

Sinophone and Taiwan Studies 5

Chia-rong Wu
Ming-ju Fan *Editors*

Taiwan Literature in the 21st Century

A Critical Reader

 Springer

Sinophone and Taiwan Studies

Volume 5

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Chia-rong Wu · Ming-ju Fan
Editors

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Editors

Chia-rong Wu
GCLS
University of Canterbury
Christchurch, New Zealand

Ming-ju Fan
National Chengchi University
Taipei City, Taiwan

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A Note on Chinese Romanization

This volume basically adopts Chinese pinyin romanization for the titles of literary works and the names of writers and historical figures, except for the English names commonly used in the English-speaking world, such as Chiang Kai-shek, Lee Teng-hui, Tsai Ing-wen, and Teresa Teng (Teng Li-chun). In some cases, the hyphenated English names of the authors are used upon the mutual agreement between the editors and contributors. Examples include, but are not limited to, Wang Wen-hsing, Gan Yao-ming, Wu Ming-yi, and Huang Chong-kai.

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Editors and Contributors

About the Editors

Chia-rong Wu is an Associate Professor in the Department of Global, Cultural and Language Studies at the University of Canterbury in New Zealand. Dr. Wu received his Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA. He specializes in Sinophone literature and film through the lens of postcolonial theories, indigenous studies, diaspora, and ecocriticism. Dr. Wu is the author of *Supernatural Sinophone Taiwan and Beyond* (Cambria Press, 2016) and *Remapping the Contested Sinosphere: The Cross-cultural Landscape and Ethnoscape of Taiwan* (Cambria Press, 2020) and has published in such academic journals as the *British Journal of Chinese Studies*, *Sun Yat-sen Journal of Humanities*, *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, and *American Journal of Chinese Studies*.

Ming-ju Fan is a Distinguished Professor of Graduate Institute of Taiwanese Literature at the National Chengchi University in Taiwan. She is the author of *Spatial/Textual/Politics, Literary Geography: Spatial Reading of Taiwanese Fiction*, *Chronological Searches of Taiwanese Women's Fiction and Critic Artisan*, *Like a Box of Chocolate: Criticism on Contemporary Literature and Culture*; Co-Editor of *The Columbia Sourcebook of Literary Taiwan*.

Contributors

Fanny Caron CNRS-Aix-Marseille University, Marseille, France

Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang University of Texas at Austin, Austin, USA

Sophia Huei-Ling Chen University of Sydney, Camperdown, NSW, Australia

Ming-ju Fan National Chengchi University, Taipei City, Taiwan

Gwennaël Gaffric Université Jean Moulin, Lyon, France

Linshan Jiang Duke University, Durham, USA

Wen-Chi Li University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK

Pei-yin Lin University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China

Carlos Rojas Duke University, Durham, USA

Irmy Schweiger Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden

Bert Scruggs University of California, Irvine, USA

Nicholas Y. H. Wong The University of Hong Kong, Pokfulam, Hong Kong

Chia-rong Wu University of Canterbury, Canterbury, New Zealand

Yenna Wu University of California, Riverside, USA

Michelle Yeh University of California, Davis, USA

Min-xu Zhan National Chung Hsing University, Taichung City, Taiwan

Introduction: Taiwan Literature in the 21st Century



Chia-rong Wu and Ming-ju Fan

1 The Historical and Theoretical Framework

In the late 1980s, Taiwan experienced its most radical changes in decades since the Kuomintang (KMT) lost the Chinese Civil War to Mao Zedong's Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and retreated to Taiwan under Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's command. The small island-state thus entered a symbolic phase in modern history due to its rapid industrialization. On the one hand, the economy of Taiwan reached its greatest height since the end of the Second World War. Taiwan was thus labeled one of the Four Asian Dragons (or the Four Asian Tigers) alongside Hong Kong, Singapore, and South Korea (Morris, 1996, p. 95). As Taiwan's high-performing economy helped vitalize the local community, the authority of the KMT government was constantly challenged by a series of sociopolitical movements. On the other hand, Taiwan benefited from frequent intercultural exchanges with foreign countries as well as overseas imports of diverse theoretical discourses and artistic trends, which led to liberation from any singular and fixed ideology and paved the way for multiexperimental themes and forms of expression in the literary arena.

In 1987, Taiwan's President Chiang Ching-kuo decreed the lifting of the martial law imposed by the KMT about four decades before and officially ended the longest martial law period in human history. Thanks to the liberation and democratization of Taiwan, opposing political parties and independent media forms such as newspapers, radio, and television are legalized and operate beyond the government's surveillance and prosecution. Additionally, Taiwanese people are allowed to publicly discuss once-taboo subjects, including but not limited to historical incidents, political claims,

C. Wu (✉)
University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand
e-mail: chiarong.wu@canterbury.ac.nz

M. Fan
National Chengchi University, Taipei City, Taiwan
e-mail: fanmj@nccu.edu.tw

ethnic divides, and cross-Strait relations. Through the presidential election in 2000, Taiwanese people voted against the continuous single-party rule by the KMT for over half a century and made Chen Shui-bian the first president from the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). This highlighted the non-violent transition of power in Taiwanese history and affirmed the new trajectory of Taiwan's subjectivity and localization. Opposed to China-centric discourse, intellectuals have been compiling and publishing local materials, documents, files, records, and images, which have greatly contributed to the re-presentation and re-construction of Taiwanese history in the post-martial law era. These endeavors have not only put forward a variety of resources and discourses in relation to localism, but also facilitate the sustainable development of Taiwan literature in the twenty-first century—that is, the focus of this edited volume.

When it comes to the book's structure and design, this volume is indebted to *Writing Taiwan: A New Literary History* (2007), a weighty collection of English-language essays co-edited by David Der-wei Wang and Carlos Rojas. *Writing Taiwan* provides a comprehensive survey of modern Taiwan literature from 1945 to the early 2000s and thus extends literary analysis to methodological frameworks, ideological debates, avant-garde experiments, and the cultural, historical, and spatial politics of Taiwan. The major agenda of *Writing Taiwan* is twofold. First, it proposes “a way of rewriting China” (Wang, 2007, p. x) by examining Taiwan's literary canons mainly drawn from the twentieth century. Second, it identifies Taiwan as “a discursive and political construct that is continually being constituted and contested through a multifaceted process of ‘writing’” (Rojas, 2007, p. 4). In response to the two thought-provoking claims outlined by Wang and Rojas, this volume aims to explore the multiethnic and multilingual way of rewriting Taiwan through a close investigation of both seasoned and rising writers in the twenty-first century. Despite its focus on the new styles and topics in literary writing, this volume recognizes the historical and cultural significance of the previous century, which provides a solid foundation for Taiwan literature in the new era.

During the last decade of the twentieth century, Taiwanese writers presented a kaleidoscopic account of literary production in relation to the clash with the authoritarian regime and system by means of mockery and deconstruction. In terms of forms and techniques, Taiwanese writers probed experimental and non-mainstream narratives under the umbrella of serious literature. While Taiwan's society and politics are still agitated by contentions and disputes in the twenty-first century, its literature parts way with the *fin-de-siècle* sociopolitical campaigns and points to a new formulation of cultural values. Despite the ongoing process of historical and political re-evaluation observed in the island-state, it is not the traditional literary writing of anti-authoritarian skepticism that occupies the center stage; instead, Taiwanese writers have started exploring the overlap and intersection of plurality and diversity with respect to the representation of varied ethnic voices and experiences. While redefining traditions and norms, Taiwanese writers lead readers to closely examine issues of the past, the present, and the future, such as the wealth gap, gender equality, ecological conservation, and transitional justice. Other key topics include how literature speaks to society and how Taiwan can be seen by the world in the new era that

stimulates the rapid interflow of technology and the large-scale transformation of literary communication in the international network.

While Taiwan literature in the twentieth century can be identified as a complex entity that thematizes rupture, grafting, and taboos in a sociopolitical sense, it further enriches topic selection and diversifies aesthetic expression in the twenty-first century, which emphasizes the subjectivity of Taiwan in transition. On one level, the scope of Taiwan literature in the last century was widened through the internalization and localization of the artistic methods drawn from Japan, China, and world literature across generations. This cross-cultural approach has been kept alive, enhanced, and even transmuted by the younger generation of Taiwanese writers to generate a new model of aesthetics in the past two decades. On another level, a number of groundbreaking writers who established their reputation in the previous century are not absent in contemporary academia while instilling in their literary works different local elements and sharpening their aesthetic visions in the new age of Taiwan literature. Notable examples include Wang Wenxing, the master writer of modernism from the 1960s, his successor Li Yongping from the 1980s, the representative feminist writer Li Ang from the 1980s, and the most prominent female and postmodern poet Xia Yu, all of whom continued to publish new works in the twenty-first century.

Present-day Taiwanese writers are equipped with the knowledge to fully grasp aesthetic and cultural dimensions across borders. In a translocal light, these writers are tasked to investigate and represent both domestic and international issues through literary writing. As the dynamic between history and reality is always and still the core in focus, this volume encompasses three overarching categories in order to provide a systematic reading of Taiwan literature in the twenty-first century. The first and dominant category is the reflection and reconstruction of history and politics. The focus of the first category is not limited to the construction of a collective geography and political history of Taiwan; rather, it hinges on Taiwan through the lens of the commoners, the countryside, and the place-oriented counties/townships outside municipalities and capitals. For example, writers like Gan Yao-ming, Wu Ming-yi, and Huang Chong-kai may still incorporate political history into their writings but would give more credit to Taiwan's topography, scenery, crops, cultural relics, ethnography, art, and art and literary history itself. Additionally, writers like Li Ang, Lai Xiangyin, and Zhang Yixuan do not heap praise on or idolize the activists of democratic movements while criticizing the authoritarian regime but put into words the intricate hybridity within opposition movements and the legacy left behind by the KMT to this day.

The second category sheds light on the continuous deepening of topics on human rights in relation to gender and sexuality. Since the 1980s, issues about women and homosexuality have played a pivotal role in the arena of Taiwan literature, which is thus recognized as the most liberal and open national literature in Asia, despite Taiwan usually being compared to a ghost country outside of the United Nations while being contested by the People's Republic of China (PRC) under its nationalist One China Policy. Readers can see in works by writers like Li Ang, Liglav Awu, Zhang Yixuan, and Kevin Chen the penetrating critique of fixed gender norms and representation of cultural diversity that carry out the educational function of gender

equality in the contemporary society of the island-state. Annette Lu of the DPP was voted the first female vice president of Taiwan in 2000. Tsai Ing-wen of the DPP became the first female president in 2016 and won the re-election for her second term in 2020. Furthermore, Taiwan hit the world news headlines in 2019 by claiming the title as the first country to legalize same-sex marriage in Asia. All the above achievements were made possible thanks to the prolonged advocacy and promotion of gender equality on the island.

The third category brings into focus the positioning of multiethnicities in Taiwan. In the new era, Taiwan literature is no longer driven by Han Chinese people and language on the island. Taiwanese writers not only delve into the historical conflicts among the four major ethnic groups (Hoklo, Hakka, Mainlanders, and Indigenous peoples), but also employ the once neglected or forgotten mother tongues, customs, and memories in their Chinese-language writing. When it comes to constructing the multiethnic cultural experience of contemporary Taiwan, examples include Syaman Rapongan and his ocean-centered Indigeneity, Gan Yao-ming and Hakka culture, Li Yongping and Sinophone Malaysian literature, and the second generation of new immigrants who intermarry with local Taiwanese people. These writers undoubtedly broaden the original scope of the four major ethnic groups by producing source materials for their successors and critics and, more importantly, developing an alternative vision of Taiwan literature. In recent years, the first-generation and second-generation Taiwanese immigrants living overseas are also publishing Taiwan-focused literary works in foreign languages. Li Kotomi and Akira Higashiyama in Japan as well as Shawna Yang Ryan and Ed Lin in the United States of America are solid cases in point.

In the twentieth century, Taiwanese intellectuals fiercely debate the necessity to have a standalone, independent Taiwan literature separated from Chinese literature and Japanese literature. Such contention was sparked and intensified by Ye Shitao (Yeh Shih-Tao; 1925–2008) and Chen Yingzhen (1937–2016), who were “representative writers in the spectrum of political ideology for ‘pro-independence leftist’ and ‘pro-unification leftist’” and “competing for the rights for interpreting history and for the voice in the polemics over ‘homeland literature’” (Chen, 2010, pp. 29–30). This ideological clash has finally been settled thanks to the accelerating rise of local consciousness on the native soil of Taiwan. What Taiwan literature is currently deliberating is how to identity and position Taiwanese subjects in response to the crossover blend of nationalities and literary production in the new age. Under these circumstances, what can be the potential guidelines in the process as nationalities and literary production mix and mingle? How do we separate Taiwan literature from Chinese literature and Sinophone literature? How do we define and justify their overlap? And, finally, what are the limits and boundaries of Taiwan literature in the twenty-first century? This volume seeks to tackle these questions through the compilation of 16 chapters within the intercultural and multiethnic framework of Taiwan and beyond. Each chapter is dedicated to one representative writer in the literary arena of present-day Taiwan. This volume not only engages with the evolving trends of literary Taiwan, but also promotes the translocal consciousness and cultural diversity of the island-state.

2 An Overview of Chapters

This volume involves wide-ranging topics, such as the rewriting of Taiwanese history, human rights, political and social transitions, post-nativism, Indigenous consciousness, science fiction, ecocriticism, gender and queer studies, and localization and globalization. The goal is to rethink these existing topics and further explore innovative takes on Taiwan literature in the contemporary era. Tailored to accord with the three fundamental categories of Taiwan literature emphasized earlier, this volume is divided into five parts. It is pivotal to consider the five parts of the volume are in place to facilitate thematic readings. These five parts are interconnected, and readers can easily spot overlaps across sections. The first part of the volume spotlights the reconstruction of history and politics in Taiwan literature. Ming-ju Fan opens our volume with a stimulating chapter about Lai Xiangyin's metanarrative through a clear-eyed consideration of *The Translator* (2017), a collection of seven previously published stories and five new works. Historical driven, Lai's stories engage with such significant democratic movements and achievements as the Peasant Movement, the Shell-less Snail Movement, the Wild Lily Student Movement, and presidential elections in the post-martial law era. Fan sharply points out that Lai's rewriting of Taiwanese history goes beyond one singular localist vision and further intensifies the internal conflicts within the opposition movement against the KMT rule. To sum up, Lai's chronological account of Taiwanese history and individual experiences is provocative and confounding at the same time, as the female protagonist of the last story in the collection encounters considerable difficulties in properly translating her parents' past into another language. The translation issue here points to complexity of mediation and communication across historical time and ethnicities on the island as suggested by Lai's political fiction.

In Chap. 3, Yenna Wu closely examines "Beef Noodle Soup," a short story drawn from Li Ang's *An Erotic Feast for Lovebirds* (2007). Wu not only offers an engaging close reading of Li's literary text on the specific Chinese/Taiwanese dish, but also extends her discussion to the historical and political contexts of modern Taiwan. Wu argues that "Beef Noodle Soup" straddles between fiction and reality and thus invites sophisticated readers to reflect on the political transition from the past to the present. While highlighting the inhuman practice experienced by both mainlander-prisoners and native prisoners in 1960s Taiwan, Wu aptly draws the parallel between food and politics during the White Terror period, thus illustrating different dimensions of trauma—be it physical, psychological, or historical. Surprisingly and allegorically, the beef noodle soup in Li Ang's writing is eventually identified as a Taiwanese invention that speaks to the traumatic memory and cultural hybridity observed in the island-state.

In Chap. 4, Brian Scruggs looks at the genre of *xiangtu* (or native-soil) fiction in the short stories and novels written by Gan Yao-ming. After quickly sketching the development of *xiangtu* literature from the 1920s to the 2020s, Scruggs offers an introductory account of Gan's Hakka background and early career as reporter and teacher, followed by an emphasis on the trope of details and dialects embedded in the

author's literary writing. This chapter sees in Gan's works a profound mix of *xiangtu* fiction and postmodernity via the forms of anime-realism and magical realism. By comparing Gan's fiction with foreign authors/auteurs such as Mark Twain, Paul Kingsnorth, Stanley Kubrick, Hayao Miyazaki, and Ōtomo Katsuhiko, this chapter illuminates the evolving artistic trend of Taiwan literature with respect to the techniques and styles drawn and adapted from imported literature and cinematography. In light of Gan's obsession with details and dialects, this chapter helps review and redefine *xiangtu* fiction as a (trans-)local genre in 21st-century Taiwan.

The second part of the volume contains three chapters that, despite their marked discrepancies, share a common relevance and interest in a further exploration of genres, forms, and ideas in Taiwan's literary production. Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang establishes a conceptual framework for an understanding of canonized writer Wang Wen-hsing's literary art. It is hard to overstate the importance of Chang's chapter in this volume for two major reasons. First, Chang advocates for Wang's modernist writing in opposition to the overpowering native-soil literature in contemporary Taiwan. Chang carefully analyzes Wang's aesthetic insights represented in *Clipping Wings: A Chronicle* through the adoption of modern Western literary theories, such as mimesis and affect. Second, Chang extends her theoretical examination of *Clipping Wings* by responding to lukewarm feedback the novel received from readers and critics alike. As the chapter highlights, the potential "datedness" of Wang's language innovation and thematic focus simultaneously reinstates the cultural importance of Wang's novel in response to global modernism, thus revitalizing the once-celebrated genre of Taiwan literature in our time.

Following Chang's chapter, Michelle Yeh's chapter is a masterclass on the innovative features of Xia Yu, whose use of themes, language, and even book design has revolutionized modern poetry in Chinese. While literary production in postwar Taiwan is dominated by a historically and sociopolitically driven discourse, Xia Yu's poetics is boldly crafted to address the personal experience and affect of a cosmopolitan woman with an experimental twist. Identified as "a poet's poet" by Yeh, Xia Yu amazes and confounds her readers through a series of language games that involve the dynamics of signifier/the signified, translation/mistranslation, visual/sensual, and more. On top of her creative poetry and designs, Xia Yu bookends her mostly self-published books with interviews and postscripts that create an extra space for the author to directly engage with or guide her readers in a "self-fashioning" way. Xia Yu's poetry, therefore, functions as a counterpoint to most of the literary works analyzed in the volume.

In Chap. 7, Wen-chi Li pursues a science-fiction quest to analyze Egoyan Zheng's two major novels, *Dream Devourer* (2010) and *Ground Zero* (2013). Li brilliantly employs two thought experiments—Schrödinger's cat and Laplace's demon—to rediscover and reinterpret the sociopolitical fabric of Egoyan's sci-fi writing through the lens of post-*xiangtu* (or post-regional) writing in Taiwan. Despite its sci-fi skin, Egoyan's literary work reconnects futuristic settings with the unflagging issues observed in postwar Taiwan. On the one hand, *Ground Zero* illustrates an apocalyptic picture of Taiwan after nuclear explosion, which makes explicit the impotence and corruption of the ruling party in the face of the extreme ecological crisis. On the

other hand, *Dream Devourer* can also be treated as a political allegory that envisions a global sci-fi world in connection with the colonial history and postcolonial context of Taiwan. Through his unique sci-fi *xiangtu* narrative, Egoyan's novels grapple with the lasting historical pains and ethnic conflicts that continue to define and divide Taiwan.

Breaking ground in Part Three, Chap. 8, a crucial contribution from Carlos Rojas, undertakes an in-depth analysis of Chen Xue's published and republished stories to relocate the politics of gender and homoerotics in contemporary Taiwan. By acknowledging the historical significance of Taiwan's 2019 legalization of same-sex marriage, this chapter traces Chen Xue's literary career from 1995 to 2019, which chronicles the author's literary focus and approach in response to her personal experiences and the sociopolitical realities regarding homosexuality on the island. Through his contextual reading of *Book of Evil Women* (1995), *A Wife's Diary* (2012; co-authored with Breakfast), *When I Became We: Thirty-six Possibilities of Love and Relationships* (2018), and *Fatherless City* (2019), Rojas intellectually explores the shared theme of "fractured families" that occupies a pivotal place in Chen Xue's unorthodox writing, as the absence of fathers remains a politically loaded issue that confronts the traditional patriarchal and heteronormative paradigms in a psychoanalytic sense. While affirming the symbolic trope of missing fathers, this chapter provides a penetrating view of queer alternatives in Chen Xue's works.

A different strain of gender and homoerotic politics is recounted in Linshan Jiang's succinct chapter dedicated to the tropes of sex and sexuality in the two novels by Zhang Yixuan: *The Love that is Temporary* (2011) and *A Farewell Letter* (2015). This chapter shows us that Zhang, as a queer and lesbian writer, presents an acute view of traumatic memories relating to domestic violence and intimate partner violence. Through the first-person narrative, Zhang's female protagonists embody a complex process of self-reflection that facilitates her readers' understanding of the committed situation and beyond. The dynamism of this chapter is justified by a refreshing juxtaposition of trauma and salvation in the sociopolitical and diasporic contexts of Taiwan and abroad. Jiang concludes with the statement about how Zhang's queer writing proposes a critical way to reconcile traumatic memories with sexual exploration across temporalities and spatialities, thus shedding new light on the *tongzhi*, or homosexual, literature in 21st-century Taiwan.

Expanding the previous two chapters on gender politics, Fanny Caron contributes an invaluable chapter on Liglav Awu, a prominent Paiwan female writer, and the revolutionary gender discourse embedded in her works. In Caron's account, Awu's writing marks the transition from colonial to postcolonial conditions endured by Indigenous peoples in Taiwan with a focus on how Indigenous women are silenced and alienated in the Han-dominated Taiwanese society. Caron further accentuates Awu's identity as a subject of "double country" (or "double heritage") that straddles her Paiwan and Han backgrounds. Though focusing on Awu's earlier works, this chapter sharply raises emerging topics that tally with the Indigenous, environmental, and international dimensions of Awu's literary production and thus connects the writer with the preponderant cross-cultural trends of Taiwan literature and the global

Indigenous community in the twenty-first century. A substantial work on the resistance and empowerment of Indigenous women through Awu's works, this chapter also builds a bridge to the following part on multiethnicities.

Part Four explores the themes of ethnicities and races that run through the entire volume. In Chap. 11, Chia-rong Wu steers the volume away from the main island of Taiwan with the re-deployment of Orchid Island and the Pacific Ocean in Tao writer Syaman Rapongan's oceanic discourse. This chapter demonstrates how Rapongan's seafaring writing is dedicated to the core task of not only challenging the Han-dominated framework but also diversifying land- or mountain-based Indigenous literature in Taiwan. To unpack Rapongan's oceanic vision, this chapter offers a critical appraisal of *Floating Dreams in the Ocean* (2014) and *Mata nu Wawa* (2018), both of which correspond with the author's mounting confrontation with undying colonial practices in the contemporary period. The greatest strength of the chapter lies in the reiteration of Rapongan's deconstructive view of China's continental and Taiwan's main-island ideologies. By plaiting Rapongan's rewriting of oceanic Taiwan with Epeli Hau'ofa's "We are the ocean" theory, this chapter delivers a timely theoretical critique that stretches the scope of Taiwan literature in regard to the global Indigenous network and even world literature.

An exhilarating piece by Gwennaël Gaffric, Chap. 12 delves into the figuration of migrants across the globe in Wu Ming-yi's fiction and prose collections. Gaffric argues that Wu's audacious writing avoids the pitfalls of being limited to specific geographical locales, temporal settings, and colonial minds in the global age. Through his works on mobilities of animals (including migrant butterflies) and human subjects, Wu unfolds the potentiality of straddling between species, histories, races, ethnicities, and nationalities. The impact of the Second World War, for instance, can never be fully assessed through any singular lens, be it geopolitical, national, or historical, but should be examined within a much larger environment that encompasses both the spaces of the living and the non-living. This chapter further borrows Dan Bloom's theoretical term—Climate Fiction—to illuminate the phenomenon of international migration and climate refugees, thus promoting an ecocritical vision that seeks mutual understanding and co-existence in the twenty-first century.

In Chap. 13, Min-xu Zhan critically adopts Leo T. S. Ching's theory to explore both the anti-Japan and "becoming-Japanese" sentiments observed in Li Yongping's literary works. Zhan first surveys the notable Taiwanese fictions on the topic and then extends his discussion of the transition from anti-Japanism to the other end of the spectrum in 21st-century Taiwan by treating Li's novels as a bridge between the two opposite ideologies. As argued by Zhan, "becoming" goes beyond the limitation of "imitation, learning, and identification," thus blurring the border between the self and the other and complicating the subjective identity in a plural sense. Departing from Chinese nationalism and anti-Japanism, Li showcases a growing understanding of, or strong interest in, Japanese samurai, food, animation, and even imperial soldiers in his later works. Therefore, this chapter offers an insightful interpretation of Li's works that pushes the boundary of identity politics across races and regions in response to the extraordinary discourses of translocality and postcoloniality in contemporary Taiwan.

In the next chapter, Nicholas Y. H. Wong deals with the literary-historical account represented in Huang Chong-kai's *The Content of the Times* (2017) and *The Formosa Exchange* (2021). Wong skillfully draws the link between Sianne Ngai's concept of the "gimmick of the novel of ideas" and Huang's perplexing narratives on virtual reality and population exchange. This chapter also identifies literary history as media history, as it taps into the imaginary nexuses of Taiwan–Cuba, Earth–Mars, and US–China relations in Huang's metafictional writing that intriguingly bears witness to the White Terror period of Taiwan and reimagines the past and future of the island. Through his rhetoric of "counterfactual historicity," Huang participates in the revision and reconstruction of Taiwan's diaspora. From this perspective, this chapter leads readers to scrutinize Huang's novels and further extend their textual reading to a profound act of contextualizing contemporary Taiwan in a sociopolitical light. Taiwan is thus imaginatively re-worlded and its literary literature rewritten thanks to Huang.

This volume closes with the topic on Taiwan literature in the age of globalization by using Pei-yin Lin's chapter to set the tone for this concluding section. In Chap. 15, Lin comprehensively charts the formulation of the border-crossing "Summer Trilogy" by Kevin Chen, a Berlin-based Taiwanese writer. By implementing a close reading of *Ghost Town* (2019), *Florida Metamorphosis* (2020), and *The Good People Upstairs* (2022), this chapter convincingly discloses the interconnectedness of escape and return of Chen's protagonists by placing side by side the ghostly repressed homeland (Yongjing and Yuanlin) and the relatively liberal foreign land (Berlin and Florida). Lin takes a further step in casting the limelight on a shortlist of provocative subjects, including, but not limited to, homophobia and the political authoritarianism of the island-state, as interrogated and trialed in Chen's fictional universe. On a higher level, this chapter represents an ambitious venture into Chen's transnational identity that simultaneously seeks root in and rebels against Taiwan's (post-)nativist literature.

Echoing the previous chapter's cross-cultural and transnational agenda on Taiwan literature, Irmay Schweiger's chapter provides an invigorating overview of Taiwanese American writer Shawna Yang Ryan and her novels. Schweiger begins by elaborating how Ryan's English-language literary writing on Taiwan is convoluted and empowered by her Taiwanese American identity and position. This chapter further explains the significance of the 1947 February 28 Incident and the pursuit of Taiwanese independence and democracy as the historical backdrop of Ryan's Taiwan-focused novel *Green Island* through the lens of national trauma and memory politics. By reflecting on the forced amnesia and the counter-narrative agenda in *Green Island*, this chapter subtly addresses the witness/victim agency that negotiates the past, the present, and the future. The ultimate goal is to endorse the re-narration of historical trauma as an alternative approach to remembrance and reconciliation in a transgenerational and transpacific context. A theoretically and translocally driven gem, this chapter offers a forward-looking view of Taiwan literature in the age of globalization.

This volume concludes with Sophia Huei-Ling Chen's chapter on Li Kotomi, a Taiwanese-born Japanese author. Unpacking the notion of cosmopolitanism, this chapter winds up focusing on Li Kotomi's fictional work *Count Down to Five Seconds*

of *Crescent Moon* (2019/2021), which features the compelling parallel between a female/lesbian Taiwanese immigrant in Japan and Mio, a female/straight Japanese immigrant in Taiwan. In addition to a lively discussion of sexual/queer and cultural others in foreign settings, this chapter takes up the theory of “minor transnationalism” by Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih as a critical way of coming to terms with the practices of immigration and acculturation and with the discourses of nationalism and transnationalism. Proficiently, this chapter not only concentrates on the relationship between the two female protagonists and their compromised situatedness in their host countries, but it also rethinks Li’s blueprint of the ethnic-Chinese Hui restaurant and Teresa Teng’s vocal performance that background the two characters’ long-awaited encounter in a trans-Asian context, thus envisaging the two-way traffic between Taiwan literature and Japanese literature.

In recent years, there are more and more English-language anthologies and volumes on Taiwan studies; still, Taiwan literature is normally overshadowed by social and political sciences and international relations in such endeavors. In addition to David Der-wei Wang and Carlos Rojas’s edited volume, *Writing Taiwan* (2007), a masterful source in the field is *The Columbia Sourcebook of Literary Taiwan* (2014), edited by Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang, Michelle Yeh, and Ming-ju Fan. It is important to consider that *The Columbia Sourcebook* is a compilation that engages with the colonial period and the Cold War under Taiwan’s martial law. As Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang (2014) argues, *The Columbia Sourcebook* is tasked “to enrich the taxonomy of modern East Asian traditions, a foundation for studying the underexplored component of world literature” (p. 30). Moving forward from the Cold War discourse, our collaborative volume not only offers a historical and theoretical overview of contemporary Taiwan, but also explores new trends in the literary production in Taiwan and beyond. Due to unexpected issues, this volume is unable to include chapters on such important writers like Xiang Yang, Hong Hong, and Luo Yijun. Still, the chapters in this volume recognize the unique historical and sociopolitical backdrop of Taiwan and aim to promote its literature and scholarship in a link with the global network. Taiwan literature, therefore, can be considered a literature of its own as well as part of world literature, rather than a subgroup under any other hegemonic state or literature.

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Chia-rong Wu is an associate professor in the Department of Global, Cultural and Language Studies at the University of Canterbury in New Zealand. Dr. Wu received his PhD in Comparative Literature from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA. He specializes in Sinophone literature and film through the lens of postcolonial theories, indigenous studies, diaspora, and ecocriticism. Dr. Wu is the author of *Supernatural Sinophone Taiwan and Beyond* (Cambria Press, 2016) and *Remapping the Contested Sinosphere: The Cross-cultural Landscape and Ethnoscape of Taiwan* (Cambria Press, 2020) and has published with such academic journals as the *British Journal of Chinese Studies*, *Sun Yat-sen Journal of Humanities*, *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, and *American Journal of Chinese Studies*.

Ming-ju Fan is a Distinguished Professor of Graduate Institute of Taiwanese Literature at the National Chengchi University in Taiwan. She is the authors of *Spatial/Textual/Politics, Literary Geography: Spatial Reading of Taiwanese Fiction*, *Chronological Searches of Taiwanese Women's Fiction* and *Critic Artisan, Like a Box of Chocolate: Criticism on Contemporary Literature and Culture*; Co-Editor of *The Columbia Sourcebook of Literary Taiwan*

The Reconstruction of History and Politics

Democracy Detoured and a Narrator Detached in the Political Fiction of Lai Xiangyin



Ming-ju Fan

Abstract This chapter will explore the various layers Lai Xiangyin (Lai Hsiang-yin 賴香吟) portrays in her collection of short stories entitled *The Translator* (翻譯者) that maps out several turning points in the post-martial law era. These stories are listed mainly in chronological order and divided into four series, the first dealing with the progression that emerged after martial law was lifted, and the second the frustrations of the reform process. Series three moves away from the democracy movement in Taipei to the perspective of Tainan, an ancient city in south Taiwan. The fourth series offers a metanarrative to Lai's fictions as well as a historiography of our time. Lai's texts offer inspiring observations on Taiwan's democratic movement: the history of the transition from authoritarianism to democracy; the history and internal conflicts of the opposition movement; and how the period looks when viewed from a different geographical vantage point. Most importantly, they show how literature, when done right, preserves time, and how a novelist can come to represent historical "truth."

Keywords Lai Xiangyin · Democracy · Historiography · Metanarrative · Post-martial law

For 50 years after Imperial Japan relinquished control of Taiwan to the Kuomintang (KMT), the Nationalist government of the Republic of China, China and Taiwan remained disconnected. Two years into the KMT rule, the Nationalists killed many native Taiwanese in what would become known as the 228 Incident¹ (or Massacre), an event the KMT forbade the press from reporting on and withheld from the history books for decades. In 1949, when the KMT fled to Taiwan after their defeat at the hands of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in Mainland during the Chinese Civil War, they declared martial law to fortify their rule over the island. For the next 40 years, a period known as the White Terror, the KMT arrested and charged citizens indiscriminately, without trial or evidence, and prohibited the Taiwanese people from criticizing the KMT or discussing any subjects the Party deemed verboten, never mind

M. Fan (✉)
National Chengchi University, Taipei City, Taiwan
e-mail: fanmj@nccu.edu.tw

¹ The 228 Incident refers to the February 28 Incident in 1947.