

Paternities and Expatriatisms: Li Yongping's *Zhu Ling manyou xianjing* and the Politics of Rupture¹

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ABSTRACT

The 1998 novel *Zhu Ling manyou xianjing*, by the Chinese-Malaysian author Li Yongping, can be read as an informal sequel to his mammoth, one thousand page 1992 novel *Haidong qing*. Like its predecessor, *Zhu Ling* allegorically explores the interrelation between individual (esp. female) maturational trajectories and collective, socio-political ones.

The present essay contends that Li's novel parallels a dialectical contrast between superficially cosmetic and violently transgressive conceptualizations of a girl's loss of virginity and her symbolic entry into mature womanhood, on the one hand, and of Taiwan's political separation from the Chinese mainland, on the other.

KEY WORDS

Li Yongping
Expatriatism

paternity
rupture



The emperor of the South Sea was called Shu [Brief], the emperor of the North Sea was called Hu [Sudden], and the emperor of the central region was called Hundun [Chaos]. Shu and Hu from time to time came together for a meeting in the territory of Hundun, and Hundun treated them very generously. Shu and Hu discussed how they could repay his kindness. "All men," they said, "have seven openings so they can see, hear, eat, and breathe. But Hundun doesn't have any. Let's try boring him some!"

Every day they bored another hole, and on the seventh day Hundun died.

—Zhuangzi²

1. Marks of Land and Flesh

Near the end of the fourth chapter, or "wandering" (*manyou*), of Li Yongping's 1998 novel *Zhu Ling manyou xianjing* [Zhuling's Wanderings in Wonderland],³ the suggestively named vice-principal Tang Baoguo (Tang "protect the nation") lectures to a group of girls from the second year of National Middle School (Guomin zhongxue) on the question of "when should pubescent girls (*qingchun qi de shaonü*) wear their first brassiere" (242). After citing some pseudo-scientific Japanese research on processes of sexual maturation, he points to the sagging breasts of some older women to illustrate the dangers of not providing maturing breasts with adequate support. He then launches into a diatribe about the importance of breasts and but-

tocks themselves:

Breast peaks and buttock mounds, the former protruding in the front and the latter uplifted behind: these are, after all, two prominent landmarks of the female body. At the same time, they also constitute an allusion to the two towering beacons which can lead astray voyagers on their way home! I am sure that you must have all heard of the Greek epic poem *The Odyssey*, whose protagonist Odysseus sails off course in the Mediterranean, leading him to drift for ten years. . . . (242)

Tang Baoguo breaks off his lecture at this point to entertain an implicit question from Zhu Ling, the young protagonist of Li Yongping's novel. The question is what he means by the term "landmark" (dibiao), to which he replies: "A landmark is the most representative and the most striking symbol (biaozhi) of a city."

Insofar as women's mammaries can be seen, in Tang Baoguo's miniature allegory, as metaphorical landmarks, they have the paradoxical role of both orienting people and, at the same time, of leading them astray (like the breasts of the Homeric Sirens). Furthermore, Tang appears to equivocate on whether he intends these metaphorical landmarks to be taken topographically (mis/orienting one with regard to the spatial layout of the female body), or temporally (mis/orienting one with respect to the chronological course of the female body's sexual maturation). Finally, the explicitly nationalist denotations of both Tang's name and that of the middle school, combined with Tang's own reference to the city in his explication of the meaning of the term "landmark," leads one to wonder whether these breasts and buttocks, figurative landmarks of the female body, might also be seen as symbolic landmarks to the Taipei/Taiwan body politic as well.

In addition, we can also take Tang Baoguo's discourse on women's breasts as itself a heuristic "landmark" to help mis/orient us in our own reading and exegesis of Li Yongping's novel itself. To begin with, Tang's discussion points to the way in which the novel as

a whole overlays temporal developmental teleologies onto metaphorical spatial topographies. More specifically, the passage evocatively points to how the novel thematizes female sexual maturation as both a literal subject in its own right, but also as an, at times, rather ambiguous metaphoric for historical development. The present essay will be primarily concerned with exploring the ways Li Yongping's novel mobilizes and develops these themes of the interrelationship between spatiality and temporality, and between individual maturational and collective national developmental trajectories.

By way of introduction, however, it would be useful to consider a third theme suggested, rather fortuitously, by Tang Baoguo's explanation. His allusion to Homer's *The Odyssey* points to a suggestive comparison with another singular landmark in the landscape of European literary modernism, against which one might usefully mis/orient oneself in reading Li Yongping's own novel. The latter modernist "landmark" is, of course, James Joyce's novel *Ulysses*, which is generally regarded as marking one of the defining moments of Western modernism. Li Yongping, himself trained in comparative literature in the U.S., is undoubtedly familiar with Joyce's work, and furthermore *Zhu Ling* and, even more, his previous novel *Haidong qing* both bear a certain resemblance to *Ulysses* in terms of their linguistic and symbolic sophistication, lack of conventional plot development, and general scope and profundity.

As is well known, *Ulysses* is written as a sort of romantic reverie of the Dublin which Joyce had already left and to which he would subsequently return only fleetingly. Like Joyce, Li Yongping himself also writes from a fundamentally expatriate status. He currently lives in Taiwan, but he was born (1947) and grew up in Malaysia, received his education in Taiwan and the United States, and has written and published several influential modernist novels in Taiwan. Despite, or perhaps in part because of, Li's expatriate status in Taiwan and his own personal diasporic background, many of his fictional works are easily read as symbolic reflections on the issue of Taiwanese socio-political identity, as well as its relationship to the Chinese mainland.

If much of James Joyce's fictional work can be seen as an expa-

triate engagement with a geographical "home" which he had already departed, Li Yongping's recent fictional works can similarly be seen as an intense, and at times conflicted, engagement with the "home" of expatriatism itself. That is, they thematize the status of Taiwan, and not only is the Malaysia-born Li Yongping himself an expatriate in Taiwan, but furthermore the status of Taiwan itself can also be seen as fundamentally "expatriate," insofar as virtually all discussions of its contemporary socio-political identity must eventually come back to its severed relationship to the Chinese mainland.

2. Delinquencies and Ruptured Sequences

Li Yongping's fascination with Taiwan and its socio-political identity and development is played out in his two most recent novels *Haidong qing* and *Zhu Ling manyou xianjing*. The former novel, *Haidong qing*,⁴ is a mammoth work of nearly a thousand pages and more than half a million characters. Li Yongping even retired prematurely from his teaching profession in order to complete it. The novel begins with the protagonist Jin Wu's return to Taiwan after having taught literature in the United States for eight years. The novel uses a rather elaborate linguistic and symbolic structure to portray Jin Wu's and the other characters' "aimless wanderings" through the city of Taipei, with special attention being given to the seamier sides of the city—particularly the burgeoning industry of child prostitution. Occupying equal or even greater centrality than Jin Wu himself is his young companion, the seven year-old girl Zhu Ling. Zhu Ling generally represents a state of idealized purity which serves as a powerful counterpoint to the rather degenerate social practices of the adult world which surrounds her, while at the same time herself standing on the threshold of entry into that same adult world.

In *Zhu Ling*, by contrast, Jin Wu assumes only a rather spectral presence, as characters occasionally (226, 231) having been or gone places with him. Instead, the novel has as its primary focus Zhu Ling herself, now eight years old and having just finished second grade, together with a group of six of her classmates. They have just been let

off for the summer holidays, and the novel describes their month and a half-long wanderings through an equally degenerate and pedophilic society. Among their concerns is to aid their friend Ke Lishuang, who has become increasingly despondent and suicidal working as a virtual call-girl selling flowers in area bars. Like *Haidong qing*, *Zhu Ling* does not have a structured plot, but rather consists of a chronologically organized “wanderings” and reflections on a variety of topics relating to contemporary Taiwan. In particular, these reflections focus on the flourishing sex industry (which the novel claims gets a significant boost during the summer months with the accompanying influx of school-age girls trying to earn some extra money), and on the accompanying effort by the city to “sweep out” and clean up said industry. The novel ends when the seven girls collectively vanish in a flash of bright light.

Both novels allegorically explore Taiwan’s state of simultaneous continuity and rupture with the traditional Chinese mainland. In *Haidong qing*, this theme is played out through a series of elaborate allegories relating Taiwan’s simultaneous continuity and rupture with the Chinese mainland with the theme of girls’ puberty, in that the latter similarly marks a paradoxical moment of continuity and rupture between childhood innocence and sexual maturity.⁵ *Haidong qing* then concludes with a brief note pointing to the novel’s own “landmarks”—that is, the geographical locations and dates of the manuscript’s conception and completion (they are the 76th and 80th years of the Republic [1987 and 1991], respectively). Although this gesture is a rather conventional one in many modern Chinese novels, what might perhaps elicit surprise are the three characters that immediately precede it: *shangjuan zhong*—“conclusion of the *first* volume” (941; emphasis added). The implication of this note is obviously that this enormous and ambitious work was originally perceived (or at the very least portrayed) as being merely the first installment of an even larger project.

When *Zhu Ling* appeared in the summer of 1998, featuring many of the same characters (*Zhu Ling* and her sisters, *Jin Wu*, *An Lexin*, etc.) and themes (Taiwanese political identity, pedophilia, di-

rectionless wandering, etc.) as Li's earlier novel, it was only natural to see it as a continuation of *Haidong qing*. However, just as both of the novels themselves prominently stress the role of temporal rupture within maturational and political developmental trajectories, the relationship between the two works themselves is one which overlays rupture with apparent continuity. Li Yongping himself claims in a recent interview that *Zhu Ling* is "not really a sequel"⁶ to *Haidong qing*, on the grounds that he had ultimately come to realize that the elaborately crafted linguistic and symbolic style of *Haidong qing* marked a distinct point in his own artistic maturation as a writer, and that it is now time for him to move on to a somewhat more straightforward and transparent style. Many authors, he observes, never move beyond this second stage of artistic development, in which everything has hidden meanings and one strives to develop one's own unique style. Furthermore, he claims in the same interview that he tried, in writing *Zhu Ling*, to focus less heavily on contemporary Taiwanese politics than he had in *Haidong qing* and other earlier works, claiming that *Zhu Ling* is instead merely "a modern fairy tale. A very scary fairy tale."⁷ Therefore, Li Yongping denies the apparent sequential continuity between these two recent novels, and instead posits a stylistic break between them. However, he explains this break precisely by pointing to an "external" point of reference (viz. the larger trajectory of one's own stylistic maturation as an artist) with respect to which the "break" itself can be reconceptualized as a progressive development.

This dialectical relationship between smooth continuity and violent rupture is not only characteristic of the sequential relationship between the two novels, but is also one of the dominant themes in the novels themselves. In both *Haidong qing* and *Zhu Ling*, the theme of temporal rupture is simultaneously developed on two different, mutually interrelated, planes. On the one hand, the geopolitical schism between Taiwan and the mainland is reformulated in temporal terms, both through the focus on moments of historical and national commemoration, as well as through the suggestion that Taiwan represents the (potential?) future of mainland China itself. On the other hand, in

both novels there is the explicit and emphatic thematization of pedophilic desire and practice, and of the temporal and maturational circularities that this practice suggests.

Related to the theme of the transposition of spatial ruptures into temporal ones is that fact that both *Haidong qing* and *Zhu Ling* explicitly thematize the act of aimless wandering. Most of the novels' characters merely stroll from place to place, with no real origin or destination. Even the occasional "landmarks" which they pass on their way are, for the most part, merely spectral reflections of an already severed past. For example, virtually all of the Taipei street names that are mentioned, often in long lists, are named after historical places and political divisions from the Chinese mainland.⁸ However, to the extent that this aimless wandering helps to unground the novels' spatial fixity, the former role of spatial landmarks is, in effect, transposed onto temporal ones.

Both novels explicitly orient themselves around temporal landmarks. These landmarks include ones with obvious historical and political significance, such as June 28, July 3, and July 7 in *Zhu Ling*, as well as other temporal landmarks whose political significance is elaborated on a more metaphorical plane. For instance, *Haidong qing* begins on the day of the mid-autumn festival (*zhongqiu jie*) and concludes on the eve of mother's day (which is thematically juxtaposed at one point with the "national father's day", i.e., Sun Yat-sen memorial day [931-2]). At another point, the discussion of *Qingming jie* is given an overtly political spin with the attention to individuals in Taiwan who, because of political tensions between Taiwan and the mainland, are unable to observe the traditional custom of visiting the graves of their ancestors on the mainland (820). Similarly, just as *Haidong qing* ends on the eve of mother's day, *Zhu Ling* concludes on the Chinese father's day (08/08, which is a pun on "baba," the colloquial Chinese term for "father") which, the novel repeatedly notes, is only a few days before the lunar calendar observance of "valentine's day" (*qingren jie*).

3. Points of Entry and Rites of Passage

By way of suggesting a point of entry into a reading of *Zhu Ling* itself, I will first turn to the evocative passage from *Zhuangzi* cited in the epigraph to this essay. This passage almost certainly bears no direct relationship with Li Yongping's novel,⁹ but nevertheless suggests a useful way to begin to think about the themes of maturation and transition which dominate it. It is located at the end of section seven of the *Zhuangzi*, and can be read as a highly ironic account of the role of bodily penetration in Hundun's symbolic entry into the mortal world.

Like the *Zhuangzi* passage, *Zhu Ling* explicitly and emphatically thematizes the role of corporal perforation as a sort of symbolic rite of passage into maturity/mortality. Specifically, I have in mind the use of ear-piercing as a symbol for a girl's maturation into womanhood. This theme is initially introduced in *Haidong qing* (374), but it is developed more systematically in *Zhu Ling*. Near the beginning of the latter novel there is an explicit discussion of how the act of piercing a young girl's ears symbolizes in a fairly obvious way the ruptured hymen which conventionally represents her true and unmistakable loss of childhood. As An Lexin explains to Zhu Ling's friend Lian Mingxin, "If a young girl wants to grow up, then she must first be shot by a man with a gun, pierced with a hole, and bled a drop of red, red blood" (74).¹⁰

When Zhu Ling herself has her ears pierced, the instrument which is used to perform the procedure is referred to in Chinese (as in English) as an ear-piercing "gun" (83). Furthermore, the novel goes on to stress that it is actually a "Japanese gun" that has been used (73, 94, 159, etc.). The novel's repeated emphasis on the role played by this "Japanese gun" suggests an uncanny juxtaposition of the trajectories of individual sexual maturation and of collective national development. The reason why Zhu Ling's use of the term "Japanese gun" inspires such surprise and shock in her interlocutors is obviously because it immediately evokes memories of Japanese aggression against both the Taiwan and the Chinese mainland.

The confusion which this terminology initially elicits in the novel's own characters is itself emblematic of one of the dominant levels of symbolic significance of both *Haidong qing* and *Zhu Ling*—namely, the symbolic coupling of individual and collective maturational trajectories as projected onto the bodies of the young female protagonists, on the one hand, and the political body politic of Taiwan, on the other. The details of this symbolic coupling are multifarious, and often contradictory, but in this case their general direction is fairly obvious: the symbolic violence imposed upon the girls' bodies by means of the (Japanese) ear-piercing "gun" is mirrored by the actual violence historically imposed upon the Taiwan body politic by actual Japanese aggression. The suggestion is clearly that the latter military aggression contributed to Taiwan's symbolic development and maturation in much the same way that the former ear/hymen piercing contributes symbolically to the individual girls' own personal and physical maturation.

Further reinforcing this association between these two individual and national historical trajectories is the additional detail that the discussion of Zhu Ling's ear piercing is roughly paralleled in the novel by references to one of the most famous historical acts of Japanese aggression against China, the so-called "Rape of Nanjing." Although the original Chinese term for this incident ("*Nanjing da tusha*": "the great Nanjing massacre") is not as explicitly evocative of sexual transgression as the English translation, the context of the incident's discussion in Li Yongping's two novels invariably bring out the prevalence of actual rapes performed by the Japanese soldiers on Chinese women. Furthermore, the discussions of ear-piercing in both novels frequently occur in close proximity to evocative discussions of sexual violence during the Rape of Nanjing.

On pages 373-4 of *Haidong qing*, Jin Wu discusses with Zhu Ling and Ya Xing the prospect of their having their ears pierced, a discussion which is followed only about 25 pages later by a scene in which Zhu Ling and Ya Xing, while riding on a train, see a newspaper report about gang rapes during the Rape of Nanjing (401-2). Similarly, the account of Zhu Ling's own ear piercing in *Zhu Ling* (159) is

preceded only a few pages earlier by a scene in which she recollects having seen a television documentary commemorating that same historical event (152-3). The parallel between sexual and national transgression is drawn even more clearly a few lines later when Zhu Ling's friend Ke Lishuang adds that, while selling flowers at the bars, on Zhongshan Lu, she would occasionally have as customers old Japanese men who would grope under her skirt while reminiscing about the WWII era competitions they would hold involving piercing young girls' "private places" (a Japanese term consisting of two characters read as "*michu*" in Mandarin) with bayonets.

Ke Lishuang's bars are located in the alleys adjoining Zhongshan Lu, which, ironically, was named after Sun Yat-sen (Sun Zhongshan, in Mandarin). This allusion to Taiwan's "*guofu*" follows directly on the heels of the Zhu Ling's own account of a dream that she had after having watched the Rape of Nanjing television documentary discussed above, a dream in which "the *Guofu* [Sun Yat-sen] was pointing angrily at Chiang Kai-shek's nose, and cursing him" (153).¹¹ I will argue below that, insofar as Li Yongping's novel allegorically develops the theme of the relationship between female "maturation" and the "touch of the father," Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek represent two opposing forms which this figurative paternal "touch" might take. Schematically speaking, I will suggest that they represent, respectively, a form of surface, cosmetic continuity vs. a more violent, penetrative rupture.

For the moment, however, I will return briefly to the theme of female "maturation," as it is developed in Li Yongping's novel. In the novel's discussion of the child prostitution, the colloquial equivalent of the symbolic ear-piercing discussed above is the expression "opening the jug" (*kaiguan*). However, at one point near the end of the novel, a character mentions that he prefers the term "dressing one's hair" (*shulong*) as a more elliptical and euphemistic term for the process of losing one's virginity (379). This latter term has both a cultural resonance with the tradition of courtesanage in Chinese history (see, for example, the Qing drama, *Tao hua shan* [Peach Blossom Fan] for a prominent use of the term), but also resonates with the

socio-cultural happenstance that hair-dressing salons (*lifating*) are themselves explicitly presented as being a prominent site of prostitutional activity in contemporary Taiwan.¹² Furthermore, insofar as *shulong* connotes a more cosmetic, continuous view of female "maturation," and *kaiguan* connotes its more abrupt, violent side, then the *shulong/kaiguan* dichotomy can be seen as representing the individual, maturational equivalent of the Sun Yat-sen/Chiang Kai-shek dichotomy alluded to above.

These two euphemisms for loss of virginity and (implicit) sexual maturation come together in a passing comment made by Zhu Ling in *Haidong qing*. One day (coincidentally, it happens to be "daughter's day" in Japan), Jin Wu notices that Zhu Ling's braid has been cut off. He asks her about it, and she explains that her mother cut it because she "is not a little girl anymore" (773-4). Here, the surface, cosmetic alterations connoted by the term *shulong* intersect with the violently transgressive connotations of *kaiguan*. Moreover, the act of cutting one's braid is serendipitously also evocative of the practice of cutting men's cues, which itself was one of the more potent symbols of China's own "maturation" from an antiquated, imperial system into a "modern" republic.

4. Emasculation and Expatriatism

When the topic of ear-piercing as a symbol of young girls' sexual maturation is discussed in *Haidong qing* and *Zhu Ling*, a question which comes up in both novels is what the equivalent rite of passage would be for young boys. In each case, a rather obvious parallel (under the circumstances) is drawn between female ear-piercing and male circumcision.¹³ However, the relationship between ear-piercing and hair-dressing/cutting explored in the preceding section suggests another point of entry into this question of the masculine equivalent of this maturational metaphor.

Near the beginning of the sixth chapter of *Zhu Ling*, there is a short passage which bears some relevance to this question. In this passage, Zhu Ling and her friend Lian Mingxin are using a small tele-

scope to watch the comings and goings of the president. They discover that, after work, the president and his motorcade do not go home, but rather go to *Changchun Lu* (Everlasting Spring Road), a district which the novel repeatedly describes as being renowned for its profusion of hair-dressing salons-cum-sex shops. Zhu Ling asks in surprise, "How could the president go to that kind of hair-dressing salon (*lifating*) to get his hair dressed? In those kinds of hair-dressing salons, it is so dark inside, that he could very easily accidentally have something else cut off while having his hair cut" (317). Lian Mingxin finds this prospect rather amusing, and suggests that, "If things were to go wrong, the hair-dressing lady might even cut off his two balls (*liang li dandan*)." Zhu Ling agrees, and further claims that the newspapers once reported precisely such an incident (317).

Given that the hair-dressing salons mark a topographical site of girls' (frequently premature) developmental transition into sexual "maturity," one is tempted to ask whether or not the latter joke about accidental presidential emasculation might be related to the theme of female sexual maturation—and how both themes might related to the novel's larger political symbolics.

We might begin by positioning Lian Mingxin's rather salacious joke within a larger discussion of severed male gonads in both *Haidong qing* and *Zhu Ling*. For example, the last chapter of *Haidong qing* features the rather peculiar image of Zhu Ling running around disconsolate with a live rooster pressed closely to her bosom. (The rooster had originally been one of a large group which had been deliberately liberated to protest America's practice of dumping unwanted turkey testicles into the Taiwan market, where they are considered an expensive delicacy). When asked to relinquish the bird, she refuses, on the grounds that she is thus protecting it from certain emasculation (903). Similarly, the first chapter of *Zhu Ling* begins with a closely related discussion of young girls' culinary interest in turkey testicles (35).¹⁴ As the *Zhu Ling* passage makes clear, it is believed that eating turkey testicles (and rooster buttocks) will help young girls to "grow up quickly" (35).

Furthermore, these (avian) male gonads acting in isolation from

the actual male body from which they originated can be also related to the theme of political paternity in both novels. Elsewhere I have discussed the explicit thematization of the "guofu," or "national father," Sun Yat-sen in Li Yongping's earlier novel *Haidong qing*, and particularly the degree to which the novel draws on prevalent pro-genitive metaphors to describe how the "maternal" Chinese motherland (the mainland) is perceived as having contributed Taiwan its basic cultural "matrix," while the "paternal" *guofu* Sun Yat-sen is perceived as having contributed its distinguishing socio-political "form."¹⁵ In the present analysis, however, I would expand on that earlier discussion by pointing to the way in which both of Li Yongping's novels elaborate a discussion of metaphorical political paternity by devoting comparable attention not only to Sun Yat-sen himself but also to Chiang Kai-shek as well. Both of these historical figures are regarded as having played paradigmatic roles in the shaping of modern Taiwan. The differences between the specific kinds of role which each played merit further consideration.

Both novels explicitly compare Chiang Kai-shek's role in the founding of Taiwan to the Moses' act of leading the Israelites out of Egypt and across the Red Sea into Israel. In the case of *Haidong qing*, this Biblical symbiology is very prominently and explicitly foregrounded in the preface to the novel itself (i-iii). If Chiang Kai-shek's role in the establishment of present-day Taiwan is grounded in his role as a military leader during the period of civil war and Japanese aggression, then Sun Yat-sen's own political paternity is elaborated on a rather more abstract and idealized plane. That is, his thought and writings from the 1911 revolution and early Republican period are retrospectively held up as one of the cornerstones of the political identity of the Republic of China. Although the historical grounds for this move are perhaps somewhat questionable, the political and ideological ones are unmistakable—by turning to 1911 and Republican era political rhetoric, it becomes possible to elaborate a political ideology which in theory, if not necessarily in actuality, embraces the mainland in a way that merely looking to a figure like Chiang Kai-shek would obviously be unable to do.

Moreover, the continuity between the themes of paternity and progeneration in the two novels' discussions of rooster gonads and founding fathers is further strengthened by the fact that the vast majority of the references in *Zhu Ling* to Sun and Chiang, are not references to the historical individuals themselves, but rather to the assortment of plaques, statues, portraits, inscriptions, and other assorted physical and symbolic memorials which commemorate their existence and achievements. Just as Zhu Ling and Lian Mingxin joked about separating the president from the symbolic seat of his phallic authority, similarly the "paternal" national-political authority of both Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek is, in effect, dissasociated from those original historical individuals and recathected onto a series of symbolic substitutes.

I will develop this topic of paternal emasculation in more detail at the end of this essay, but first let us return to the presidential hair-dressing anecdote with which we began this section. In an interesting coincidence, the "*lifa*" in *lifating* is a close homophone (same reading, different tones) of the "*lifa*" in "*lifayuan*" or "legislature." Although this imperfect homonym perhaps does not, in itself, carry much explanatory force, it is nevertheless true that many of the references in the novel to Taiwan's *lifayuan* revolve around the question of how to shield its rather ignominious day-to-day workings (i.e., fist-fights, screaming matches, etc.) from the view of a visiting group of American observers (263 ff.). Like the *lifating*, then, the *lifayuan* in Li Yongping's novel is explicitly coded as a site where there is an attempt to disguise an underlying violence with a superficial veneer of propriety and continuity.

Another, even rougher homophone can be identified between the expression "*kaiguan*" ("opening the jug") of hymen rupture and the expression "*guafen*" ("cutting the melon"), a standard metaphor for the imperial partition of China and other colonized territories. As with the *lifating/lifayuan* pun, the homophone here is rough, but the parallels of the underlying themes are, nevertheless, rather compelling. It is was the nineteenth century acts of imperial aggression and partition which are frequently seen as having been one of the catalysts for

China's ultimate transition ("maturation") from an imperial to a republican system, and similarly it was Taiwan's own "partition" from the mainland which is portrayed as having contributed to bringing it to a developmentally more "advanced" historical stage than "China" proper.

Bringing together these two homologies, then we might provisionally conclude that if the "*lifa/shulong*" of hairdressing can be seen as a transposition of the violence of masculine aggression associated with "*kaiguan*" onto a symbolics of surface detail, then the "*lifa*" of law and political ideology perhaps can similarly be seen as a transposition of the violence of imperial aggression associated with "*guafen*" onto a symbolics of "surface" political ideology.

5. Maturational Möbius Strip

In *Haidong qing*, part of the pedophilic allure of having sex with young girls is attributed to the way in which their immature bodies are sometimes perceived by the adult men as paradoxically embodying "that motherly sort of love which men are always searching for" (741). Therefore, their sexual attraction is partially derived from their being located in a rather peculiar temporal interstice, simultaneously straddling the double incestuous prohibition against sleeping with one's figurative daughter, on the one hand, and one's figurative mother, on the other.¹⁶ *Zhu Ling* offers its own, somewhat related, analysis of the allure of pedophilia. Here, pedophilic allure is portrayed as being related to the urban myth that through having intercourse with a young virgin, a man infected with an STD can "pass" (*guo*) the disease on to the girl (392). In this manner, it is believed, not only will the girl acquire the disease, but the adult men will themselves be able to rid themselves of it and thus symbolically regain a sort of prelapsarian innocence. This entire phenomenon has ambivalent and paradoxical implications for the significance of "paternity"—whereby having sex with one's own figurative daughter has the result of leap-frogging her into a symbolic, if not actual, sexual maturity, while at the same time supposedly enabling the adult man himself to effec-

tively erase the ravages of his own history of sexual conquest and return to a state of sexual purity. This symbolic exchange of sexual contamination and innocence can be seen as comparable to the temporal inversion described in *Haidong qing* whereby the pre-pubescent girl is refigured as the adult pedophile's symbolic mother.

These temporal paradoxes that are played out in the arena of sexual politics and pedophilic transgression have an evocative parallel in the way both *Haidong qing* and *Zhu Ling* elaborate the symbolic relationship between Taiwan and the Chinese mainland. Both novels evocatively juxtapose discussions of girls' sexual maturation with reflections on Taiwan's own political and historical "maturation," suggesting that Taiwan constitutes a symbolic embodiment of mainland China's own (potential) future.¹⁷ Both novels make the almost identical claim that "Taiwan's today is the mainland's tomorrow."¹⁸

The theme of accelerated sexual maturation is echoed on a more literal plane in both novels by the theme of having young girls using female hormone supplements in order to mature faster.¹⁹ Both thematizations of male gonads and female hormones suggest a disassociation of sexual maturity (masculine or feminine) from the actual masculine or feminine body itself. This, in turn, is perhaps related to the disassociation of an idealized historical developmental trajectory from the actual Chinese nations and societies to which it is being applied.

6. The Mirror Stage of History

Zhu Ling picks up on one of the dominant images of *Haidong qing*—that of mainland China staring out across the Taiwan Strait and seeing in Taiwan a spectral image of its own (potential) future self, an uncanny mirroring which is reinforced by the observation that Taiwan's (and in particular Taipei's) urban cartography is merely a "miniature reflection" of the political topography of the Chinese mainland.²⁰ Given that I began this essay with a passage in which these sorts of urban and national cartographic landmarks are metaphorically transposed onto the female body, therefore it will be fitting to

conclude here by looking at a passage where a nodal moment within a trajectory of sexual "maturation" provides a figurative model for the above-described socio-national developmental mirroring process itself.

Shortly after Zhu Ling's ear-piercing scene, she finds herself staring at her own reflection in a bathroom mirror. She is shocked that its aged aspect does not match the youthful image which she still has of herself:

In the midst of the swirling mist, Zhu Ling removed her white blouse and her little blue skirt, and stood naked on that low stool in front of the wash stand. As if entranced, she stared blankly at the image of herself in the mirror. What had once been a small face as pure as ice and jade, had now become withered and weary, and the two empty, bloodshot eyes staring out of it resembled nothing more than those of a little beggar girl wandering the streets. . . .

Zhu Ling stood up straight in front of the mirror, and stared intently at that pair of sorrowful pupils in the mirror. All of a sudden, she cried out and bit her lip to keep from laughing. Frowning her forehead, she squinted her eyes, and dispersing the cloud of water vapor in front of her, she extended her neck and once again studied the young girl's reflection in the mirror before her. Looking left and right, she couldn't refrain from exposing her small, white teeth, sticking out her red tongue, and making a funny face to the mirror, she laughed out loud. Teng, teng, teng. The large hanging clock in the next room sounded three times, and as each sound drifted into the washroom, its ripples mixed in with the whishing sound of water. Zhu Ling sighed quietly and picked up a wash-cloth to clean the dust from her face. She then took a comb and, staring intently at the girl's face in the mirror, she began fearfully to comb (*shulong*) the hair which lay strewn in disarray over her head and face. "Hululu, Hululu. Ai, mama mia" From the living room in-

cessantly drifted forth these sounds of father Zhu's deep snoring and sorrowful dream-sounds. Next door, there were the sounds of a couple that were bathing together, and their lustful laughter pierced the still night like the wailings of demons.

Zhu Ling stuck out her ears and listened intently, but she could only feel her own face flush red, and her whole body start to tremble. She grabbed a comb and started to scrape fiercely at the strands of hair hanging down over her cheeks. Suddenly something caught her eye, and she stared blankly at it. She abruptly grabbed a towel and wiped away the condensed water vapor on the mirror, and then stretched out her neck to place her face next to the mirror. Reaching out her hand, she parted the hair on her forehead, and then opened her eyes wide as she stared at her own pristinely white ear lobe.

Under the lamp, all that she could see was a bright-red bud of a bloody perforation, which permeated the water vapor of the entire room, it looked just like a red rose blooming under the morning dew, (105-6)

With almost psychoanalytic precision, this scene describes Zhu Ling's encounter with her specular and maturational other. The dynamics of familiarity and disfamiliarity are themselves reminiscent of the way in which Chinese mainland geography is spectrally projected onto Taipei urban cartography. Furthermore, Zhu Ling's sense of uncanny doubling when confronted with the reflection of her own face and body is itself given a temporal twist when she hears sounds of lovemaking in the next room. Reminiscent again of the way in which Taiwan is repeatedly described in *Haidong qing* and *Zhu Ling* as representing China's own potential future, the lovemaking is disconcerting in part because it represents a future point on Zhu Ling's own maturational trajectory.

As if to confirm this speculative reading of Zhu Ling's reaction to the water music in the next room, the passage proceeds to describe

her own immediate fascination with those facets of her own facial appearance which are explicitly coded in Li Yongping's novel as marking symbolic points of developmental transition. First, she vigorously starts to comb (*shulong*) her own hair, and the term used is, as discussed above, precisely the same as the euphemism for a young girl's (particularly a courtesan's) loss of her virginity. Next, however, her attention is distracted from her hair to the pristine whiteness of the ear lobe half concealed beneath it. As the preceding chapter of the novel has already made clear, the piercing of the ears is a potent symbol in the novel of girl's transition from childhood to sexual maturity. In this case, Zhu Ling's attention to the immaculate whiteness of her own ear lobe is immediately interrupted by her awareness of a trace of blood—a blood trace which simultaneously reflects both her own ear-piercing earlier that day, as well as the un/ruptured hymen which figuratively separates her from the love-making in the next room.

This single drop of blood, originally an indexical trace of Zhu Ling's ear-piercing "rite of passage," comes in this passage to assume an identity almost independent from Zhu Ling herself. In a passage where Zhu Ling's actual father is portentously described as being sound asleep in the next room, her drop of ear-piercing blood comes to assume a status comparable to that attributed to the avian male gonads and Sun Yat-sen/Chiang Kai-shek memorials discussed in this essay. That is, they are all originally traces or artifacts of specific and contextualized maturational or developmental trajectories, which came to be partially disarticulated from their original referents and to serve as figurative models of the original maturational/developmental trajectory. In this particular case, the drop of blood is no longer merely an indexical trace of a specific procedure Zhu Ling has undergone, but rather becomes an abstract symbol of the entire maturational trajectory against which Zhu Ling must attempt to position herself. Similarly, the memorial artifacts associated with Sun Yat-sen in *Haidong qing* and *Zhu Ling* cease to be indexical traces of the (admittedly significant) achievements of a single historical figure, but rather come to assume an identity of their own as concretizations of the abstract historical teleology against which not only Taiwan, but even the Chinese

mainland is expected to live up to. Therefore, Zhu Ling's bloody "rose" can be seen as the symbolic point of rupture itself which provides the symbolic fulcrum around which the novel's maturational and developmental trajectories revolve.

I began this essay with a discussion of the themes of diaspora and expatriatism, and their relationship to Li Yongping's oeuvre. The sense of topographical ungroundedness evoked by the theme of expatriatism is reflected nicely by a concept central to both of Li's two most recent novels: that of *Titou*. *Titou* is a Taiwanese term meaning roughly to roam, wander or stroll. It, and its various synonyms (including *piaobo*, *liulang*, *youguang*, *liuda*, etc.), are explicitly and repeatedly used in the novels themselves to describe the various protagonists' characteristic means of moving through space. Like the figurative expatriate, most of the two novels' characters are never in a place where they can feel truly at home, and instead are constantly on the move with no real topographical telos in mind.

Beyond its actual meaning of wandering or roaming, the Taiwanese term *titou* is also a homonym of the Mandarin phrase *titou*, which can mean either to cut one's hair, to shave one's head, or even to decapitate.²¹ There is even one passage in each of the two novels in which the characters themselves hear the Taiwanese term and mistake it for the Mandarin homonym.²² This fortuitous homonym, furthermore, brings together many of the various themes discussed in this essay. The literal meaning of the term suggests the bodily dislocation from a topographic point of origin, such as one's "motherland," which is characteristic of the expatriate condition. The range of potential meanings of the Mandarin homonym traverse the array of connotations suggested by the *shulong/kaiguan* dichotomy discussed above. For example, the "hair-cutting" meaning approaches the surface, cosmetic connotations of *shulong*, while the "head-shaving" meaning would generally be taken to resemble more closely the violently transgressive connotations of *kaiguan*. And even if the "head-shaving" meaning is ambiguous in this regard, the "decapitation" meaning of the term not only approximates *kaiguan*'s connotations of violent rupture, but even approaches those of the allegory of Hundun.

Finally, these two mutually opposed connotations of the Mandarin *titou* actually come together in the presidential hair-dressing anecdote discussed above. That anecdote uses the same expression, *titou*, first to denote conventional, cosmetic hair-cutting, and then, in Zhu Ling's elliptical formulation, to suggest a symbolic "beheading" or emasculation.

Therefore, the various different meanings and connotations of *titou* come together to express what I would argue is one of the important implications of *Zhu Ling* as a whole for question of the relationship between symbolic paternity and the status of expatriatism. The original Taiwanese meaning of *titou*, to roam or wander, is suggestive of a certain rootless diasporic or expatriate condition. Meanwhile, the two opposing meanings of the Mandarin *titou*, hair-dressing and decapitation, are suggestive of the same cosmetic continuity/violent rupture dichotomy which I have argued is shared by the *shulong/kaiguan* and Sun Yat-sen/Chiang Kai-shek dyads. Finally, Zhu Ling's salacious innuendo (which Lian Mingxin makes explicit) draws on the castrative dimension of *titou*, which I have suggested can be linked to the process of positing an idealized model of individual or collective development which is thought to be located outside of oneself.

NOTES

¹ I am grateful to David Wang and Yvonne Chang for advice and encouragement on both this article as well as an earlier article on Li Yongping's *Haidong qing*.

² Burton Watson, trans., *Chuang Tzu: Basic Writings* (New York: Columbia UP, 1996) 95.

³ Li Yongping, *Zhu Ling manyou xianjing* (Taipei: Lianhe wenxue, 1998). Henceforth, this novel will be referred to simply as *Zhu Ling*, and the page numbers of the citations to it will be integrated parenthetically into the text itself.

⁴ Li Yongping, *Haidong qing* (Taipei: Lianhe wenxue, 1992). Page numbers to citations from this novel will be integrated paren-

thetically into the text itself as well.

⁵ For a more detailed discussion of this issue, see my essay: Carlos Rojas (Luo Peng), "Muguo yu muxing: Li Yongping de *Haidong qing* zhi dixing meiying" ("Motherlands and Maternities: Spectral Topographies in Li Yongping's *Haidong qing*"), forthcoming in *Wenxue Taiwan wushi nian* [*Writing Taiwan: Strategies of Representation*] (Taipei: Lixu, 1999).

⁶ Chen Yaling, "Taibei de 'Yixiang Ren'—Suxie Li Yongping" ["'Outsider' in Taipei—Li Yongping"], *Guanghua* [Sinorama] 23.8 (1998): 109-110.

⁷ Chen Yaling 109-110.

⁸ See *Haidong qing* (iv-v, 460, 495, 806-7, etc.) and *Zhu Ling* (319) for discussions of this phenomenon.

⁹ Although *Zhu Ling* does not allude to *Zhuangzi* at all, *Haidong qing* does explicitly allude to *Zhuangzi* on a number of occasions.

¹⁰ In an uncanny echo of the "seven holes" of the *Zhuangzi* allegory, An Lexin speaks specifically of giving Zhu Ling and her six friends a group discount for all "seven shots" (82).

¹¹ This dream is reminiscent of another precociously political dream Zhu Ling has near the end of *Haidong qing*, in which all of the bronze Sun Yat-sen statues in front of Taiwan elementary schools suddenly come to life and search out those officials who beat his banners and carry off his placards, and also cut off the heads of those adults who take advantage of young boys and girls (924).

¹² See the discussion on p. 54, to cite just one of many passages discussing this phenomenon.

¹³ See, for instance, *Haidong qing* 374, and *Zhu Ling* 77.

¹⁴ In both novels, this delicacy is referred to rather delicately as "yaozi" (kidneys), but when Zhu Ling's friend Lin Xiangjin asks her what they are, she explains that they are *gaowan* ("testicles"), and then when Xiangjin still fails to understand, she reverts back to the same terminology which she and Lian Mingxin used, in the passage cited above, to refer to the presidential balls (*dandan*).

¹⁵ Rojas, "Motherlands and Maternities."

¹⁶ See Rojas, "Motherlands and Maternities" for a more detailed

discussion of this topic.

¹⁷ See, for example, *Zhu Ling* 333.

¹⁸ *Haidong qing* (iv-v), *Zhu Ling* 333.

¹⁹ See, for example, *Haidong qing* 927 and *Zhu Ling* 60.

²⁰ "Da Zhongguo de suoying," *Haidong qing*. iv.

²¹ See Wang Derwei, "Shalemei Titou: Ping Li Yongping de *Haidong qing* (shang juan)," *Zhongshi wanbao* 22 March 1992: 10, 15.

²² *Haidong qing* 124 and *Zhu Ling* 322.