



The Incense Burner of Lust

A Full English translation is available.

北港香爐 人人插

Original Author: Li Ang **Illustrator:** Lau Kwong Shing

Project Planner: Department of Taiwanese Literature, Providence University **Publisher:** Dala Publishing

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224 pages | 17 x 23 cm **Volume:** 1

Adaptation: Original novel

BFT2.0 Translator: David Knight

This graphic novel adapts Li Ang's classic Taiwanese political erotic work, reimagining a woman's rise through a male-dominated political arena. The protagonist Lin Li-Tzu wields her body as a tool of power, successfully becoming a legislator. And yet she remains the target of men's idle gossip and a source of discomfort for women and feminist groups.

How should society judge a woman who subverts patriarchy through sexuality? If "sexiness" is a performance, are chastity and sorrow not performances as well? Through its bold depiction of Lin's ascent, downfall, and defiance, this work exposes the uncomfortable truths of society, politics, and human nature—ultimately confronting a provocative question: Can a woman use her body to claim power?



Original Author **Li Ang**

Born in Lukang, Li Ang is a renowned Taiwanese writer and longtime professor at Chinese Culture University. Known for her bold exploration of taboo subjects, sexuality, and power, she has earned international acclaim, with coverage in *The New York Times*, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, and *Le Monde*. Her works, including *The Butcher's Wife*, *Mysterious Garden*, and *Visible Ghosts*, have been published worldwide. Recent fictional projects explore the world of gastronomy. Li Ang's honors include France's Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres, and Nobel laureate Kenzaburō Ōe hailed her as a leading Chinese woman writer of her era.



Illustrator **Lau Kwong Shing**

Lau Kwong Shing, raised in Kyoto and influenced by local manga culture, studied Fine Arts at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He collaborated with Dutch game studio Rusty Lake on *Cube Escape: Paradox*. During the 2019 Hong Kong protests, he created one-page comics for *Ming Pao* and social media, later compiled as *Vanished Hong Kong* (also in French). His silent graphic novel *Fantaisie Ordinaire* uses sheet music instead of text, blending visuals and sound in a unique storytelling style.

A Bold, Taboo-Breaking Adaptation of Li Ang's Classic Novel on Sexuality, Gender, and Politics

by Wen-Cheng Huang

In the years surrounding the lifting of martial law in Taiwan, the literary world was swept by a wave of groundbreaking works that captured the spirit of the era. It was arguably Taiwan's most open period, and Li Ang's *The Incense Burner of Lust* (1997) arrived right on cue. As literary scholar David Der-wei Wang once described, Li Ang was like a "little witch" who cast spells on both the political and literary scenes, ushering in what came to be known as the "Li Ang Phenomenon." Her novel challenged taboos and opened up public discussions around politics, gender, and sexuality—topics rarely addressed with such frankness in Taiwanese literature.

Although written more than 25 years ago, *The Incense Burner of Lust*

remains highly relevant, with its themes still carrying significant power today. Li Ang has continuously pushed boundaries across different eras. Her works often provoke or resist dominant systems, creating waves of cultural impact. She is also open to new interpretations of her writing, welcoming adaptations across different mediums.

This graphic adaptation of *The Incense Burner of Lust* was born out of such openness. It's the result of a cross-generational collaboration between Li Ang and Lau Kwong Shing, a young artist with no direct background in Taiwan's political or literary history. At 32, Lau brings with him a multicultural background shaped by life in Hong Kong, Japan, and China. Often on the margins

of the societies he's lived in, Lau found in manga a space where his fears and dreams could coexist.

His artistic style blends traditional Japanese manga with a profound sense of solitude and introspection—an emotional depth that may arise from his own fragmented upbringing. After immigrating to Japan, Lau gravitated toward hand-drawn comics as a way to explore his inner world and express what words could not. In this manga version of *The Incense Burner of Lust*, his pencil sketches evoke a deeply introspective, often somber visual tone that lingers in the reader's experience.

Lau gained broader recognition with his illustration "An Eye Patch," inspired by the Hong Kong protests, which freshly made him a Hong Kong exile. His art reflects both a micro-level sensitivity and a macro-level vision. Even though he did not live through 1980s Taiwan, Lau captures the essence of Li Ang's novel with striking fluency. His reinterpretation not only offers a new perspective but also mirrors his own worldview shaped by displacement and cultural hybridity.

Through his drawings, the

emotional lives and outer worlds of the characters in *The Incense Burner of Lust* take on new dimensions. His adaptation resonates across generations, while also embedding itself in the broader political and cultural landscape of the Chinese-speaking world.

Now, more than a quarter-century after its original publication, *The Incense Burner of Lust* has been reborn as a manga, reaffirming its place in Taiwanese literary history. Thanks to Lau Kwong Shing's unique lens, this adaptation is likely to introduce a new generation of readers to Taiwanese literature.

At Providence University's Department of Taiwanese Literature, an essential goal has been to broaden readership across generations. Literary adaptations—particularly through visual forms like manga—offer a promising path to achieve this.

This afterword has been edited for the purposes of this booklet.

Wen-Cheng Huang is the department chair of the Department of Taiwanese Literature, Providence University.

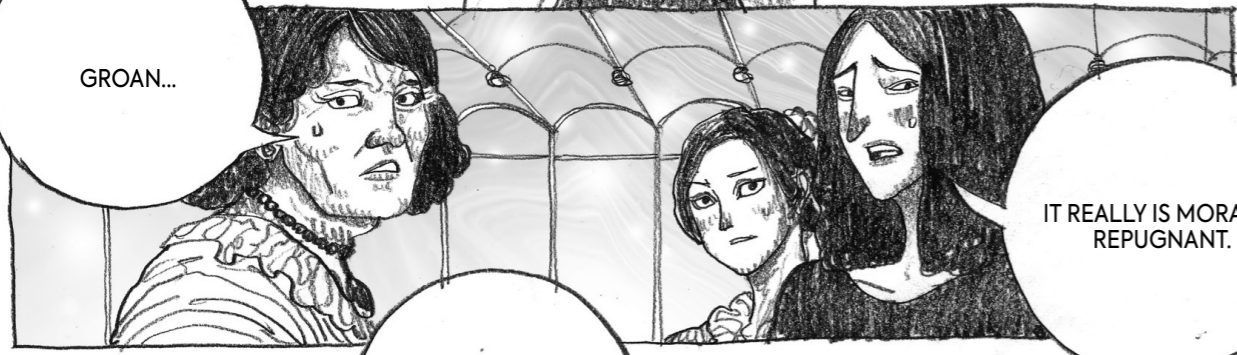


TO DANCE LIKE THIS,
SO SEDUCTIVELY—



WHAT KIND OF
DECORUM IS THIS?

GROAN...



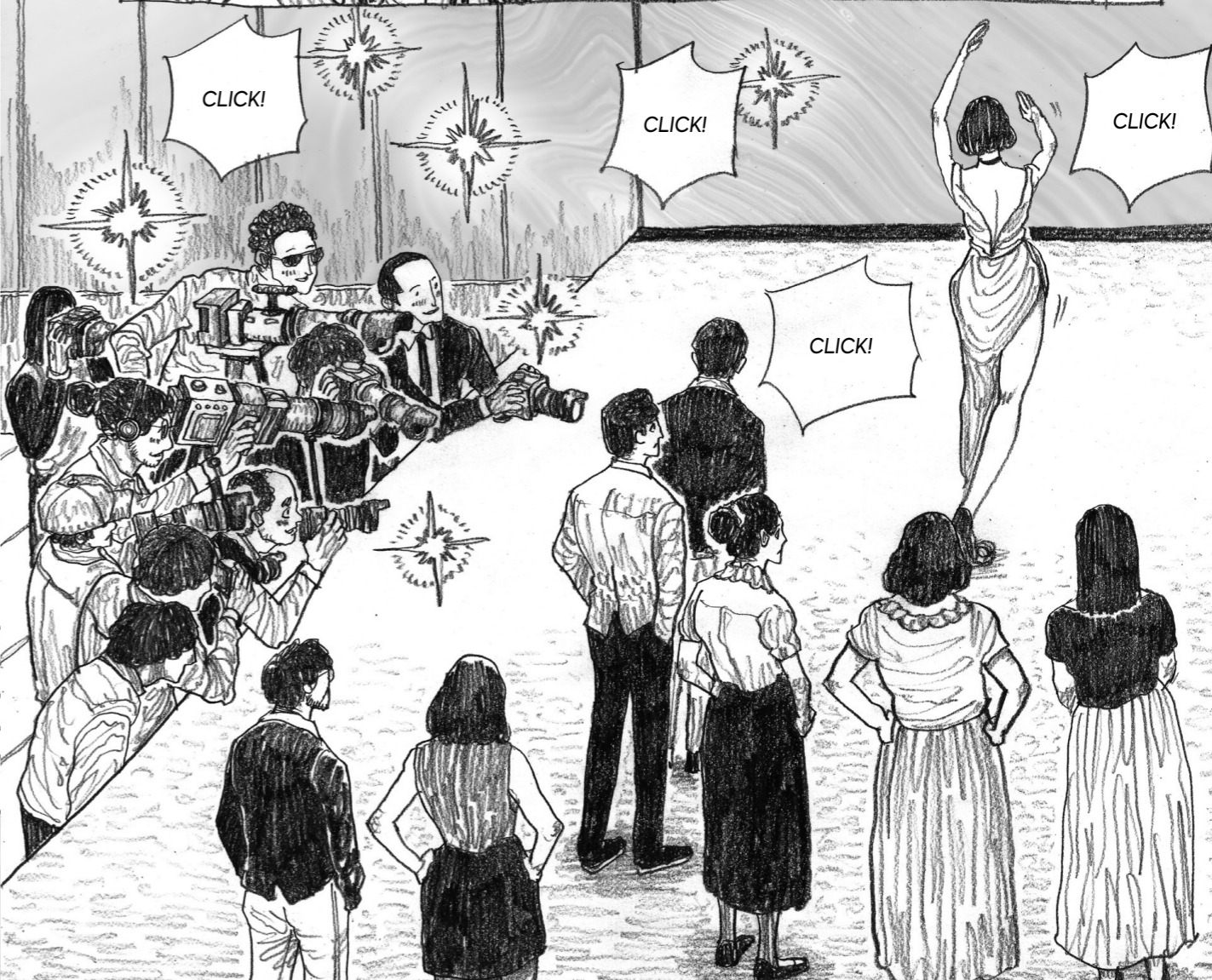
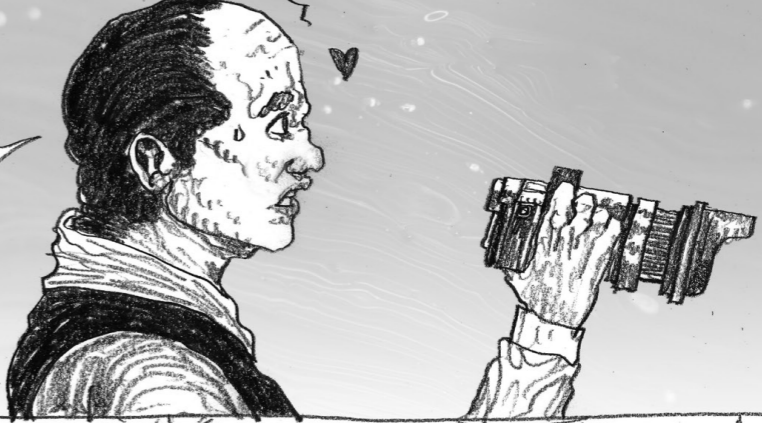
IT REALLY IS MORALLY
REPUGNANT.

DON'T FORGET...

SHE WAS PUTTING ON
THIS SEXY DISPLAY.



!!



All alone this lonely night, sheltered by the lamp,

A light breeze touches my face,

Seventeen, eighteen years old, but not yet married,

Dreaming of making a new home.

All the while she incongruously doing the dance steps from "Awaiting Spring's Breeze."

"Awaiting Spring's Breeze," lyrics by Li Lin-ch'iu and music by Teng Yü-hsien, was released in the 1930s. It had long before been a popular Taiwanese folk song. During the Japanese colonial period, it had been reworked as a military song, and later, due to government policies regarding the Taiwanese language, fallen out of popularity.



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IT HAS TO BE SAID...

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