The Spirit of Deer Town
and the Redemption of Li Ang's Uncanny Literary Home

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In this essay, Darryl Sterk, a sinologist based in Taiwan, traces the shifts in the representation of the specters that have always haunted Deer Town, Li Ang's literary home. He argues that over the course of her long literary career, Li Ang has questioned her early assumption that modernity and women's liberation required the transcendence of local religious traditions; in her more recent works, Li Ang suggests that faith in these traditions effects a therapeutic re-enchantment of familiar places in the modern world.

In 1970, when she was still a teenager, Li Ang published her first story about an uncanny home. In the story, she depicted an imaginary homeland in maternal but also erotic terms as the body of a curvaceous woman: in "an unbroken stretch of flat grassland . . . she spotted two mountains rising before her, two full, rounded mounds standing erect in the distance."[1] A romantic or nativist image of a rural idyll has been defamiliarized in a disturbing way. In this story, "Curvaceous Dolls" ("You quxian de wawa" 有曲線的娃娃), dolls become fetishes, erotically invested substitutes, for a young wife living in the city. The true objects of her desire are her dead mother and her distant home. In her dream, the two objects condense into a single image. Like many Taiwanese modernist writers in the 1960s, Li Ang went through a Freudian phase, only to outgrow it a few years later.[2] She did not tire of writing about disturbed people and places—quite the contrary. But whereas the wife in "Curvaceous Dolls" is only figuratively haunted, the characters in her latest novel, *Possession* (*Fushen* 附身), are literally haunted. In fact, almost every major work of Li Ang's since *The Butcher's Wife* (*Shafu* 殺夫), published in 1982, has been a ghost story. The setting for these ghost stories is a haunted literary homeland called Deer Town (Lucheng 鹿城), the model for which is Li Ang's own hometown of Lugang 鹿港, or Deer Harbor, located in south-central Taiwan. Once a major port, Lugang was in decline by Li Ang's day. But because of Li Ang's stories, Deer Town has become a landmark in Taiwanese literary geography comparable to Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County. A haunted place, especially a house, is essential to any gothic literary work. In popular fiction the place is haunted to give readers a thrill, while in serious works the haunted place has some sort of philosophical meaning. The haunted homeland in Li Ang's works is her way of talking about the uneasy process of modernization, which Taiwan went through more quickly than almost any country before or since. Whether the literary experimentation with the gothic romance in American and Chinese place-writing in recent decades explores the same process is a question for another day.[3] My more modest aim here is to trace the evolution of Li Ang's southern gothic.

What Li Ang expresses in her early Deer Town stories is the sense that something is not quite right at home, that what was once intimately familiar has become suddenly strange. Freud's German term for this feeling, *Unheimlich*, is literally "unhomely," although "uncanny" is the usual translation. The homely becomes unhomely, according to Freud, when what "ought to have remained secret and hidden" comes to light in a return of the repressed.[4] The harbinger of this return, the spiritual revenant, is a "thing of terror."[5] Dismissing as childish or primitive the idea that this psychic agency is a separate being, Freud would interpret a spirit double or doppelgänger in a story as a symbol of a person's superego.[6] More generally, the ghost in a work of fiction represents unresolved trauma; but before interpreting the meaning of the revenant in a story, a post-Freudian critic must first question the Freudian "ought": what forces require these secrets to remain undisclosed?

During Li Ang's youth, most people in Taiwan thought the sexual desire of women ought to remain secret and hidden. Li Ang has spent her literary career offending such people.[7] She never accepted the moral norms of the day as ethical givens, and by provocatively bringing what was hidden and secret to light

in her fiction, she has in some sense participated as an agent of modernity in the redefinition of moral norms. Modernity, however, is an unfinished project, as witnessed in the returning specter of patriarchy in some of Li Ang's ghost stories. Although she longs for modernity and is sick of a home overshadowed by the inescapable patriarchal past, Li Ang also feels a nativist homesickness for a native home untouched by modernity. Li Ang can be considered a nativist (*heimat*) writer because she has obsessively returned to an imagined home (*Heim*). She is certainly not a typical nativist, who seeks a foundation for identity in an idyllic landscape of green fields and rolling hills. She had already recognized the unreality of the idyllic by the time she wrote "Curvaceous Dolls," a story in which "the very site of return—the identitarian home itself—turns out to be doubled, deferred, and haunted."[8] Rather, Li Ang is a dark nativist. As such, her attitude toward both the past—which haunts her while it also seems lost forever—and the present could only be powerfully ambivalent. Deer Town has long been inscribed with her ambivalence. Though it is a troubled place, Li Ang's recent fiction has shown that it is not beyond redemption.

Deer Town first appeared in Li Ang's writing in the early 1970s when she was a university student in Taipei. In this early series of Deer Town stories, we find many of the features of the American southern gothic genre: skeletons in the closet, malicious gossip, shocking sexual misconduct. A key feature of the southern gothic that is missing, however, is a ghostly haunting. Li Ang does represent traditional spiritual practices in a story about a Deer Town woman who makes handicrafts for annual festivals—incense pouches for Dragon Boat Festival, the grass effigies burned to appease the spirits during Ghost Month, and the decorative lanterns lit for the new year. Every year she sells fewer and fewer items as "new, foreign ideas . . . replace old customs"[9] and as cheap, mass-produced items flood the market. These imitations are meant to seem familiar, but to anyone who remembers the old ways they can only inspire an uncanny feeling. The woman gets a job in a new ironworks, but she cannot stand the noise and quits after a few days. The story offers what seems like a sociological treatment of dying spiritual practices in the context of economic modernization. In 1980, Li Ang crafted another Deer Town story, which bears the quaint title "New and Old" ("Xinjiu" 新舊). The story is about a young boy who will sit in the "spirit sedan" (*hunjiao* 魂轎) when his grandmother dies and serve as her psychopomp, guiding her spirit to meet her long-lost husband. The boy wonders: How will grandma be able to talk to grandpa about "televisions, cars, trains, atomic bombs" when they reunite in the afterlife?[10] Although in this story, Li Ang merely raises this question for the reader to ponder, she soon begins a deeper investigation of modernization, one she has been conducting ever since, in a novel about a traditional community in which folk religion is taken deadly seriously.

Li Ang's next Deer Town story, *The Butcher's Wife*, is best known as a novel about the plight of women in traditional society. It is an account of a woman who kills her abusive husband, a pig butcher who lives in a seaside village outside Deer Town, after he rapes and starves her for months on end. There are rumors about the butcher from the start: "After years and years of slaughtering countless animals, he was visited every night by ghostly pigs bleating on his doorstep. Or so people said."[11] While the butcher himself scoffs at what people say, his colleagues have set up a monument to the souls of animals where they seek to propitiate the ghosts of the pigs. Soon after the wedding, a neighbor instills fear of the porcine dead in the young wife, but she also offers the chance of expiation through visits to the temple of the Chen clan elder to make sacrificial offerings. At the temple, the young wife sees an image of a hanging ghost, "a terrifying specter with a horrible bloody face or a frighteningly long tongue." Behind the temple is a well into which a servant girl named Chrysanthemum had thrown herself. But Chrysanthemum is not a thing of terror; she is seen as a beautiful spirit because the elder "gives people who have suffered injustices a chance to have their say."[12] The wife implores Chrysanthemum to be her spiritual protector. Thus Li Ang seems to have shifted from a purely thematic treatment of spirituality in her earlier work—in which the story is filtered through a narrator who does not believe in ghosts—to a more

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active engagement, as seen in this story's offering of some real consolation in traditional spirituality for an abused woman.

Yet the hanging ghost keeps recurring in her imagination. The image of the ghost's tongue, an organ of both ingestion and speech, particularly terrifies her. Setting out an offering of pig's feet with noodles provides her some temporary daytime reassurance, but then her dreams are filled with noodles that look like protruding purple tongues. She stuffs herself with them night after night. The dreams worsen after her neighbor insinuates that her offering during Ghost Month is inadequate, that the ghosts will not be appeased. The

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wife has no defense against her fear of the dead; she has no larger perspective. She herself is just like an unappeased ghost in that she is both starving and unheard, but unlike one in that nobody fears her. In the end, that is her husband's undoing. One night, after being forced to watch him ply his trade, the butcher's wife butchers her sleeping husband in a superb hallucinatory scene: "Countless bright red tongues noisily jabbered on and on. She raised the knife and hacked and hacked until the tongues went away."[13]

The wife's act seems like revenge but it is unintentional and quickly condemned. She becomes a scapegoat. The local gossips conclude that her case illustrates the ancient law of divine retribution because of what had happened to her mother. The wife's mother had been cast out of her husband's family after being widowed, only to be caught later hiding out in the clan temple and having sex with a soldier in exchange for food. The wife's mother was then permanently banished. The local gossips blame the daughter for her mother's fate because it was she who went for help when the solider came. Forever after, the mother is a terrifying revenant. She reappears in her daughter's dreams to beg for food; unfed, she rips open her own belly and begins eating her own innards. A Freudian might say that the wife suffers from an overactive superego, yet the true problem is the patriarchal logic of the social structure. By virtue of this logic, the daughter replicates her mother's fate. In this static system, the domination of animals by humans, of the young by the old, and of women by men is reproduced generation after generation. The novel thus seems strangely behind the times considering it was published in 1982, at a time of rapid social change regarding women's place in marriage and society. In writing this novel, Li Ang took a news story about a mariticide in 1930s Shanghai and transposed it to a Deer Town seemingly untouched by modernity.[14] Nearly a decade later, Li Ang would reintroduce the historical awareness she had shown in her early Deer Town stories into a novel about a heroine for whom she claimed far greater historical agency.

The heroine of *The Lost Garden* (*Miyuan* 迷園), Zhu Yinghong, inherits a garden on land outside Deer Town that first came into her family's possession in the seventeenth century after the family's pirate patriarch, Zhu Feng, abandoned the family matriarch, a woman in whose veins aboriginal and Chinese blood flowed. Out of spite, the matriarch kept her husband's name off the family tree and warned that anyone who wrote him back in would ruin the family. Zhu Feng and his spiteful wife haunt the family garden, or at least their presence is felt by Lin Xigeng, Zhu Yinghong's lover and later her philandering husband. Lin Xigeng is a land developer; he has turned the land of Taiwan, represented by the garden, into a commodity. After they marry, she uses his money to restore the Zhu family garden to vernal glory and then, lest he try to develop it, she donates the land to the people of Taiwan. At the same time, she acknowledges Zhu Feng as her ancestor. By doing so, she deliberately fulfills the curse in an act of donation that restores the land to the status of a gift and, by dispersing the matriarch's animus, reconciles the living and the dead. The sense that the dead might be watching from afar contributes a wonderfully haunted atmosphere to the garden when the couple enters it for the last time. When they turn on the lights at night, the garden appears like a scene out of *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* (*Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋誌異), a classic collection of ghost stories. In that spectral glow, Lin tries and fails to make love to Zhu, causing her to worry she might never have his child. His impotence might seem bathetic but for the final, ambiguous image of the garden as a "flourishing conflagration."[15] The garden symbolizes Taiwan's society at the time of the economic miracle, a time of rapid commodification in which the cultural heritage, as idealized in the garden, is vanishing. As society modernizes around her,

Zhu Yinghong feels that her home has become unfamiliar to her. But, unlike the butcher's wife, she has the ability to act upon her environment.

Over the past two decades, Li Ang has been searching for a heroine who might follow Zhu Yinghong in making Taiwan a place where she could feel at home again. Li Ang's next novel, *Autobiography: A Novel* (*Zizhuan no xiaoshuo* 自傳の小說), was about one of her personal heroines, Xie Xuehong 謝雪紅, who led a resistance to the KMT[16] in the late 1940s. Xie Xuehong's story ended tragically: She fled to Hong Kong, suffered during the Cultural Revolution on account of her Taiwanese background, and died in Beijing in 1970. Worst of all, "her desire for her remains to be buried at home"[17] remained unfulfilled, as the novel's narrator exclaims while attending a funeral held on the outskirts of Deer Town for a family member who was of Xie Xuehong's generation. Looking out over the Taiwan Strait toward the mainland, the narrator can only sadly conclude that Xie Xuehong was able neither to achieve her social and political ideals nor to satisfy her personal desires.

A few years later, Li Ang set herself free of the shackles of history and found fulfillment in the afterlife. In *Visible Ghosts* (*Kan de jian de gui* 看得見的鬼), she composed five allegories of ghostly women's liberation. Of course, they are set in Deer Town. There is one story for each direction, including the center. The collection is thus a kind of feminist literary mandala. In several of these stories, Li Ang mourns the hordes of ghosts of immigrants to Taiwan who died in floods, famines, plagues, earthquakes, and rebellions—the ghosts who were traditionally appeased during Ghost Month. But the main characters in this collection are all ghosts of women. The only traditional tale is of the spirit of the screw pine (*lintou jie* 林投姊)—a tree that grows in sandy soil by the sea—who hanged herself from a branch after she was abandoned by her husband from the mainland. To create feminist ghost stories, Li Ang had to delve into her imagination. In fact, she invented her own formula: a woman is killed, becomes a ghost, suffers confinement, achieves rebirth, sees poetic justice done, and finally fulfills her desire.

The most striking images in the stories are of symbolic female castration, which occurs during the confinement phase of the allegories. The fear of castration, representing a radical loss of power, was the source of the sense of the uncanny according to Freud, who considered the loss of the eyes in E. T. A. Hoffman's "The Sandman" to be a symbolic castration. In one of Li Ang's *Visible Ghosts* stories, the eyes of a traveling ghost are put out and her tongue is cut out so that she cannot identify her persecutor. In another story, a native (*fan* 番) prostitute suffers the mutilation of her breasts and groin in a death by a thousand cuts. But each woman manages in her own way to regain freedom and ultimately make herself at home.

The story of the *fan* ghost, for instance, begins by exposing a false image of home. Li Ang quotes a late nineteenth-century literati traveler's poem depicting a happy hunting ground at Deer Harbor:

> The mountains ring the delta round, between the waters flow.
> And on the stream *fan* girls and wives their searafts nightly row.
> "The hunting's done, the deer are won, it's time for us to go."
> On mountaintops their song resounds beneath a lunar glow.[18]

The deer had disappeared from the area around Deer Harbor over a century before the poem was written, and along with them the hunter-gatherer way of life of the plains aborigines. Li Ang shows the poem to be ahistorical primitivist nonsense through her story about a particular site of injustice. The protagonist is a *fan* woman who has become a prostitute as a result of the historical practice in which Han men took local women as wives, appropriated their land, and then sold the women to brothels. The rickety brothel the *fan* was sold to collapses, tossing her onto the offal-covered rocks below and breaking her legs. This was an aspect of the grotesque historical reality of Deer Town hidden beneath the floral beauty of *The Lost Garden*. Unable to work as a prostitute due to her injuries, she makes a land claim on the basis of her plains aboriginal ancestry. Unfortunately, social injustice is compounded by official injustice when the official who receives her claim has her tortured to make an example of her as a warning to other land claimants. The torturer takes a knife to her breasts and groin. The incisions he makes bear an uncanny resemblance to mouths (and vaginas): "Everywhere there were wounds oozing blood and fluid, making it look as if there were innumerable mouths, mouths which she could use to ply her trade."[19] She dies a horrible death from her wounds and is dumped on the eastern outskirts of Deer Town at a place called Dingfanpo 頂番婆, the "end of the line for *fan* women."

There, to add insult to injury, she is encased in a tower of salt. Local people customarily pour salt on corpses to prevent them from rotting and to stop their ghosts from escaping. But in a rainstorm centuries later, she escapes her salty confines. Her spirit is now free to roam. By chance she sees the mummified body of a

Qing era mandarin dug up and chemically destroyed by the Japanese. Vindication is hers! Then after World War II, her own mummified body, which has become as small as a child's doll, is found and honored as the idol in a temple. In the climax of the story, her spirit performs an orgasmic dance upon a moonlit path of salt. Once a prison, salt is transformed by this image into an empowering part of the environment. As she dances, the scars of the wounds her torturer inflicted upon her are described, with brazen intertextuality, as "poor dumb mouths"[20] voicing the eternal sorrow of the disempowered. For her at least, there is closure. The story seems a textbook case of the Freudian uncanny,

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and not just because of female castration. Freud argued that dolls that seem as if they might be alive are uncanny, as also is—for neurotic men—the pudendum, "this unheimlich place [that] is the entrance to the former Heim of all human beings, to the place where each one of us lived once upon a time and in the beginning."[21] Surely she is uncanny! Yet Li Ang may not ultimately be aiming at uncanny effects, for ghosts are only uncanny when they are things of terror. Appeased, they are benign or even beneficent spirit familiars, whose very absence might seem uncanny—a disruption of the natural order of home.

Li Ang seeks ways to manage the disruptions of modernization in her recent story cycle *An Erotic Feast For Lovebirds* (*Yuanyang chunshan* 鴛鴦春膳). In the first story, a young girl named Wang Qifang is afraid to play in an abandoned bomb shelter, which is said to be haunted by the ghosts of the wild animals her father butchers there. In the stories in the middle of the collection, she grows up, goes abroad for higher education, joins the cosmopolitan jet set, and indulges in erotica and fine cuisine, yet she remains strangely unfulfilled.[22] She returns to Deer Town in the final story after her father has a stroke. Neighbors say that his stroke illustrates the ancient law of retribution: the spirits of the wild animals he butchered in the bomb shelter have finally taken revenge. This traditional belief coexists with the modern medical interpretation of a high-cholesterol diet. Wang Qifang finally decides she "should go on a Buddhist vegetarian fast to honor her father."[23] The Buddhist ending to the story is noteworthy given Li Ang's specialization in the representation of desire. She is famous for her graphic sexual passages and would insist upon a woman's right to pleasure, but this story questions the notion that happiness is a function of the fulfillment of desire, perhaps even entertains the Buddhist idea that desire is the source of all suffering. The hungry ghost in Buddhism is a being that is never satisfied no matter how much it consumes. In retrospect, we see that Li Ang's fiction is home to many hungry ghosts who are yet living, the first of which is the butcher's wife. In her latest novel, Li Ang explores how they might finally be fulfilled.

It was folk belief that drove the butcher's wife to madness, but in *Possession*, Li Ang seeks wisdom in a syncretic folk spiritual tradition, integrating traditional spirituality into modern subjectivity. *Possession* revolves around an ang-î (the Taiwanese pronunciation of a term Li Ang transliterates as *hongyi* 紅姨 or *wangyi* 尪姨 in Mandarin), a traditional female spirit medium, who helps possessed people as well as possessive spirits. She welcomes a mother and daughter, Qianhe and Jingxiang, to live with her in Yuncong Hall, her home on a hill on the outskirts of Deer Town, after Qianhe is abandoned by her husband and rejected by her father. At Yuncong Hall, her mother Qianhe starts a new life as the ang-î's interpreter. When the ang-î conducts exorcisms, she speaks only in an esoteric language, which Qianhe is suddenly able to understand after studying the scriptures of various religious traditions.

The very act of interpretation provides a level of spiritual protection that the butcher's wife never had. She was defenseless against the fear inspired by the spirits of dead pigs, of the hanging ghost, and of her own mother. Qianhe and the other characters in *Possession* are not educated beyond what Freud called childish and primitive beliefs, but they can interpret the world around them in the terms of other religions or modern psychology. Jingxiang, the daughter, takes a particular interest in psychoanalysis. The reader who does not believe in ghosts will have to read the paranormal phenomena psychologically, but the traditional explanation is usually more interesting. For instance, there is a nymphomaniac who is a successful businesswoman and who happens to believe that her vagina has been invaded by an ice spirit. After losing her boyfriend, she goes to see an analyst, who gives her the standard diagnosis: the spirit represents repressed trauma. The woman tosses out the analyst's

prescription for an anti-psychotic and seeks help from a spiritual professional. Psychoanalysis, after all, is often reductive and unempirical. The bizarre spiritual or religious beliefs of ordinary people in Taiwan, even career-minded members of the middle class, are, by contrast, fascinating social facts.

Li Ang gives us some guidance in *Possession* as to the symbolic meaning of these facts. The story of the woman who yields to the ice spirit, loses her boyfriend, and becomes a nymphomaniac is disturbing, but one character, Yuzhong, who also grew up at Yuncong Hall, draws a positive interpretation from it: he thinks the woman has been practicing what he calls "the charity of the flesh" (*roushen bushi* 肉身佈施), using her body to do good works. In this regard, Yuzhong articulates the "nest" theory of possession: By allowing an alien spirit to inhabit her body as a baby bird would a nest, the woman is being charitable. The spirit who possesses her might be difficult to live with, but it is not evil. It is simply needy. In this way, the figure of the ghost becomes a metaphor, not for hidden trauma, as in Freud's theory, but rather for human neediness.[24] Initially, the need in question seems to be for erotic love. Yet Yuzhong himself is wary of erotic love as a form of possession. One evening in a haunted room in a hot-spring hotel, he tells Jingxiang the story of a man who, for spiritual protection, wrote the Diamond Sutra on every part of his body save one. Jingxiang guesses his penis, as by this point she is caressing Yuzhong's, but it was actually the man's ears. Yuzhong, not finding humor in the idea of castration, loses his erection. That night Yuzhong dreams that Jingxiang's bloody mouth is eating the characters of the sutra inscribed on his skin and boring holes into his body. To him, this represents the threat of erotic love, which in Buddhism is simply one more form of attachment. He is unable to prevent her from possessing him in the dream, but in real life their love remains unconsummated. When they meet again several years later, however, he has a young son. He has allowed someone else to possess him, though it is not clear whether he is still possessed. Though Jingxiang no longer feels any sexual attraction for Yuzhong, she does feel a special affinity for his son, so to her the three of them seem like a family. In forming this family, Jingxiang lets herself be possessed by other needy beings. The reader of *The Butcher's Wife* might have decided that according to Li Ang marriage is a trap. The reader of *Visible Ghosts* might conclude that self-fulfillment is purely a solitary pursuit. While Buddhism stresses the spiritual community more than the family, in *Possession* the spiritual community *is* the family. Li Ang has reconsidered the fate of the modern family, which in *Possession* takes the form of an alternative family that is somehow traditional in its stubborn attachment to a native place.

The home of this family is Yuncong Hall, the only home Jingxiang has ever known. Jingxiang is a modern woman who, unlike the butcher's wife, has the freedom to fulfill her desire, which, beyond becoming a writer, is to go home. The need to go home, or to find a place to call home, is a consequence of the increased mobility of modernity; the freedom to leave home carries the risk of being unable to ever really return, because home will have changed in the interim. Jingxiang takes this risk without fully understanding it. But through the auspices of the ang-î, Congyun Hall remains familiar. The Deer Town of *Possession* is without precedent in Li Ang's fiction, as it is no longer uncanny. For the first time, Li Ang is able to imagine Deer Town as the site of a family sanctuary, Congyun Hall. The bodhisattva Guanyin 觀音 is its guardian spirit. Guanyin is a familiar presence in Taiwanese homes, and, as her name in Chinese indicates, she "observes the sound" of suffering in the world. But *Possession* is not an allegory for a country that Li Ang has elsewhere (in the foreword to *Visible Ghosts*) described as being filled with a ghastly spectral wailing. Congyun Hall is a place of peace and quiet while also remaining a house of spirit familiars—including, after her death, the spirit of the ang-î. Unlike the ghosts in *Visible Ghosts*, who escape into the unknown, the ang-î remains. She remains not because she has unfinished business, like the family patriarch and matriarch in *The Lost Garden*, but because Congyun Hall is her home, too, and remains so in the afterlife. In this image of a hall on a hill on the outskirts of Deer Town, Li Ang finally has a place to call home.[25]

Li Ang left Lugang right after high school for higher education in Taipei and later the United States. More recently, she has become a jet-setting literary lioness and globe-trotting gourmand. Her life's trajectory has been urban and cosmopolitan; she would seem to be a free spirit. And the characters in her fiction have traced wider and wider life trajectories. Yet for forty years she has repeatedly felt a compulsion to return to her uncanny literary home of Deer Town. Her uncanny representations of Deer Town dispel the simplistic nativist fantasy of a rural idyll or the primitivist fantasy of a happy hunting ground and reveal the secret and hidden historical trauma underneath. Yet the Li Ang who created the garden in *The Lost Garden* or the house on the hill in *Possession* is a nativist. By writing about these places, she has tried

to make peace with the patriarchal past and to resolve the tensions in her attitude toward modernity, a potentially liberatory process with uncanny consequences: it greatly augments our ability to satisfy certain needs and desires, but, according to a dark nativist writer like Li Ang, leaves people feeling empty in the midst of plenty, strangers in their own land. In Li Ang's latest novel, Deer Town is a spiritual but not a haunted place because, through the agency of the ang-î, the living are reconciled and the dead appeased. Li Ang, the spirit of Deer Town, performs these spiritual offices for her readers. As Taiwan's literary ang-î, she has become a spirit guide for the haunted and possessed souls trying to make a home for themselves in the modern world.

Notes

[1] Li Ang, *The Butcher's Wife and Other Stories*, ed. and trans. Howard Goldblatt (Boston: Cheng and Tsui, 1995), 192–193.

[2] On the psychological turn in modern Chinese literature from Taiwan, see Yvonne Chang's *Modernism and the Nativist Resistance: Contemporary Chinese Fiction From Taiwan* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1994), 41–44.

[3] Kathleen Brogan explores this American literary trend in *Cultural Haunting* (Charlottesville: Univ. of Virginia Press, 1998), while David Der-wei Wang discusses the renaissance of "phantasmagoria" that occurred in Chinese literature a half-dozen years after the deaths of Mao Tse-tung and Chiang Kai-shek in the "Second Haunting" chapter of his *The Monster That Is History* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2004).

[4] Sigmund Freud, "The 'Uncanny,'" *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey, with Anna Freud, Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson, eds. (London: Hogarth Press, 1953–1974), 17:225.

[5] Ibid., 236.

[6] See David Lodge, "The Uncanny," *The Art of Fiction* (New York: Penguin, 1992), 211–214, for an interpretation of Poe's "William Wilson."

[7] See Howard Goldblatt, "Sex and Society: The Fiction of Li Ang," *Worlds Apart: Recent Chinese Writing and Its Audiences* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1990), 150–165.

[8] Marilyn Ivy, *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1995), 103–104.

[9] Li Ang, *Shafu—Lucheng Gushi* 殺夫鹿城故事 (*The Butcher's Wife—Deer Town Stories*) (Taipei: Lianjing, 1983), 48.

[10] Ibid., 68.

[11] Ibid., 11.

[12] Ibid., 32.

[13] Ibid., 139.

[14] Li Ang, *The Butcher's Wife*, v.

[15] Li Ang, *Miyuan* 迷園 (*The Lost Garden*) (Taipei: Hongfan, 1991), 280.

[16] The KMT (Kuomintang) refers to the Chinese Nationalist Party, which governed Taiwan from 1945 until 2000 and again after 2008.

[17] Li Ang, *Zizhuan no xiaoshuo* 自傳の小說 (*Autobiography: A Novel*) (Taipei: Crown, 1999), 347.

[18] Li Ang, *Kan de jian de gui* 看得見的鬼 (*Visible Ghosts*) (Taipei: UNITAS, 2004), 10.

[19] Ibid., 16.

[20] Ibid., 32.

[21] Freud, "The 'Uncanny,'" *The Standard Edition*, 17:245.

[22] Li Ang has gone on her own food vacations, which she recounts in *Ai chi gui de haohua maoxian* 愛吃鬼的豪華冒險 (*The Luxurious Adventures of A Ghost Who Loves To Eat*) (Taipei: Youlu Wenhua, 2009).

[23] "Suzhai" 素齋 ("A Vegetarian Fast"), *Yuanyang Chunshan* 鴛鴦春膳 (*An Erotic Feast For Lovebirds*) (Taipei: UNITAS, 2007), 265.

[24] It is interesting in this regard that one of the Chinese words for "ghost," *gui* 鬼, is also used to form the words for "alcoholic" (*jiugui* 酒鬼) and "drug addict" (*dugui* 毒鬼) as both describe people who satisfy primal human needs through substance abuse.

[25] I based the discussion of *Possession* in this essay on an unfinished version of the novel, which Li Ang graciously shared with me in advance of its final publication. Appropriately, the novel was published during Ghost Month in August 2011. In the final chapter, Li Ang emphasizes the local, aboriginal origin of the ang-î's art. Yet Li Ang's vision is ultimately syncretic. The cover art of the novel hints at an anecdote about a man who believes a crucifix inside him "has grown into a tree, an abode for the butterfly, a home for the bee" (89). Li Ang's syncretic vision represents a synthesis of her conflicted feelings about modernity. She now realizes that neither modernity nor the feminist cause requires the transcendence of traditional beliefs, and that by gleaning spiritual convictions from the world's traditions, modern folk—both men and women—can find a familiar sense of place in a changing world.