yi-ling attack what they call the lesbians' "crude identity politics" in defense of Luo's innocence, Chen Yo-cheng and Ko Yu-fen take an opposite stance. Chen criticizes Luo for committing a sexual assault on the mute, dead Chiu. Ko, arguing for the uncertainty of meanings and the necessity of contestation, sees that Luo is far from innocent, and that the lesbians' angry silence is a reaction to the sudden emptying out by Luo's novel of the ground from which to give voice to lesbian subjectivity, hence a strategy to continue the contestation of meanings.

⁷ On the surface, "The Blissful Haunted House" is just a belated love letter to her old flame. Both its content and style, however, lead me to conclude that it is in fact an open or at least a half-open letter. Firstly, the narrator and her beloved had not had much time being together ten years ago, which had made their relationship both distant and close. As far as the content is concerned, apart from her confessions of love and betrayal, the letter contains a large section on charges against and satires on the heterosexual system. This is odd since both the narrator and her beloved have joined the lesbian/gay/queer movements. If her beloved were the letter's only reader, she would not need to elaborate on her protests against the system in such great length. Besides, the style of this love letter is too literary and convoluted, which places it somehow in both the eastern and western tradition of letters written by literary people with a large reader in mind, letters that are ready for publication either during the authors' lifetime or posthumously. It is noteworthy that in being both a private and an open love letter, "The Blissful Haunted House" seems to be influenced by Chiu Miao-jin's novel *The Last Letters from Montmartre* (1996), although the love letters in these two fictions are written for very different purposes (see Liou, "Desire" 141).

⁸ While in Chinese the statement usually means that "you have done

something wrong or borne evil thought behind my back,” it may be alluding specifically to lesbianism in this context, hence punning on the ghost-status of lesbianism.

⁹ Judith Butler, using J. L. Austin’s speech-act theory to deconstruct the regime of presumptive heterosexuality, analyzes gender in patriarchal heterosexual culture as simply the sedimentation of repetitive performativity. That is, patriarchal heterosexual culture presumes that a biological sex is the ground or origin and that this sex must be expressed in certain ways through a gender (or gender gesture and behavior), and then be expressed through heterosexuality. Compulsory heterosexuality thus naturalizes itself through establishing the illusion of the causal relationships of sex/gender/sexuality. But these causal or expressive lines are highly problematic: heterosexuality and the binary opposition between man and woman presumed by compulsory heterosexuality are “retrospectively and performatively produced fabrications” (Butler 29). For Butler, there is no essence of gender; rather, compulsory heterosexuality first constructs the phantasmatic ideal of heterosexualized gender and, after repetitive performance or citation of identities, gives us the illusion that they have fixed essence. As Butler remarks, “gender is *performative* in the sense that it constitutes as an effect the very subject appears to express. It is a *compulsory* performance in the sense that acting out of line with heterosexual norms brings with it ostracism, punishment, and violence, not to mention the transgressive pleasures produced by those very prohibitions” (Butler 24). In denaturalizing gender in patriarchal heterosexual culture as gender performativity, Butler, I think, can be seen as doing queer performativity.

¹⁰ For instance, we know that La-tze is an exceptionally brilliant student who comes from southern Taiwan and attends university in Taipei, that she is a lover of Japanese literature and European art film, active in extra-curricular activities, has a double personality, and has quite a few gay and lesbian friends; whereas all we know about the Crocodile is her physical functions and daily routine.

¹¹ A more benign reading is to see the crocodile’s amphibious nature as a figure for gender “deviance” in some lesbians, hence the deliberate pronoun “it” rather than “she” or “he.” For fear the reader may not know that the Crocodile is just a trope for the lesbian, however, I use “she” rather than “it”

throughout the paper when referring to the Crocodile.

¹² TTV, short for Taiwan Television Broadcasting Company, was one of the only three TV channels at that time. *TTV's News and World Reports* was somewhat like *60 Minutes* in the US. Since there were very few such news programs, its influence on the viewing public was much greater than its counterparts today.

¹³ This may be influenced by Hung Ling's vampire stories.

¹⁴ Pai Hsien-yung's novel *Crystal Boys* (1983) sets a very good example for this. A roman-a-clef, *Crystal Boys* portrays the homosexual underworld at Taipei's New Park in the 1960s and 70s. At a time when society never admits the existence of homosexuality in Taiwan, the novel speaks for a cohort of Taiwanese male homosexuals and pioneers Taiwan's gay movement. Moreover, by using the genre of roman-a-clef, it alludes to real people without revealing most of their identities, a strategy that heralds the "collective coming out" strategy of the lesbian/gay/queer movements in 1995–1996, when a group of gays and lesbians march in the streets wearing masks (see Liou, "At the Intersection" 195, 192–193).

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