Ever since the lifting of martial law in 1987 public discussions about the February 28\textsuperscript{th} Incident of 1947 have been permitted. As a result, a large number of literary texts were generated to challenge the KMT’s official view of the island’s past and to recall forgotten memories. In this paper, I will regard literary works as individual attempts to engage with the official account and as an integral part of the larger effort to recuperate Taiwan’s lost history, examining how “memory” of the February 28\textsuperscript{th} Incident is constituted and mediated through the two selected novels, Lin Yaode’s \textit{1947 Lilium Formosanum} (\textit{Yijiu siji gaosha baihe}, 1990), and Li Qiao’s two-volumed \textit{Buried Grievance of 1947} (\textit{Maiyuan 1947 maiyuan}, 1995). Through a close reading of each text I would like to explore how differently Lin and Li represent the Incident. It will analyse Lin Yaode’s post-modern collage of history with Atayal myth as an attempt of historical revisionism. It will then discuss how Li Qiao consigns to a post-colonial land-centred historical view as a way-out for constructing Taiwanese subjectivity.

\textbf{Lin Yaode’s \textit{1947 Lilium Formosanum} (1990)}

Lin’s 1947 \textit{Lilium Formosanum} weaves history and myth together and represents the February 28\textsuperscript{th} memory from aborigines’ point-of-view. One of the most evident elements is that this novel involves the temporally minute moment. Literally, it starts from the afternoon of February 27\textsuperscript{th}, 1947 and ends at 11:59pm on the same day. The timing 11:59pm on February 27\textsuperscript{th} is highly symbolic as the Incident was about to break out. This timing in Lin’s novel is also critical, as it is the moment at which the Atayal protagonist Luoluogen re-assesses the meaning of head-hunting and leads his tribal
people to enter the new era. Hence, Lin’s choosing to end his novel at this decisive moment suggests his attempt to rethink how history is constructed from a critical historical instant. Within less than half a day and linked by the four different cultural signifiers (the aborigines, the Dutch, the Japanese and the Han Chinese), the four hundred year Taiwanese history is exposed. This evidently shows Lin’s ambition of wishing to challenge not only the lineal historical development but also a Han-centred historical perspective.

The novel begins with the Atayal chief Watao Baiyang’s recollection of his last head-hunting with his father. After the Japanese arrived, Watao’s status in the tribe is replaced by the Spanish missionary Father Andele who wins people over with western medicine. Losing their backing, Watao consigns himself to his past glory and remains faithful to his tribal myth. Yet his faith in the Atayal myth is futile; as even his son Guwei converts himself to Catholicism to assist Father Andele. Out of ignorance, Guwei mistakes the post-marked Pope stamp on Father Andele’s letter as that of his tribal leader with a whale-patterned face. Consequently Father Andele’s letters become a sacred symbol that Guwei decides to preserve their holiness by burying hem. One of the three letters Guwei buries is about Father Andele’s coming transfer back to the Vatican. Guwei’s behaviour prevents Father Andele from being transferred, and can be read as a subversion of the Spanish power in Taiwan. However, the Atayal tradition does not get passed down to Guwei’s generation, as Guwei not only fails to recognise the sacredness of the Atayal hunting practice, but also undermines his tribal myth by misusing the Atayal bear-hunting knife.

If Guwei stands for the contestation between old and new myths, then Watao’s grandson Luoluogen signifies the discovery of long-lost myths and reengagement with history. Being betrayed by his lover, Luoluogen leaves the tribe and goes to the city to make his living. During his wandering in the city, Luoluogen encounters a young prostitute who reminds him of his youthful love Luyi. Through Luyi’s inspiration, Luoluogen recalls his own origin and begins to recognise the collective subconsciousness of his tribe. He finally realises that the old bag which he has been carrying is a sacred item symbolising courage and beauty. His recognition of his origin leads him to a dream world in which he has a dialogue with his ancestors. His ancestors instruct
him to devote his life to understand the Atayal myth, as it is the key to revive his tribe. Although the novel does not indicate how to continue the Atayal myth, it calls for an open and sincere attitude towards history. The brutal killings in history magnified by Lin in this novel not only reveals the cruelty involved in myth/nation building, but also reminds us that history comes to us through the medium of interpretation of past events and has its potential limitations. By abandoning the chronological order and adopting an omniscient point of view, Lin’s narration of the past allows various cultural and historical systems (such as the Atayal myth, Western imperialism, Japanese colonialism, Han society) to juxtapose together. It shows Lin’s pursuit and skepticism towards truth, and his reservation about to what extent we can claim authority of our interpretation of the event. By relying on the aborigines’ tribal myth, Lin helped re-engage the traumatic history from a rare viewpoint.

In addition to place the previously marginalised aborigines to the centre of his story, Lin is also particularly interested in narrating history through the eyes of rather atypical people. For instance, when portraying the Dutch Father Andele, Lin did not make him a missionary in power but a considerably not-so-successful father who is almost forgotten by the Vatican. As for the Japanese military officer Nakano, he is down in his luck and arrives in Taiwan to seek for a better life. The three generations of Nakano’s family fail to honour the family through their overseas services, indicating the collapse of the Japanese colonial enterprise. Interestingly, the lives of the three generations of the Nakano family are interwoven with those of the Atayal family. The first generation Watao Baiyang’s father is accidentally kills by Nakano Mannosuke. The second generation Guwei turns to be a Catholic while Nakano Taro goes missing in the Sino-Russian War in China. The third generation Luoluogen drifts in the cities, whereas Caption Nakano Hidetsune refuses to admit Japan’s surrender in 1945 and therefore carries on fighting on Taiwan. The most striking parallel can be found in the sexual encounter of the grandson generation of both sides. In the case of Nakano Hidetsune, the relationships with his lover are similar to “the military vehicles of the nighttime policemen of the great Tokyo” (125) and defied with death and separation caused by the war. On the contrary, Luoluogen’s sexual encounter with Luyi turns out to be a chance of self-searching and rebirth as he eventually in a brothel acknowledges the lily-like
pureness of Luyi and the sacredness of his tribe from an old hunting bag. Through this obvious contrast, Lin’s attempt of ridiculing the Japanese colonial power and celebrating the aboriginal (Atayal) consciousness becomes apparent.

In addition to the depiction of the unsuccessful Nakano family, similar authorial subversions are also found in rewriting the myth of Sister Delan. Sister Delan for instance is believed to be the French Saint. Yet in Lin’s fictional writing, she becomes the object of Father Andele’s sexual fantasy. The black lily at her death bed, contrary to the “gigantic white lilies” Saint Terrain sees around the same time, implies that the Western civilisation would decline while the Atayal tradition sustain. By merging the colonial experience of different peoples (such as the Spanish and the Japanese) on Taiwan and re-telling Taiwan’s most symbolic event concerning Taiwan’s identity with an accentuation on the aborigines, Lin Yaode challenges the univocal history that has long been taken for granted. For Lin Yaode, history contains multiple layers and memory about the February 28th Incident can be narrated in many different ways. Furthermore, it is perhaps more important to remember it from the diminutive slices of commoners’ lives than from the heroic people. Lin’s alternative historiography in which memory of the Incident becomes an understated part in his less than half-a-day collage reminds us historical narration involves rendering of selected elements. If what is remembered is defined by the assumed identity, then the identity Lin Yaode’s February 28th tale suggests is not merely an aboriginal one, but indeed a hybrid one.

The postmodern hue of this novel deserves special attention. Lin’s application of magic realism can be seen as one of the examples. By pushing history back to its pre-discourse time on February 27th, and representing Taiwan’s four hundred year history into the symbolic few hours through montage are both such attempts. Through recollections, dreams, or illusions, the experiences of the Spanish missionary who bears the Dutch blood, the defeated Japanese, the Chinese poet who converses with the dead; and the Taiwanese aborigines merge together. Instead of questioning history, Lin Yaode is so ambitious that he directly subverts previous official historical records. In this work, Sister Delan offers herself to the Jesus, the national hero Zheng Chengong is nothing more than a pirate, and the revered Emperor Hirohito becomes an over-indulgent eater.
These fictive anecdotes are put in contrast to the events that really happened, creating a parody to the master narrative. 

Other examples of postmodernism can be found in Lin’s treatment of history as myth. During the KMT rule, Chinese culture has been hailed as the core belief in Taiwan to reinforce the legitimacy of their government on the island. Yet, in this novel, the ancient Chinese culture represented by philosophers such as Confucius and Zhu Xi has corrupted through the alienated poet Wu You 吳有 (a pun of “nothingness” 無有)’s conversation with these two intellectuals. Walking out of his widely read classics The Analects of Confucius, Confucius laments that “China is an old tree which has been eaten empty” (218), and “nowadays no one understands culture.” (218) More ironically is that towards the end of story, the person who can take over Liao Qingshui’s family business (a Chinese medicine shop) is the Atayal young man Luoluogen. As for Lin’s stress on myth, it is extremely obvious in the end of the novel where the voices of Watao Baiyang, and that of Atayal ancestors Lutu Kesi become an unified chorus calling for the passing down of the Atayal myth. Through an unexpected dream-like encounter with the spirit of his dead grandfather Watao Baiyang, Luoluogen is entrusted to bear the last legend of the Atayal race. The spirit of the Atayal ancestors informed Luoluogen that he should spend his entire life to understand the myth, and there will be an opportunity for reviving the tribe only if he remembers the myth. (242) The novel ends in Luoluogen’s acceptance of this “mission”, as “the shadow of history extends towards the distant ocean with the sound sleep of the whole island” suggests that historical memory is similar to a myth.

Despite Lin’s treatment of history as a myth may be controversial, I would argue that magic realism does present a possibility of restoring a historical dimension. In 1947 Lilium Formosanum, the major characteristic of magic realism: derealisation and defamiliarisation is evidently shown. For instance, the montage of Atayal myths and the conversation between the characters and their dead tribal ancestors, and the juxtaposition of multiple layers of stories all exemplify a sense of detachment from the reality. And the unusual representation of the Catholic father, the Japanese military officer indeed causes them to appear new and unexpected. Such literary devices enable the writers to go
beyond traditional mimesis as the boundaries of an assumed "real" are stretched to the multiplicity of realities. The free jumping between different time zones and geographical space further allows the readers to contemplate upon their past and present by placing one in contrast against the other. In this way, Japanese colonial practice in Taiwan can be seen as a prelude of the Han Taiwanese’s cultural chauvinism towards the aborigines. Although Lin’s treating historiography as textuality may appear evasive of moral judgments, I would consider it a new form of historical novel reflecting alertness towards all tendentious appropriations of the February 28 Incident. It is by reducing the symbolic significance of this event and with amalgamation of multiple layers of reality that the meanings of the event can be released and opened to all peoples on the island.

**Li Qiao’s Buried Grievance of 1947 (1995)**

If Lin Yaode’s 1947 *Lilium Formosanum* attempts to deconstruct history with Atayal myth, then Li Qiao’s *Buried Grievance of 1947* endeavours to construct Taiwanese subjectivity with his laborious research. Though not the first time of writing historical novel, Li Qiao encountered the problem of representing history through fictional writing in composing his monumental work *Buried Grievance of 1947*. He declared in the postscript that: “the real writing time for this novel is about three and half years, yet it took him about ten years to collect materials and conduct interviews. In total it has taken him thirteen or fourteen years to finish this more than 700000 words novel. I will not have a second chance of doing so in my life and even if I had I would not do that again.” (Epilogue, 643) He further expressed that the intention of writing this novel is to

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1 Li Qiao earlier wrote *結義西來庵*, based on the anti-Japanese Tapoan Incident. He encountered similar dilemma between history and fiction. He read the 8-volume Yu Qingfang anti-Japanese files and personally went to the site where the incident took place to conduct fieldwork. The materials gathered made him re-adjust his original writing plan of “rendering the materials into a fiction”. In the end, he decided to base on historical data and link them with his literary imagination.

2 See Peng Ruijin’s “The Struggle and Transformation of Historical Literature – The denial of swinging between fiction and reality in Buried Grievance of 1947” (Lishi wenxue de zhengzha yu tuibian – jujue zai xugou, zhenshi jian baidang de maiyuan yijiu siqi maiyuan) on [http://www.tyhs.edu.tw/campus/tyhs0101.htm](http://www.tyhs.edu.tw/campus/tyhs0101.htm). Peng argued that from *Jieyi xilai’an* through *Wintry Night* to *Buried Grievance of 1947*, Li Qiao has gradually abandoned being overwhelmed by historical materials and shifted to using fiction as tool to represent history.
use fiction to interpret history. He has long considered representing the complete scenes of the February 28th Incident and release its meaning as his inborn duty, a debt that he owed the motherland Taiwan….and at present he has paid off his debt (643). The reason why Li Qiao once again faced this dilemma between history and fiction is because the symbolic meanings endowed in the February 28th Incident. It is not simply a historical event, but the historical event in which Taiwanese people’s suffering and fate accumulated. 3

Using the February 28th as the background, Li Qiao’s novel not only tackles the incident but also narrates the progress of Taiwanese people’s disillusion of their Chinese dream. For instance, when mentioning the distant cause of the February 28th Incident, Li traces back the cultural differences between Taiwanese and mainlanders in the late 1940s. For Li Qiao, under the Japanese rule, Taiwanese have developed some basic concepts of law and order. Yet unfortunately, this concept turns to become “life-costing ‘wrong concept’ when Taiwan was just taken over by China. (I: 187) Li further points out that the immediate cause comes from Taiwanese people’s dissatisfaction with the Chen Yi government and the exploitative behaviour of the mainlanders. As for mainlanders’ attitude towards Taiwanese, it is often full of contempt. For instance, seen from the mainlanders’ perspective, Taiwan people know nothing about politics as they were enslaved by Japanese and they should receive more lessons (I: 277-278). It is only after the February 28th that Taiwanese people ultimately recognise that escaping or hiding may be the best way for survival when disaster comes (II: 255-256).

After detailing the causes for the February 28th Incident, Li Qiao painstakingly pays attention to how Taiwanese people have survived through the tragedy. For characters such as Lin Zhitian, the incident turns out to be the turning point for his resistant spirit and the formation of his Taiwanese consciousness. Lin is arrested by the KMT government after the Incident. During his incarceration, he encounters Ke Weilun, 3 Other examples can be found in Dongfang Bai’s Langtao sha. Dongfang Bai claimed that the honour and credits (of this novel) should go to the thousands of people in Taiwan. Without their experience of blood and tears over the past one hundred years, there would not be the book Langtao sha today. See the author’s speech “Looking forward to the Blossom of World Flowers” (Qidai kaifang shijie de huaduo) after being awarded the 1982 Wu Zhuoliu Literary Award (期待開放世界的花朵). See Taiwan Literature (Taiwan wenyi), no.88 (1982 October).
a mainlander who informs Lin that the outbreak of the February 28th Incident lies in “deep inside Taiwanese people’s psyche, it’s extremely likely that there still hides some Chinese curse (II: 317). After long-term contemplations, Lin Zhitian gradually comes to agree with Ke. Lin consequently no longer feels inferior when teased by his Communist friends, but becomes an inmate with confidence. (II: 479) He slowly grows out of his previous left-leaning thinking, and comprehends that only by searching his belief in his birthplace Taiwan can he find a way-out. It is the first time that a complete image of Taiwan island emerging in his mind, hinting a strong identification with the land. In fact, when being appointed to make a model of Taiwan, Lin already senses his attachment with Taiwan. He says to himself that although the party (KMT) can imprison him physically, his heart remains close to the soil of Taiwan (II: 406). As Lin tells himself “Taiwan is Taiwan of the Taiwanese people” (II: 406), he finally walks out of his orphan complex and even changes his name to “Zhitai” to declare his change and new life (II: 488). The imprisonment experience makes Lin Zhitian become a true Taiwanese (II: 574) who is later attracted to Taiwan’s independent thoughts. It is also through Lin Zhitian that this novel provides a neat answer to Fanon’s simple postcolonial question “but who am I?”, that is, son of the Taiwanese land.

In the article “The meaning of the February 28 in the psychological history of Taiwanese”, Li Qiao argues the side-effects a traumatic event such as the 228 may bring its people but underlines that with “autonomous cultural system” Taiwanese ‘orphan’ would have a turning point of changing oneself inside out (1998: 406). Thus, for Li Qiao, Feb 28, despite no doubt a traumatic event in Taiwanese history, seems to be a ‘necessary’ pain. (1998: 406). Lin Zhitian’s change serves the best example demonstrating the importance of going through this torture. Li Qiao himself indeed has undergone a similar process. While composing Yu Qingfang’s biography, he read up Yu’s lengthy notes on his revolutions and conducted fieldwork trips to those places mentioned in Yu’s record. This is a significant experience for Li Qiao as he feels that it

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4 “Yige Taiwan zuojia de xinlu licheng” (The mental path of a Taiwanese writer), Li Qiao duanpian xiaoshuo quanj [Complete collection of Li Qiao’s short stories: Material collection and compilation], published by the Miaoli County Cultural Centre, 2000, p.49.
is only after this occurrence that he becomes a true “son of Taiwan” (*Taiwan zidi*)⁵ In an essay entitled “Individual Resistance and Historical Memory”, Li Qiao declares that Taiwan is a place that has lost its historical memory.⁶ If we were to take this authorial reading, then Li Qiao’s text can be seen as resistance against what Fanon indicated the coloniser’s (in this case the KMT government) distortion and even erasure of the oppressed people’s (Taiwanese) past. It is not simply a re-writing of “the Empire writes back”, but more to recuperate a past that has long been deliberately silenced.

This novel details the mental journey Taiwanese have traveled to form a reliable identity after the Incident. The various characters indeed represent diverse strategies of this post-trauma self-construction. Ye Zhenzi for instance appears the opposite to Lin Zhitian in viewing Taiwan’s post-228 history. Being sexually abused and made pregnant by a mainlander soldier, Ye considers her son a reminder of her unspeakable past and attempts to transform herself to a “pure” mainlander to fight against her sense of guilt and self-denial. She earnestly practices mandarin, puts on Chinese-style dress, and even changes her name Zhenzi into Zhenhua. But such efforts fail to make her immune from identity crisis, as she is never considered mainlander. Zhenzi’s self-imprisoning is put in contrast to Lin Zhitian who is physically incarcerated but spiritually free. Another female character Zhong Qiongyu, Lin Zhitian’s fiancée, also bears the pain of the Incident with her extremely self-disciplined widow-like life. The violation of female’s body as seen in Ye Zhenzi’s rejection of her body and Zhong Qiongyu’s suppression of her desire for other males yield an effective image illustrating the extreme pain the Incident has brought to its survivors.

These female characters however are endowed with the self-healing ability. Though having lived in the fear that one day her son might discover her painful past, Zhenzi once in a while would lower down her alertness and temporarily lets her thoughts drift freely. At this rare moment, she would return to her past while she is still named “Zhenzi” (II: 612) and her vague memory about her youthful love more than a decade ago would emerge. On other sleepless occasions when she is torn between her two

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⁵ “Aihen fenming de dadi zhi zi – Taiwan xin wenhua tuidongzhe Li Qiao” (Son of the earth who has distinct love and hatred – the promoter of Taiwan’s new culture Li Qiao), *Xin Guannian* (New concept), no. 107 (September 1997): 36.

⁶ Same as footnote 4, p. 68.
identities of “Zhenzi” (primordial self) and “Zenhua” (her detestation for her inborn Taiwanese identity and yearning to become Chinese), she surprisingly discovers that she is capable of loosening herself when “hiding into a Japanese mood” (II: 527). She indulges herself with the lyrics from the Japanese literary classics *Manyoshu* (Collection of ten thousand leaves) to the odes written by modern Japanese poet Yoshino Hideo (1902-1967). She occasionally reads Chinese lyrics too, yet unlike the Japanese *waka* or *haiku* works which she can directly appreciate the beauty of them, her comprehension of them has to go through “translation”, that is her thinking in Japanese. This suggests the surge of *la mode rétro* in Foucault’s terms,⁷ that consigning to Japan’s colonial legacy can be understood as a reaction against the KMT party’s dictatorial rule in Taiwan. In addition to Zhenzi’s occasional self-liberation through poetry reciting, other female characters undergo similar self-healing process. Zhong Qiongyu for example is able to justify and make sense of her status of a fiancé of a political prisoner, other survivors such as Zhan Yinzhu finds peace in her Christian belief.

Yet compared to those female characters, male protagonists in this novel still appear more confident especially. Lin Zhitian and Ye’s illegitimate son Pushi are prime examples. Dissatisfied with his mother’s over-emphasis on Chinese culture, Pushi questions his mother the reason behind her fuss over his mandarin pronunciation as it seems so unnatural. For Zhenzi, her son’s mandarin sounds too vulgar. Yet Pushi is at ease with his unique Taiwanese vulgarity as that is the way he is, considering his mother’s mimesis as “lack of confidence” (II: 626). While much younger, Pushi used to feel sorry for his “impure” background. Yet with him becoming more mature, he grows out of the “fatherless” grievance and hybrid hatred, coming to accept the way he is. It is perhaps exactly because the absence of Pushi’s Chinese father throughout his growing up that he is somewhat set free to develop his own identity. In fact, the “vulgarity” of maternal Taiwanese culture is an artificial construction for the KMT government to further secure its control, but should not be taken as an original sin. At a bedtime talk, Pushi challenges his mother’s sense of guilt and inferiority. He reveals he has already known he is an “illegitimate child”, “a bastard”, and even his mother’s painful past of

⁷ See Martin Jordan’s “Film and Popular Memory: An Interview with Michel Foucault” in *Radical Philosophy 11* (summer 1975): 24-29.
being sexually abused. Furthermore, he conveys: “I do not think I am related to that ‘devil’; I am a new, independent life in this world”, and “…if one wants to laugh at, to disdain, then it should be directed to the devil that hurts us, but not us!” (II: 637) The ultra considerate and encouraging words from Pushi deeply touch Zhenzi, who embraces her son tightly as if she has finally been able to let go her grievance. Such a positive and even complacent attitude of Pushi towards his maternal vulgarity embodies the resistance against the Chinese symbolic system forcibly imposed on the Taiwanese subjects. Pushi’s vulgarity to some extent echoes with Lin Zhitian’s close identification with the land on which he has lived most of his life. The former implies the healing of maternal figure, while the latter suggests a confirmation of intimate relationship between one’s life experience and the (mother)land one grows up from. It is within such a healing and redemptive process that one’s psychological shadow of the February 28th can be buried in the past, enabling a new starting point and prospects of happiness for Taiwan.

**Conclusion:**

As Shoshana Felman has stated, the traumatic memory is “composed of bits and pieces of a memory that has been overwhelmed by occurrences that have not settled into understanding or remembrance, acts that cannot be construed as knowledge nor assimilated into full cognition, events in excess of our frames of reference.”

The February 28th Incident, for Taiwanese writers, filmmakers, and other artists, is such a traumatic memory that it has for too long been repressed and inadequately understood. The two novels discussed in this paper are considered individual efforts made to restore voices and perspectives ignored by previous official KMT interpretation in which the incident has been seen as Taiwanese rebelling under the instigation of communists. They can also be viewed as part of the collective efforts made to reclaim a more Taiwan-centred history followed by the trend of nativism that has been growing in Taiwan over the past decades. Yet to what extent can literary works serve as a means of history recuperation, memory registration, and identity construction? And what are the limits of using literature to narrate the past? Before I answer these questions, I will stress as

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8 See Shoshana Felman’s “Education and Crisis, or the Vicissitudes of Teaching” in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, edited by Cathay Caruth, pp. 13-60.
Walter Benjamin has pointed out that “to articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it ‘the way it really was’. It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger.”9 As all narrations are always mediated, it is almost impossible to claim absolute objectivity in historical writing. Literature in this perspective offers one of the tools of representing the past via which memory may be reworked into the fabric of a nation/race’s founding cultural myth.

Literature however have limits, because it is always a post-datum record, and not all the experiences especially those traumatic ones like the February 28th can be fully or accurately “translated” through words or other forms such as visual images or audio sounds. In fact, I would propose that the value of these literary representations lies not so much in how truthful the writer has narrated the past event, but in the very process of writing and reading. In other words, writing and reading about the February 28th itself can be a privileged experience that allows us to discover ourselves and understand our present. In this case, Lin Yaode and Li Qiao seemingly take on different routes. Lin shies away from the usual nationalist perspective which challenges the adequacy of this event as the foundation for a nationalist imagination, while Li laboriously strikes to tell his story within the historical framework to diagnose Taiwanese’ post 228 psychiatric cultural syndromes and call for an autonomous cultural system without grievances. The former displays a postmodern vogue with collage and magic realism, and the latter elaborates more the theme of postcolonialism in which it seeks to re-inscribe Taiwan’s effaced self and a sustainable subjectivity. Lin’s tale distrusts of any fixed and univocal interpretation by celebrating cultural hybridity, Li’s story awaits a reconstruction of alternative Taiwan-centred interpretation after the “necessary” pain from the February 28 incident.

Both Lin Yaode and Li Qiao’s works point to a question: why has there been a burgeoning trend of historical revisionism or memory construction in the post-martial law Taiwan, if history, after all, is a narration and identity is simply constructed? Perhaps it can be understood as just because identity is not stable or coherent, it becomes extraordinarily urgent to claim the accountability or authority of one’s (hi)story, memory,

and identity. In contemporary Taiwan especially after the call of nativism peaked in the DPP’s winning the presidential election in the millennium, the February 28th Incident has become the collective memory of native Taiwanese. The main issue nowadays is perhaps not so much about memory reinstitution but the use of the Incident. The recent institutionalised and ritualised commemorations of the event, and the flaring up of the incident above other discourses in most political campaigns urge us to be extraordinarily alert about whether the event has become an opportunity for re-integration and reconciliation of the multiple ethnic groups in Taiwan, or simply regressed to a defensive and dangerously exclusionary forms of (native Taiwanese or the pan-green) chauvinism. What we need here is perhaps a new discourse that would enable us to construct a collective memory for Taiwan without being provincial, and to find equilibrium between postcolonialism and postmodernism which these two books have inspired us.

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