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Cultural Production in Shanghai Theatre during the Japanese Occupation Period: Yang Jiang's Reception and Transformation of Jane Austen's Comedic Art

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Abstract

In the wartime China of the 1940s, Yang Jiang 楊絳 wrote two very popular comedies: *As You Desire* 稱心如意 (1943) and *Swindle* 弄真成假 (1943). The genre of these two comedies and their relation to Western literature is discussed, and the connection between the styles of Yang and Austen is noticed and established on the ground that their works are regarded as belonging to the genre of the comedy of manners. This study focuses on Yang's reception of Austen's comedic style in her own comedies and examines how she receives and transforms the comedic elements of Austen's works onto the stage of the 1940s wartime Shanghai theatre.

This thesis is divided into three parts. Part I discusses the background and horizon of expectations of Yang's reception of Austen's comedic art. Yang's direct reception of Austen's comic style is observed in her critique of Austen, in which her interpretation of Austen's style is generically related to the comedy of manners. Yang's reading experience of the familiar works of the comedy of manners in classical Chinese literature, as well as the comedies of manners written by Chinese playwrights in the China of the 1920s to 1940s, is the significant key to comprehending her horizon of expectations in the reception of Austen's style.

Part II examines Yang's reception of Austen's style of the comedy of manners. The similarities between the styles of these two writers are discovered in the contexts of the

depiction of female laughter, the spatial settings and anti-romanticism.

Part III discusses Yang's transformation of Austen's comedic art in her own comedies. Living in a more turbulent environment than did Austen, Yang transforms Austen's comedic art in accordance with wartime Shanghai's socio-historical and socio-literary context. This transformation is demonstrated in two aesthetic orders of Yang's comedies: disillusionment and detachment.

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For my parents

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Introduction

The Emergence of Yang Jiang as a Writer of Comedy

This is a study of Yang Jiang's 楊絳 (1911-2016) two comedies – *As You Desire* 稱心如意 (1943) and *Swindle* 弄真成假 (1943), which were written and staged in Shanghai during the Occupation Period of the War of Resistance[1]. This study will examine the plays in comparison with the novels of Jane Austen (1775-1817) in terms of their comedic art.

The extant literature on Yang's comedies concerns itself either with the playwright's comic style or the place which her plays occupy in the history of modern Chinese comedic drama, including consideration of their connections with Western literature. What special qualities are to be found in Yang's humour? How can we historicize Yang's comedies in relation to her predecessors in modern Chinese drama? What is the connection between Yang's comedies and Western literature, especially in terms of their dramatic form? Inevitably, either discourse leads to the question of to what genre Yang's comedies belong. Most critics agree with Li Jianwu's 李健吾 (1906-1982) comment on Yang's comedies, i.e. that they are comedies of manners[2], and they discuss them in accordance with the more

[1] The history of wartime Shanghai is usually divided into two phases: 1. The *gudao* 孤島, or Orphan Island period, (from 13th August 1937 to December 1941), and 2. The Occupation Period (from December 1941 to 15th August 1945). A further explanation of these two phases will be given in the latter part of this chapter.

[2] Li Jianwu is the first person to regard Yang's comedies as belonging to the genre of the comedy of manners, but the extant text of his suggestion does not elaborate what he had in mind. Li's comment will be discussed further in this chapter. For the full text of Li's comment on Yang Jiang, see Meng Du 111.

superficial generic features of this Western dramatic genre - such as the living-room setting and romantic stories of middle-class youth. Not many of them touch upon the core quality of the comedy of manners, namely subversiveness.

The only exception to this approach is Amy Dooling, who, in her article "In Search of Laughter: Yang Jiang's Feminist Comedy"[3] and her treatise entitled *Women's Literary Feminism in Twentieth-Century China*,[4] reveals the subversion inherent in the comedies, which is opposed to a patriarchal and ideological mainstream dominated by male writers and intellectuals. Dooling suggests that the genre in which Yang works is the "feminist comedy of manners", which, according to Dooling, is to be distinguished from the general comedy of manners by virtue of its subversive quality. As Dooling is interested primarily in discussing the comedies from the feminist perspective, she emphasizes Yang's role as a woman and interprets the subversive elements in the comedies in the context of gender hierarchy; but she makes little effort to relate those elements to the role of the playwright as an intellectual in the aftermath of May Fourth. Hence Dooling does not discuss Yang Jiang's general response, as an intellectual, to the rapid changes in the contemporary cultural and social environment. Furthermore, regarding the comedy of manners as a form that "preserved rather than challenged the status quo" (Dooling *Women's* 145), Dooling maintains that the "feminist

[3] Dooling, Amy D. "In Search of Laughter: Yang Jiang's Feminist Comedy." *Modern Chinese Literature*, 8 (1994): 41-66. See Dooling "Laughter".
[4] Dooling, Amy D. *Women's Literary Feminism in Twentieth-Century China*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005. See Dooling *Women's*.

comedy of manners" is a parody of the comedy of manners similar in form and intent to that which Yang inherits from Oscar Wilde (1854-1900). The present study casts doubt upon such an assertion, as it is predicated upon the assumption that the comedy of manners is not an inherently subversive genre. However, Dooling's assertion that Yang's comedies belong to the genre known as the "feminist comedy of manners" and her contention of Yang's connection with a Western playwright, namely Wilde, have provided the present research with insights through which the Western lineage of Yang's comedies may be explored.

I will argue that it is principally upon Jane Austen's comedic style, rather than that of Wilde, that Yang draws. It will be argued that Yang merges the subversive quality of Austen's comedic style with her own horizon as a modern Chinese intellectual. Yang's comedic style is a hybrid expression of Western literary/dramatic resources and Chinese aesthetics. The combination of the two allows Yang's comedies to suggest an extensive social discourse, including that of women's liberation, and to express her social concerns on various levels.

The connection between Yang and Austen has been noticed and briefly discussed by a number of critics; however, no comprehensive research on this subject has been conducted so far. Through the examination of the relationship between the two writers' styles, it is believed that Yang's comedic aesthetic may be ascertained and her comedies more accurately contextualized within the wartime literary scene, the theatrical landscape of wartime Shanghai, and the development of modern Chinese drama as a whole. Furthermore, as one of

the few female comedy playwrights of early modern China, Yang Jiang's use of comedy may provide us with an alternative perspective from which to observe how the intelligentsia responded to social change and crisis during that era; that is to say, a perspective which differs in significant respects from the perspective of the male intellectuals who constructed the dominant discourse of the period. In constructing the framework for the present research, Reception Theory will be adopted as the principal methodology.

I attempt to answer the following questions: What comedic elements does Yang receive and transform from Austen's feminist comedy of manners? How does Yang integrate Austen's comedic art with the traditional Chinese literary aesthetic? How does Yang continue the efforts of her predecessors in writing modern Chinese drama, especially in terms of the comedy of manners? What role did socio-geographical factors and the aftermath of May Fourth play in Yang's reception and transformation of Austen's comedic art? Furthermore, how did Yang employ female laughter in response to that specific historical situation? Before entering into the discussion, it is necessary to give an account of the background against which the comedies were written and to elucidate certain key concepts.

I. Yang Jiang and Her Two Comedies

Yang Jiang was born Yang Jikang 楊季康 on 17th July 1911 in Beijing to Yang Yinhang 楊蔭杭 (1879-1945), who had been a revolutionary in the late Qing and was a judge when Yang Jiang was born, and Tang Xuying 唐須嫈 (1879-1937), a well-educated woman from a wealthy family. Both parents were from Wuxi in Jiangsu Province. Owing to the nature of her father's profession Yang Jiang lived in several cities during her childhood, including Beijing, Shanghai, Wuxi, and Hangzhou. The family finally settled in Suzhou.

Yang Jiang was educated in the missionary schools of Shanghai and Suzhou and graduated from Soochow University in 1932. In her last year at Soochow University, classes were suspended owing to a strike by students. To avoid delay in obtaining her degree, Yang applied and became a transient student of Yenching University. At Tsinghua University, which was next to Yenching, she met Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書 (1910-1998), her future husband. Yang Jiang began her studies of foreign literature in the graduate school of Tsinghua University in 1933. In 1935, just after she had finished her graduate studies, she married Qian. The couple left for Britain for further study at Oxford University. While Qian studied for a B.Litt. degree, Yang attended courses in literature. Just after their daughter Qian Yuan 錢瑗 (1937-1997) was born and Qian Zhongshu obtained his degree, the family moved to Paris, where Qian and Yang planned to study at the Sorbonne. However, the plan was

disrupted by the outbreak of the War of Resistance. Upon receiving the news of the death of Yang's mother, the couple decided to go back to China to be with their family. A series of accidental events led to Yang Jiang's remaining in Shanghai during the war, where she became a playwright.

During the couple's stay in Shanghai they made some new friends among certain intellectuals who were also stranded in the occupied city, such as Chen Linrui 陳麟瑞, Li Jianwu, Ke Ling 柯靈, Fu Lei 傅雷 and Song Qi 宋淇. Of these, it was Chen and Li who were to have a great impact on Yang's decision to write comedies. Chen Linrui (1905-1969) was a graduate of Tsinghua and a scholar of English, French and American drama. He had written a comedy entitled *Zhiye funu* 職業婦女 [Working Women - 1940] and had adapted several plays which had gained the approval of Shanghai theatregoers. Chen liked to discuss drama with her and would lend her treatises on drama from his library.[5] Li Jianwu was another graduate of Tsinghua who had committed himself to developing modern Chinese drama.

At a dinner gathering in the winter of 1942, the friends prepared grilled lamb, and the conversation turned to the subject of Chen Linrui's play *Wanyan* 晚宴 [A Banquet - 1942] and Li Jianwu's play *Yuncaixia* 雲彩霞 [Rosy Cloud - 1942]. Both plays have scenes in them which depict Mongolians grilling lamb for dinner. The discussion finally focused on Yang

[5] The friendship between Qian, Yang and Chen, along with the latter's influence on Yang in terms of play-writing, can be seen in X. Wu 114-29. In addition, Yang wrote an article about Chen. See Yang "Shihuafu".

Jiang, and the two playwrights encouraged her to try to write a play. This was the event that motivated Yang to write plays (Yang "original preface"). She wrote four plays in the 1940s: three comedies – *As You Desire*, *Swindle* and *Sporting with the World* 游戲人間 (1944) – and one tragedy – *Windswept Blossoms* 風絮 (1946),[6] which was never staged. It was at this point that Yang Jiang, Yang's pen name, first appeared on the Chinese literary scene. The comedies caused a sensation. Two of them, *As You Desire* and *Swindle*, constitute the subject matter of the present research. However, *Sporting with the World* cannot be included, as Yang, dissatisfied with the work, destroyed the script after the play was staged, and so it is no longer extant.

A. *As You Desire* and *Swindle*

As You Desire was premiered at the National Academy of Drama 國立戲劇專科學校 in January 1943. Then, under the direction of Huang Zuolin 黃佐臨 (1906-1994), it was performed by the Shanghai United Arts Theatre 上海聯藝劇團 at the Golden Capital Theatre 金都大戲院 for seventeen days in May of the same year. The Shanghai United Arts Theatre was one of the significant troupes of that time.[7] Huang Zuolin was a prominent director in

[6] The translated names of the dramas used here have been adopted from Edward Gunn's discussion of Yang Jiang's dramas.

[7] According to the research, most of the drama troupes of the Orphan Island Period in Shanghai were amateur; however, during the Occupation Period, many professional drama troupes appeared. Statistics show that there were about twenty drama troupes in 1942, and the National United Arts Theatre was one of them. See T. Li 10-11. A more detailed account of the theatrical landscape of wartime Shanghai will be discussed in the latter part of this chapter.

wartime Shanghai.

As You Desire is a four-act play about a young girl, Junyu 君玉, whose parents have died, and who hence is forced to travel from Beijing to Shanghai in order to seek shelter with her maternal relatives. She comes first to her Uncle Zuyin's 祖蔭 household. Zuyin is a bank manager. The seemingly charitable gesture of offering refuge to Junyu turns out to have been an plot by Zuyin's wife Lady Yin 蔭夫人, who wishes to recruit Junyu as Zuyin's secretary instead of the attractive Miss Lu whom Lady Yin suspects of having an affair with Zuyin. However, the couple dislike Junyu and decide to send her away to another uncle and aunt, Zuyi 祖貽 and Lady Yi 貽夫人. During her stay at Zuyi's home, Junyu is assigned many duties, such as looking after Zuyi's children and typing up his manuscript into a book-form. A dramatic twist occurs when Lady Yi discovers that her son Jingsun 景蓀, who is already engaged to his cousin Lingxian 令嫻, is attracted to Junyu. Lady Yi and Lingxian's mother, Lady Qian 錢夫人 are anxious that the relationship between Jingsun and Lingxian must be preserved at all costs, believing that childless Great Uncle Langzhai 朗齋 will leave an inheritance to the young couple. The aunts shunt Junyu off to Uncle Zumao's 祖懋 house. Zumao runs a factory and his wife, Lady Mao 懋夫人, is a philanthropist. However, Lady Mao's philanthropy is only a pretence. Although she is interested in many charitable activities, she does not want to offer shelter to her niece. To invalidate the relatives' excuse that she and Zumao, having no children, are available to take care of Junyu, she plans to

adopt a baby. To dissuade his wife from adopting a child, Zumao plots with Junyu, and, to deceive Lady Mao, forges a letter in which he says that he has been having an affair with another woman with whom he has already had a son. Lady Mao is deceived and is furious. Junyu is finally sent to the house of Great Uncle Langzhai, who is a wealthy man with an eccentric temperament. Since he has no children, Langzhai's inheritance is coveted by Junyu's uncles and aunts. Unexpectedly, Junyu, whose mother was Langzhai's favourite in the past, is doted upon by Langzhai. The ending indicates that the prospects for Junyu are promising: she becomes Langzhai's heir.

As You Desire was warmly received by the Shanghai audience, and Yang gained fame from the staging of the play. As Lin Bin 林彬 (1925-2014), who played Junyu, recollects, *As You Desire* had the largest box-office success of all the plays staged by the National United Art Theatre (Shao "fang Lin Bin" 96).[8] Yang's friends encouraged her to continue writing plays. In a matter of a few months she had completed another comedy, *Swindle*.

A production of *Swindle* was mounted by the Tongmao company 同茂剧團 at the Golden Capital Theatre in October 1943, and it ran for thirty-two days. The Tongmao company was a professional drama troupe organised by Song Qi. During this period of the war, the most dominant drama troupes in Shanghai's theatrical landscape were the Tianfeng Theatre 天風, the Kugan Players 苦幹 and the Tongmao Company (T. Li 11).

[8] The National United Art Theatre staged six plays in total.

Swindle is a five-act play which begins with the intervention of a rich businessman, Zhang Xiangfu 張祥甫, in the relationship between his daughter, Wanru 婉如, and Dazhang 大璋, a dashing young man who claims to come from a prominent background and to be in possession of a doctoral degree awarded by an overseas institution. The drama in the play centres upon a deception employed by Dazhang, who is gradually revealed to be an impostor. Prior to making the acquaintance of Wanru, he has first of all made the acquaintance of Wanru's cousin, Yanhua 燕華. Dazhang then approaches Wanru and soon becomes her romantic interest. Yanhua is jealous of Wanru's good fortune. Believing that Dazhang is a rich man and viewing marriage to Dazhang as a means by which she may escape poverty and climb the social ladder, Yanhua decides to drive Dazhang away from Wanru. Taken in by the story concocted by Yanhua that Wanru is in love with him no more, Dazhang falls into Yanhua's trap and eventually elopes with her. The story ends with Dazhang and Yanhua's marriage, which Xiangfu has insisted upon and to which the couple, having used up their money, has reluctantly agreed. Since the wedding takes place in Dazhang's home, his real identity is revealed.

The sensation caused by *Swindle* was even greater than that created by *As You Desire*. Yang's name appeared in newspaper advertisements, and actors expressed pride at having appeared in her plays. She became an important playwright in Shanghai and was invited to watch the latest performances, where she was given the best seat in the house (X. Wu 187-

89).

B. Contemporary Reviews of Yang Jiang's Comedies

Yang Jiang's comedies were praised by the critics in the magazines and journals of the 1940s for their comedic depiction of social hypocrisy and their characterization and structure.[9] *As You Desire* and *Swindle* are branded "rare masterpieces" (Mai Ye "zongping" 172); Fu Lei (1908-1966) also comments on *As You Desire* that "it is a masterpiece rarely seen these past two years" (60). A more influential comment on Yang Jiang's comedies is given by Li Jianwu. He asserts that *Swindle* is the second milestone in the history of modern Chinese comedy, while the first milestone is widely acknowledged as belonging to Ding Xilin 丁西林 (1893-1974) (qtd. in Meng Du 111). Yang's comedies were restaged by some other theatrical troupes. A reviewer said he had watched *As You Desire* three times: "I have never watched a play performed twice by an amateur theatre troupe. If it were not because of this excellent script written by Mme Yang Jiang and the great performance of the Leidianhua Troupe 雷電華劇團, I would not have enough patience" (Z. He).

Yang Jiang's talent for comedy was well recognized among the critics of the 1940s: "I believe that Miss Yang Jiang has an amazing genius and the perfect temperament for writing plays" (Lok Chuan 8). Yang's virtuosity is discussed by a reviewer who has read the

[9] Publication information regarding the reviews of Yang's comedies (including *Sporting with the World*) can be found in Appendix 1.

published scripts of *As You Desire* and *Swindle*:[10]

> What makes her a more impressive playwright of comedy than the others is her mind and craft: sober and independent, derisive but sympathetic. In her scripts, the playwright's ingenuity and craftsmanship is abundantly revealed. The play [*Swindle*], overall, gives us an impression: the art of the playwright reaches the acme of perfection (F. Lin 50).

Her appearance drew extraordinarily large attention against the backdrop of the low tide of comedy during the war:[11] "Yang Jiang, who has appeared on the wartime theatrical scene with her play *As You Desire*, is just like the breeze of early spring which awakes the earth from her hibernation; everything is endowed with a living spirit" (Meng Du 110). Yang Jiang's uniqueness as a playwright of comedy amid the dominance of tragedy in wartime was also widely discussed.[12] Contemporary stage comedy was in large part farce. *Swindle*, according to Mai Ye, is a profound comedy which is different from farce and rare in 1940s Shanghai (Mai Ye "Shiyue" 174). Yang's comedies belong to the rare genre termed "profound comedy" and were exceptional in having been welcomed by wartime theatregoers in spite of that very profundity. The uniqueness of Yang Jiang is also discussed in Meng Du's 孟度: and were

> The creative life of the writer is dictated by the times. Society today is chaotic and licentious and is developing in an abnormal way. Hence, it is impossible to seek to create a large body of plays that can be regarded as true works of art. The present ragbag of "comedies" and "farces" mirror this blood-sucking, commercial society. How unexpected, then, that Mme Yang Jiang should steal quietly onto the scene, bringing the beauty of harmony and serenity where there was chaos, and soothing the nerves of those who love drama (110).

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[10] *As You Desire* and *Swindle* were published by World Book in 1944 and 1945 respectively.
[11] Although comedy was popular during the wartime period, it did not possess the dominance of tragedy or melodrama. The popularity of melodrama will be discussed in Chapter 3.
[12] See Fang, Shi Di Hua, Xiao Hua and Mai Ye "zongping".

Yang's comedies, as we shall see, are invested with meanings peculiar to the cultural context of post-May Fourth and wartime Shanghai. In this lies one important reason for their favourable reception.

It is worth noting here that many critics writing in the 1940s struggle to believe that *Swindle* is a comedy rather than a tragedy. They see in *Swindle* a tragic strain stemming from the characterizations of two protagonists, Dazhang and Yanhua, both of whom are full of anger and dissatisfaction with life and who become trapped in a reluctant marriage to one another.[13] This discourse is extended into the discussion of Yang Jiang's comedies nowadays. This will be further explained in Part III of this chapter.

The reviews written by the critics of the 1940s provide us with an insight into the popularity and favourable reception which Yang's comedies received when they appeared on the wartime theatrical scene of Shanghai. However, despite their success, Yang did not write any new comedy after *Sporting with the World*. Instead, she made an attempt to change her style by writing a tragedy. *Windswept Blossoms* was written in the summer of 1945; however, the play was not staged as planned owing to the end of the war, although the script was eventually published in *Wenyi Fuxing* 文藝復興 in 1946.

After writing her plays, Yang published a number of translated works, both prose and fiction (see Appendix 2). However, Yang published no more plays after the end of World War

[13] This caused a little polemic between Shi Di Hua (Mai Ye) and another reviewer. See Shi Di Hua, Shi and Mai Ye "zongping" 172.

II. The four plays written in wartime Shanghai in the 1940s remain significant. This is evident when we examine Yang's literary life, especially the two comedies which were staged and for which there are extant scripts.

II. The Time and the Place

This section gives an account of the milieu in which the works were produced. The historical context is the aftermath of May Fourth and the War of Resistance, while the geographic context is Occupied Shanghai.

A. The Times: From *May Fourth* to the *War of Resistance*

Born in the year of the Xinhai Revolution, Yang experienced many turbulent changes. The revolution of 1911 did not bring lasting peace to the nation. Another chaotic period, that of warlordism, followed soon after. In 1918 China joined the Paris Peace Conference (1919) to set the peace terms for the countries defeated in the First World War. Requests made by representatives of the Chinese government, including the abolition of all privileges held by foreign powers in China, the termination of the Japanese's "Twenty-One Demands"[14] and the

[14] The Twenty-One Demands was an unfair treaty made by the Empire of Japan during the WWI to request

return of the territory and rights of Shangdong, were refused. Chinese intellectuals and students were dissatisfied with the settlement imposed on China, which they regarded as unfair.

1. The May Fourth Movement

On 4th May 1919, about three thousands students marched in the streets to protest against the government's inability to protect the nation's interests at the Conference. Yang Jiang was in Beijing on the day of the incident and witnessed the protest. Although she was only a child in 1919, Yang already had a strong impression of the movement and could still recall the details of the protest in 2013 ("haishi" 378-79).

As many scholars have asserted, the May Fourth Movement should not be interpreted as an incident spanning a mere two months but as a movement which lasted for about a decade and which made a significant impact on the country's political, social and cultural arenas. During those years, intellectuals and students demanded equality and individual choice and embraced iconoclasm.[15] *New Youth* 新青年, a magazine established in September 1915 by Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀 (1879-1942), played a critical role in the Movement. Owing to

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extended control over Manchuria and the Chinese economy. The treaty was accepted by Yuan Shikai in 1915, who at the time was the General ruling the new Republic.

[15] In Chow Tse-tsung's opinion, the May Fourth Movement, accompanied by the New Culture Movement which had already started a few years before 1919, was a complex mix of forces. All of these forces took as their aim the building of a new China. See T.-t. Chow 4-5.

the importance of *New Youth*, some critics regard the central point in the May Fourth Movement as the publication of that magazine, taking the beginning of that Movement to be September 1915, with the emergence of the New Culture Movement, and asserting that it continued until June 1923, after which the magazine would become an official organ of the Chinese Communist Party. However, other critics argue that the May Fourth Movement ends with the May 30th incident of 1925, which witnessed the death of many workers at the hands of the security forces during their protest against Japanese-owned factories in Shanghai (Larson 58n2). The May 30th incident in fact initiated another transitional period. Many intellectuals experienced a kind of disillusionment. This disillusionment, as we shall see, was to play a critical role in Yang's transformation of Austen's art and will be discussed in Chapter Seven. In the light of this, for the purposes of this research, the period of May Fourth is defined as starting in September 1915 – with the inauguration of *New Youth* – and ending with the May 30th incident of 1925.

2. The Development of Modern Chinese Drama in May Fourth

Modern Chinese drama is widely recognized to have commenced with the performance of *The Record of the Black Slave's Cry to Heaven* 黑奴吁天錄, which was performed in Tokyo by a group of Chinese students who had formed a drama group called the *Chunliushe* 春柳社, or Spring Willow Society in 1907. This set the stage for the development

of a modern, Western-style form that in Chinese is known as "spoken drama", or *huaju* 話劇, as opposed to the indigenous operatic forms of theatre that had hitherto held sway. Traditional Chinese drama had come to be rejected by a number of intellectuals during the late Qing, who believed that the form lacked the capacity to reflect people's real lives and the social problems which they faced.[16]

Having been through the age of *wenmingxi* 文明戲, or civilized drama, after the appearance of the *Black Slave*,[17] May Fourth intellectuals championed a modern, Western-style drama as a means by which to promote new ideologies and new knowledge. Hu Shi 胡適 (1891-1962) even adapted Ibsen's (1828-1906) *A Doll's House* (1879) to create a play entitled *The Greatest Event in Life* 終身大事,[18] published in March 1919, which is regarded by many critics as the first play in the repertory of modern Chinese drama.[19] Apart from Ibsen, Chinese intellectuals also paid attention to other Western playwrights, such as Oscar Wilde and August Strindberg, in order to gain a deeper knowledge of drama. According to the statistics, from 1917 to 1924 more than 170 plays written by about seventy playwrights from

[16] For example, Chen Duxiu writes a criticism of traditional Chinese opera in his article "Lun Xiqu" 論戲曲 in 1904, before the appearance of *Black Slave*. See D. Chen "xiqu".

[17] A form of performance which combines the dramaturgies of Western drama, Japanese forms of theatre such as *shinpa* (new school drama) and *kabuki*, and Chinese opera *jingju* (Peking opera). *Wenmingx*i had gradually developed since the performance of *Black Slave* in 1906 and reached its heyday in the mid-1910s. It started to decline in the late 1910s owing to its poor quality and to over-commercialized productions. See Herd (2001) and S. Liu (2013).

[18] In the view of the May Fourth intellectuals, Ibsen was a playwright whose realist style presents the playwright's social criticism effectively. The popularity of Ibsen during the May Fourth Period reached its peak when a special issue on the playwright was published in *New Youth* in June 1918. An English translation of *Event* can be found in Xiaomei Chen 31-39.

[19] Hong Shen regards *Event* as the first modern Chinese drama in his edited book *Zhongguo xinwenxue daxi* 中國新文學大系 in 1935. This view is challenged by some critics, such as Chen Baichen and Dong Jian, who maintain that *Xinkezheng* 新科正 performed by the Nankai Xuexiao 南開學校 in 1918 departed from the style of *wenmingxi* and presented a new style of modern Chinese drama. See Chen and Dong 99.

sixteen to seventeen countries were translated and published in China (Chen and Dong 97).

The term *huaju*, was coined by Chen Dabei 陳大悲 (1887-1944) in 1922 (S. Liu 8).[20] With the encouragement of active dramatists such as Song Chunfang 宋春舫 (1892-1938) (S. Liu 8), a number of amateur theatres, mostly established in Beijing and Shanghai, emerged. In the period between 1919 and 1929, more than 400 modern Chinese plays were created or adapted from Western dramas by Chinese playwrights (Chen and Dong 111). Social problems and the emancipation of the individual constituted their most prominent subject matter.

3. New Women and Nora

Since the very beginning of May Fourth the demand for the liberation of the individual had gone hand in hand with that of the liberation of women.[21] In the minds of May Fourth intellectuals the low social status of women was an indication of the backwardness of the country (Z. Wang 47). This vision calls for the birth of "new women" who no longer submit to patriarchy and feudalism but have: "independence, a sense of duty to society, a reformist mentality, a critical mind, a spirit of mutual help, a spirit of public service, a love for learning, an open and upright manner, and a healthy body" (Z. Wang 82).

[20] There is an argument about who coined the term *huaju*. Some would believe that the term was coined by Hong Shen 洪深 and his suggestion was supported by Tian Han 田漢 and Ouyang Yuqian 歐陽予倩. A more detailed account of the history of this term can be seen in S. Liu 8-10.

[21] Chen Duxiu suggests the liberation of women in his article "Jinggao qingnian" in the inaugural issue of *New Youth*. See D. Chen "qingnian" 2.

Hu Shi's female protagonist in *The Greatest Event in Life*, Yamei 亞梅, impressed May Fourth intellectuals and students because, daring to run away from her traditional family in order to pursue freedom with her lover, she embodied people's image of the new woman. In fact, the characterization of Yamei is primarily based on the character of Nora, the protagonist of Ibsen's *A Doll's House,* who also leaves her husband and family to start a new life. Hu's Noraesque became a paradigm which was adopted in many plays and works of fiction, such as Ouyang Yuqian's 歐陽予倩 (1889-1962) play *Po Fu* 潑婦 [A Shrew - 1923] and Guo Moruo's play 郭沫若 (1892-1978) *Zhuo Wenjun* 卓文君 (1924). [22]

This so-called "new woman" was demonstrably an image created by a male-dominated discourse. Ching-kiu Stephen Chan observes that the May Fourth intellectuals had an identity crisis and felt a need to define the "other", i.e. the new woman, in their search for their own "self" (13). The feminist discourse on May Fourth sets out to demonstrate that, during this period, women's voices were, in fact, silenced. Did Yang Jiang cast doubt upon the credibility of this discourse, or did she submit? How does she appropriate the elopement narrative first employed by Hu Shi? As an intellectual, did she feel the urge to rewrite the prevailing intellectual discourse?[23]

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[22] Ouyang Yuqian's play was written in 1922 and staged by the Shanghai Drama Society 上海戲劇協社 in 1923. It was published in *Juben huikan vol.1* 劇本匯刊第一集 by The Commercial Press in 1925. Guo Moruo's play was written in 1924 and published in *Sange panni de nuxing* 三個叛逆的女性 by Shanghai guanghua shuju in 1926.

[23] A discussion concerning "new women", Noraesque fiction/play and Yang's response to the gender discourse of May Fourth will be found in Chapter Four and Chapter Six.

B. The Place: Wartime Shanghai

As a treaty port, Shanghai, geographically and culturally, was semi-colonial. Half of its territory was taken up by France in the form of the French Concession and by Britain and America in the form of the International Settlement, while the other half of the city was still ruled by the Chinese government. Foreign nationals living in Shanghai came from a multitude of countries.[24] Even among the city's Chinese inhabitants four-fifths were immigrants from the Chinese interior (Shih 236). That is to say, culture in pre-war Shanghai was pluralistic and hybridized. Such an environment helped to cultivate a culture of open-mindedness which welcomed modernity and novelty.

1. The War of Resistance

The history of wartime Shanghai is usually divided into two phases: 1. The *gudao* 孤島, or Orphan Island period, (from the Japanese invasion of Shanghai on 13th August 1937 to the outbreak of the Pacific War in December 1941); and 2. The Occupation Period (from the start of the Pacific War to the surrender of Japan on 15th August 1945). During the Orphan Island period, the Japanese took over all parts of the city except the International Settlement

[24] According to Shih Shu-mei, there were forty-eight nationalities in total in the two million population of Shanghai in 1930. See Shih 236.

and the French Concession; during the Occupation Period the whole city fell to Japanese rule.

The Orphan Island Period

Shanghai's existence in wartime China was unique. The foreign concessions remained unaffected and isolated from the rest of war-infested Shanghai, but still Shanghai as a whole, with its peculiarly hybridized culture and prosperous economic development, continued to distinguish itself from the rest of the nation. Most of the services and industries in Shanghai were allowed to run as usual (Tao 109). The fact that a multitude of immigrants migrated to Shanghai from the interior of China is evidence of the stability of the city, whose prosperity offered job opportunities to the refugees.[25] Another factor was that a large amount of capital was transferred to the city for safety or investment (J. Wu 79; P. Fu 47).[26]

Although Shanghai was still a prosperous and safe city, a crisis was lurking underneath the surface. The political autonomy of the concessions was gradually removed by the Japanese. Aiming at ultimately taking control of the whole city, the Japanese executed a series of political and military interventions in the concession regions, including blocking the import of rice and other resources (P. Fu 46).

[25] According to Wu Jingping's research, the population of the Foreign Concessions leapt twofold during the war. See J. Wu 78.

[26] As Wen-hisn Yeh has noted, during the Orphan Island period, Chinese capitalists chose to move their capital to the foreign concessions in Shanghai, while the Chinese industrialists also chose to re-settle their plants in the concessions because of the abundant supply of labour, raw materials and the well-established financial system which existed there. See Yeh 2.

The Occupation Period

After the outbreak of the Pacific War, life in Shanghai became even harder than it had been during the Orphan Island Period. Owing to the shortage of raw materials, power and fuel, many factories closed and a number of industries fell idle; a large percentage of the population became unemployed (J. Wu 82-84). The rate of inflation rose steeply. In Yang Jiang's memory, the hardest time she suffered during the war was during the period after the outbreak of the Pacific War, when rationed rice and flour were of very poor quality, and fuel was difficult to get hold of (*Women* 101-02) .

The Japanese put cultural circles under close surveillance. As a playwright who had written popular comedies, Yang Jiang was summoned to military headquarters for interrogation; at that time her friend Li Jianwu had already been arrested by the military (Yang "Keqi"). It was during those dark days that Yang wrote her plays and became a renowned playwright.[27]

2. The Theatrical Scene in Wartime Shanghai

The popularity of drama declined in the aftermath of May Fourth as a sense of

[27] The socio-historical background of Yang's comedies will be further discussed in Chapter Five.

disillusionment spread among the intelligentsia. The development of drama was further obstructed by the amateur theatres, which could not maintain the quality of their productions owing to limited financial support. However, enthusiasm for drama arose again after the Mukden Incident (1931) and the January 28 Incident (1932), both of which alerted Chinese society to the threat of Japanese invasion. Drama drew the attention of the public again on account of its being an effective means of promoting patriotic ideas of resistance against the Japanese. Chen Baichen 陳白塵 and Dong Jian 董健 dub this period as a "golden age" of drama, when the art form gained "unprecedented, prosperous popularity" (432).

When restrictions were gradually placed on manufacturing industry, which discouraged the running of factories in Shanghai,[28] capitalists turned their eyes towards other commercial opportunities. Following the outbreak of the Pacific War, American movies were banned, and hence the theatre became a business with a high profit-making potential.

Before the war, American movies had attracted sizeable audiences in Shanghai. According to statistics compiled in 1936, of the movies released in Shanghai cinemas 60-70% were US productions (C. Wang 120). These attracted big audiences, since the public saw watching movies as a fashionable activity. When in 1943 American movies were banned, it had a knock-on effect on the rise of local drama, as it was assumed that drama would take the

[28]A number of restrictions had been imposed on the factories since the Orphan Island period, such as the control of power sources, rationing of materials, and transport closures. According to records, 210 factories were closed in 1942 and two-thirds of factories with Chinese investment closed soon afterwards. In 1945 2000 factories closed. See Coble 64..

place of movie entertainment (P. Fu 98). The wartime dramatist, Song Qi (1919-1996), analyses the interconnection between Hollywood movies and drama: “When there were no Hollywood movies, the people sought entertainment from the only alternative: drama” (Shui Jing 113).

Another wartime dramatist, Zhou Yibai 周貽白 (1900-1977), points to the direct relationship between commerce and the popularity of drama:

> The prosperous development of the drama business nowadays may not be due to the enhanced quality of the performances but just to their commercial value ... That is to say, drama has become a means for entrepreneurial profit-making, which therefore becomes the only aim for the existence of all the scripts, directors, actors/actresses and even the assistants of the drama productions (24).

The involvement of the businessmen and their investments greatly facilitated the growth of the theatre.

With its growing popularity, drama increased its influence on the media. Columns featuring drama were published in the newspapers and general magazines such as *Shenbao* 申報*, Wenhuibao* 文匯報 and *Zazhi* 雜誌 and *Women's Voices* 女聲; and a number of theatrical magazines appeared, for instance, *Juchang yishu* 劇場藝術, *Xiju yu wenxue* 戲劇與文學, *Xiao juchang* 小劇場, *Wutai yishu congkan* 舞台藝術叢刊 and *Juchang xinwen* 劇場新聞.

According to Ke Ling’s recollections, three genres of drama were especially popular in wartime Shanghai: adapted plays, comedies and historical plays ("guankui" 3). Therefore, Yang’s comedies were written against a background of a great demand for comedy. Apart

from the fact that writing in the genre held the possibility of a promising income,[29] was there another reason why Yang chose to write in this genre as her first attempt to gain a foothold in the theatrical scene? Besides material benefit, as an intellectual who was facing such a national calamity, did Yang follow the previous generation in taking up a leading role in calling for social reform, conveying that message to the public in her own works? If so, what was that message, and what was advantageous in her employment of the feminist comedy of manners?

3. The Literary Scene of Early Modern China: *Haipai* and *Jingpai*

In his critique of wartime drama, Fu Lei discusses the uniqueness of *As You Desire* in standing out from the theatrical mainstream, which was dominated by the works of the Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies school 鴛鴦蝴蝶派 (56-59). An example that demonstrates the popularity of the style of the Butterflies School is the favourable reception received by the play *He is Called Begonia* 秋海棠 (1942), based on the fiction of Qin Shouou 秦瘦鷗 (1908-1993), a prominent writer in the Butterflies School. *Begonia* caused a very great sensation in wartime Shanghai (T. Li 66).[30]

To explain the style of the Butterflies School it is necessary to place it in the context

[29] It is an important reason for Yang, who admits that making a livelihood was one of her motivations in writing plays, see X. Wu 193.
[30] Discussion of the popularity of *He is Called Begonia* can also be found in Shao "gudao" 95-97; Shao "Jiapo" 17.

of two literary schools, namely the *Jingpai* 京派, or the Literary School of Beijing, and the *Haipai*, or the Literary School of Shanghai, two literary schools which held opposing views on the morality of writing. They first appeared in the 1930s as a result of a debate between writers from Beijing and Shanghai.[31]

In a further debate on this issue, the terms "*Jingpai*" and "*Haipai*" were coined to signify two contrasting outlooks on life, especially with regard to the morality of writers, and these outlooks were closely associated with those regional cultures. It should be noted that the criterion used to decide whether a writer belonged to one or other faction lay in the writer's own particular attitude towards his or her lifestyle and craft, and not whether he or she was born in or came from a particular city. Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881-1936) gives a very detailed explanation of the connections between the writers' living and writing styles and the cultures of the cities and of the tendency to despise the *Haipai*. The socially hierarchical difference between the bureaucracy and mercantile class, as discussed by Lu Xun, highlights the opposition between Beijing and Shanghai, between *Jingpai* and *Haipai* ("'Jingpai'" 491-92): while the *Jingpai* writers, regarding themselves as the heirs of the May Fourth generation, were concerned with social discourse, the *Haipai* writers were regarded as only having commercial interests.

The most prosperous era of the Butterflies School, the first generation of *Haipai*, was

[31] The polemic was initiated by Shen Congwen 沈從文 and Du Heng 杜衡. See C. Shen "Wenxuejie" and Du Heng.

during the 1910s and 1920s. A decline occurred in the 1930 in the face of the emergence of a group of new young writers. To revive their glory, the writers of the Butterflies School deliberately mentored a group of female writers to be their successors which included Eileen Chang 張愛玲 (1920-1995) and Su Qing 蘇青 (1914－1982), who eventually were to become popular writers in the 1940s. As such, the works of the *Haipai* were still dominant during the war.

As an intellectual and a graduate of Tsinghua University, the cradle of the *Jingpai*, can Yang be said to belong to that school? If so, does her connection with the style of the *Jingpai* provide any new insight into her comedies, which were written in Shanghai and reflect the daily life of wartime Shanghai? In addition, if there is a connection between her and the *Jingpai*, does this connection provide us with a justifiable basis upon which to assume that she possessed the consciousness of taking on the role of an intellectual and thus that in her comedies she was suggesting a direction for society to take at a time of national crisis? Yang's self-positioning in the literary scene of modern China provides us with a new perspective from which to observe her comedies, and from which we may comprehend one of Yang's comedic aesthetics, which will give us a perspective from which to analyze Yang's comedies in Chapter Nine.

III. Literature Review: A Discourse on the Genre of Yang's Comedies

Li Jianwu's commentary on Yang Jiang has, as has already been mentioned, been widely quoted and discussed by subsequent critics:

> If there is comedy in China, the authentic comedy of manners, the genuine Chinese comedy extracted from Chinese culture, I do not exaggerate in insisting that *Swindle* represents the second milestone in the history of modern Chinese literature … The first milestone is widely accepted as belonging to Ding Xilin, and the second, let me happily announce, belongs to Mme Yang Jiang (qtd. in Meng Du 111).

Li makes three significant points: he draws parallels between Ding Xilin and Yang Jiang; he defines Yang's comedy as belonging to, in the Chinese term, *fengsu xiju* 風俗喜劇 which is generally identified as the Western dramatic form, the comedy of manners; and he exhibits a consciousness that indigenisation is needed when a Western dramatic genre is adopted into China.

As discussed in Section I, in the 1940s Yang's comedies were widely discussed by the critics. But a blank period in the discourse about Yang's comedies followed in the post-war period. Yang's comedies were re-introduced in the 1980s by two critics: Ke Ling, a playwright also active in wartime Shanghai, published an article "Shanghai lunxian qijian xijuwenxue guankui" 上海淪陷期間戲劇文學管窺 [An Introduction to Drama in Occupied Shanghai][32] in which Yang Jiang's comedies were discussed; and the American scholar

[32] Ke Ling's article was published in 1982 in *Journal of Shanghai Teachers University*. See Ke Ling "guankui".

Edward Gunn included Yang Jiang's plays in his treatise on Chinese wartime literature, *Unwelcome Muse: Chinese Literature in Shanghai and Peking, 1937-1945*.[33] Gunn's classification, grouping Yang Jiang with Qian Zhongshu and Eileen Chang in the category of writers of works of anti-romanticism, highlights the subversive quality of Yang's comedies. Centred on the significance of May Fourth and the torrent of romanticism linked with that movement in early modern China, Gunn's work emphasizes that some extraordinary works – Yang's comedies being included in this category – were hostile to romanticism. Connecting the anti-romantic writers to the British writers after WWI and highlighting both groups of writers' shared sense of disillusionment expressed in their works, Gunn's classification provides an insight into the ambiguous tone of Yang's comedies (198-200). Leo Ou-fan Lee's treatise on the romanticism of May Fourth, *The Romantic Generation of Modern Chinese Writers,*[34] is also a significant reference for the present research, as it offers a comprehensive account of the dominance of romanticism during the May Fourth period.

In the mid 1980s more Chinese critiques of Yang Jiang's comedies appeared. Many of them follow Li Jianwu in regarding Yang's comedies as *fengsu xiju*. Zhuang Haoran's 莊浩然 critique "Lun Yang Jiang xiju de wailaiyingxiang he minzufengge" 論楊絳喜劇的外來影響和民族風格 [Foreign Influences and Indigenous Style in Yang Jiang's Comedies][35] adopts

[33] Gunn's treatise was published in 1980, and the chapter on Yang's plays is Ch5. See Gunn Ch 5.
[34] The treatise was published in 1973 by Harvard University Press. See Lee *Romantic*.
[35] The critique was published in 1986 in *Journal of Fujian Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*. See Zhuang.

Li's stance in basing its discourse on the genre of Yang's comedies. Zhuang develops Li's commentary, drawing parallels between Yang and the Russian playwright Aleksandr Ostrovsky (1823-1886) (58). Zhuang maintains that Yang is much more influenced by Ostrovsky than by other writers of the Western European comedy of manners, given the fact that Yang's comedies share the same feature as Ostrovsky's, namely, a depiction of the concerns of the lower classes of society. He even goes so far as to assert that Yang Jiang has followed the tradition of the writers of the Left League who expanded their literary horizons from Western Europe to Russia (58). These assertions may be called into doubt, but, nevertheless, Zhuang's approach suggests a useful method with which to study Yang's comedies. Zhuang attempts to establish grounds for Li Jianwu's assertion that Yang's comedies are genuine Chinese comedies of manners. It should be noted that Li does not elaborate on the generic qualities of *fengsu xiju*, but in his critique he tries to define *fengsu xiju* in accordance with the general interpretation of the comedy of manners genre, merely identifying its superficial generic features. Zhuang, on the other hand, maintains that Yang merges Chinese culture and aesthetic into the Western dramatic form so as to justify his assertion that Yang's works are genuine Chinese comedies of manners (59-61). Here Zhuang augments Li Jianwu's ideas. Indeed, what Li and Zhuang suggest - the genuineness of Chinese culture embodied in Yang's works – provides a useful insight into the question of how Yang fuses a genre originating in the West with the Chinese aesthetic and creates a

welcome for the genre in wartime Chinese society.

Zhang Jian 張健's study of Yang Jiang's comedies in his treatise on modern Chinese comedy, *Expecting Comedy* 喜劇的守望：現代喜劇論集,[36] is also noteworthy. In historicizing the development of modern Chinese comedy Zhang's classification has two major strands,[37] one termed "humorous comedy", or *youmo xiju* 幽默喜劇 and the other termed "satirical comedy", or *fengci xiju* 諷刺喜劇.[38] Zhang places Yang's comedies in the subgenre of humorous comedy known as *shitaihua xiju* 世態化喜劇, or the comedy of manners, which, along with the development of humorous comedy, is preceded by *jizhihua xiju* 機智化喜劇, or witty comedy, and followed by *yingxionghua xiju* 英雄化喜劇, or the comedy of the hero. In addition, Zhang regards Wang Wenxian 王文顯 (1886-1968), Song Chunfang and Li Jianwu as the predecessors of Yang as writers of the comedy of manners in

[36] Zhang Jian's treatise is an anthology of his critiques of modern Chinese comedies, which was published in 2006 by Shandong wenyi chubanshe. See Zhang 張健 *Expecting*.

[37] Zhang Jian constructs two theoretical frameworks, the theory of subjectivity 主觀論 and the theory of objectivity 客觀論, in order to classify two different strands of comedy in modern China. The theories are employed in order to explain the two major comedic aesthetics in early modern China. While the writers to whom the theory of subjectivity relates are concerned with the mental activity inherent in the person who laughs and hence produce humorous comedy, the writers to whom the theory of objectivity relates are interested in the object of ridicule and write satirical comedy. For a discussion of Zhang's theories, see Zhang 張健 *Expecting* 15-17; 55-60.

[38] It is considered that both genres do not exist in Western literature, especially as such terms sound nonsensical in English. These two main categories in the classification of modern Chinese comedy have arisen as a consequence of the path of development taken by modern Chinese drama since the imported art form was absorbed into the field of Chinese literature in the early twentieth century. According to this classification, while satirical comedy is regarded as having a biting and sarcastic quality, humorous comedy is understood to be gentler and more sympathetic. In addition, there is a disparity in the concepts of "humour" or *youmo* found in the Western and Chinese cultures. According to Zhang Jian, while in the West "humour" means the portrayal of the irrationality and absurdity in daily life combined with a sense of sympathy and tolerance as one of the expressions of satire, in the Chinese concept of *youmo*, the sentiments of sympathy and tolerance are more emphasized and are distinguished from satire. See Zhang 張健 *shilun* 42. In fact, the concept of *youmo* is complex and difficult to define. It appeared in modern China in the 1930s as a symbol of progressive modernity, and hence it became a topic of endless discussion without any final definition being reached. See the discussions in Sohigian 139-44; Rea *Irreverence* 150-55.

modern China. Zhang's study of these playwrights will be employed as a significant point of reference. Furthermore, as Ding Xilin in particular is mentioned in Li Jianwu's comment as being the predecessor of Yang, his connection with Yang will be closely examined. In addition, certain views on the style of Ding's comedic aesthetic, discussed in Zhang's article, co-written with R. A. Herd, "Wildean Echoes in the Plays of Ding Xilin", will also be explored in the present research.[39]

One crucial aspect of the genre, as well as of Yang's comedies, which Zhang Jiang does not appear to recognise, is the subversive element which is embedded within it. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, this aspect is crucial to the present study. This study offers a detailed look at Yang's representation of subversive activity in her comedies, which, as I will argue, is indeed her response to the national crisis of wartime and the aftermath of an iconoclastic social movement, and which reflects her strong consciousness of her role as an intellectual in turbulent modern China.

I shall also examine another literary classification, namely *Jingpai/Haipai*, as a means with which to examine the comedic aesthetic of Yang Jiang. Xu Daoming's 許道明 treatises *Jingpai wenxue de shijie* 京派文學的世界 [The World of the Literary School of Beijing] and *Haipai wenxue lun* 海派文學論 [A Discussion on the Literature of the Literary School of

[39] The article was published in 2010 in *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*, vol. 22, issue no.1. See Herd and Zhang.

Shanghai][40] and the exposition of the styles of the two literary schools within are useful to this study. This research explores Yang's relationship with Shanghai through the perspective supported by the theories of *Jingpai/Haipai* in order to lay out the comedic aesthetic of Yang. This perspective is also employed by Zhang Jian 張儉 in her thesis "Laughter in the War: The Comical Literature in 1940s Shanghai",[41] in which, although Yang's distance from Shanghai is observed, the discussion concerning the subject is brief.

In addition to studying Yang Jiang's relationship with Shanghai, Nicole Huang in her treatise *Women, War, Domesticity: Shanghai Literature and Popular Culture of the 1940s*[42] provides critical insight to the topic. Huang's examination of the complicated and mutually beneficial relationship between femininity, domesticity, female writers and the wartime environment is remarkable and is useful for the discussion of interpreting Yang's self-position in the scene of Shanghai as well as of Beijing. Leo Ou-fan Lee's treatise on Shanghai of the early twentieth-century *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945*[43] provides a clear urban mapping of wartime Shanhgai, and also serves as a useful resource for the present research.

While Chinese scholarship identifies *fengsu xiju* with the Western genre know as the comedy of manners, Western scholars cast doubt upon such an identification. In her article

[40] The treatise of *Jingpai* and that of *Haipai* were published in 1994 and 1999 respectively by the Fudan University Press. See D. Xu *Jingpai* and D. Xu *Haipai*.
[41] The thesis was approved by the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology in 2012. See Zhang 張儉.
[42] The treatise was published in 2005. See N. Huang.
[43] The treatise was published in 1999. See Lee *Shanghai*.

"In Search of Laughter: Yang Jiang's Feminist Comedy" and later in her treatise *Women's Literary Feminism in Twentieth-Century China*, Amy Dooling suggests that Yang's comedies are parodies of the comedy of manners. Her assertion is grounded on the argument that Yang's comedies are subversive, but that the comedy of manners genre is not. Dooling regards Yang's comedies as a genre invented by Yang herself: the feminist comedy of manners, in light of Yang's evident attempt to subvert the gender hierarchy through her work. The discussion here does not uphold Dooling's view that the comedy of manners is a non-subversive genre and therefore that Yang's comedies are parodies of that genre, as will be further discussed in Chapter One. But Dooling's suggestion that Yang's comedies are feminist comedies of manners is useful to the present research, as female laughter and its subversive sense is highlighted as the critical element of this genre, which will be identified here as the core quality of Yang's comedies. However, here I must refute Dooling's assertion that Yang Jiang invented the genre (*Women's* 146). Rather, I argue that predecessors can be found, of whom Jane Austen is the most noticeable, especially in terms of the impact of her work on Yang's literary and comedic style.[44] This leads us to the central argument of this research, namely that Austen's works are the chief literary resource which Yang borrows from in order to create comedic works of her own.

Another noteworthy point discussed by Dooling is Yang's subversion of patriarchy. In

[44] The subversive nature of female laughter and Austen's connection with the feminist comedy of manners will be further discussed in Chapter One.

fact, Yang's subversions in other contexts in addition to that of gender are recognized and briefly discussed in Dooling's 2015 article,[45] "Yang Jiang's Wartime Comedies; Or, The Serious Business of Marriage".[46] In this research I shall examine the subversive nature of Yang's comedies and draw parallels with Austen's novels; we shall see that the contexts in which these two writers carry out their subversive acts are strikingly similar and that the manner in which Yang receives Austen's aesthetic of subversion, namely, concealing it beneath a lighthearted comedy, can be demonstrated.

Dooling's suggestion that Yang's comedies are parodies of the comedy of manners is supported by John Benjamin Weinstein, who notices the ambiguous tone of Yang's comedies and tries to explain it in his classification of modern Chinese comedy which forms the core of his thesis, *Directing Laughter: Modes of Modern Chinese Comedy*.[47] According to Weinstein's classification, there are three categories of comedy to be found in the path of the development of modern Chinese comedy, namely, the Comedy of Ethics, the Comedy of Politics and the Comedy of Dialogics, and he assigns to Yang's comedies a position between the first and the second categories, as they are identified as constituting a transition between those two modes. While the Comedy of Ethics represents humour, the Comedy of Politics is

[45] For instance, Dooling suggests that Yang wrote the plays in order to earn a livelihood, not in order to present a lofty vision to the public as her previous generation had done; Yang mocks the "new woman" figure which was regarded as an achievement of the social movement of May Fourth. See Dooling "Yang Jiang's" 22; 25-26. However, the subversiveness of Yang's comedies is not the focus of Dooling's article but rather Yang's portrayal of materialism and depraved morality in wartime Shanghai.
[46] The article is collected in *China's Literary Cosmopolitans: Qian Zhongshu, Yang Jiang, and the World of Letters,* edited by Christopher Rea. Dooling "Yang Jiang's".
[47] Weinstein's thesis was published in 2002. See Weinstein *Directing*.

in the style of satire. Weinstein asserts that Yang's comedies, from *As You Desire* to *Swindle*, actually move in the direction of the mode of satire, which results in *Swindle's* being a combination of two modes: humour and satire, or, in other words, the Comedy of Ethics and the Comedy of Politics. This blending of categories results in an ambiguity which brings to light another two sets of mingled styles, namely, farce and comedy, and comedy and tragedy (Weinstein *Directing* 153-54). In light of the ambiguous tone found in the plays Weinstein maintains that Yang's comedies are parodies of the comedy of manners (*Directing* 127-28).

The debate over the genre to which Yang's comedies may be assigned, as raised in the research of both Chinese and Western scholars, stems from different interpretations of Li Jianwu's comment that Yang's works belong to *fengsu xiju*. The indeterminacy of this term leaves room for scholars to elaborate on the generic qualities of *fengsu xiju*. While Chinese scholars identify *fengsu xiju* as the comedy of manners, Western scholars distinguish *fengsu xiju* from the genre of the comedy of manners; they suggest that Yang's comedies belong to a genre similar to the comedy of manners but not to the comedy of manners itself. The present research defines the comedy of manners as a subversive genre and asserts that Yang's comedies belong to a sub-branch of the genre, namely the feminist comedy of manners. This feminist comedy of manners is even more subversive than the general form of the genre.

Not much research concerning feminist comedy is found in Chinese academic circles. Su Qiong's 蘇瓊 thesis on female drama in modern China, entitled "Scenes of 'The Female

Other': A Study of Female Drama" 「她人」場景：現代女性戲劇論[48] , in which a chapter discusses female comedy, includes a discussion of Yang Jiang's comedies. A section of this chapter, in which Yang Jiang's comedies along with the works of three other female playwrights – Yuan Changying 袁昌英 (1894-1973), Ling Shuhua 凌叔華 (1900-1990) and Li Mangui 李曼瑰 (1906-1975) – are discussed, gives a rather thorough explanation of female comedy. Su Qiong highlights the essential qualities of female comedy, such as *huixin de weixiao* 會心的微笑, or thoughtful laughter,[49] emphasizing the importance of a sense of the rational in these female comedies (51-52); and female humour, which is employed by the playwrights as a weapon to fight against the opposite sex (52-53). Here Su underscores the subversive quality of female comedy. Su highlights Yang's role as an intellectual and sees her mockery of the male characters in her plays as the means by which Yang subverts the patriarchy. Su's illustration of the subversive quality of female comedy supports the theoretical core of the present research, and Su's categorization of Yang's comedies together with the works of Yuan, Ling and Li also provides an insight into the relationship between Yang's works and those of her predecessors and contemporaries in terms of female laughter.[50]

Several studies of female comedy by Western scholars are significant references for the discussion of genre in this context. Audrey Bilger's treatise on the comedies written by

[48] The thesis was approved by the Nanjing University in 2001. See Q. Su.
[49] Thoughtful laughter is a comedic aesthetic discussed by Ding Xilin and is connected with George Meredith's comedic theory. This will be discussed in Chapter Three. This aesthetic is also discussed by Yang Jiang in her critique of Jane Austen. This will be discussed in Chapter One.
[50] Yuan's and Ling's comedies will be further discussed in Chapter One; however, Li's comedy will not be included, as it appeared in 1947 after Yang's comedies.

female writers including Jane Austen, *Laughing Feminism: Subversive Comedy in Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Jane Austen,*[51] provides a detailed analysis of female laughter in Austen's works. Regina Barreca's discussion of female humour in her treatise, *They Used to Called Me Snow White… But I Drifted: Women's Strategic Use of Humor,*[52] is also very relevant to the present research, especially in terms of its discussion of the difference between female humour and male humour.

To date there has been no comprehensive study examining such a connection between the comedic aesthetic as employed by Austen and Yang Jiang. The present research seeks to deliver a thoroughgoing study of Austen's style in the context of the feminist comedy of manners and to conduct a more comprehensive comparison between the two writers than has been previously attempted.

While there is a lack of comparative research as between Yang and Austen in Chinese academia, the Western scholar Judith M. Amory, the translator of Yang's novel's *Baptism* 洗澡 (1988), has noticed the connection and discusses it in her article "Self-Deception and Self-Knowledge in Yang Jiang's Fiction".[53] Amory's discussion focuses on Yang's appropriation of Austen's style for the creation of her own fiction. Amory's observation supports the thesis presented here. For instance, the similar confined setting found in the works of both writers is

[51] The book was published in 1998. See Bilger.
[52] The book was published in 1991. See Barreca.
[53] Amory's article was published in 2015 in the collection of articles entitled *China's Literary Cosmopolitans: Qian Zhongshu, Yang Jiang, and the World of Letters,* edited by Christopher Rea. See Amory.

discussed; however, Amory's article focuses on Yang's reception of Austen's style in her fiction but not in her comedies and pays little attention to the two writers' comedic aesthetic.

IV. Methodology: Reception Theory

In order to investigate Yang's reception and transformation of Austen's comedic art, this research uses a methodology taken from Reception Theory. This theory will form the framework of the thesis. In order to explain its applicability to this research, the principles of the theory will be set out in the section below, accompanied by an overview of its application in the field of comparative literature and drama. Firstly, however, the connection between Yang Jiang and Jane Austen has to be discussed further.

A. Yang's Connection with Jane Austen

According to Yang Jiang's own recollections she read a number of Western literary works during her stay in Oxford. She drew up a schedule in chronological order of the works of English and French literature which she planned to read to help her in her studies. Starting with Chaucer, the literary works which Yang read in Oxford are varied both in terms of their period and of their genre. They include the fictional works of Dickens, Thackeray, Stendhal

and Prévost, the dramas of Molière, James Barrie and Shaw, the autobiographical writings of Rousseau and the poems of Shelley (X. Wu 104-06).[54] Such an extensive reading list suggests that Austen's novels must also have been covered during this time. However, we may assume that Yang's reading experience of Austen's novels predated her arrival in Oxford. The subjects specified for her study of foreign literature at Tsinghua University included the category "English Novels" (X. Wu 87); thus Austen's novels were very possibly prescribed for her study at Tsinghua. Moreover, as Wu Mi 吳宓 (1894-1976) states in the preface to the first Chinese translation of *Pride and Prejudice* published in 1935,[55] the novel had been widely used as teaching material in schools long before it had been translated (M. Wu 1). Another significant reference is from Ji Xianlin's 季羨林 (1911-2009) recollections of his student years in Tsinghua. Ji entered Tsinghua a year later than Qian Zhongshu and was also taught by Ye Gongchao 葉公超 (1904-1981), the teacher of Qian and Yang. Ji recollects that the textbook of Ye's class was *Pride and Prejudice* (Ji 19). Therefore, Yang Jiang may well have come across Austen's work before she went to Oxford, probably at the missionary

[54] For the details of Yang Jiang's reading experience prior to her writing comedies, please see Appendix 4.

[55] The novel was translated by Yang Gang 楊剛, a student of Yenching University and later a leftist writer and a journalist of *Ta Kung Pao*. Her translations include the first complete translated novel written by Austen published in China. According to *Minguo shiqi zong shum, 1911-1949: waiguo wenxue* 民國時期總書目, 1911-1949: 外國文學 [A General Bibliography in the Period of the Republic of China, 1911-1949: Foreign Literature] and *Shinpen zōho Shinmatsu Minsho shōsetsu mokuroku* 新編增補清末民初小說目錄 [A New Edition of the Novels' Bibliography in the Periods of Late Qing and the Early Republic of China], there is no record of any published translated complete novel of Austen's prior to Yang Gang's work. (A work which was mistakenly regarded as Austen's - *Sangdike zhentanan* 桑狄克偵探案 is in fact R. Austin Freeman's *John Thorndyke's Cases*). See Beijing tushuguan and Tarumoto. However, before Yang Gang's *Pride and Prejudice* was published, some translated chapters from Austen's works appeared in journals – the first we have been able to find are the first two chapters of *Sense and Sensibility* which were published in *The Woman's Messenger* in 1929. We have also come across some reviews of Austen's works and a biographical introduction to Austen in the English and Chinese journals published in early modern China. See Appendix 3.

school and no later than the years during which she was studying at Tsinghua.[56]

Yang Jiang's great interest in Jane Austen is well-known. When Yang Jiang was asked by her biographer Wu Xuezhao 吳學昭 who her favourite writer was, Yang mentioned that Austen was one of her favourites (X. Wu 106-07). In the 1950s Yang commenced research on the works of Jane Austen while she was working at the Institute of Literature. This work brought her into conflict with the institution, on the grounds that Marx had never made any reference to Jane Austen. Yang was not satisfied with this reason for her being prevented from engaging in the research and observed that "possibly, it was because Marx had not read Jane Austen" (X. Wu 267). Those words resulted in her receiving a warning from the head of the institution. Nevertheless Yang persevered with research on Austen, and hence "You shenme hao? - du xiaoshuo manlun zhi san" 有甚麼好？- 讀小說漫論之三 [What is there in her? - Comments on reading novels (Part Three)] – a critique of Austen's works[57] – was published. In this critique Yang identifies Austen's comedic style as belonging to the category of the comedy of manners (Yang "You shenme" 130). This can serve as a starting-point from which the discussion of Yang's reception of Austen's style may be initiated. Yang's critique of

[56] In a school magazine published by the McTyeire School in Shanghai in 1933 some photos show that the students staged *Pride and Prejudice*. It serves as evidence that *Pride and Prejudice* was already popular in the missionary schools.

[57] This critique was published in *Literary Review*, (3) 1982. It focuses on *Pride and Prejudice*; however, Austen's art as well as her other novels is also discussed. According to Yang's explanation, "You shenme hao?" is a translation of Joseph Conrad's comment on Austen. Conrad did not understand why Austen's works were so popular and so in a letter to his friend H. G. Wells asked: "What is all this about Jane Austen? What is there in her? What is it all about?" See Yang "You shenme" 135n2. In *Yang Jiang wenji,* which was published in 2009, the critique is renamed as "You shenme hao? – du Aosiding de *Aomen yu Pianjian*" 有甚麼好？ — 讀奧斯丁的《傲慢與偏見》[What is There in Her? – A Review of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*].

Austen is significant for Yang's direct reception of Austen's comedic aesthetic and thus to the present research. A further discussion of this critique will be found in Chapter One.

B. Yang Jiang as the Centre of the Examination

As Yang Jiang is the focus in the reader-writer relationship between her and Austen, Reception Theory is here employed as the methodology with which to construct the framework for this thesis. Reception Theory highlights the importance of the role of the reader in the "writer-text-reader" relationship. It challenges the conventional approaches to literary analysis, including the emphasis on the imitation of ancient works, source studies of literary works and the study of features inherent in the text. Jauss maintains that these approaches are obsessed with the notion that a work is a self-sufficient object.[58]

Hans Robert Jauss, in his seminal article entitled "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory", which is commonly recognised as the manifesto of the literary school, suggests that the appropriate evaluation of the essence of an artwork need not be its production or its inherent features, but rather the reader's consumption and response to the work. It is clear therefore that the interaction between the author and the public must be taken into account (Jauss 15). A literary work is thus not an objective entity but an event, the

[58] For a discussion of Jauss's criticism of these approaches see Holub 53-57; Jauss 8-9, 20-21, 30-31; De Man x-xi.

formation of which is a continuous process of reception throughout its history.[59]

Horizon of Expectations

To explain the theory, Jauss introduces the concept of the "horizon of expectations". Jauss concludes that every real experience as well as the "literary experience of a previously unknown work" (23) demands a basis of foreknowledge which is "an element of the experience itself, and on the basis of which anything new that we come across is available to experience at all, i.e., as it were readable in a context of experience" (qtd. in Jauss 23).[60] Thus, a new literary work, when it appears before an audience, is not something absolutely new. According to Jauss, it "predisposes its audience to a very specific kind of reception by announcements, overt and covert signals, familiar characteristics, or implicit allusions" (23) , prompting the readers to recall their reading experience, including the emotion engendered by preceding works. An expectation is then aroused and will be objectified upon the reader's horizon in the process of reading. The readers would expect and obtain a literary experience "maintained intact or altered, reoriented, or even fulfilled ironically" (Jauss 23). Past and

[59] The conception is a compound of the Marxist aesthetics of Karel Kosik, Werner Krauss and Roger Garaudy, and the principle of literary evolution suggested by the formalists such as Viktor Shklovsky and Jurij Tynjanov. See Jauss 14-17. Though formalism is recognised as holding different notions of the nature of literature from that of Reception Theory, one of its branches - Russian Formalism - is regarded by the critics, as well as by Jauss himself, as one of the precursors of the theory, along with other intellectual influences, namely, Prague structuralism, the phenomenological concepts of Roman Ingarden, the hermeneutical approach of Hans-Georg Gadamer, and the "sociology of literature". See Holub Ch2 and De Man x-xi.

[60] This is a quotation from G. Buck *Lernen und erfahrung* which, as remarked by Jauss, actually refers to Edmund Husserl.

contemporary literary experiences are mediated in the horizon of expectation. The concept of the horizon of expectations employed in literary history operates in this way - as the horizon upon which the mediation and the interactions between the old and new forms of a work and its recipients, as well as that between the past and successive reception, takes place. In the light of this the formation of the genre is the result of a process in which the horizon forms a continuous establishing and altering process, which determines the relationship between the text and its successive text (Jauss 23, 33). Jauss believes that the theory establishes a framework in which history is no more to be described as a series of individual facts, but as a process, thus bridging the gap between history and literature.

In the case that the relationship between the reader and the work is less historically related – such as is the case of Yang's reception of Austen, where the comedy of manners is an imported genre, Jauss suggests that the objectification of the horizon of expectations will be produced in three perspectives: "First, through the familiar norms or the immanent poetics of the genre; second, through the implicit relationships to familiar works of the literary-historical surroundings; and third, through the opposition between fiction and reality, between the poetic and the practical function of language" (24). One of the advantages of the concept of the horizon of expectations is that it provides a relatively objective system with which to assess the literary value of an artwork. The aesthetic experience would not be merely understood in terms of subjective impressions but in the "carrying out of specific instructions

in a process of directed perception, which can be comprehended according to its constitutive motivations and triggering signals, and which also can be described by textual linguistics" (Jauss 23). [61]

C. Reception Theory in the field of Comparative Literature/Culture

As Reception Theory concerns a dyadic relationship in terms of literature, these concepts have been adopted by researchers in comparative literature and used as the basis of their comparative literary studies, or, in a larger context, cultural studies.

Yves Chevrel categorised the variation of research modes operating within Reception Theory for the purposes of research in comparative literature as follows (248-49):

[61] Wolfgang Iser's assertion of the active role of the reader in the "writer-text-reader" relationship serves as a complement to Jauss's theory. Iser observes that the text provides signals to guide the reader and that an indeterminacy exists in the text which needs the reader's ideation to actualize the meaning. Iser also suggests the conception of repertoire which is similar to Jauss's idea of a horizon of expectations. See Iser Ch1-3, 8.

Table Intro. 1 Research modes operating within Reception Theory

X (The object being received)	**Y (The recipient)**
A work (or the selected part of the work)	An individual lives against the same/a different cultural background as/from the work(s)
Several works of a writer	An audience lives against the same/a different cultural background as/from the work(s)
All works of a writer	A culture (of region, race or ethnicity)
A kind of literature of a unit of writers	Several cultures
A kind of literature	All known cultures
A kind of literature/writers from different literary systems	
Several kinds of literature (within a unit of writers or a literary system)	
All known literary works	

Table Intro. 1 illustrates that, as X is the object being received while Y is the recipient, the observation of the literary reception can be worked through the relationship between "either of X" and "either of Y". Chevrel highlights several modes for further discussion. One of them sheds light on the foundations of this research: Chevrel proposes that a mode of research "disposes itself at the margins of the field of research based on the reception theory; the literary question dealt with within such a mode is coupled with an appearance of dual identity: the reader/recipient is meanwhile a translator or a writer" (253). The research mode embedded in Chevrel's description is the one employed in this research.

D. Reception Theory and the Study of Comparative Drama in Modern China

The idea of comparing Chinese forms of drama, both classical and modern, with Western drama arose in the China of the 1980s (Xia and Lu 1-3). Qian Zhongshu, consultant to the China Comparative Literature Association, was of the opinion that the imperative of the discipline was to "organize the connection between Chinese literature and the foreign literature" (L. Zhang 89).

The popularity of comparative literature led scholars of drama to become interested in employing the comparative approach applied to literature generally to research into drama.[62]

[62] The development of the studies of comparative drama in the China of the 1980s is chronicled in Wang Xiangyuan's article "Zhongwai xiju bijiao yanjiu" 中外戲劇比較研究 [The Studies of the Comparative Drama]. See X. Wang 229-47.

After organizing a conference on the study of comparative drama, Xia Shixie 夏時寫 and Lu Runtang 陸潤棠 published a treatise on the discipline *Bijiao xiju lunwen ji* 比較戲劇論文集 [Essays on Comparative Drama].[63] Afterwards, several treatises on comparative drama were published, for instance, Rao Pengzi's 饒芃子 *Zhongxi xiju bijiao jiaocheng* 中西戲劇比較教程 [The Course of Study of Comparative Drama].[64] While there are some articles in these books discussing the connections between modern Chinese drama and foreign literature, these treatise in larger measure investigate the relationship between Chinese classical drama and Western drama.

In 1986, Tian Benxiang 田本相 proposed the idea of writing a treatise on the history of modern Chinese drama based on the comparative approach to drama ("Guanyu"), as he had observed a close relationship between modern Chinese drama and foreign literature. In 1993 Tian published *Zhongguo xiandai bijiao xijushi* 中國現代比較戲劇史 [A Comparative History of Modern Chinese Drama].[65]

Reception Theory, according to Xiao Ming's record of the second annual meeting and colloquium of the China Comparative Literature Association held in 1987, constituted a new theory to be introduced and discussed in the conference (164-65). Scholars there observed that the theory interprets the role of the reader regarded not just as a submissive participant

[63] The book was published in 1988 by Zhongguo xiju chubanshe. See Xia and Lu.
[64] The book was published in 1989 by Guangdong gaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe. See Rao
[65] The book was published in 1993 by Wenhua yishu chubanshe. See Tian *bijiao*.

but rather as an active initiator (Xiao 164). In Zhu Donglin 朱棟霖 and Wang Wenying's 王文英 1991 treatise *Dramatic Aesthetics* 戲劇美學, it is suggested that the theory should be applied to research into drama in the contexts both of the audience's reception of the play in question and of the Chinese playwrights' reception of Western Drama (Ch 8).[66]

On the basis of the idea suggested by the aforementioned scholars, Tian Benxiang employed the theory as his methodology for composing his treatise on the history of the dramatic literature of modern China. Tian argues that, "a history of modern Chinese drama is a history of Chinese receiving foreign theories, ideologies, schools and works of drama" (*bijiao* 2), which "rather intensively reflects the progression of modern Chinese literature and art entering the literary and artistic stream of the world" (*bijiao* 4). In other words, a study of the regular patterns underlying the development of modern Chinese drama, with a strong focus on the connections between the genre and its foreign origins, would not only contribute to the research into Chinese drama *per se*, but would also benefit the understanding of modern Chinese literature and even of the history of modern culture and art.

Tian suggests that three types of recipient are available for the purposes of comparative research: the nation as a unit, social history as a unit, and the readership or an individual reader, who is, in some circumstances, a playwright (*bijiao* 15-20). Tian enlarges

[66] The present research does not ignore the problem that the object of reception in this research, namely the novels of Austen, do not belong to the genre of drama. A further discussion of this issue will be found in Chapter One.

on the subject of the reader as playwright and characterizes a situation as complex in terms of the various factors that would influence the playwright's reception of foreign literature (*Xiangdangdai* 162-63). Tian's view corresponds with that of Chevrel discussed in the last section, which is also concerned with the dual identity of the reader as both reader and writer.

Focusing on the recipient, Tian points out that there are two factors that would affect the recipient's reception of a new work. First, is the playwright's recognition of the traditional aesthetic value of his/her own culture (Tian *Xiangdangdai* 163). We can interpret this as implying that the playwright will comprehend drama diachronically as a new art form, within his/her horizon of expectations, as he/she seeks a framework of reference along the lines of tradition, especially in terms of art. Second, Tian identifies the synchronic process of comprehension within the playwright's horizon of expectations: his/her understanding of the drama through his/her unique and profound delving into and contemplation of time present and past (*Xiangdangdai* 163).

Such a concept of the diachronic and synchronic processes occurring within the playwright's horizon of expectations is actually a variation of Jauss' theory of the objectification of the horizon of expectations, but Tian's concept is illustrated in a broader sense. While Jauss is primarily concerned with the traditional and similar works based on his surroundings as the material of reference in the recipient's objectification of the horizon of expectations, Tian emphasises that the aesthetic value of the reader's own tradition and

culture is the resource used by the reader/playwright to appropriate a new work. Tian maintains that in the synchronic process the recipient will mainly seek references from contemporary life, and this is similar to the third perspective of the objectification of the horizon of expectations suggested by Jauss above. There is no doubt that these two theories to a certain extent complement each other.

Nevertheless, an essential feature of Reception Theory is that it does not deny the significance of the inherent faculties of the reader, which comprise, for instance, the reader's own artistic culture, tradition and the socio-historical environment in which he/she resides. This is critical to this research, providing as it does a means of examining Yang Jiang's horizon of expectations as the threshold for investigating the connection between Yang and Austen in terms of their comedic aesthetic. Two kinds of relationship will be of crucial importance: reception and transformation. Reception refers to the resemblance of the literary and aesthetic qualities shared by the works of Yang and Austen, and transformation refers to the variations in terms of the literary and aesthetic qualities found in the works of Yang and Austen. It must be emphasised that, according to Jauss, transformation is a mode of reception.[67] That is to say, the relationship between reception and transformation is not interpreted as an opposition; conversely, transformation is constructed on the basis of reception. But, for the sake of discussion, in the present research the terms "reception" and

[67] Jauss argues that a process of reception is indeed a process of "the continuous establishing and altering of horizons…. The new text evokes for the reader (listener) the horizon of expectations and rules familiar from earlier texts, which are then varied, corrected, altered, or even just reproduced." See Jauss 23.

"transformation" will generally have the meanings mentioned above. However, such an exploitation of these two terms does not mean to ignore the fact that transformation is indeed operated in the context of reception.

On the basis of this theoretical framework, this thesis is divided into three parts. Part I includes Chapters One, Two and Three, in which the first and the second perspectives, suggested by Jauss, in processing the objectification of the horizon of expectations will be discussed. The two perspectives are the reader's understanding of "familiar norms or the immanent poetics of the genre" and his/her reading experience or relationships to "familiar works of the literary-historical surroundings" (Jauss 24). In this process the background and horizon of expectations of Yang's reception and transformation of Austen's comedic art will be introduced and discussed.

Part II contains Chapters Four, Five and Six, in which the objectification of Yang's horizon of expectations is explained. The similarities between Yang's and Austen's works in terms of their depiction of female laughter, their choice of spatial setting and their anti-romanticism will be discussed.

Following the discussion of Yang's reception of Austen's comedic art in her own comedies, her transformation of Austen is discussed in Part III, which comprises Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine. It will be argued that Yang's transformation of Austen's art reflects the fact that the socio-historical environments in which the writers lived differed. Therefore

the objectification occurs through the third perspective - “the opposition between fiction and reality” suggested by Jauss (24) in Yang’s horizon of expectations in her reception of Austen’s comedic art is not complete. Unable to configure the fictional world of Austen in the real situation she was dealing with, Yang transforms Austen’s comedic art in accordance with her own socio-historical and socio-literature contexts. In these three chapters two aesthetic orders, namely the senses of disillusionment and detachment, are discussed.

Part I The Background

Chapter One

Jane Austen, Yang Jiang and the Feminist Comedy of Manners

Amy D. Dooling discusses Yang Jiang's comedies in her treatise, *Women's Literary Feminism in Twentieth-Century China*, and regards them as examples of a feminist comedy of manners, which is a parody of the comedy of manners and was invented by Yang Jiang (*Women's* 146). The present research agrees with the assertion that Yang's comedies are feminist comedies of manners, but suggests a more accurate view, namely that the feminist comedy of manners is not a parodied genre of the comedy of manners, but rather that, while the comedy of manners is subversive *per se*, the former is a more subversive form than the latter. Further, Yang Jiang is not the first one who writes in such a genre, but she learns from another writer, Jane Austen, whose novels are also written in the style of the comedy of manners.

To establish such a connection in this generic context, several issues will be discussed in this chapter. First, the generic qualities of the comedy of manners and the feminist comedy of manners will be discussed, so as to see whether they are subversive genres. Dooling's discussion signalizes the significance of female laughter and the subversion of gender-based discourse in the feminist comedy of manners. This provides the present discussion with an insight needed to discuss further the generic qualities of the feminist comedy of manners in this context. Second, Austen's works will then be discussed in the generic context of the feminist comedy of manners, in order to see whether her works belong to this genre. Yang Jiang's article "You shenme hao? – du xiaoshuo manlun zhi san" 有甚麼好？－小說漫論之三 [What is there in her? - the comments on reading novels (part three)], in which Yang discusses *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and other works by Austen, provides us with a critical

approach with which to understand Yang's perception of Austen, including her observations on the generic features of Austen's works in the context of the comedy of manners. This article will therefore be closely examined. The problem that Austen's works, being novels, do not belong to a literary genre but to a dramatic one will also be dealt with here.

I. The Comedy of Manners

The genre of the comedy of manners originated in the New Comedy of Ancient Greece, the main playwrights being Menander (c.342/41BC-c.290BC), Philemon (c.362BC-c.262BC) and Diphilus (c.360-350BC-?). Their plots deal with the romances of young lovers, accompanied by other stock characters such as the clever servant, aged, uninteresting parents and rich rivals. These plots and their characters were then inherited by the Roman playwrights, Plautus (c.254BC-184BC) and Terence (c.195/185BC-c.159?BC), and used in their comedies, such as Plautus's *Miles Gloriosus* and *Bacchides*,[1] and Terence's *Andria*.[2] Later the genre was developed by various European playwrights, such as Shakespeare (1564-1615), whose comedy, *Much Ado About Nothing* (1623), was adapted and performed several times during the Restoration period several times owing its style being very similar to that of

[1] Both plays are generally regarded as having been adapted from Menander's New Comedies. In *Miles Gloriosus* Plautus keeps all the names and places in their Greek form, and *Bacchides* is believed to have been adapted from Menander's *Dis Exapaton*. For the relationship between Plautus and Menander see Stace and Castellani. In addition, Webster and Abrams agree that Plautus followed the style of Menander and made his own contribution to the development of the tradition of the comedy of manners; see Webster 3 and Abrams and Harpham "The Comedy of Manners" 57.

[2] It is believed that Terence adapted the style of the New Comedy of Ancient Greece, and his works contributed to establishing the tradition of the comedy of manners. In the *Encyclopedia Britannica Online* it is stated that "recent critical opinion seems to accept that, in the main, Terence was faithful to the plots, ethos, and characterization of his Greek originals: thus, his humanity, his individualized characters, and his sensitive approach to relationships and personal problems all may be traced to Menander, and his obsessive attention to detail in the plots of *Hecyra* and *Phormio* derives from the Greek models of those plays by Apollodorus of Carystus of the 3rd century BC." See Arnott. The connection between Terence and Menander is also made by Webster and Abrams. See Webster 3 and Abrams and Harpham "The Comedy of Manners" 57.

the comedy of manners.[3] In the Restoration period (1660-1700) the genre attained a more polished and concrete form as Restoration comedy.

As M. H. Abrams maintains, Restoration comedy is much indebted to the French playwright Molière,

> [Molière's comedy] deals with the relations and intrigues of men and women living in a sophisticated upper-class society, and relies for comic effect in large part on the wit and sparkle of the dialogue - often in the form of *repartee*, a witty conversational give-and-take which constitutes a kind of verbal fencing match - and to a lesser degree, on the violations of social standards and decorum by would-be wits, jealous husbands, conniving rivals, and foppish dandies ("Comedy" 39).

Representative works of Restoration comedy are William Congreve's (1670-1729) *The Way of the World* (1700) and William Wycherley's (c.1641-1716) *The Country Wife* (1675). In response to the middle-class's criticism that the genre was indecent, Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774) and Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751-1816) revised the Restoration comedy, excluding sensitive subject matter, the situations and the dialogues which were regarded by the public as immoral and indecent, which frequently appear in the Restoration comedies. After a period of inactivity during the early 19th century another peak occurred with the emergence of dramatists such as Oscar Wilde. Wilde's works were the most translated and performed of all Western playwrights in China during the May Fourth era[4] and were well-received and highly influential during the critical time of the development of modern Chinese drama.

Summarizing the points observed by M. H. Abrams, the genre is characterized by the

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[3] The play was adapted several times in the Restoration period: *The Law Against Lovers* staged in 1662 was an adaptation of two Shakespeare plays, *Measure for Measure* and *Much Ado About Nothing*; *The Universal Passion*, staged in 1737, was an adaptation of *Much Ado About Nothing* and a play of Molière's. Although not all Shakespearean comedies are regarded as comedies of manners (most of them are tragi-comic romances (see Edwards)) , the view that his plays helped to establish the convention of the comedy of manners is generally accepted: see Webster 3 and Abrams and Harpham "The Comedy of Manners" 57. In addition, in Hirst's opinion Congreve in a sense adopted the comic style of Shakespeare in his own comedies of manners ; see Hirst 28, 35.

[4] The popularity of Wilde is discussed in Weinstein *Directing* 35. In addition, Weinstein further states that Wilde and Ibsen were the most influential Western playwrights in the May Fourth period. The salient point concerning Wilde's works in the context of the present discussion is that they had an influence on the style of certain Chinese playwrights, including Ding Xilin, whose plays are regarded by Li Jianwu as the first milestone in the history of the Chinese comedies of manners prior to the plays of Yang Jiang. A discussion of Wilde's relationship with Ding and its connection with Yang's works will be found in the later part of this chapter as well as in Chapter Three.

following features: 1) its plot concerns the daily life and intrigues of the middle classes; 2) it contains a lot of witty dialogue; and 3) it violates the norms of social decorum. In addition to Abrams' view, David L. Hirst emphasizes the fact that people's social manners and their responses to the issues of sex and money are its main concerns (1); T. B. L. Webster highlights the ordinariness of the lives of the people depicted in these works, in which the characters neither make "very adventurous or fantastic or villainous" attempts nor do they have "very wild or political or anti-social dreams" (4); therefore a subtle expression of emotion is required in this genre: romantic love and conjugal felicity, which are depicted with passion, are the only exceptions to this rule (4).

According to the aforementioned generic qualities of the comedy of manners, a significant literary feature, discussed by Abrams, is the subversive nature of the genre. The comedy of manners has long been recognized as a subversive form of art, since in is earliest manifestation it was associated with the Greek god Dionysus. The qualities of the genre relate to "the principles of festivity, inversion, relative sexual freedom and travesty" (Stott 4). In fact some critics, such as Andrew Stott, regard subversion as the primary feature of comedy. In discussing the characteristics of the genre Stott argues that:

> Even though comedy often seems to be suspending, inverting, or abandoning dominant norms, these inversions are produced in relation to the cultural orthodoxies from which they must always begin…. In this way, the comic can be thought of as a means of opening up the possibility of multiple perspectives, as each concept culturally established as orthodox simultaneously presents itself for the possibility of comic subversion (8).

For Meredith, the comedy of manners is extraordinarily subversive among other forms of comedy, which "began similarly as a combative performance, under a licence to deride and outrage the Puritan" (5). Hirst agrees with this, and as he comments in his treatise: "Because social satire is basic to all the plays of this type, the comedy of manners is a particularly subversive dramatic form. The men of fashion in the plays of the late seventeenth century defy the taboos of marriage: their life-style is aggressively promiscuous, hedonistic, yet

ruthlessly cool" (4). The subversion of social decorum exhibited by this genre in this way created a solid base for the rise of the sentimental comedy[5] in the eighteenth century, which, with its emphasis on the virtues of mankind, emerged in opposition to the practice of the comedy of manners of depicting indecency and immorality.

Whilst the subversive nature of the comedy of manners is evident, its plot, however, consists of a merry comedy describing the quiet and commonplace life of ordinary people in a very subtle way. This contrast between a lighthearted comedy in the foreground and a subversive current in the background is crucial to any discussion of Austen's connection with the genre.

II. The Feminist Comedy of Manners

Dooling is the first critic who regards Yang Jiang's comedies as belonging to the genre of the feminist comedy of manners. She does not provide any clear definition of the genre; however, one will find that the female laughter present in Yang's comedies is highlighted and thoroughly explored in her discussion. This feature of Yang's works is interpreted by Dooling as an expression intended to convey Yang's subversion of the prevailing gender discourse. Dooling's discussion undoubtedly illustrates the fact that female laughter is a prominent element of the feminist comedy of manners, which is extremely subversive in nature and which renders the feminist comedy of manners a much more subversive form of the genre than the general comedy of manners. Female laughter, in fact, has long been recognized as a subversive action.

[5] According to Abrams, sentimental comedy is a dramatic work which prefers to expose the virtues of mankind rather than its vices. Oliver Goldsmith observes that the characters of sentimental comedy "though they want humour, have abundance of sentiment and feeling." As a result high moral sentiments abound in these plays, evoking the audience's tears before the happy ending is presented. For more details please see Abrams and Harpham "Sentimental Comedy".

A. Female Laughter in the Historical Context

The potential of laughter to invert the position of superior and inferior has long been noticed.[6] Audrey Bilger observed that the laughter of women, whose position in society had long been subordinate, was seen as a threat to the upper class.[7] To maintain the domestic, or, in a larger context, the social order, women were discouraged both from developing their comic sense and from giving vent to their laughter. If we survey the guidebooks on proper conduct in eighteenth-century Britain, it is clear that contemporary writers took the view that wit was not one of the qualities thought to constitute the ideal of femininity; women, in order to be good companions of men, were taught to sigh with compassion more than to laugh (Bilger 21-23). As Bilger argues, such teachings were given to protect masculine interests: "Their depictions of the domestic unhappiness brought about by witty women suggest that all men, not just husbands, are improper targets for humour" (23).

Female laughter was similarly not encouraged in China. Zhu Ziqing's 朱自清 (1898-1948) fiction "Xiao de lishi" 笑的歷史 [A History of Laughter] can be read as a realistic account of how in the Chinese cultural context a woman is deprived of the right to laugh. The protagonist of the fiction, who loves to laugh, has been taught to restrain her laughter since she was small, and, after she is married, she is cautioned by her mother-in-law as well as by her husband against laughing, as they feel threatened when she laughs (Zhu). Apparently, it is the subversive spirit embedded within female laughter which alerts people. For this reason laughter is not a prominent element in the traditional Chinese comic aesthetic. In the eyes of the literati, historians and people in power, female laughter possessed a destructive potential which might bring disastrous consequences upon the country. In the historical record of the

[6] The subversiveness of laughter has been discussed by a number of critics, for instance, Thomas Hobbes, who identifies laughter as a "sudden glory", a superior sentiment, see Hobbes 34; Susanne K. Langer, see Langer 339; Francis Hutcheson, see Tave 61-63; Shaftesbury, see Shaftesbury 36 and Rand 225; Joseph Addison, see Tave 49.

[7] A thorough discussion of the teachings in guidebooks on proper conduct discouraging women's humour and laughter can be found in Bilger 16-25.

Western Zhou dynasty, King You 周幽王 tried many methods to amuse his queen, Baosi 褒姒 before finally achieving success by lighting warning beacons to deceive his nobles, who, believing that the capital was under attack, hastened to come to save the king. Baosi is described as being impressed and amused by this mischief. King You's continual lighting of the warning beacons eventually resulted in his losing the trust of the nobles, who did not respond to the warning beacons, even when the capital was under real attack, with the result that it was conquered by the enemy. In this way the subjugation of the Western Zhou was widely attributed to the laughter of Baosi.[8] This story reveals the connection between female laughter and its destructive power. In Chinese history this idea recurs again and again in relation to various *femmes fatales* such as Yang Guifei 楊貴妃, the consort of the Tang emperor, Xuanzong 唐玄宗. The poem *Changhen ge* 長恨歌 [The Song of Everlasting Regret], composed by Bai Juyi 白居易 (772-847), gives an account of the love story of Yang and the emperor. There is a famous line which depicts Yang's beauty and her smile: "Turning her head, she smiled so sweet and full of grace / That she outshone in six palaces the fairest face".[9] Like Baosi, Yang Guifei was blamed for destroying the country: her coquetry is said to have caused the king to neglect his duties, leading disastrously to the national crisis of the An-Shi Rebellion 安史之亂.

In Chinese literature the connection between female laughter and its power to destroy a country or city is a deep-rooted cultural concept, as can be seen in the saying *Yixiao qingcheng* 一笑傾城, meaning: "A city is destroyed by a smile." The saying originates as a line in a poem describing the beauty of a woman written by an Imperial musician, Li Yan'nian 李延年 (2nd century BC-87BC) of Han: "A single glance, and she upsets a city; / A

[8] For the complete account of the story, see "Zhou dynasty", *Records of the Grand Historian*.
[9] The verse is translated by Xu Yuanchong. See Y. Xu 8.

second glance, and she upsets the state!"[10] The smile or laughter of the beauty is not described in these lines; however, there is a literary convention of connecting a woman's smile or laughter with her glance.[11] In this light, on the basis of the smile or laughter of the beauty in the poem as implied by her glance, the saying "A city is destroyed by a smile" *Yixiao qicheng* arose, stressing the destructive power of female laughter. Another example in classical Chinese literature, which emphasizes the beauty of a woman by connecting her laughter with a power to move people, can be seen in Song Yu's 宋玉 (c.298BC-c.222BC) poem *Dengtuzi haose fu* 登徒子好色賦 [A Poem of a Lecher] in which Song dramatises the beauty of a girl in a similar manner: "When she smiles, all the men of Yangcheng and Xiacai[12] are bewitched."

Given the recognition that female laughter is so destructive as to ruin a country, women in ancient China, just as in eighteenth-century Britain, were no doubt discouraged from laughing. That is to say, in both the Chinese and British historical contexts laughter, especially that of women, was inhibited or even prohibited.

B. The Subversiveness of Female Laughter

Regina Barreca asserts: "Any time that a woman breaks through a barrier set by society, she's making a feminist gesture of a sort, and every time a woman laughs, she's breaking through a barrier (182)." Barreca's analysis of women's inclination to laugh at the

[10] The verse is translated by Burton Watson. See Ban 247.
[11] The famous example is the line from *Shuoren, Odes of Wei* of *Classic of Poetry*: "Complement her dimpled cheeks and make her black eyes glow." This serves as a relatively complimentary example of female laughter in Chinese literature. In this line the beauty's smile is in a sense approved. However, there is an interpretation of this approval which means that the bride is being praised for her chastity, i.e. the bride as well as her beauty, including her smile, is being approved in a moral context, and therefore this is not pertinent to be examined in the same context as the female laughter discussed here. This verse was translated by Wang Rongpei. See Chen, Jiang and Wang 101.
[12] Yangcheng and Xiacai were cities of Chu State of the Warring States period of ancient China. Song Yu was a poet of Chu, and the beauty whom he describes in the poem was also from Chu.

conventions which they are taught to revere supports the idea of women's laughter being dangerous to authority: it reflects an attitude of refusing to take seriously matters that are meant to be serious. In this light female comedy is no doubt a highly subversive genre. Barreca discusses the subversive nature of female comedy:

> Such comedy is risky. It is confrontational and boundary-breaking, since you walk away feeling angry even as you laugh. This sort of comedy does not do away with women's feelings of powerlessness: instead it underscores the political nature of a woman's role. It should make us [women] even more determined to change those aspects of our situation that confine us. It is comedy that inspires as well as entertains (14-15).

Maaja A. Stewart's discussion of the character of the witty woman offers us one more perspective from which to observe women's wit and its relationship to daily life: "The witty lady's strength comes from her responsiveness to the immediate scene, her ability to listen, the quick play of intelligence that can uncover the incongruities inherent in power games, the relish of absurdity that can gain emotional distance from often painful or frightening situations" (61). That is to say, wit and laughter give a woman not only the strength to engage with life but also the ability to detach from it when she finds a situation unfavourable.[13]

Furthermore, the distinction between male and female humour sheds light on the fact that the feminist comedy of manners is more subversive than the general comedy of manners. Regina Barreca's theory provides a clear perspective:

> The difference, in fact, between men's humour and women's humour seems to be the difference between revolt and revolution. Masculine humour has of course included digs at the conventions of the world, poked fun at the institutions and establishments, but without the truly anarchic edge that characterizes feminine humour. Women's humour calls into question the largest issues, questions the way the world is put together …
>
> Whereas a male writer might rave against the basic tenets of a system of beliefs, his female counterpart will be asking whether any belief system should be in power. Her question will be far more subversive than his because she's asking for the destruction of the system rather than for a change in it (179-80).

Judy Little elaborates on this point by asserting that, while male writers mock the norm, female writers challenge its very identity (11). That is to say, while a male comic writer might

[13] J. B. Priestley also discusses female humour and wit and points out that women's sharper eyes and ears are the critical elements in creating such humour. See Priestley 115.

express his desire to reform a country either by agreeing or disagreeing with the ideas suggested by the principal movement for change, a female comic writer of the same period might be suspicious of the need for such a movement and ridicule its very existence.

C. Female Laughter in Chinese Literature

If we survey Yang's literary critiques, it is not difficult to discover that *caizi jieren* 才子佳人, or the scholar beauty romance is a favourite genre of Yang Jiang's.[14] In these romances the heroines are often idealised as submissive, gentle and feminine figures, who unfailingly agree with their lovers or husbands. In fact, subversive female figures do exist among these romances, though they are rare. In both Yang's favourite classical novels, *The Story of the Western Wing* and *The Dream of the Red Mansion*, some witty and also subversive women are vividly portrayed, and their laughter pervades the stories.

1. An Extraordinary Female Figure: Hongniang

Hongniang 紅娘 in *The Story of Western Wing* is a character remarkable among the scholar beauty romances. As a maid of the heroine, she is not represented as being elegant, gentle and submissive, as is her lady, Cui Yingying 崔鶯鶯, but rather as a lively, witty, humorous and playful girl, who to some extent resembles Elizabeth Bennet of *Pride and Prejudice*. Through her wit a happy ending is brought about for Yingying and Zhang Sheng 張生.[15] Impeded by Yingying's mother's intriguing, Zhang Sheng's intention of marrying Yingying is completely frustrated. It is Hongniang who conceives the idea of Yingying and

[14] Yang's interest in the scholar beauty romance will be discussed further in Chapter Two.
[15] Yang Jiang briefly discusses the role which Hongniang plays in the relationship of Yingying and Zhang Sheng and compares Hongniang's role with that of Celestina in her critique of *La Celestina*. See Yang "Jiushu" 122. But Yang does not provide an in-depth study of Hongniang's character in this or her other critiques.

Zhang Shang playing music across the wall so as to be able to communicate their feelings to one another. Whenever the couple meets an obstacle to their prospect of marriage, Hongniang employs her wit to help the lovers.

Hongniang's challenges to authority are flagrant, a fact which gives a lively spirit to the whole work. C. T. Hsia 夏志清 asserts: "*The Story of the Western Wing* would not be a success without the character of Hongniang" (154). Despite being a significant character, who contributes a great deal to the plot of the work, Hongniang does not play a leading role in the story. From the rhetorical and aesthetic viewpoint Hongniang is a remarkable character; however, in the context of the work's genre her role is not as critical as that of the beauty; more importantly, in a masculine narrative and literary tradition a witty woman who laughs and mocks as freely as Hongniang cannot be regarded as an ideal feminine figure.

2. The Unconventional Female Characters in *The Dream of the Red Mansion*

Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹 (1715-1763) claimed that his intention in writing *The Dream of the Red Mansion* was to record the stories of a number of women; Cao endows many of these women with the power of laughter.

Wang Xifeng 王熙鳳 is one of the most distinctive of them. On her first appearance in the book her laughter precedes her, making a dramatic entrance which causes Daiyu to wonder: "Everyone else around here seems to go about with bated breath. Who can this new arrival be who is so brash and unmannerly?" (1: 90-91) Xifeng is also introduced as a non-feminine figure: "She had been brought up from earliest childhood just like a boy; she had been educated as a boy and had acquired in the schoolroom the somewhat boyish-sounding name of Wang Xifeng" (91-92). Xifeng is a character possessing unconventional qualities in a woman, such as cleverness, determination, aggression and an active engagement in the family

business. However, she is not a person who confronts the feudal system.

Compared with Xifeng, Lin Daiyu 林黛玉 is a more subversive figure.[16] She is not as outgoing as Xifeng, though the work is full of her laughter. That laughter is no doubt a defence mechanism. She finds it hard to adapt to the complexity of the relationships in the Jia household, and she is constantly fearful of being despised. Laugher serves as a weapon with which she may reverse her inferior situation. For instance, when Zhou Rui's 周瑞 wife delivers the palace flower to Daiyu and Daiyu finds out that she is the last person to get the flower, and it is the only flower left, she immediately sneers and says, "I thought as much. I get the leavings when everyone else has taken their pick" (1: 174). When she hears Xiangyun's 湘雲 comment that she resembles the actress who is invited to stage a play in the Jia House, she laughs coldly and says: "I'm only a figure of fun - the sort of person you might compare with a child actor in order to get a good laugh from others" (1: 438).

Daiyu clearly recognizes her inferior position with regard to her rival Baochai 寶釵, who was born to a family as rich and famous as the Jia's, and who is someone praised by the Jia family as an elegant and kind lady. A fact most unpleasant to Daiyu is that Baochai has a golden lock given to her by a mysterious person when she was small, an accessory regarded by their families as a perfect match for the Baoyu's 寶玉 jade. Daiyu uses her laughter as a way of attacking the widely held view that marriages should be made on the basis of a comparable family background rather than on the basis of free will.

As witty characters, Hongniang and Daiyu no doubt play a role in the construction of Yang's horizon of expectations, giving Yang an insight into the way in which to create a feminist comedy of manners for modern China. However, these characters themselves cannot be considered to be the main literary resources upon which Yang draws when creating her

[16] Yang Jiang discusses the characterization of Daiyu in terms of her passionate love to Baoyu; however, it is not about the wit and subversive laughter of Daiyu. See Yang "Yishu".

feminist comedies of manners. Hongniang is not the heroine of her tale, while Daiyu, despite her spirited use of wit, is in the end a tragic heroine.

3. The Female Laughter in May Fourth

Despite their emergence as an oppressed and rebellious class in the context of the literary mainstream of *tileijiaoling* 涕淚交零, or snivelling and tears,[17] May Fourth female writers hardly ever expressed themselves in works typified by laughter. They were subversive, but they rarely laughed. If we survey the plays, most of them tragedies, written by the outstanding female playwrights of this age, such as Bai Wei 白薇 (1894-1987) and Su Xuelin 蘇雪林 (1897-1999), the subversive female figures are represented as being actuated by bitterness and hatred rather than by laughter. But there are two exceptions: Yuan Changying 袁昌英 and Ling Shuhua 凌叔華. Yuan produced a number of comedies from the late 1920s to the early 1930s. Their domestic setting and the theme of romance and marriage give her plays a certain degree of resemblance to Austen's novels. However, their works are not similar in ideological terms. Subversive female laughter is not found in Yuan's plays; instead we find that a romantic idealism and praise of humanity form the core of her works. A high moral sense and kindness serve as the key to resolving conflicts in her plays. For instance, the bride-to-be heroine sacrifices her love and fortune to let her cousin marry her fiancé in *Jiehunqin de yiwen* 結婚前的一吻 [A Kiss before the Wedding - 1928]; in *Huoshiren* 活詩人 [A Real Poet - 1934], the hero gives up a date, possibly his only chance to pursue the heroine, because he needs to save a cat, and his good deed eventually serves to win the admiration of the heroine. This kind of romantic and idealistic sense was, in the eyes of the May Fourth writers, credible. Chen Baichen 陳白塵 and Dong Jian 董健 discern such

[17] The term is suggested by Joseph S. M. Lau. See his article Lau.

an ideological current in China of the late 1920s and 1930s:

> The dramas gave a great impact in this period [1918-1929] were those fused with romanticism, though there were a number of realistic plays concerned with rational thinking. Constructive romanticism was the main ideological current in the dramatic context as a result of a furious and ambitious social movement. The young and energetic playwrights who upheld democracy experienced the struggles between ambition and reality and reflect two kinds of emotions in their plays: 1) resisting against the darkness in reality and aspiring to a bright future; 2) being depressed in an ambiguous situation. While the former is vehement, the latter is melancholy. Both sentiments are perfectly manifested in the presentation of romanticism (118).

In fact, Yuan herself praises aestheticism (276), recognizing it as closely connected with romanticism.

While Yang Gang 楊剛 (1905-1957) was the first person in China to translate Austen's work, publishing a translation of *Pride and Prejudice* in 1935, Ling Shuhua also showed an interest in Austen and attempted her own translation of the work.[18] Given such a connection, it is reasonable to expect to find a certain degree of influence by Austen upon Ling's works. Indeed, such an influence is noticed and discussed by critics such as Ye Gongchao 葉公超 (2), Meng Yue 孟悅 and Dai Jinhua 戴錦華 (155) - the comments of the last being particularly concerned with feminism. Hence, is the kind of subversiveness to be found in Austen's works also found in those of Ling Shuhua?

Ling produced a few plays, but her penchant for a comic style is more evident in her short stories. To examine her subversiveness, a comparison between her short story "Intoxicated" 酒後 and its adaptation, a comedy written by Ding Xilin 丁西林, may provide a useful perspective. Though Ding's play preserves the plot of the original story - a wife asks for her husband's permission to kiss a male friend who is drunk and sleeping on the sofa - the relationships in the stories are presented differently, reflecting the difference in the two writers' concerns. Ding presents us with a very sensible and reasonable heroine: she displays sympathy for her poor friend and her conviction of universal love; a long discussion and

[18] Ling Shuhua tried to translate *Pride and Prejudice* in 1932 but did not finish. See Xueyong Chen Ling Shuhua 134.

debate on the subject of the true meaning of love, trust and freedom is conducted between the husband and the wife. In contrast, the heroine in Ling's story, Caitiao 采苕, gives no reason for her request. Rather it seems to have arisen purely from physical desire. While the heroine in Ding's play is overpowered by her husband, the one in Ling's story proclaims her autonomy and free will by terminating her action after gaining her husband's permission: she is the person to decide her own will.

This demonstrates the difference between male humour and female humour: while Ding is attempting to address a discussion concerning a burning topical issue in the May Fourth programme,[19] Ling does not pay much attention to the social issue but, denying the social and traditional bondage, only focuses on the subjectivity of the heroine as a female. The identification of this subversiveness supports some form of connection between Ling and Austen. However, the narrative structure of Ling's story is quite different from that of Austen. While Austen's narrative framework is based on a narrative of lovers meeting obstacles and then overcoming them to reach a happy ending, Ling's stories are mostly about the boring lives and the depression of ladies in rich families.

Yuan and Ling can be regarded as pioneers in comedy written by female authors prior to Yang, and their work offers some insights into the way in which Yang may have approached the creation of feminist comedies of manners in the China of the 1940s. However, it should be noted that these two writers' works were written during the early stage of vernacular literature, and therefore in dramaturgy their works should be judged as embryonic. Furthermore, Yuan's comedies contain rhetorical terms and show a lack of subversiveness, a prominent feature of the feminist comedies of manners, and Ling's stories differ in their themes from both the novels of Austen and the comedies of Yang Jiang.

[19] Although Ding Xilin used to suggest some views which are different from the May Fourth mainstream, he nevertheless tried to develop some solutions for social reform in his works. A further discussion on his style and views on social reform will be found in Chapter Three.

Therefore, while the aforementioned female laughter appearing in Chinese literature is not denied in the present research as offering some insights for Yang to create her own feminist comedy of manners, the works of Jane Austen, which are also feminist comedies of manners, as I shall illustrate further in this Thesis, serve as a prominent reference point for Yang's comedies.

III. Austen and Her Feminist Comedy of Manners

Austen's novels deal with romance and matrimony, portraying society and its array of snobbish and cunning people who are mainly interested in money and property and who express themselves by means of witty dialogue. This explains why these novels have long been discussed in the context of the comedy of manners.[20] Since the comedy of manners is a theatrical form and the novel a literary one, it not always the case that the common features of the outer generic form will be found when a comparison is made between a given play in the comedy of manners genre and one or other of Austen's novels. However, it may be argued that the inner form, concerned with tone and attitude, should be regarded as the more important perspective from which to compare the works in question. Here Rene Wellek and Austin Warren's theory will explain this point further. Critics maintain that there are usually two criteria employed for defining the concept of "genre", namely, outer form and inner form. While the outer form refers to the metre and the structure of the literary work, the inner form is regarded as the attitude, tone and purpose inherent in the work. Wellek and Warren argue that the creation of a literary genre only requires one or other of these two criteria for its visible basis (Wellek and Warren 231). In the light of this one can go so far as to say that

[20] For instance, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* regards Austen's works as belonging to the genre of the comedy of manners, see "Jane Austen (English Novelist)"; Katherine Metcalfe holds the same opinion, See Southam Introduction (Heritage Vol.2) 80.

defining “comedy” as a tone or mode of writing is a more practical criterion, especially for the purposes of the present research.

In fact, to define “comedy” in terms of its outer generic qualities is something the difficulty of which caused even the great lexicographer Samuel Johnson to feel that it was “unpropitious”, because there are “various methods of exhilarating their [the comic writers’] audience, [and] not being limited by nature, [they] cannot be comprised in precept” (221). Comedy is a permeable form open to a continual process of adaptation in response to the demands of the times (Stott 3). Such an idea was discussed by Ben Jonson (1572-1637) through the persona of Cordatus, the moderator of his play *Every Man Out of His Humour* (1599). In the introduction of the play Cordatus states that comedy starts as a song with a single voice, which then accumulates more different voices throughout the ages and is enriched by these additions. He concludes that neither comedy nor mankind should “be tied to those strict and regular forms, which the niceness of a few (who are nothing but form) would thrust upon us” (Wilkes 293).[21]

Agreeing with the idea that “comedy” is an open concept, involved in a continual process of adaptation, Andrew Stott cites a number of examples showing how comedy appears as different subgenres[22] and suggests that it would be better to define comedy as a tone or a mode of writing without any generic constraints. He concludes that “comedy is a term that can refer equally to a genre, a tone, and a series of effects that manifest themselves in diverse environments. This will require us to think of comedy multilaterally, as at once a literary tradition with identifiable structural qualities and as a way of describing isolated

[21] Wylie Sypher also propounds a similar idea. He maintains that there is no “satisfactory definition of comedy” and that most of the theories of comedy oversimplify this form of art in their definitions. See Sypher "comedy" 206.

[22] Stott gives a number of examples of comic works in different contexts, such as “pastoral comedy, farce, burlesque, pantomime, satire, and the comedy of manners”; and in modern times, “cartoons, sitcom, sketch comedy, slapstick cinema, stand-up, some game shows, impressionists, caricatures, and even silly walks”. Stott further explains that comedy is better regarded as a “tone”, because comic techniques are sometimes employed in serious works. See Stott 2.

events or passages within other types of work" (3).

Moreover, Audrey Bilger's definition of comic writing is also applicable to the concept of "comedy as a genre". She defines "comedy" as "a mode of writing, speech, or behaviour that plays with cultural conventions either to affirm them or to reveal their inadequacies" (11). Bilger's idea of comedy as a mode of writing corresponds to the "inner form" concept of Wellek and Warren, and to Stott's conception of "comedy", and thus it serves as a supplementary idea to these theories on genre.

In addition, J. Middleton Murry's idea of the comedy of manners as prose comedy is also noteworthy. He maintains that the concept of literary genre should not be restricted by the outer form of the work (55-58), but that it should be assessed in accordance with the "attitude of mind" (56) of the writer required by and thus exhibited in the work. Employing such an idea, Murry asserts that "prose, the medium of exactness, is the appropriate instrument" (56) for the comedy of manners, because the genre is required to present the "rational judgment of men" (56). Murry's assertion that the writer's attitude of mind exhibited within his work is rather more significant than the generic qualities apparent in the work's outer form is consistent with the arguments discussed above and helps to establish a basis for the theory of "comedy as a tone of writing", upon which the argument that Austen's works belong to the genre of the feminist comedy of manners is based.

Undoubtedly, it is not difficult to bring to light the fact that Austen's novels display the generic qualities of the feminist comedy of manners. In this thesis such features of Austen's works will be further illustrated; however, for the sake of discussion, they will be briefly discussed here first. The following discussion will also demonstrate how Yang Jiang interprets these generic features, which serve as the evidence of Yang's direct reception of Austen's comedic style.

A. Marriage and Money

Yang Jiang observes and highlights the close connection between marriage and money in Austen's novels:

> In Austen's novels, marriage is always a significant subject in her romantic stories . . . It is evident for a romantic relationship to be established as an ultimate goal of getting married, of building up a family. In light of such a purpose, one's social status and fortune are important concerns when he/she becomes a romantic interest: the rather low social status can somehow be tolerated; however, the bad economic situation is seriously a problem which cannot be ignored (Yang "You shenme" 129).

This intricate relationship as a theme in Austen's works was widely recognized by her readers. According to Lord David Cecil's famous conclusion, Austen's view of the connection between marriage and money reveals that "It was wrong to marry for money, but it was silly to marry without it" (qtd. in Chapman *Facts* 191). Chapman agrees with such a view, arguing that the concept of marriage as embedded in Austen's stories requires "A condition of a suitable match" and an "equality of fortune" ("Appendixes" 513).

At the heart of the marital aspect pervasive in the world of Austen's novels is the pursuit of material interest. Thus readers of *Pride and Prejudice* may observe the way in which Charlotte Lucas forfeits her belief in true love and finally gives her hand to the foolish Mr. Collins, and the way in which Lady Bertram and Sir Thomas persuade Fanny to accept Henry Crawford's proposal. A cluster of characters in Austen's novels, such as Willoughby, Mary Crawford, General Tilney and Isabella Thrope, all view marriage as a means with which to gain a pecuniary advantage.

This reveals the generic quality of the comedy of manners, as suggested by Webster, whose theme is the romantic affairs of young lovers and their strong concern for their marital prospects (4). Bonamy Dobrée asserts that the Restoration comedy: "dealt somewhat coldly with human love and lust, something [sic] cavalierly with the marriage tie" (vii-viii). By exposing the widely held mercenary view of romantic relationships and marriage - the cold

side of love and lust - Austen's writing style follows in the tradition of the comedy of manners.

B. Manners

In Yang's view, romance and marriage are not the main themes of Austen's works: they are merely the subject matter of her stories. Yang has a comprehensive concept of the novel as a literary form, viewing the plot not as the entirety of the novel but as only one of many working components. She finds that the theme of Austen's works is actually the significance of manners: "Austen's novels are to reveal the manners of people as well as their mentality underlying the manners through the stories of romance and marriage" ("You shenme" 129-30). The quotation above highlights Yang's acute perception of both the novel as a genre and of the importance of "manners" in the novel, and romance and marriage are merely employed as a way in which to reveal the true preoccupations of the novelist.

Austen's novels are also considered to be novels of manners,[23] wherein manners, i.e. people's responses to social convention, are extremely important: "The conventions of the society dominate the plot, and characters are differentiated by the degree to which they measure up to the uniform standard, or ideal, of behaviour or fall below it" ("Novel of Manners (Literature)"). Similarly, the inclusion of social manners is important to the comedy of manners. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, the comedy of manners is a dramatic form which "depicts and often satirizes the manners and affectations of a contemporary society … is concerned with social usage and the question of whether or not characters meet certain social standards" ("Comedy of Manners (Narrative Genre)"). In Dobrée's discussion

[23] For instance, the *Encyclopedia Britannica Online* takes Austen's novels as an example of the novel of manners and suggests that the manners reflected in her works are limited: they "deal with the domestic affairs of English gentry families of the 19th century and ignore elemental human passions and larger social and political determinations", see "Novel of Manners (Literature)"; Abrams and Harpham also regard Austen's works as novels of manners, see Abrams and Harpham "Novel of Manners" 360.

of the generic qualities of Restoration comedy, the concept of manners - social standards - is also regarded as a crucial element of the genre:

> For there are, in the main, two attitudes one can take up in face of man's inability to live up to his ideals: one that of amusement in the comic spirit, which implies that man's ideals need modification, or at least that his attitude towards them does; the other that of horror, which implies that man himself needs modification - a task in which the risks of failure are discouraging (viii).

According to Dobrée, the existence of an ideal of manners, or of moralistic standards, is important to the genre, especially in that it acts as a challenge to the characters. Thus the characters' failure to attain these standards induces a comic spirit and hence comedy. Murry also discusses the ideal of manners in the genre and closely analyses the relationship between this ideal and the playwright: "The ordering principle of his [the playwright's] world is a social convention which he accepts, and with which he identifies himself; he measures men and women by the standard of an ideal, but the ideal is not his own, it is that of the society in which he moves" (56). In Murry's opinion, Congreve and Austen are the most successful writers of social comedy in so far as they present the ideal but can also maintain their rational judgment in an objective perspective (57).

A number of critics discuss the ideal of manners embedded in Austen's works. For instance, C. S. Lewis argues that "principles" or "seriousness" are essential elements in Austen's art because they act as a norm or criterion for judging whether people's behaviour is acceptable or ridiculous (370). Ian Watt also maintains that Austen, similar to Burney and Fielding, has an "ultimate picture of the proper norms of the social system" (*Rise* 339) in her works. This ideal of manners is the agent which arouses the laughter in both the author and the reader.

C. Subversive Laughter

As discussed above, the concept of manners is pivotal in bringing laughter and comic drama together in Austen's novels. Austen mocks people who fall short of her moral standard. Lewis states that the "principles" which Austen upholds in her works actually constitute the "grammar of conduct", which is "something that anyone can learn; it is something that everyone must learn" (370).

Yang also observes that this aspect of Austen's work is crucial to the evocation of the author's laughter:

> A standard is embedded in her mind for judging what is good and reasonable. When she sees anything bad, and absurdity does not reach the standard, she laughs. Where there is no such standard, she cannot find the contrast between the good and the bad, the reasonable and the ridiculous. Austen by her irony shows something which is never ironical …
>
> Laughter, therefore, is not harmonious but otherwise. She holds fast to the standard, forbidding any negotiation, and whenever her standard conflicts with the reality, she laughs ("You shenme" 131).

As discussed, laughter, especially female laughter, is subversive in nature. As the laughter of the female characters and the author herself is notably found in the novels,[24] the novelist's subversiveness has been drawn attention to and widely discussed by critics such as D. W. Harding. He argues that "her books are, as she meant them to be, read and enjoyed by precisely the sort of people whom she disliked; she is a literary classic of the society which attitudes like hers, held widely enough, would undermine" (347). Other critics contribute different figurative ideas on Austen's subversion. For instance, Maaja A. Stewart finds that the instability emerging from the subversive nature of Austen's novels reflect its association with the comedy of manners. Stewart, borrowing from George Meredith, maintains that one of the objects of subversion noticeable in Austen's novels is the hierarchy of gender (64-

[24] The depiction of female laughter in Austen's works as well as the author's laughter will be discussed further in Part II of this thesis.

66).[25] That is to say, the equality between the sexes is, for Austen, a significant factor, which she conceals beneath her comedy. As discussed, using female laughter to subvert the dominant feminist discourse is a feature of Yang's comedies noticed by Dooling and regarded as an indication that Yang's comedies belong to the feminist comedies of manners. Thus, a common ground between Austen's and Yang's styles is established in the generic context.

D. Witty Dialogue

In her treatise on Austen's style and its relationship with twentieth-century writers, Rachel R. Mather argues that a pivotal feature of the tradition of the comedy of manners in Austen's works is the combination of wit and dialogue (2). Mather follows Jan Fergus, who maintains that Austen learnt how to employ the structure of the comedy of manners from Burney and Samuel Richardson, as is evident in Austen's use of wit and dialogue (8-10). As Fergus suggests, there is an essential technique called "linear irony" in the structure of Austen's novels which functions as an organized ability to "reverse or undercut the main characters' expectations or judgment and the reader's as well" (8). The use of wit and dialogue in this regard serves as an effective device, especially in that "wit and dialogue can be an effective means to control and complicate" (Fergus 9) the readers' responses to the characters and hence facilitate their participation in the author's educating and refining process. Fergus further asserts that Austen develops this skill of using wit and dialogue in *Pride and Prejudice* and in the later novels, wherein the characters "can debate as well as dramatize the central issues, to excellent effect" (9), through witty dialogue.

Yang also gives credit to the art of dialogue demonstrated in Austen's novels. She analyses how Austen draws upon her skill in creating various dialogic styles for different types of characters, and this constitutes the craftsmanship of her characterization:

[25] Meredith's idea can be found in Meredith 14-15.

> The lively dialogue and the interesting plot both contribute significant elements in Austen's portrayals of character… Whenever they [the characters] speak, they are just like real people presented to the readers, and these characters' mental activities are also clearly revealed to the readers, as if what they say comes directly from their hearts. Even those whose speech is ridiculous can also help to give a more complete portrayal of the character. Austen is a master at creating dialogue for characterization. The reason that the critics often compare her to Shakespeare is her talent of revealing the complicated mental activities of her characters through dialogue... The vivid dialogues between her characters create an animated quality in the representation of her characters which interests the readers ("You shenme" 134).

For Yang both dialogue and wit are prominent features in Austen's novels. As discussed, wit is closely related to laughter. Therefore, where wit is concerned, its subversive nature is what is noticed.

Stewart points out that the association between wit and women was restricted or rejected in Austen's era, in which people were alert to the danger of wit, whose power might help to establish women's rights over discourse:

> In her [Austen's] era women were systematically stripped of [sic] power measured in possession of property and self-possession gained with control over language. Wit and control over conversation, which wit naturally yields, enable conjunctions that oppose sentimental interactions between men and women as well as the bourgeois idealizations of silently submissive ladies (65).

Meredith asserts that women are adept at using wit in their lives and are therefore capable of becoming prominent in those comedies which allow them to engage with men in a battle of wits (14-15). In Restoration comedy wit and witty women are prominent. This means that the genre is subversive not only in terms of the literary mainstream but also in respect of social conventions. Austen's application in her own works of the structure of the genre and of its characterisation of witty women can also be seen to challenge and undermine the dominant culture of the time.[26]

[26] For a detailed discussion on the connection between wit and women in eighteenth-century England and witty women in the Restoration comedy, see Stewart 66-67.

E. Domesticity

Another name for the comedy of manners is “drawing-room comedy”, demonstrating the significance of domesticity to this genre. Widely regarded as the successor of Austen, E. M. Forster argues that what he learnt from Austen was “the possibilities of domestic humour” (qtd. in Watt Introduction 9).[27] Austen’s work, according to Watt’s elucidation of her domestic humour, is “the outwardly unambitious novel which deals humorously with ordinary middle-class domestic life in a relatively leisured society” (Introduction 9). Indeed, the characters’ domestic lives highlight a prominent feature of the genre.

Austen exploits the confined state and the small-scale domestic spaces in which her stories take place. Commenting on such features of these settings in Austen’s novels, Yang writes:

> She likes to stage the plot against the setting of “a village with three or four families”. Austen was not an ignorant spinster. She read books and newspapers, was familiar with contemporary significant literature. Her social circle was rather large, which included her relatives and people who came from various levels of society. Therefore she knew about urban life and its world. However, she chose to stage every plot against this setting - a village with three or four families ("You shenme" 129).

Yang maintains that Austen had her own purpose in using these small-scale domestic settings. Yang observes that the relationships between people living in small domestic spaces in Austen’s stories are intricate indeed: “Although there are only three or four families in the village, the conflicts and the struggles which arise among these people are complicated and intense, and the manners of people revealed in the drama of these conflicts are interesting” ("You shenme" 129).

Where the commonplace facts of life are concerned, femininity becomes an advantageous quality. In Watt’s opinion the success of Austen’s novels can be largely attributed to a feminine sensibility which is “in some ways better equipped to reveal the intricacies of personal relationships and therefore becomes a real advantage in the realm of

[27] Forster’s comment on Austen is taken from his 1953 interview.

the novel" (*Rise* 339). Feminine sensibility is, in the mind of these commentators, therefore advantageous to the depiction of domestic life, because women are skilled at detailed observation and description. Nicole Huang, in her discussion of the female writers of 1940s Shanghai, emphasizes the relationship between domesticity and femininity, arguing that domesticity is "defined by a wide range of the so-called 'feminine details'" (36). Given that such detailed descriptions which allude to domesticity are gendered as feminine,[28] they are inevitably placed in a marginal and subversive position in a male-dominated culture. By setting a plot in the domestic realm and portraying a story with a strong sense of femininity, the feminist comedy of manners inevitably becomes an extremely subversive genre.

IV. Yang Jiang's Feminist Comedy of Manners

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Li Jianwu's 李健吾 description of Yang's comedies as *fengsu xiju* 風俗喜劇, or comedies of manners, sets the tone for this discourse on genre. However, he does not provide any further elaboration of the genre. This causes a lot of confusion. Dooling casts doubt on the Chinese critics' equation of the comedy of manners with *fengsu xiju* within the discourse on Yang's comedies. She considers *fengsu xiju* to be parodies of the comedy of manners rather than as comedies of manners themselves, because she recognizes the feature of the subversive nature in Yang's comedies which, in her view, do not belong to the comedy of manners.[29]

However, as discussed earlier in this chapter, comedy, if one traces its origin, can be defined as a subversive genre, and, as suggested by Meredith, the comedy of manners is also

[28] Rey Chow, in her discussion of Eileen Chang's works, observes the connection between details and femininity and the circumstance that "details" are gendered. See R. Chow 85-86. Chow's idea has been adopted from Naomi Schor, whose research illuminates the fact that details are usually viewed as feminine. See Schor 97.
[29] Dooling's assertion is assented to by John Benjamin Weinstein. See Weinstein *Directing* 127-28.

subversive in ways that "deride and outrage the Puritan" (5). This perception of the comedy of manners is at odds with Dooling's view of the genre, which, in contrast, acknowledges that the genre "originated as a mild form of amusing entertainment that preserved rather than challenged the status quo" (*Women's* 145). Therefore the argument that Yang's comedies are parodies of the comedy of manners is not justified.

In addition, Dooling argues that the parody of the comedy of manners has a Western lineage which can be found in the works of Wilde, which lend themselves as literary models or resources for Yang in order to create her own comedies. The connection between Wilde and Yang no doubt exists, and it earns credibility through the widely accepted recognition of the tie between Wilde and Ding Xilin, whose comedies,[30] as noted by Li Jianwu, are the first milestone of *fengsu xiju* in modern China. However, the argument that Wilde's plays are parodies of the comedy of manners is also not justified. In Ruth Herd and Zhang Jian's view, the subject Wilde mocks and condemns in *The Importance of Being Earnest* is not social inequality, but Puritanism and utilitarianism (170). While promoting the need to abandon extreme moral positions, Wilde advocates alternative moral ideals such as "love, sympathy, magnanimity, tolerance, and forgiveness" (Herd and Zhang 170). This indicates that Wilde's plays consistently correspond to the generic qualities of the comedy of manners.

The shift of the subject of ridicule in Wilde's works, as observed by Dooling, can be explained as an alteration in the natural course of a genre development. In fact, this kind of alteration of the tradition appears not only in Wilde's works, if tradition is regarded as the style of the Restoration comedy. Hirst points out that stylistic changes in the genre of the comedy of manners have occurred a few times in the development of the genre (4). This phenomenon can be related to Jauss's reception theory, which argues that the succession of literary forms is a process of literary evolution in which mediation occurs between the old

[30] For a discussion of the connection between Wilde and Ding Xilin, see Herd and Zhang 162-68.

and new forms (32-36).

With regard to their Western lineage, Austen's works actually serve as a more direct reference for Yang than those of Wilde, given that Austen is one of Yang's favourite writers, and the resemblance between their feminist comedies of manners is noticed. In Part II of this thesis I shall demonstrate how Yang Jiang receives Austen's feminist comedy of manners in order to create her own. Therefore Dooling argues that Yang "invents a feminist comedy of manners" (*Women's* 146). The notion that the genre was "invented" by Yang herself is not justified, if one considers Austen to be the predecessor of Yang. Besides, it is important to note that the works of Austen also inherit the generic qualities of other writers such as Fanny Burney.

In conclusion, Dooling as well as John Benjamin Weinstein assumes that the genre *fengsu xiju* is certainly defined by Chinese critics as being a subversive genre, but in fact the subversive nature inherent in Yang's comedies and the subversive nature of the comedy of manners genre in general have been underestimated by the Chinese critics. This neglect of the subversive nature in Yang's comedies has resulted in confusion and misinterpretation.

In Wartime Shanghai

Unexpectedly, the wartime environment of Shanghai proved itself an ideal place for the development of female comedy. The first reason is the public had a desire to seek comic entertainment for relieving the stress stemming from the Japanese invasion and oppression. Another reason is because the wartime environment produced what Meng Yue and Dai Jinhua regarded as "discursive space" (207). The Japanese rule controlled or even prohibited the social reform and national salvation discourse which had been dominated by the male members of the population for centuries. Amidst the struggle between the prohibited

discourse and Japanese political propaganda, a discursive space was formed, which allowed the female writers to share their own female experience without submitting to the agenda of the ideological mainstream (Meng and Dai 206-09).[31] Dooling agrees with Meng and Dai's view and maintains that this discursive space was critical to the emergence of female laughter and comic works in wartime Shanghai (*Women's* 139-40). This inverted socio-cultural environment was no doubt advantageous for the appearance and reception of female literature. These female writers' works suggest a very different view from the discourse of the mainstream of the previous ages, subverting the established "ideal female figure" created and promoted by the male-oriented discourse.

Yang Jiang's comedies appeared in such an extraordinary historical and cultural context. Her comic works, as asserted in Dooling's discussion, indubitably subvert the male-dominated feminist discourse.[32] However, I shall argue that Yang Jiang's subversion is executed in a larger context rather than only in that of feminism. In examining Yang Jiang's comedic aesthetic in this thesis, I shall further demonstrate how Yang Jiang subverts the established code spanning the cultural, literary, geographical and even political contexts. We shall see that Yang Jiang, as a female intellectual, not only responds to the era in her role as a female, but also as an intellectual – she, in a sense, takes up the duty that the generations of Chinese intellectuals have been assigning to themselves.[33]

[31] Nicole Huang discusses a similar view in her treatise. See N. Huang 47-48.
[32] As discussed in the Introduction, a feminist discourse appeared in the aftermath of May Fourth, which cast doubt on the women's liberation of the previous age. Yang Jiang paid attention to this topic and responds to the view of the mainstream in a subversive manner. This will be further discussed in Chapters Four and Five.
[33] As Poshek Fu mentioned, the Chinese intellectuals have the consciousness to see themselves as the "social conscience of China", who need to speak out about peoples' needs on their behalf. See P. Fu xii. This consciousness of the Chinese intellectuals will be discussed further in Chapter Nine.

Female laughter here should be interpreted on two levels – the laughter of the female character and that of the writer which can be found in the depiction of the female character's laughter as well as in the entire work. Part II of this thesis will examine the female laughter in Yang Jiang's works on both levels in comparison with that in Austen's novels. While Chapter Four focuses on the female characters' laughter, Chapters Five and Six will examine the writers' own laughter and subversion which is in response to the historical situation in the time and space in which they were residing. Yet before we enter upon the discussion of female laughter in Yang Jiang's comedies, the following chapters, Chapters Two and Three, must first examine Yang Jiang's horizon of expectations in reading the comedy of manners – her reading experience of the similar genre prior to her reading Jane Austen.

Chapter Two

In Search of the Comedy of Manners in Traditional Chinese Literature

Given that modern Chinese spoken drama is widely recognized as an imported art form, Yang's exposure to Western literature and drama is a key factor in evoking her horizon of expectations in the process of her reception of Austen's comic art. According to the parameters set out by Jauss (24), both Yang's reading prior to her study of Austen's novels and her knowledge of the contemporary works belonging to the genre of the comedy of manners are of critical importance in the present discussion.

Yang Jiang read a considerable number of literary works from both Chinese and Western literature. However, ascertaining which works Yang had read prior to her reading Austen is difficult, because when she started to read Austen cannot be established. Although Yang stated that she made a very detailed study plan of Western literature while she was in Oxford,[1] her reading experience of Austen, as discussed in the Introduction, must have taken place before she studied aboard.[2] Compared to the question of Yang's reception of Austen, Yang's reading experience of classical Chinese literature is less problematic. Her reading experience of classical Chinese literature as a whole can be treated as her knowledge of the aesthetic of Chinese literature rather than as her perception of each individual Chinese literary work, given the fact that she was born and educated in China before studying aboard and thus she had long been nurtured in the Chinese cultural context, whereas the Western literature which she read came from various countries including Britain, France, Germany, Spain and even Greece. A unified literary aesthetic order among all these works cannot be identified. Although from her literary critiques of Western literature and translations Yang's

[1] Please see Appendix 4 "The Works Yang Jiang Read Before 1943".
[2] A discussion about when Yang started to read Austen and Austen's popularity in China since late Qing is found in the Introduction, Part IV, Section A.

literary interest in such works as the novels of Henry Fielding, William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* and Fernando de Rojas's *Le Celestina*,[3] which are widely regarded as belonging to or at least being similar to the genre of the comedy of manners, it is still impossible to say whether Yang had read all these works before reading Austen, and therefore her reading experience of Western literature can hardly be included in the scope of this discussion.

How Yang Jiang implanted a Western dramatic form, namely the comedy of manners, in modern China, and combined it with the Chinese literary and dramatic aesthetic are the main themes of this research. Undoubtedly Yang Jiang shared a more or less similar Chinese literary and dramatic aesthetic with her audience. Her cunning method of combining the Chinese literary and dramatic aesthetic with a Western dramatic genre explains why her comedies were well received.

When we survey Yang Jiang's literary critiques, a classical Chinese literary genre, which bears a certain resemblance to the comedy of manners, frequently appears, namely *caizi jiaren* 才子佳人, or the scholar-beauty romance. Sometimes it figures as a piece of evidence in an argument and sometimes as the object of her critique.[4] We cannot confirm which scholar-beauty romance Yang had read prior to Austen. However, the genre had had a long history and had established its own aesthetic order deep in the Chinese cultural context. Whether Yang Jiang's reading experience of the scholar-beauty romance took place later than her reading of Jane Austen or not, she had definitely already become acquainted with many stories of the scholar-beauty romance, which had established themselves as folk-tales in China through the performance of Chinese opera or thanks to their circulation amongst the people, since she was a child. We can find a connection between Yang's attraction to the

[3] Yang's literary critiques deal with the comic, the humorous and the ironic style of the works. Apart from the works discussed above, she presents a translation, as well as a discussion, of *The Life of Lazarillo de Tormes and of His Fortunes and Adversities*, *Gil Blas* and *Don Quixote.*

[4] See Appendix 5 "The Scholar-Beauty Romance Discussed in Yang Jiang's Critiques".

scholar-beauty romance and her interest in the comedy of manners, given that these two genres are considered to have similar generic qualities.

In this chapter I shall examine the similarities between the genres of the scholar-beauty romance and the comedy of manners in order to sort out the common ground between the Western genre and the Chinese traditional literary aesthetic order, in which Yang planted a Western dramatic form, so transforming it and bringing it into a Chinese cultural context. Then I shall discuss the differences between these two genres in order to examine how Yang Jiang borrowed from the Western dramatic form as well as from Austen's comic style in order to carry out her course of subversion.

I. Similarities between the Indigenous Literary Tradition and the Comedy of Manners

In his treatise *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilue* 中國小說史略 [A Brief History of Chinese Fiction], Lu Xun 魯迅 defines the scholar-beauty romance as being a subgenre of the novel of manners 人情小說. Elaborating on this point, he writes:

> The popularity of *Chin Ping Mei*, *Yu Chiao Li* and other novels of this type gave rise to a host of imitations. Though these later works were not altogether the same, having different types of characters and adventures, the titles followed the established tradition; thus we have *Yu-Chiao-Li, Ping Shan Leng Yen,* and others. The stories dealt with talented scholars and beautiful girls, with refined, romantic actions, as well as failures and successes in the examinations and other changes of fortune. Since they started with many misadventures but always ended happily, they were known as "pleasant tales". Though the plots often seem reminiscent of Tang dynasty romances, there is no real connection. It was sheer coincidence that the heroes in both cases were nearly always scholars, making the stories appear similar though written in different ages (*Brief History* 245)[5].

In this description Lu Xun identifies a narrative pattern in these romances. Such a pattern is accepted and amalgamated by succeeding critics as a "three-steps-pattern": love at first sight

[5] The text is translated by Yang Hsien-Yi and Gladys Yang. See Lu Xun *Brief History*.

– impediments – happy ending.[6]

Su Jianxin 蘇建新 suggests a broader, diachronic concept for this genre. This concept denies the inevitability of a comedic ending and instead allows for a tragic ending based upon the existence of a narrative pattern. Su argues that the scholar-beauty romance is an aesthetic format with a long history that dates back to ancient China: one whose origin can be traced back to such early works as the *Classic of Poetry* 詩經 and the *Records of the Grand Historian* 史記 (13-14). According to Su, the novels of the Ming and Qing mark the heyday of this genre (8-9). While it is not critical to have a rigorous definition of the genre for the purposes of this research, the recognition of the deep-rootedness of this aesthetic is significant to our understanding of its impact on Yang's horizon of expectation.

The idea of the scholar-beauty romance as a middle-class love story indicates that it exhibits strong similarities with that of the comedy of manners. Like the comedy of manners, in the traditional Chinese scholar-beauty romance the most urgent concern of all the characters, including the protagonists, their families, friends and the rivals, is matrimony. Another common feature shared by the scholar-beauty romance and the comedy of manners genre alike is that intrigue forms an important element in the stories. The characters tend to employ intrigue in pursuit of their conjugal objectives.

In terms of their spatial setting both genres set their stories in the domestic realm. The significance of domesticity and feminine detail in the comedy of manners was discussed in Chapter One. Such a feature is also to be found in the scholar-beauty romance. Nearly all those romantic stories occur in the *guige* 閨閣, or lady's boudoir. In a broad sense this refers to the domestic area that is the exclusive preserve of women. Given that feminine details are

[6] Many scholars suggest this idea, see H. Guo 38; D. Liu 1065-66; C. Lin 74-75. In *Zhongguo fenti wenxueshi* the pattern of the plot of this story is analysed into eighteen episodes. Although more details of the pattern can be identified using this mode, the sequence of the episodes can actually still be categorized according to the "three-steps-pattern," see Li and Zhao 359-60.

also important in the comedy of manners, the aesthetic contributed by the scholar-beauty romance can be postulated to have assisted in the construction of a base upon which both Yang and her Shanghai audience were able to accept the Western comedy of manners genre.

II. Subversive and Non-subversive

While there exists some resemblance between the scholar-beauty romance and the comedy of manners, one fundamental difference is the lack of a subversive spirit in the scholar-beauty romance. The traditional Chinese comedic aesthetic is founded on the core concept of Chinese philosophy, namely *tianrenheyi,* 天人合一, or harmony of humanity and nature. According to Luo Shuhua 羅書華, the concept of *tianrenheyi* contrasts sharply with the nature of Western comedy.

In the Chinese romances the hero and the heroine are eventually happily married despite the obstacles which they encounter, their problems solved with the help of the king. For Su Jianxin such an idealised narrative is defined as "an aspiration for a pleasant tale" (126-27), a means by which the author attains compensation for his failure in the imperial examination system.[7] Dong Yan 董雁 observes that this kind of "fancy idealistic romance" arises from the context of an enfeebled patriarchy; it establishes a dramatic setting in which parents are not powerful enough to monitor and restrict the development of their children's romantic affairs (23-24).

According to Dong's perspective, the idealisation of patriarchy seen in the scholar-beauty romance is an attempt to gloss over generational conflicts. This idealism undoubtedly

[7] Many authors of scholar-beauty romances express their disappointment at their failures in the imperial examination. The satisfaction of their wish for examination success in the world of the imagination is one motivation for writing these stories. See Y. Li 28-29 and Tianhuazang zhuren 2.

stands in contrast to the aesthetic shared by the comedy of manners and Austen's novels. Austen does not deny the existence of such conflicts. As Reginald Farrer asserts, Anne's and Fanny's negative views of their fathers are unconventional among Victorian heroines and would not have gained acceptance beyond the early nineteenth century (257). Similarly Marvin Mudrick suggests that Austen tends to expose conflicts through the use of irony: "Everywhere she found incongruities between overt and hidden, between professed and acted upon, failures of wholeness which in life have consequences and must be judged, but in comedy - and for Jane Austen - are relieved of guilt and responsibility at the moment of reception, to be explored and progressively illuminated by irony" (3). The subversive element in Austen's works is in sharp contrast with the pursuit of harmony in the scholar-beauty romances.

A. Sentimental Love *vs* Anti-sentimental Love

In the scholar-beauty romance, romantic love is sentimentalised and idealised in the extreme. Both the hero and the heroine are oblivious of reality, including the question of how they will secure their livelihood. While mercenary matters are an important concern in the comedy of manners, they are not widely discussed in the scholar-beauty romance. The financial anxiety resulting from the heroines' predicaments which one finds in Austen's works are hardly ever portrayed in, or linked to, the heroines of the scholar-beauty romance.

It is widely recognized that sentimentalism was a major ideological current during the late Ming dynasty. This ideological torrent became extremely apparent in literature. Thus, the scholar-beauty romance as a kind of sentimental romantic novel came into being. The scholar-beauty romance as a genre can be said to share certain similarities with both the sentimental novel, a genre that appeared prior to the Romantic Movement and which was

prevalent in the age of Austen, and the sentimental comedy, a genre popular just after the heyday of the Restoration comedy.[8] Like its Chinese counterpart, the sentimental novel tells stories of middle-class youth who often fall in love at first sight. B. C Southam describes here the narrative pattern of this genre, arguing that the stories:

> required aristocratic connections for at least one, if not both of the lovers, and this social elevation was to be matched with the peculiar moral elevation of romantic attachment. By this code, love was always love-at-first-sight, springing from the immediacy of "first impressions". The consecration of that love was marriage, but marriage far removed from such mundane consideration as solvency or home-hunting or in-laws or compatibility. Whatever hazards might afflict the lovers, their love itself was an unassailed ideal (Introduction (Heritage Vol.1) 9).

However, sentimentalism or a romantic style is not an interest to those playwrights writing within the genre of the comedy of manners. Austen shows neither interest in nor a taste for sentimental novels. As Richard Simpson observes, Austen wrote novels with the aim of attacking "a prevalent superstition," namely the sentimentalism of popular novels, while enforcing "a general truth" known as love with intelligence (254-56).[9]

B. The Idealised Feminine Figure *vs*. the Subversive Heroine

In the comedies of manners the most subversive display of wit in is to be found in the person of the witty woman, who supposedly belongs to a lower or subordinate class in society, but who is endowed with a subversive power which she employs to mock others. Such a subversive characterisation is not normally in evidence in the heroines of the scholar-beauty romance.

Richard C. Hessney takes as an example the heroine Shan Dai 山黛 in *Ping Shan*

[8] Indeed, the romantic torrent of the Ming is very similar to that of the Romantic Movement in 18th-century Europe, which was still a dominant ideology in the age of Austen. A thorough discussion can be found in Yao.
[9] Richard Simpson contributes an extensive discussion of Austen's anti-sentimentalism in her six novels: *Sense and Sensibility* coveys her objection to the sudden flash of love; *Pride and Prejudice* highlights the problems associated with the holding of sentimental preoccupations; *Northanger Abbey* indicates the ridiculousness of sentimental fiction; *Mansfield Park* emphasises that the foundation of true love is esteem, not passion; *Emma* shows the problems of prejudice; and *Persuasion* conveys the writer's view that one cannot deny the connection between intellect and passion. See Simpson 254-56.

Leng Yan 平山冷燕.[10] Details of the heroine's talents and beauty are given in his introduction to this character, but her image does not develop throughout the narrative. As Hessney observes, "Nothing she does or says is original, or, for that matter, individual. We know little of how she feel... However, she is not the only stereotyped heroine in these romances" (234). This stereotypical pattern of feminine beauty appears to be the standard image of an ideal woman as constructed by men. The writers, disappointed by reality, offer themselves consolation by indulging in the fantasy of being loved by a beautiful, talented and chaste woman, a type of woman which they may never meet in real life. Dong suggests that such a stereotypical norm might be interpreted as an objectification of women when considered in relation to the Chinese literary tradition. In other words, the under-appreciated scholar tends to identify himself with the beauty, on the basis of their similarly marginal positions in society as well as their tragic destinies. In such a literary-traditional context, the beauty in the romance can be interpreted both as the object of men's romantic desire and as the projection of the writer himself, who aspires to the qualities which he bestows upon the beauty (Dong 29-32).

That is to say, given that the works are produced from a male perspective which bestows masculine values on characters and subject matters, the works of this genre tend to belong to a male-oriented literature. Although the heroes' self-consciousness and disappointment in being under-appreciated socially are depicted in the works, it is more likely that they will be read with sympathy rather than being taken to be subversive. Indeed, such a masculine-oriented narrative does not provide any solution for women's predicament. In contrast,

> The beauties are endowed with the literary talent and knowledge; meanwhile, however, they are not given any right to discourse. Their subordinated position and the measurement of their achievement in life are still recognized by means of the old values - namely, the scholars are still the only hope of the

[10] *Ping Shan Leng Yan* is a novel written in Qing by an unknown writer, whose pen name was Dian Shanren 荻岸山人. It was a very popular and influential scholar-beauty romance in early Qing.

> beauties' happiness. The heroines' talents are only valued because of their husbands' admiration (Dong 29).

According to Dong's analysis, this kind of feminist narrative is actually one constructed by men, and nothing more than "a by-product of the masculine-oriented narrative" (32). Within such a literary context it is difficult to regard the heroine as a subversive character. In some cases the heroine would only manifest a rebellious consciousness towards her family if her parents stood in the way of her romantic affair. This situation is not typical of the scholar-beauty romance. Objections to the protagonists' marriage, especially in the novels of the Ming and Qing, usually come not from their families but from villains and strangers in the outside world. However, the obedience shown by the beauty to the heroes is indicative of her submission to the patriarchal system.

There is an exception among these scholar-beauty romances, namely *The Dream of the Red Mansion*. Yang wrote a literary critique of this novel and frequently discussed it in her prose writing.[11] The novel contributes much to Yang's literary aesthetic and is therefore worthy of further discussion.

C. *The Dream of the Red Mansion*: An Unconventional Scholar-Beauty Romance

The Dream of the Red Mansion is distinguished by its characterisations of the scholar, Baoyu, and the beauties, Daiyu and Baochai; its sentimental romance;[12] and its narrative style. This explains why it is generally regarded as a work belonging to the category of

[11] An additional remark can be made here: *The Dream of the Red Mansion* was also Yang's parents' favourite novel. According to Yang's recollection, Yang's mother also loved the novel, a gift from Yang's father, and read it every night. It may be possible to detect a family influence here, in that Yang had the chance to read the novel, or at least to hear its plot at an early age, having been influenced by her parent's taste in reading. See Yang "Huiyi" 122.

[12] Yang observes that predestination is provided by the scholar-beauty romance, such as *The Story of the Western Wing* 西廂記 and *The Peony Pavilion* 牡丹亭, as an explanation for love at first sight. Given that the relationship between Baoyu and Daiyu is said to have had a previous existence (they were acquaintances in heaven), their romance is a kind of sentimental love. See Yang "Art" 31-35.

scholar-beauty romance. However, if it is indeed a scholar-beauty romance, it is an unorthodox one.

One of the novel's extraordinary features inconsistent with the tradition of the genre is the author's point of view *vis-à-vis* the imperial examination system. Baoyu is described as "a doltish mule, to study disinclined" (Cao 1: 102). Baoyu's opposition to the imperial examination as well as to the vanity attached to that examination gradually emerges and is reinforced during the course of the narrative. As Daiyu holds the same view on this subject as that of Baoyu, their mutual outlook on life strengthens their attachment. Their unorthodox characters are regarded by many critics as "rebellious natures" (*panni xingge*) [叛逆性格], for they both dare to wage "a vain but heroic campaign against the oppressive feudalism of old China" (A. C. Yu 225-26). More importantly, Daiyu's subversive views exhibit her genuine love for Baoyu, as she is indifferent to Baoyu's career prospects. By the same token, Daiyu appreciates Baoyu's literary talent for its own sake, rather than as an asset which will ensure his career advancement as an official. The prominent feature of Daiyu's character, as argued by Anthony C. Yu, is her respect for Baoyu's individuality: "Dai-yu's love of Bao-yu reflects her unconditional affirmation of him as an individual" (238), which sets her apart from the other female characters, such as Baochai and Xiangyun, who "uphold the priority of the family, of its structures and values" (238) and therefore insist that Baoyu nevertheless should work hard on his formal education in order to launch himself on a path to becoming an official.

Although critics generally regard the novel as a scholar-beauty romance, distaste for that genre is clearly stated in the novel itself. For instance, in Chapter Fifty-Four criticism of the genre is represented by Grandmother Jia, who both criticizes the stories of scholar-beauty romance for being unrealistic and stereotypical and their writers for being "envious of people so much better off than himself, or disappointed because he has tried to obtain their patronage

and failed, and deliberately portrays them in this unfavourable light as a means of getting his own back on them" (Cao 3:30-31). This is why she calls these stories "dreadful lies" (Cao 3: 31). *The Dream of the Red Mansion* as a parody of the scholar-beauty romance, is similar to Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1818), written as a parody of the gothic novel.

However, the difference between *The Dream of the Red Mansion* and the comedy of manners is that the former, unlike the latter, is *not* a comic work. This difference is crucial to the construction of Yang's comedic aesthetic. In *The Dream of the Red Mansion* subversiveness, despite being present, is not given a comedic outcome, rather it contributes to the painful condition of the characters and finally brings about their tragic endings. In discussing the extraordinariness of *The Dream of the Red Mansion*, Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877-1927) points to the fact that the tragic ending of the novel is "a radical reversal of some of the most cherished values in Chinese literary culture", namely that "this-worldliness" and "optimism", in accordance with which the traditional Chinese fictions and dramas usually deliver "happy, united, and prosperous endings" (A. C. Yu 217).[13] Tragedy does not easily accommodate itself within the context of the traditional Chinese aesthetic. Wang employs Arthur Schopenhauer's philosophy to analyse the work and concludes that it belongs to the third type of tragedy: the highest tragedy among all (G. Wang 60-69), in which misfortune is brought about neither by the wicked characters nor by Fate, but by natural, ordinary circumstances.[14] This form of tragedy depicts an inevitable situation which all will meet. This kind of work is rarely found in Chinese literature, and therefore the unconventionality of the novel is manifested.

The Dream of the Red Mansion is nonetheless an exception. The scholar-beauty romance as a genre contributing to the construction of the traditional Chinese comic aesthetic

[13] This interpretation of Wang's critique is cited from A. C. Yu. The original text of Wang's critique can be found in G. Wang 1: 64-65.
[14] Schopenhauer's discussion of this type of tragedy can be found in Schopenhauer 1:329.

does not encourage a subversive spirit.

Although similarities between the scholar-beauty romance and the comedy of manners are found, the former, after all, does not encourage a subversive spirit, as does the latter. Undoubtedly the Chinese genre to a certain extent helped to establish a basis on which Yang was able to write and on which her audience was able to accept works written in the form of a feminist comedy of manners: it could not itself serve as a main literary resource, enabling Yang to compose her feminist comedies.

Chapter Three

The Chinese Comedy of Manners:

Yang Jiang and Her Contemporaries

Before the appearance of Yang's works, the works of some Chinese playwrights were already regarded as comedies of manners because they displayed similarities to Western examples of the genre. Those playwrights include Wang Wenxian 王文顯, Ding Xilin 丁西林, Song Chunfang 宋春舫 and Li Jianwu 李健吾. In Zhang Jian's 張健 historical account of the development of modern Chinese drama, the comedy of manners is presented as a prominent form in a specific period, i.e. from the 1930s to the 1940s, as part of the development of *youmo xiju* 幽默喜劇, or "humorous" comedy - one of the two main genres of modern Chinese comedy;[1] and the playwrights mentioned above can be shown to have played different roles in the development of this genre. Their works surely influenced Yang Jiang to a certain extent when she decided to write her own comedies of manners and stage them in 1940s Shanghai.

In this chapter I shall discuss the above playwrights' styles and their works in order to examine Yang Jiang's horizon of expectations as she transformed Austen's feminist comedy of manners for the Chinese stage and with the aim of contextualizing Yang Jiang's place in the development of the comedy of manners genre in modern China. Among the playwrights in question Ding Xilin's works merit further discussion as together with the comedies of Yang Jiang they are viewed as "genuine comedies of manners which are extracted from Chinese culture" (qtd. in Meng Du 111).[2] Based on an analysis of the nature of the connection

[1] Further explanation of the concept of "humorous comedy" is provided in Chapter One.
[2] Comment by Li Jianwu.

between Yang and Ding Xilin, one may conduct a more thorough examination of Yang's horizon of expectations in the process of her reception of Austen's feminist comedy of manners.

I. Wang Wenxian, Song Chunfang and Li Jianwu

Wang Wenxian is regarded as the great master of modern Chinese comedy because, when he taught Western drama in Tsinghua University, many playwrights of comedy studied in his class, among them Li Jianwu, Chen Linrui 陳麟瑞 and Yang Jiang. Wang's representative work is *She Stoops to Compromise*, which was written in English and performed in America in 1927.[3] Wang had a Western lifestyle, as evidenced by his literary interests and his educational background.[4] *She Stoops to Compromise* was clearly indebted to the Western comedy of manners; the play's name already informs us of this. It was adapted from a representative work of the genre of the comedy of manners, *She Stoops to Conquer*, by Oliver Goldsmith. The most remarkable manifestation of the play's generic style lies in its depiction of the power struggle among a group comprising the principal and the professors of a certain university and the intrigues which they employ. The playwright mocks the notion that the value of the characters lies only in their Machiavellian nature, not in the sympathy they display or their friendship (Zhang 張健 *Expecting* 274-75).

Song Chunfang is another notable playwright who wrote comedies of manners in the early part of the twentieth century. Song also had a Western educational background, having studied in Europe and worked as a diplomat. When Song came to write his own dramas, Western dramatic genres such as the comedy of manners served as significant resources for

[3] The play was later translated by Wang's student, Li Jianwu, and published in 1983.
[4] Wang was born and educated in Britain.

his writing. Two of Song's works are regarded as comedies of manners: *Yifu Xishen* 一幅喜神 [A Painting of the God of Fortune - 1932] is a story of a thief's stealing a valuable painting from a hypocritical couple through the use of his wits; *Wuliwu zhong* 五里霧中 [Confused -1935], is about a man who falls victim to a woman's prank. *Yifu Xishen* mocks hypocritical, pretentious people, such as so-called antique collectors who do not even know the authenticity of the antiques which they have collected. Through his mockery of the art collectors' ignorance of the only valuable treasure in their own house, a painting drawn by their ancestor, the playwright adds a further layer of meaning to the play, that is to say, he mocks those Chinese who do not treasure the achievements of their own culture. The portrayal of Chinese tradition, culture and custom is employed as a critical aesthetic element in Song's plays (Zhang 張健 *Expecting* 284-86).

Although Wang's and Song's plays are set within a domestic realm or a closed community, their works cannot be viewed as having a strong connection with Austen's style: their signficance lies only in the fact that they belong to the genre of the comedy of manners. The importance of marital concerns which we find in Austen's novels is not prominent in the plays of either Wang or Song. In contrast with those two playwrights, Li Jianwu's plays share similarities with Austen's works. Two of his plays are regarded as comedies of manners, namely *Setting an Example* 以身作則 (1936) and *The New Pedant* 新學究 (1937) and both of them have as their subject matter romance between one or more couples, whose relationships, after certain confusions and difficulties have been overcome, happily end in marriage.

The works of all these playwrights can be said, in terms of their domestic setting, to follow in some sense the aesthetic tradition established by the scholar-beauty romance. This is especially true of Li's works, which also happen to take romance and marriage as their

themes. However, their works are more associated with the genre of the comedy of manners than with the scholar-beauty romance, for these twentieth-century playwrights are clearly keen to adopt this Western genre. To this end they intentionally make use of some of the generic qualities of the comedy of manners, such as the interplay of wit and intrigue among the characters, in order to bring their works within the framework of the Western dramatic style. It is possible that their works appeared after Yang had read Jane Austen's novels, but it can certainly be argued that these comedies of manners of early twentieth-century China served to form part of Yang's horizon of expectations as she received and then transformed the genre in wartime Shanghai. These playwrights, especially Wang and Li, had a direct connection with Yang: Wang was one of her teachers, while Li was a friend of Yang's, who had graduated from Tsinghua before both Yang and Qian Zhongshu and who saw the couple frequently during the period in which they all were living in Shanghai during the war. Li was also the one who encouraged Yang to write plays. He even played the role of Xu Langzhai in Yang's first comedy, *As You Desire*.

However, even if these Chinese comedies of manners helped to form Yang's horizon of expectations in the course of her reception and transformation of the genre, a crucial question is whether they contributed anything to Yang's transformation of *Austen*'s type of comedy of manners. It is apparent that the plot lines of Wang's and Song's plays are inherently different from those of Austen's novels, and even those written by Li are also in a clearly different style from that of Austen. Although Li's plays are also domestic comedies with the themes of romance and marriage, a critical point clearly distinguishes the styles of the two writers: Li's plays are no doubt in the masculine-oriented narrative style. This difference is distinctive when we examine the plot lines in which two male characters compete for the heroine's love. In Li's plays the competition is predominantly portrayed through the eyes of men, such as that between Scholar Xu 徐舉人 and Baoshan 寶善 for

Mrs. Zhang's 張媽 love in *Setting an Example,* and that between Kang Rushui 康如水 and Feng Xianli 馮顯利 for Xie Shuyi's 謝淑義 love in *The New Pedant*. This is very different from Austen's novels, in which the tussles over love are for the most part seen through the eyes of the heroine.

Of more importance is the "subversive spirit" evidenced in Austen's works, which is also found in Wang's, Song's and Li's comedies. The playwrights mock unethical social values and practices. Zhang Jian interprets the university in Wang's play, in which he mocks the snobbery and hypocrisy of the academic world, as a symbol representing the wider chaos of Chinese society in the 1920s during the age of warlordism (*Expecting* 243). In his plays Song mocks people's ignorance of the aesthetic beauty of tradition and expresses his concern about the instability and conflict in society. Like his contemporaries, Li also uses mockery to convey clear messages concerning the need for social reform. He satirises old-fashioned, stale moral values and those who call themselves modern but whose attitudes are in fact antiquated. As Zhang observes, Li's family background instilled in the playwright a strong political consciousness (*Expecting* 324), and so it is not surprising that Li attempted to incorporate many social and political elements in his plays.

In this light the works of these playwrights should be interpreted in the context of the May Fourth Movement, as also those of many writers of May Fourth or post-May Fourth, who use satire to appeal for change and who in some cases even call directly for social reform. However, a similar urge to change society is not conspicuous in Austen's works. The view that "an 'autonomous' writer must persuade the reader of certain truths in order to produce a change in consciousness" (M. Chen 75) can be regarded as in some sense a part of the May Fourth literary tradition. This view is particularly strong in the case of drama, which was perceived as the most effective medium with which to promote new ideas. In the light of their adherence to the literary and ideological mainstream, it is arguable that these plays are

in fact not as subversive as female humour, as argued in Chapter One, which does not call for revolution but casts doubt upon revolution *per se*. Hence, the subversive nature of Austen's works which, as will be demonstrated further in Chapter Six, subvert the literary conventions of her time. Therefore, although the comedies of these three playwrights in a sense served as the foundation upon which Yang staged her own comedies in the Chinese theatre and although they were the medium from which the spectators received Yang's comedies of manners, they cannot be counted as works which played a large part in constructing Yang's horizon of expectations as she was engaged in the transformation of Austen's subversive spirit in the Chinese context.

II. Ding Xilin

Ding Xilin's comedies can be found to be more subversive than those mentioned in the last section. As Li Jianwu comments, while the second milestone in the development of a Chinese comedy of manners belongs to Yang Jiang, the first milestone belongs to Ding's plays.[5] In the light of this a stronger connection between Ding's and Yang's works is to be expected, and therefore a more thorough examination of Ding's works and their part in contributing to Yang's horizon of expectations in her reception of the Western genre is called for.

Ding's plays are generally more readily defined as comedies of manners since marital issues are of significant concern and the plays possess a witty style and a domestic setting (N. Xu 19). These features of Ding's plays serve as a ground for drawing parallels between his works and those of Oscar Wilde. As Yuan Muzhi 袁牧之 (1909-1978) comments on Ding's

[5] Quoted in Meng Du 111.

works: “The author’s witticisms and his philosophy of relations between the sexes are greatly reminiscent of the aestheticism of Oscar Wilde. His plays are all similarly set in beautiful drawing-rooms, his characters chewing on tobacco pipes as they sit sunk in comfortable sofas” (112-13).[6] Yuan’s comment provides a solid basis for the discussion of Ding’s comedies in the context of the genre of the comedy of manners, as well as in their comparison with Yang’s works. It is not difficult to identify similarities between the works of the two playwrights in terms of the features which Yuan mentions: wit, the relationship between the sexes, the drawing-room setting, and, more importantly, the subversive spirit present in the works. These will be discussed in the following sections.

A. Ding’s May Fourth Discourse: His Subversion of the Institution of Marriage

Like Austen’s novels, which in her stories of romance and marriage, as Yang Jiang observed, embody the novelist’s call for good manners ("You shenme" 129-30), Ding explores in his dramas of romance and marriage a number of controversial, social and ethical topics, such as marriage, gender and the roles and responsibilities allotted to wives and husbands. More importantly, the connection between Ding and the genre of the comedy of manners is evident not only in the way in which Ding writes within the parameters of the surface conventions of this genre, but it lies in the subversive spirit revealed in his plays. Ding's subversiveness is particularly evident in the eloquent discussions to be found in the plays.[7] In R. A. Herd and Zhang Jiang’s argument, subversiveness is evident in the connection between Ding and Oscar Wilde, which is expressed not simply their both having chosen to write within the surface conventions of the genre of the comedy of manners, but more importantly, lies in their sharing the same subversive spirit, a spirit which rejects extremes of

[6] The translated text is quoted from Herd and Zhang 164.
[7] Lengthy discussions and debates are one of the distinctive features of Ding's plays. Zhang identifies this feature as evidence of the influence of the works of George Bernard Shaw. See Zhang 張健 *Expecting* 307.

thought (175).

In essence, the views presented in Ding's plays are provocative and unconventional and often lead to story lines which were unusual when they first appeared. For example, in *A Wasp* 一只馬蜂 (1923), the protagonist, Mr. Ji 吉先生, suddenly suggests to the woman he is in love with, Miss Yu 余小姐, that they should remain in the state of "not marrying together". Mr. Ji's suggestion provides an anti-climax, challenging the conventional idea that people must marry when they are in love. In *Dear Husband* 親愛的丈夫 (1924), after hearing a poet mock the actors in Chinese opera who specialise in the female role as "weird creatures without gender", a *nan huadan* 男花旦, or female impersonator disguises himself as a woman and marries the poet, his true identity remaining undetected. Though he is a good "wife" to the poet throughout the play, his successful pretence should be interpreted as a protest against the poet's attack, designed to prove that he and his peers are not de-gendered creatures, but are acceptable people in both sexual roles. In *Intoxicated* 酒後 (1925) the wife asks permission from her husband to kiss a male friend, as evidence of his trust in her. Yet when the husband's permission is granted, she hesitates. Through this incident Ding challenges the public's perception of the true meaning of freedom.

In these plays one will discover Ding's persistent subversion of social conventions, particularly with regard to the institution of marriage. Instead of simply providing the audience with the conventional comedy's happy ending so that the young lovers eventually win over the old generation and get rid of an arranged marriage, Ding poses a number of far more complicated questions concerning marriage: is marriage to be understood as the natural or proper goal of romance? Should sexuality be the main concern, should it be the foundation of a loving relationship? What is the true definition of fidelity in marriage? In a significant work, composed in Ding's later years as a playwright, *Mt. Miaofeng* 妙峰山 (1940), the

subversion of marriage as an institution is still a prominent theme, which presents the notion that romance is not necessarily a stage through which all couples are obliged to pass before marriage. On Mt. Miaofeng a utopian society is established by Tiger Wang 王老虎, who declares that romantic relationships are prohibited even though marriage is still a legitimate institution. Given the fact that *Mt. Miaofeng* is a four-act play, while most of Ding's works are one-act plays,[8] and that it was written after the playwright's nine-year hiatus from writing, critics generally distinguish *Mt. Miaofeng*, along with two other plays written by him between 1939 to 1940, from other works by Ding and regard their style as inconsistent with his general style.[9] Herd and Zhang assert that *Mt. Miaofeng* does not differ from Ding's early one-act plays, either in its style or in its artistic intention, but is in fact representative of Ding's oeuvre; the questions that Ding posed in his earlier plays, such as the necessity of marriage, as well as matters of gender and social equality, are answered in *Mt. Miaofeng* by the demonstration of an ideal society, in which all the societal issues which formed the subject matter of the earlier one-act plays – the questions he reflected in the peak period of May Fourth - are resolved. *Mt. Miaofeng* indeed can be regarded as the playwright's reflections on, or the suggested settlement of, the outrage which followed in the aftermath of May Fourth.

Mt. Miaofeng is one of the few contemporary plays which Yang had seen prior to writing her own comedies and is the only play written by Ding which is mentioned in her recollections of the experience of watching wartime drama (X. Wu 183). *Mt. Miaofeng* was staged in 1939 in Shanghai, just before Yang wrote her first play. The timing of this

[8] Among all of Ding's comedies only two of them are not one-act plays, namely *Mt. Miaofeng* and *When Madam Returns Home* 等太太回來的時候 (1939).

[9] In fact, a two-phase periodisation of Ding's plays is generally agreed by many critics. The first period comprises Ding's works from 1923 to 1930, which are widely regarded as having little social consequence and as being merely the portrayal of comfortable middle-class life, while the second period includes three of Ding's plays written between 1939 and 1940, which seem to have more significant social and political concerns. A thorough discussion of the periodisation of Ding's plays and the opinions of the critics on the styles of the respective periods can be seen in Herd and Zhang 165-68.

performance and Yang's perception of the play provide further evidence of the impact of *Mt. Miaofeng* on Yang's writing. As such, it can be considered that the work is significant to Yang's horizon of expectation in her reception and transformation of Austen's feminist comedy of manners onto the 1940s Shanghai stage. Considering the case that the impact of *Mt Miaofeng* on Yang's writing is particularly notable among all of Ding's comedies, we can say that the connection between Ding and Yang occurs not only in the context of comedy of manners but also in the context of the May Fourth discourse. The significance of May Fourth discourse in *Mt. Miaofeng* had provided a particular impetus for Yang to incorporate the May Fourth discourse into her use of the genre of the comedy of manners. As both Yang and Ding illustrated their May Fourth discourses through the stories of romance and marriage, the connection between their styles is more evident than that of Yang with other contemporary playwrights.

While Ding's and Yang's similar usage of the genre, namely incorporating the May Fourth discourse in comedy, is recognized, it should be noted that there is a fundamental difference between their May Fourth discourses. As discussed above, Ding's idealistic vision is revealed in his plays and is particularly embodied in the utopian community depicted in *Mt. Miafofeng* (Herd and Zhang 179). His idealism and ambition for social reform is demonstrated in his representation of the ideal society on *Mt. Miaofeng*, in which all the societal problems discussed in his previous plays are resolved. Zhang Jian notes that it is important to understand the influence on Ding of Cai Yuanpei's 蔡元培 (1868-1940), one of the significant figures in the May Fourth and New Culture Movements and the president of Peking University who recruited Ding to teach in the University, in order to appreciate the scope of Ding's belief in social reform.[10] Furthermore, Zhang maintains that Ding's plays cannot be understood without correlating them with Cai's theory of "freedom, equality and

[10] This point is evidently revealed in Ding's *Miaofeng*, as this work is his tribute to Cai Yuanpei. See Rea "Three Dollars" 177.

love" (*Expecting* 298) and of a utopian society in which people can enjoy absolute freedom and understand true love and, hence, institutions such as marriage and the family are no longer desired (*Expecting* 299-302). Peter Kropotkin's (1842-1921) *Mutual Aid, A Factor of Evolution* (1902), was a popular book in China during the 1920s and one which Zhang believes to have been a crucial factor in helping the playwright form a vision of a society based on mutual help and universal love. While it may be difficult to assess the extent of the influence of Cai and Kropotkin on Ding, there is little doubt that the harmonious and idealistic nature of Ding's plays are closely associated with utopian ideals. Ding's vision of society is in a sense similar to the closed community in Austen's novels, which however is far from an ideal realm (Harding 347). Furthermore, it is apparent that no matter how provocative and challenging Ding's ideas are when set against the May Fourth canon, they are still suggestions for social reform. This is hardly the case with Austen who rarely discusses social issues and who offers no concrete suggestions for social development.[11]

Ding's plays seem to focus on exploring controversial social and ethical issues, and he creates opportunities for the expression of his opinions on such matters. Herd and Zhang suggest that the play *Mt. Miaofeng* "combines a greater degree of engagement with contemporary political events and further exploration of the themes he [Ding] had been concerned with from the start of his life as a dramatist" (182). John B. Weinstein, who maintains that Ding's comedies are a combination of Wilde's aestheticism and Ibsen's realism (*Directing* 47-50), asserts: "Characters like Mr. Ji were appealing because they discussed socially engaged subjects in an aesthetic style" (*Directing* 47). In Weinstein's 2008 article the critic further discusses Ding's engagement with social issues in his plays. Weinstein observes that Ding adopts Wilde's "elegant word play to tackle social issues" ("Ding Xilin" 103)

[11] It should be noted that the present research makes no attempt to claim that Austen ignores social issues. Conversely, it is believed that she does pay attention to them. There will be further discussion on this subject in Chapters Five and Six. The present discussion merely asserts that she does not openly discuss these issues in her works.

against the prominence of *wenmingxi* , which is an improvised form of performance without script. According to the popular view of May Fourth intellectuals that drama serves as a pertinent means for promoting new ideologies and knowledge with the aim of social reform, Weinstein maintains that Ding's craft of language – his superb use of words – was actually "the new weapons in the battle for social reform" ("Ding Xilin" 103).

In the light of this Ding, although proposing a more subversive May Fourth discourse in his comedies than his contemporary playwrights writing comedies, nevertheless offers suggestions for social reform. This can be attributed to the difference between male humour and female humour which has been discussed in Chapter One: while the subversiveness of male humour arouses the writer's desire to reform, that of female humour suspects the very existence of the reform. Such a quality of female humour is evidently found in Austen's works. As D. W. Harding asserted, Austen was a writer whose subversive attitude took the form of undermining society. (347). This description actually is also applicable to describe Yang Jiang' comic art, and I shall demonstrate such subversiveness further on the part of Yang and Austen in Parts II and III of this thesis. We shall see that these two writers cast doubt upon their surroundings in the same way including the ideological mainstreams of their times. In this light Ding's works, although they are recognized as offering Yang an insight on how to incorporate the May Fourth discourse into her comedies, do not themselves serve themselves as a primary point of reference for Yang's feminist comedies of manners.

B. Male Humour/Female Humour

The female characters in Ding's comedies are significant compared to those who appear in the comedies of manners written by other contemporary playwrights. As discussed in Part I, none of the comedies written by Wang, Song and Li are interpreted through the

perspective of their female characters. This is also the case with Ding's comedies from the 1920s. Although in Ding's early comedies there are female characters who occupy an equal position with their male counterparts, they are eventually outwitted by the men. For example, the female protagonist of *Intoxicated* strives for her rights by showing admiration for her male friend in front of her husband, but, as Weinstein and Yee argued, the female protagonist "may win the battle of the sexes, but he [her husband] wins the war of words. As the last lines of the play demonstrate unequivocally, in Ding Xilin's comedic world he who laughs best laughs last" (Weinstein and Yee). In *Oppression* 壓逼 (1925), it is the female tenant who suggests to the male tenant the witty idea which solves the dispute between them, and it is the landlady who insists on not offering the lease to the male tenant in order to avoid her daughter having contact with a strange man; however, we can still see "the male domination of laughter" in the play (Weinstein and Yee).

While the female characters in Ding's early works are devoid of the opportunity for their domination of laughter, a remarkable female character, Hua Hua 華華, can be found in *Mt. Miaofeng* who not only outwits the object of her affection, the male protagonist Tiger Wang, but also for most of the play provides the perspective through which the story is interpreted. This exceptional characterisation of Hua Hua essentially gives an insight into how Ding deals with the subject of equality between the sexes.[12]

Overall Hua Hua is regarded as "the culmination of a series of female protagonists of Ding's plays" and the one who is the most "progressive and independent of mind" (Herd and Zhang 180) when compared with Ding's other female protagonists. The progressive character of Hua Hua is challenging and subversive, and she is dominant in her relationship with Tiger Wang, her future husband, to the extent that she undermines the social code of the gender

[12] Christopher Rea observes that "Ding's plays tend to privilege male agency, a pattern which remained consistent, except for last play of the period, *Mount Miaofeng*." See Rea "Three Dollars" 175-76.

hierarchy so as to take the lead in her discussion with Wang of their prospects of marriage – it is at her initiative that Wang proposes to her (Ding *Miaofeng* 235). Apart from this unconventional behaviour, another quality revealing Hua Hua's subversiveness is her wit. Hua Hua employs wit in order to find a way out of a predicament[13] and to assume dominance over Tiger Wang.[14] Such a witty and progressive woman, as Zhang asserts, "is rarely presented in the works of other comedic writers of modern China" (*Expecting* 310). As discussed in Chapter One, wit is a subversive comic element used to alarm a patriarchal society, especially when it is associated with women, who have traditionally been placed in a peripheral social position. Thus the witty female characters in Austen's novels are subversive, and this subversive quality is similarly found in the characterisation of Hua Hua.

According to Herd and Zhang, a utopian vision including gender equality is the basis of the establishment of the connection between Ding and Wilde. In Ding's and Wilde's vision of the ideal society women's position should be equal to, or even higher than, that of men.[15] While the connection between Ding and Wilde is indubitably found in their similar style and vision, other Western sources contributing to Ding's style of comedies are also discussed by the critics. Examining the Western literary resources which Ding drew upon when composing his works, Zhang Jian identifies a significant impact from the works of George Meredith and George Bernard Shaw, including their attitudes to the portrayal of female characters (*Expecting* 305-10). According to Zhang, Ding takes Meredith's and Shaw's comic aesthetic as a point of reference and goes on to create a number of assertive female characters in his own comedies (*Expecting* 310).

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[13] For instance, she uses her wit to assuage Captain Zhao's suspicions when he accuses of her talking to the prisoner, Tiger Wang. Ding *Miaofeng* 162.

[14] For instance, when Tiger Wang tells her that she is his *roupiao* (hostage), she combines the words *roupiao* and *pengyou* (friend) as *piaoyou* (fan) in order to dissolve Wang's threat and mocks his claim to be a violent man. Ding *Miaofeng* 226.

[15] Herd and Zhang argue that the equality between the sexes in Wilde is exemplified by the relationship between Cicely and Algernon. Herd and Zhang 180-83.

As discussed in Chapter One, Meredith highlights gender equality as a significant feature of comedy, since comedy is a ground where men and women focus on the same object – life (14-15). Meredith asserts: "There never will be civilization where comedy is not possible; and that comes of some degree of social equality of the sexes" (32). Whereas the equality between men and women is an important quality of comedy, its significance is particularly manifested in the comedy of manners. As R. C. Sharma observes, "For the appearance of true comedy it is necessary that women should not only have intellectual equality with men but should enjoy the same freedom of speech. A modest and quiet heroine would be altogether out of place in the comedy of manners" (39). Since witty female characters who are placed in an equal or even an intellectually superior position to men are so prominent in the plays by Ding, Wilde, Austen and also Yang, as the following chapters will demonstrate, their interconnection within the genre can be recognized. As a predecessor of Yang in terms of writing a comedy of manners in the modern Chinese context, Ding's comedies, especially *Mt. Miaofeng,* provide an insight into her approach to portraying the character of a witty woman on the Chinese wartime stage.

C. Comedic Aesthetic: Thoughtful Laughter and Melodrama/Tragedy

It should be noted that "thoughtful laughter" is a prominent element in the formation of Ding's and Austen's comedic aesthetic. "Thoughtful laughter" should be recognized as the common comedic aesthetic which these two writers shared. What Ding expects of his plays is that they shall engender in the audience a sentiment which is bound to evoke laughter with judgment - "*huixinde weixiao"* 會心的微笑 (Ding "Preface" 51). In Zhang Jian's interpretation, *huixinde weixiao* indeed corresponds to Meredith's concept of "thoughtful laughter" (*Expecting* 305), which is the laughter evoked through the mind and is only produced by "true comedy" (Meredith 47), something different from the laughter produced

by the ridicule cast on "our unfortunate nature" (Meredith 47) and by satire. Civilisation, as argued by Meredith, is the key factor to producing comedy, and "our civilisation is found in common sense" (47). Common sense, in Meredith's argument, is the power in an individual's mind to help him/her to discern what is right and wrong. Through "unsolicitous observation" (Meredith 48), whenever an individual discovers human absurdities, his/her common sense "will look humanely malign, and cast an oblique light on them, followed by volleys of silvery laughter, and that is Comic Spirit" (Meredith 48). It is the 'Comic Spirit' which produces true comedy. Therefore, in Meredith's theory only a civilised mind has this comic spirit and can thus produce thoughtful laughter. It is Meredith's idea of "thoughtful laughter" which inspires Ding and constitutes a part of Ding's comedic aesthetic.

In Meredith's opinion Austen's works are representative works of comedy (41), and thus the laughter created from within is certainly "thoughtful laughter". Meredith's view of Austen is noted by Yang in her critique of Austen and is a view with which she is in agreement ("You shenme" 130-31). Favouring the same type of laughter could mean that Ding shares a similar comic aesthetic and a style similar to that of the English comic novelist. Given this connection, Ding's comedies undoubtedly share a part of Yang's horizon of expectations in her reception and transformation of Austen's style of the comedy of manners.

However, Ding and Austen only shared a similar comedic aesthetic in part. In Herd and Zhang's study of *When Madam Returns Home* 等太太回來的時候 (1939), a tone of melodrama is discovered in the last scene where Mei 梅 looks forward to her mother's return without knowing that she has already left for good. This scene is undoubtedly emotional and touching and therefore adds a melodramatic touch to the play (Herd and Zhang 187-88).[16]

[16] Wilde's society plays are regarded as having aa strong melodramatic sense, see Herd and Zhang 168-70. Wilde's society plays are *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892), *A Woman of No Importance* (1893) and *An Ideal Husband* (1895). Herd and Zhang exemplify this connection by comparing *When Madam Returns Home* with *Lady Windermere's Fan* and *A Woman of No Importance*. See Herd and Zhang 184-88.

This melodramatic tone resonated with the ideology of May Fourth and could be observed in the decades afterwards. The melodramatic mode as a fashion in the May Fourth theatre, including drama and film, has been widely discussed by critics. For example, Paul Pickowicz's study of Chinese cinema in the May Fourth period highlights the contribution of melodrama to the tradition of Chinese cinema at the time (96). Although Pickowicz's discussion is confined to movies, the respective roles of film and drama were similar in the May Fourth era, particularly since many dramatists also worked in cinema.[17] Moreover, Huang Xuelei argues that the popularity of melodramatic representation in the May Fourth era is attributed to emotionalism (193). As this feature of the genre with its "representation of intense emotion and moral conflict" (X. Huang 193) is indicative, the genre was particularly welcomed in May Fourth China, the society of which was occupied with the fierce emotional torrent released during a series of transitional and turbulent moments.[18] Huang also attributes the popularity of melodrama during the May Fourth period to the didactic function of the genre (194-98). Given the fact that popular literature and art was widely employed as an educational tool in the May Fourth period, melodrama was unsurprisingly used in the same context as it has "the capacity to convey social messages" (X. Huang 194). As Peter Brooks points out, melodrama offers such a function: "There is virtue in clarity of recognition of what is being fought for and against" (206). That is to say, one can easily find the answer in this genre to the kind of societal problems met with at such a chaotic time as the Republican period (Pickowicz 78-79). In addition to the aforementioned facilitating factors for the popularity of melodrama, Leo Ou-fan Lee observes that melodrama resonates with traditional Chinese literary aesthetics, which intrinsically attracted the Chinese audience (*Shanghai* 97-

[17] The close connection between film and drama in terms of melodrama is discussed by Huang. See X. Huang 197-98.

[18] It is argued that romanticism and sentimentalism was the dominant ideological torrent in May Fourth. See Lee *Romantic*. A further discussion on this subject will be found in Chapter Six.

98).[19] Lee maintains that in the pre-war and wartime context melodramatic narrative was mingled with Marxism to cater to the increasing patriotism of an audience faced with Japanese aggression (*Shanghai* 101-02). These factors contributed to the development of melodramatic representation as a prominent theatrical mode of May Fourth and the decades which followed.

However, as discussed in the Introduction and Chapter One, a tragic rather than a melodramatic tone has been detected in Yang's plays by many critics, and this can also be found in Austen's novels. DeWitt Bodeen comments that "the tragedy of morals" (Bodeen) can be observed in Austen's comedy of manners. A tragic sense concealed by a comic presentation embodies the height of Austen's art. The present research will argue that Yang adopted this form of presentation (see Part II of this thesis). According to Marvin Mudrick, a fundamental characteristic of Austen's irony is her sense of detachment, which allows the author to maintain a distance from her readers and the subject in her writing (1-3). However, one does not necessarily detect a comic sense in the irony; conversely, as Mudrick discussed, irony aims to sharpen and expose "all the incongruities between form and fact, all the delusions intrinsic to conventional art and conventional society" (1), which provoke "man's conventional response of outrage and involvement toward delusion and error" (3). A comic sense only emerges from irony when it is exploited as a relief from such a response of outrage and involvement (Mudrick 3). Discovering incongruities may provoke anger, but dissatisfaction with reality, corresponding with the seriousness in Austen's laughter as discussed in Chapter One, also conveys the tragic sentiment present in her works. As discussed above, a strong sense of detachment is found in Austen's works, rendering sympathy impossible (Mudrick 2). Wylie Sypher argues that the melodramatic mode revolts against the idea that one should disengage from the responsibility to care for the dispossessed

[19] Huang also highlights the relationship between melodrama and traditional Chinese values in her discussion of the melodramatic movie *Orphan*. See X. Huang 198.

and to show sympathy for the poor ("Aesthetic" 433-37). That is to say, the sense of detachment in Austen's works dissociates them from melodramatic presentation.[20]

This sense of detachment is also noticed in Yang's plays. The playwright's voice is not found in any specific character (Weinstein *Directing* 151-53). In fact, Yang's role as an outsider in relation to the action in her plays is evident. (This will be discussed in Part III of this thesis – Yang's transformation of Austen's comedic aesthetics). The same attribute of Yang's comedies which correlates with Austen's style also distinguishes Yang's comedies from those of Ding. This demonstrates that, while Ding's works are recognized as having the closest connection with Yang's among their contemporaries in terms of comedic style and as in a sense contributing themselves to the construction of Yang's horizon of expectations as she was bringing her own comedies of manners onto the stage of the 1940s wartime Shanghai, Austen's works are more important resources than Ding's for Yang's adoption and transformation of the genre.

The comedies of manners of the contemporary playwrights of Yang's time are subversive to varying extents according to the messages conveyed in their works which undermine tradition and ridicule the social order. Among them the works of Ding are believed to bear a closer relationship to Yang's comedies. However, a very significant comedic element – female humour - present in Austen's as well as in Yang's comedies, cannot be found in the works of these playwrights. Therefore, if the assertion is made that Yang's plays are a kind of feminist comedy of manners which is extremely subversive in nature, the works of these modern Chinese playwrights, discussed in this chapter, can only be regarded as

[20] Eileen Gillooly asserts that Austen's humorous treatment of Fanny Price's circumstances is a means of rescuing the narrative from sinking into melodrama. See Gillooly 83.

constructing Yang's horizon so as to transform the genre for the modern Chinese theatre and as forming the audience's horizon for the reception of Yang's works, but not as resources as significant for Yang's writing as were those of Austen.

Part II The Reception

Chapter Four

Female Laughter as a Weapon of Subversion

The present research aims to establish a connection between Austen and Yang upon a generic ground, i.e that both writers' comic works belong to the feminist comedy of manners. The prominent feature of this genre is the subversiveness embedded within it. In the works of Austen, this is presented through the laughter of her female characters. Is it possible to find such a similar female laughter in Yang's comedies? If so, can we obtain a concrete idea of Yang's subversiveness? Can we also observe in this laughter Yang's reception and transformation of Austen's comedic art?

In this chapter, the laughter of the female characters in Austen's and Yang's works will be examined. The laughter of the female protagonists of Yang Jiang's comedies, namely that of Junyu and Yanhua, will be paralleled by the laughter of two female characters of Austen's novels, that of Elizabeth Bennet of *Pride and Prejudice* and Mary Crawford of *Mansfield Park* (1814). We will see the striking resemblance between the laughter of Junyu and Elizabeth and that of Yanhua and Mary. In addition to their laughter, these female characters of Austen also share similarities with Yang's heroines' "orphan girl situation".[1] All of these female characters are orphans and are lodged or fostered in the homes of rich relatives. Therefore, they can all be said to be outsiders in a closed community. While Junyu and Yanhua both are orphans, or orphan-like, and are lodged or fostered in the homes of rich relatives, Mary is also an orphan as well as an outsider in the domestic circle of Mansfield Park; and Elizabeth, though not an orphan, is facing the prospect of losing the family home - Longbourn is entailed to her cousin Mr. Collins – and living on the verge of the gentry class –

[1] This feature of the narrative will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

her family, far from being welcomed, is also treated as outsiders by the aristocratic community.

In the examination of their laughter in this chapter we shall see how these characters similarly employ their laughter as a weapon to protect themselves, subverting their inferior situations within their closed community, and also in order to overthrow the established code of the gender hierarchy.

I. Laughter as a Weapon

The laughter of Elizabeth Bennet, bears similar qualities to that of Junyu. Firstly, it is clear that the two use laughter to amuse themselves. Laughter employed in this way is a mode of behaviour which they may exploit in order to live with composure in an unfavourable situation and even at times to redefine it.

Elizabeth, who has grown up in Hertfordshire, is certainly not an outsider in the eyes of the neighbourhood. However, as a girl from a family on the periphery of the gentry class, Elizabeth is certainly viewed as an outsider by the local aristocratic *milieu*. Elizabeth's outsider role is made apparent in several of the scenes in the novel. For instance, in the episode in which Elizabeth arrives at Netherfield to take care of the seriously ill Jane, her "weary ankles, dirty stockings, and a face glowing with the warmth of exercise" (*P&P* 32)[2] after a three-mile walk to the mansion, first surprises and then disgusts most of the people in the breakfast-parlour. They then soon discover that the habits of this country girl are out of tune with their aristocratic standards of decorum. At dinner Mr. Hurst finds Elizabeth to be a person he has no interest in talking with because she prefers "a plain dish to a ragout" (*P&P*

[2] *P&P* is adopted as the short title of *Pride and Prejudice* in this thesis.

35) and is surprised after dinner to learn that Elizabeth prefers “reading to cards” (*P&P* 37). Just after Elizabeth has left the dining room, Miss Bingley commences to “abuse” Elizabeth openly, criticizing her as a lady with “no conversation, no style, no taste, no beauty” (*P&P* 35). On her visit to Rosings, Elizabeth is again placed in the role of outsider by the aristocratic circle hosted by Lady Catherine, whose “noble air” and authority demonstrates that she has no intention of making her visitors “forget their inferior rank” (*P&P* 162). Elizabeth is alert to people’s condemnation; she fully recognizes that she and her friends are not “acceptable” visitors to Lady Catherine.

Confronted with the humiliation of being despised, Elizabeth, in the same way as Junyu, uses laughter as a weapon. Laughter for Junyu and Elizabeth is employed both as a means of amusement as well as a way of controlling and altering an inferior situation. It is therefore reasonable to assume that Yang takes Elizabeth's laughter as a critical point of reference for her characterization of Junyu.

To Elizabeth, laughter serves as her principal means of entertainment. Therefore, when she hears Miss Bingley's admiration of Darcy as a man having no deficiency to be laughed at, she cries out, "Mr. Darcy is not to be laughed at! That is an uncommon advantage, and uncommon I hope it will continue, for it would be a great loss to *me* to have many such acquaintances. I dearly love a laugh" (*P&P* 57). In her words "I dearly love a laugh" Elizabeth thus plainly explains one of her critical attitudes to life. This attitude of Elizabeth’s can probably be traced back to her father's influence. Living as a satirist, Mr. Bennet teaches Elizabeth: "For what do we live, but to make sport for our neighbours, and laugh at them in our turn?" (*P&P* 364)

Laughing as an attitude to life for amusement is also demonstrated in Junyu's laughter throughout the play. In all the families she lives with, she finds causes for laughter, such as the hypocrisy and fake philanthropy of her hosts. Lady Yin's ulterior motive in asking Junyu

to take the job as Zuyin's secretary is obvious: she wishes to avoid the possibility of an affair between Zuyin and his secretary. Lady Yin's hypocrisy induces in Junyu a repeated mockery of her aunt, and causes her to reject the job. Junyu finally announces to one and all the true reason for her aunt's wish for her to take the job: "Oh! Auntie, so you asked me to come because you were worried about uncle having a female secretary!" (*Desire* 22; Act I)[3], greatly embarrassing Lady Yin. Later, when Zuyin shows that he despises Junyu's father's Western-style paintings, disgusted by the nude girls in the pictures, and Lady Yin explains Zuyin's response, saying: "He's like that: he hates pictures of female nudes - they're too seductive", Junyu immediately responds: "As seductive as a female secretary?" (*Desire* 23; Act I) Junyu's witty, playful language serves as a useful device to expose people's hypocrisy, and she readily finds amusement in every this kind of situation.

Junyu's wit is also exemplified by her conversation with Zuyi, who asks for Junyu's help in typing the manuscript of his book which is written in English. Junyu cannot help laughing because of her uncle's pseudo-Western style. Zuyi's vanity and ignorance is apparently exposed through her witty words:

ZUYI.	Are you good at English?
JUNYU.	I don't' think so.
ZUYI.	Don't pretend to be modest - this is the Chinese habit.
JUNYU.	I am not modest – I –I don't know what is Uncle's meaning of "good English".
ZUYI.	You are right! You need to clarify the question first, and so you can give an accurate answer.
(Junyu laughs)	
ZUYI.	Oh, I am not joking. What are you laughing at?
JUNYU.	I didn't laugh.
…….	
JUNYU.	Is this Uncle's travelogue?
ZUYI.	Travelogue? This book discusses very important issues.
JUNYU.	Is this Uncle's diary?
ZUYI.	The things discussed in this book are not only concerned with me. This book is a

[3] Act 1 of *As You Desire* is translated by Christopher Rea (the title of the play is translated as *Heart's Desire*), see Yang *Desire*. The text quoted from this act in this thesis uses Rea's translation.

study, a comparative study of the customs of different countries.

JUNYU. Has Uncle been to many countries?

ZUYI. All the places one should visit! And, whenever I visit a new place, I must open my eyes wide to observe it carefully and then close my eyes to contemplate it thoroughly. So, in this book, all I've written are the things people haven't seen and thought about.

JUNYU. Why didn't Uncle write in Chinese?

ZUYI. (shrugs) If I write it in classical Chinese, people may laugh at me and treat me as an old-fashioned person; if I write in vernacular Chinese, people may despise me and think that I am not good at classical Chinese.

JUNYU. So, give it to a translator, and let him translate the book, one in classical Chinese and one in vernacular Chinese.

ZUYI. Exactly! What you said is so – so – so right. Indeed, this is what I am going to do (*Desire* 219-22; Act II).

What has been accused by Zuyi – people's practice of pretending and hypocrisy – and regarded as a "Chinese habit" is revealed as Zuyi's own habit – he also is a vain and hypocritical person, and this is exposed in the conversation into which he is insidiously led by Junyu. Seeing Zuyi's ignorance of his own shortcomings, Juyu, after Zuyi has left the room, cannot continue to type but just sits there and laughs (*Desire* 222; Act II). Such a kind of witty language intended to expose people's shortcomings and amuse the speaker herself is similar to that of Elizabeth who induces Darcy to admit his "vanity and pride", and when she successfully steers the conversation to her purpose, she "turned away to hide a smile" (*P&P* 57). Junyu's witty language pervades the play. In Act III her wit is apparently revealed in her conversation with Zumao. She is much amused by Zumao's trick of deceiving his wife, joyfully joining Zumao in making mischief, and she laughs on hearing the ridiculous conversation between the couple (*Desire* 252-55; Act III). Laughter to Junyu, as well as to Elizabeth, is an expression of high spirits in every situation, good or otherwise.

To these two female characters the function of laughter is not simply amusement, but it is also a defence mechanism which often holds the power to relieve stress and control an unfavourable situation. In an environment in which people are snobbish and materialistic Junyu and Elizabeth are both keenly aware of their social inferiority; however, this awareness in no way makes them willing to submit to any insult.

Elizabeth consciously employs laughter as a weapon with which both to protect herself and to attack her enemies. She plainly declares that laughing at a person is a way to "plague and punish" (*P&P* 57) him/her. In her first meeting with Darcy at the ball she clearly overhears Darcy's direct rejection of his friend's request to invite her to dance, as he regards her as a woman "slighted by other men" (*P&P* 12). Elizabeth, however, does not allow herself to feel distressed by the insult but seizes control of the situation by telling the story "with great spirit among her friends; for she had a lively, playful disposition, which delighted in any thing ridiculous" (*P&P* 12). Her laughter is by no means the result of insensibility. Indeed, her later complaint to Colonel Fitzwilliam, accusing Darcy of dreadful manners on the occasion of her first encounter with him, illustrates that she had indeed felt humiliated (*P&P* 174-75). She chooses to laugh in that situation, as Elvira Casal observes, as a way "to take control over the incident and redefine it" (Casal).

In a similarly inferior situation Junyu also employs laughter to relieve the stress of humiliation. After the discussion concerning Junyu's rebellious attitude and the negative impact which this might have upon their own daughter, Zuyin and Lady Yin suddenly decide against keeping Junyu in their family. Lady Yin slyly asks Junyu: "Really, Junyu, where are you staying tonight?" (*Desire* 28; Act I), pretending that she has never intended that Junyu should stay at their home. Though surprised, Junyu immediately understands Lady Yin's trick and laughs: "Oh, (laugh) so Uncle won't be having me stay here" (*Desire* 28; Act I). Junyu's response to the evident mistreatment is not to show anger but instead to laugh it off. Laughter is the most powerful resource available to Junyu to change an unfavourable situation.

Like Elizabeth, Junyu is not one to ignore the inferior situation in which she is trapped. When she finally meets Binru, she tells him: "They just shunted me from here to there, from one family to another family. Every family dislikes me. I so regret ignoring your advice not to come to Shanghai" (*Desire* 290; Act IV). Finding no place to stay among the

relatives' families, Junyu recognizes her own dreadful situation, and feels hurt and humiliated, but she does not indulge herself in feeling wretched. It is reminiscent of Mrs. Gardiner's comments to Elizabeth on her habit of solving problems: "You would have laughed yourself out of it sooner" (*P&P* 141).

The most striking similarity which the protagonists share is the sadness behind their laughter. Since they realize their inferior situation, it is is not easy for them to "laugh it off". Elizabeth finds it"… necessary to laugh, when she would rather have cried" (*P&P* 364), and Junyu also explains her laughter as an alternative to tears (*Desire* 223; Act II). The laughter of the characters is their only defence against the mischief of others.

While Junyu's laughter is mixed with different emotions connected with her subtle dissatisfaction with her surroundings, Yanhua's laughter is more complicated, for the latter's laughter does not appear as a forthright expression of merriment, but, as Dooling observes, it "often slips into outbursts of rage" ("Laughter" 60). Yanhua's laughter indicated in the stage directions is described as a "sneer" (*Swindle* 317, 349, 356, 357) and a bitter or sarcastic laugh (*Swindle* 380, 381). Even though her laughter appears cheerful and warm in her mocking of Wanru's romantic affair with Dazhang, the audience knows very well that this is just a pretence, as her expression swiftly changes to one of coldness (*Swindle* 315-16). Her use of laughter is significantly more aggressive than that of Junyu and Elizabeth. It is not simply a weapon with which to protect herself, but rather something employed assertively in order to manipulate others. This serves as the basis upon which we may establish her kinship with a significant female villain of Austen's - Mary Crawford.

Mary Crawford shares the same background as the female protagonists of Yang. She also is an orphan and an intruder into the domestic circle. Laughter and an arch smile, her usual expressions, are employed as a means of getting what she wants.

One of many examples of this is the scene in which Mary compels Fanny to accept a necklace from her brother Henry. Fanny's insistence upon rejecting the gift induces Mary to employ laughter in the service of manipulation: she laughs in order to create a careless impression and to cover up the falsity of a story which she has just invented to deceive Fanny, finally saying: "To convince me that you suspect no trick and are as unsuspicious of compliment as I have always found you, take the necklace, and say no more about it" (*MP* 259)[4]. Consistent with such a style of intrigue, Mary also uses an arch, playful smile at the beginning of her persuasive speech to convince Fanny to accept her brother's offer of marriage (*MP* 357-59). Mary's aggression and ambition are thereby revealed. As the narrator comments, "Miss Crawford was not the slave of opportunity" (*MP* 357). Mary asserts: "I will stake my last like a woman of spirit. No cold prudence for me. I am not born to sit still and do nothing. If I lose the game, it shall not be from not striving for it" (*MP* 359).

Yanhua makes a similar declaration for herself: "When I set my mind to do something, I do it – sooner or later" (*Forging* (*Swindle*) 156; Act III)[5]. Both in attempting to separate Wanru and Dazhang and in attempting to deceive Dazhang into marrying her, she employs smiles and laughter as tools of intrigue. She laughs, joking with Wanru, so as to give him the impression that she is willing to act as a messenger between Wanru and Dazhang, and then asks for Wanru's engagement ring as a token of the authenticity of the message. This is Yanhua's way of cheating Wanru into giving her the engagement ring (*Swindle* 353; Act III). This ring is finally used by Yanhua as evidence that Wanru wishes to break off her engagement with Dazhang. When Dazhang is made desperate by Wanru's departure, Yanhua sneers to show her jealousy (*Swindle* 356-57; Act III). Her jealous sneer is, in the eyes of Dazhang who actually also loves her, an act of seduction. The intrigue works, and Dazhang

[4] *MP* is adopted as the short title of *Mansfield Park* in this thesis.
[5] *Swindle* is translated by Amy D. Dooling, and the title of the play is translated as *Forging the Truth*, see Yang *Forging* (*Swindle*). The text quoted from this play in this thesis uses Dooling's translation.

finally elopes with Yanhua. Yanhua accomplishes what she had sworn before: "Zhou Dazhang is mine. I must marry him" (*Forging* (*Swindle*) 155; Act III). In this way laughter serves as a useful means by which Yanhua is able to manipulate people and achieve her ambition.

II. Laughing at the Patriarchy

The existence of subversive female laughter is predicated on the dominance of a male-oriented culture. Female laughter evoked at the periphery of society is a form of subversion by means of which the established patriarchal order may be overthrown. Men are inevitably the object of female laughter.[6] In order to analyse the laugher of Yang's female protagonists, their relationship with its opposition - male authority - should provide a significant insight.

A. The Refusal to be Rescued

An offer of marriage from a rich and young man is in fact a rescue from an unfavourable situation. However, the female protagonists of Yang's comedies cannot hold back their laughter on receiving that offer of "rescue". That their laughter bursts out at this specific juncture not only reflects their subversion of patriarchy, but also Yang's reception of Austen's comic style.

In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England women relied upon marriage to secure material and social advantages. Maaja A. Stewart scrutinizes women's situation in the socio-economic context of Austen's time and points out that women were constrained by two economic forces - the traditional land system and the newly rising mercantile trade (4).

[6] A close examination of female laughter and its relationship with male authority can be found in Bilger 111-20.

Falling between these unequal systems, women were not allowed access to economic independence, and marriage was the only means by which they could achieve it.[7] Furthermore, as Stewart suggests, women in this socio-economic situation were also without individual identity, which was only conferred upon them by men through marriage: "Every woman is an orphan who lacks social identity until she is 'adopted' by a husband", because "only men have the direct access to the economic and cultural resources that would support the necessary illusion of possible parity between nature, effort, and destiny" (163). The anxiety arising from such circumstances, therefore, can also apply to financially independent women, such as the eponymous heroine of Austen's *Emma* (1815), who is branded by Stewart as a heroine typifying "the psychological stress created by such insecure class identity" (163).

Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* is certainly in need of economic rescue. Her family is on the verge of losing their property, and her portion of any inheritance will be very small. To her family, her cousin Mr. Collins, a clergyman with a stable income and the prospect of inheriting her father's property, would be the ideal candidate for marriage. This is the reason her mother puts so much effort into persuading Elizabeth to accept the offer. Elizabeth, however, refuses Collins. When she hears Collins's foolish and arrogant proposal, she tries her very best to refrain from bursting into laughter, but seizes upon the only short pause in Collins's prolix speech to intercept and refuse him. It should be noticed that the subversiveness of Elizabeth is not only manifest in her refusal of material benefit, but also in her impulse to laugh. In the female ethical books of the early eighteenth century, laughter was something to be cautioned against: "When … the admirers were encouraged to make proposals, the ladies burst out into a loud laugh, wondered what the man could mean; they

[7] Stewart discusses and exemplifies this point made by Miss Taylor's marriage in *Emma*. The discussion can be found in Stewart 164.

never dreamt of any thing more than common politeness" (qtd. in Bilger 122).[8] However, Hannah More here refers only to the ladies with a large fortune; they are believed to be the only women to have enough economic independence to laugh in this situation. In the light of this, when Elizabeth, a poor girl who has the prospect of losing her home, refuses Collins's proposal, she subverts both a social code which prioritized material value and also contemporary standards of femininity.

The same kind of laughter is employed by Junyu when refusing her cousin Jingsun's proposal of marriage. Despite the fact that Junyu has not shown any romantic interest in him, Jingsun still believes that Junyu is in love with him. His romantic fantasy makes him finally decide to abandon his fiancée Lingxian and ask Junyu to clarify their relationship:

JINGSUN.	So, you have your difficulty. You think that - Of course you are good enough for me. But you may think that you are from a poor family, and therefore you don't want to flatter yourself to marry a man out of your league - I am just saying what you think, and that is definitely not my own thought - Anyway, great-uncle is going to adopt you as his granddaughter and so we are now on the same rank, right?
JUNYU.	Really?
JINGSUN.	Junyu, don't sacrifice yourself, and more importantly, your situation is going to change, you absolutely have no reason to sacrifice yourself. You always urge me to not upset Lingxian. But why don't you think in this way, how can I let myself upset you, make you suffer this kind of pain?
JUNYU.	Me? I am upset and suffering? Because I don't dare to flatter myself to marry you? (laughs loudly)
JINGSUN.	(staring at Junyu) Junyu!
JUNYU.	(holds the laughter) My god! It is too funny! You think that I am in love with you! (laughs loudly) (*Desire* 288; Act II)

Junyu might have tried to control her laughter for propriety's sake, but her playful disposition does not allow her to respond to Jingsun's arrogant confession without bursting into laughter. As much as Jingsun emphasizes that he does not mind Junyu's inferior rank and family background, it is obvious that he does indeed think Junyu not "good enough" for him. The prevailing assumption among the families is that a poor girl must set her cap at a rich man like Jingsun. Therefore Jingsun, in his romantic fantasy, takes upon himself the role of

[8] The citation is originally quoted from Hannah More, *Coelebs in Search of a Wife* (1808).

rescuer. This idea is also revealed in Collins's proposal to Elizabeth. Elizabeth's refusal of the proposal, despite her having clarified it repeatedly, is mistakenly interpreted by Collins as merely the modest custom of an elegant lady, who will refuse a proposal a few times before finally accepting it. Like Jingsun, his disbelief in Elizabeth's refusal is a reflection of his perception of Elizabeth's poor situation. He tells Elizabeth that:

> You should take it into further consideration that in spite of your manifold attractions, it is by no means certain that another offer of marriage may ever be made you. Your portion is unhappily so small that it will in all likelihood undo the effects of your loveliness and amiable qualifications. As I must therefore conclude that you are not serious in your rejection of me, I shall choose to attribute it to your wish of increasing my love by suspense, according to the usual practice of elegant females (*P&P* 108).

Collins also imagines himself as rescuer of Elizabeth. His "situation in life" and his connection with the aristocratic family must seem more than ideal to a poor girl like Elizabeth. Both female characters cannot help but laugh at the arrogance of their suitors.

The similarly comic gestures of the two suitors help to illustrate Yang's fidelity to Austen's aesthetic. From the exaggeratedly formal address at the beginning to the points logically listed out as the arguments for the existence of this proposal of marriage, each sentence signifies the ridiculousness and insincerity of Collins's reasons for proposing, forming a contrast to his confession that he wishes to express "in the most animated language the violence of my affection" (*P&P* 106). Similarly, the proposal of marriage by Guangzu 光祖 to Yanhua is executed in the same style. Both their prolix speeches start off with a ridiculous introduction, not at all resembling a romantic proposal of marriage. While Collins proposes the marriage as if discussing a business proposition with Elizabeth: "Almost as soon as I entered the house I singled you out as the companion of my future life. But before I am run away with by my feelings on this subject, perhaps it will be advisable for me to state my reasons for marrying - and moreover for coming into Hertfordshire with the design of selecting a wife, as I certainly did" (*P&P* 105), Guangzu starts his proposal as if discussing an academic issue:

GUANGZU. (*suddenly sits down next to* YANHUA): Yanhua, I have something to discuss with you.

YANHUA. (*softly*) What's about? So serious!

GUANGZU. You can't call it a serious matter – from the overall perspective of society, it's a very insignificant matter. But to the one or two people involved, however, it is a matter that concerns lifelong happiness, so one can't not see it as a very important matter, and one can't not discuss it very thoroughly (*Forging* (*Swindle*) 151-52; Act III).

More striking is their manner of listing out the points as arguments which in their belief are more than convincing for the women to agree to marry them. Collins arrogantly explains the reasons why Elizabeth must marry him:

> My reasons for marrying are, first, that I think it a right thing for every clergyman in easy circumstances (like myself) to set the example of matrimony in his parish; secondly, that I am convinced that it will add very greatly to my happiness; and thirdly - which perhaps I ought to have mentioned earlier, that it is the particular advice and recommendation of the very noble lady whom I have the honour of calling patroness… (*P&P* 107),

and he still employs this style in counter-arguing, refusing to believe that Elizabeth is really rejecting him:

> You must give me leave to flatter myself, my dear cousin, that your refusal of my addresses are merely words of course. My reasons for believing it are briefly these: - It does not appear to me that my hand is unworthy your acceptance, or that the establishment I can offer would be any other than highly desirable…. As I must therefore conclude that you are not serious in your rejection of me, I shall chuse to attribute it to your wish of increasing my love by suspense, according to the usual practice of elegant females (*P&P* 108).

For Guangzu, the strategy of point-listing is his way of proceeding with the discussion:

GUANGZU. … I'll lay the whole matter out very clearly for you. There are five points. The first point is, that is to say, the basic issue is whether or not this is worth discussing at all. In the past, when young ladies brought up the issue of marriage they would get embarrassed, and as for their own important event, they would get so flustered that they would let other people go and take care of it.

YANHUA. So, of course, it is worth talking about.

GUANGZU. But what we also have to carefully examine is - that is to say, the second point, that is, the problem itself – in other words, what we have to analyse now is, what is the issue?

YANHUA. What?

GUANGZU. Nowadays, some people oppose marriage. What we have to discuss is: Should a person get married or not? Some people say that the family is the root of all greed and a great many social ills – and that extortion and so forth starts with marriage. So, is marriage a good thing or not?

YANHUA. What?

GUANGZU. Of course it is obvious, so I might as well be frank. All men and women, no matter

who they may be, need to get married. . . .

YANHUA. Enough! *I* don't need to get married. If I ever fall in love with a man, I'll just run away with him.

GUANGZU. （*nervously*) Yanhua, we are merely discussing the issue – and I'm not finished – what I just said was the second point - let me first finish giving you the overall outline and then we can discuss the individual points one at a time. The third point is, why haven't I gotten married yet? There are several reasons for this, and I'll tell you them gradually. The fourth point is, can I get married right now? And there are two subpoints here: one is your perspective on this, the other is my perspective on this. The fifth point is the union of these two points, that is to say . . .

YANHUA. That is to say, I ought to marry you!

GUANGZU. Oh, Yanhua, I have never dared to utter that sentence. I always thought that - this - this – this thing called love is quite a marvellous thing that has to be painstakingly fostered. It can't be forced. That's why I have patiently waited for you, one year, two years, three years, even as much as five years or six years so that it could grow naturally. I just want it to grow. This brings us back to my third point . . . (*Forging* (*Swindle*) 152-53; Act III)

Like Collins, after hearing Yanhua's refusal, Guangzu still focuses on proceeding with his discussion in such a manner: "Why? Yanhua? Oh, Yanhua, you just weren't even willing to finish listening to my third point. . . . " (*Forging* (*Swindle*) 154; Act III)

Given such a resemblance between Collins's proposal and Guangzu's, Yang's adoption of Austen's representation is evident. Elizabeth in this proposal scene, as discussed in the previous sections, subverts the predetermined hierarchy of gender. Yanhua's laughter bursts out in a similar situation. Yanhua's refusal of Guangzu's proposal, while she is living in refuge at the home of her uncle, Zhang, is clearly the refusal of a rescue. Guangzu, though he also lives with the Zhangs, is in a different situation, as he has studied abroad and is a university professor with a stable income. His financial situation and middle-class background give him adequate qualifications to be an ideal husband for Yanhua. Unlike Collins, Guangzu is not as arrogant as to take Yanhua's acceptance for granted; however, in the Zhangs' minds, Guangzu is more than ideal for Yanhua, given the disparity of Guangzu's and Yanhua's backgrounds. In Xiangfu's conversation with his wife, he has a plan to match Guangzu with his own daughter Wanru. When Mrs. Zhang tells Xiangfu that Guangzu loves Yanhua, Xiangfu immediately says: "If he fancies Yanhua, how can he not fancy Wanru? Does a man who smokes Beauty

brand cigarettes complain that Three Forts lack flavour?" (*Forging* (*Swindle*) 120; Act I).[9] Mrs. Zhang says to Guangzu before his proposal to Yanhua: "Be brave and ask her. Why would she turn you down?" (*Forging* (*Swindle*) 151; Act III) Yanhua's acceptance of Guangzu's offer would have been a chance for her to escape from an inferior situation. Nonetheless, she denies herself.

Though Yanhua, like Elizabeth, rejects the offer, the laughter evoked is different from that of Elizabeth. While Elizabeth cannot help feeling the ridiculousness and foolishness of the offer, Yanhua sneers, her feelings mingled with rage. Guangzu's proposal irritates Yanhua in that it casts light upon the oppression which she suffers, and arouses her jealousy because of her unfair treatment in comparison with Wanru. When Guangzu discovers the fact that Yanhua secretly loves Dazhang, Yanhua's rage bursts out. She tells Guangzu of her plan to destroy Wanru and Dazhang's relationship and then marry Dazhang herself:

GUANGZU. I truly understand you, and I sympathize with you as well. However – and this is leaving my self aside – after all, they're engaged, and you can't just go and break apart their marriage.

YANHUA. (*sneers*) And why can't I? Why can't I?

GUANGZU. You shouldn't.

YANHUA. Why shouldn't I? Should Wanru get to be the pampered little lady? Should I be the wretched slave! Should Wanru get to enjoy all the wealth while I have absolutely nothing? They exalt her, they fawn on her! In what way do I not measure up to her? In what way?

GUANGZU. Yanhua, you are more clever than her and more beautiful.

YANHUA. What' good is that?! This world belongs to her, she has a mother and father who dote on her, while I only have people who dislike me. She gets whatever she wants, I get nothing I want. She needn't care about whether she has money or not, yet I have to sell myself, piece by piece, in order to earn a few lousy *yuan* - Isn't that so? – I won't live for long, since there are only 365 days in a year and each day I sell a little of myself to the office. In the blink of an eye, I'll be old, and what will I have achieved? What's the good of being clever? What's the good of being beautiful? She doesn't have to be clever, and people say she's clever. She doesn't need to be beautiful, since as long as a young woman isn't too ugly, she can dress well and she'll look beautiful. Not only is she clever and beautiful but her disposition is also all right, and her heart's not bad, plus generous . . . not like me, who's petty and jealous! Should! Should! Should! All the fire in hell is burning in my heart! (*Forging* (*Swindle*) 155; Act III)

[9]Beauty was a local product, while the *Three Forts* brand was imported from the West. Therefore in the popular belief of the 1940s Shanghai the latter was a higher quality brand than the former.

One of the reasons for her anger is the Zhangs' idea that she is not good enough to have a husband like Dazhang: “Since heaven bullies me, I have to look after myself all the more! Since heaven doesn’t love me, should I not love myself? Why should Wanru be the only one who gets a good husband, a rich husband? Why should only her husband be able and handsome?" (*Forging* (*Swindle*) 156; Act III). Guangzu's foolish proposal does not provide the same kind of amusement that Collins's does to Elizabeth, but instead elicits anger and bitterness. Such a response can thus be seen as akin to that of Mary, a version of how Mary might be, were she to find herself in similar circumstances.

A significant difference between Yanhua's and Elizabeth’s laughter lies in the fact that Elizabeth’s rejection of rescue does not mean that Elizabeth has the desire to reject the social institution of marriage, while Yanhua’s does. Elizabeth's judgment of her sister's elopement displays her conventional outlook on marriage. Her refusal of an offer with secure material benefits is a rejection of the assumption that women are victims awaiting rescue, but not of the institution itself. Yanhua’s laughter is much more subversive than Elizabeth’s, for Yanhua subverts the marital institution *per se*. She asserts: "If ever I fall in love with a man, I’ll just run away with him" (*Forging* (*Swindle*) 152; Act III). From this perspective, Yanhua’s laughter shares many more resemblances with that of Mary, who also objects to the very institution of marriage itself.

Mary does not believe in marriage. To her marriage is a deception. She shares her view with her sister: "There is not one in a hundred of either sex, who is not taken in when they marry... when I consider that it is, of all transactions, the one in which people expect most from others, and are least honest themselves" (*MP* 46). Although she observes that marriage is only "a manoeuvring business", as "everybody is taken in at some period or other" (*MP* 46), she prepares herself to get married, but only for advantage: "I do not like to have people throw themselves away; but everybody should marry as soon as they can do it to

their advantage" (*MP* 43). The agenda of marrying for advantage makes Mary cast Tom Bertram as her original target because he is the eldest son, the future master of Mansfield Park:

> She looked about her with due consideration, and found almost everything in his favour: a park, a real park five miles round, a spacious modern-built house, so well placed and well screened as to deserve to be in any collection of engravings of gentlemen's seats in the kingdom, and wanting only to be completely new furnished - pleasant sisters, a quiet mother, and an agreeable man himself - with the advantage of being tied up from much gaming at present by a promise to his father, and of being Sir Thomas hereafter. It might do very well; she believed she should accept him; and she began accordingly to interest herself a little about the horse which he had to run at the B——races (*MP* 48).

Her later falling in love with Edmund is an incident beyond her expectation. As a result of her ambition to marry for material benefit, she tries her best to persuade Edmund to choose another, in her eyes, more honourable profession than that of clergyman (*MP* 91-92), and she even has a wish that Tom would die soon and thus Edmund could replace his brother to inherit the property (*MP* 433-34). Mary's concept of a romantic affair is that it is a field of battle on which she must triumph. This is one of the arguments she uses to persuade Fanny to accept Henry Crawford: "Fanny, the glory of fixing one who has been shot at by so many; of having it in one's power to pay off the debts of one's sex! Oh, I am sure it is not in woman's nature to refuse such a triumph" (*MP* 363).

The same kind of outlook can also be found in Yanhua. Marriage to her is merely a means to gain material benefit. She tells Guangzu plainly that she loves Dazhang because Dazhang is rich, successful and handsome, making clear her opinion of romantic love, "Whatever it is they call unconditional love, I don't believe in it!" (*Forging* (*Swindle*) 156) Another critical reason given for Yanhua's desire to marry Dazhang, as discussed above, is her jealousy of Wanru. The fact that the match approved by her aunt is to Guangzu, not to the more dashing, richer Dazhang, sharpens Yanhua's sense of inferiority and inequality. To Yanhua, the triangular love affair is not a purely romantic matter; rather, like Mary, she sees marriage in terms of a battle, triumph in which will prove that she is better than Wanru, thus

subverting her inferior position.

The female characters' refusal of the offer of a "rescue" can also be interpreted as a refusal to be victimized. While Junyu's and Elizabeth's laughter can be identified as subversions of the gender hierarchy as well as of the socially accepted equation of marriage with economic advantage, Yanhua's and Mary's laughter is much more subversive in that it shows the characters' determination to take the right to discourse away from men and deliberately to employ marriage as a means of satisfying their own desires and achieving their ambitions.

B. The Refusal to be Emancipated

A reverence for "knowledge" began to play a role in Chinese society at the time of the New Culture Movement. Knowledge was no longer recognized as merely a means of gaining self-interest but as a means of saving the nation. There was significant gender inequality in the area of educational provision. Thus during the May Fourth period men were presented as both lovers and emancipators.[10] Relationships were depicted in such a way that women were charmed by a lover's intelligence. Interestingly, the female protagonists who appear two decades later in Yang's comedies refuse to be emancipated through the intervention of masculine characters.

An example of this independence is demonstrated in Yanhua's refusal of Guangzu. After listening to Guangzu's prolix, logical but not in the least romantic proposal, Yanhua is disgusted and says: "If I did marry you, it would only be because I admire university students

[10] Such narratives, i.e those depicting this kind of relationship, are abundant in May Fourth literature, examples being *Regret for the Past* 傷逝 by Lu Xun and *The Greatest Event in Life* 終身大事 by Hu Shi. And this kind of romantic relationship in reality can be observed in the common occurrence of relationships between teachers and students - the man acting as both lover and emancipator of the female student in this relationship. The story of Lu Xun and his student, Xu Guangping, who later became his wife, is one example. A discussion of this kind of May Fourth romantic narrative will form part of Chapter Six.

and have never had the good fortune of attending classes and hearing lectures, and that way I could have private lessons with you!" (*Forging* (*Swindle*) 153; Act III). Yanhua's sarcasm here reflects her contempt for both educational and intellectual opportunity, subverting the prevailing social practice. She further demonstrates that her will is above those things valued by society. A similar contempt towards a highly educated suitor is found in Junyu's mockery:

JUNYU.	Oh! You avoid him [Zuyi, Jingsun's father]. Are you afraid of him asking for your help in typing his manuscript?
JINGSUN.	I don't know how to type. Even if I knew typing, he will not ask for my help. He wants me to concentrate on my study.
JUNYU.	Oh, you college students' study life is so busy.
JINGSUN.	Don't tease me (*Desire* 222; Act II).

Here a well-educated college student does not know how to type, but the less educated Junyu does. Even the arrogant Jingsun can sense Junyu's irony on this issue. Junyu's scorn towards Jingsun's educational qualifications is revealed here. She shows no admiration for Jingsun's identity as a "college student", but despises his lack of practical knowledge. Juyun's strong individual will is apparent throughout the play. For instance, she complains to her lover Binru after their long separation that: "They [Jinyu's uncles and aunts] just shunted me from here to there, from one family to another family. Every family dislikes me. I so regret ignoring your advice not to come to Shanghai" (*Desire* 290; Act IV). This confession tells us that Junyu initially came to Shanghai without her lover's consent. In Junyu and Binru's relationship, Junyu, different from the female protagonists in the literature of the past decades, does not act as the submissive woman who is ready to obey her lover's every opinion and expected to be enlightened, but she is an individual with a strong consciousness of self.

Such a strong individuality is similarly manifested in Austen's female characters' laughter. In the witty exchanges between Elizabeth and Darcy the former never submits. In

their arguments Elizabeth never submissively complies with Darcy's opinions.[11] Her submission to Darcy's "knowledge of the world" (*P&P* 312), as it is seemingly revealed at the end of the story, is in Elizabeth's mind an exchange of her own "ease and liveliness" (*P&P* 312) for Darcy's knowledge. Thus the relationship between Elizabeth and Darcy is established on an equal ground. Mary Crawford's consciousness of self is even more explicit. In the course of her romantic relationship with Edmund she is never influenced by her lover; but conversely she attempts to take the dominant position in their relationship. Mary's individual will is strong, to the extent that she demands her lover comply with her own ideas. From this perspective Mary can be seen to share a close similarity with the character of Yanhua, who finally persuades her lover Dazhang to believe in her deception, leading him into her trap.

In Bilger's critique of eighteenth-century British female writers the critic discusses the female writers' mockery o educated men:

> They ridicule male pretension and express resentment against an educational system that allowed ignorant men to claim superiority over women through their association with male-dominated institutions of higher learning. They show that common sense may be superior to booklearning and that it transcends gender as an indicator of people's worth; in their depictions of humorous encounters between heroines and male egotists common sense belongs exclusively to the woman (130).

Such a comment is pertinent to an interpretation of Austen's works, as well as Yang's comedies. The heroines/female characters discussed above express their derision of educated men and their "intelligence", so subverting the established order of gender hierarchy.

C. Laughing at the "Father" Figures

There is no scene in which Yanhua's attitude towards her father is depicted, and her humble attitude towards her uncle is mainly attributed to her need for Xiangfu's economic

[11] The discussion of laughter and dancing can be found in Austen *P&P* 57-58; 91-92.

assistance; Yang's heroine's mockery of "father" figures is thus confined to its manifestation in Junyu's attitude. In every family Junyu is sent to the absurdity of her uncles is witnessed, as well as the attempt to hide the ridicule which accompanied it. She mocks Zuyin's hypocrisy and lechery (*Desire* 205-06; Act I), Zuyi's blind worship of Western style and his vanity (*Desire* 219-22; Act II), and Zumao's cowardice in his relationship with his wife (*Desire* 247-54; Act III). With regard to her aunts, the associates of the patriarchy, Junyu scorns their foolishness, as in the case of Lady Mao's cunning and pretence of charity (*Desire* 205-12; Act I).

In Austen's works there are many examples of this type of deflated patriarchal figure. Elizabeth has a good relationship with Mr. Bennet: she is her father's favourite (*P&P* 4-5); however, deep down in her mind there is a criticism of her father, when she observes the conduct of her mother and her sisters' imprudent behaviour:

> Had Elizabeth's opinion been all drawn from her own family, she could not have formed a very pleasing opinion of conjugal felicity or domestic comfort. Her father, captivated by youth and beauty, and that appearance of good humour which youth and beauty generally give, had married a woman whose weak understanding and illiberal mind had very early in their marriage put an end to all real affection for her. Respect, esteem, and confidence had vanished for ever; and all his views of domestic happiness were overthrown … To his wife he was very little otherwise indebted, than as her ignorance and folly had contributed to his amusement ...
>
> Elizabeth, however, had never been blind to the impropriety of her father's behaviour as a husband. She had always seen it with pain ... But she had never felt so strongly as now the disadvantages which must attend the children of so unsuitable a marriage, nor ever been so fully aware of the evils arising from so ill-judged a direction of talents; talents, which, rightly used, might at least have preserved the respectability of his daughters, even if incapable of enlarging the mind of his wife (236-37).

While there is clear evidence of Elizabeth's criticism of her father, Mary Crawford makes caustic comments about her uncle, who had taken the role of foster parent for her ever since her father's death. Her brother Henry's "detestable" temper is identified by her as a bad habit learnt from her uncle: "the admiral's [Mary's and Henry's uncle] lessons have quite spoiled him" (*MP* 43). When she talks about her uncle's profession, she directly expresses her distaste for her uncle - albeit in a playful tone:

> Of various admirals, I could tell you a great deal; of them and their flags, and the gradation of their pay, and their bickerings and jealousies. But in general, I can assure you that they are all passed over, and all very ill used. Certainly, my home at my uncle's brought me acquainted with a circle of admirals. Of *Rears,* and *Vices,* I saw enough. Now, do not be suspecting me of a pun, I entreat (*MP* 60).

She even feels that it is lucky for her brother that he has decided to get married because he then can leave their uncle's home, avoiding any possible damage to character that would be brought upon Henry by the contagion of the uncle's ruined personality (*MP* 295-96). She is disgusted by her uncle to the extent that she tells her brother: "To have seen you grow like the Admiral in word or deed, look or gesture, would have broken my heart" (*MP* 296). Her criticism of her uncle is interpreted by Edmund as her love for her aunt who was badly treated by Mary's uncle (*MP* 63). Nevertheless, in Mary's eyes, her uncle is neither honourable nor worthy of respect.

In fact, in Austen's novels this flawed patriarchal figure is given prominence. For instance, Sir Elliot's character in Anne's eyes is odious to the degree that she wishes she did not know him (*Persuasion* 34); even to the gentle and submissive Fanny her father is a coarse and rough man who neglects his family and swears and drinks all the time (*MP* 389). In Reginald Farrer's opinion these two heroines' views of the father is distinctive among Victorian's works and a betrayal, one which would be regarded as "blasphemy", of an "accepted axiom" in the Victorian period (257). As Farrer comments, "Her [Austen's] heroines, indeed, are out-of-door creatures, by no means fettered by conventional ignorance or innocence; and they all have minds of their own so clear and firm that, while their good-feeling remains unalienated, their judgments equally remain unconciliated" (257). It may be added that, when they feel their judgment is at odds with reality, they laugh.

When the common background and laughter of these female characters are discussed, a character in the context of Chinese literature should be acknowledged – Daiyu, who shares the similar "orphan girl situation" with Yang's female protagonists and Elizabeth and Mary; she also tries to subvert her inferior situation among her rich relatives by laughter. It may be argued that Yang adopts these qualities from the characterisation of Lin Daiyu of the *Dream of the Red Mansion* and then combines them with the portrayals of some of the qualities of Elizabeth and Mary Crawford of Austen's novels in order to characterize her own female protagonists and their subversive laughter. This is actually one of Yang Jiang's ways of introducing the Chinese literary aesthetic into the Western genre: to extract the elements from a story well-known to the Chinese public and craftily combine them with the portrayals of characters from a Western novel and eventually present the reconstruction in a Western dramatic from.

However, it should be noted that, although Daiyu displays a critique of patriarchy, she does not disapprove it as blatantly as Junyu. After all, in studying Chinese literature, we find that, even though the literary works deliver a strong critique against patriarchy, such as those written by May Fourth female writers, many of these works are not presented in the comic mode and have instead a tragic ending. Therefore the subversive female laughter found in Yang's comedies should be considered in the context of Yang's reception of Austen's comic art.

While the inherent subversive nature of Austen's and Yang's works is manifested in the female characters who are endowed with the power of laughter, executing subversion within the context of the work, the subversion executed by the writers themselves should be interpreted in a larger context, which will be discussed in Chapters Five and Six. We shall see that Yang receives Austen's subversions in both the geo-political and ideological contexts respectively.

Chapter Five

The Closed Domestic Space

> 3 or 4 Families in a Country Village is the very thing to work on.
>
> -- Jane Austen, 1814.[1]

In a letter to her niece Anna, Jane Austen describes her favourite setting for a story. This setting appears in each of her novels. Often consisting of only three or four families, this small-scale community is constructed upon the close connections between the people within it. In such a country community all the villagers know each other and enjoy a tranquil domesticity within that confined space, dining, dancing and courting – the commonplace life of the gentry class. In Raymond Williams' seminal treatise, *The Country and the City*, in which he discusses the geographical locality of literary works, the critic observes the "knowable community" in Austen's novels:

> While it is a community wholly known, within the essential terms of the novel, it is as an actual community very precisely selective. Neighbours in Jane Austen are not the people actually living nearby; they are the people living a little less nearby who, in social recognition, can be visited. What she sees across the land is a network of propertied houses and families, and through the holes of this tightly drawn mesh most actual people are simply not seen. To be face-to-face in this world is already to belong to a class. No other community, in physical presence or in social reality, is by any means knowable. And it is not only most of the people who have disappeared... it is also most of the country, which becomes real only as it relates to the houses which are the real nodes; for the rest the country is weather or a place for a walk (166).[2]

Confined in the countryside, this community is, according to Williams's analysis, not just a closely connected social circle but also a space that exists only in the world of Austen's novels. Yang also recognizes this "knowable community" in Austen's novels: "She [Austen] likes to stage the story against a setting of 'a village with three or four families'" ("You shenme" 129).

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[1] Austen *Letters* 275.

[2] This point is also made by Tony Tanner in the "Introduction" to his treatise on Jane Austen and is exemplified by the community in *Emma*. See Tanner 20-23.

Similarities to Austen's closed community are found in the domestic settings of Yang Jiang's comedies. The families in *As You Desire* visit each other as part of their usual activities; people outside the circle are rarely depicted. Like the domestic space in Austen, the isolated status of the social circle in Yang's plays and the mundane daily lives depicted within it, give a constant rhythm and therefore a timeless quality to the space - though Yang's domestic space is actually located in metropolitan Shanghai. The only exception appears in *Swindle* - the scene showing Dazhang's lower-class family (*Swindle* Act II). In the context of Yang's reception of Austen such an exception is, in fact, not at odds with the conventions of Austen's style. Exceptions can also found in Austen's works, for example Fanny Price's home in *Mansfield Park* and Mrs. Smith's abode in *Persuasion* (1818). The important point is that those scenes, whether in the novels of Jane Austen or in the plays of Yang Jiang, are not central to the structure of the story. The focus of the works remains the closed circle.

In this chapter Yang Jiang's reception of Austen's confined spatial setting will be examined, in which, like Austen, Yang executes her subversion. Part I will examine closely how Yang takes from Austen the construction of the confined setting which is unsettling in nature. Part II and III will discuss further Yang's trechnique for destabilizing the domestic realm, namely deforming the femininity and constructing the narrative structure of the "invasion by the outsider".

I. The Foreground/Background setting

In Yang's critique of Austen, she notes that Austen employs a confined space as the setting of her stories: creating a dramatic effect ("You shenme" 132) and portraying realistically commonplace life ("You shenme" 129). A two-layered setting can be identified in

the novels of Austen: a domestic comedy is presented in the foreground, and an unsettling force is embedded in the background, arising from the writer's interest and anxiety about the wider society. Yang notices and hence adopts this two-layered setting in her own comedies.

A. Intensifying the Drama in the Foreground

In a critique of Li Yu 李漁 (1610-1680), a dramatist of the Yuan dynasty, who wrote a number of domestic comedies and the first treatise on the Chinese dramatic theory, Yang Jiang makes a study of the spatial setting of classical Chinese opera. She writes that she regards the genre as belonging to the epic style, in which the story is situated in a wider and more extensive scene. This is in contrast to its counterpart, its dramatic structure, which is very intense and condensed. She comments that this intense dramatic structure is employed by many Western novelists, such as Jane Austen ("Li Yu" 104). Here Yang makes reference to Edwin Muir's theory of the "dramatic novel". In his treatise *The Structure of the Novel* Muir suggests that Jane Austen is the first English novelist successfully to accomplish the dramatic novel, and the first point which he emphasizes in his analysis of this form of art is its confined setting: "In her [Austen's] novels, in the first place, [there is] a confinement to one circle, one complex of life, producing naturally an intensification of action; and this intensification is one of the essential attributes of the dramatic novel" ("Dramatic" 42). Muir explains that the subjectivity of the characters is the most prominent feature of this form of art. The story unfolds according to the changing dynamic among the characters, and at the end of the story all the forces within the social circle are balanced. Therefore the confined setting in a sense creates a small stage upon which to set the drama, amplifying the tension circulating within the domestic space. Muir illustrates the relation between the confined setting and its outcome of an intensified action:

> There is no escape from it. The reason for the isolation of the scene in the dramatic novel is obvious enough. Only in a completely shut-in arena can the conflicts which it portrays arise, develop, and end inevitably. All the exits are closed, and as we watch the action we know this. There is no escape into other scenes, or if there is we know that they are false exits bringing the protagonist back to the main stage again, where he must await his destiny. The scene here is the framework within which the logic of the action can develop unimpeded, and shut off from the arbitrary interference of the external world. It gives necessity to that logic by defining the limits within which it may work ("Dramatic" 59).

As what Yang is working on is not the novel but drama, which requires that she tells a story in four or five acts, the intensification of dramatic effect must be of even greater importance to her than it is to Austen. Yang's adoption of Austen's confined setting, specifically that of the "3 or 4 families", constitutes a comprehensive reception of Austen's technique with regard to the spatial setting.

B. Intensifying the Forces in the Background

This small-scale stage not only intensifies the dramatic and comic effects of the story but, more importantly, amplifies the forces underlying the narrative. Critical discourse has debated the extent to which Austen has something more to tell than her surface narrative i.e. it has been postulated that the novelist's concern reaches beyond the domesticity of country life, namely that there exists in her work a hidden element never explicitly expressed.[3] Yang's objective in adopting such a spatial setting is the same as that of Austen, i.e. she employs it in order to hide her real concerns under the surface narrative, exposing them only intermittently. That is to say, this underlying force of the story, as well as that of the domestic space that forms the setting for the action, arises from the writers' anxieties about the world outside. In both writers' times, society was experiencing turbulent change. To understand the writers' employment of the spatial setting to reveal their social concerns, the socio-historical contexts of both of their times should first be briefly illustrated.

[3] For instance, Tony Tanner maintains that Austen is a social novelist and her social concern is evidently maintained in her novels. See Tanner Ch 1; Warren Roberts suggests that the war is deliberately avoided in Austen's novel, which, conversely, shows Austen's awareness and concern about the war. See Warren Ch 2. These critics' views will be discussed further in this chapter.

1. The Turbulent Times

The most prominent event within Austen's lifespan was the French Revolution. This event is comparable to that which Yang would have experienced in her youth, the May Fourth Movement, which occurred in early twentieth-century China. These two radical events brought significant political and social changes to society and resulted in an extended period of discontent. In fact, prior to the French Revolution, Britain had been involved in the American War of Independence. Then, during a period of post-war recuperation, Britain was once again disturbed by the turbulence brought about by the Revolution. With this in mind, the fact emerges that most of Austen's experience would have been against the backdrop of a chaotic, wartime situation. This is in a sense similar to the circumstances which Yang faced in her early life. Wars occurred throughout China since the Revolution of 1911, the year Yang Jiang was born. Meanwhile beyond China, the world was experiencing the First World War. Hence, the May Fourth Movement burst out.[4] No more than two decades later, Japan officially declared war on China - known as the War of Resistance.

Yang Jiang recollects that in the period in which she wrote her plays the cultural and theatrical circles were oppressed by Japanese rule, and that this was a period of "long unending darkness" ("Afterword" 382). Ever since the beginning of the Orphan Island period the Japanese had been making great efforts to coerce writers. Though the holders of the foreign concessions were said to take a neutral stand, they did not dare to stand in opposition to the Japanese (Wei 79-81). Cultural circles experienced noticeable political intervention. As Edward Gunn concludes, the primary Japanese initiative was "to insert their goals into and exploit indigenous literary trends as they perceived them … to revive literary activity in order to exploit it by converting it into propaganda" (51). To ensure that published works did not show any opposition to their rule, the Japanese used such tactics as censorship, terrorist

[4] More details of the chaotic period of China since 1911 and the outburst of the May Fourth Movement can be found in the Introduction: Part II, Section A.

attacks upon journalists, and paper-rationing policies (Wei 79-80).[5] Being a member of the cultural circle in Shanghai, Yang would have experienced this tense atmosphere and surely would have been aware of events taking place outside Shanghai, such as the Nanjing Massacre. It is within this context that Yang wrote her two comedies.

In Austen's time the Industrial Revolution was already underway. It brought about a number of economic changes, significantly affecting both the shape of the country's economy and the hierarchal structure of society. As the English working class began to coalesce and organize, so did their demands for equal treatment, resulting in an increased tension between workers and employers. The Combination Acts of 1799 were an attempt to suppress the growing force of the working class. Several riots, led by workers and artisans, took place in the 1800s and 1810s.[6] In such an era it would have been impossible to be unaware of the changes within society. In Tony Tanner's opinion, these social issues drew Austen's attention and were inextricably related to the interests of the writer's own class. Tanner postulates the existence of "the rule of property" in Austen's mind,[7] something concerned with "maintaining the structure of authority which arose from property and protected its interests", and which manifested itself in "a paternalistic mode of behaviour on the part of the landed class, by graciousness, justice, generosity, mercy" (16-17). Austen emphasises good manners, decorum and morals, i.e. propriety, as the propertied class was not regulated by any force but "a system of deference and obedience" (Tanner 18) and that this class must be "exemplary" in order to preserve the social order. Tanner asserts that Austen possessed a strong consciousness of the need to maintain the relationship between property and propriety, "a

[5] Gunn also discusses the Japanese policies of oppressing the cultural circle. See Gunn 44-46.
[6] The food riots happened around 1800, and the Luddite riots occurred from the late 1790s to the mid-1810s. For the historical background of Austen's age, I am indebted to Tony Tanner's research. For a more detailed account, see Tanner 2-4.
[7] Tanner mentions that such a rule has been discussed by a number of prominent figures of seventeenth and eighteenth-century England, such as John Locke and Samuel Johnson. See the discussion in Tanner 16-17.

matter of vital social - and political - importance" (18).[8] Tanner's view is that, as the power and status of the landowners were being shaken, through her works Austen was analyzing her anxiety over a society experiencing a state of flux (19).

The socio-economic background of Yang's plays was a world similarly upturned. A large part of China was occupied by the Japanese army, and Shanghai, the city in which Yang Jiang resided, was war-torn. The Japanese objective of keeping the city's international reputation intact meant that Shanghai was relatively undamaged, but the metropolis was still under the oppression of the Japanese. Yang recollects that she suffered great hardship. Food was rationed, and rice was mixed with impurities. A lack of fuel was another problem encountered in everyday life, which led to much suffering.[9] Yang recollected that the income gained from the publication of her plays was enough to allow her to afford a proper meal with chicken for herself and her family, who had not eaten meat for many months (X. Wu 193).

Living in such a tumultuous society, it would not have been possible for Austen and Yang to ignore such turbulence. Warren Roberts maintains that Austen must have held strong feelings about the war;[10] however, as the critic notices, the novelist "seems deliberately to have avoided the war" in her works (95). Tanner also apparently points out that "it certainly would not have taken an 'abnormally acute' reader to gather from Jane Austen's novels that there was a war on: indeed, it would have taken an abnormally obtuse one not to gather just that" (4). That is to say, the novelist's deliberately ignoring the social situation merely serves to emphasise the historical and social events at the very centre of the novel. The same interpretation is applicable to Yang's comedies. Yang lost her mother during the war, and the

[8] Tanner also illustrates the relation between "property" and "propriety" in the etymological context, maintaining that "propriety" can be defined as "possession" while "property" in a sense means "proper". Tanner further asserts that Austen's heroes all are propertied and behave properly, while her heroines have a sense of propriety. Their marriage is indeed the "emblem of the ideal union of property and propriety". See Tanner 19.
[9] Yang Jiang recollects the hardship of wartime in *Women sa*, see Yang *Women* 101-02 and also in her biography, see X. Wu 193-94.
[10] Warren Roberts highlights the facts that Austen's brothers were in the navy, that her family suffered, and that her sister's fiancé died in the war, as significant points of reference when considering Austen's wartime experience. See Warren 98.

war prevented her from being with her father when he died. She was even confronted by a Japanese soldier and interrogated in a Japanese camp. This awareness of national calamity exists as a forceful undercurrent in the works of both writers, signifying that something turbulent is taking place outside the domestic space.

2. The Space as a Microcosm of Society

In his discussion of Austen and her concern with society Tanner asserts that Austen was not ignorant of the outside world:

> Yet it would be wrong to infer from this that she had no interest in, or awareness of, the larger "society" which surrounded and contained the "community" she wrote about. What I think we can say is that she hoped that what she had depicted as happening to the 'community' of her novels, its potentialities for self-destruction, its possibilities for self-restoration, its values and vulnerabilities, was in some way parabolic of what was happening to "society" at large. If you like, she saw "community" as a microcosm of "society" (12-13).

Tanner maintains that the countryside in Austen's novels actually serves as the ideal model for the writer, whose hope was that it would be actualized. What Tanner suggests is that the confined domestic space in Austen is actually an attempt to project society at large. This idea is also observed by Yang Jiang, who explains that this small-scale setting allows Austen to portray many different types of people:

> The people from the country are similar to those in the city and thus their qualities are adequate enough for the writer to conduct a character-study: the innocent and the obscure, especially the latter, providing interesting literary material. Therefore, although the place is small and the people are few, the variety of country people's characters is large and complicated, which indeed provides scope for observation ("You shenme" 129).

Yang's observation of such a quality in Austen's domestic setting reinforces the inference that she adopts that same quality in establishing the domestic space in her plays; that is, the closed community in her plays is to be understood as a microcosm of Shanghai. Indeed, the domestic space in Yang's plays bears a great deal of resemblance to Shanghai; it is a constant, peaceful confined space erected upon an unstable, turbulent environment.

During the Orphan Island period, the Foreign Concessions in Shanghai were allowed to maintain a relatively high degree of political and economic stability. The fact that numerous Chinese refugees from other places moved to Orphan Island is illustrative of its position as a place of safety. According to statistics, the population of the Foreign Concessions increased twofold during the war.[11] Even after the outbreak of the Pacific War the Japanese had no desire to ruin the previous flourishing development of Shanghai but sought rather to maintain it. Once they had occupied the whole city, the Japanese claimed that most of the services and industries were allowed to run as usual, including the banks, department stores, amusement arcades, cinemas, theatres, dance halls, bookstores and restaurants (Tao 109). The Japanese efforts to promote an image of peace provided a stable environment which attracted much financial investment.

Shanghai's existence in wartime China was unique. As Nicole Huang points out, the war was just like "a form of the blockade, which functions as a device of isolation, creating a specific moment in both time and space. Various borders and divisions that have already cut across the urban space are further sharpened because of the intrusion of war" (23). And, the environments inside and outside this specific space of 1940s Shanghai stood in sharp contrast to one another. The abnormally thriving development of the city went hand in hand with its occupation by the invader. The financial industry, manufacturing industry and even cultural activities inside the city were burgeoning at a time when all the other regions of the nation were engulfed by turbulence.

The coexistence of the seemingly peaceful interior and the turbulent exterior is also seen in the construction of Yang's domestic space, which is closed and tranquil but nonetheless situated in an occupied city. The exact year in which the plays are set is not clearly stated; however, it is certain that the temporal setting of the plays is about two

[11] The population of the Foreign Concessions increased from 2.5 million before the war to 5 million in 1938. See J. Wu 78.

decades after May Fourth, in wartime Shanghai. In *As You Desire*, Junyu's parents - their passion for romantic love, their style of elopement - certainly follow the common practice of May Fourth youth. And as Junyu is at the age of entering college, it is not unreasonable to surmise that the play is set about two decades after May Fourth at a time when the nation was at war. In the case of *Swindle* the time setting of the play is even easier to estimate. A conversation between Xiangfu and Mrs. Zhang reveals that protests demanding equality between the sexes and free love had occurred when they were young. This is clearly a reference to the May Fourth Movement. That is to say, Wanru, Yanhua and Dazhang are of the generation born just after May Fourth. Although the exact year of the setting of plays is still uncertain and thus it cannot be pinpointed whether it was within the Orphan Island period or that of the Occupation, the action occurs without a doubt during wartime. Therefore, the seemingly peaceful domestic space has been built upon a volatile base - the wartime city.

Having such a connection between the domestic spaces and the outside world in these two writers' works, the conflicts occurring inside the confined space can be understood as alluding to those existing on a larger scale in the world outside. That is to say, the imprudent manners and values which Austen depicted in her fictional closed communities, such as snobbery, the traps set by unscrupulous men to entice foolish young girls, and the inequality between the social classes and between the sexes, serve as a reflection of the problems happening in real society but on a larger scale. In Yang's comedies, such an interpretation is also applicable. For instance, in *As You Desire*, the different cultural manners of the characters and the conflicts among them which contribute to the tension of the play are indicative of the convergence of different cultures on a larger scale in metropolitan Shanghai.

The Function of Laughter in the Confined Space

When the confined space is regarded as the microcosm of the society, we can see in the laughter of the female characters their creators' own laughter, which should be interpreted as being within the larger social context. While the characters directly laugh at the manners of the other fellow characters, Austen and Yang in fact laugh at the prevailing manners and established conventions in society at large. In mocking these mainstream conceptions in their comedies, the writers are carrying out their own political interventions in the domestic space.

As D. W. Harding suggests, Austen's laughter is in a sense an undermining, destructive force in society (347). Marvin Mudrick advances this view, suggesting that irony is a defence used by Austen in order to distance herself from the reader and the subject matter which she mocks (1). The objects of ridicule become "figures in a comedy, whose audience may laugh at every exhibited incongruity of social behaviour without becoming involved or responsible" (Mudrick 1). That is to say, Austen's laughter acts as a defence by means of which to isolate herself from the objects of ridicule - that is, all of society. Her laughter is destructive, conveying the writer's disapproval of her surroundings, but, at the same time, it is connective, revealing her social concern and her relationship to society. The virtuosity manifested at the core of her comedic aesthetic lies in her technique of concealment in order to reveal. Through the isolation depicted in the relationship between the domestic space and the outside world, Austen conceals but, in a sense, also exposes her connection with society. Yang receives Austen's comedic aesthetic order, and it is remarkably well-suited to the carrying out of her own political interventions in the specific historical location that is wartime Shanghai.

In the afterword written in 1981 to *Two Comedies* 喜劇兩種 (1982) in which *As You Desire* and *Swindle* were published together, Yang explains that her employment of laughter is closely related to her hidden wartime concerns:

> Though Shanghai was eventually occupied, the resistance against the Japanese in the cultural circle was never suppressed into oblivion. The theatrical scene was the prominent camp in this fight. Of course the industry, inevitably, was intervened in and oppressed in some ways; therefore it needed some less politically coloured plays to ease the tense atmosphere ... If the uncompromising spirit under the abuse of Japanese rule was regarded as a kind of revolt, the refusal of being frustrated as the sense of tenacity, the laughter provoked in these two comedies was hence an expression of our unbeatable confidence in that endless darkness, of our persistence of maintaining an optimistic spirit in that tough time ("Afterword" 382).

From this afterword to the plays cited above, we see again evidence of the way in which Yang takes the domestic space of her plays to be a microcosm of wartime Shanghai.

Yang's *Afterword* tells us that the war is indeed the playwright's real concern and the motivation behind her writing. As she was not allowed to make any direct reference to the war, the adoption of Austen's style of laughter and isolated spatial setting allowed her the space in which to express her wartime concerns. In a manner similar to that of Austen Yang hides her anxiety about the turbulence of her time in the background of the works and isolates herself from society as a whole. This disengagement guaranteed her safety during that politically sensitive period. Through Austen's comedic aesthetic, Yang transforms the shapes of the objects of ridicule without revealing her real feelings and thus safely hides her wartime concern behind the guise of comedic presentation.[12]

3. The Interpenetration of Forces

Susan Stanford Friedman suggests that there is an interconnection between the domestic space and the outside world. She believes that the geopolitical meaning of the space becomes comprehensible only when placed within a conception of the interlinkage of the spaces and thus an imprint of "here" is also a product of "elsewhere" (110-11). Friedman further emphasizes the special meaning of domestic space: "*Any* 'domestic' setting serves as a

[12] Yang is not the only writer who felt the political threat of the Japanese and thus deliberately uses humour to conceal her real concern, avoiding political oppression. Before the outbreak of the War of Resistance, in 1932, Lin Yutong 林語堂 had already felt the high political pressure of Japanese aggression, and said plainly that he he used humour to present his views because he was afraid of going to prison. See Sohigian 151-52.

site for absorption, appropriation, and transformation of cultural formations from elsewhere" (112). Providing an example from Virginia Woolf's (1882-1941) *To the Lighthouse* (1927), Friedman explores the relationship between war and domesticity in the context of the geopolitical connection between the two. With some indirect references to the Crimean War, the depiction of the domestic realm observed by Friedman in fact echoes a national war.[13] Friedman argues that this exhibits Woolf's "interpenetration of the domestic, the national and the transnational" (125). Friedman summarises the importance of the domestic site in Woolf's works by asserting that: "For Woolf, the domestic - the local - is always already global and transnational and vice versa" (126). Therefore Woolf may be regarded as a writer who uses domesticity to express political meaning.

According to Friedman, her theory is based on that of Edward Said. In his treatise *Culture and Imperialism* Said discusses the connection between colonial enterprise on a global scale and domesticity in the countryside in *Mansfield Park*. The episode in which Sir Thomas terminates the young people's private theatre after his return from Antigua and carries out a series of reforms in the household is used as an example of his application of this theory. Said asserts that it is important to notice Sir Thomas's authority in restoring order at home, as this image actually serves as an everyday illustration to connect the domestic space and the colonial region of Antigua, giving readers a way of undersanding how Sir Thomas dealt with his business in Antigua in accordance with the same values, "the values associated with such higher things as ordination, law, and propriety must be grounded firmly in actual rule over and possession of territory" (104). Said affirms Austen's consciousness of conflating the domestic space and the colony in her works: "She [Austen] sees clearly that to hold and rule Mansfield Park is to hold and rule an imperial estate in close, not to say inevitable, association with it. What assures the domestic tranquillity and attractive harmony

[13] Friedman suggests an example: the "patriarchal folly at home is both a cause and a reflection of militarist and nationalist folly abroad." Friedman 125.

of one is the productivity and regulated discipline of the other" (104). Said's discussion provides an insight into the spatial setting of Austen's novels and establishes a platform for further discussion. It asserts that the culture, practice, atmosphere or indeed any imprint of elsewhere can in fact produce an effect inside the domestic area even though the spaces have no direct contact.[14]

The same view of the wartime imprint existing in Austen's works is held by Roberts Warren when he discusses the Antigua episode of *Mansfield Park*: "While the war is never mentioned in the Antigua episode, that part of the novel clearly bears the imprint of England's - and Austen's - wartime experience" (98). Roberts also found this kind of imprint in the depiction of the militia stationed at Meryton in *Pride and Prejudice*, which in fact corresponds to the protest against building barracks in eighteenth-century England: "Austen did not raise the old cry of 'No barracks' or declaim against the large army on English soil, but the soldiers stationed at Meryton did turn the eyes of susceptible young ladies in the Netherfield drawing room" and also raised Elizabeth's anxiety (96).

This interpenetration of spaces is not difficult to distinguish in Yang's comedies. For instance, the unusually rapidly changing economic environment of the city, as discussed by Zhang Xiangfu and Mrs. Zhang, does not create an image of a thriving, prosperous urban space but rather a sense of insecurity and anxiety:

> LADY ZHANG. (*laughing*) What? Did the deal on Herder Road go through?
>
> XIANGFU. All 1,800,000 *yuan* worth. I came back to relax. This evening I'm going out to celebrate.
>
> LADY ZHANG. 1,800,000! For such a tiny bit of land!
>
> XIANGFU. It is a building site! It's not for anything else! It's a sure bet! The location couldn't be better, and it's certain to appreciate in value.
>
> LADY ZHANG. What about that house on Jing'an Temple Road?
>
> XIANGFU. The Honghe corporation is willing to put up 3,000,000; Old Wang has agreed to 3, 500,000. We'll see . . . (*Forging* (*Swindle*) 116; Act I)

[14] A similar view can be found in Doreen Massey's assertion which maintains that the inside of a bounded place, such as a domestic area, is nevertheless connected with the outside; indeed the outside "helps to construct the specificity of the local place." See Massey 169-70.

The circumstances discussed by Xiangfu and Mrs. Zhang reflect the unstable wartime economy, which made people try every possible way to secure their wealth, including such measures as land investment. Another comment of Xiangfu's in the same conversation with his wife can be regarded as another imprint of wartime, reflecting the abnormal increase in the rate of the inflation:

> XIANGFU. Take my time! Take my time! These days, how can we take time over anything? Take that piece of property over in the Bund, it now costs 5,000,000, but just a day ago it was only 3,000,000! And what about those two dozen towels you bought? If you had bought them a month ago, wouldn't they have been half as cheap? Foreigners say "time is money." Can you afford to throw money away? (*Forging* (*Swindle*) 119; Act I)

The price of goods in Shanghai was increasing steeply. According to the records, the price index of wartime Shanghai rose steeply throughout the war years. If the base of the price index of Shanghai is set at 100 in accordance with the economic environment of June, 1937, it becomes 653 at the end of 1940 and 1598 by the time of the outbreak of the Pacific War at the end of 1941. When Yang began to write *As You Desire* in late 1942, the price index of Shanghai had grown to 4,929 and it reached 17,602 at the end of 1943, just after *Swindle* was staged. The peak of the price index was 8,640,000 just before the end of the Second World War (J. Wu 372).

Given these factors, it is impossible to regard the domestic space as merely a place "with its connotations of shelter and security, of pleasure, and as a storehouse of memories" (McDowell 72),[15] but, as many scholars have argued, it is "a contested site" (N. Huang 35), and the domestic circle within is "a marginal community" (N. Huang 36). In explaining this "cultural marginality" as well as its "subversive implications", Nicole Huang highlights the fact that domesticity represents "a set of counter-discourses" which is "constructed apart from the public space or the male-dominated domains" (36). That is to say, the existence of the domestic space is inherently subversive. As discussed above, the necessary connection

[15] A literature review of the meaning of "home" can be found in McDowell 71-73.

between the inside and the outside renders the idea that domestic space is an absolutely private sphere is unjustified. It is not only the hierarchy within the space that reflects the real social order - as Linda McDowell asserts "the social relations within a domestic space crosses the boundary between the private and the public, between the particular and the general" (73), but more particularly the gender politics in the domestic realm is closely connected to the patriarchy outside the domestic realm,[16] which evidently contributes an unsettling sense in this seemingly private sphere.

The blurred boundaries between private and public in the display of domesticity is not found in Yang's comedies alone among the literary works of wartime Shanghai. By examining female writing and print culture in wartime Shanghai, Nicole Huang provides evidence that the domains of private and public in wartime Shanghai merged, and thus domesticity became of public interest.[17] Leo Ou-fan Lee is of the view that the Hollywood domestic and screwball comedy probably had an impact on some writers in 1940s Shanghai.[18] Insofar as the boundaries between the private and public realms were blurred and the subject of domesticity in literary works and popular culture was so well accepted, writing a play that depicted the dynamics operating within the domestic area would no doubt be well received. The Shanghai audience was willing to see plays on the same subject matter as that found in the female writers' prose and fiction and also in the domestic comedies emanating from Hollywood.[19] Given the close relationship between domesticity and femininity,[20] it is

[16] Apart from Friedman's assertion discussed above, which exemplifies the point by the dynamic between Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse* and its connections with the Crimean War, Nancy Armstrong also discusses the gender politics existing in both domestic literature and the real domestic realm. For Friedman's discussion, see Friedman 121-26; for Armstrong's discussion, see Armstrong 29, 90.

[17] In her treatise Huang examines female writers' works, such as those of Eileen Chang 張愛玲, Su Qing 蘇青 and Shi Jimei 施濟美, and also the popularity of domestic journals in 1940s Shanghai in order to demonstrate how the boundaries between private and public spheres became blurred. See N. Huang.

[18] Lee also discusses the fact that the popularity of these genres of Hollywood movie is attributed to their resemblance to traditional Chinese literary aesthetic. See Lee *Shanghai* 97-98.

[19] Leo Ou-fan Lee lists some Hollywood popular domestic dramas shown in 1930s and 1940s Shanghai in his research: See Lee "Zhang Ailing" 41.

[20] Nicole Huang argues that domesticity is "defined by … a wide range of the so-called 'feminine details'". For a more detailed discussion, see N. Huang 35-37.

justified to say that the culture of wartime Shanghai was a gendered one.[21] Yang deploys this cultural characteristic and combines it with Austen's comedic aesthetic to create plays specifically suited to the wartime Shanghai audience.

II. Domesticity and Femininity - Lady Bertram and Mrs. Zhang

Austen and Yang both construct the domestic space *per se* in an unsettling shape – with the underlying force in the background - so that its instability is manifested from within. Moreover, they ingeniously reshape femininity distinguishing it from its conventional image, thereby subversively, and also comically, reconstructing the domestic realm.

Many scholars have discussed the relationship between domesticity, femininity, and the female body. In her discussion of the origin of domesticity, McDowell highlights the division of urban space in which women have long been identified with the domestic world, while men belong to the public world associated with industrial capitalism; in such circumstances women have been encouraged to stay at home and do the housekeeping (73). The reasons for identifying domesticity with women, as McDowell suggests, can be accounted for by virtue of the sociological, economic and religious contexts: domestic work is assumed as the natural duty of women. Threatened by the ability of women, men deliberately excluded women from trades and service industries in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Moreover during the time of the Puritan revolution and the later evangelical movements in Britain, women were recognised in the religious context as the domestic helpers of their husbands. The fulfilment of these duties was regarded as

[21] When she examines the popularity of home journals, Huang discusses the fact that the readership of wartime Shanghai was gendered. See N. Huang 69-70. Here I expand her idea: not only the readership but also the cultural scene as a whole in wartime Shanghai was gendered, and therefore domestic comedy was also welcomed by the Shanghai audience.

constituting femininity (McDowell 76-78).

McDowell also observes the connection between the domestic arena and the female body: when sexuality was viewed as an irrational force, it was not thought to be compatible with the serious side of the world, as rationality was upheld at that time; therefore women, whose ability to become pregnant displays that they are indubitably sexual beings, were restricted from the public world (78). Surveying the female conduct books of the eighteenth century, Nancy Armstrong also identifies the existence of the principle that the household represents the qualities of the mistress, as it is she who is responsible for the domestic economy (86). Such extracts discovered in conduct books emphasise Armstrong's argument in her discussion of domestic fiction. Armstrong observes that household objects in domestic fiction are endowed with a meaning which can help to interpret the women's outlook, mental activity, taste and secrets; and she believes Austen to be one of the writers who ingenuously use this approach (87).

Armstrong suggests that Austen associates domestic objects with her female characters. This is an approach which Yang Jiang can also be demonstrated as using in her comedies. An examination of Lady Bertram in Austen's *Mansfield Park*, and Mrs. Zhang, a character in Yang's *Swindle,* will demonstrate how both characters are similarly attached to specific domestic objects or the domestic realm, symbolically representing their dependence on their husbands and an unhealthy satisfaction with their domestic confinement.

A. The Wives and the Husbands

The relationships of these two characters with their husbands can be said to be significant. While the husband is represented as a successful businessman who possesses worldly knowledge, his wife is ignorant, one whose only access to information outside the

household is through her husband. For instance, Sir Thomas tells Lady Bertram about the business in Antigua in his letter during his business trip (*MP* 30); a similar situation is the conversation between Xiangfu and Mrs. Zhang discussed in the last section. Mrs. Zhang's knowledge of business and the current economic environment comes from Xiangfu (*Swindle* 299). It seems that the husband takes up the role of educator to the wife. The husband, having more financial power and knowledge of the world, dominates the wife, who is submissive to him. This can be seen in the scene describing Xiangfu's return home, in which Mrs. Zhang treats him as her master, to whom she immediately hands his slippers and his soup.[22]

In the discussion of the relationship between Dazhang, a new acquaintance, and their daughter, Mrs. Zhang does not dare to advance her views; conversely, Xiangfu scolds his wife, contemptuous of her fondness for Dazhang, and attributes her ignorance of the fact that her nephew Guangzu is a good match for Wanru to her femininity:

> It's just like when you ladies go out shopping - you see all those colourful and pretty things and you completely forget about what you actually came to buy. Whether your eyes are open or shut, all you see is one Zhou Dazhang, Zhou Dazhang, and you've clean forgotten about your very own nephew, who lives in your very own home and whom you see every single day! (*Forging* (*Swindle*) 120; Act I)

When Mrs. Zhang expresses her opposition to her husband's suggestion to match their daughter, Wanru, with her nephew Guangzu, Xiangfu violently displays his anger by "slapping the table" (*Forging* (*Swindle*) 120; Act I).

The submissiveness of Lady Bertram to Sir Thomas is equally conspicuous. In every situation she needs to ask for her husband's opinion. The narrator introduces the reader to this fact at the beginning of the novel: she needs to be "guided in every thing important by Sir Thomas" (*MP* 20). Aware that Fanny will accept the invitation from Mrs. Grant for dinner, she feels anxious and does not know if she can do without Fanny for the evening, until Sir Thomas confirms that she will be fine (*MP* 217-19). As Maaja A. Stewart observes, "She has

[22] In fact, the slippers and the soup are delivered by Yanhua and Yang Ma, the maidservant, but they do these by Mrs. Zhang's order. Yang *Swindle* 299-300.

no association with any economic, cultural, or even maternal role, and she turns to Sir Thomas for all explanation and interpretation of her life" (130). To some extent such a description can also be applied to the portrayal of Mrs. Zhang. Generally, submissiveness seems to be the virtue of a wife and the quality of femininity. In Confucian teaching women should behave in accordance with the "three obediences and the four virtues" 三從四德, and one of the obediences demands that married women should obey their husbands. Judged by this standard, both Lady Bertram and Mrs. Zhang are qualified as feminine wives.

B. Wives and Domesticity

Interestingly, domestic areas or objects are employed in association with the descriptions of Lady Bertram and Mrs. Zhang – the parlour and the sofa.

1. Lady Bertram and Her Sofa

Lady Bertram always appears sitting idly on her sofa with her pug. Such a picture is given when she is introduced at the very beginning of the novel, when Fanny has just come to Mansfield Park:

> To the education of her daughters, Lady Bertram paid not the smallest attention. She had not time for such cares. She was a woman who spent her days in sitting nicely dressed, on a sofa, doing some long piece of needlework, of little use and no beauty, thinking more of her pug than her children, but very indulgent to the latter, when it did not put herself to inconvenience, guided in every thing important by Sir Thomas, and in smaller concerns by her sister. Had she possessed greater leisure for the service of her girls, she would probably have supposed it unnecessary, for they were under the care of a governess, with proper masters, and could want nothing more (*MP* 19-20).

An air of indolence suffuses the portrayal of this lady. She feels nothing after hearing that her sister has eloped with a man, as she is "a woman of very tranquil feelings, and a temper remarkably easy and indolent, would have contented herself with merely giving up her sister, and thinking no more of the matter" (*MP* 4). Her indolence is associated with her physical

lassitude, which appeared once she had married,

> From about the time of her entering the family, Lady Bertram, in consequence of a little ill-health, and a great deal of indolence, gave up the house in town, which she had been used to occupy every spring, and remained wholly in the country, leaving Sir Thomas to attend his duty in Parliament, with whatever increase or diminution of comfort might arise from her absence (*MP* 20).

Her indolence thus accounts for her quitting the responsibility of being a wife as well as a mother. For depicting indolence and langour the sofa serves as a very suitable prop. Lady Bertram keeps to her sofa even in the midst of her sons' vehement quarrel on the morality of having a private performance at home: "sunk back in one corner of the sofa, the picture of health, wealth, ease, and tranquillity, [she] was just falling into a gentle doze" (*MP* 126); every time they ask for her opinion, she just replies in a sleepy voice and immediately falls asleep again. In her portrayal Austen intentionally emphasizes her relationship with her sofa, which serves as a place of refuge for her, a place to which she binds herself. When she wants to show her welcome and appreciation, she expresses her sentiments by inviting her interlocutor to sit on this exclusive, privileged piece of furniture. This can be seen in the scene welcoming Sir Thomas after his long business trip, in which she "remained sensibly animated as to put away her work, move Pug from her side, and give all her attention and all the rest of her *sofa* to her husband" (*MP* 179; emphasis added).

Stewart asserts that Lady Bertram is an "ideal woman", a combination of attractive female figures taken from two cultural contexts - the planter's wife in the West Indies and the metropolitan upper-class woman.[23] Stewart argues that in the eighteenth century the conception of femininity was mingled with the common interpretation of the slave woman. While aristocratic women were required to “remain sexually pure”, slave women were “powerfully sexualized, ideologically empowered, and politically powerless” (Stewart 128). And, Stewart asserts, Lady Bertram embodies the elements of both classes of women, thus

[23] Stewart exemplifies this point by several pieces of evidence, such as the observation of Janet Schaw in her trip to Antigua, i.e. the portraits that Maria Edgeworth gives to the slave women in her fictions. See Stewart 129.

displaying the ideal of femininity. Her languidness exactly demonstrates the special quality perceived as belonging to the slave women in the West Indies (Stewart 129-30). Although Lady Bertram holds all the ideal feminine elements in her characterization, Austen emphasizes that Lady Bertram is extremely lacking in subjectivity. Through Austen's humorous treatment, Lady Bertram's indolence does not reveal femininity – it is merely ludicrous. Moreover, Austen highlights Lady Bertram's dependency and immobility by depicting the character's extreme adherence to the sofa, in a sense objectifying Lady Bertram as furniture. Another matron in the novel, the observant Mrs. Grant, comments "Lady Bertram seems more of a cipher" (*MP* 162). A cipher, without potential to convey any meaning, Lady Bertram's is as unimportant as a piece of parlour furniture. By mocking and relegating the feminine figure of the house to an object, Austen creates an unsettling, disturbing sense in this domestic space, in which femininity is defined by domesticity, and the representation of Lady Bertram is an act of Austen's which undermines the established social notion of femininity by presenting a caricatured figure.

2. Mrs. Zhang: A Lady of the Parlour

Mrs. Zhang is not directly related to a sofa, but she is called by her husband "a lady of the parlour" twice in a brief conversation, and this term further links Mrs. Zhang to the same piece of furniture that always accompanies the portrayal of Lady Bertram. The connection between the title "a lady of the parlour", the sofa and Mrs. Zhang will be explored later, but before that it will be significant to look into how and why Xiangfu connects his wife with this title. In fact, the title "a lady of the parlour" is closely related to May Fourth discourse. Xiangfu and Mrs. Zhang hold a conversation in which they recollect and evaluate the May Fourth movement in terms of the equality of the sexes.

> LADY ZHANG. … Back then, so many of my cousins had just started clamouring for women's

equality and free love.

XIANGFU. Back then, it was advantageous for women to be free and equal. But these days, freedom and equality don't pay off for them.

LADY. ZHANG. That's news to me.

.....

XIANGFU. … These days, insisting on all that female equality stuff doesn't pay off even for girls themselves. Before, it was just rhetoric: "emancipated" and "equal" women like you in fact did nothing more than sit in your parlours being housewives, while the ones out earning a living were still us men. But nowadays people are taking it seriously. Girls are expected to be just like men and go out and earn a living too. But how can men and women be equal when women still bear the responsibility of pregnancy and child bearing?

.....

XIANGFU. Only obedient and virtuous women wind up with good husbands! Who would want to be a "newfangled parlour *taitai*" like you, who thinks all men are worthless and has ten things to say for every one thing he says? (*Forging* (*Swindle*) 117-18)

In the original text, the translated term "new-fangled parlor *taitai*" is *keting le de xinshi taitai* 客廳裡的新式太太, and its transliterated meaning is "the modern lady of the parlour". Yang here, in delivering the recollections of Xiangfu and Mrs. Zhang who were young during the period of May Fourth, incorporates her May Fourth discourse into the play. As if to bring an unsettling sense to the domestic space, the term "a lady of the parlour" 客廳太太 and its implied meaning is cleverly employed by Yang. The term is closely related to the concept of "new women" prevailing in the May Fourth era.

The term was popularized by a short piece of fiction "Our Madam's Parlour" 我們太太的客廳 written by Bing Xin 冰心 (1900-1999) and published in *Ta Kung Pao* 大公報 in 1933. It is the story of a modern, pretty, and well-educated Chinese lady, who is married to a well-off husband and lives with him and their daughter in a very delicate, Western-styled house, where she holds a salon every week, socializing with writers, poets, philosophers, politicians, intellectuals and professionals. Her style of living is Westernized – she reads Western literature, gives her maid an English name and acts in a Shakespearean play. The men, however, come to the salon not just for cultural discussions. Some of them are there to admire the lady and to win the lady's admiration in return - this is well understood both by the

literary celebrities and intellectuals, and by the lady herself and her husband.

Bing Xin's ridicule of the pretence, vanity and coquetry of the lady is explicit. It may be taken to be an allusion to a contemporary literary celebrity, namely Lin Huiyin 林徽因 (1904-1955), who held a salon in Beijing, resembling that described in the work, in the house occupied by her and her husband Liang Sicheng 梁思成 (1901-1972) in the 1930s (H. Zhang 40). There is a correspondence between the romantic relationship depicted in the work of the lady and the poet with the well-known affair between Lin and Xu Zhimo 徐志摩 (1897-1931) (Jie 5). But in an interview given in the 1990s Bing Xin denies the inference, though she admits that the lady bears a certain resemblance to Lin (Xueyong Chen "Qian Zhongshu" 94). No matter who is the prototype of Bing Xin's heroine or whether an allusion exists in the work to a specific real person in the literary circle, the caricature of the female protagonist undoubtedly represents a certain kind of educated women in middle- or upper-class social circles. It cannot be said that the portrayal of this type of "lady" is identical to that of Mrs. Zhang or Lady Bertram, because there are certain important attributes, such as vanity, a penchant for showing off artistic talents and literary interests, and hypocrisy towards her fellow women that cannot be found in the portrayal of Mrs. Zhang and Lady Bertram. However, her indolence does provide a point of resemblance. Interestingly, Bing Xin also chooses a sofa as a prop which helps to establish the idle, languid character of the lady.

Bing Xin writes that the lady "had that pleasant, rested look of one who has just arisen from slumber" (263-64)[24]. Her actions are coloured with languidness, as in "the lady yawned and said with indifference" (285). She, like Lady Bertram, is attached to her sofa all the time. To receive her guests, instead of standing at the door to welcome them, she "took another quick look at the mirror on the wall, then sat back down, half reclining, with her head propped by one hand and her legs curled up on the sofa" (266-67). When her guests find seats

[24] The English version of "Our Madam's Parlour" is translated by Jeff Book. See Bing Xin.

into which to settle themselves to listen to the poetry reading, she "as usual, was stretched across half the sofa" (280). At the end of the gathering, though the lady has not done much except sit on the sofa and chat with the people, she "appears a bit tired" (286).

The languidness of "a lady of the parlour" is the reason why Yang chooses to use the term in her play in order to describe “liberated women” like Mrs. Zhang, whom she regards as a pseudo-achievement of May Fourth. Mrs. Zhang, although regarded as having a new role and identity in terms of modernity, has in fact an unliberated spirit and is bound to an extremely dependable situation, financially and intellectually. The title Yang assigns to Mrs. Zhang in the text is *taitai* 太太, or madam. According to Wang Zheng's research, this is a pejorative term for May Fourth women, especially those who have flung themselves into the pursuit of a career:

> There was at least one other new category that the new women did not want to be associated with: *taitai* (wives of officials of bourgeoisie). It is unclear when *taitai* became a special term for wives of upper-class men. But it certain that in the May Four [sic] generation, *taitai* included newly educated wome ... Moreover, a *taitai* was associated with modernity, because she could accompany her husband on social occasions ... as an educated woman, a new woman could have chosen to be a *taitai,* dependent on her newly rising bourgeois husband for a comfortable and consumerist life. But she opted not to do so. Although a *taitai* could read, dance, play the piano, and have a social life, in essence she did not differ much from the traditional wife insofar as she lacked that quality most essential to the new women: *duli renge* (independent personhood) (20).

The purpose in using the term for Mrs. Zhang is explained in Wang's discussion quoted above. The titles Yang uses for the married women in *As You Desire* are different, rather traditional, for these she uses *furen* 夫人, such as in Yin *furen* 蔭夫人 and Qian *furen* 錢夫人. The employment of this title gives the setting a more classic sense in that it is the appropriate title for married women of the upper class used in classical novels.

Like the case of Lady Bertram, the humorous treatment of Mrs. Zhang through Yang’s employment of the term “a lady of the parlour” and all its attendant connotations is a way of deconstructing the domestic area, distributing an unsettling sense through this confined space. In addition, Yang also demonstrates the true outcome of the May Fourth social reform, such

that after about two decades' effort women's liberation is still no more than a fantasy. Mrs. Zhang, like Lady Bertram, is a cipher. Having no individuality, she has no desire to find her own value and live her own life. Yang's discourse on women's liberation and May Fourth is a subject similar to that of Austen's anti-romanticism, which will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

Based upon the common ground of the tight connection between women and domesticity, Austen and Yang both destabilize the domestic setting through their caricatures of the mistresses of the domestic realm, disfiguring their femininity. The intertextual reading of the portrayals of Lady Bertram and Mrs. Zhang is one example which demonstrates Yang's reception of Austen's comedic art.

III. The Invasion of Outsiders

Austen and Yang make further use of the narrative structure of their works to reinforce the unsettling nature of the domestic space. As briefly discussed in Chapter Four, the "invasion of outsider" spatial setting is inherent in the dramatic structure of Yang's comedies. Entering into and merging with a closed circle becomes an urgent imperative for the outsiders in her plays, Junyu in *As You Desire* and Yanhua and Dazhang in *Swindle*. Their aim is to legitimatize their position inside this space and then subvert their respective positions from that of inferior to superior. Junyu and Yanhua achieve this through their laughter, while Dazhang and Yanhua do so by their scheming. Whichever means is employed, their entering of the circle constitutes an invasion.

The narrative mode of a stranger entering the confined space is not rare among Austen's works. These strangers' appearances upset the original settled balance within the

social circle, disturbing the hitherto constant rhythm of the closed domestic space. We may point to Willoughby's appearance in Devonshire; Darcy's, Bingley's and Wickham's in Longbourn; Fanny Price's and the Crawfords' in Mansfield Park; Harriet's and Frank Churchill's in Highbury; and Captain Wentworth's in Kellynch Hall. Among them, the most notable example is Fanny Price's and Mary Crawford's entering Mansfield Park, as they share the similar "orphan girl as the invader" situation with Yang's female protagonists. And, as discussed in Chapter Four, Mary, Junyu and Yanhua all share the similar subversive spirit and subvert authority and try to elevate their position in the circle by their use of laughter.

A comparison of the employment of the domestic space by Yang and Ling Shuhua 凌叔華, another female writer who is also regarded by certain critics as having Austen's style,[25] helps to demonstrate more clearly how evident is Yang's reception of Austen's usage of the domestic space.

The Boudoir in Ling Shuhua

Most of the stories by Ling, including her short fiction and comedies, occur in a setting similar to that employed by Yang - a confined domestic space in a city, mostly Beijing. Ling's domestic space also resembles Yang's in another respect: it is represented as a timeless, isolated domestic realm. However, although the domestic space in Ling's works can be understood as belonging to the same kind of spatial setting as that of Yang's comedies - a forever monotonous space existing ironically within a vibrant city - Ling's domestic space bears a more traditional stamp. The domestic realm in Ling's stories is more accurately regarded as the *guige*, which refers exclusively to the bedroom and the area for domestic activities of a lady from the traditional Chinese family of the upper class. Most of the

[25] The connection between Ling Shuhua and Austen is discussed in Chapter One.

heroines of Ling's stories are born in or married into this kind of prosperous traditional family. The confinement of the domestic space in Ling's stories, unlike the invisible boundaries of the closed communities in Yang's comedies, is depicted in a concrete form within the four walls of the chamber.[26]

Notwithstanding the differences in the form of confinement, visible as opposed to invisible, a common feature that underlies the domestic spaces in the two writers' works is the seeming timelessness of the events happening within the confined space. In Yang's comedies the characters constantly act in a most routine manner in the closed communities, in the holding of family gatherings, dining, and gossiping, most of which activities do not correspond to the reality of events outside the circle and the turbulent background of the time. Similarly, constancy is a prominent feature of Ling's domestic space. Ling's space, the *guige*, is itself a testimony to a time-honoured tradition. The strong tie to traditional Chinese culture helps to establish the *guige* as a concept of domesticity which belongs to a previous age. The visible form of the four-walled confinement only helps to reinforce the complete loss of the sense of time. This is the stagnant domestic space found in Ling's stories. Time seems not to exist within this space, and the activities of the people living within are mundane. Time only has a role to play in the minds of the female characters, heroines and maids alike, who fear their chances of marriage will only decrease with the passage of time.

The natural answer is to find a husband.[27] However, this solution will then take the married heroines into another predicament. For the married women the confined domestic realm eventually becomes a very disturbing space, because the significance of time is

[26] There are a number of representations of the confined status of the heroines' living in the *guige* in Ling's works. For instance, in "Xiao Liu" 小劉 [Young Liu] the living place of young madam Xiao Liu is described as being "enclosed by four high dark walls", like "living in a jail"; in "Qixia" 綺霞, the living place of the heroine Qixia is artificial and confined: "looking from the windows and the door, one can only see the windows and the door on the opposite side. If you want to see the sky, you need to move near to the window and look upward."

[27] The young women's urge to be married can be found in a number of short fictions of Ling, such as "Chicha" 吃茶 [Taking Tea], "Chahuiyihou" 茶會以後 [After the Tea Party] and "Xiuzhen" 綉枕 [The Embroidered Pillows].

diminished within the space after they have got married, and therefore the only movement within the space is no longer noticeable. Thus to these married women the domestic space is in a state of total stillness - and in that stagnant space, boredom leaves them completely frustrated.[28]

Ling's heroines choose a very different approach to solving their problematic circumstances from that of Yang's female protagonists. Rather than exploring the possibility of settling themselves in the confinement, they attempt to search for a way out. It should be noted that Ling's heroines were created in the 1920s, at the climax of May Fourth. At that time the outside world was rapidly changing. To adapt to the life of modern society became an immediate challenge to those who were more used to the comfort and security of the *guige*. Their struggle to adapt to cultural transition, to get used to modernity, is a frequent theme of Ling's stories. In contrast to Yang's use of the tension of the outside world as an undercurrent in her plays, Ling's depiction of the interplay between her heroines and a society rapidly undergoing modernization is far more explicit. It is apparent that modernity serves as the first source of a solution as these women seek to solve their predicaments. For example, the unmarried young women in "*Chicha*" 吃茶 [Taking tea - 1925] and "*Chahuiyihou*" 茶會以後 [After the Tea Party - 1925] want to follow the modern practice of joining mixed-gender social activities to get acquainted with young men, seeking the chance to marry by choice instead of entering an arranged marriage. The married women also seek a way out of their boring lives in the modern city. Rubi of "*Wuliao*" 無聊 [Ennui -1934] tries to leave the *guige* in order to adopt an urban lifestyle and so cure the depression that arises from her boring, meaningless life. However, they all fail in their efforts. The heroines of "Chicha" and "Chahuiyihou" are upset by the rituals of modern life. They cannot blend into

[28] In a number of short stories, Ling depicts the ladies of the rich families who cannot bear the boredom of lives in their *guige*. For instance, "Chuntian" 春天 [Spring], "Zhuanbian" 轉變 [The Change] and "Wuliao" 無聊 [Ennui].

the social circle and have inadequate social skills and experience to manage their relationships with the opposite sex. Lady Rubi feels lost when she walks in the city and is disgusted by the shopping crowd. She even imagines that she must look like a mad woman in the urbanites' eyes.

Similarly unsettled in the domestic space, Yang's heroines choose by contrast to try their best to settle themselves within the space rather than seeking a way out in the outside world, though they also do not seem satisfied with the life within the space, and, interestingly, they themselves are the invaders who ruin the constant, harmonious rhythm of the space. In Ling's stories no invader disturbs the mono-rhythm of the domestic space. This is the key feature to establish the distinction between the narrative structure of Ling's stories and that of Yang's comedies and to observe the different extent of their reception of Austen's works.

The difference between Ling's and Yang's works can be regarded as reflecting an evolutionary process in the relationship between women and modernity. As works written two decades earlier than Yang's and at a time amidst the uproar of demanding national modernization, Ling's stories tend to focus more upon representing the heroines' urge to adapt to a burgeoning modernity and the re-writing of women's traditional roles. After two decades of trial urban life is no longer new to the heroines of Yang's comedies. They do not like it and give up the attempt to adapt to modernity. It should be observed that the wartime environment outside the domestic realm is an evident reason for Yang's protagonists' view that the outside world is not a better place for them. It is undeniable that the war acts as a critical factor in Yang's plays; in the context of spatial setting it presents the heroines with a cul-de-sac.

Ling's and Yang's reception of Austen's dramatic structure have shown us, each to a different extent, representations of women in different eras in the process of Chinese modernization, or perhaps they have merely shown us two writers' different responses to an

English novelist's art in accordance with their own literary interest. It is Yang's comprehensiveness in receiving Austen's spatial setting in her own plays, nonetheless, that distinguishes Yang's closer tie with Austen. This becomes more apparent when we make a comparison with another writer who is also regarded as having adopted Austen's style.

When we examine Yang's employment of the spatial setting for the dramatic narrative, the playwright's approach of interweaving Chinese aesthetic resources into the Western genre is again noticed. The "orphan girl as invader" structure, as discussed in Chapter Four, is also found in *The Dream of the Red Mansion*. Daiyu is fostered in the Jia House, and most of her activities are conducted within a closed and isolated space, the Jia household's Prospect Garden 大觀園.

But, after all, it is Austen's spatial setting which serves as a comprehensive demonstration for Yang how to conceal her wartime concerns over the devastated country in the background of her own comedies. Such a space is evidently unsettling in nature. Within the confined space Yang, taking over Austen's techniques, executes her subversion against the ideological mainstream and the established aesthetic of the female figure to destabilize the domestic space further. Yang successfully receives Austen's aesthetic in the geo-political context in order to write her own subversive feminist comedies of manners for wartime China.

Chapter Six

The Anti-Romantic Writers

Yang Jiang's reception of Austen's subversive spirit in the socio-historical context is evidenced by their both having eschewed the ideological and literary mainstream. When we look into the social context of their comedy, we discover a political dimension through which is exhibited their isolation from the Romanticism which lay at the centre of the ideological mainstream of their times. Adopting a subversive spirit, the two writers laugh at people's impercipient adherence to social and literary conventions, with an eye towards undermining the Romanticism embedded in these contemporary social and literary doctrines. In this chapter we shall investigate this anti-romanticism. As May Fourth has long been regarded as a period of successful social reform, the anti-romantic laughter by means of which Yang mocks the Romantic mainstream can be interpreted as her interpretation of the mythology surrounding the May Fourth Movement. This led her to the creation of a unique anti-May Fourth discourse in her plays, the works of anti-romanticism, as entitled by Edward Gunn in his treatise on the wartime literature (Ch5).

Noticeably both writers utilise the same comedy of manners genre in order to explore romance and marriage as their subject matter, while we find that their anti-romanticism was similarly inherent in their narratives of romance. This chapter will examine how they implicate their anti-romanticism in their stories of romance and marriage. Part I will discuss how the ideological torrents of these two writers' times subscribed to romanticism, and how romantic sentimentality prevailed at that time. Part II will examine a particular feature of their stories of romance, namely the equation of money and marriage; the eloping narrative, a mode of story similarly found in both writers' works, will be discussed in Part III. In this

examination we shall see how Yang employs her stories of romance and marriage in order to subvert the prevailing feminist discourse and the ideological mainstream, romanticism, of the 1940s.

I. Romanticism and Anti-romanticism

Austen and Yang both wrote their comic works against a background of an intellectual revolution dominated by Romanticism. Austen's writing took place against the background of the Romantic Movement that occurred in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe. Lord David Cecil comments, when referring to this movement:

> Jane Austen lived at a period of intellectual revolution. The standards of reason and common sense which had guided the larger part of educated opinion during the eighteenth century were being overthrown; and a new race of thinkers was rising who referred all their opinions to the guidance of the instinctive movements of the heart" (xiii-xiv).

Interestingly, Leo Ou-fan Lee suggests a Chinese connection with this "intellectual revolution": that of the Romantic Movement and May Fourth. He points out the common nature of those two movements: both of them "represented a reaction against the classic tradition of order, reason, schematization, ritualization, and structuring of life. Both ushered in a new emphasis on sincerity, spontaneity, passion, imagination, and the release of individual energies - in short, the primacy of subjective human sentiments and energies" (*Romantic* 292).[1] These inextricable links offer the points of contact from which to observe the historical contexts in which Austen and Yang wrote their works and highlight the way in which their works stand in contrast to the literary mainstreams from which the two writers sought to distance themselves.

[1] The favourite novels of the May Fourth writers, namely *The Sorrows of Young Werther* and *Jean-Christophe,* and the hero worship of Byron, are adopted as proof in this analysis. See Lee *Romantic* 283-92.

A. The Tenets of the Romantic Movement and May Fourth

During the height of May Fourth, many writers, such as Hu Shi 胡適, Xu Zhimo 徐志摩 and Yu Dafu 郁達夫 (1896-1945), expressed their admiration of certain Western authors. Most of the Western authors with whom they identified are recognized as Romantic: e.g. Byron (1788-1824), Rousseau (1712-1778), Shelley (1792-1822), Goethe (1749-1832), Hugo (1802-1885) and Keats (1795-1821) (Lee *Romantic* 277-78). It is therefore not surprising that the liberation of the individual was the most important demand both of the May Fourth Movement and the Romantic Movement, and both groups held outbursts of emotion and the emphasis upon "self" to be aesthetic imperatives for literary creation.

With regard to the May Fourth literary scene, the significance of passion and sincerity was widely discussed as being fundamental. For instance, Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892-1978) praises Goethe for writing *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774) inspired by his own passion (274); Cheng Fangwu 成仿吾 (1897-1984) asserts that "Literature originates from our passion but not rational thinking. To understand a literary work, a merging process of sentiments (between the readers and the writer) is needed but not a rational analysis" ("Shi" 26). The outburst of personal emotion was so essential that it became their outlook on life.[2] Xu Zhimo asserts: “I have no other methods but love; no other talents but love; no other potentialities but love; no other energies but love" (296).[3] To express true feeling, it was also required that the sentiment should come from deep within the writer’s self. Cheng explains that the expression of the feelings of the heart is actually the motivation for these writers, as well being as the only factor in producing perfect and beautiful literature ("Xinwenxue" 39, 44). Yu Dafu makes a similar comment in a discussion of New Literature more than a decade

[2] Lee comments that it was the inclination of the May Fourth intellectuals to equate love with freedom, and that they connected love with an act of defiance and sincerity in opposition to a hypocritical society. See Lee *Romantic* 265-66.
[3] The translation of Xu's words is quoted from Lee *Romantic* 160.

after the May Fourth era: "The greatest success of the May Fourth movement lay, first of all, in the discovery of individual personality" ("Xiandai" 205). This emphasis on sincerity led to the trend for self-exposure, and this accounts for the large number of autobiographies, personal biographies, diaries, letters and love letters that appeared on the 1920s literary scene (Lee *Romantic* 262-63).

One of the beliefs of the romanticists in nineteenth-century Europe was the need for the free and sincere expression of the feelings of the writer. In William Wordsworth's (1770-1850) preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), published in 1800, a work that represented the beginning of the Romantic Age,[4] he maintains that good poetry is "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (Preface 62). Margaret Drabble, commenting on Romantic writing, observes that such a literary style shows a "new emotional intensity", which raises sentiment to "unprecedented extremes" ("Romanticism"). And such an emotional expression became inevitably associated with the necessity for sincerity. Thus the writer's personal vision and experience became required elements in literature. M. H. Abrams points out this characteristic: "Much of romantic poetry invited the reader to identify the protagonists with the poets themselves" ("Neoclassic and Romantic"). Abrams asserts that Wordsworth's *Prelude* (1850) and Byron's *Childe Harold* (1812-1818) represent different forms of self-exposure - while Wordsworth draws an identification between the protagonist and himself directly, Byron does this "in an altered but recognizable form" ("Neoclassic and Romantic"). The flourishing of autobiography, biography and writers' love letters at this time calls to mind similar examples that arose during the May Fourth era.

Lee also brings up another point, namely that spontaneity and imagination were emphasized both by the writers of May Fourth and by those of the Romantic Movement as important elements in the process of writing. Those elements were set against the concept of

[4] Some critics take the view that this preface acted as a manifesto for the Romantic style of the age and that it marks the start of the Romantic period. See Drabble, Stringer and Hahn "Romanticism".

artificiality. This notion accorded the concept of "genius" an extremely high position, romanticizing the creative process of literature by advancing the belief that geniuses were the only people capable of producing literary works. Yu Dafu maintains: "Literature is the creation of genius, the quality of which is not possible to be measured by any standard" ("Yiwen" 11) and "the real geniuses are luminous pearls" ("Yiwen" 12). Such appreciation for genius is on the same level as emphasizing the significance of inborn talent in the process of writing literature, requiring spontaneous feeling rather than intellectual design. Guo Moruo asserts: "Art is an exposure of self which originates from an artist's impulsive desire to express himself/herself" (qtd. in Chen and Chen 38).[5] In recollecting the process of writing *Sinking* 沉淪 (1921) Yu Dafu explains the importance of spontaneous feeling: "I had a feeling that I must write, and I plainly let the feeling drive me to write. I did not care about any writing skill and rhetoric" ("Chanyu" 182).

Wordsworth's emphasis on "spontaneity" decries artificial expression and requires the exercise of the imagination; works must originate spontaneously from their writers. "The setting of imagery should be like the sun coming naturally to him" (238); "If poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree it had better not come at all" (239), wrote John Keats in a letter to John Taylor (1781-1864). To Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) the imagination of the artist provides a means by which literary works may grow organically; an inherent organic law within the literary work governs its own development (Abrams "Neoclassic and Romantic").[6] Given this prevailing belief that imagination is the primary source of everything in the Romantic period (Wordsworth "Preface 1815" 26-27), genius, the talent for creating original literary works and opposition to the notion of imitation, was highlighted. Wordsworth emphasizes that a writer should "owe nothing but to nature and his own genius"

[5] The words are from Guo's 1923 article "Yingxiang yu biaoxian" 印象與表現 [Impression and Expression].
[6] Abrams also discusses this in another treatise. See Abrams *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* 168-77.

("Preface 1815" 26-27), and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) suggests that originality is the "primary property" of the genius (137). This explains Percy Bysshe Shelley's insistence on avoiding the imitation of any style, asserting that "even if what I have produced be worthless, it should still be properly my own" (317), similar to Yu Dafu's conviction when writing *Sinking* of paying attention to nothing but the expression of his own emotions.

The discussion here does not attempt to equate the nature of the May Fourth Movement with that of the Romantic Movement in its entirety. There are others who have suggested a connection between May Fourth and other Western social and political movements. Since Hu Shi's speech in the 1940s, likening May Fourth to the Renaissance, the nature of the May Fourth Movement remains an issue requiring further analysis. The ideological current in the May Fourth period was complicated. A number of ideological concepts can be identified as constituting the literary production of the May Fourth Period, including classicism, romanticism, realism, naturalism and neo-romanticism.[7] Defining May Fourth as a movement formed by any single ideology is thus to oversimplify its nature. As the era is understood to have produced so many Romantic writers, however, it is reasonable to recognize Romanticism as one of the dominant ideologies of that period. In comparing Jane Austen and Yang Jiang the present study only focuses upon the fact that these two writers distanced themselves from Romanticism, which constituted one of the main currents in the ideological mainstream of their times.

[7] Some critics suggest that a literary evolution occurred throughout the May Fourth period in which the intellectuals believed that China should follow a pattern of Western ideological progression; this gave rise to a situation in which a number of ideologies were introduced and promoted in the period. See McDougall 254-55.

B. The Romantic Sentimentality of Their Times

As discussed in Chapter Two, a genre was popular prior to and during the Romantic Movement, namely the sentimental romantic novel. It tells romantic stories of middle-class youth, who usually fall in love at first sight. According to B. C Southam, the story of the sentimental novel is written in a pattern which requires the protagonists to have aristocratic connections who consider marriage as a sacred and romantic institution and romantic love as an "unassailed ideal" (Introduction (Heritage Vol.1) 9).

In terms of romantic sentimentality there is a great deal of resemblance between the Romantic Movement and May Fourth. Romantic sentimentality is one of the characteristics of May Fourth literature. Lee notices that the momentousness of love is elevated to the positionextent of a new morality, replacing the Confucian orthodoxy as the substance of "*Dao*" 道, or truth in the traditional literary credo "*Wen yi zai dao*" 文以載道, or literature for conveying truth (*Romantic* 262):

> Love had become an overall symbol of new morality, an easy substitute for the traditional ethos of propriety which was now equated with external restraint. In the general temper of emancipation, love was identified with freedom, in the sense that by loving and by releasing one's passions and energies the individual could become truly a full and free man. To love was also considered an act of defiance and sincerity, of renouncing all the artificial restraints of hypocritical society so as to find one's true self and expose it to one's beloved. Thus true love cannot but be good and beautiful. The prevalent trinity of new faith, truth-goodness-beauty in the 1920s, as expounded by Hsu Chih-mo [Xu Zhimo] and the early Creationists, was inescapably inspired and infused by the reigning spirit of love (*Romantic* 265-66).

After a couple of decades, the impact of May Fourth was still alive in China. As Chow Tse-tsung remarks, the movement was still being praised by different political parties during wartime.[8]

[8] Chow also records that there was a dispute between the parties over "who led the movement" between the parties through the decades after May Fourth in a struggle to gain credit for themselves in the movement. See T.-t. Chow 356.

The Elopement Narrative of May Fourth

Elopement in the May Fourth period was identified as a rebellion against patriarchy which also sought to promote romantic love as well as individual freedom. Such a view of elopement was associated in large part with Henrik Ibsen and Nora, the protagonist of his play *A Doll's House*. Nora was praised as a paragon of the 'new woman' in a movement that advocated gender equality and individual freedom.[9] Following Hu's adaptation of Ibsen's play called *The Greatest Event in Life* 終身大事, a "Nora-fever" was invoked, which lasted for more than two decades and reached its peak in 1935, the 'Nora-year'.[10] As Elisabeth Eide observes, before Nora entered the scene, there was no epic female role model in Chinese literary history for women concerned with their own identity (73-74). After Hu's adaptation, a number of plays appeared in the Nora-esque mode. As He Chengzhou observes, the Chinese Nora-esque genre is produced within a specific narrative motif, as part of which elopement is highly regarded:

> The departure of the heroines in these plays means a daring rebellion against the old conventions that suppressed women at that time. These 'Nora-type' plays more or less follow the same plot progression: first, the onset of an awareness of individuality; second, the resulting conflict with family and society; and finally, the decision to depart from the home (29).

In Feng Yuanjun's 馮沅君 (1900-1974) "Separation" 隔絕 (1923) the heroine, Wei Naihua 維乃華, is confined by her mother after her plan to elope with her lover Qingai 青靄 is exposed. Naihua then writes a letter to Qingai to propose a new plan for an elopement, the wording of which clearly informs us of Naihua's perception that she and her lover are in a state of confrontation with the old, patriarchal society:

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[9] The equality of the sexes was stated as one of the demands as early as in the manifesto of *Xin Qingnnian*. See Eide 75.

[10] According to He Chengzhou 's record, the year of 1935 was called "Nora-year" owing to the high frequency of the staging of the play, and a social conflict "Nora-event" happened in the same year – a primary school teacher of Nanjing, Miss Wang, played the role of Nora and hence was dismissed by the school headmaster for the reason that she played a character who leaves her husband and children. This issue aroused great attention among the public, and there were furious discussions about it. The headmaster was criticized for his accusation of Miss Wang. The event finally became a political event in which the progressive forces fought against the conservative forces. A detailed account of the "Nora-fever" can be found in C. He 27-28.

> My love!
>
> I never thought that despite all of our careful planning, we would still find ourselves defeated by society's backwardness. Although it's true that physically we are separated, in spirit we are still together. What a terrible fate our love has met. Perhaps at this very moment you are weeping bitter tears over this, or maybe you are plotting various rescue strategies. If you are brave, you will come to my rescue …
>
> Life can be sacrificed, but not one's will. If I can't have my freedom, I'd prefer to die. When people don't understand that love must be sought freely, then nothing else matters. You've heard me make this declaration many times before, and I've often spoken of how our love is concrete and yet boundless. When we can no longer resist the obstructive powers around us, we will drown ourselves in the sea together (105-06).[11]

In a symbolic sense, the confinement of the heroine by her parents is not only in physical terms, but also in that of her mentality, since she is restricted by the bonds of tradition. Therefore, elopement in this context, while providing a resolution of the predicament of the lovers, also constitutes a weapon of social revolution.

Though in the May Fourth period intellectual society was generally experiencing the same mania, some intellectuals and writers had already begun to calm their animated emotions and cast doubt upon the superiority of romantic love. As early as the early 1920s, Lu Yin 廬隱 (1898-1934), a female writer belonging to the Literary Association 文學研究會, expresses this concern in her 1922 short story, "Huo ren de beiai" 或人的悲哀 [Perhaps It is the Melancholy of Mankind], in which the heroine writes in a letter that: “Even sacred romantic love gives no promise of constancy. Two people, at the beginning, were so much in love and hence became engaged; after a while they would begin to hate each other and, in the end, divorce” (165).

Lu Xun 魯迅 not only revealed the inclination to mythologize romantic love in society: he further discerned the appalling predicament that would befall women if they followed the course of action advocated by the movement and rush into a romantic affair. In a speech given at Peking Normal College for Women in 1923, Lu Xun posed the practical question as to what happens after Nora leaves home. In answer to this question he then

[11] The text is translated by Janet Ng. See Feng.

proposes: she will either debase herself, or she will return to her husband because of the inevitable economic problems which she is bound to encounter ("What After" 86):

> Thus the crucial thing for Nora is money or - to give it a more high-sounding name - economic resources. Of course money cannot buy freedom, but freedom can be sold for money. Human beings have one great drawback, which is that they often get hungry. To remedy this drawback and to avoid being puppets, the most important thing in society today seems to be economic rights. First, there must be a fair sharing out between men and women in the family; secondly, men and women must have equal rights in society.
>
> Unfortunately I have no idea how we are to get hold of these rights; all I know is that we have to fight for them. We may even have to fight harder for these than for political rights ("What After" 88).[12]

Undoubtedly, a clear objective of Lu Xun's speech is to motivate women to strive persistently to gain rights for themselves. However, he presents an important caution: the contradiction between the ideal and reality, between romance and real life.

Lu Xun's fictional work, "Regret for the Past" 傷逝, published in 1925, is an illustration of the view expressed in this speech. The story begins with a typical May Fourth romantic narrative. The heroine Zijun 子君, having been inspired/educated by her lover, the young intellectual Juansheng 涓生, finally runs away with him. However, the plot does not follow the conventional literary motif in that the hero and the heroine then live happily ever after; instead, the writer proposes a realistic scene in which the hero and the heroine struggle to support themselves. While Zijun still holds fast to his belief in romantic love, Juansheng cannot hide his regret. Under financial pressure Juansheng blames Zijun, as he is forced into the predicament that he has no alternative but to take a job he dislikes. He even sneers at Zijun's innocent persistence in having a romantic outlook, one which was actually imparted to her by him. Unable to bear the sufferings of poverty as well as the coldness of Juansheng, Zijun finally dies in misery. Echoing the view he presented in his speech, Lu Xun's fictional work explores the viewpoint that those who intend to engage in romantic affairs should balance romantic emotion and financial needs. Mao Chen comments on Lu Xun's uniqueness

[12] The article is translated by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang. See Lu Xun "What After".

among the May Fourth intellectuals for his sceptical attitude towards the negative assault on Chinese tradition, as revealed in his fiction.[13] Discussing the story within the larger context, Chen maintains that it not only satirizes the frenzied pursuit of romance but more significantly its hollow pretence. This manner, prevalent among the May Fourth intellectuals, is, according to Chen, caused by the immaturity of intellectualism (101). Later, as He Chengzhou notices, the sceptical writer finally finds a way out of Nora's difficult situation, which is suggested in an article written after he turned to Communism: "Not until society is liberated can women liberate themselves" (qtd. in C. He 35).[14]

The elopement narrative, as Chen sees it in his analysis of "Regret for the Past", largely relates to the May Fourth revolutionary context, and is supported by the fact that freedom in romantic love was only one of the demands raised by those who called for social reform.

C. Anti-romanticists against the Torrent of Romanticism

Austen was clearly an outsider in terms of the literary mainstream of her age. In Cecil's view, Austen alone stood apart from the writers of the Romantic Movement, such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Byron, "who referred all their opinions to the guidance of the instinctive movements of the heart" (xiv). Cecil further emphasizes that *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) is indeed "an attack on the fundamentals of the Romantic position" (xiv). Clifford Siskin makes a similar observation, pointing out: "Sober Jane Austen, of course, would never fail a sobriety/drug test, so she becomes the primary example of a non-Romantic writer in the Romantic period" (62).

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[13] Mao Chen maintains that the influence of multiple foreign literary sources made a great contribution to Lu Xun's sceptical attitude towards the movement. See M. Chen 97, 101-02.

[14] The citation here is from Lu Xun's article "Guanyu funu jiefang" 關於婦女解放 [A Discussion of the Liberation of Women].

Austen's anti-romanticism is evidently revealed in her narrative of romance and marriage. In an age suffused with romanticism the contemporary reader consumed the love story with an expectation, in Southam's analysis, "to preserve literature as a kind of higher, happier reality", and Austen's novels thus "were a particular threat to the greatly-prized unreality of romantic and sentimental fiction" (Introduction (Heritage Vol.1) 10). That is to say, Austen's love stories do not emphasize the significance of aristocratic connections and they are not in the pattern of 'love-at-first-sight'. As a result, they were considered by some readers to be lacking in romantic interest (Southam Introduction (Heritage Vol.1) 9). Walter Scott (1771-1832) notices this distinguishing feature in Austen's novels, that they present nature and common life to the reader without providing romantic imagery and excitement. In fact, in his analysis of Austen's style he deliberately placed her works in contrast to romantic fiction, the prominent genre in which writers, both those immediately preceding and contemporaneous with Austen, worked. Scott remarks on the anti-climax in the relationship between Frank Churchill and Emma in *Emma*, a disillusioning of the romantic fantasy projected by the village and even by Emma herself, as "there are cross purposes enough (were the novel of a more romantic cast) for cutting half the men's throats and breaking all the women's hearts" (67). Southam comments that Scott actually views Austen's novel as being anti-romantic, a work "in which Jane Austen is playing upon the devices and situations of romantic fiction, adjusting them to a story whose drama and distresses are personal and domestic" (Introduction (Heritage Vol.1) 13).

Similar to the style of her Western counterpart, Yang's way of depicting romance is inconsistent with the literary beliefs of the mainstream. Yang, by divesting romantic love of its importance, executes a deconstruction of the Movement.

II. The Equation of Marriage with Money

The first distinctive and consistent feature in all Austen's courtship narratives is the characters' close association of marriage with material concerns. In contrast to the sentimental novels prevailing in her period, Austen adopts a rational and practical perspective from which to write about romance - highlighting her characters' recognition of the material advantages made possible by marriage. Material concerns form one of the significant discourses in Austen's work. As Mark Schorer notices, "the essence of her comedy resides … in the discrepancy betwen [sic] social sentiment and social fact", and that "social fact" is discovered in "commerce and property, the counting house and the inherited estate" (540). A major aspect of the hierarchical system that characterized contemporary society was the financial dependency it forced upon women; a woman was financially and culturally dependent until she was "adopted" by a man through marriage.

In such a competitive market, even Emma, the heiress of Hartfield, and Anne, the daughter of a baron, cannot escape the anxiety of this situation, and other heroines born into a less fortunate background naturally find themselves in a far worse position. Such anxiety is plainly seen in the minds and lives of Elinor Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility* and Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*, though prudence and decorum prevent them from outwardly exhibiting those financial concerns.

While the majority of Austen's heroines are virtuous and innocent, never initiating a competition for men amongst themselves (Bilger 173), other female characters behave differently. Their anxiety, as well as their vanity, causes them to immerse themselves in a competition for a materially beneficial marriage, which takes the place of a villain in the novels. For instance, Lucy Steele in *Sense and Sensibility* is a competitive woman who

demonstrates both hostility and manipulation towards Elinor in her contention for Edward Ferrars; Isabella Thorpe in *Northanger Abbey*, who eventually breaks off her engagement with James Morland because of her dissatisfaction with the small income which James's father would offer them after their wedding, while she develops a new-found "relationship" with the eldest son of General Tilney.[15] This kind of character, one who regards marriage as a means of gaining material benefit, is also seen in the comedies of Yang Jiang. The protagonists in *Swindle*, Dazhang and Yanhua, are imposters, who do not give up any opportunity to marry a rich man/woman. They see marriage as a way to solve their predicament of being poor and belonging to a lowly social class. In their pursuit of marital prospects they do not, as the protagonists in works following the May Fourth literary convention do, display any sentimentality: their sole consideration is a material one.

The Commodification of Marriage

The marketable value of women is central to Austen's fiction. Anne in *Persuasion* shows us the way in which a woman is acutely aware that her value decreases in the marriage market as she grows older: she finds herself in "a great tendency to lowness" (*Persuasion* 98).[16] Unmarried women in the time of Austen could not openly display or discuss a materialistic view of marriage, though it was an open secret that such a view was in the minds of the majority. Conversely, it was the cultural norm for married women and men to discuss the topic openly. Married men and women clearly displayed their penchant for quantifying the material value of marriage for a woman in terms of the husband's income. For instance, Mrs. Bennet says: "If a smart colonel, with five or six thousand a year, should want

[15] Mary Crawford in *Mansfield Park* also sees marriage as a means of achieving material benefit; however her characterization is more complicated and requires a deeper understanding. Apart from material considerations she displays a degree of real affection for Edmund Bertram and struggles between love and vanity. In Chapter Eight there is a further discussion of the characterization of Mary.

[16] Mark Schorer asserts that this phrase reveals Anne's situation - "finally the problem of a stock that has a debased value" in the market of marriage. See Schorer 543.

one of my girls, I shall not say nay to him" (*P&P* 29) and John Dashwood has this to say about Marianne to Elinor:

> She was as handsome a girl last September, as I ever saw; and as likely to attract the men. There was something in her style of beauty, to please them particularly. I remember Fanny used to say that she would marry sooner and better than you did; not but what she is exceedingly fond of *you*, but so it happened to strike her. She will be mistaken, however. I question whether Marianne now, will marry a man worth more than five or six hundred a year, at the utmost (*S&S* 227).

Similarly imprudent words are also said by John Middleton, who, when commenting on the Dashwood sisters, says that an unmarried woman must always be in the mode of "hunting" for a husband or, more likely, a wealthy man. When he first receives the Dashwood family at Barton Park, he keeps apologizing to the girls for the absence of young gentlemen in the party and guarantees them a future improvement of the situation (*S&S* 33). When the girls have just become acquainted with Willoughby and make inquiries regarding the gentleman, Middleton emphasizes Willoughby's expected inheritance and says to Elinor: "he is very well worth catching, I can tell you, Miss Dashwood; he has a pretty estate of his own in Somersetshire besides; and, if I were you, I would not give him up to my younger sister" (*S&S* 44). After hearing Marianne's compliments concerning Willoughby, he responds: "Aye, aye, I see how it will be, I see how it will be. You will be setting your cap at him now" (*S&S* 45). Despite Marianne's showing abhorrence of the phrase "setting the cap", he still proceeds in a similarly impertinent style, saying: "Aye, you will make conquests enough, I dare say, one way or other. Poor Brandon! He is quite smitten already, and he is very well worth setting your cap at, I can tell you" (*S&S* 45).

When the value of a marriage is, to a woman, in proportion to the size of the husband's income, her own value is likewise justified by the same standard; that is to say, upon her possibility of marrying a wealthy husband. It has been commented that there was a tendency in the eighteenth century for women to be regarded as a commodity, a woman's

appearance being the standard by which her value was assessed.[17] John Dashwood's words may support such a view: Marianne's beauty can be quantified in relation to the size of her future husband's income, and her beauty directly connected to a "better" marriage. Schorer's discussion highlights the way in which Austen's metaphorical language is replete with allusions to commerce and property. One such feature is Austen's description of the marriage market (Schorer 540-44).

When we turn to Yang, we find a very similar kind of "commercial language" used when discussing marriage in her comedies. In *Swindle*, the identification of marriage with commercial value is discussed plainly by Zhang Xiangfu, a businessman, who emphasizes several times that marital matters work according to the same principles as those of a commercial business. He elucidates this point of view to his wife when he objects to the relationship between his daughter, Wanru, and her new friend, Zhou Dazhang:

LADY ZHANG. He is the scion of an old scholarly family and the young master of a rich household. He studied abroad, he earned a doctorate, he's young, he's handsome, yet you still don't approve of him?

XIANGFU. You listen to me. We don't know whether he's from a good family or not, or whether he is rich or not, or whether he's well educated or not. I have been asking around, and nobody knows much about him. He's basically an unknown product with a new brand name, and such business is not reliable.

LADY ZHANG. Now who said anything about businesss?

XIANGFU. The same logic applies. If you stock your shop with brand new products that you got on discount, it's plausible that you'll make a profit, but the risk involved is too great. There's no shortage of boys in our family, so in the future they can choose their own wives; but Wanru is our one and only daughter, and thus when I select a son-in-law, it has got to be a reliable transaction, not some act of wild speculation.

LADY ZHANG. Who's asking you to speculate? Zhou Dazhang doesn't have a single friend who isn't famous; and as for his relatives, we've heard of them too. Why don't you just take the time to make some inquiries?

XIANGFU. My dear wife, we are not acquainted with the people he knows. And those relatives of his, we have only heard their names and thus couldn't possibly go around to their houses asking for details. He's just a causal acquaintance of Yanhua's, but you have taken such a fancy to him! We have just one daughter. Can you afford to make her bear the responsibility of taking such a risk?

LADY ZHANG. I'm not telling you to rush out and marry her off to him; take your time to ask around….

XIANGFU. Take my time! Take my time! These days, how can we take time over anything? Take

[17] Maaja Stewart asserts that "women become subjects of conversation and are subjected to commodification equally in the words of the fools and those of the heroes". See Stewart 69.

> that piece of property over in the Bund, it now costs 5,000,000, but a just day ago it was only 3,000,000! And what about those two dozen towels you bought? If you had bought them a month ago, wouldn't they have been half as cheap? Foreigners say "time is money." Can you afford to throw money away?
>
> LADY ZHANG. You certainly are obsessed with business! In you mind, even marrying off your daughter and choosing a son-in-law is a business deal.
>
> XIANGFU. What's the difference? When you take a fancy to some product that's a sure money maker, before you can bat an eyelid you've got to snatch it up. In today's market, how many girls are there waiting to get married? But how few quality sons-in-law there are! They all have 3 or 4 *yuan* in capital and think they can make a fortune of 300,000 or 400,000. Our Wanru is already 21 years old; do we have time to make things slowly and ask around? (*Forging* (*Swindle*) 119-20; Act I)

Such a view is not found in *Swindle* alone. The principal storyline of *As You Desire* is the scramble for the inheritance from Great-Uncle Langzhai through marriage. The plot conceived by Lady Qian and Lady Yi is well understood by the relatives as a tactic by means of which they seek to establish the legitimacy of their children, Jingsun and Lingxian, as the beneficiaries of Langzhai's fortune by convincing Langzhai to preside over their wedding ceremony. A potential candidate for the inheritance could be destroyed by a plot, as in the case of Junyu: once her romantic relationship with Binru is disclosed to Langzhai, who disapproves of it, Junyu's chances are ruined.

Metaphors setting marital matters and commerce in parallel are to be found in both writers' works. They depict a social attitude that removes the sacred importance of romance and marriage upheld by the previous generation.

III. Stories of Elopement in Yang's Comedies and Austen's Novels

Yang's comedies present three narratives of elopement: Junyu's parents' elopement in the May Fourth period, an episode which happened in the pre-context of the comedy; Wanru and Dazhang's plan to elope (which is never executed); and Yanhua and Dazhang's elopement, which is critical to the progression of the plot. Examining these narratives, their

resemblance to some of the narratives of elopement in Austen's novels is apparent. In fact, elopement is a critical element that frequently appears in Austen's novels (See Table 5.1).

Table 5.1
The elopement narratives in Austen's novels

Novel	**The elopement narrative**
Sense and Sensibility	• Eliza Williams and John Willoughby (occurred in the pre-context of the story) • Lucy Steele and Robert Ferrars
Pride and Prejudice	• Georgiana Darcy and George Wickham (attempted but failed eventually) • Lydia Bennet and George Wickham
Mansfield Park	• Mr. and Mrs. Price (occurred in the pre-context of the story) • Maria Bertram and Henry Crawford • Julia Bertram and John Yates
Persuasion	• Mrs. Clay and William Elliot

Two elopement stories in particular bear a striking resemblance to those in Yang's comedies, namely the story of Fanny Price's parents, which resembles that of Junyu's parents, and the story of Lydia and Wickham, which resembles that of Yanhua and Dazhang. It will be argued that Yang adopts Austen's comic presentation of the elopement narrative and that, furthermore, she constructs her elopement narratives on the basis of an underlying anti-romantic spirit.

A. Mr. and Mrs. Price versus Junyu's Parents

In terms of subject matter the similarity between *As You Desire* and *Mansfield Park* is striking. The first lies in the primary structure of the works: a poor girl is sent to her relative's home for, presumably, a better life. More arresting is the similarity in the stories of the parents of the female protagonists of the two writers' works: both pairs are eloping couples.

Consistent with Austen's anti-romantic discourse, Fanny's parents, a couple who eloped, are judged negatively from the outset. The narrator clearly regards such a connection as imprudent. Mrs. Price, the former Frances Ward, clearly understood that this marriage would defy her family; therefore "she never wrote to her family on the subject till actually married" (*MP* 4). The notorious affair made Mrs. Price an outcast and disconnected her from her sisters for eleven years. The narrator condemns the elopement on the basis of the damage it had wreaked upon the family: "an absolute breach between the sisters had taken place. It was the natural result of the conduct of each party, and such as a very imprudent marriage almost always produces" (*MP* 4).

The more critical judgment comes from Fanny, their daughter, who is a heroine characterized as having a high moral sense. On her first visit to her own home after having left for Mansfield Park eight years previously, though her heart is filled with hope and affection and she is ready to love her parents after a long separation, she cannot deny, after seeing them, their coldness and impropriety, as well as the messiness of the household they manage. In Fanny's eyes, both are tied down by the marriage, which has eliminated their chance for better education and social exposure. Their connection, having been formed on impulse and having been based purely on sentiment, has left them unprepared, both materially and intellectually, to support a family or to educate and take care of their children, and they are not even capable of imposing order on their domestic environment. Fanny ruefully reflects:

> She could not respect her parents, as she had hoped. On her father, her confidence had not been sanguine, but he was more negligent of his family, his habits were worse, and his manners coarser, than she had been prepared for. He did not want abilities; but he had no curiosity, and no information beyond his profession; he read only the newspaper and the navy-list; he talked only of the dock-yard, the harbour, Spithead, and the Motherbank; he swore and he drank, he was dirty and gross. She had never been able to recall anything approaching to tenderness in his former treatment of herself. There had remained only a general impression of roughness and loudness; and now he scarcely ever noticed her, but to make her the object of a coarse joke (*MP* 389).

As her mother is preoccupied with the household, lacking the assistance of many servants, she bestows little attention on Fanny. It is clear that this situation could have been avoided had she secured a marriage that would have allowed her a better income. Naturally, Fanny compares her mother to her aunts, the two closest female relatives she has lived with. She cannot deny the fact that the poor situation in which her mother lives is the result of this imprudent marriage:

> Of her two sisters, Mrs. Price very much more resembled Lady Bertram than Mrs. Norris. She was a manager by necessity, without any of Mrs. Norris's inclination for it, or any of her activity. Her disposition was naturally easy and indolent, like Lady Bertram's; and a situation of similar affluence and do-nothing-ness, would have been much more suited to her capacity, than the exertions and self-denials of the one, which her imprudent marriage had placed her in. She might have made just as good a woman of consequence as Lady Bertram, but Mrs. Norris would have been a more respectable mother of nine children, on a small income (*MP* 390).

When Fanny pities her mother, she thinks that, if she had not embroiled herself in an infamous liaison, she could have been a better person, someone more like Lady Bertram. Her disapproval of this elopement-style of marriage is obvious. Here Austen's condemnation of the practice of elopement is explicit, consistent with the judgment she passes upon Lydia and Wickham in *Pride and Prejudice*, and echoing Elizabeth's judgment of Lydia and Wickham's marriage, which will be discussed in the next section.

In the elopement narrative of Junyu’s parents, Yang’s judgment of the eloping couple seems much milder than that of Austen’s judgment of Mr. and Mrs. Price. Junyu's parents have died before the story begins. What they did twenty years previously, during the period of May Fourth, was typical of the romantic May Fourth youth. The woman was born into a rich family and the man was a poor painter. The romantic affair was opposed by the family.

This was the reason for the couple's having eloped to Beijing, living there in poverty thereafter. Soon after giving birth to a baby girl, the woman died. The story starts with Junyu's arrival in Shanghai, where she has come in order to obtain material assistance from her maternal uncle and aunt, her father, the painter, having died in middle age.

Though the couple seemingly has a rather sad ending, this cannot be directly attributed to the playwright's having passed judgment on the couple. The reproaches come from the woman's family. For instance, Zuyin blames the fatal fault on Junyu's mother for having "made the wrong friend and ended up falling for a poor artist with no family connections or property . . . not two years into her marriage she was driven to an early grave" (*Desire* 20; Act I); Langzhai, the woman's uncle, accuses Junyu's father of taking his most beloved niece away and causing her death (*Desire* 270; Act III). As the criticism coming from Zuyin is heavily tainted with emotion and bias, and since Zuyin is portrayed as a snobbish and arrogant character, while Langzhai is portrayed as a dominating, patriarchal figure, this judgment cannot be assumed to be the playwright's own opinion. On the contrary, Yang in a sense gives the couple quite a good deal of credit. Though the playwright does not deny the fact that the lives of the couple must have been hard after their elopement, there is no indication that the couple felt miserable and unhappy, or that their hardship had done any ostensible harm to their daughter. On the contrary, Junyu shows respect to her father and mother[18] - Junyu's mother died when she was young, so presumably, this is the result of the influence of her father. There is also proof that he still loved his wife even after she had been dead for so many years. The eloping couple was no doubt short of financial support and lived in hardship, but Yang does not reduce the value of their love or cast doubt upon it. While

[18] For instance, when Junyu first arrives at Zuyin's home, she tells the servant that her father is a famous painter, see Yang *Desire* 198; and she is proud of her father's drawings and takes them as gifts for her uncles and aunts. When she hears that her friend Binru wants to visit her great uncle Langzhai, she immediately shows her disapproval of the proposed visit and asks him not to mention her in front of Langzhai because "He despised my father for his poverty and also accused him of seducing my mother" Yang *Desire* 199. When Lady Mao tells her that Langzhai has always accused Junyu's father of being responsible for Junyu's mother's death, Junyu immediately protects her father's name: "My father had nothing to do with my mother's death" Yang *Desire* 270.

Yang does not judge or devalue the love between Junyu's parents, and the playwright does take up the May Fourth discourse on another issue, namely, the balance of romance and money.

As discussed before, the debate on the balance of romance and money had already begun in the 1920s during the May Fourth era, constructing an argument against the dominant feminist discourse. In such a case, the ridiculousness of elopement in Yang's comedies, works written by a female intellectual during the aftermath of May Fourth, cannot be interpreted merely on the surface level. Yang's elopement narrative offers a more extensive response to the May Fourth discourse, rather than merely mocking the naivety of the fanatical pursuit of romantic love. In the story of Junyu's parents Yang sets out a more complete elopement narrative than may be found in the May Fourth literature. Similar to "Regret for the Past", Yang's narrative provides the difficult situations found in real life that the romantic couple must deal with, and to which Yang does not optimistically give a happy ending. It is clear that Yang is as sceptical as Lu Xun about the enthusiastic pursuit of romance. Given the sad endings that Yang gives her elopement narratives, it would appear that she believes that financial independence is the prerequisite for the pursuit of romantic love. However, such an insight does not justify the existence of her disapproval for this May Fourth couple. In "Regret for the Past" Lu Xun's satire concerning Zijun and Juansheng is explicit: Zijun's innocence and unhappiness, Juansheng's anger and faded love – developing from romantic excitement to mere liability - all of these constitute the underlying theme of the love story. But the sarcasm of Lu Xun is not to be found in Yang's treatment of the elopement depicted in *As You Desire*. Furthermore, Yang's giving the couple such an ending - both of them having already died in the 1940s – symbolically illustrates the fact that sentimental love only existed in the past and was already extinct by the 1940s. In Yang's other elopement tale, the playwright demonstrates a similar viewpoint. Wanru and Dazhang never carry out their plan

to elope. Wanru's interpretation of elopement is undeniably naïve, as revealed in her comparing her proposal to elope with the romantic plot of a movie (*Swindle* 320-22; Act I). In his research on the movie industry in Shanghai during the period 1930 to 1945, Leo Ou-fan Lee highlights the fact that romantic Hollywood movies were one of the most popular genres (*Shanghai* 97-98); and in those popular romantic Hollywood movies of the 1930s and 1940s,[19] the elopement narrative was not rare. For instance, in *It Happened One Night* (1934) and *Heaven can Wait* (1943), elopement forms a central theme. Here Yang injects an element of fashionable culture - the popularity of movies - into her play and in so doing informs her audience that romance in the 1940s is fictitious and to be found nowhere but in the movies.

It may be hard to substantiate the case for Mr. and Mrs. Price as role models for providing the prototype for Junyu's parents, given the fact that there were many eloping couples in the May Fourth period.[20] A literary paradigm of the elopement narrative certainly exists in the literature of May Fourth for Yang to imitate and transform in her comedy. But there is no doubt that there are some shared qualities in both representations of the couples. Therefore it can be assumed that the portrayal of Fanny's parents is one of the reference points for the creation of Junyu's parents, especially in that the structures of both stories are similar: their daughters are sent to live with relatives because of their poverty. A more important concern here is the two writers' treatments of the eloping couples, which show their subversion of Romanticism, albeit in different contexts. While Austen passes a strong judgment upon Mr. and Mrs. Price and advances the belief that bad consequences must result from imprudent connections, Yang presents the hardship experienced by the couple as a result of their elopement in order to negate the romantic ideals of elopement upheld by the May

[19] Leo Ou-fan Lee lists eighteen high comedies of Hollywood movies, which he believes were the most popular romantic comedies in Shanghai of the 1930s to 1940s. See Lee "Zhang Ailing" 41.

[20] Elisabeth Eide argues that Zijun and Juansheng in "Regret for the Past" "may well be a realistic portrayal of the majority of young Chinese intellectuals in 1925", see Eide 116. Wang Zheng notes that "the young student and the senior teacher, the emancipated and the emancipator, embodied the relationship between the new women and the male champions of the May Fourth era". See Z. Wang 66.

Fourth writers who encouraged elopement in works such as *The Greatest Event in Life* by Hu Shi and "Separation" by Feng Yuanjun.

B. Lydia and Wickham versus Yanhua and Dazhang

The case of Lydia Bennet and George Wickham in *Pride and Prejudice* is surely the most impressive example of an elopement narrative among Austen's works. Not only does it include the introduction of a scandalous affair and a detailed account of the settlement of this confrontational situation, it also provides a picture of the domestic life of the couple after they are married. Comparing this elopement narrative with that of Yanhua and Dazhang in the *Swindle*, it may be argued that they possess a number of similar qualities both in terms of plot and characterization. It is reasonable to infer that this episode in Austen's work is a significant point of reference for Yang.

The striking resemblance between the two stories can be first noticed in the plots: the couples elope, eventually return and then, as requested by their families, get married. A noticeable similarity is that the resolutions of these two dramatic crises are closely related to financial issues. While Yanhua and Dazhang return of their own accord after having used up all their money, Wickham and Lydia get married based on an agreement with Mr. Darcy, who consents to lending them financial assistance. Facing similar difficulties, both couples, subjected to their uncles' arrangements (another surprising similarity), take the same action to solve their problems - and unwillingly fulfil their obligations to marry – all except Lydia, that is, who is happy and satisfied with the arrangement.

The characterizations are also similar: Dazhang and Wickham are both impostors who scheme to swindle money through relationships or marriages, disguising themselves as promising young men. Such a villainous persona is actually one of the stock characters in

Austen's novels, as exemplified by John Willoughby in *Sense and Sensibility*. Another typical example is William Elliot in *Persuasion*, who desires to marry Anne for her inheritance. Some of the other examples contain minor differences, such as Robert Ferrars in *Sense and Sensibility*, Henry Crawford in *Mansfield Park* and Frederick Tilney in *Northanger Abbey*, whose interest is not in money but in having imprudent relationships. Yang may be shown to have used elements of this stock character of Austen's in creating the character of Dazhang. Having taken over this approach and the characterizations, Yang indeed executes three modes of subversions in this elopement narrative.

1. The Subversion of Sentimental Romance

In these two elopement narratives a similar subversive spirit is inherent, inverting contemporary literary conventions. Austen clearly expresses her disapproval of sentimental romance through Elizabeth's recollection of Lydia's initial affection towards Wickham:

> When first he entered the corps, she was ready enough to admire him; but so we all were. Every girl in, or near Meryton, was out of her senses about him for first two months; but he never distinguished her by any particular attention, and, consequently, after a moderate period of extravagant and wild admiration, her fancy for him gave way, and others of the regiment, who treated her with more distinction, again became her favourites (*P&P* 285).

Austen bases Lydia's inappropriate attitude towards romantic love on "the mischief of neglect and mistaken indulgence" (*P&P* 280). The novelist denies that this kind of romance stems from true love: "How Wickham and Lydia were to be supported in tolerable independence, she could not imagine. But how little of permanent happiness could belong to a couple who were only brought together because their passions were stronger than their virtue, she could easily conjecture" (*P&P* 312). This kind of sentimental love is in sharp contrast to the ideal romance between Elizabeth and Darcy. In Elizabeth's reflection on her relationship with Darcy:

> If gratitude and esteem are good foundations of affection, Elizabeth's change of sentiment will be neither improbable nor faulty. But if otherwise, if regard springing from such sources is unreasonable or unnatural, in comparison of what is so often described as arising on a first interview with its object, and even before two words have been exchanged, nothing can be said in her defence, except that she had given somewhat of a trial to the latter method in her partiality for Wickham, and that its ill success might, perhaps, authorise her to seek the other less interesting mode of attachment (*P&P* 279).

In Austen's view, romance must be tempered with judgment, and this model of romantic love is indeed found in the romances of many of her heroes and heroines. Some of the heroines, such as Elizabeth, get to know their lover better and return their affection. Other such examples are Marianne Dashwood (*S&S* 378-79) and Emma Woodhouse (*Emma* 475); but some of the couples know and love each other more after experiencing unfortunate incidents, such as Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth (*Persuasion* 240-41), or Catherine Morland and Henry Tilney (*NA* 252). As Kate Fullbrook observes, an ideal mode of courtship exists in Austen's works, which is mainly based on the protagonists' reflection and self-criticism:

> Her men and women are equally presented as changing, in a process of learning to understand and to accommodate the other. The males and females are seen and judged on the basis of a fundamental equality. The same components go into the composition of their personalities, their manners, and their morals. As moral beings they must educate each other for suitability to love, and they must do so equally hampered by the crudities and false advice that surround them (43-44).

This view of romantic love is certainly in great contrast to the sentimental romantic interest upheld in the Romantic Movement, during which, as commented by Southam, the romance depicted in the fiction, "required aristocratic connections for at least one, if not both of the lovers, and this social elevation was to be matched with the peculiar moral elevation of romantic attachment. By this code, love was always love-at-first-sight, springing from the immediacy of 'first impressions'" (Introduction (Heritage Vol.1) 9).

In the case of Yang's anti-romanticism, her attitude needs to be understood within the context of the legacy of May Fourth, especially in relation to the cultural significance of elopement during the May Fourth era. Against such a cultural background, the dénouement of Yanhua and Dazhang's elopement story is a distinctive inversion of the literary paradigm. The couple returns home because they have used up all of their money, and hence are forced

by their families to compromise through the institution of marriage, undergoing a wedding ceremony. The narrative here appears to stand in opposition to the romantic idealism of May Fourth, which viewed love as being of the utmost importance and sacred, surpassing all the things in the material world. Such a view can be found in many of the works of the May Fourth writers, such as *Jia* 家 [Family-1933] by Ba Jin 巴金 (1904-2005), in which both Juemin 覺民 and Juehui 覺慧, after they fall in love with someone of whom their family does not approve, decide to leave their wealthy family and start an independent life even though it will mean hardship. Indeed, Yang delivers only disillusionment to her readers through her elopement narrative, set as it is in an anti-romantic wartime environment in which romance must give way to reality.

2. The Subversion of Father Figures

As mentioned, some portrayals of the characters in Yang's elopement narratives are similar to those in Lydia and Wickham's story. On the other hand, Mr. Bennet and Zhang Yuanfu 張元甫 (the father of Yanhua) are striking in their resemblance because the characters do not conform to type. Both of them make unusual responses to their daughters' elopements in that they are portrayed as cold, indifferent and apathetic in manner.

After receiving the news of his daughter's elopement, Zhang Yuanfu comes to Shanghai, his brother's home:

(ZhANG YUANFU *enters with a cigar in his mouth*)

YUANFU. Hello, Third Brother, Third Sister - oh, Wanru.

WANRU. First Uncle.

XIANGFU. Big Brother, you sure kept us waiting! Did you just get our letter?

YUANFU. The day before yesterday maybe? Or the day before that? I forget.

LADY ZHANG. We expected that you would come today.

YUANFU. At first, I wasn't going to – but it just so happened that I had something to do, Yanhua's mother wanted to find some matching lace for her dress, and said that the

best stuff was in Shanghai. . . .

XIANGFU. Yanhua has run off, and we ‘ve been asking around everywhere for her.

YUANFU. If she ran off, then she’s gone . . .

LADY ZHANG. She ran off with a man.

YUANFU. Of course she went with a man, she wouldn’t have run off with a woman.

XIANGFU. She was abducted by an imposter.

YUANFU. If he tricked her into taking a liking to him, that’s fine.

XIANGFU. Oh, then you’re not going to go after her?

YUANFU. What for? Women aren’t meant to be kept. If you keep them locked up in their rooms and seal the door, they will still escape.

XIANGFU. So you’re just going to let her go?

YUANFU. (*laughs, puffs out smoke rings in the air*) What’s the point of not letting her? She’s already gone (*Forging* (*Swindle*) 166-67; Act IV)

When they have found Yanhua and Dazhang and are about to organize a wedding for them, in order to legitimatize their marital status, and to protect the reputations of Yanhua and also of the family, Xiangfu asks Yuanfu about Yanhua's dowry:

YUANFU. For a dowry? Her own talent is her living dowry, and she can earn two or three percent interest a month on it.

XIANGFU. Shouldn’t you at least give her something?

YUANFU. Not even a cent (*Forging* (*Swindle*) 169; Act IV)

Eventually, the wedding, suggested and organized by Zhang Xiangfu, is planned to take place in Dazhang's home:

XIANGFU. Once we’ve apprehended them and bought them back, we have to hold a belated wedding ceremony for them.

WANRU. Hey! Yanhua is marrying him! Hooligan! Impostor!

YUANFU. （*yawning*) She’s already married, she doesn't need your permission!

XIANGFU. You all have to hurry up! And you have to get dressed up.

LADY ZHANG. I’m not going! Who wants to claim kinship with that old lady [Dazhang’s mother]?

XIANGFU. This is a big event! Who says they’re not going?

YUANFU. (*lazily*) You go, I’m going to stay here and lie down for a while

(*Forging* (*Swindle*) 171; Act IV)

Yuanfu's awkwardly indifferent reaction towards his daughter's imprudent affair is highly reminiscent of Mr. Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*, who acts in a similar manner towards

Lydia's elopement.

Mr. Bennet is not as uncaring as Yuanfu in that at the very least he attempts to search for his daughter. However, just as the narrator observes, "When the first transports of rage which had produced his activity in seeking her were over, he naturally returned to all his former indolence" (*P&P* 309). When he has the letter from Lydia's uncle, who has already settled the matter by obtaining Wickham's consent to marry Lydia, Mr. Bennet is in no hurry to reply. Instead of giving his immediate approval, he takes a walk in the woods. Since his return from searching for his daughter in London, he is unnaturally calm, composed and even ironic. Acknowledging that Wickham is only requesting a small amount of money, he says, "I am only ashamed of his asking so little" (*P&P* 303) and "Wickham's a fool, if he takes her with a farthing less than ten thousand pounds. I should be sorry to think so ill of him, in the very beginning of our relationship" (*P&P* 304). Later, guessing that Lydia's uncle must have generously given financial assistance in paying Wickham, he feels regretful and blames himself for not saving money: “Had he done his duty in that respect, Lydia need not have been indebted to her uncle, for whatever of honor or credit could now be purchased for her. The satisfaction of prevailing on one of the most worthless young men in Great Britain to be her husband, might then have rested in its proper place” (*P&P* 308). He also gives his opinion on Lydia's dowry. When his wife is excitedly preparing clothes for her daughter's wedding, he, like Yuanfu, coldly refuses to pay even a guinea for it (*P&P* 310).

The portrayals of these two fathers' indifferent manners are uncannily alike, and this resemblance is surely one of the indications of Yang's reception of Austen's art. It is reasonable to assert that Mr. Bennet, in a sense, is the prototype of Zhang Yuanfu.

Compared with the tyrannical father figure typically found in contemporary gothic novels, a genre that forms part of the Romantic tradition in literature, Mr. Bennet would no doubt be regarded as abnormal. Indeed in Austen’s novels, there are some tyrannical father

figures, such as General Tilney and Sir Thomas, who are in accord with the patriarchal figure of literary convention.[21] They are authority figures in their respective families and dominate all domestic business and the lives of the other family members. Mr. Bennet's idleness, coldness and his withdrawal from familial concerns provides, then, a contrast. In Mr. Bennet's characterization, Austen's inversion of the conventional Romantic literary tradition is clearly demonstrated. In addition, among Austen's novels Mr. Bennet is not the only example of the impotence of patriarchy. As discussed in Chapter Four, some of Austen's heroines, such as Fanny and Anne, patently despise their fathers. Regarding the novelist's own laughter, other paternal figures are mocked, such as Mr. Woodhouse, who is depicted as being incapable of taking care of himself, needing his daughter to take care of him.[22] According to Audrey Bilger, this treatment of the father figure is Austen's subversion of the social and gender hierarchy (135-41). Bilger's idea is consistent with Janet Todd's assertion: these portrayals of authority figures indeed constitute a demythification, devaluing "the heroic myths men have created for themselves" (2).

Therefore there are several contexts within which to explore the subversive nature of Austen's characterization of Mr. Bennet, including those of literature, society and gender. In all these contexts Austen subverts the established conventions. In fact, the characterization of Mr. Bennet provides a perspective for examining the case of Yuanfu. Yang's subversion is certainly at work in her portrayal of Yuanfu, and contributes to her discourse on May Fourth.

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[21] In Austen's own description of the characterization of General Tilney, Tilney's authority is also termed "parental tyranny" Austen *NA* 252; Claudia L. Johnson suggests that General Tilney is characterized as a tyrannical father figure, who embodies the gothic convention which Austen wants to emphasizes in the novel, see C. L. Johnson 35; and Sir Thomas is the "figurehead for the sublime" and his pairing up with Lady Bertram as his wife embodies Edmund Burke's aesthetic of sublime and beautiful: Sir Thomas strikes his children with horror, while Lady Bertram represents femininity, who is just like a doll, weak and little, needing her husband's advice all the time; in addition, Johnson explains that Burke pays extreme respect to paternal authority; see C. L. Johnson 97-100. Eileen Gillooly agrees with Johnson's view and thinks that Sir Thomas is "a tyrannical parent of near-gothic proportions", whose despotism finally forces Julia to choose the path of elopement. See Gillooly 92-93.

[22] A further discussion of the characterizations of Mr. Woodhouse, which demonstrates Austen's mockery of father figures, can be found in Bilger 135-39.

According to the conventions of the May Fourth elopement narrative, the paternal character is a supposed to be an obstacle to the pursuit of freedom. Yuanfu, in contrast, is the ideal paternal figure who shows no intention of prohibiting Yanhua's marriage, as long as she is happy with her choice. Furthermore, he expresses his trust in his daughter, regarding her as having the strength to support herself and hence not to require a dowry from her father. The freedom and trust given by Yuanfu to his daughter is actually what the May Fourth intellectuals called for in their protests against traditional marriage. However, as we have seen in the story, Yuanfu is portrayed as an unpleasant character, whose attitude towards his own daughter is unreasonably cold and indifferent.

The characterization of such an unconventional father in the May Fourth literary context would seem to reflect the doubt which Yang casts upon the May Fourth discourse. Yuanfu is in fact an inversion of the May Fourth literary paradigm. In the mind of the May Fourth intellectual, Yuanfu represents the ideal patriarch: one who would not oppose the right of the young to decide for themselves in matters of love and marriage. In the character of Yuanfu, Yang Jiang presents us with a figure whose nature encapsulates the consequences of such a disengagement on the part of a father from the marital affairs of his children. Though Yuanfu seemingly gives his daughter absolute freedom and trust, this is not based upon a high moral motive but is the result of indifference. The reader, therefore, sees Yuanfu's coldness and indolence rather than his respect and love for Yanhua. The playwright presents the May Fourth ideal figure in such an unpleasant way in order to undermine that ideal on the basis of its inherently contradictory and ironic nature. In so doing Yang deprives the May Fourth generation of their dream and ultimate goal. Yang also provides another father figure to set alongside Yuanfu - Xiangfu - who demonstrates Yang's other inversion of the literary paradigm. Xiangfu, in contrast to his brother, intervenes heavily in his daughter's freedom to pursue romantic love, but apparently shows his care for her. He is represented as a snobbish

businessman possessing a "money-marriage" associated theory, in sharp contrast with the May Fourth intellectual's romantic morality. Yet, ironically, the judgment given through his business acumen turns out to be right: Dazhang actually is an impostor, whose real motive in approaching Wanru was to gain access to her inheritance.

In Yanhua and Dazhang's elopement are depicted several inversions of the May Fourth convention. In her reception of Austen's comic method, as well as in that of her subversive spirit, Yang seeks to deconstruct the May Fourth tenets regarding the sacred nature of romantic love and the demonization of patriarchy. Given the resemblance in terms of the comedies and of the anti-romanticism shared with the elopement narratives in Austen's novels, Yang's integration of Austen's comedic aesthetic lies both in the presentation of the work in its foreground and in the subversive spirit embedded in its background.

3. The Subversion against the Dominant Feminist Discourse of May Fourth Era

As discussed above in 'the Nora-esque story', the elopement narrative and the discourse of women's liberation are all interconnected. Yang, in overturning the conventional elopement narrative, deconstructs and destabilizes what had become accepted as the achievements of the May Fourth writers in the cause of women's liberation.

The behaviour and manners demonstrated by the female protagonists of the elopement narrative in *Swindle* in 1940s Shanghai show us women who no longer believe in the sentimental love for which their previous generation strove passionately. Wanru superficially suggests an elopement, but as a fictional, playful ploy; Yanhua's aim is only material benefit. What they refused to do wasidentify romance with individual emancipation and thus to regard it as a rescue offered by their lovers to enable them to leave their tradition-bound family, as their previous generation had done (see Chapter Four). This refusal subverted the

literary paradigm created by the May Fourth writers, and, more importantly, established a basis on which Yang could construct her critique of the May Fourth discourse, denying the "achievements" of that social movement.

In fact, these female protagonists are not the only characters revealing Yang's deconstruction of the idea of women's liberation. The characterization of Mrs. Zhang, which displays a connection with that of Lady Bertram, demonstrates the way in which Yang caricatures feminine figures in order to destabilize the seeming tranquillity of the domestic space, as discussed in Chapter Five. In fact, more than just producing an unsettling sense in the spatial setting, the characterization of Mrs. Zhang also reflects Yang's attempt to create her own discourse on May Fourth. Through the portrayal of this dependent and languid woman, Yang also exhibits the true outcome of the social reforms, such that after about two decades' effort, it is no more than an endeavour of fantasy. Therefore in this characterization Yang's reception of Austen's comedic art is evident. While Austen uses the portrayal of Lady Bertram to undermine the prevailing construction of femininity upheld in contemporary literary practice, Yang strikes a blow against the success of the women's liberation.

The invalidity of the perceived success of women's liberation is not solely a discovery of Yang's but is actually a problem which was widely discussed in the post-May Fourth era. For instance, a writer published an article in a women's journal to suggest a view that the liberation of middle-class and upper-class women was "nothing more than a slogan with which to adorn their lives, and that it gave upper-class women an excuse to hire lower-class women to do their housework" (qtd. in N. Huang 105).[23] A famous writer in 1940s Shanghai, Guan Lu 關露 (1907-1982), who was also the editor of the popular women's journal *Women's Voices* 女聲, also criticizes the over-simplicity and invalidity of women's liberation. In

[23] The comment is from a writer called Wen Ying, who published the article in *Women's Voices* in 1942. For a further discussion of the social response to women's liberation in the May Fourth era, see N. Huang 104-10.

Nicole Huang's discussion Guan Lu expresses her dissatisfaction with the "achievement" of the women's liberation of May Fourth patently in an article written in 1942:

> She [Guan Lu] argued that the May Fourth discourses on equality and individual rights were misleading. She stated that Chinese women had not yet achieved complete liberation, due to an over-simplistic interpretation of the notions of equality and freedom. According to Guan Lu, many women enjoyed equality as a right without being socially responsible; the same women also viewed freedom as pure indulgence. This tendency, she asserted, was most common among "self-proclaimed progressive and liberated women" (N. Huang 114).

Therefore, Yang's characterization of Mrs. Zhang was in response to contemporary social discourse, part of a trend that sought to deflate the image of these so-called "liberated women".

Yang also provides portrayals of another type of liberated woman: Yanhua and Lady Mao. Yanhua takes up employment, as a man would do. However, Yanhua's sharing of her "new women" experience tells us that she does not really like being a working woman (*Swindle* 350; Act I). Xiangfu's description of the life of the working woman also gives a very unpleasant impression of it: "Girls are expected to be just like men and go out and earn a living too. But how can men and women be equal when women still bear the responsibility of pregnancy and child rearing?" (*Forging* (*Swindle*) 117; Act I) The solutions that Xiangfu suggests for this new women's predicament are to revive the custom of arranged marriage and to encourage women to adhere to the traditional Confucian doctrine of "Three obedience and four virtues", which does not accord with women's independence and equality. It is difficult to identify Xiangfu's view with Yang's, as his opinion is obviously subjective. His ideas are at the other extreme, just like the blindly Westernized "lady of the parlour". This mocking view is not to be identified with that of the playwright. However, through Xiangfu's description, Yang shows us from another perspective the unwelcome result of this liberation. Although the experience of those working women is not same as that of a *taitai* like Mrs. Zhang, each exhibits the invalidity of women's liberation in its own way.

In the characterization of Lady Mao Yang displays another extreme. Depicted as a completely "liberated" woman, Lady Mao is busy all the time with her urban life as well as charitable works. However, she neglects her duties as a wife and even establishes a very unequal relationship between herself and her husband: she dominates her husband in both familial and financial matters. Moreover, her unkindness towards Junyu exposes her true self underneath her charitable pretence. This caricature exhibits the failure of women's liberation, as it aims to show that the movement did not emancipate a woman in such a way that she could become a better person, but rather that the individualism promoted by the movement was over-emphasized and hence distorted, resulting in the production of a group of selfish, hypocritical women for whom a sense of being a "new woman" was mere vanity.

Yang Jiang and Jane Austen and their female characters alike employ their laughter to subvert authority. While the laughter ascribed to the female characters is a weapon with which to mock at the suitors and father figures, to the writers it is the power to subvert the authority in a more extensive manner – the hegemony dominant in the socio-historical, cultural and ideological contexts. Yang Jiang's reception of Austen's art is manifested not only in the narrative of marriage and romance of her comedies, but more critically in her subversive spirit. Inheriting Austen's anti-romanticism, Yang seeks to embark upon a discussion which is more intimate to herself and to her Chinese audience. Just as Southam's comment on Austen cited above, she actually plays upon the devices and situations of Austen's style of romantic and comic stories and adjusts them to her comedies, enabling her to explore the more intimate and personal concerns, the concerns uniquely belonging to the intellectuals in the post-MayFourth period.

Part III

The Transformation

Chapter Seven

Disillusionment as an Aesthetic Order

Part II of the thesis discussed Yang's reception of Austen's comedic aesthetic. Yet her reception is not a mere replication of Austen's works but also contains within it a transformation. Yang subtly reshapes her comic art in light of her own artistic interests as well as the aesthetic order that was shaped by the surrounding environment of wartime Shanghai. This chapter will examine one of the orders of that transformation, one which is related to different writers' views on human effort. The endings of Austen's and Yang's stories show that the two writers exhibit completely different attitudes to the subject of human effort. We will see that Yang's disbelief in human effort is expressed using Austen's comic style but with subtle alterations.

In Part I of this chapter I shall examine the difference between Yang and Austen in terms of their portrayal of human effort in their works. After discussing their different outlooks on human effort, in Part II, I shall discuss further the standards whereby the writers pass their judgements on people's manners. In Part III the endings of the two writers' works will be examined in order to investigate what is the prevailing power in Yang's comedies like the place of human effort in Austen's works, which controls whether people have happy or sad endings. To explain Yang's transformation of Austen's comedic aesthetic, Yang's consciousness of being an intellectual will bcussed in Part IV. I will argue that such transformation of Austen's art is indeed Yang's response to the national crisis.

I. Self-criticism

A distinct difference between Austen and Yang's writing style is their different view of human ability. While Austen exhibits a deep belief in the value of human effort through her works, Yang, in contrast, expresses her distrust of it, deconstructing the fantasy of the power of mankind.

In Edwin Muir's treatise on categorising novels in terms of their structure, Muir, as mentioned in Chapter Five, brands Austen's novels as accomplished examples of the dramatic novel, an assertion supported by Yang ("Li Yu" 104). A prominent characteristic of this genre is the intertwined nature of characters and plot. According to Muir, the progression of a plot is developed on two planes: the changes in characters and the changes in situations. Their relationship indeed is established in reciprocal terms. Hence, in Muir's words, "character is action, and action character" ("Dramatic" 47).[1] With such a relationship the characterization of the characters is a process which goes hand in hand with the progression of the action, and the combination of both contributes to the development of the plot (Muir "Dramatic" 56). Therefore in works of this genre the denouement is "not only of the action but of the characterization; the last touch which gives finality and completeness to the revelation of the figures" (Muir "Dramatic" 58). Muir's theory underpins the importance of the development of characterization in Austen's works, suggesting that the changes in the characters, probably through self-criticism, are represented prominently in her novels.

Self-criticism is in fact frequently presented as a critical element of characterization in Austen's novels, especially for the heroines, and Austen's belief in human effort is therein manifested to the full, as the faculties of self-reflection and self-rectification are required to complete this action. In C. S. Lewis's discussion, "undeception" or "awakening", which

[1] Relevant discussion can be found in Muir "Dramatic" 45-47.

occurs to almost all Austen's heroines, completes the most significant part of their characterization; this awakening moment sees the consequence of bringing the heroines "self-hatred" or "self-contempt" (362). This reflection, as Lewis observes, is very critical to the development of the story, for it, "structurally considered, is the very pivot or watershed of the story" (363). Indeed, the heroines' self-contempt and consequently self-rectification usually leads to a happy ending, that is, marriage. In Muir's theory this self-rectification gives "completeness to the revelation of the figures" and thus induces such an ending:

> The end of any dramatic novel will be a solution of the problem which sets the events moving; the particular action will have completed itself, bringing about an equilibrium, or issuing in some catastrophe which cannot be pursued farther. Equilibrium or death, these are the two ends towards which the dramatic novel moves. The first, for various reasons, generally takes the form of a suitable marriage ("Dramatic" 58).

L. J. Potts also observes such a theme in Austen's works and maintains that self-criticism occurs in the case of all heroines in Austen's novels.[2] Potts regards Austen's novel as "internal comedy", emphasising that its comic element is manifested in "the thoughts of a single character" (35).[3] In other words, all these critics observe Austen's strong belief in and emphasis upon human effort, whereby her characters are able to reflect upon and rectify their faults and eventually change their fate.

Indeed, nearly all Austen's heroines change their fate after becoming aware of their faults and determined to correct themselves. By the time Marianne Dashwood reproaches herself for being too indulgent in her waywardness and wretchedness after Willoughby has gone and neglectful of her sister's misery, she determines to rectify herself. She gains, as Elinor observes later, "an apparent composure of mind, in being the result … of serious reflection" (*S&S* 342). It is the mature Marianne who receives Colonel Brandon's love and hence has a happy marriage as her denouement. Similarly, Elizabeth Bennet "grew absolutely

[2] Lewis maintains that self-criticism happens to all of Austen's heroines except Fanny Price and Anne Elliot, both of whom are "of no 'consequence'". See Lewis 363-69. But Potts thinks that self-criticism occurs to all of Austen's heroines. See Potts 127.
[3] Another relevant discussion of this subject in Potts's treatise can be found in Potts 126-27.

ashamed of herself" (*P&P* 208) when she found that in her prejudice against Darcy she had let herself be taken in by the rumour spread by Wickham. Elizabeth sees her own folly and vanity in this incident, and this helps her to resolve the misunderstanding about Darcy and hence return his affection for her. Emma also reaches a moment when she realises the improper nature of her attitude towards Harriet and her neighbours. It is also the moment when she understands "the deceptions she had been thus practising on herself, and living under! The blunders, the blindness, of her own head and heart" (*Emma* 411-12) and her love for Mr. Knightly which leads to the denouement of their marriage. Catherine Morland, influenced by gothic novels, has an over-romantic fantasy of Northanger Abbey and excessive imagination as to the previous horrors which might have occurred there. At her moment of awakening, Catherine feels anxious about her own folly and guilt towards Henry Tilney because she has misunderstood General Tilney as a murderer, and thus she determines to correct her fault: "Her mind made up on these several points, and her resolution formed, of always judging and acting in future with the greatest good sense, she had nothing to do but to forgive herself and be happier than ever" (*NA* 201). Furthermore, it is this clarity that leads to the realisation of "Henry's astonishing generosity and nobleness of conduct" (*NA* 201), serving as the inducement to her marriage to him. In the early part of *Persuasion*, Anne Elliot's awakening is reflected in her regret that she was too submissive in her acceptance of Lady Russell's advice to relinquish the engagement to Wentworth: "She had been forced into prudence in her youth, she learned romance as she grew older - the natural sequel of an unnatural beginning" (*Persuasion* 30). This reflection causes Anne eventually to confess her feelings to Wentworth after they meet again. Among all Austen's novels, *Mansfield Park* is probably the only one in which the protagonist, Fanny Price, appears not to have this type of self-reflection.

Austen has not limited the awakening experience to her heroines. Additional

characters in Austen's novels share such an awakening experience, and henceforth are provided with an opportunity to amend their conduct. With regard to the characters discussed in Chapter Five and Chapter Six, such as Lady Bertram and Mr. Bennet, their eccentricities are demonstrated through Austen's subversion of literary and social conventions. While their eccentricities have been already discussed in the previous chapters, their moment of awakening and self-rectification is also worthy of discussion here, which provides a salient perspective from which to observe Austen's belief in human effort.

Mr. Bennet's coldness and detachment is not only reflected in his attitude towards Lydia's elopement but towards his family in general. In fact his detachment is in evidence from his first appearance in the novel. His particular indifference to his daughters' marital prospects is not typical of a parent's response. In contrast to his excessively expressive and anxious wife, the image of Mr. Bennet's coldness becomes all the more emphasized. When Mr. Bennet attempts to avoid unpleasant business, he retires to the library to read.[4] The library is a shelter for Mr. Bennet in which to withdraw himself from his guests and even his own family, a place in which he can enjoy "leisure and tranquillity" (*P&P* 71). Austen portrays Mr. Bennet's withdrawal as an evasion of his responsibility to correct his wife's impropriety. In Elizabeth's painful reflection she acknowledges her father's fault and perceives the negative impact which this neglect has extended to his daughters, exposing them to humiliation:

> Elizabeth, however, had never been blind to the impropriety of her father's behaviour as a husband. She had always seen it with pain…. she had never felt so strongly as now, the disadvantages which must attend the children of so unsuitable a marriage, nor ever been so fully aware of the evils arising from so ill-judged a direction of talents; talents which, rightly used, might at least have preserved the respectability of his daughters, even if incapable of enlarging the mind of his wife (*P&P* 236-37).

In addition, Austen condemns the ineffectual love of Mr. Bennet. Elizabeth reflects:

[4] For instance, Mr. Bennet desires to get rid of Mr. Collins and then goes back to the library as soon as possible, Austen *P&P* 71.

> Her father, captivated by youth and beauty, and that appearance of good humour which youth and beauty generally give, had married a woman whose weak understanding and illiberal min, had very early in their marriage put an end to all real affection for her. Respect, esteem, and confidence had vanished for ever; and all his views of domestic happiness were overthrown (*P&P* 236).

Therefore, Mr. Bennet's cold humour, though indeed enlivening the comic atmosphere in the domestic space of the work, has a seriously didactic purpose in the context of the development of the story.

To correct his passivity, Lydia's elopement provides an opportunity for Mr. Bennet to undergo a turning-point. It can be seen that he blames himself throughout this event for his carelessness in allowing Lydia to go to Brighton. He admits to Elizabeth that he ought to have taken her advice. He feels anger towards Lydia. This explains why, when Lydia and Wickham arrive at Longbourn, he receives them in an unfriendly manner. It is possible to interpret this regret as an indication of a deliberate turning point in his usual disregard and passive attitude towards the impropriety of his wife and daughters. There is evidence of his altered state in his disciplining of Kitty after Lydia's elopement:

> Kitty, I have at last learnt to be cautious, and you will feel the effects of it. No officer is ever to enter my house again, nor even to pass through the village. Balls will be absolutely prohibited, unless you stand up with one of your sisters. And you are never to stir out of doors, till you can prove that you have spent ten minutes of every day in a rational manner (*P&P* 300).

The elopement serves as an opportunity provided by the author for Mr. Bennet to redress his conduct. Therefore, while this character reveals the author's subversion of a typical paternal figure of the literary mainstream, his amendment in the later part of the novel demonstrates the author's belief in human effort to effect change. Austen in Mr. Bennet's self-rectification illustrates an ideal father figure, who knows how to present his affection and care without compulsion, a balance between the extremes of tyranny and indifference.

For Lady Bertram, such an amendment occurs in the later part of the novel, in which she experiences the biggest disaster of her life. Her son contracts a serious illness; hence both of her daughters eloped. The disaster gives her a chance to reflect; in her alarm she realises

the need to right her fault. It is the turning-point of her character and the point at which her femininity is truly complete. Before this, Lady Bertram's feminine image can be perceived as a charade. Her feminine qualities are superficial. Though they fit into the contexts of literary and social conventions, for the reader the picture of her which is given does not suggest a tangibly real feminine model. In addition to her indolence, it is in her attitude towards her children that the reader cannot find the integral part of feminine maternal affection. However, after the unfortunate incidents occur, she becomes more affectionate towards Fanny,[5] and she suddenly experiences feelings of maternal love when she sees the seriously ill Tom return home - "the real solicitude now awakened in the maternal bosom" (*MP* 427). The maternal side is further demonstrated when she receives Fanny, who has just returned to Mansfield Park after a long visit to her own home: "Lady Bertram came from the drawing room to meet her; came with *no indolent step*" (*MP* 447; emphasis added). Rather than establish Lady Bertram as an indifferent woman, Austen gives her an opportunity to amend herself. Austen shows that Lady Bertram and Mr. Bennet are not villainous in themselves, but serve as portraits of ordinary people who make ordinary mistakes. When Austen provides the opportunity for them to redress their actions, she illustrates what was wrong before as well as her belief in the transforming power of human effort.

However, this self-reflection is not a characteristic of either of Yang's comedies. The portrayal of the characters suggests that people are in a changeless state: the characters initially appear on the scene in the portrayal of their general selves and remain in a constant representation of the same until the end of the play. For instance, in the past Langzhai objected to the romantic relationship of Junyu's parents because of his obstinate stance against free love, whereas in the current situation of the play the old man seems to have

[5] It is stated that her letters to Fanny are written "in the language of real feeling and alarm", in which she tells Fanny she needs Fanny's comfort; therefore she no longer sees Fanny merely as a person serving her. See *MP* 427.

changed in that he gives his consent to the relationship between Junyu and Binru (*Desire* 292; Act IV). However, this approval is based on Langzhai's discovery of Binru's background - he is the grandson of Langzhai's good friend. In light of his friendship with his friend, Langzhai is pleased to let Junyu marry Binru. The change is in the circumstances but not in Langzhai's internal view of romantic love. The pretentious Jingsun courts Junyu and then decides to abandon his fiancée Lingxian. However, he gives up his romantic interest in Junyu at the end of the play. As is consistent with the case of Langzhai, Jingsun does not develop a sudden appreciation of the importance of fidelity, but his final realisation is that Junyu never had a romantic interest in him. In another example, that of Wanru, her change - suddenly losing romantic interest in Dazhang - seems different from the above examples. She accepts the news of Dazhang and Yanhua's affair with extraordinary calmness. Her composure illustrates that her change does not depend on altered circumstances. The theme of the permanence of human beings is clearly demonstrated in Wanru's case, as the consistency of her character is maintained all through the development of the narrative. From the outset she is depicted as a naïve, frivolous girl; therefore her love for Dazhang lingers momentarily and her affection can disappear swiftly.

Whilst self-criticism, let alone self-rectification, is not a factor in Yang's characterization, the similarities between Yang and Austen's characters are evident, and thus Yang's taking over of Austen's characters undoubtedly exists. However, in Yang's reception, this integral part of Austen's characterization - self-criticism - is missing. Such a conspicuous void in her reception could not possibly be unintentional. Hence, the two pertinent questions should be: firstly, with what content will Yang replace Austen's belief in human effort? Secondly, what message is conveyed through this replacement? These questions may lead us to another question. Certainly a moral standard is embedded in Austen's works as a reference point for her passing judgment upon her characters. It might be said that it is Austen's belief

in human effort that allows her to exhibit both aspects of her characters: they fail, but ultimately they successfully reach the standard. She does think that people do wrong, but she also believes that they are able to right the wrong. However, this is not the case for Yang. Despite her evident indebtedness to Austen, Yang refuses to give her characters a chance to change, as Austen does. Hence the question is: does Yang merely distrust human effort, and so forfeit the role of self-rectification in her characterization? Or is it that her characters do not have the same moral standards as Austen's, so that the boundary between right and wrong is blurred and self-criticism is thus difficult to represent? A discussion of these standards in Yang and Austen's works will be outlined in the following section.

II. The "Grammar of Conduct"

As discussed in Chapter One, a standard of proper behaviour is apparent in Austen's works. Lewis suggests that the "unyielding core" of Austen's novels are the "principles" or "seriousness" in the works (370). Yang is no doubt cognizant of and in agreement with Lewis' observation.[6] What is the nature of this standard? Do Yang's comedies contain such a standard?

Based on an etymological reference, Tony Tanner confirms that in Austen's novels a connection exists between this standard of propriety, "decorum, morality and good manners", (18) and the rule of property, which is briefly discussed in Chapter Five. Tanner asserts that Austen's exhortation of the necessity of propriety serves to ensure that the maintenance of the rights of property, a discipline for running the system of the gentry class, remained the principal ideology of Austen's time. The existence of the connection between propriety and

[6] A discussion of C. S. Lewis' view of Austen's "seriousness" and Yang's adoption of this view can be found in Chapter 1.

property can further be verified if we consider the ideal marriage in her works, which is a paradigm that matches the heroines with both a sense of propriety and the propertied heroes.[7] Although it is not necessarily true that the urgency of moral order in Austen's works is strictly limited to the cause of the propertied class, the term "propriety" suggested here by Tanner and his further explanation of the term is noteworthy. In the light of her own standard of propriety it is surely a feature required of Austen's characters; hence she provokes laughter at those who fail to reach this standard. As Tanner argues, while "propriety" has its expression in the form of good manners, Austen's greater concern is with the morality embedded in its core. To explain further the morality in Austen's novels, Tanner takes John Locke's concept of "Civility" and "Ceremony" as referred to in his treatise *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693). This is the theory with which Tanner believes Austen must have agreed.[8] Locke maintains that " 'Civility' is 'a Christian duty' which leads to 'the true art of living in the World', while 'excess of Ceremony' could be a fault in good manners"; therefore, he assumes that "Civility'" must prevail over "Ceremony" (Tanner 26). This explanation suggests two perspectives regarding the examination of Austen's morality. The first is the close connection between Austen's morality and her religious background. Secondly, Locke's theory points to Austen's distaste for "Ceremony", or pretence. This observation explains Austen's mockery of literary and social conventions, as well as hypocrisy, for these conventions are exaggerated by an "excess of ceremony". The pursuit of ceremony also betrays the integrity of human nature, which is proclaimed in Christianity. In her works Austen possesses an understanding that this morality must be restored and maintained in order to revive the harmony of the currently chaotic social environment.[9]

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[7] The relevant discussion can be found in Tanner 17-19.
[8] This discussion can be found in Tanner 24-29.
[9] In addition, Alistair M. Duckworth points out that Austen's emphasis on morality is a reflection of her fear that "economic considerations will outweigh and overcome moral considerations in human conduct". See Duckworth 88.

Indeed, Tanner is not the only critic who has noticed the connection between Austen's morality and her Christian background. Nardin observes that, to Austen, "morality takes precedence over propriety" (Nardin) and moreover *Pride and Prejudice* "posits a fairly close connection between the code of propriety and the sort of social conduct Christian morals would dictate, yet the connection is not perfect" (Nardin). Lewis's discussion of Austen's "seriousness" also highlights its relationship with Austen's Christian outlook and maintains that such seriousness is in the interests of Austen's comic art, stating that "the hard core of morality and even of religion seems to me to be just what makes good comedy possible" (370). Lewis maintains that in this respect, the "principles" in Austen's works are "the grammar of conduct" which "anyone can learn" and "everyone must learn" (370). This assurance and adherence to a "grammar of conduct" explains why Austen treats the people who fail to meet this standard as objects of amusement, since to her they are absurd in their denial of the duty and integrity of mankind.

Yang Jiang also agrees with the existence of seriousness and moral principles in Austen's novels. The playwright's awareness of Austen's comedic aesthetic provides a perspective from which we may interpret the playwright's own laughter in her comedies. Although Yang does not share the same religious background as Austen,[10] it is apparent that Yang's laughter is similar to Austen's. The principle behind her laughter is Yang's distaste for the exaggerated adherence to, and the superficiality of, May Fourth traditions in both literary and social contexts, and also her distaste for the hypocrisy of manners. The difference between Yang and Austen is that Yang never demonstrates an ideal model as Austen does. For instance, while Austen laughs at Lydia and Wickham's ignorant, imprudent and sentimental

[10] Yang never admitted that she believes in any religion. But it is possible that she was influenced by Catholicism, as she studied in Catholic schools. In an interview which took place when she was elderly, she said: "When I was in Qi Ming, I was still a little girl. Though I have not been baptized to become a Catholic, I have acknowledged the moral value that 'I must love myself as well as others'. It is the influence of the love of the Sisters." Yang "baisui".

love, she also presents Elizabeth and Darcy as the ideal couple. At the end of every Austen novel, the readers must be presented with a picture of the hero and heroine's being happily married, and that the romance between them serves as a model for the ideal couple. However, no such paradigm exists in Yang's works. In this respect Yang differs from her Western counterpart, as she creates no ideal couple in her comedies. Therefore the reader has no positive example by which to comprehend her view of the ideal romance and marriage.

In *As You Desire* there is no scene that exhibits the affectionate and intimate relationship between Junyu and Binru, by which we can identify them as a couple. Actually, there are not many scenes providing information about the way they relate to one another. If it were not reported by the characters themselves, the audience would have hardly any understanding of their relationship as lovers. In *Swindle* the relationships between Wanru and Dazhang and between Yanhua and Dazhang are incompatible with the ideal of love. While Wanru's love for Dazhang is so innocent and superficial, that of the other two is by nature deceitful, merely acting out of greed and jealousy. Apart from these protagonists, if Binru can be counted as a protagonist, it is difficult to find any affectionate, happy couple in the plays, representing Yang's ideal of romantic love and marriage. Lady Yin is shown to be manipulative and scheming towards her husband, whilst Zuyin is involved in infidelity; Lady Mao quarrels with Zumao all the time and shows no care for her henpecked husband, who in turn never dares to reveal his real feeling to his wife. As for the other couples in the play, such as Lady Qian and Qian Shoumin, and Lady Yi and Zuyi, the playwright does not provide much information on how they relate to one another. As discussed in Chapter Five, in *Swindle* the relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Zhang is not on an equal footing. Perhaps the only affectionate couple to be found in Yang's plays are Junyu's parents, who died before the story even begins. This is the central concept which Yang wants to share with her audience: that romance is dead.

In Yang's play, we can observe a "grammar of conduct", but it is ambiguous, for the ideal is yet to be exhibited. This absence of an ideal is indicative of Yang's disbelief in human effort or in people's ability to behave correctly. Therefore, while Austen clearly displays her "principles" and establishes them as the arbiter of the happy denouements of her characters, Yang eschews this approach. How does Yang fill that void when she so distrusts human effort? What might be the reason for Yang's disillusionment with human effort?

III. The Denouements

Yang's comedies evolve within the comic convention that the protagonists are eventually granted a wedding, and in some cases two pairs of protagonists are given a double wedding.[11] Such a paradigm is certainly found in each of Austen's novels: the hero(es) and the heroine(s) are all happily married at the end of the story, but that similarity should not be confused with the different treatment which the two authors describe in the post-marriage circumstances. Firstly, it would be wrong to assume that Austen's novels are simply fairy tales. As a sober ironist, Austen would never have believed that the heroes and heroines would live "happily ever after". However, she is not interested in showing the difficulties that these characters will encounter after marriage. Her interest is in the characters' courtship and in settling all of them into a state of neat harmony at the end. The central concept of her novels is that the good people, with all their kind-heartedness and innocence, should have good consequences, and villains should suffer from their evil endeavours and be expelled from the social circle. Regarding the problems which a newly wedded couple might possibly chance upon, Austen gives them a way out. For instance, the tension between Elizabeth and

[11] According to Andrew Stott, marriage serves as "the conclusion toward which the traditional comic narrative inevitably moves, a cultural symbol of the harmonious symmetry and the resolution of troubles". See Stott 72.

Lady Catherine presumably would have continued, but Austen resolves the situation: "After a little further resistance on the part of his [Darcy's] aunt, her resentment gave way, either to her affection for him, or to her curiosity to see how his wife conducted herself" (*P&P* 388); the problematic situation after Fanny and Edmund's wedding of the couple's living with Mrs. Norris is to be solved by the arrangement whereby the odious Mrs. Norris is exiled with the abandoned Maria to another country "remote and private, where, shut up together with little society, on one side, no affection, on the other, no judgment, it may be reasonably supposed that their tempers became their mutual punishment" (*MP* 465); henceforth Mansfield Park is in total harmony.

The harmonious ending of Austen's novels is not to be found in Yang's comedies. It is impossible to regard the heroines in her comedies as having a settled denouement, even though the endings are characterized by the generic convention of a wedding or double weddings.

In the case of Junyu throughout the play she feels unsettled in all her uncles and aunts' families. Furthermore, it is not guaranteed that in her supposedly final resting place, Langzhai's home, she can secure a harmonious existence; at the beginning of the final act – an episode that depicts how Junyu gets along with Langzhai, it is seen that Langzhai, a patriarchal figure, has not yet been exposed to Junyu's subversive laughter. In addition, Junyu faces potential dangers, namely the intrigues with which she is surrounded by her scheming relatives. These dangers become increasingly apparent when she inherits Langzhai's wealth.

A more significant reason for the sense of insecurity that emerges from her happy ending is Fate.[12] Junyu is not a devious character, but neither is good conduct a feature of her characterization. She is not shown to possess the high moral values of a Fanny Price, or the

[12] The idea that the endings of Yang's comedies are determined by the rule of fate is discussed by Edward M. Gunn. Please see the discussion in Gunn 233.

tolerance and understanding of an Anne Eliot. Her good outcome is not the result of her own efforts, such as self-criticism. The power to transform life in her favour comes from the patriarchal figure of Langzhai. This is not to imply that the playwright upholds the power of patriarchy. Her belief is rather in the power of Fate.

The heroine, Junyu, does not fit into the patriarchal context. Her romantic affair with Binru is a potential crisis which will possibly lead to her losing Langzhai's trust. This dangerous situation arouses alarm when Langzhai hears from others about her romantic relationship and he becomes violently angry. However, the crisis is immediately solved when Binru, at the last moment, is discovered to be a grandson of Langzhai's good friend and as such becomes a welcome guest. It is nothing more than luck that brings about a change in Junyu's circumstances. Yang's scepticism is thereby revealed.

Fate is the most significant force conveyed in Yang's comedies and becomes the belief which Yang attempts to share with her wartime audience. Yang gives a different version of fate from that of Greek tragedy. While fate in Greek tragedy is only interested in giving a tragic ending to the hero, Yang shows us a comprehensive vision of fate: fate is the extreme power which decides whether people have fortunate or unfortunate outcomes. In doing so, she demonstrates this one principle through two perspectives, as shown in the two plays. While *As You Desire* exhibits the power of fate in a positive way, i.e. bestowing good fortune on the heroine, *Swindle* is just like a mirror of *Desire* in that both hero and heroine fail to fight against fate and cannot have what they long for. The outcome may be different, but the message remains the same. In addition, unlike Greek tragedy, Yang's comedies are concerned with the power of fate over, not the hero, but ordinary people. As discussed in Chapter Two, Schopenhauer makes it plain that the highest tragedy consists in the fact that the misfortune is brought about by ordinary circumstances. The most tragic aspect manifested by this kind of tragedy is that tragedy is inevitable for all people (Schopenhauer 1: 329).

Drawing on Schopenhauer's theory, we can see the unfathomable power of fate portrayed in Yang's comedies. In Yang's description of fate it is an uncontrollable power from which no one can escape.

The ending of *Swindle* is suffused with a strong tragic sense and one which is worthy of further discussion. One may argue that such a sad ending for the newly wedded couple, Yanhua and Dazhang, is not unique among the comic conventions, but that it can also be found in Austen's novels, as in the case of Wickham and Lydia. Laurie Kaplan suggests that the wedding of Wickham and Lydia is also unconventional in the comic genre. Comparing Shakespeare's *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1589-1593) with *Pride and Prejudice*, Laurie Kaplan analyses the unconventional denouement of double marriages – that of Wickham and Lydia and Darcy and Elizabeth – in Austen's work:

> At the end, in both the play and the novel, the double marriages *seem* to restore order and smooth the social fabric both in Milan and Meryton, but in the novel, Austen avoids scenes of reconciliation and instead questions if it is possible to restore order through marriage…. She [Austen] rejects in particular a vision of social concord and brotherly affirmation at the expense of thematic exposition; she avoids the sentimental romanticizing of conventional endings.… Austen's ending is more punitive, suggesting as it does a serious critique of what is forgivable behavior and a realistic vision of social discord and disunity. Wickham remains, in Launce's parlance, "vanished" - banished from social interaction with the Bennet and Darcy families, but still there as a dependent relation, a less than noble kinsman (Kaplan).

As discussed by Kaplan in relation to Wickham and Lydia's marriage, Austen directly passes judgment on the villain by inverting the comic convention that marriage is the eventual solution. To illustrate this view, Wickham cannot reconcile his relationship with society through marriage, thus not contributing much sense of harmony to the balanced congruity at the end of the story; but neither is the harmony of the conclusion of the novel ruined, since Wickham and Lydia are not the hero and heroine of the story, but are in a sense the villains, and they are eventually expelled from the closed community. Comparing the denouement of this couple, the marriage of Dazhang and Yanhua in *Swindle* should be considered as far more subversive. They are not merely an eloping couple misbehaving: they are also themselves the protagonists.

Yanhua and Dazhang are both characterized as fighters challenging their own fate throughout the play. They employ all means to fight their way out of poverty and their lower-class background. At the moment that they think they have achieved success, their dreams are immediately disillusioned, because neither of them is as rich as they would like to claim. In the final scene, wry laughter is evoked in Yanhua, who angrily proclaims that she must continue to fight against her fate, while Dazhang tries to persuade himself to submit to Fate:

YANHUA. (*looking around*) What a cultured family! (pointing outside) That was your wise and proper, talented and virtuous mother? And down below is your uncle's magnificent department store? And that happy woman was your sister! (*laughing bitterly*) My, Dazhang, you really did transform your environment! I admire your skill in transforming your environment!

DAZHANG. Oh, Yanhua, you are in charge of your destiny! I admire your skill in controlling fate!

YANHUA. Fine! You are right! I really understand what you mean! You say fate is what I control, right? I can't blame you, am I right?

…….

DAZHANG. Oh, for heaven's sake, Yanhua, you are an extremely intelligent person, how could you blame me? If I were a god, if I wanted something, would I not have that which pleased you? But this is beyond my control!

YANHUA. It's beyond your control? Hm, everything is controlled by you! But what I want to do, I definitely do!

DAZHANG. Right, you can conquer fate!

YANHUA. Including you! Starting with you! Remember that!

DAZHANG. Me? I can only transform . . .

YANHUA. From now on, I will supervise your transformations! Including you! Starting with you! Remember that!

DAZHANG. Yanhua, how right you are! You're right about everything, everything! If we depend on my ability to transform the environment, and combine it with your knack for controlling fate, we can be successful wherever go!

YANHUA. (*sarcastically*) Coming from your mouth, everything is positive!

DAZHANG. Nothing that comes from the mouth is dependable, so from now on we must watch out, since the world belongs to us! (*pouring tea, he forces* YANHUA *to clink glasses with him*)

YANHUA. (*drinking*) This is lukewarm tea!

DAZHANG. Just pretend it's wine! (*the crowd enters, and everyone helps to move the table and set up the feast*)

DAZHANG. . . . Today is a day of great festivities! My father-in-law hasn't made any efforts for me yet, but my uncle-in-law has already found me a good official position! (YANHUA *looks down and stands to one side*) My bride is of course not as pretty as my mother! But she is so obedient that if you took a lantern and went and searched, you wouldn't find another like her. In this life of mine, what now won't go my way? Today is my wedding feast, and it is really a happy feast! (*Forging* (*Swindle*) 176-77; Act V)

A sense of bitterness permeates the conversation between this newly wedded couple. Their powerlessness in the face of fate is abundantly depicted in their struggles against their destiny. The last few lines of Dazhang's ironic words convey the protagonist's bitter outlook on the world – where he finds no way out in his destined life, he can only use his imagination to transform the miserable reality. Such a tragic tone has elicited a controversial discussion regarding the genre of the play. The comic sense is predicated on the comical behaviour of this "perfect-match" between two impostors, while the tragic tone arises from Fate, which serves as the underlying force driving these men and women into their helpless and ridiculous situations.

It is apparent that such a surrender to fate never appears in Austen's works. Conversely, as observed by some critics, Austen even parodies fatalism as a literary convention in sentimental fiction.[13] Yang does not provide us with a settled ending reminiscent of Austen. Fate in Yang's plays is endowed with enormous power and is depicted as being mightier than sentimental fiction. While sentimental novels suggest that the heroes and heroines are destined for a tragic fate, Yang's mirroring of Fate in her two comedies should be understood as her illustration of the supremacy of Fate: it can produce calamity (like that experienced by Yanhua), but also good fortune (like that of Junyu). Fate is characterized as unstable and mighty. Yang's plays progress in accordance with the uncertainty of this principle. In the light of this we might say that Yang presents us with something which is very different from the Chinese intellectual convention, since "the intellectuals" as a social class have been used to prescribe the direction in which society is to develop. Before exploring this subject, a more critical question which needs to be discussed is: what has brought about such a disillusionment with human effort in Yang's comedies?

[13] C. L. Johnson 31. Johnson exemplifies this point in Austen's juvenile work "Love and Friendship", maintaining that this is a preparatory sketch for *Sense and Sensibility*.

IV. Between May Fourth and the War: the Disillusionment of an Intellectual

Edward Gunn's 1980s treatise *Unwelcome Muse: Chinese Literature in Shanghai and Peking 1937-1945* gives a very insightful analysis of Chinese wartime literature. Gunn classifies this literature into three categories: the reflection of the decline of May Fourth romanticism, the return of tradition, and anti-romanticism. This form of classification highlights May Fourth as a core perspective to which the different types of narrative correspond. According to Gunn, Yang's plays, along with Qian Zhongshu's and Eileen Chang's fictions and essays, are classified as anti-romantic works, which recoil from the movement and from any social discourse. As Gunn observes:

> They did not identify themselves with Western romantic writers, or any writers of any movement. They did not attempt to embody in their lives any notion of romantic values. No idealized conceptions appear in their works, not of heroic characters, revolution, or love. Instead there are disillusionment, the exposure of fraud, and compromise with reality. The climatic gives way to the anticlimactic. Emotionalism gives way to restraint, irony, skepticism. Slogans are replaced with wit. Unlike other writers before them who stayed well outside the bounds of romanticism, they propounded no social goals or panaceas (198).

Gunn's theory is based upon Edwin Muir's analysis of British writers after the First World War. In his assertion of the significant influence of the war on these writers, Muir discusses the atmosphere of a pre-war society which was dominated by prosperous development and optimism, which mainly contributed to the faith in the future reflected in the literature. In light of such confidence the subsequent outbreak of war triggered disillusionment:

> After this came the War and a quick contraction of all hopes into the hope that the nation would survive. There was not for the time being, nor for several years afterwards, any question of improving the state of society; nor was there much effective faith in the possibility of improvement: the disillusionment caused by the War was too deep. This disillusionment found expression in novels which tried to show that mankind was not up to much and would never be up to much, or that the fathers of the War generation were to blame for the fate of their sons and daughters (Muir *Present Age* 24).

Muir goes on to suggest that the first reflection of this disillusionment was scepticism, which is: "a comprehensive scepticism regarding society and the various programmes designed to

improve it, a doubt not only of certain conceptions and certain ideals, but of all conceptions and all ideals. The writer was left alone with his reactions, and he felt that he could not trust anything else" (*Present Age* 24-25). Muir asserts that the writers did not even trust human emotions, as emotions were considered to be connected to human hopes. Similarly disenchanted by a disastrous war, Gunn connects this scepticism found among the British writers with what he observed in the Chinese anti-romantic writers, highlighting this as a factor causing the writers' distrust of the literary movement that preceded them and a lack of interest in making any alternative suggestion for the social cause.

Such a view provides an adequate explanation of the circumstances in which Yang's voice is lost or to some extent obscured in her comedies. Yang laughs at her characters, but gives no suggestion as to what their proper conduct might be. She gives no suggestion for social improvement. This is the result of her scepticism: the total denial of the value of human efforts and ideas, and such a disillusionment is closely related to the socio-historical environment.[14]

There is no doubt that a commonality exists, as suggested by Muir, between the literary-social context during and after the First World War and that of 1940s wartime China. The influential impact of the May Fourth Movement and its partial success did animate the students and intellectuals' hope of social improvements, saving the country from its backward predicament. Their achievement also gave the intellectuals confidence in taking the leading role in the cause of social reform. When the War of Resistance broke out and the nation was upon the verge of subjugation, it is not difficult to imagine the disappointment of these intellectuals and their disillusionment with their efforts more than two decades before.

For the intellectuals, disillusionment with May Fourth actually occurred much earlier

[14] Nicole Huang notes that Eileen Chang, another wartime writer who is also categorized by Edward Gunn as an anti-romantic writer, similarly experienced this kind of disillusionment and a feeling of being lost in the wartime period. See N. Huang 124.

than the outbreak of war in 1937, and it can be traced back to a series of incidents between 1925 and 1927 when demonstrators, including young students and unarmed workers, were brutally attacked.[15] While some May Fourth intellectuals realised that politics was imperative to bring about cultural transformation and turned to Communism, some May Fourth leaders cast doubt upon their leading roles. Their roles were therefore diminished from *xuezhe* 學者, or scholar and *zhishi jieji* 知識階級, or intellectual class (i.e. those culturally distinguishable for leading the common people) to *zhishi fenzi* 知識分子, or knowledgeable elements, turning into the "mere fragments of a defeated revolution" (Schwarcz 149). Though disillusionment had occurred and May Fourth intellectuals were disappointed by these political events, as Vera Schwarcz asserts, the intellectuals never really gave up even amidst the war: “May Fourth intellectuals survived many new political upheavals. Sometimes, these upheavals turned against the May Fourth legacy, nearly crushing its spokesmen underfoot. Intellectuals, however, never quite forgot the meaning of the original enlightenment movement. When it was possible, they tried to reintroduce its goals into the Chinese revolution” (239).

According to May Fourth intellectuals, the initial Japanese invasion was a chance to reignite peoples’ desire for social improvements as a means of saving the country. However, after the outbreak of the war, the consciousness of national survival was aroused. Based upon this, collective identity became much more desirable than the emancipation of the self; the preservation of the cultural heritance was much more critical than the iconoclasm of tradition for reinforcing peoples’ national confidence in facing the battle. Therefore the ideas advocated in May Fourth were not applicable to the wartime situation. However, in such a circumstance May Fourth intellectuals still attempted to continue the spirit of the movement

[15] For a relevant discussion, see Schwarcz 145-48. Schwarcz argues further that, while the incidents of 1925 and 1926 only led intellectuals to evaluate the movement and try to readjust their orientation, the bloody attack in 1927, resulting in thousands of victims, threw the intellectuals into total despair.

by transforming these ideas to fit the wartime context.[16] In other words, the majority of May Fourth intellectuals made every effort to keep the spirit of the movement alive in every context throughout the decades. However, this is not the case in Yang's comedies. Despite the disillusionment among the intellectuals, it did not generally impede their momentum to reform the country, yet in the case of Yang's comedies disillusionment had extinguished hope.

In his treatise upon the May Fourth Movement, *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness: Radical Antitraditionalism in the May Fourth Era,* Lin Yu-Sheng discusses a deep-rooted conception in the Chinese intellectual mindset, which he terms the cultural-intellectualistic approach. This approach was the prevalent mode for the May Fourth reform, as well as the reform of the preceding generation in late Qing. It emphasises:

> the necessary priority of intellectual and cultural change over political, social, and economic changes … It implies a fundamental belief that cultural change was the foundation for all other necessary change. It assumed, further, that cultural change - a change in the system of symbols, values, and beliefs - could best be achieved through changing man's ideas concerning his total conception of, and relationship to, both cosmic and human reality; that is, changing his world view (Y.-S. Lin 26-27).

Lin maintains that the approach has its deep-rooted origin in classical Confucianism, which attaches great importance to the human mind for both its faculties of morality and intelligence, giving ordinary men the ability to follow the norm of "social and moral order," established by the emperor or the sage. Lin believes that the concept of "mind" as a self-generating power is embedded in the mindsets of Chinese intellectuals including those of May Fourth, and the anthropogenic constructivism, which emphasises human power for establishing and following the social, political and moral orders, was dominant in May Fourth.[17] That is to say, in their radical efforts and promotion of anti-traditionalism as a

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[16] For instance, the intellectuals suggested a "national self-awakening," remarking that the two concepts of "self" and "nation" were in fact very similar. This altered their attitude toward idols such as "nation" which rather than being destroyed in May Fourth were in fact promoted as the basis for building up faith during wartime. See the discussion by Schwarcz 233.

[17] Lin Yu-sheng asserts that the May Fourth intellectual's attitude towards social reform was closely related to anthropogenic constructivism, which is "a belief that the social, political, and moral orders of the world are intentional constructions by sage-kings and sages of antiquity", see Y.-S. Lin 51; an ordinary man must look up to the model established by the sage-kings and the sages and "rely on his mind to understand these orders, and

means of reform, the May Fourth intellectuals followed the morality of the Confucian intellectual tradition (Y.-S. Lin 42-55).

In such a context Yang's comedies are radically subversive, not only for the May Fourth intelligentsia, but also of the fundamental Confucian tradition of Chinese intellectuals, as they deny human power, giving no suggestions for social improvement, but rather merely trust in Fate. One may argue that Yang's comedies perhaps adopt the pessimism of Taoism rather than the constructive nature of Confucianism. However, is it possible to conclude that Yang's comedies are simply ideologically closer to Taoism than Confucianism, which would explain their subversiveness? If so, how do we perceive her discourse on May Fourth as it exists within the plays?

Yang's comedies are concerned with social causes. Although, on the face of it, her plays do not directly respond to the Japanese occupation, they are closely related to a movement which had been dominant in the social and political discourses of modern China since it began, and which remained a strikingly controversial topic in wartime. As discussed above, intellectuals were still eager to promote the May Fourth Movement during war time, and the movement's extraordinary impact upon and position in modern Chinese history provided an ideal focus for their political concerns. The parties encoded the movement in accordance with their own political vision. This political encodement of the movement is still in practice to date, but it had an especially significant impact on the tense wartime period.[18] Yang's inclusion of May Fourth discourse in her comedies therefore contradicts the view that the plays are apolitical. The misunderstanding that her plays are apolitical arises from her emphasis upon Fate, a principle constructed apart from human effort and ideas and independent of the traditional model suggested by the Chinese intelligentsia. The unreliable nature of Fate imbues Yang's comedies with a great sense of uncertainty, challenging the

conduct his life accordingly", see Y.-S. Lin 54.

[18] For the relevant discussion, please see Schwarcz 230-50.

usual practice of interpreting the playwright's voice and thus hardly distinguishing it at all.

Fate as a New Form of Faith

A sense of uncertainty is strongly prevalent in Yang's plays, particularly in their endings, which makes them seemingly incomplete. In *As You Desire* Junyu's denouement, as discussed earlier, is unsettled. Both Langzhai as regards his character and the home he provides are not a reliable shelter for Junyu. The inheritance and marriage prospects seemingly secured by Langzhai are still uncertain. Junyu's scheming relatives also increase the challenges to the harmonious status of her life in prospect. Though the story seems to end with a very satisfactory and conventional ending, a sense that danger lurks somewhere in the future for the protagonist is not difficult to detect. The undercurrent of the play, with its potential conflicts, characterizes the ending of the play as more of the beginning of an unknown. However, even if it is argued that the ending for Junyu is nevertheless established conventionally, the uncertainty in the denouement of *Swindle* is explicit. The miserable tone struck in the wedding scene and the newlyweds' determination to continue to struggle with their fate make this final scene more like the beginning of another adventure story.

Muir observes a similar tendency toward endings which are like the beginning of another story in British writers' works after the First World War. Muir discovers that this kind of unconventional ending stems from the writers' appropriation of the big change and the chaotic post-war status. There are two implications of this ending: "first, that the actions and thoughts of contemporary people, set down no matter how honestly, do not contain a complete meaning; secondly, and as a consequence of this, that life must be changed in some way" (Muir *Present Age* 39). That is to say, the writer sees that the meaning of every object – probably the recovery of coherence – is developing and, as Muir observes, hopes it will

obtain in the future (*Present Age* 41). In the light of this, scepticism derived from the idea that fate is the key principle in the work, not in its function of inducing uncertainty, but as belief: "hoping that somehow good would come of ill, and clinging to honest doubt as a form of faith" (Muir *Present Age* 30), becomes a realistic way for the writer to face the turbulent world. Muir suggests a fundamental key to reading this new kind of narrative: "it ceases to be a form and becomes a process" (*Present Age* 41). That is to say, to fully understand it, we need to realize that it is in essence not merely a kind of narrative but also an exploration of meaning in which the reader is invited to join the writer. In the case of Yang's comedies, in Shanghai theatres, the playwright indeed invited the audience to join her in exploring the meaning of life and also the possibility of recovering the order of society. To Yang, the stories in her plays are unfinished and therefore provide no answer. This is a personalized narrative in response to the war. This unanswerable status also constitutes the ambiguity of the genre of her plays. While the meaning is futuristic, the nature of the tone is uncertain. It is a different presentation from that of Austen, who tells a complete story in which every character and situation will be delicately resolved at the end. Austen represents reason and rationality, but Yang signifies fate and uncertainty.

In the light of this, it is not justified to say that Yang does not exhibit any awareness of being an intellectual in her comedies for the reason that she does not display any social concern and any attempt to lead the social course. She is conscious of her role as an intellectual. She just does not convey the deep-rooted traditional “truth” – the belief in human effort - in her comedies. Instead, she shares another “faith” and explores the meaning of life with her audience. In a sense she suggests a direction for her audience, not in the form of an answer, but rather in a great number of questions: what would fate bring to the nation and to every individual who was now watching the play?[19] These questions were indeed the concern

[19] Yang’s intellectual consciousness will be further discussed in Chapters Eight and Nine concerning her

of the wartime audience who shared the same chaotic social situation as the playwright. It is this empathy found in the plays, which gained resonance with the audience, and which made Yang's comedies so well received in wartime Shanghai.

As discussed in this chapter, the difference in the belief of human effort offers itself as a basis for one of the aesthetic orders with which Yang transforms Austen's comic art. While, in Austen's novels, self-criticism and self-rectification act as the turning-point of the story, what Yang portrays focuses only on how the characters fail to achieve such a standard without the possibility that people could eventually achieve it. In the light of this, transformation is a necessary part of Yang's response to Austen's comic art. Rather than any principle determining whether a character achieves a good denouement, Yang emphasizes the power of Fate, a very unstable rule, serving as the main energy in the plays, and offers suggestions for the future to her wartime audience who shared with her the same feeling and experience of disillusionment.

Yang's denial of human effort and trust in an unreliable force make her voice ambiguous, as it is outside the usual understanding and practice of Chinese intellectuals and literati who tend to believe in self-generating human power and thus try to provide suggestions for the course of society. In this sense Yang's replacement of human effort with Fate as the principle behind human action and its consequences is indeed subversive, challenging the Confucian tradition of Chinese intellectualism as a whole. Although it is subversive and outside the norm of intellectual convention, the social concerns and the May Fourth discourse in the plays deny the recognition of their apolitical and pessimistic potential. Yang suggests Fate as a new form of faith, and the playwright invites the audience to explore

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relationship with Shanghai.

a satisfactory ending together.

Chapter Eight
Detachment (I)

- The Distance between Yang Jiang and Her Comedies

Yang's relationship with the heroines of her plays provides a very pertinent perspective from which to discuss her relationship with the comedies. The discussion in Chapter Four of Yang's reception of the subversive laughter of Austen's female characters also provides a background for discussion in this chapter. As we shall see, whilst the reception is evident, transformation also occurs: detachment as an aesthetic order significantly shapes the bond between writer and heroine in Yang's comedies, contrasting greatly with the writer-heroine bond in Austen's novels. Similarly, detachment can be observed in the connection between the heroines and their spatial setting. Although the spatial setting of Yang's comedies shares similarities with that of Austen's, it is important to emphasise that the basis of the construction of the domestic spaces in the two authors' works is distinctly different. Such a difference induces the sense of detachment in Yang's characters.

In this chapter Yang's sense of detachment as an aesthetic order and as the indication of her transformation of Austen's comedic art will be investigated, firstly, by comparing these two writers' relationships with their heroines/female protagonists; and, secondly, by examining the heroines'/female protagonists' relationships with the domestic space in the works.

I. The Female Protagonists

Austen's strict and unbending moral outlook is revealed in her works. Austen's voice and judgment, as many critics have observed, is identified mostly with that of the narrator and very often with that of the female protagonists. Austen establishes a close relationship with her protagonists, adhering to a perspective which is close to that of the heroines. In the light of this some critics even assert that these heroines are the alter egos of Austen.[1] While it is in a sense arbitrary to assert an absolute identification between Austen and her heroines, it is impossible to deny that the narrator and heroine share the same point of view. As L. J. Potts asserts, "the whole story is seen through their [Elizabeth Bennet, Emma Woodhouse and Anne Elliot] eyes…" (126)[2] In the case of those heroines characterized by a high sense of morality, such as Fanny and Anne, as C. S. Lewis maintains, Austen even gives them her "complete approbation" (365). That is to say, the novelist's connection with those female protagonists is demonstrated by the moral values which they share.

Some critics assert that it is due to the completeness of her irony that Austen intentionally distances herself from the subjects of her mockery as well as from her readers.[3] Nevertheless, this notion, as argued by Eileen Gillooly, would be justified only if a critical element of her feminine humour is ignored – the closeness of her relationship with her heroines. Gillooly maintains that this "prevents her [Austen] from being a fully committed ironist" (80).

Gillooly suggests that it is possible to categorise Austen's novels into two types: the

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[1] Rachel Lerman asserts that Elinor, Elizabeth and Fanny are the alter egos of Austen, who are portrayed from the writer's own experience. See Lerman.

[2] Some other critics also discuss this point, for instance, Edward Said, who maintains that Fanny Price occupies the position of an observer of how the narrative proceeds. See Said 103; and Alistair Duckworth notes that the story of Marianne is seen mainly through the eyes of Elinor, see Duckworth 110.

[3] For instance, Marvin Mudrick highlights the distance between Austen and her subjects as well as her readers and argues that this disengagement helps Austen to establish irony as her defence. See Mudrick Ch1.

"sunny novels" and the "problem novels". This division rests on the characterization of the heroines and of their bond with the writer. In the "novels of education" or the "sunny novels", including *Pride and Prejudice, Emma* and *Northanger Abbey*, the female protagonists will reach a moment of awakening and subsequently achieve self-rectification to complete the progression of the plot and the development in their characterization. In addition, Austen maintains a "constant, steady, and slight psychological distance" (Gillooly 79) from these female protagonists. The stories of these novels are mostly narrated through the perspectives of the female protagonists. The distance between the female protagonists and the narrator only appears when they inevitably become the objects of the narrator's humorous assault when their faults are exhibited. However, her judgment on these female protagonists demonstrates that Austen's voice is still engaged with the scene, as shown in Elizabeth's self-reflection when she has long been prejudiced against Darcy but has come to mistrust Wickham's innocence:

> She grew absolutely ashamed of herself. - Of neither Darcy nor Wickham could she think, without feeling that she had been blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd.
>
> "How despicably have I acted!" she cried. - "I, who have prided myself on my discernment! - I, who have valued myself on my abilities! who have often disdained the generous candour of my sister, and gratified my vanity, in useless or blameless distrust. - How humiliating is this discovery! - Yet, how just a humiliation! - Had I been in love, I could not have been more wretchedly blind. But vanity, not love, has been my folly. - Pleased with the preference of one, and offended by the neglect of the other, on the very beginning of our acquaintance, I have courted prepossession and ignorance, and driven reason away, where either were concerned. Till this moment, I never knew myself" (*P&P* 208).

Based upon this reflection, as observed by Yang Jiang, Austen's laughter has been informed by the earlier scene: when Elizabeth mocks Darcy's pride and vanity,[4] the author is actually mocking the heroine, as her prejudice against Darcy is definitely constructed on the basis that he hurt her pride and vanity when they first met at the ball ("You shenme" 130). In such a case, Austen's voice presents itself through her judgment upon the female protagonists, that is

[4] Yang "You shenme" 130; the episode of the novel to which Yang refers here can be found in Austen *P&P* 57. In the novel the difference between "pride" and "vanity" has been discussed and distinguished a few times, see Austen *P&P* 20; 57. But in Yang's interpretation in this critique she instances the fact that Elizabeth mocks Darcy for being both pride and vanity.

to say, she connects with the scene but occasionally changes her position from the perspective of the female protagonists to that of an outsider. In the "problem novels", including *Sense and Sensibility,*[5] *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*, the female protagonists, as Gillooly observes, are different in their characterization. They have no obvious faults to correct, and Austen holds a very close relationship with these protagonists, empathically identifying herself with them.[6] Therefore, as Gillooly argues, the female protagonists in both types of novels are treated with sympathy in the narrative, indicating a distinctive "affective closeness" (80) in the relationship between her and the female protagonists. Given that Yang's reception of Austen's comic art is substantial, one might expect that an Austen-style writer-protagonist bond would also be found in Yang's comedies. In fact, this kind of closeness is not observed. Yang appears to weaken the connection between herself and the female protagonists as a way of disengaging herself from the scene. It is essential to stress that this aspect of Yang's comedies, being divergent from Austen's style, suggests that her reception of Austen is not a mere replication, but includes a process of transformation. Comparing the writer-protagonist bond between Austen and Yang reveals an aspect of Yang's transformation in the form of detachment.

Yang's detachment from her female protagonists can be analysed on the basis of several aspects. In terms of laughter, Yang's laughter is not always provoked in the same sense as that of her protagonists. While Junyu laughs purely at her relatives' ridiculous manners, Yang laughs at those people within a larger context - the conventions of May Fourth, challenging the validity of the views supporting the movement to reform the nation throughout the previous few decades. It is difficult to regard Junyu as an alter ego of Yang.

[5] It is believed that Gillooly here only refers to Elinor, as Marianne is certainly a character who is depicted as being a character capable of self-criticism and hence of rectifying herself, and as a result of her final improvement she achieves a happy marriage. This subject has been discussed in Chapter Seven.

[6] Gillooly discusses the fact that Austen's relationship with the female protagonists of the "problem novels" is complicated. While Austen mostly identifies her voice with those of these protagonists, she does not completely exempt them from humorous treatment, and at such moments the identification with them is disrupted. See Gillooly 80.

Such a detachment is further evident in several circumstances in which Junyu's mental activity is not adequately addressed, which makes Junyu's laughter enigmatic - sometimes we cannot be sure if she is even aware that she is laughing. Junyu's laughter is unwelcome to her relatives and even feared by some. However, the intriguing point is that Junyu intentionally softens the expression of her laughter, demonstrating that she attempts to hide it. For instance, she laughs at Zuyin's unreasonable choosiness in selecting a secretary, but her laughter is obscured by a whisper (*Desire* 204; Act I). Furthermore, when she mocks the nude girl in her father's picture for being as alluring as Zuyin's secretary, the stage direction states that she says it "softly" (*Desire* 206; Act I). It seems that this is the protection Junyu makes for herself in order to disguise the extent of her subversion, but her attempts at softening the expression of her laughter bring up a number of questions: does she have no power to check her laughter? Does she perhaps intentionally relinquish this power to tease her relatives by only dimly revealing her laughter? It should be noted that the playwright gives us no information on this subject. Further ambiguity lies in Junyu's denial of her laughter. When she laughs at Zuyi's exaggerated Western style and criticism of Chinese life and is asked by Zuyi, "Oh, this is not a joke. What are you laughing at?" She immediately denies her laughter: "I didn't laugh" (*Desire* 219; Act II). The same response appears in the following scene:

> (Junyu types and suddenly stops, giggles. Jingsun enters the stage.)
>
> JINGSUN. Junyu.
>
> JUNYU. (looking at Jingsun) Oh.....
>
> JINGSUN. What are you laughing at?
>
> JUNYU. I didn't laugh.
>
> JINGSUN. I heard you laughing.
>
> JUNYU. Really? What was I laughing at?
>
> JINGSUN. You were laughing at my dad.
>
> JUNYU. Who said it?
>
> JINGSUN. I was waiting outside the room and then came in just after he left. I was listening outside the door.

JUNYU.	Oh! You avoid him. Are you afraid of his asking for your help in typing his book?
JINGSUN.	I don't know how to type. Even if I knew, he would not ask me to help. He wants me to focus on my homework.
JUNYU.	Oh, you college students are so busy with the homework.
JINGSUN.	Don't laugh at me.
JUNYU.	Did I laugh?
JINGSUN.	Don't hide from me. I definitely saw you laugh!
JUNYU.	You wrong me! I actually want to cry! (*Desire* 222-23; Act II)

Again, Junyu denies her laughter. While her intentionally subdued expression of laughter can probably be explained by her awareness of people's uneasiness, the equivocality in the denial, however, is much more complicated, and it is not clear whether she is aware that she has laughed. Her response to Jingsun's inquiry into her laughter seems innocent: "Really? What was I laughing at?" "Did I laugh?" and in the end she desperately cries out: "You wrong me! I actually want to cry!" Her straightforward denial and seemingly honest replies contribute an air of ambiguity to the scene, confusing the audience and the readers. Furthermore, no stage direction indicates that Junyu has in fact laughed when Jingsun's second inquiry into the reason for her laughter takes place. But Jingsun maintains: "I definitely saw you laugh!" Therefore is it possible to assume that Junyu sometimes is unaware of her laughter? Subconsciously, is she actually crying or laughing? For Junyu functions more as a device, which connects the families and delivers the scenes, than as a protagonist, having an independent subjectivity and autonomy in the scenes.[7] Therefore it is hard to identify Yang's personal perception with that of Junyu.

As far as Yanhua is concerned, it is implausible that her laughter should be identified with the playwright's. It is clear that the voice of the playwright cannot be found simply in Yanhua or in any other characters in the play. As John Benjamin Weinstein comments in connection with *Swindle*, "there are no fixed positions: everyone is at times the joker and at

[7] John Benjamin Weinstein asserts the same idea, namely that Junyu is more like a device in the play to portray the scenes which take place in every family. See Weinstein *Directing* 150.

times the brunt" (*Directing* 152). While Junyu is rarely a character to be laughed at and thus a connection between her and the playwright is, on a level, not difficult to surmise, the authorial voice in *Swindle* is hard to detect and is sometimes lost. The undefined position that Yang takes in the plays does not mean her laughter is totally lost; however, the refusal to identify with any specific character's perspective further confirms Yang's alienation from the scene, exhibiting her entrenched reluctance to conform to any specific point of view and again her subversion of the May Fourth conventions.

Austen's bond with her protagonists is noticeable, and it underlies Austen's perspective in the works, a fact that Yang cannot possibly ignore. Therefore Yang's transformation of this writer-protagonist bond is no doubt accomplished with a specific end in mind. Moreover, an additional reference to the May Fourth literary conventions is essential to an interpretation of Yang's detachment. During the May Fourth period there was a literary practice of identifying a literary character with its creator. Elisabeth Eide exemplifies such a practice in the tendency of May Fourth intellectuals such as Hu Shi 胡適 to connect Dr. Stockmann in *An Enemy of the People* (1882) with his creator Henrik Ibsen. To Hu, both Dr. Stockmann and Ibsen are the "victims of public opinion, but victims with sufficient moral integrity and strength of character to accept their role with composure" (Eide 11), and Hu saw himself as having the same attitude. Eide's analysis provides a basis for Weinstein's theory of a triadic relationship of the May Fourth theatre, and he maintains that a rapport was produced between the playwright, the character and the spectator (*Directing* 40-45). Hence, central to Yang's detachment from her characters and the scene is not only a departure from Austen's style but also a subversion of a May Fourth literary convention. In this convention the connection between the writer and his/her character is typically tight and the writer's vision is easily identified. The following discussion of the characterization of Elizabeth Bennet, Mary Crawford and Yang's female protagonists will further demonstrate how Yang has transformed

Austen's comedic art in accordance with the aesthetic of detachment in terms of the female characters' laughter.

Elizabeth vs. Mary/Junyu vs. Yanhua

Some critics claim that Mary is another version of Elizabeth on the ground that both of them have a witty and lively character. However, while the latter has learnt discipline and judgment by the end of the novel, the former never does.[8] The two characters and their different endings show a mirror image of the writer's view of humour, demonstrating the positive side and negative side of humour used by these two characters in order to emphasise the important union of wit and judgment.

As discussed in Chapter Four, Elizabeth is well aware of her propensity to laughter, with the plain declaration that "I dearly love a laugh" (*P&P* 57). Though sometimes she controls it, the reason for checking her laughter is clearly informed by the context. Her theory is that the purpose of laughter is to plague and punish people: "I hope I never ridicule what is wise or good. Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies do divert me, I own, and I laugh at them whenever I can" (*P&P* 57). Based on Elizabeth's theory of laughter, in particular her notion that "follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies" are inevitably the objects of ridicule, Austen apparently laughs with the protagonist at the people in society who have a deplorable behaviour and attitudes. But it should be noted that, as discussed above, the protagonist is also the object of the writer's ridicule in that Elizabeth's faults - her prejudice against Darcy and her vanity - are revealed. Therefore, it is clear that Austen's ultimate approval of Elizabeth's laughter arises from her self-criticism and self-rectification, which is

[8] Alistair Duckworth remarks that Elizabeth and Mary resembled each other at the beginning but that Elizabeth has learnt judgment at the end, which helps her to adapt her outlook from individualism to a socially accepted identity. However, Mary never has such a change; see Duckworth 142. A similar view is suggested by Lionel Trilling, who asserts that "Mary Crawford of *Mansfield Park* is another version of Elizabeth Bennet"; See Trilling 128.

a combination of wit and judgment.

As observed by Maaja A. Stewart on the basis of the tradition of witty comedy, opposition between wit and judgment is the dominant characteristic of *Pride and Prejudice*, in which the witty heroine represents “emotion” by responding to the immediate scene with laughter, while the hero possesses knowledge of the world and owns the real power behind the scene.[9] Stewart’s interpretation is that Elizabeth eventually submits to Darcy's power from financial considerations and her own intelligence, taming her wit to comply with the limitations of domesticity (56-71). Stewart explains: “Her [Elizabeth’s] actual wit does not balance Darcy’s ‘knowledge of the world’ but potentially questions and subverts it” (64); therefore it is Elizabeth’s own willingness to reduce her own wit and “allows herself to remain amused by him” (71). That is to say, the harmony is the result of a proper balance between wit and judgment, formed upon the basis of equality. One does not do full justice to the union of Elizabeth and Darcy if one regards it simply as the heroine submitting to the hero. In fact Elizabeth does not give up her attempts to teach Darcy to laugh but simply thinks that it "was rather too early” for him to begin to learn to laugh (*P&P* 371), implying that she will teach her husband how to laugh gradually. As Kate Fullbrook observes, equality is the real interest of the writer in characterizing the marriage between Elizabeth and Darcy: to Darcy, Elizabeth "can bring as much as she takes" (52). Afterwards Elizabeth realises herself that she has already fallen in love with Darcy and has the following reflection:

> She began now to comprehend that he was exactly the man, who, in disposition and talents, would most suit her. His understanding and temper, though unlike her own, would have answered all her wishes. It was a union that must have been to the advantage of both; by her ease and liveliness, his mind might have been softened, his manners improved, and from his judgment, information, and knowledge of the world, she must have received benefit of greater importance (*P&P* 312).

In Alistair M. Duckworth's discussion the union of Elizabeth and Darcy represents the

[9] Stewart 40, 60. Stewart also mentions that John Locke's idea concerning the difference between wit and judgment: “judgment belongs to the serious business of life, and wit expresses amusement and play", could be applied by Austen to characterize the theme of the novel; see Stewart 63.

integration of the strengths of perseverance and improvement, which offers itself as a "fixed moral and social centre" (143) contributing to the harmonious environment of their community. Therefore Austen's approbation is given to a humour derived from the elements of laughter which lie embedded in the interplay between wit and judgment.

Regarding Mary's subversive laughter, Austen possesses a very different view. The moralistic Edmund and Fanny have a discussion about Mary's humour, in which Edmund concludes that there is a "right of lively mind", which

> seizing whatever may contribute to its own amusement or that of others; perfectly allowable, when untinctured by ill humour or roughness; and there is not a shadow of either in the countenance or manner of Miss Crawford, nothing sharp, or loud, or coarse. She is perfectly feminine, except in the instances we have been speaking of (*MP* 64).

Having made a joke insulting her uncle's profession, Mary is regarded by Edmund as having ill humour. The prudent heroine Fanny, of whom the writer always approves, comments upon Mary as follows:

> Miss Crawford, in spite of some amiable sensations, and much personal kindness, had still been Miss Crawford, still shewn a mind led astray and bewildered, and without any suspicion of being so; darkened, yet fancying itself light…. for looking on the chance of Miss Crawford's future improvement as nearly desperate, for thinking that if Edmund's influence in this season of love, had already done so little in clearing her judgment, and regulating her notions, his worth would be finally wasted on her even in years of matrimony (*MP* 367).

Moreover, in the regard of the same moralistic author, Mary merits a bad ending, which is clearly the consequence of her own ruined character. Such a view is revealed in Edmund's comment on Mary after his last meeting with her. On his way to visit Mary, Edmund has given himself many expectations, hoping that he will get some comfort and understanding from Mary, after a series of disastrous affairs and events in his family. However, the undisciplined Mary just comments that what Edmund's sister and her own brother committed is folly (*MP* 454). Instead of being comforted, Edmund is subjected to her careless, playful attitude. The awakened Edmund eventually sees that: "The evil lies yet deeper; in her total ignorance, unsuspiciousness of there being such feelings, in a perversion of mind which made

it natural to her to treat the subject as she did" (*MP* 456). This can also be regarded as the writer's explanation for Mary's ill humour, i.e. a lack of seriousness, or principle. Mary's lively laughter at first attracted Edmund, but now it disgusts him. After scolding Mary for her ignorance, Edmund sees that:

> She was astonished, exceedingly astonished - more than astonished. I saw her change countenance. She turned extremely red. I imagined I saw a mixture of many feelings - a great, though short struggle - half a wish of yielding to truths, half a sense of shame - but habit, habit carried it. She would have laughed if she could. It was a sort of laugh. . . (*MP* 458).

The similarly subversive nature of Mary's and Elizabeth's wit and the different consequences they have at the end of the novels constitute the basis for the theory that Mary is in fact an inadequate version of Elizabeth. As discussed in Chapter Four, the resemblances between the laughter of Elizabeth and Junyu and that between Mary and Yanhua are evident. But do they also suggest that Yanhua is an inadequate version of Junyu? Though Junyu's laughter is enigmatic, one can detect a sense of discipline in Junyu's laughter. Furthermore, she sometimes knows how to soften the expression of her laughter, thereby easing the tension between herself and the authority which she is subconsciously challenging. Therefore her laughter is definitively not unrestrained, and, compared with Yanhua, Junyu's laughter is less provocative. While Junyu only intends to employ laughter to protect herself and redefine her bad situation, Yanhua uses it as a weapon to fight against authority and improve her inferior situation. That is to say, Yanhua's laughter is more subversive than that of Junyu, in the same way that Mary's is more subversive than that of Elizabeth.

Austen's use of Elizabeth's perspective to advance the plot constructs a concrete connection between the writer and the character. The nearly identical perspective of Austen and Elizabeth is in sharp contrast to Yang's ambiguous attitude towards Junyu, particularly in terms of her view of Junyu's laughter, which is enigmatic. There is a critical difference between the characterization of Junyu and Elizabeth in that no self-criticism can be detected

in the former, whereas it can be observed in the latter. Therefore there is no indication to show whether Junyu laughs with judgment. That is to say, in *As You Desire* Yang detaches herself from the scene by refusing to identify herself with any character, including the protagonist, which is the character which would be most likely to be identified with the playwright herself. Compared to Austen's approval of Elizabeth's laughter once it has become a balanced form of wit and judgment, Yang's approval of Junyu's laughter is not evident, rejecting any assumption that Yang attempts to use Junyu's laughter to demonstrate her own views.

According to Gillooly the relationship between Austen and Mary is intimate enough to display Austen's view of Mary, although Mary is one of the villains of *Mansfield Park*.[10] In Gillooly's opinion, Mary is in a more significant position to act as a "narrative analogue" compared with the quiet, humourless heroine Fanny. Mary is a double of Fanny (99-100). It should be noticed that the term "double", suggested here by Gillooly, is endowed with the meaning of a "complementary image". The term "complementary image" in fact more specifically highlights the relationship between Mary and Fanny, as Gillooly's conceptualisation actually focuses on Mary's function of speaking and laughing for Fanny. This is revealed in the contrast between the portrayal of Mary's laughter and Fanny's suppression of laughter (Gillooly 100). While Fanny is hardly an appropriate character to present the writer's humour and irony, Mary is a vital character in the novel, connected with the writer and sharing the same consciousness of feminine humour. In the light of this Austen inevitably bonds with Mary and empathises with the character.[11] The relationship between

[10] Gillooly argues that Mary is not a villain of *Mansfield Park* to justify the existence of closeness between Mary and the writer. But it is not necessary to deny Mary's role as a villain to rationalize her as being a double of Fanny. In fact, the notions of Mary's being a villain and of an intimacy existing between Austen and Mary are not mutually exclusive. This is explained in the latter part of this section. For Gillooly's discussion, see Gillooly 99.

[11] Gillooly observes that when Fanny and Edmund criticize Mary's humour, the narrator actually defends Mary, and that the narrator tolerates Mary's laughter and also participates in the laughter with Mary. See Gillooly 98, 101.

Austen's and Mary's humour, as Gillooly maintains, is reflected in the rhetoric, the perspective and, most importantly, in the feminist contexts. In the scholar's observation, Mary is, in the context of feminist humour, a clone of Austen, as the subversive laughter of both attacks the construction of femininity which restricts Mary and the rigidly disciplined heroine, Fanny, alike (103-05).

Despite the bond between Austen and Mary, Austen still assigns to Mary a punishment for her low moral standards and undisciplined behaviour. It is generally agreed that one of Austen's main concerns is eventually to revive the equilibrium of the domestic sphere within her works, and her corresponding actions hinge on two approaches: to give her characters the chance to correct their moral faults, and to expel the villainous characters from the closed community. In the last meeting between Mary and Edmund, just after news of the elopement of Henry Crawford and Maria Bertram broke, Edmund's discovery and realization of Mary's poor character, as displayed by her indifference to the notorious incident, is obviously the fatal reason for Mary losing her lover's affection, as well as her chance of permanently residing in Mansfield Park. Therefore, to Austen, Mary is still a villain. Although a shared perspective does exist between Austen and Mary in terms of the feminist subversiveness presented in their laughter, Austen does not agree with Mary in a moral context; Mary's materialistic outlook and subversion of the institution of marriage means that she must pay for her low morality as well as her ill humour. However, despite Austen's expulsion of a character closely bonded with the writer herself, it is the construction of a "double-heroine" that allows Austen to accomplish the comic structure without impairment. The happy dénouement, i.e. the wedding, is finally given to the morally faultless heroine, Fanny.

The parallel between Mary and Yanhua in terms of their relationships with their creators is far more complicated than that between Elizabeth and Junyu. As discussed above,

Yang does not attempt to identify herself with any villainous character. However, while she disapproves of Yanhua's lack of morality, Yang does not refuse to establish a sentimental connection with the protagonist. Yang's own explanation of her relationship with the character is that "I am too sympathetically connected with the female protagonist [Yanhua]" (X. Wu 187). This is plausible, providing evidence that the playwright probably shares the same view as the character on some social issues, such as the predicament of women and the inequality which exists between the social classes. At this point, it is not difficult to discern that the portrayal of Yanhua is more substantial than that of Junyu. While Junyu is barely more than a device used to link the scenes, Yanhua's mental activity is more meticulously and tangibly depicted. As in the case of Austen's treatment of Mary, Yang still needs to pass a moral judgment on Yanhua, punishing her with a bad ending. But a critical difference between *Swindle* and *Mansfield Park* is that there is no character complementary to Yanhua. Without another choice, Yang finally gives Yanhua a wedding to fulfil the conventions of comedy. However, it is not a purely happy ending, but one in which Yanhua eventually discovers that she has been deceived. As discussed in Chapter Seven, disillusionment forms the basis of this ending, and hence Yang does not simply compromise with a comic convention: rather, the wedding is suffused with a strong sense of tragedy.

Disillusionment is not the sole factor constituting this tragic tone. Added to this is Yang's sentimental connection with Yanhua. Yang herself also notices this and explains that her sympathy for Yanhua is possibly the reason which makes "this comedy fused with a tragic sense" (X. Wu 187). In the bitter portrait of Yanhua, we are presented with a combination of Yang's disillusionment and the rare circumstance in which she connects herself with both the protagonist and the scene. This reveals the pivotal aesthetics of Yang's comedy: a distance between herself and the scene ought to exist for the sake of achieving an accomplished comic style. As the deep-seated quality of disillusionment has adequately

provided a tragic sense in the background of her plays, any sentimental connection that engages the playwright herself with the character or the scene would initiate the underlying melancholic sentiment of the plays.

In addition to Yang's emotional attachment with/detachment from her female protagonists, a point is uncovered: the writer has more capacity to bond with the substantial character. As discussed above, the characterization of Yanhua is undoubtedly more substantial than that of Junyu. Drawing on E. M. Forster's theory of flat/round characters of the novel that flat character is caricature, "constructed round a single idea or quality" while the round character is more substantial and complicated (73-85); Yanhua is more a round character than Junyu. By the same token, this theory is applicable to explain the difference between the writer-heroine bonds of Yang and Austen, as drama as a performing genre, discussed by Yang Jiang, has more capacity to allow conceptualized character – the character functions at conveying a concept - than novel. In her critique of Austen's novel, Yang Jiang argues that the conceptualized characters in drama are possible to be transformed as substantial characters through actor's performance while novel needs substantial characterization to embody the concept that the author wants to present ("You shenme" 133-34). Therefore, the difference between the writer-heroine bonds of Yang and Austen can also be interpreted in the context of cross-genre adaption.

Nonetheless, except for her meager connection with Yanhua, Yang mostly disengages herself from character and scene. This detachment is the reason that we cannot clearly grasp Yang's own voice, including her judgment of the female protagonists' humour in her plays. Therefore, while, by bonding with Elizabeth and Mary, Austen's intention of representing humour and ill humour is clearly reflected, such a theory is not applicable when interpreting the relationship between Yang's two female protagonists. In disengaging herself from or weakening her connection with the protagonists, Yang transforms Austen's characterization

of the female characters and of their laughter.

II. Detachment from the Domestic Space

Another key discussion point in terms of the difference in their dénouements is that Mary is expelled from the domestic space, yet there is no clear indication that Yanhua will stay away from the closed community. This contrast highlights the disparity between Austen and Yang in terms of the spatial setting. Austen clearly set boundaries to confine the domestic setting of her works in order to be able to expel the villains from the space and thereby to restore harmony successfully. This sharply defined boundary is absent from Yang's comedies.

A. The Different Constructions of Their Domestic Space

As discussed in Chapter Five, the two writers construct a similarly "knowable community" in their works, in which people are confined and seemingly isolated from the outside world. The monotony of people's everyday activity in this confined domestic space dictates a constant rhythm. The features of the domestic space in their works, if interpreted in the literary context of the distinction between country and city, reveal that they belong to the countryside category in the geographical context:

> On the country has gathered the idea of a natural way of life: of peace, innocence, and simple virtue. On the city has gathered the idea of an achieved centre: of learning, communication, light. Powerful hostile associations have also developed: on the city as a place of noise, worldliness, and ambition; on the country as a place of backwardness, ignorance, limitation (Williams 1).

In this regard Yang's reception of the spatial setting of Austen's works appears to exist; however, this view is based on a surface representation of the discussion at hand. In fact, the constructions of domestic spaces are intrinsically different in their works.

The setting of Austen's novels is often located in the countryside. In contrast, the setting of Yang's comedies is more complex owing to the domestic space in the plays being situated within the thriving, busy, cosmopolitan city of Shanghai. The context of Yang's works is in contrast to Austen's isolated countryside. The complex existence of this domestic space implies that there is a dual rhythm in the setting: a peaceful, steady tempo within the space constructed upon an unstable, volatile basis. More important in terms of the construction of the domestic space revealed in these two writers' works is that the boundaries between country and city are clearly shown in Austen's, but they are blurred in Yang's. Therefore, though both of their works present a peaceful, quiet, domestic space embedded in an underlying anxious tension, the boundaries between country and city in Austen's novels offer a plausible condition for reviving harmony, while in Yang's comedies they do not.

In Austen a dichotomy between country and city is clearly displayed: the villains from the city contaminate the peaceful countryside. Mary blatantly admits that the lifestyle of London is the origin of her materialistic outlook: "Coming down with the true London maxim that everything is to be got with money" (*MP* 58). Austen disapproves of the urban style and its associated materialistic outlook. She expresses her judgment through the medium of the prudent and religious Edmund's point of view. Edmund strongly disagrees with Mary's argument that London's religious atmosphere and its inhabitants' moral values can represent the whole country. Edmund maintains: "We do not look in great cities for our best morality. It is not there that respectable people of any denomination can do most good; and it certainly is not there that the influence of the clergy can be most felt ... The clergy are lost there [London] in the crowds of their parishioners" (*MP* 93). In fact Mary's urban style is indeed a more significant cause of her destructive power than her laughter. To Austen, laughter is destructive, although it is not necessarily involved with unethical value; however, urban fashion has its definite connection with immorality. Such a view can be demonstrated by the

difference between Mary and Elizabeth's laughter. Though Elizabeth loves to laugh, she is never blamed as severely as Mary. Austen highlights the way in which Mary's entering this domestic area produces a potential contamination of the innocent domestic area. This is dramatically embodied in Mary's impact upon Edmund. After Edmund reveals his inconsistency through his sudden decision to join the private performance, Fanny disappointedly discovers that Edmund has been influenced by Mary's damaged morality (*MP* 156-57). This menace to the morality of an upright youth is a most important concern of Austen's, provoking her contempt of urban outsiders and the contamination which they bring with them. Austen's novels reveal the author's extreme fondness for and strong insistence upon the preservation of the country lifestyle. Managing this destructive force and restoring peace and harmony in the countryside is crucial. To regain the balance of this domestic space, Austen expels the contemptible people, either outsiders or inhabitants, from this space.

In Yang's plays the discourse of city versus country is represented in a more complex form. As the characters live within both spaces, the peaceful domestic realm and cosmopolitan Shanghai, they have a more entangled relationship within the spatial setting. Though they appear confined in the domestic space, they are essentially urbanites. The destructive power of urban life is also observed by the playwright and then reflected within the plays. In contrast with the dichotomous representation of the "intruder" found in Austen, in Yang's plays a destructive power is created in this closed space by the people who live within it. In other words, these characters are both the initiators and the victims of the urban-rural tension: they are disturbed by the incongruous situation within the space, but they have no way out. The tension of the play in terms of the antagonism between city and country is not brought about by an invasion of outsiders, but arises from within this closed community. This closed domestic community is a static space constructed upon the unstable base of wartime Shanghai.

Therefore in terms of the spatial setting it is clear that a transformation of Austen's literary aesthetic is found in Yang's comedies. Although Yang establishes in her stories a closed community in a confined space which is somewhat comparable to Austen's favourite setting of "three or four families in a country village" (Austen *Letters* 276), the foundation of the space itself is not a constant, stable existence and bears no resemblance to the countryside in Austen's novels. The most significant difference is revealed by the establishment of a boundary between the domestic space and the outside world. With a clear boundary set between the city and the country in the works of Austen a dichotomy between the spaces is clearly presented. With this clearly established boundary it is possible to regain harmony within the domestic space, as the villains may be expelled from it. From this perspective the existence of the countryside is actually a solution to the predicament, as it serves as the ideal shelter for the characters from the geographical tension arising from the conflicts between city and countryside. Such a refuge is absent from Yang's comedies. In her plays the boundaries between the confined domestic space and the outside are blurred, and so any attempt at regaining the harmony of the domestic space or driving out the destructive force from it is futile.

An additional difference in their works lies in the use of temporal boundaries. In Austen's works the temporal boundaries of the space are clearly defined. Edwin Muir suggests that such a construction of Austen's space stems from the fact that the author, who had not personally experienced any drastically disruptive event in her life, could not conceive that any big change could possibly occur within the countryside after the end of the story (*Present Age* 35-36). In contrast the disillusionment of Yang during the war probably gave rise to an alternative set of ideas in both the temporal and the spatial features of the space. As discussed in Chapter Seven, national calamity brought Yang new insights into ways whereby she might transcend her vision beyond present circumstances, and this inspired her to invite

the audience to explore the possibilities of recovering social equilibrium in the turbulence implied by the unsettled endings of the stories, which are in fact more like the beginnings of new stories. Instead of neatly winding up her stories within the narrative Yang introduces a number of uncertainties in their endings, which include the possibility of changes to the shape of the domestic space in the future. In this way both the temporal and spatial boundaries of the domestic space in Yang's plays are blurred. The indeterminate shape of the space gives rise to a strong sense of uncertainty to which the playwright cannot provide any answer or solution.

In such a context the characters are placed in a situation from which it is impossible to escape except by leaving Shanghai. This is the course of action which appeals to Junyu, who wishes to return to Beijing (*Desire* 285-90; Act IV). The attraction of Beijing for Junyu is linked to an intriguing discussion whether Beijing could be preferred to Shanghai? Does Junyu's preference for Beijing potentially provide one with a personal insight into the playwright's own relationship with these two cities? Further, on the assumption that Junyu dislikes urban life, why would she then attempt to return to Beijing? It may be that she dislikes Shanghai but not necessarily urban life *per se*. It is worth considering to what degree these considerations betray the attitude of the playwright herself to Shanghai and Beijing. These issues will be further discussed further in Chapter Nine.

The weak dichotomy between the domestic space and the outside world, which provides no possibility of demonstrating an ideal place, signifies the absence of hope in Yang's comedies. In this way Yang extinguishes the sense of hope that lingers in Austen's works.

B. The Unsettling Invaders

As discussed in Chapter Five, Yang took from Austen a narrative structure in which a stranger enters a closed community and is allotted a role to disrupt the equilibrium of that space. In this context the resemblance between Austen's Mary and Yang's female protagonists is patent, as all of them are orphans, endowed with the power of laughter, and therefore represented as having the personae of aggressive invaders.

Expulsion from or integration within the domestic space are the strategies open to Austen in her dealings with the outsiders. Aggressive invaders, such as Mary, Wickham, Willoughby and William Elliot are expelled from the community. But the moral or innocent characters, such as Fanny, Harriet Smith and Catherine Morland, are all eventually integrated within the confined space. A paramount observation is that both types of outsider have a strong desire to remain within these spaces. For instance, in *Mansfield Park*, both Fanny and Mary emotionally engage with the confined circle: Fanny at first experiences difficulty in adapting to life at Mansfield Park, but before long she treats it as her home and develops an affectionate attachment to the place; even though Mary needs to readjust herself to country life, her plan is to settle at Mansfield Park, a desire that is greatly enhanced by her falling in love with Edmund.

However, one finds in Yang's female characters no parallel to the attachment which Austen's heroines feel for their domestic space. As discussed in Chapter Seven, the dénouements of the protagonists' experiences are disturbing and upsetting, indicating the fact that in the end the community is still not an ideal place for them. The outsiders are by no means enamoured of the closed community which they attempted to join. Their attempt to merge with this circle may be understood simply as a need to sustain themselves in a turbulent environment, as they have no other place in which to seek shelter. In fact, they display an equal dislike for the outside world - Shanghai. Junyu complains about urban

pollution (*Desire* 225; Act II), and Yanhua complains about the circumstances of urban life for a working woman (*Swindle* 350; Act I). While they feel unsettled in the seemingly peaceful, domestic space, they experience an urgent necessity to find a secure position within the space for their survival. This urgency goes hand in hand with their keen sense of their need to seek a way out of this closed circle, illustrated by Junyu's urge to return to Beijing and Yanhua's desire to marry a rich man who can take her away.

The motivation behind their plans to leave the space is an interesting topic of discussion. These protagonists are urbanites with their own urban experience. Essentially their relationship with the city is depicted in a more complicated and figurative form than the dichotomous representation of the relationship between city and country presented in Austen's works. This is closely related to Yang's relationship with Shanghai and will be discussed in Chapter Nine.

Compared with Austen, Yang maintains a clear distance from both her characters and the scene. Furthermore the domestic world in Yang's comedies is different from that in Austen's novels with regard to the foundations of the domestic spaces in their works. In Yang Jiang's comedies the turbulent spatial setting in the city creates in the protagonists a strong sense of insecurity and vulnerability. That is to say, the presence of detachment as an aesthetic order is also evident in the connection between the protagonists and the spatial setting. This detachment enables Yang to foster a different comedic aesthetic within her work, increasing an enigmatic sense in the context of the plays as well as spreading through them a deeper feeling of disillusionment.

Chapter Nine

Detachment (II)

An Outsider in a Confined City

As discussed in Chapter Eight, the sense of detachment as an aesthetic order can be recognized in Yang's transformation of Austen's comic art. This detachment can be observed in the relationship of Yang to her protagonists, who are in turn disengaged from their environment. As discussed in Chapter Five, the domestic situations found in Yang's works are a microcosm of the outside world. Therefore her detachment should be interpreted within the larger context of the relationship which existed between wartime Shanghai and the immigrants to Shanghai, including Yang herself. In fact, Yang's relationship with Shanghai offers us a very significant perspective from which to read her comedies. Hence the central question of this chapter is how the playwright positioned herself in Shanghai against the background of its thriving literary scene and theatrical circles.

In this chapter I shall first examine Yang's relationship with the city through her connection with the literary and theatrical scenes of Shanghai together. In explaining Yang's disengagement from the confined city and its culture the essence of *Jingpai* will be discussed further in Part II, and hence Yang's intellectual vision will be discussed in Part III.

I. Staying Away from the Spotlight

In prosperous wartime Shanghai both the printing industry and the theatrical scene thrived. A group of female writers emerged onto the cultural scene of Shanghai. However,

although Yang Jiang's two comedies suddenly brought the playwright fame, Yang Jiang did not enjoy the position as a member of the literary elite as did other female writers.

A. Among the Female Writers

A group of female writers, including Eileen Chang and Su Qing, appeared on the literary scene of Shanghai in the 1940s, and their fame and popularity increased rapidly. The emergence of these women is recognized as being due to the efforts of the veteran writers of the Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies School 鴛鴦蝴蝶派 in a revival of their literary style. By identifying the connection between these female writers and the Butterflies School we can recognize their link with the *Haipai*.

"*Haipai*" was never formalized as a literary school, and no writer has ever admitted belonging to this group (F. Wu "Zuowei" 6). Its general por reputation is due to its having been regarded as a style of literature with commercial and risqué qualities. In Wu Fuhui's 吳福輝 discussion of *Haipai* the critic highlights the fact that the Butterflies School did indeed establish the foundation for *Haipai* literature in terms of its style and commercially oriented practice.

In the light of such connections the expectations in relation to the works of these female writers, held either by the readers or the writers themselves, were in accordance with the style laid down by the Butterflies School. The tradition was to provide entertainment for readers, while treating commercial profit as the foremost concern. Therefore social or political matters were not the critical issues. As these women writers emerged onto the scene of contemporary print culture, they were ready to position themselves as literary celebrities for the sake of commercial considerations. Because of their creativity and the cultural taste of a wartime Shanghai public specifically interested in domesticity (this subject has been

discussed in Chapter Five), they subverted the established patterns of wartime narrative and instead presented domesticity in the foreground. They personalized their narrative by giving it a sense of daily life; this then attracted a wider readership. The work of Eileen Chang, a very prominent female writer in wartime Shanghai, openly revealed her desire for fame: "Make yourself famous as early as possible! If success comes too late, it will not be as enjoyable ... Hurry! Hurry! Otherwise it will be too late! Too late!" ("*Quanqi*" 156).[1]

To gain such fame, these female writers made great use of their wartime background, as discussed by Nicole Huang. However, as pointed out in Chapter One, the turbulence brought by war shattered the fixed "system of thoughts, beliefs, and aesthetic principles" (N. Huang 47) and offered an opportunity to introduce a new form of art and literary narrative.[2] Therefore Chang and the other female writers were allowed to offer another kind of narrative, differing from the wartime propaganda which promoted the goal of national salvation, one characterized by domesticity and feminine details which contrasted with the wartime background. Chang and her fellow writers' aim was, as Huang observes, to create a new cultural and literary scene, demonstrating their talents and creativity (47-48), and more importantly, highlighting their personalities. This became for them a way to fashion themselves as wartime legends - a way of positioning themselves within the wartime literary scene.

News concerning the private lives of the female writers in the Shanghai tabloid press was a constant reminder of the way in which their biographical contingencies helped to establish their fame. The general public was interested in reading the stories written by female writers, and they consumed not only their works but also the public personae of their creators. Indeed, since the first group of female writers emerged into the public eye during

[1] Translation from N. Huang 21. See Chang "*Quanqi*".
[2] N. Huang 47-49. A similar point is also made by Meng Yue and Dai Jinhua who termed this opportunity for female writers to express themselves in the wartime as “discursive space”. This idea was adopted by Amy Dooling. It has been discussed in Chapter One.

the May Fourth Movement, they established a literary elite, attracting much attention from the public, as they were a new, modern kind of people within the social circles. Before the era of May Fourth, although there were female writers called *cainu* 才女, or talented women, they were active nly in private circles. Thus, the private lives of these modern women who lived in a modern way and worked in accordance with the concept of "new women" to earn their livings, provided a rich material for the public's romantic imagination.

These female writers were celebrities in wartime Shanghai. Among them Eileen Chang and Su Qing were undoubtedly the most popular female writers there in the 1940s. The image which they projected was one of well-educated professional women who were able to earn their own living. They were outstanding figures who represented the “new women” of the time. The views of these two writers were influential among readers, particularly female readers. That is why *Zazhi* invited Chang and Su Qing to an interview to talk about issues concerning women, family and marriage. In the introduction to the article which resulted from this meeting, the reporter states:

> Right now, the most famous female writers in Shanghai are, undoubtedly, Eileen Chang and Su Qing. They write about things that occurred around them. That is to say, they write about themselves. There is nothing more appropriate than women writing about women. What is more invaluable is that their writings seem to represent a viewpoint or a perspective of life of contemporary educated women in China. When talking to them, I was able to learn about their remarkable opinions on issues concerning women. That is why we have invited Chang and Su to this interview to discuss issues about women, family and marriage ("Su Qing" 78).

Readers responded excitedly to the publication of this interview. In order to satisfy readers’ demands and to publish their letters in response to the views of Chang and Su Qing, the interview was covered in two further special issues. In addition, riding on the frenzy of such public interest, many magazines carried articles about the two writers.[3]

A forum of female writers was also held to satisfy the readers' interest in them as well

[3] For instance, see J. Huang, an article which was written by a fan of Su Qing who sought the chance of visiting Su Qing repeatedly; see also Hu, this was written by Zhang's lover and which contained not only a discussion of Zhang's writings but also some details about his character and daily life.

as in certain other female writers. Those attending the forum talked about their literary tastes and the works of other female writers.[4] Additionally in some magazines photos and caricatures of the female writers occasionally replaced those of actresses.[5] This reflected the trend of juxtaposing female writers with actresses, both of whom were treated by the media as celebrities. Having been placed in the spotlight by the media, the public then became interested in their personal lives as well. Yu Bin 余彬 comments upon such a culture: "The personal lives of both female writers and actresses were favourite materials of the tabloids" (7). The celebrity status of female writers can also be observed from the following examples. Firstly, Eileen Chang and Guan Lu were invited to join a meeting with Choi Seung-hee 崔承喜 (1911-1969), a famous Korean ballet dancer to exchange their views on the arts. Their intellectual exchange, however, was not the only concern of the reporter who, in addition to making a recording of a discussion on dancing, also described their outfits in great detail (Luo Chuan 86-88). Secondly, Eileen Chang was invited to join a summer gathering with the famous actress Li Xianglan 李香蘭 (1920-2014). A record of this meeting was published in *Zazhi*.[6] Again the outfits of the two ladies were presented in detail, along with their outlook on romance and details of their love affairs. By comparison, although actresses had status within their own profession, female writers probably enjoyed a higher status because of the long-held traditional prejudice against female entertainers.[7] The similarities in the treatment of women in these two occupations is an interesting social phenomenon worthy of further investigation, but that is not within the scope of this project. It is enough to emphasize here

[4] The female writers who joined this forum were Wang Liling 汪麗玲, Eileen Chang, Pan Liudai 潘柳黛, Guan Lu and Su Qing. See "Nuzuojia".
[5] For instance, photos of Eileen Chang, Su Qing and Wang Liling were published in "The Portraits of Three Female Writers"; caricatures of Eileen Chang, Su Qing and Pan Liudai were drawn by a reader and then published under the title "Gangbi yu kouhong" 鋼筆與口紅 [The Pen and the Lipstick], see Wen Xiang.
[6] See "Nalianghui".
[7] Jiang Jin discusses the view that the female entertainer used to be viewed as having an ambiguous profession, falling between an actor and prostitute/courtesan, and that this view did not vary much after May Fourth and in the following decades. See Jiang 62-65.

that female writers in wartime Shanghai enjoyed the social status of celebrities and public attention, in the same way as did the famous actresses. The above examples show that because of the new and modern feminine images projected by these female writers their tastes in culture and fashion were influential and attracted much public interest.

Besides Eileen Chang and Su Qing, who were professional writers and earned their living by producing literary works, there was another category of female writer who gained public attention. They are worth mentioning in this discussion in order to form a more complete picture of the 1940s Shanghai literary scene. This category of female writers was known as the *Dongwuxi nűzuojia* 東吳系女作家, also called *xiaojie zuojia* 小姐作家, or young lady writers. Although the name of this group includes *Dongwuxi*, or the stream of Soochow University 東吳大學, it was not formed as an officially established literary school with definite literary views and ideologies. The term was used vaguely to refer to a group of female writers who graduated from or were otherwise related to Soochow University. Among them were Shi Jimei 施濟美 (1920-1968), Yu Zhaoming 俞昭明 (1920-1989) and Tang Xuehua 湯雪華 (1915-1992). These writers all came from quite well off and, probably, literary families. Apart from their writing style, this background set them aside from ordinary people. They were usually regarded as "modern women" because they had received a Western education. They danced, spoke English and played Western music. The image projected by these writers, however, was not that of "the new women", such as Eileen Chang and Su Qing, because most of them were still students when they began to publish their works and all of them were amateur writers. But for the same reason they enjoyed a large readership. Stories about the lives of female university students as well as the lives of authors appealed to readers, satisfying their curiosity about the lives of girls from families of high social standing. A notable example is that of Shi Jimei, whose tragic romantic love story helped to project her public persona and attracted readers' interest (N. Huang 40).

Since the public's interest was clearly directed towards these writers, any attempt to personalise their narratives in order to enlarge their readership was felt to be justified. As Huang notes:

> They [the female writers of wartime Shanghai] demonstrated a fascination with everyday matters, an uninhibited desire to talk about their own life experiences, and a superb ability to manipulate the hazy boundaries between the authorial voice and the narrative self. Readers felt a personal connection to the authors, whose personal lives had been an integral part of their public personae from the very beginning of their careers. In turn, the writers tended to employ systems of reference that middlebrow readers, with their insatiable desire to learn more of the authors' private lives, could conveniently identify as both personal and intimate (39).

This explains the popularity in wartime Shanghai of *xiaopinwen* 小品文, or minor prose, in which the personal views of the writers on issues of daily life are emphasized (N. Huang 51). In addition, the coupling of female writers with actresses further confirms that the public's appetite for the writers' works as well as for details of their personal lives was closely linked to the context of entertainment, or more specifically, to the context of popular culture. The readers' expectations of the works of these female writers were based on their interest in light-hearted subjects and not on serious literature according to the May Fourth tradition of concern with social and political issues.

In the light of the popularity of female writers in wartime Shanghai some space will be devoted in this chapter to determining why Yang Jiang was not more prominent in the cultural scene, when the fame of these female writers had grown, their involvement in cultural circles had increased, and the attention of the mass media had become focused upon them. Eileen Chang's distinguished family background may have partly contributed to the rise of her status within the literary elite (she was a great granddaughter of Li Hongzhang 李鴻章, the senior official of late Qing), and Yang's background also afforded her all the requisite qualities for becoming a cultural celebrity. As the daughter of Yang Yinhan, a well-known revolutionary in the late Qing Period, who after the revolution became the chief prosecutor of Jiangsu and Zhejiang Provinces together with Beijing from 1910s to 1920s, as

well as being an editor of *Shenbao,* Yang Jiang undoubtedly came from a well-established family which was in itself appealing enough to attract the public's interest. In addition, Yang Jiang was the wife of Qian Zhongshu, who also came from a renowned scholarly family. Although she had such an impressive background and was a female playwright who had written two popular comedies, it is notable that Yang was absent from the circles of female writers as well as from the spheres of media and public attention.

B. In the Theatrical Scene

As discussed in Introduction, the wartime milieu in Shanghai provided an ideal atmosphere for the development of drama as a performing art as well as a form of commercial entertainment. The theatrical circle was no less thriving than the publishing industry. Therefore, although Yang's comedies were not publicised through the flourishing print media, as were Eileen Chang's literary instalments in the journals and newspapers, they were still able to gain much public attention.

With its growing popularity, the news of actors, actresses, directors and playwrights drew the public's attention. A number of drama magazines appeared, and columns featuring drama were also published in the newspapers and general magazines. The press was especially interested in the gossip concerning actors, actresses and even directors and playwrights, and such articles appeared as features. For example, the gossip columns such as "Xijuquan" 戲劇圈 and "Gudaojutan" 孤島劇壇 in *Xijuzazhi* 戲劇雜誌 and "Chuanshengtong" 傳聲筒 in *Huajujie* 話劇界 and also drama magazines such as *Juchangxinwen* 劇場新聞 featured a wide range of gossip about theatrical celebrities. The private lives of these celebrities were revealed to the public and became a "cultural commodity". Whether it was about director Yao Ke's 姚克 (1905-1991) new girlfriend,

actress Sun Jinglu's 孫景璐 (1923-1989) newly adjusted salary, or actress Tang Ruoqing's 唐若青 (1918-1983) drug addiction, the news was received with eager interest by the public (T. Li 35). Meanwhile, the celebrities also noticed this and paid more attention to their "star images". Actress Huang Zongying 黃宗英 (1925-) recollects that:

> Song Qi emphasised that an actor/actress should create a good persona and actively promote himself/herself more. He always held meetings with the actors and actresses at the Liangyou photographic studio and took photos of them. He encouraged them to take more commercial jobs so that their faces would be widely displayed and the actors/actresses themselves would be more impressive to the public (T. Li 35).

In 1944 the lives of the drama actors/actresses were also filmed in two movies: *Bubugaosheng* 步步高升 and *YuefuYanyu* 樂府煙雲 (Shao "gudao" 97). And so their celebrity status within the Shanghai drama circle was well established in the 1940s.

Although Yang Jiang was a female playwright active in this golden age of drama and associated with such a flourishing celebrity culture, news about her was surprisingly infrequent and was rarely to be found in the press. A relatively detailed piece of news about Yang Jiang was found in Meng Du's review, which commented on her comedies at length but gave only brief information about the playwright herself at the end of the article; this was in fact a piece of information originally from Li Jianwu, a friend of Yang. It can be assumed that Meng Du probably did not know Yang personally:

> Yang Jiang is not one of the high-profile writers; on the contrary, she is wise but subtle. She is a diligent and virtuous lady. When you meet her, impressed by her appearance of white skin, medium stature and plainly dressed, you would feel that she seems to be still as shy as a maiden. With a quiet and delicate feminine sensitivity, she has the insight afforded her to portray ordinary people in a proper, balanced way: fair, sensible, natural but with an extraordinarily pleasing quality (112).

Other than this piece no other sources of information, such as personal interviews about Yang's private life, can be found in the contemporary press. Against the background that the public was very interested in the lives of female writers, members of the cultural elite and the theatrical circle, it seems implausible that Yang had not become a focus for the mass media.

In the light of Yang's low-profile style some interesting subjects are worthy of further discussion: Yang's own expectations of becoming a playwright and whether she had any aspirations to be a cultural celebrity like the others; her view of the *Haipai* writers' practice of becoming celebrities, and whether or not she regarded herself as one of the *Haipai*. To discuss these questions it is necessary first to examine Yang's relationship with the city – her view of Shanghai.

It is important to point out that Yang does not appear to have had the same fondness for Shanghai as had certain other female writers. The *Haipai* female writers, such as Eileen Chang, were typical urban writers, whose works are full of their fondness for that city. Some of Chang's prose can be read simply as praise of Shanghai and a declaration of her pride in being Shanghainese: "Shanghainese, After All " 到底是上海人. Chang gives a detailed description, and shows her enjoyment, of urban life. Life in an apartment, a new type of urban accommodation, is incorporated into the content of much of her prose. Her strong affection for urban life is a frequent theme of her writings, such as her interest in listening to the sounds of the city (Chang "Notes" 24). What is most intriguing is Chang's extremely affectionate attachment for the city's trams. Her pleasure in looking out of these vehicles is compared to that of a country girl looking at the animals on her farm ("Notes" 25). However, as discussed in Chapter Eight, the same affection for Shanghai cannot be found in Yang's comedies. The way she felt about trams can be gauged from Junyu's complaint: "I've got the bad smell of cigarettes from being on the tram" (*Desire* 225; Act II). Furthermore, Xiangfu and Mrs. Zhang's discussion of the abnormally rapid economic growth conveys a sense of insecurity and anxiety, while revealing the materialistic outlook of the Shanghainese businessmen (*Swindle* 299; Act I). From Yang's distaste for the city it is easy to conclude that the playwright does not hold the same favourable view of Shanghai as Eileen Chang and other *Haipai* female writers. Therefore, it is reasonable to infer that Yang does not regard

herself as a member of the *Haipai* camp and for that reason she does not adopt that school's literary practices and style. This raises the problem of how to situate her in the 1940s China literary scene, if we now consider Yang as an outsider from the mainstream. In order to try to associate her with any other school we need to examine Junyu's wish to return to Beijing, which provides us with a hint. In fact Yang, though she lived and staged her plays in Shanghai, is more like a writer of *Jingpai* than of *Haipai*. Like her protagonists, she was an outsider in this confined city in her role both as a resident and in the literary mainstream of Shanghai.[8] Because of her different style and purpose Yang therefore made no attempt to enjoy the status of being a literary celebrity aas the *Haipai* female writers did.

II. *Jingpai* Writers: The Heir of May Fourth Intellectuals

As discussed in the Introduction, the formation of these *Jingpai* and *Haipai* writers was based upon a polemic. The writers of neither group had the intention of formally establishing a school of thought. The primary perceptions of the two schools did not come from a manifesto or any literary creed which they had created. Rather it was their mutual antagonism that motivated them to portray themselves in completely contrastive terms. To castigate the *Haipai* for their betrayal of the conventional morality of the literati, *Jingpai* writers stressed the *Haipai's* mercantile outlook and their practice of equating literary works with commodities. The *Jingpai's* condemnation of the *Haipai* did not only place that literary camp in an inferior position, but also provided an opposing extreme for the *Jingpai* to define themselves against and inevitably to elevate their superiority in terms of literary morality.

[8] Zhang Jian also suggests that Yang's relationship with *Jingpai* and her educational background of studying in Tsinghua, provides a pertinent perspective for examining her comedies. Zhang maintains that Yang came from the cultural circle of Beijing and that therefore she employed an outsider's perspective to observe Shanghai. See Zhang 張儉 157.

Therefore, at the outset at least, the *Jingpai* were best defined by what they opposed: its philosophy of literature, the style and the themes of their works, which were basically established in opposition to those of the *Haipai*. As Xu Daoming 許道明 states: "In the beginning there was no existence of so-called '*Jingpai*'. These writers of Beijing branded themselves as "*Jingpai*" for their criticism of *Haipai* ... Living in Beijing, the style of some of them was undoubtedly suffused with a little sense of nobility" (*Jingpai* 3). This sense of the "nobility" of the *Jingpai* writers, produced in a cultural-geographical context, is discussed by Lu Xun, who interprets it by drawing a connection between the *Jingpai* and the Beijing-based May Fourth Movement writers of the previous era ("'Jingpai'" 492). As noted by Xu, the *Jingpai* writers justified themselves as being the "perfect heirs of the May Fourth spirit" (*Jingpai* 3). Such a recognition is evidently important, as it is the basis of the *Jingpai* writers' consciousness of their status as intellectuals in modern China. In the absence of the motivation necessary to establish a definite school with the aim of promoting and applying a particular literary theory in a mutually agreed context, the writers' mutual consciousness of their intellectual status became the most prominent characteristic of the tradition.

What connected the *Jingpai* and the writers of the May Fourth Movement were their backgrounds. First of all, most of them were teachers or students at Peking or Tsinghua Universities, which were the cradles of the movement. Secondly, the leading writers of this school, such as Zhou Zuoren 周作人 (1885-1967) and Hu Shi 胡適, were leading figures in the May Fourth Movement, and this takes us to the third point, namely that the publishing base for these *Jingpai* writers were the May Fourth-related journals such as *Yusi* 語絲 and *Xinyue* 新月, which had been established by a number of May Fourth writers. Against the background that the movement was led by intellectuals of the previous generation, the consciousness of the *Jingpai* writers of being heirs of the movement would naturally give them a strong sense of belonging, in that they were the intellectuals of this new era, who,

according to the May Fourth tradition as well as the Chinese intellectual convention, had a legitimate role in the development of society.

For these writers a particular literary outlook is closely adhered to in their exploration of their responsibility as intellectuals. Xu discusses the fact that humanity is the major concern in the *Jingpai* writers' works (*Jingpai* 14-18). However, it would be more accurate to say that these writers' main concern is the exploration of their purpose in life, which has always been of interest to Chinese intellectuals. This aspect of social concern is certainly prominent. It stemmed from those intellectuals' actualisation of the purpose of life in accordance with Confucian teaching in terms of a saintly mission: "Self-cultivation, harmonization of the clan, the proper government of the country, and then the goal of peace-making throughout the world".[9] The latter three goals can be regarded as the extension of the first, in which the individual moral accomplishment has its firm connection with the harmony of the family, a political mission for the nation and even for the world. With the aim of manifesting this virtue to the world, social concern is actually a part of the scholar's fulfilment of the purpose of his life – the actualisation of the mission of the sage. This outlook was adopted by the *Jingpai* writers, who were very conscious of their close ties with the role of intellectual. The model that the *Jingpai* writers regarded highly was not the general Chinese intellectual convention itself, but that of the May Fourth Movement. However, it is important to note that, as discussed in Chapter Seven, the May Fourth intellectuals did in fact paradoxically follow the Confucian tradition which they protested against. Therefore the *Jingpai* writers' recognition of the morality of the intellectuals also undoubtedly followed the same intellectual convention. Their concerns about the purpose of life can be interpreted within the literary creed of a particular May Fourth literary association – the Literary Association.

[9] The Confucian teaching can be found in *The Great Learning* 大學.

The Literary Association was established at the peak of the May Fourth period in 1921 by prominent writers, such as Shen Yanbing 沈雁冰 (1896-1981), Zheng Zhenduo 鄭振鐸 (1898-1958) and Ye Shaojun 葉紹鈞 (1894-1988), together with the leading figure of *Jingpai* - Zhou Zuoren, who was also one of the founders of the Society. Founded when the "new literature" was coming into being, the Society established a set of literary rules for exploring and developing the embryonic vernacular literature. The dominant principle of the Society was "literature for the purpose of life" (Y. Shen 1), which contrasted with the prevailing view of literature at that time as an entertainment; it stressed the application of literature to life and attempted a convergence of literature with life. Such an attempt was continued by the *Jingpai* writers, among whom was the influential aesthete Zhu Guangqian 朱光潛 (1897-1986). He was famous for aiming to create a balance between the aesthetic value of literature and the purpose of life and thus to establish an artistic outlook on life. As discussed by Xu, the efforts of Zhu in this context actually summarize "the general attitudes of the *Jingpai* writers towards literature" (*Jingpai* 13). The ultimate concern of these intellectuals, both the *Jingpai* as well as the May Fourth writers, had never been political in the sense of seeking power. Rather, as in the May Fourth era, they saw their mission as actualising their intellectual responsibility – to help the nation become properly governed. Their enthusiastic call for reforming the nation in fact was not the product of a political interest but of the intellectually superior goal of seeking the purpose of life. Therefore the approach suggested by these reformers, such as the liberalism of Hu Shi who submitted to neither the Communist nor the Nationalist party, although it was a critical time to show one's political stand when the two parties were furiously struggling together,[10] inevitably

[10] Although it is known that Hu Shi had worked for the national government, in the articles which he published in the late 1920s and the early 1930s he apparently expressed his dissatisfaction with both political parties, the Communist party and the Nationalist party. His opposition to these political parties reinforced his insistence on maintaining a liberal view, even though the struggles between the two parties were then intense and many intellectuals and writers were beginning to reveal their political stands as they made their choices between them.

demonstrated many ties with the aloof yet unrealistic views of the intellectuals. This line of approach also explains the *Jingpai* writers' attempt in their works to exclude themselves from politics. Xu summarizes the *Jinapai* writers' political interest:

> Most of them did not agree with either the Nationalist Party or the Communist Party. Affected by the intellectual tradition, they have an embedded aloof sense to distance themselves from the realities, which turned out to be explicitly revealed in the context of modern China as a sense of naivety, evidently embarrassing themselves. These writers held a strong belief in their role of being intellectuals. Their enthusiastic passion, usually, was not activated by reality but by an idealistic belief, such as Hu Shi's reformism (*Jingpai* 10-11).

Jingpai writers' positioning themselves as outsiders in the political context should not be considered to be the same as the stance which their opponent *Haipai* adopted, which is plainly apolitical. In fact, the specific style of these two schools sheds light on the differences between them. *Haipai's* great effort to be isolated from politics as a means of protecting its mercantile profit was in sharp contrast to the *Jingpai* writers' aloof detachment from the competition between the political parties. It can be concluded that, when the origin of both schools is compared, *Jingpai's* connection with the May Fourth intellectuals and the link of the *Haipai* writers to the Butterflies writers placed the writers of these two schools in very different domains in the world of literature. While *Jingpai* writers still tried their best to maintain the May Fourth traditions, the *Haipai* writers developed a much greater interest in profit and fame in time of war.

As discussed above, Yang Jiang almost disappeared from the Shanghai literary scene and the theatrical circle and seemed to have no interest in establishing herself as a literary celebrity. In fact one could suggest that Yang was actually a *Jingpai*, according to her educational background as a graduate of Tsinghua, although she wrote, staged and published her plays in Shanghai.

See D. Xu *Jingpai* 10.

III. The Intellectual Vision of Yang Jiang

The consciousness of being an intellectual as mentioned above, which is a distinguishable characteristic of the *Jingpai* writers, is certainly typical of Yang. In her comedies she attempts to explore questions concerning the development of society and the purpose of life. Katherine Hui-ling Chou identifies a distinctive phenomenon, namely that in comparison with the large-scale emergence of female writers since the 1920s female playwrights subsequent to May Fourth were relatively rare. Through her study of the female playwright Bai Wei, Chou draws the conclusion that the desire to become a playwright arises from a woman's consciousness of being an intellectual. Chou observes that many of the well-educated women chose to become actresses rather than playwrights, which reflects the fact that most of these women lacked the consciousness to fight against the unequal treatment of women, submitting to the view that women should conform to roles which the male playwrights and directors wrote for them but that they should not take their own paths, so reflecting a hidden agenda that the New Woman, as an image, is just an instrument for the overall social reform: women were not really being paid their proper respect.[11] Chou further maintains that male intellectuals possessed an inclination to glorify the achievements of women's liberation, thus idealising the concept of the New Woman (105-06). An actress in that era was a typical embodiment of such a figure. Under the voyeurism of the male gaze these actresses were unaware of their real situation or of the question whether women were really emancipated or were simply following a male trend (Chou 90-91). Chou points out that

[11] Katherine Hui-ling Chou's suggestion is based on her observation of Bai Wei's character in her fiction "Zhadan yu zhengniao" 炸彈與征鳥 [Bomb and Fighting Bird]. Bomb is an enthusiastic revolutionary but is just assigned a role, along with other women revolutionaries, to sing and dance for their male comrades on the battlefield as a way to entertain them. Bomb is pained by such an arrangement which means that women revolutionaries are treated only as entertainers but not as fighters and is disillusioned by the inequality between men and women even on the field of revolution. Chou maintains that such a disillusionment reflects Bai Wei's own experience of her situation. See Chou, 100-102.

the only exception is Bai Wei.

Adopting David Der-wei Wang's view of Bai Wei, Chou maintains that Bai Wei remained clear-minded throughout the movement's life (100). Her consciousness motivated her to reflect on the actual predicament of women, and she refused to replicate in her plays any idealistic illusions created by the male intellectuals. Bai Wei's consciousness of being an intellectual granted her an autonomy which was unavailable to othe members of the female literary elite.

An analysis of Bai Wei acts as a useful reference point from which to understand Yang's motive for writing plays. Among the choices between presenting herself as a playwright, an actress or a female writer of prose in the Shanghai cultural scene, she chose to be a playwright, a role which attracted a public following and related to her consciousness of being an intellectual in modern China. As discussed in Chapter Seven, her writings enabled her audience to explore the purpose of life *vis-à-vis* cultural and social issues during those turbulent times. Yang cared about national issues and even more about the purpose of life rather than her material interests. She perceived herself to be intellectual of modern China rather than a literary celebrity.[12] Yang preferred to deal with issues closely related to the war as opposed to sharing her views of feminine subjects within the domestic realm so dear to the *Haipai* female writers. She made use of the dynamics arising from the contrast between a light-hearted and superficial domestic comic narrative and the underlying wartime tension in order to create an unsettling atmosphere for her audience and then to stimulate them into exploring the purpose of life during those turbulent times as a possible means of regaining

[12] A supplementary note should be added here to explain that Yang had a very clear consciousness of being an intellectual. In a piece of prose which records Yang's friendship with another woman writer, Chen Hengzhe 陳衡哲, Yang recollects that there was a gathering in wartime Shanghai in which she and Qian Zhongshu were together with Chen, Chen's husband Ren Hongjun 任鴻隽 and Hu Shi. In that gathering they discussed their prospects and whether they should stay or leave the country, and Yang clearly states that "The fate of the intellectuals was our prominent concern, because we were all intellectuals who would see the new political regime." See Yang "Chen Hengzhe" 328.

peace and stability. The aesthetic orders of disillusionment and detachment embedded in her plays indeed give rise to a strong sense of uncertainty. However, it is inappropriate to read Yang's plays as merely an expression of uncertainty: they should be viewed as an attempt to highlight certain problems for the audience to consider. Therefore one should not speculate whether she positions herself as a complete outsider in the social context, who loses all interest in, or even denies, everything in her surroundings. It is actually more appropriate to interpret her attitude as her adherence to intellectual morality and to conclude that her plays are an exploration as well as an invitation to her audience to search for the purpose of life, not simply within the context of the plays, but beyond this context.

Despite lacking any solution, Yang shares a vision with her audience – the power of laughter. It is suggested that the most remarkable point in this "comic presentation together with an underlying wartime anxiety" is the employment of laughter. This not only helps to create a superficial joyful atmosphere, giving the plays a pretence of light-heartedness, but it also serves as an effective means to deliver an unsettling, subversive sense. Yang makes it clear in her afterword to the published plays that she deliberately employs laughter as a means of subversion, creating and giving expression to the spirit of resistance in the confined city of Shanghai ("Afterword" 382). Therefore laughter is another indication of Yang's intellectual concern. She wanted to share this power with her audiences, who shared the same oppression.

A point that must be emphasised here is that Yang endows her female protagonists, who are also the outsiders in the confined community, with the power of laughter. This made the comedies more influential and well accepted, since enormous numbers of refugees migrated to wartime Shanghai, a seemingly peaceful city. According to the statistics obtained by Wu Jingping 吳景平, the population of the Foreign Concessions leaped twofold during the

war,[13] when Yang was one of the immigrants. An observation in the afterword to the published plays mentioned above revealed that she and her husband had indeed been accidentally and reluctantly trapped in Shanghai during the war ("Afterword" 382). This suggests that it was never her intention to settle in Shanghai but, like her other female protagonists, she became trapped in a confined realm and could not find her way out. Moreover, as discussed above, Yang did not seem to integrate with the *Haipai* circle and, more importantly, did not adopt the literary practices of Shanghai. She was in fact an outsider on the literary scene during the period of her residence in Shanghai. Yang's intellectual outlook suggests that she had a very different literary outlook from that of the literary mainstream of this city.[14] This was one of the critical factors in determining the source of her sense of detachment. As an outsider within this confined city she sought a way to survive. She strengthened herself and her audience with the power of laughter, the same power with which she endowed her protagonists when they were facing unfavourable situations. Yang, with her intellectual concern and vision, shared her belief in the power of laughter with her wartime audiences, especially those residents new to the city and who also felt unable to blend in with the city's culture. Laughter may not be a solution, but it is an effective defence mechanism or at least a temporary consolation for the predicament of being in a strange environment. This was how Yang transformed Austen's comic art in accordance with an aesthetic order of detachment and explains why her plays were so popular in wartime Shanghai.

This leads us to another question as to whether Yang's intellectual consciousness and

[13] The population of the Foreign Concessions increased from 2.5 million before the war to 5 millions in 1938. See J. Wu 78. In her study of wartime Shanghai Shu-mei Shih also highlights the fact that "eighty percent of the Chinese population in Shanghai …were immigrants from the vast Chinese interior", and their identities were far from unified; See Shih 236.

[14] A supplementary note should be added here from Fu Lei's comment on *As You Desire*, as mentioned in the Introduction. In an article Fu clearly points out that *As You Desire* is different from *He is Called Begonia,* which is written in *Haipai* style. This contemporary review of Yang's comedy can serve as evidence that Yang's style is different from *Haipai*. See L. Fu 56-59.

isolation from Shanghai's literary mainstream puts her at the other extreme, namely as a writer of *Jingpai* in opposition to *Haipai*. Yang was taught by prominent *Jingpai* writers such as Zhu Ziqing 朱自清, when she was in the Graduate School of Tsinghua. Her appearance onto the Chinese literary scene was encouraged by those teachers who recommended her works to the *Jingpai*-based literary journals.[15] Despite such a connection, it is not the only criterion which decided whether a writer belongs to a particular literary school. Rather, it is the literary quality of their works that should be the criteria for the classification. Therefore the following section will argue that, although Yang has the attributes of a *Jingpai* writer, her two comedies diverge noticeably from the commonly accepted style of *Jingpai* works. A comparison of the works of Yang and those of another female *Jingpai* writer Ling Shuhua 凌叔華 demonstrates the significant differences between Yang and the *Jingpai* writers.

Yang Jiang and Ling Shuhua: The Way Out of Predicament

The discussion in Chapter Five has already drawn a comparison between Yang and Ling on the basis that they both share the writing style of Jane Austen, and the debate focuses on the spatial settings of their works. As we have seen, Ling's reception of Austen is not as evident as Yang's. The difference is seen in the fact that Ling's heroines are apt to leave their confining domestic situations in order to seek a new life, whereas those of Yang, like some characters of Austen, enter their confines as strangers. However, the comparison between Ling and Yang in this chapter will be conducted in a different context. The basis for this comparison is that both of them are regarded as *Jingpai* writers. Indeed, Ling is regarded as

[15] Yang first published her work on *Xinyue* 新月. It is a translated work "Gongchanzhuyi shi buke bimian de ma?"共產主義是不可避免的嗎？[Is Communism Inevitable?], requested by Ye Gongchao as Yang's school assignment and then published in *Xinyue*. And, "Shoujiaoyin"收腳印 [Collecting Footprints] and "Lulu, buyongchou!'璐璐，不用愁！[Lulu, Don't be Sad!] were both assignments from the "The Writing of Vernacular Prose" class taught by Zhu Ziqin, who recommended the work of Yang to *Ta Kung Pao: wenyi fukan* 大公報・文藝副刊; see X. Wu 88, 95.

an influential female representative of the *Jingpai*, and therefore she is a good basis for analysing Yang's *Jingpai* attributes.

Most of the stories by Ling, including her short fiction and comedies, occur within a confined domestic setting: the *guige*. Annoyed by the confinement of their stagnant domestic situation and by the anxiety they feel in adapting to the modern outside world, her women feel the angst of being lost between tradition and modernity. How to seek a way out of their predicament is the theme of Ling's stories. As we have seen in Chapter Five, Ling's heroines seek to find a solution in their modern lives in order to cope with their predicament. However, developing a modern life-style is an invalid solution for their problematic situation, since adapting to it is often at the expense of their inborn traditions. The final solution which Ling provides for her heroines is related directly to her own background. It is nature itself that eventually saves Ling's heroines, and this is consistent with the general view that *Jingpai* writers possess a great fondness for nature, which is in complete contrast to *Haipai's* urban style.[16]

Based on this analysis, the *Jingpai* writers' admiration of nature is associated with their pursuit of the integrity of humanity. Xu Daoming observes that it is the purity, kindness and innocence found in the countryside which encourages the *Jingpai* writers to praise nature (*Jingpai* 14). Wu Fuhui also maintains that to these *Jingpai* writers their most admired outlook on life is one of health and wellbeing, which should be inspired by nature ("Xiangcun" 239). The words written by Shen Congwen 沈從文 (1902-1988), a representative of *Jingpai*, combine his admiration of nature and the pursuit of a healthy outlook on life:

> What I want to represent actually is "a mode of life" which is beautiful, healthy and natural – not

[16] Wu Fuhui observes: "There are two cultural systems in the world of *Jingpai* country fiction – opposing country and urban cultures – the representation of which consists of two different life styles, two cultural environments and two moralities." See F. Wu "Xiangcun" 238.

> violating the integrity of humanity. I have no plan to lead the readers to an adventure in 'Xanadu', but I want to tell a story of ordinary people who somehow live in a small town or a small city or perhaps the River You near to Xanadu. In the story, through the sadness and happiness of all these people, an appropriate definition of human "love" will then be found ("daixu" 45).

The same admiration for nature is also found in Ling's stories. For instance, the young lady in "*Chuntian*" 春天 [The Spring - 1926] Xiaoyin 霄音 is bored by her married life and is sick. She lies in bed having lost all interest in life. Eventually she revives her spirits by gazing upon the beautiful views and smelling the fragrance of the natural world outside. In addition, Shuangcheng 雙成 in "*Fengliao de shiren*" 瘋了的詩人 [A Mad Poet - 1928] is seriously ill, but she becomes better and lively again as she enjoys the fragrance of the plants in the garden. Nature does not only give happiness to these heroines but even provides them with a way out of their predicaments. In the denouement of Ling's short story "Qixia" [綺霞 – 1927] her heroine's decision to leave her husband and family to pursue her dream of music is inspired by a cypress tree. Its "awe-inspiring, erect shape" kindles her imagination and she sees herself "getting applause from the audience at a concert", at which Qixia 綺霞 happily shouts: "The greatness of the cypress! The great power of music!" (150) The extraordinariness of Ling's heroines goes far beyond that of any other female characters in the May Fourth literature, who *chuzou* 出走, or run away, from their families. Qixia recognises her predicament in marriage, even if that was her own decision, and she then had her "second escape" from her husband. Here the heroine is no longer enlightened by her lover but by nature. Such happenings can be understood as reflecting the writer's strong admiration of the purity and originality of nature and representing a healthy outlook on life and its goals.

When nature is highlighted as a solution in Ling's stories, the great difference between Ling and Yang is revealed. As discussed before, a sense of insecurity and instability permeates the areas both within and without the domestic realm in Yang's comedies, delivering the message that there is no way out of the predicaments facing Yang's heroines.

Furthermore, no trace of Yang's interest in nature can be found in the comedies. This lack of interest shows Yang's divergence from the *Jingpai* style, since one of its main characteristics is its admiration of nature. In this antagonism between *Jingpai* and *Haipai* Yang exhibits a greater inclination towards the intellectual nature of the former. This explains Junyu's choice of returning to Beijing rather than settling herself in prosperous cosmopolitan Shanghai. The preference for Beijing and its cultural style may be traced to Yang's Tsinghua background and her connection with the *Jingpai* writers. However, her works do not include all the typical *Jingpai* literary qualities. According to Yang's recollection, Qian Zhongshu told his Tsinghua fellow-students and teachers that it was better to combine the strengths of both schools through the establishment of a new school during the 1934 peak period of the polemic between *Jingpai* and *Haipai* (X. Wu 90). Excluding herself from both schools might reasonably be regarded as a significant reference point in interpreting Yang's views, as the comment can be made that Yang was in a totally excluded position within the literary mainstream of wartime China. Her sense of detachment is clear and becomes prominent in the aesthetic order presented in her comedies.

Yi-Tsi Feuerwerker concludes in her discussion of Chinese woman writers of the 1920s to the 1930s that the woman writers of that period were too much bounded in their historical context, and that this impeded them from having the "balanced, mature detachment" (168) necessary to create great literary works. In contrast Yang's comedies, in receiving and transforming Austen's aesthetic, are imbued with a sense of detachment as an aesthetic order, and they do, in fact, exhibit qualities that surpass the literary achievements of the preceding generation, attaining a new height of achievement for Chinese literature.

Conclusion

Modern China through the Eyes of a Humourist

As the present research emphasises, Yang Jiang took an active role in the importation of the genre of the comedy of manners as well as the comedic style of Jane Austen. In so doing, she was by no means a passive recipient of Austen's feminist comedy of manners, but, rather, she adapted, digested and transformed this art form whilst merging it with her own cultural inheritance.

Yang's Successful Reception of Austen's Comedic Presentation

As discussed in the previous chapters, Yang's horizon of expectations is objectified through the first and second perspectives suggested by Jauss. Both perspectives are concerned with the recipient's interpretation of the features of the literature. Yang's direct reception of Austen's style and the author's approach to the genre of the comedy of manners is clearly demonstrated in her critique of Austen's art: "You shenme hao?". Yang takes over a very critical comedic element from Austen, namely subversive laughter, a literary quality rarely seen in Chinese literature prior to Yang's comedies.

Gabriela Castellanos identifies a unique comic presentation in Austen's works: "Jane Austen's main resource, her most basic attitude, was laughter. Because her voice was never strident, her manner never discordant, the peculiar shape of her laughter allowed many to smile at her wit, without feeling the force of her irony" (1). Laughter is a critical part of the construction of Austen's unique comic presentation in which the author's true concern and her irony are concealed. This is the foreground/background setting discussed in Chapter Five which Yang receives from Austen in order to conceal a significant discourse in her own

comedies – that arising from the May Fourth Period. The playwright exhibits a strong sense of doubt in the achievements of the May Fourth Movement, which she explores through irony, attempting to subvert the canon.

"Laughing in a Confined Space": Humour as an Attitude

As You Desire and *Swindle* were important milestones in the writing career of Yang Jiang. It is known that Yang published other works before the plays, but these comedies can be legitimately regarded as the point at which she established her own style of writing. Although these are the only comedic *dramas* written by Yang, they are not her only comic writings. Since producing the comedies, Yang had developed a style of writing in which humour is the predominant element in her *oeuvre*.

Zhang Wei's 張韡 discussion of Yang's humour suggests that humour became her very outlook on life (W. Zhang). Caricature and witty dialogue are elements frequently found in her works. We can see how humour serves as a method by which Yang dealt with the world's hardships.[1] Yang uses humour to describe the way in which she was humiliated by the political movements of the 1950s and 1960s. When, during the Cultural Revolution, she was assigned to cleaning the ladies' toilets, she had experiences, whose lessons she recounts:

> Since I had become a toilet cleaner, I began to enjoy a freedom I have never had. I am educated in traditional values and thus bounded by the regulation of being polite … When I see an acquaintance, I must greet him/her – even if I do not like that person, or I know he/she does not like me. Since I was been a toilet cleaner, I was happy to be allowed the indulgence of ignoring people. When I saw someone I did not like, I just showed her my boring face, or even stared at her as if she were not a human being but an object. No one would blame me for being arrogant, as I also was not a human being anymore ("Bingwudingwei" 67).

This humorous approach to writing is applied to the writing of her novel, *Baptism* [洗澡], in which she mocks the practices of the intellectuals by caricaturing their selfishness and

[1] A detailed discussion can be found in W. Zhang 11-14.

haughtiness. For example, Shi Nina's 施妮娜 always boasts about her knowledge of literature, but does not know that *La Comedie Humaine* is not a drama; and Yu Nan 余楠 is selfish enough to abandon his wife and leave the country with his mistress, yet still claims himself to be a righteous person in front of his wife.

Another significant attribute which Yang adopts from her comedies and applies to her other writings is the confined setting which appears in several of her fictional works. The most noticeable example is the academic institution which forms the setting for the novel *Baptism.* The intellectuals working in the institution live in the houses within its courtyard. Another example of a confined setting is in Yang's story "What a Joke" [「大笑話」]. Like *Baptism*, the setting of the story is in an institution, and the story is about the relationships among the intellectuals and their families. The story "What a Joke" is about the rumour involving the romantic affairs of a widow Chen Qian 陳倩, whose husband was also a scholar at the institution. The scenes in which the wives of these intellectuals plot against their rivals and their various intrigues bears a strong resemblance to the plot of *As You Desire*, in which Junyu's aunts plot to get their hands on Langzhai's fortune.

Yang's Reflection as an Intellectual of Wartime China

Yang's transformation of Austen's comedic art is mainly revealed in the incomplete objectification of her horizon of expectations through the third perspective discussed by Jauss: she has a different interpretation of the socio-historical environment from that of Austen. The aesthetic order of Yang's comedies, which is seldom if ever to be found in Austen's works, is a sense of disillusionment. This is Yang's response to the May Fourth movement. As discussed in Chapter Three, the incorporation of May Fourth discourse into the comedies is an insight provided by Yang's contemporary playwrights. However, Yang

obviously demonstrates a very different attitude towards the movement from that of her predecessors. While the playwrights of the genre of the comedy of manners, such as Ding Xilin, express, to a certain extent, a desire for social reform, Yang doubts the validity of such a desire, given the nature of human beings.

Such a sense of disillusionment with human effort is rarely found in Chinese literature. The traditional literary credo *Wen yi zai dao* 文以載道 – contributes a large component to the intellectual formation of Chinese morality. However, in Yang's comedies there is seemingly no articulated direction for a social cause, and it is this aspect which makes them unorthodox. However, it would be unjustified to state that Yang's comedies indicate that the playwright is lacking in intellectual vision; rather it would be more appropriate to state that Yang expresses her social concern in an unorthodox way – by receiving and transforming Austen's comedic aesthetic in her own comedies. The *dao* which she conveys in her comedies is very different from that understood in the traditional context. Yang proposes a new form of faith – Fate, a force that is characterized by its uncontrollability and disengagement from human effort. Living in a time of calamity, Yang could scarcely believe that human effort was of any value. In this sense Yang does not refuse to follow the traditional practice of the intellectual, taking up the duty of an intellectual to explore the possibility of restoring the social order.

That is to say, whilst the theme of Yang's comedies subverts the Chinese literary convention, Yang somehow still plays the traditional role of the intellectual in the literary context. This seemingly contradictory situation is dissolved through Yang's achievement in transforming Austen's humour within the context of the indigenous culture, the literary aesthetic as well as intellectualistic vision of China. As discussed in Chapters Two and Four that subversive spirit is particularly rare in Chinese literature. Yang draws from Austen in order to question the existence of everything, including established conventions and the

achievements of the iconoclastic movement that was May Fourth. This subversiveness sets Yang's comedies apart from traditional Chinese literature as well as from the comedies written by her contemporaries. In ingeniously combining this comedic element with traditional Chinese literary practice, the genre was thus successfully indigenised and well received by the audience of wartime Shanghai, who shared the same socio-historical situation. Moreover, in Yang's cunning transformation, the intellectual interweaves her reflections on the social reforms of the previous generation at a time of national calamity with a dramatic form originating from the West.

A Strong Sense of Detachment

Another aesthetic order in Yang's transformation is the sense of detachment which Yang draws from Austen. In Yang's works this detachment is even more pronounced than in Austen's. Yang's sense of detachment disengages her from both her characters and the story. For this reason it is difficult to identify her voice with that of any specific character. This sense of detachment is an approach which Yang deliberately employs and uses consistently throughout her later years. In the preface to *Baptism* written in 2003 Yang emphasises that there is no protagonist in this story: "In this novel only one or two people have the consciousness to transcend 'self'. Owing to the reader's fondness for them, they are regarded as protagonists" ("Preface (2003)" 211). This point is repeated in the preface to the sequel of *Baptism*, *After Baptism* [洗澡之後], which was written in 2010:

> Yao Mi 姚宓 and Xu Yancheng 許彥成 are the readers' favourite characters. In the light of this, they somehow become the protagonists of the novel. However, if there are protagonists, the nature of the work would depart from my original intention. According to my original plan, I only meant to write a story of some intellectuals who were in the process of ideological remolding. It is about the whole group of intellectuals. Who would be the protagonist among them? (*Preface (2010)* 2)

Yang's emphasis that no one is to be designated as the protagonist in her novel illustrates her

efforts to extinguish her own voice, so removing any chance that the reader should mistakenly identify any character's views with those of the author. This detached attitude has been evident ever since her time as a playwright in wartime Shanghai.

This sense of detachment in Yang's literary works is clearly a reflection of her outlook of life. Yang desires to take the role of an outsider, or more directly, to be invisible, both perhaps in the context of her literary work and in that of the real world. In her piece entitled "Cloak of Invisibility" [隱身衣 - 1986], Yang clearly states her attitude towards life: that is, her desire to be invisible, just like wearing a cloak, and the way she achieves invisibility is to humble herself. The many advantages of being invisible are set out in her prose: "If you don't try to climb high, you have no fear of falling, and have no need to elbow others aside or do them down; you can preserve your innocence, fulfil your nature, and apply your mind to doing what you can do" ("Cloak" 267)[2]. Yang's desire to be invisible is also an attempt to observe and interest herself in observing people's manners:

> Manners and mores are more fascinating than bright moons and fresh breezes: they can be read like a book or watched like a play. Descriptions in books, performances in plays, are in the end only works of art, however lifelike they might be. Manners and mores are unthinking and artless, and frequently go beyond rhyme and reason, taking startlingly or frighteningly original forms; so they make a deeper impression, and give more peculiar pleasure. It is the humble person who is best placed to see the true face of manners and mores, as opposed to artistic performances directed at an audience ("Cloak" 268).

That is to say, in order to write a good comedy of manners, Yang deliberately chooses the position of the outsider in her story. In the context of personal survival in turbulent times, Yang distanced herself from the environment in which she lived. Ke Ling 柯靈, a friend of Yang, recollects that "Yang modestly says she is a 'tan xia ren' [壇下人]" (Cuxi 136). Ke Ling interprets the term as Yang's explanation of her position in the literary scene, which is "flowing under the literary scene, just like Miaoyu 妙玉 in *The Dream of the Red Mansion* who calls herself as 'kan wai ren' [檻外人, or a threshold outsider]" (Cuxi 136). Being an

[2] The prose is translated by David Pollard. See Yang "Cloak".

ironist, Yang soberly detached herself from the world. Her sober mind and wisdom demanded that she took a humble position as an outsider of society. Moreover, the temperament of the humorist enabled Yang to deal with crises in a calm and easy manner. This gave her the ability to survive and, more importantly, to survive with dignity. Her humour gave her the wisdom to live with turbulence and the insight to write a number of beautiful works of comedy providing many delightful moments for her readers.

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Appendix 1: The Reviews of Yang Jiang's Comedies Written in the 1940s

Author	Title	Date/ Year	Publication Information
風帆 Fengfan	〈五月劇評散輯 ：「稱心如意」〉 "A Collection of Theatrical Reviews of May: *As You Desire*"	1943	太平洋周報 [第 1 卷，第 67 期，頁 1378] *Chinese Pacific Weekly* (vol.1, issue 67: 1378)
方中 Fang Zhong	〈讀稱心如意〉 "Reading *As You Desire*"	1943	《稱心如意》演出特刊 The special issue of the performance of *As You Desire*
史蒂華 Shi Di Hua (Mai Ye)	〈劇評：弄真成假〉 "A Review of *Swindle*"	1943	太平洋周報 [第 1 卷，第 86 期，頁 1904] *Chinese Pacific Weekly* （vol.1, issue 86: 1904)
史約 Shi Yue	〈談喜劇的特性：讀弄真成假評後感〉 "A Discussion of the Characteristics of Comedy: A Review of a Critique of *Swindle*"	1943	太平洋周報 [第 1 卷，第 88 期，頁 1960] *Chinese Pacific Weekly* （vol.1, issue 88: 1960)
小華 Xiao Hua	〈「弄真成假」觀後感〉 "A Review of *Swindle*"	10 Nov. 1943	上海影壇 [第 1 卷，第 2 期，頁 37] *Shanghai Yingtan* (vol.1,

			issue 2: 37)
馬二 Ma Er	〈「秋」「雲彩霞」「花信風」話劇編導李健吾為藝術而削髮登臺：在「稱心如意」劇中飾七十多歲老頭兒〉 "The Playwright and Director of *Autumn, Rosy Cloud* and *The Breeze of Blossom* Li Jianwu will Shave His Head for Acting: Playing the role of a Seventy-Year-Old in *As You Desire*"	1943	新天津畫報 [第 5 卷，第 17 期，頁 2] *Xin Tianjin Huabao* (vol.5, issue 17: 2)
麥耶 Mai Ye	〈十月影劇綜評〉 "A Review of the Movies and Drama of October"	10 Nov. 1943	雜誌 [第 12 卷，第 2 期，頁 170-3] *Zazhi* (vol.12, issue 2: 170-3]
傅雷 Fu Lei	〈讀劇隨感〉 "Some Comments on the Dramas"	Oct. 1943	萬象 *Panorama Monthly*
麥耶 Mai Ye	〈是月也〉 "This Month"	10 Dec. 1943	雜誌 [第 12 卷，第 3 期，頁 173-5] *Zazhi* (vol.12, issue 3: 173-5)
何芝 He Zhi	〈看「稱心如意」：雷電華劇社演出〉	1944	中國周刊 [第 123 期，頁 8]

	"A Review of *As You Desire*: The Performance of Leidianhua Troupe"		*China Review* (issue 123: 8)
班公 Ban Gong	〈觀「遊戲人間」〉 'Watching *Sporting with the World*"	1944	小天地 [第 2 期，頁 59-60] *Xiao Tiandi* (issue 2: 59-60)
	〈遊戲人間：姚克導演〉 "*Sporting with the World*: The Director Yao Ke"	1944	影劇界 [革新號，第 3 期，頁 10] *Yingjujie* (issue 3, The issue of renovation: 10)
洛川 Luo Chuan	〈「遊戲人間」〉 "*Sporting with the World*"	1944	中國周報 [第 140 期，頁 7] *China Review* (issue 140: 7)
吳琴 Wu Qin	〈「遊戲人間」觀感〉 "The Impression of *Sporting with the World*"	1944	中國周報 [第 142 期，頁 7] *China Review* (issue 142: 7)
麥耶 Mai Ye	〈七夕談劇〉 "A Review of Dramas on the Star Festival"	10 Sep. 1944	雜誌 [第 13 卷，第 6 期，頁 164-8] *Zazhi* (vol.13, issue 6: 164-8)
孟度	〈關於楊絳的話〉	10 May 1945	雜誌 [第 15 卷，第 2

Meng Du	"A Piece of Writing about Yang Jiang"		期，頁 110-2] *Zazhi* (vol.15, issue 2: 110-2)
趙景琛 Zhao Jingshen	〈記錢鍾書與楊絳〉 "Notes of Qian Zhongshu and Yang Jiang"	1946	世界半月刊 [第 1 卷，第 4 期，頁 61] *World a Fortnightly Review* (vol.1, issue 4: 61)
林凡 Lin Fan	〈書評：評「稱心如意」和「弄真成假」〉 "A Book Review: A Critique of *As You Desire* and *Swindle*"	1948	婦女月刊 [第 7 卷，第 1 期，頁 48-52] *Funu yuekan* (vol.7, issue1: 48-52)

Appendix 2: Yang Jiang's *Oeuvre*

Year	Name of the work	Genre
1933	"Gongchan zhuyi shi buke bimian de ma?" 共產主義是不可避免的嗎? [Is Communism Inevitable?]	Translation
	"Shou jiaoyin" 收腳印 [Collecting Footprints]	Prose
1935	"Lulu, buyongchou!" 路路，不用愁！ [Lulu, don't be Sad!]	Fiction
1937	"Yin" 陰 [Shadow]	Prose
1943	***As You Desire*** **稱心如意**	**Play**
	Swindle **弄真成假**	**Play**
1944	***Sporting with the World*** **遊戲人間**	**Play**
1946	***Windswept Blossoms*** **風絮**	**Play**
1948	*1939 nian yilai Yingguo sanwen zuopin* (*Prose Literature since 1939*) 1939 年以來英國散文作品	Translation
1950	*Xiao Laizi* (*Lazarillo de Tormes*) 小癩子	Translation
1954	*Jier · Bulasi* (*Gil Blas*) 吉爾 · 布拉斯	Translation
1957	"Lun Feierding guanyu xiaoshuo de lilun yu shijian" 論菲爾丁關於小說的理論與實踐 [A Discussion of Fielding's Theory of Fiction]	Literary criticism

1959	"Lun Sakelei *Minglichang*" 論薩克雷《名利場》[A Discussion of Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*]	Literary criticism
	"Yishu yu kefu kunnan - du *Honglunmeng* ouji" 藝術與克服困難 – 讀《紅樓夢》偶記 [Art and the Overcoming of Difficulty – *The Dream of the Red Chamber*]	Literary criticism
	"Li Yu lun xiju jiegou" 李漁論戲劇結構 [Li Yu's Theory of the Structure of Drama]	Literary criticism
1977	"'What a Joke'" 「大笑話」	Fiction
1978	*Tangjihede* (*Don Quixote*) 堂吉訶德	Translation
	"'Yuren'" 「玉人」[A Beauty]	Fiction
1979	"Gui" 鬼 [Ghost]	Fiction
	Chunni 春泥集 [The Soil of Spring]	Articles of literary criticism
1980	"Shiye" 事業 [Career]	Fiction
	"Shishi – gushi – zhenshi" 事實 - 故事 - 真實 [Fact – Story – Truth]	Literary criticism
1981	*Daoying ji* 倒影集 [Reflections]	A collection of short stories
	A Cadre School Life, Six Chapters 幹校六記	Memoir

	"Jiushu xinjie" 舊書新解 [A New Interpretation of an Old Book]	Literary criticism
1982	"You shenme hao? - du xiaoshuo manlun zhi san" 有甚麼好？— 讀小說漫論之三 [What is there in her? – Comments on Reading Novels (Part Three)]	Literary criticism
	"'Tianshang yiri, renjian yinian' - zai Saiwantisi ji'nianhui shang fayan" 「天上一日，人間一年」- 在塞萬提斯紀念會上的發言 ["A Day in Heaven, a Year in the World" – A Speech delivered in Commemoration of Cervantes]	Prose (originally a speech delivered in commemoration of Cervantes)
1983	*Xiju erzhong*[1] 喜劇二種 [Two Comedies]	A collection of comedies
	"Art and the Overcoming of Difficulty – *The Dream of the Red Chamber*"	Literary criticism (The English version of "Yishu yu kefu kunnan - du *Honglunmeng* ouji")
1986	"Huiyi wo de fuqin" 回憶我的父親 [In Memory of my Father]	Prose
	"Huiyi wo de gumu" 回憶我的姑母 [In Memory of my Aunt]	Prose
	"On Qiang Zhongshu and *Fortress Besieged*" 記錢鍾書與《圍城》	Prose
	"Bingwu dingwei jishi" 丙午丁未紀事 [An Account of the Incidents of 1966]	Memoir
	"Shibai de jingyan"（Its name in the later edition has become "Fanyi de jiqiao" 翻譯的技巧） 失敗的經驗 [The Experience of Failures]	Literary criticism

[1] Two comedies *As You Desire* and *Swindle* are collected in this book.

	Guanyu shaoshuo 關於小說 [About Fiction]	A collection of articles of literary criticism
1987	*Toward Oblivion* 將飲茶	A collection of prose writings
1988	*Baptism* 洗澡	Novel
1991	"Diyici xiaxiang" 第一次下鄉 [The First Time of Working in the Country]	Prose
	"Shunjie de 'ziyou lianai'" 順姐的「自由戀愛」 [Maid Shun's "Romance"]	Prose
1992	"*Laopu yiwenji* qianyan" 《老圃遺文輯》前言 [A Preface to *A Collection of Lao Pu's Extant Writings*]	Prose
	Zayi yu zaxie 雜憶與雜寫 [Miscellaneous Recollections and Writings]	A collection of prose and fiction
1993	*Yang Jiang zuopin ji* 楊絳作品集 [A Collection of Yang Jiang's Works]	A collection of Yang's works
	"Ji si meng fei meng" 記似夢非夢 [As in a Dream]	Prose
1994	*Yang Jiang sanwen* 楊絳散文 [The Prose Writings of Yang Jiang]	A collection of Yang's prose writings
1995	*Yang Jiang sanwen xuanji* 楊絳散文選集 [Selected Prose of Yang Jiang]	Yang's selected prose
1997	" Fan Wumei and her 'My Old Man'" 方五妹和她的「我老頭子」	Prose
	"Da Zong Pu 'Budebu shuo de hua'" 答宗璞〈不得不說的話〉[A Reply to Zong Pu's	Prose

	"Budebushuo de hua"]	
1998	"Qian Zhongshu likai Xinan Lianda de shiqing" 錢鍾書離開西南聯大的實情 [The Truth of Qian Zhongshu's Quitting the National Southwestern Associated University]	Prose
1999	"Cong 'canshazi' dao liuwang" 從「摻沙子」到流亡 [From "Adulteration" to Exile]	Prose
2000	*Cong bingwu dao liuwang* 從丙午到流亡 [From 1966 to Exile]	Memoir
	Feiduo (*Phaedo*) 斐多	Translation
2001	"Nanwang de yitian" 難忘的一 天 [An Unforgettable Day]	Prose
	"Wo zai Qiming shangxue" 我在啟明上學 [I Studied in Qiming]	Prose
2002	"Huainian Chen Hengzhe" 懷念陳衡哲 [In Memory of Chen Hengzhe]	Prose
	"Ji wode fanyi" 記我的翻譯 [My Experience of Translation]	Prose
2003	"Chen Guangfu de gushi erze" 陳光甫的故事兩則 [Two Stories of Chen Guangfu]	Prose
	We Three 我們仨	Memoir
	"Xiang Lin Yian xiansheng qingjiao" 向林一安先生請教 [May Ask for Mr. Lin Yian's Advice]	Prose
2004	"Buguan bushang you shuxiang" 不官不商有書香 [The Fragrance of the Books]	Prose

	A Preface to *A Collection of Qian Zhongshu's English Essays*	Prose
	Yang Jiang wenji 楊絳文集 [A Collection of Yang Jiang's Works]	A collection of Yang's works
	"Jianbing Qian Yuan" 尖兵錢瑗 [Qian Yuan, a Good Soldier]	Prose
2007	*Zoudao renshengbian shang - ziwen zida* 走到人生邊上ㄧ自問自答 [On the Edge of life – Answering the Question I Posed for Myself]	A collection of prose
	"'Yang Jiang' he 'Yang Jikang' – zhuhe Shanghai jinian huaju bainian" 「楊絳」和「楊季康」- 祝賀上海紀念話劇百年 ["Yang Jiang" and "Yang Jikang" – In Celebration of the 100th Anniversary of Shanghai Drama]	Prose
2008	"*Ting Yang Jiang tan wangshi* xu" 《聽楊絳談往事》序 [A Preface to *Ting Yang Jiang tan wangshi*]	Prose
2009	"Jian bianzi de gushi" 剪辮子的故事 [A Story of Cutting the Braid]	Prose
	"Qian Zhongshu shengming zhong de Yang Jiang" 錢鍾書生命中的楊絳 [Qiang Zhongshu's Yang Jiang]	Prose
2010	"Mogui yefang Yang Jiang" 魔鬼夜訪楊絳 [The Devil's Late Visit to Yang Jiang]	Prose
	"Jian wei gongde" 儉為共德 [Frugality as a Universal Moral Value]	Prose
	"Hanwen" 漢文 [Chinese Characters]	Prose
	"Mantan *Hongloumeng*" 漫談《紅樓夢》[Comments on *The Dream of the Red Mansion*]	Literary criticism

2013	"Zhongshu xizi" 鍾書習字 [Thoughts on Zhongshu's Practising Calligraphy]	Prose
	"Yi haishi (wuze)" 憶孩時 （五則） [Five Stories of my Childhood]	Prose
2014	*After "Baptism"* 洗澡之後	Fiction

Notes to readers:

1. This table is mainly based on the information provided in "Yang Jiang shengping yu chuangzuo dashi ji" 楊絳生平與創作大事紀 [The Record of Yang Jiang's Life and Works].[2]
2. The works recorded here are only those which have been individually published in journals and news-papers. Some articles such as "Cloak of Invisibility" 隱身衣 , which is the afterword of *Toward Oblivion* 將飲茶 and has already been included in a book on its first appearance, would not be recorded individually in this table.
3. Only the first editions of the books are recorded in this table. Subsequent editions or translated editions of these books are not recorded in this table.

[2] The record can be found in *Yang Jiang wenji. wenlun xiju juan: wenlun, xiju erzhong* 384-416.

Appendix 3: The Reviews, Translated Works of Jane Austen in the Journals or Magazines Published in the Early Modern China

Writer/ Translator	**Title**	**Date**	**Publication Information**	**Genre**
	"Portraits of English Authors: Chronologically Arranged, with Short Biographical Notes: Jane Austen"	1 July 1923	英文雜誌 (第 9 卷，第 7 期，頁 2) *English Student* (vol.9, issue 7: 2)	Picture
	"Literature: A family scene [From *Pride and Prejudice*]"	20 Sep. 1924	中華英文周報 (第 11 卷，第 276 期，頁 559-60) *Chung Hwa English Weekly* (vol.11, issue 276: 559-60)	*Pride and Prejudice:* Ch1
May K. Toy	"Jane Austen's heroes and heroines"	23 Apr. 1927	英語周刊 (第 601 期，頁 25-26) *English Weekly* (issue 601: 25-26)	Criticism
薛琪英 Xue Qiying	〈說部：長篇小說：婚姻鏡〉 "A Section of Fiction: Novel: The Reflection of Marriage"	1 June 1929	女鐸 (第 18 卷，第 1-2 期，頁 24-33) *Woman's Messenger* (vol.18, issue 1-2: 24-33)	Translation (*Sense and Sensibility*: Ch1&2)
Tseu Yih Zan	"Great Books and Their Stories: XXII, 'Pride and Prejudice'"	9 Nov. 1929	英語周刊 (第 728 期，頁 565)	Criticism

			English Weekly (issue 728: 565)	
居易 Ju Yi	愛與友情 (續) “ ‘Love and Friendship’ (continued)”	1 Oct. 1932	北國月刊 (第 1 卷，第 2 期，頁 43-60) *Beiguo yuekan* (vol.1, issue 2: 43-60)	Translation
	The Photos of Drama: *Pride and Prejudice*	1 Jun 1933	墨梯 [第 1933 期，頁 132-3] *McTyeire School, Shanghai* (issue 1933: 132-33)	Photos
楊縯 Yang Bin	〈「傲慢與偏見」作者擷茵奧斯登評傳〉 “A Critical Biography of *Pride and Prejudice's* Author, Jane Austen”	29 June 1935	商務印書館出版周刊 (第 135 期，頁 9-11) *Commercial Press Weekly* (issue 135: 9-11)	Criticism
Annotated by T. Tet	“Letters by Men of Letters: Jane Austen to Her Niece”	24 Aug. 1935	英語周刊 (第 146 期，頁 1283-84) *English Weekly* (issue 146: 1283-84)	Austen’s letter written in 1814

	〈為了影片的題材發生恐慌：英美爭攝文學電影：莎士比亞、奧斯丁、史蒂芬生著作紛紛上銀幕〉 "A Scarcity of Movie Script: Emergence of Films Based on Literature: the Works of Shakespeare, Austen, Stephenson will be adapted into Movies"	11 July 1936	娛樂週報 (第 2 卷，第 27 期，頁 541) *Variety Weekly* (vol.2, issue 27: 541)	News
程憶帆 Cheng Yifan	〈小書人：琴．奧斯登：「藹瑪姑娘」〉 "Little Bookman: Jane Austen: *Emma*"	Jan. 1937	小書人 (第 1 卷，第 1 期，頁 90) *China Bookman* (vol.1, issue 1: 90)	Review
Gertrude Gelbin 徐百益譯 Trans. by Xu Baiyi	〈傲慢與偏見(附照片)〉 "*Pride and Prejudice* (with pictures)"	1941	家庭 (第八卷，第 2 期，頁 61-73) *Happy Home* (vol.8, issue 2: 61-73)	A translation of the adapted work
王影 Wang Ying	〈擇偶記：新「傲慢與偏見」〉 "A Story of Choosing a Spouse: New 'Pride and Prejudice'"	16 Nov. 1941	萬人小說 (創刊號，頁 27-37) *Wanren xiaoshuo* (inaugural issue: 27-37)	An adapted work
吳景榮 Wu	〈奧斯登的 (Jane Austen) 戀愛觀：從「勸導」講起〉	15 May 1943	時與潮文藝 (第 1 卷，第 2 期，頁 107-10) *Shi yu chao wenyi*	Criticism

Jingyong	"The Romantic Outlook of Jane Austen: Starting the Discussion with *Persuasion*"		(vol.1, issue 2: 107-10)	
無欲 Wu Yu	〈傲慢與偏見(長篇小說)(三)〉 "*Pride and Prejudice* (Novel) Part 3"	Nov. 1943	雛燕 (第 1 卷，第 5 期，頁 66-70) *Chuyan* (vol.1, issue 5: 66-70)	Translation
天虹 Tian Hong	〈班奈德夫婦〉 "Mr. and Mrs. Bennet"	25 Apr. 1945	改進 (vol.11, issue 2: 81-83) *Gaijin* (vol.11, issue 2: 81-83)	Translation (*Pride and Prejudice*: Ch1&2)
林樹珍 Lin Shuzhen	〈世界名著介紹：傲慢與偏見〉 "A World Masterpiece: *Pride and Prejudice*"	1 Apr. 1947	新自由 (第 1 卷，第 5-6 期，頁 36-37) *Xin Ziyou* (vol.1, issue 5-6: 36-37)	Review
宗仍 Zong Reng	風波 "Storm"	30 Apr. 1947	文藝先鋒 (第 10 卷，第 4 期，頁 35-39) *Wenyi xianfeng* (vol.19, issue 4:35-39)	Translation (*Pride and Prejudice*: Ch1&2)
徐百益 Xu Baiyi	〈琴．奧司汀 (Jane Austen)〉 "Jane Austen"	Summer 1947	家庭良伴 (第 3 期，頁 26-28) *Happy Home Companion* (vol.3: 26-28)	Biography

朱有琮 Zhu Youcong	〈奧斯丁的代表作：傲慢與偏見〉 "The Masterpiece of Austen: *Pride and Prejudice*"	10 Dec. 1947	讀書通訊 (半月刊)(第 146 期，頁 15-16) *Dushu tongxun* (monthly) (issue 146: 15-16)	Criticism
林海 Lin Hai	〈「傲慢與偏見」及其作者〉 "*Pride and Prejudice* and its Author"	16Apr. 1948	時與文 (週刊) (第 3 卷，第 1 期，頁 9-11) *Time & Culture* (vol.3, issue 1: 9-11)	Criticism
	"On the Chinese Translation of 'Pride and Prejudice'" 〈關於翻譯「傲慢與偏見」〉	5 June 1948	中華英語半月刊 (第 9 卷，第 11 期，頁 11-14) *Chung Hwa English Fortnightly* (vol.9, issue 11: 11-14)	Criticism
常風 Chang Feng	〈奧斯汀的「傲慢與偏見」〉 "Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*"	Aug. 1948	文學雜誌 (第 3 卷，第 3 期，頁 89-96) *Wenxue zazhi* (vol.3, issue 3: 89-96)	Criticism
陳新謙 Chen Xinqian	〈奧斯丁和她的「驕傲與偏見」〉 "Austen and her *Pride and Prejudice*"	15 Sep. 1948	新學生 (第 5 卷，第 5 期，頁 13-17) *Xin xuesheng* (vol.5, issue 5: 13-17)	Criticism
錢歌川 Qian	〈傲慢與偏見〉 *"Pride and Prejudice"*	5 Aug. 1948	中華英語半月刊 (第 10 卷，第 3 期，頁 7-12)	Translation

Gechuan			*Chung Hwa English Fortnightly* (vol.10, issue 3: 7-12)	
錢歌川 Qian Gechuan	〈傲慢與偏見〉 *"Pride and Prejudice"*	20 Aug. 1948	中華英語半月刊 (第 10 卷，第 4 期，頁 26-30) *Chung Hwa English Fortnightly* (vol.10, issue 4: 26-30)	Translation
錢歌川 Qian Gechuan	〈傲慢與偏見〉 "*Pride and Prejudice* (continued)"	5 Sep. 1948	中華英語半月刊 (第 10 卷，第 5 期，頁 27-30) *Chung Hwa English Fortnightly* (vol.10, issue 5: 27-30)	Translation
錢歌川 Qian Gechuan	〈傲慢與偏見〉 "*Pride and Prejudice* (continued)"	20 Sep. 1948	中華英語半月刊 (第 10 卷，第 6 期，頁 23-28) *Chung Hwa English Fortnightly* (vol.10, issue 6: 23-28)	Translation
錢歌川 Qian Gechuan	〈傲慢與偏見〉 "*Pride and Prejudice* (continued)"	5 Oct. 1948	中華英語半月刊 (第 10 卷，第 7 期，頁 19-24) *Chung Hwa English Fortnightly* (vol.10, issue 7: 19-24)	Translation

錢歌川 Qian Gechuan	〈傲慢與偏見〉 "*Pride and Prejudice* (continued)"	20 Oct. 1948	中華英語半月刊 (第 10 卷，第 8 期，頁 20-24) *Chung Hwa English Fortnightly* (vol.10, issue 8: 20-24)	Translation
錢歌川 Qian Gechuan	〈傲慢與偏見〉 "*Pride and Prejudice* (continued)"	5 Nov. 1948	中華英語半月刊 (第 10 卷，第 9 期，頁 19-25) *Chung Hwa English Fortnightly* (vol.10, issue 9: 19-25)	Translation
錢歌川 Qian Gechuan	〈傲慢與偏見〉 "*Pride and Prejudice* (continued)"	20 Nov. 1948	中華英語半月刊 (第 10 卷，第 10 期，頁 17-23) *Chung Hwa English Fortnightly* (vol.10, issue 10: 17-23)	Translation
錢歌川 Qian Gechuan	〈傲慢與偏見〉 "*Pride and Prejudice* (continued)"	5 Dec. 1948	中華英語半月刊 (第 10 卷，第 11 期，頁 19-23) *Chung Hwa English Fortnightly* (vol.10, issue 11: 19-23)	Translation
錢歌川 Qian Gechuan	〈傲慢與偏見〉 "*Pride and Prejudice* (continued)"	20 Dec. 1948	中華英語半月刊 (第 10 卷，第 12 期，頁 16-22) *Chung Hwa English Fortnightly* (vol.10,	Translation

			issue 12: 16-22)	
錢歌川 Qian Gechuan	〈傲慢與偏見〉 "*Pride and Prejudice* (continued)"	5 Jan. 1949	中華英語半月刊 (第 11 卷，第 1 期，頁 21-25) *Chung Hwa English Fortnightly* (vol.11, issue 1: 21-25)	Translation
錢歌川 Qian Gechuan	〈傲慢與偏見〉 "*Pride and Prejudice* (continued)"	20 Jan. 1949	中華英語半月刊 (第 11 卷，第 2 期，頁 25-27) *Chung Hwa English Fortnightly* [vol.11, issue 2: 25-27]	Translation
錢歌川 Qian Gechuan	〈傲慢與偏見〉 "*Pride and Prejudice* (continued)"	5 Feb. 1949	中華英語半月刊 (第 11 卷，第 3 期，頁 17-21) *Chung Hwa English Fortnightly* (vol.11, issue 3: 17-21)	Translation
錢歌川 Qian Gechuan	〈傲慢與偏見〉 "*Pride and Prejudice* (continued)"	20 Feb. 1949	中華英語半月刊 (第 11 卷，第 4 期，頁 22-25) *Chung Hwa English Fortnightly* (vol.11, issue 4: 22-25)	Translation

錢歌川 Qian Gechuan	〈傲慢與偏見〉 "*Pride and Prejudice* (continued)"	5 Mar. 1949	中華英語半月刊 (第 11 卷，第 5 期，頁 21+) *Chung Hwa English Fortnightly* (vol.11, issue 5: 21+)	Translation
錢歌川 Qian Gechuan	〈傲慢與偏見〉 *"Pride and Prejudice* (continued)"	20 Mar. 1949	中華英語半月刊 (第 11 卷，第 6 期，頁 19-22) *Chung Hwa English Fortnightly* (vol.11, issue 6: 19-22)	Translation
錢歌川 Qian Gechuan	〈傲慢與偏見〉 "*Pride and Prejudice* (continued)"	5 Apr. 1949	中華英語半月刊 (第 11 卷，第 7 期，頁 23-25) *Chung Hwa English Fortnightly* (vol.11, issue 7: 23-25)	Translation
錢歌川 Qian Gechuan	〈傲慢與偏見〉 "*Pride and Prejudice* (continued)"	5 May 1949	中華英語半月刊 (第 11 卷，第 9 期，頁 23-26) *Chung Hwa English Fortnightly* (vol.11, issue 9: 23-26)	Translation
錢歌川 Qian Gechuan	〈傲慢與偏見〉 "*Pride and Prejudice* (continued)"	20 May 1949	中華英語半月刊 (第 11 卷，第 10 期，頁 19-21) *Chung Hwa English Fortnightly* (vol.11,	Translation

			issue 10: 19-21)	

Appendix 4: The Works Yang Jiang Read Before 1943

Year	**The age of Yang Jiang**	**Literature**	**Writer**	**The age of appearance/ publication**	**Country**	**Genre**
1921-1923	10-12	《孟子》 *Mencius*	Mencius (or his disciples)	300 BC [Spring and Autumn Warring States]	China	Philosophy
1924-1927	13-16	《說文解字》 *Shuowen jiezi*	Xu Shen	2nd Century [Eastern Han]	China	Dictionary
		《詩經》 *Classics of Poetry*	Edited by Confucius	600 BC [Zhou]	China	Poetry
		《道德經》 *Tao Te Ching*	Laozi	6th century BC [Spring and Autumn Warring States]	China	Philosophy

		《左傳》 *Zuo Zhuan*	Zuo Qiuming	Late 4th century BC [Zhou]	China	History
		Ivanhoe	Sir Walter Scott	1820	Britain	Novel
		David Copperfield	Charles Dickens	1849	Britain	Novel
		《寄小讀者》 *Ji xiao duzhe*	Bing Xin	1923-1926	China	Prose
		The Works of Su Manshu	Su Manshu	1903-1918	China	
		The poetries of Li Yu	Li Yu	Late 900th century [Southern Tang]	China	Poetry
		中國哲學史大綱 *Zhongguo zhexueshi dagang*	Hu Shi	1919	China	The history of Chinese philosophy
1928-	17-21	Ancient Greek Tragedies				Drama

1932		枯樹賦 *Kushu fu*	Yu Xin	554 AD [Northern and Southern dynasties]	China	Poetry
		《中國哲學史》 *Zhongguo zhexue shi*	Feng Youlan	1931	China	The history of Chinese philosophy
		Van Loon's Geography: The Story of the World We Live In	Hendrik Willem van Loon	1932	US	Geography
		How to Fulfil Yourself				Ethics
		Time and Free Will	Henri Bergson	1889	France	Philosophy
1933—1934	22-23	*Immensee*	Theodor Storm	1849, 1851	Germany	Novella
		Jean-Christophe	Romain Rolland	1904-1912	France	Novel
1935-1937	24-26	《隨園詩話》 *Suiyuan shihua*	Yuan Mei	Qing dynasty	China	Literary criticism

(The age of staying at Oxford & Paris)		《養一齋詩話》 *Yangyizhai shihua*	Pan Deyu	Qing dynasty	China	Literary criticism
		The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer	Geoffrey Chaucer	14th century	Britain	
		The Plays of Molière	Molière	17th century	France	Drama
		The Red and the Black	Stendhal	1830	France	Novel
		Manon Lescaut	Abbé Prévost	1731	France	Novel
		The Works of Prosper Mérimée	Prosper Mérimée	19th century	France	
		Confessions	Jean-Jacques Rousseau	1782-1789	France	Autobiography
		Julie, or the New Héloïse	Jean-Jacques Rousseau	1761	France	Novel

		Émile, or On Education	Jean-Jacques Rousseau	1762	France	Philosophy
		The Works of Balzac	Honoré de Balzac	19th century	France	Novel and drama
		The Works of Émile Zola	Émile Zola	19th century	France	Novel and drama
		The Works of James Barrie	James Barrie	1880s-1930s	Britain	Novel and drama
		The Works of George Bernard Shaw	George Bernard Shaw	20th century	Britain	Drama
		Don Quixote	Miguel de Cervantes	1605, 1615	Spain	Novel
		Sard Harker	John Masefield	1924	Britain	Novel
		ODTAA	John Masefield	1926	Britain	Novel

		The Works of John Milton	John Milton	17th century	Britain	
		Madame Bovary	Gustave Flaubert	1856	France	Novel
		The Works of Alfred Tennyson	Alfred Tennyson	19th century	Britain	Poetry
1940-1943	29-32	*The Development of Shakespeare as a Dramatist*	George Pierce Baker	1907	US	Dramaturgy
		Dramatic Technique	George Pierce Baker	1919	US	Dramaturgy

The Works Yang Jiang Read Before 1943 (the exact reading time is unknown)

Literature	**Writer**	**The age of appearance/ publication**	**Country**	**Genre**
Outwitting Our Nerves	Josephine A. Jackson Helen M. Salisbury	1921	US	Medical Book
〈弔古戰場文〉 "Diao guzhanchang wen"	Li Hua	Tang dynasty	China	Poetry
《論語》 *Analects*	The Disciples of Confucius	The period of Spring and Autumn Warring States	China	Philosophy
《紅樓夢》 *The Dream of the Red Mansion*	Cao Xueqin	Qing dynasty	China	Novel
《元曲選》 *Yuenqu xuan*	Zang Maoxun	1615 [Ming]	China	Poetry

The Works of William Makepeace Thackeray	William Makepeace Thackeray	19th century	Britain	Novel
The Works of Jane Austen	Jane Austen	19th century	Britain	Novel/fiction
The Works of George Eliot	George Eliot	19th century	Britain	Novel
The Works of Samuel Johnson	Samuel Johnson	18th century	Britain	Literary criticism, novel, biographies and essays
The Poems of Shelley	Percy Bysshe Shelley	19th century	Britain	Poetry

Remarks: the literary works included in the above table are the works which are mentioned in Yang Jiang's memoirs. It is believed that there were many other works which she read but which were not recorded in her memoirs.

Appendix 5: The Scholar-Beauty Romance Discussed in Yang Jiang's Critiques

Work	**Writer**	**The age of appearance**	**Yang Jiang's critique(s)**
《紅樓夢》 *The Dream of the Red Mansion*	Cao Xueqin	Qing dynasty	1. "A Preface to the Translated Version of *Lazarillo de Tomes*" 〈《小癩子》譯本序〉(1950) 2. "Yishu yu kefu kunnan - du *Honglunmeng* ouji" 〈藝術與克服困難 – 讀《紅樓夢》偶記〉(1959) 3. "Shishi – gushi – zhenshi" 事實 - 故事 - 真實 (1980) 4. "You shenme hao? - du xiaoshuo manlun zhi san" 有甚麼好？— 讀小說漫論之三 (1982)
《會真記》 *Yingying's Biography*	Yuan Zhen	Tang dynasty	1. "Yishu yu kefu kunnan - du *Honglunmeng* ouji" 〈藝術與克服困難 – 讀《紅樓夢》偶記〉(1959) 2. "Shishi – gushi – zhenshi" 事實 - 故事 - 真實 (1980) 3. "Jiushu xinjie" 舊書新解 (1981)

《飛烟傳》 *Feiyan zhuan*	Huangfu Mei	Tang dynasty	"Yishu yu kefu kunnan - du *Honglunmeng* ouji" 〈藝術與克服困難 – 讀《紅樓夢》偶記〉(1959)
《西廂記》 *The Story of the Western Wing*	Wang Shifu	Yuan dynasty	1. "Yishu yu kefu kunnan - du *Honglunmeng* ouji" 〈藝術與克服困難 – 讀《紅樓夢》偶記〉(1959) 2. "Shishi – gushi – zhenshi" 事實 - 故事 - 真實 (1980)
《牆頭馬上》 *Qiangtou mashang*	Bai Pu	Yuan dynasty	"Yishu yu kefu kunnan - du *Honglunmeng* ouji" 〈藝術與克服困難 – 讀《紅樓夢》偶記〉(1959)
《牡丹亭》 *The Peony Pavilion*	Tang Xianzu	Ming dynasty	"Yishu yu kefu kunnan - du *Honglunmeng* ouji" 〈藝術與克服困難 – 讀《紅樓夢》偶記〉(1959)
《琵琶記》 *Tale of the Pipa*	Gao Ming	Ming dynasty	"Li Yu lun xiju jiegou" 李漁論戲劇結構 (1959)
《巧團圓》 *Hao tuanyuan*	Li Yu	Qing dynasty	"Li Yu lun xiju jiegou" 李漁論戲劇結構 (1959)

《慎鸞交》 *Shen luanjiao*	Li Yu	Qing dynasty	“Li Yu lun xiju jiegou” 李漁論戲劇結構 (1959)
《憐香伴》 *Lian xiangban*	Li Yu	Qing dynasty	“Li Yu lun xiju jiegou” 李漁論戲劇結構 (1959)
《游仙窟》 *You xianku*	Zhang Zhuo	Tang dynasty	“Shishi – gushi – zhenshi” 事實 - 故事 - 真實 (1980)