

## From Indigenization to the World: Reflections on the Themes and Methodologies in Recent Taiwanese Literary Studies

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Taiwanese literature has witnessed an increased diversity in its research trends and methodologies since its institutionalization in the late 1990s.<sup>1</sup> The lifting of martial law in 1987 ushered in the conspicuous indigenization turn of literary studies in Taiwan from a Taiwan-centric perspective that is often critical of postwar Nationalist rule. Scholars, usually informed by originally Western postmodern or postcolonial theories introduced into Taiwan in the late 1980s, were keen to explore new perspectives from which to understand Taiwan's history and identity issues.<sup>2</sup> The “postcolonial historical perspective,” which regards Nationalist rule as Taiwan's “re-colonial” period and was proposed by Chen Fangming in 1999, is illustrative of this literary indigenization in Taiwanese academia.<sup>3</sup> Under this Taiwan-centric indigenization, the previously stigmatized imperial-subject literature was re-evaluated in the 1990s and early 2000s in some Chinese scholarship, which was in sync with comparable efforts in English scholarship. But overall Chinese scholarship tends to stress the resis-

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<sup>1</sup> The important marker is the establishment of the first Department of Taiwanese Literature in 1997 in Aletheia University in Tamsui of Northern Taiwan. For reflections on its nearly twenty-five-year history, see the articles published as a special issue edited by Lin Yun-hung in the University of Texas Austin-based online journal *TaiwanLit* 2.2 (Fall, 2021), <http://taiwanlit.org/special-topics/>.

<sup>2</sup> A fair amount of Chinese scholarship from Taiwan strives to answer which theoretical frameworks (postmodernism or postcolonialism) can better explain Taiwan's literary trajectory and post-martial law social imaginary. See for example Zhou Yingxiong and Liu Chi-hui, eds. *Shuxie Taiwan—Wenxueshi, houzhimin yu houxiandai* [Writing Taiwan: Strategies of Representation] (Taipei: Maitian, 2000). For an equivalent English version, see David Der-wei Wang and Carlos Rojas, eds. *Writing Taiwan: A New Literary History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> See Chen Fangming, “Taiwan xin wenxueshi de jiangou yu fenqi” [The Construction and Periodization of Modern Taiwanese Literary History], *Liangge wenxue* [Unitas] 178 (August 1999): 162–73. This article provoked the debate between Chen Fangming and the China-leaning critic-cum-writer Chen Yingzhen in *Unitas* at the turn of the 21st century. Another useful reference is You Shengguan's *Taiwan wenxue bentulun de xingqi yu fazhan* [The Rise and Development of Taiwan's Literary Indigenization] (Taipei: Qianwei, 1996).

tance embedded in those imperial-subject texts,<sup>4</sup> whereas English scholarship strives to contextualize them more deeply and to challenge the nationalist or moralistic interpretation of the texts more thoroughly.<sup>5</sup>

Since the millennium, the field of Taiwanese literature has undergone some important “paradigm shifts.” At least two research tendencies can be observed. One is the exploration of understudied topics rather than continued devotion to those conventional socially engaged and canonical writers. A good case in point is the emerging research on colonial Taiwanese popular literature, such as works published in lightweight entertainment-oriented journals including *Sanliujiu xiaobao* 三六九小報 [Three, Six, Nine Tabloid] and *Fengyuebao* 風月報 [Wind and Moon Bulletin]. Another is the reconceptualization of Taiwanese literature from a more global point of view, instead of the rigid and insular nationalist perspective. To remain within clearer and more feasible parameters, I will concentrate in this review article on a few selected and more recent Chinese publications on Taiwanese literature. The article will primarily cover two areas: the newly arisen research topics, and some innovative methodologies or approaches to Taiwanese literature.

## THEMATIC EXPANSION

Thematic expansion is one of the most noticeable developments in the field of Taiwanese literature in the past few years. A variety of topics have garnered scholarly attention in the past few years, among which nature writing, gender, and translation studies have yielded fresh results. Concerning nature writing in Chinese scholarship, Lee Yu-lin’s 李育霖 *Nizao xin diqiu* 擬造新地球 [The Fabulation of a New Earth: Contemporary Taiwanese Nature Writing] serves as a salient example, which complements two English volumes on a similar topic—*Ecoambiguity: Environmental Crises and East Asian Literatures* and *Ecocriticism in Taiwan: Identity, Environment, and the Arts*.<sup>6</sup> A quick comparison of the titles

<sup>4</sup> Some Chinese scholarship remains critical of the colonial Taiwanese writers’ pro-Japan stance, but Ye Shitao sympathetically claims there is no imperial-subject literature as all literature is resistance literature. See his “Kangyi wenxue’ hu? ‘Huangmin wenxue’ hu?” [Resistance Literature or Imperial-subject Literature?] in *Taiwan wenxue de beiqing* [The Sadness of Taiwanese Literature] (Kaohsiung: Paise Wenhua, 1990), 111–12.

<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang, “Beyond Cultural and National Identities: Current Re-evaluation of the Kominka Literature from Taiwan’s Japanese Period,” *Journal of Modern Literature in Chinese* 1.1 (1997): 75–101.

<sup>6</sup> See Karen Thornber, *Ecoambiguity: Environmental Crises and East Asian Literatures* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012); Chia-ju Chang and Scott Slovic, eds. *Ecocriticism in Taiwan: Identity, Environment, and the Arts* (New York: Lexington Books, 2016).

shows that Lee's book, which only deals with Taiwan and is dedicated exclusively to contemporary literature, has the most limited scope, allowing him to delve deeply into each text. Nature writing, or environmental humanities in a broad sense, has been a vibrant research trend for approximately a decade. If we consider the year 1983 as the starting point of Taiwan's nature writing, with the publication of *Women zhiyou yige diqiu* 我們只有一個地球 [We Have Only One Earth] as the marker, research on this topic is a relatively belated effort. Prior to Lee, Wu Mingyi laid a solid foundation for the study of Taiwan's nature writing as an established practitioner of this genre with global visibility himself.<sup>7</sup> Compared to Wu's initial exploration, Lee's volume offers an in-depth and multidimensional analysis involving aesthetics, philosophy, and ethical politics and focusing on four representative authors—Wu Mingyi (Chapters 1 and 2), Liu Kexiang (Chapter 3), Liao Hongji (Chapter 4), and the Tao writer Syaman Rapongan (Chapter 5). The word “fabrication” (*nizao*) in the title of Lee's monograph indicates his emphasis on humans' creative agency.

Lee's book unfolds around the fundamental question of how humans perceive, and are related to, other species. He considers nature writing by contemporary Taiwanese authors an act of resistance against homogeneity and the alienation of one's subjectivity caused by global capitalism. In other words, nature writing functions as those authors' “lines of flights,” a term developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.<sup>8</sup> While writings by Deleuze have been popular among Taiwanese academics, Lee's book provides an answer to the general question about employing Western theories in non-Western contexts. For Lee, this is not evidence of non-Western scholars' uncritical obsession with Western theories. Rather, it can be seen as an exploration of the possibility of having a dynamic dialogue between Taiwanese literature and Western theories. The extent to which Deleuze's concept is applicable to Taiwan is itself an interesting transcultural “assemblage” that “captures feelings and creates unknown affects” and “belongs to neither the West or the East.”<sup>9</sup> In the book, Lee illustrates how Wu's butterfly and hydrologic writing, Liu's observation of birds, and Liao's and also Syaman Rapongan's oceanic narratives can be taken as complex affect-infused assemblages in which we can glance at those writers' sen-

<sup>7</sup> For Wu Mingyi's pioneering research on nature writing, see his *Yi shuxie jiefang ziran: Taiwan xiandai ziran shuxie de tansuo* [Liberating Nature by Writing: An Exploration in Modern Taiwanese Nature Writing]. As for Wu's nonfiction nature writings, see his *Mi die zhi* [The Book of Lost Butterflies, 2000] and *Die dao* [The Dao of Butterflies, 2003]. For fiction, see his *The Man with the Compound Eyes* translated by Darryl Sterk (New York: Vintage, 2015).

<sup>8</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

<sup>9</sup> Lee Yu-lin, *Nizao xin diqiu*, 15, 20.

sation-informed geological aesthetics. The last chapter, on Syaman Rapongan, is particularly meaningful as it applies Guattari's "ecology of society" to posit how Syaman Rapongan's nature writing subverts the Han majority's epistemological system and constructs the Tao's cultural subjectivity.

In addition to nature writing, gender-related topics have gathered momentum in recent scholarship. Chi Ta-wei's 紀大偉 *Tongzhi wenxue shi: Taiwan de faming* 同志文學史：台灣的發明 [A Queer Invention in Taiwan: A History of Tongzhi Literature] is a welcome and long overdue publication from Taiwan. Although homosexuality-related research on Taiwanese literature can be traced back to the late 20th century, Chi's monograph is the first full-length chronological treatment of the history of Taiwan's *tongzhi* 同志 literature. The Chinese title uses *tongzhi*, a term more closely associated with the Taiwanese context than the alternative term *tongxinglian* 同性戀, which is more or less a translation of the English word "homosexual," signaling Chi's distinct emphasis on postwar Taiwanese history. Using *tongzhi* literature as a prism, Chi's book is a sociocultural history spanning from the 1950s all the way to the 21st century. In the introductory chapter, Chi explains that *tongzhi* literary history is a "public history" (*gongzhong lishi* 公眾歷史), which is different from "mainstream history" (*zhuliu lishi* 主流歷史). Hence, while its chronological structure based on the decimal year format may seem rigid, Chi's treatment of Taiwan's literary history is far from linear but closer to that of the new historicists, who question power-embedded interpretations and accentuate the inevitable gaps and ruptures in grand narratives. This stance opens up new interpretative possibilities for existing *tongzhi* literature and also helps excavate several previously overlooked literary works or representations of same-sex desire.

In a similar vein, Yang Cui's 楊翠 two-volume *Shaoshu shuohua: Taiwan yanzhumin nüxing wenxue de duochong shiyu* 少數說話：台灣原住民族女性文學的多重視域 [Minority Speaks: The Multiple Perspectives of Taiwanese Indigenous Women's Literature] is worth noting. It covers two crucial and long-lasting concerns in Taiwan's literary studies: ethnicity and gender. Ethnicity has for a long time been a dominant issue in the studies of Taiwanese literature conducted in Taiwan. This is largely owing to the Nationalist Party's 38-year (1949–1987) period of authoritarian rule propped up by martial law, during which ethnic tension became intensified. While this can be seen as a unique feature of contemporary Taiwanese literature, certain critics are concerned that the Taiwanese/Mainlander conflict has overshadowed other worthwhile dimensions of Taiwanese literature—such as the class perspective, that still remains understudied.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Lin Yun-hung argues that ethnic confrontation overrides class issues in the research on Taiwanese literature. See his "Wangque 'jieji' de liangzhong zuopai: Bijiao Taiwan wenxueshi lunshu zhong de 'houzhimin' zuoyi yu 'zuqun daoxiang de jieji xushi,'" [Two Types of Left-

Unlike the ethnicity issue, gender-related topics, such as women's literature, have been a popular choice for scholars in not only Taiwan but also China.<sup>11</sup> The publication of Yang's book is proof of the maturation of Taiwanese indigenous literature by female writers, both in quantity and quality. Yang points out that the younger female indigenous authors do not necessarily highlight their ethnic background in their works whereas indigenous identity remains central in works by older female indigenous authors. Yang further remarks that this book was not written for academic purposes. Rather, it was initiated for personal reasons—her long-term friendship with the indigenous author Liglav Awu and her interest in tracing her family history. After discovering that her bloodline is a mix of the Han, the Siraya, and the Paiwan tribes, Yang questions why she has “so logically positioned her subjectivity towards the paternal, Han identification,”<sup>12</sup> reminding us of the need for self-reflection when conducting research and the importance of unearthing minor voices.

In addition to ecocriticism and gender-related topics, translation studies have proven to be a fruitful albeit new area in current Taiwanese literary studies. Given the multilingual and multiethnic nature of Taiwanese society, translation offers a niche prism through which the various forces that have jointly shaped the production and reception of Taiwanese literature can be scrutinized. The most recent publication related to this topic in Chinese is an interdisciplinary edited volume entitled *Taiwan fanyishi: Zhimin, guozu, yu renting* 台灣翻譯史：殖民，國族，與認同 (A Translation History of Taiwan: Colonialism, Nationhood, and Identity).<sup>13</sup> The twelve chapters include individual case studies on textual circulation and reception, the translator's role and appraisal, and source text identification and comparison, as well as private and official institutions related to translation projects in Cold War Taiwan. Taking Anthony Pym's four principles for translation studies as a guide,<sup>14</sup> the book explores

ists Who Forget about 'Class': A Comparison between Postcolonial Left and Ethnically-oriented Class Narrative in Discourses on the History of Taiwan Literature], *Chung Wai Literary Quarterly* 46.2 (June 2017): 161–96. However, Xie Shizong's *Jieji youguan: Guozu lunshu, xingbie zhengzhi yu zibenzhuyi de wenxue zaixian* [Class That Matters: Nationalist Discourse, Gender Politics, and the Capitalist Literary Representations] (Taipei: Qunxue, 2019) partially addresses the insufficiency of class-informed analysis of Taiwanese literary works.

<sup>11</sup> For example, the Chinese scholar Fan Luoping published *Dangdai Taiwan nüxing xiaoshuo shilun* [A History of Contemporary Taiwanese Women's Literature] in 2006.

<sup>12</sup> Yang Cui, “Houji: Yige ‘fanyizhe/fanyizhe’ de yanjiu xinlu” [Afterword: A Researcher's Mental Trajectory]. Accessed July 20, 2021. <https://www.thenewslens.com/article/92648>.

<sup>13</sup> Lai Ciyun, ed. *Taiwan fanyishi: Zhimin, guozu, yu renting* [A Translation History of Taiwan: Colonialism, Nationhood, and Identity] (Taipei: Lianjing, 2019).

<sup>14</sup> They are: (1) explain why translations took place in a specific time and place, (2) the central object should be translators and their social entourage, (3) attention to the social contexts where translators live and belong, (4) explore what has driven one to study translation history. See Anthony Pym, *Method in Translation History* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), ix–x.

the specific context and the possible actors involved in each translation and pays attention to how the translations shed light on the translator's society or the target culture. Coincidentally, an English book touching upon translation and Taiwanese literature and adopting sociological approaches was published recently, signifying the vogue for researching Taiwanese literature in cross-cultural and interdisciplinary perspectives.<sup>15</sup>

As the title *A Translation History of Taiwan: Colonialism, Nationhood, and Identity* aptly indicates, identity is not a given but an articulation mediated constantly through cultures and languages. Indeed, the early works by colonial Taiwanese writers are embedded with visible foreign inspirations both thematically and technically. And the question of what counts as “Taiwanese” literature is almost impossible to answer if one treats Taiwanese literature merely in isolation. The boundary is often drawn during the process of translation practice. As some chapters in the book demonstrate, the conceptualization of Taiwanese literature remains unstable and is subject to Taiwan's dominant ideology and global circumstances. For instance, the label “Taiwan” was strategically repackaged as “free China” in the Cold War translation projects, whereas the open-mindedness among scholars nowadays facilitates the inclusion of Japanese writers' works from the colonial period as part of Taiwanese literature. And while multilingual ability is normally a valuable asset allowing writers to access world literature more easily, the multilingual Taiwanese people involved in war trials unfortunately could be held liable for the political violence that had befallen the victims.

## METHODOLOGICAL INNOVATION

Scholars' thematic expansion complements their search for innovative analytical frameworks within which to position Taiwanese literature. At least three frameworks—the East Asian, the Sinophone, and the world literature frameworks—are discernible in recent Chinese scholarship concerning Taiwanese literature. The East Asian framework is an essential and highly fruitful approach—especially for studies of colonial Taiwanese literature. “Taiwan and East Asia” is actually a Lianjing (Linking) Publisher's book series edited by Chen Fangming, a renowned postcolonial critic from Taiwan.<sup>16</sup> As far as the “East Asian” framework is concerned, Liu Shuqin 柳書琴 is one major devotee. Dong-

<sup>15</sup> Szu-wen Kung, *Translation of Contemporary Taiwan Literature in a Cross-cultural Context: A Translation Studies Perspective* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2021).

<sup>16</sup> Twelve volumes were published, including Chi Ta-wei's aforementioned book (2017).

ya wenzhuchang: Taiwan, Chaoxian, Manzhou de zhimin zhuyi yu wenhua jiaoshe 東亞文學場：台灣、朝鮮、滿洲的殖民主義與文化交涉 [The East Asian Literary Field: Colonialism in and Cultural Encounters between in Taiwan, Korea, and Manchuria], which she edited, exemplifies the recent findings of this approach. This book's merit is twofold. One of its strengths is the breadth of topics it covers, and the other is the multilingual and transnational academic community it fosters. The contributors consist of scholars from Japan, Korea, China, and Taiwan.<sup>17</sup> Liu has also coined the concept of the “East Asian Leftwing Cultural Corridor” (*Dongya zuoyi wenhua zoulang* 東亞左翼文化走廊) to explore the cultural exchange between writers in China, Taiwan, Japan, and, to a lesser degree, Korea in the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>18</sup> This approach to Taiwanese literature, at least from the colonial period, has a unique advantage because it allows Chinese scholarship to be in dialogue with that by non-Sinophone East Asian scholars, and also in sync with English research conducted by comparatists such as Karen Thornber.<sup>19</sup>

The second framework—the Sinophone—can be dated back to 2004, when Shih Shu-mei 史書美 probed the strategies that could help minor literature to win global recognition.<sup>20</sup> As the Sinophone framework challenges China's political and cultural hegemony and celebrates locally accented literary expressions, it has been a catchy and constructive framework among Taiwanese scholars. In a Chinese article from 2015, Shih discusses the implications of this framework for Taiwan's literary studies.<sup>21</sup> She acknowledges that Taiwanese literature is richer than the Sinophone framework can encompass, as it also contains works written in Japanese, romanizations, indigenous languages, southeastern lan-

<sup>17</sup> Among the four Chinese scholars, at least three of them (Liu Xiaoli, Zhang Quan, and Jiang Lei) are also scholars of Manchukuo literature. Their research on Manchukuo literature can be found in Annika A. Culver and Norman Smith, eds. *Manchukuo Perspectives: Transnational Approaches to Literary Production* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2019).

<sup>18</sup> No book-length study has been published, but an essay on Xiao Hong showcases some of Liu's findings. See Liu Shuqin, “Liuwang de Nala: Zuoyi wenhua zoulang shang Xiao Hong de xingbie huayu” [Nora in Exile: Xiao Hong's Gender Discourse in the Left-Wing Corridor], *Qinghua xuebao* 48.4 (December 2018): 763–96.

<sup>19</sup> Karen Thornber, *Empire of Texts in Motion: Chinese, Korean, and Taiwanese Transculturations of Japanese Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

<sup>20</sup> Shih Shu-mei, “Global Literature and the Technologies of Recognition,” *PMLA* 119.1 (January 2004): 16–30. For a history of how the framework was introduced into Taiwan, see Mao-shan Huang, “Kua shikong juage: Huayu yuxi yanjiu zai Taiwan xiaoshi” (Entanglements across Time and Space: A Brief History of Sinophone Studies in Taiwan), *TaiwanLit* 1.2 (Fall, 2020). Accessed August 2, 2021. <https://1url.cz/HK3CK>.

<sup>21</sup> Shih Shu-mei, “Huayu yuxi yanjiu dui Taiwan wenzhuchang de keneng yiyi: Wei Zhongwai wenzhuchang ‘Huayu yu hanwen zhuanji’ suoxie” [Implications of Sinophone Studies for Taiwan Literature: A Response Essay], *Chung Wai Literary Quarterly* 44.1 (March 2015): 135–43.

guages (by new migrants), and even English. She explains that it is not a framework that privileges Chinese writing. Rather, it concerns the larger interlingual relationship and exchange. She further remarks that the framework enables scholarship to investigate Taiwan's palimpsestic colonial history more deeply and pay greater heed to Taiwan's literary "place-basedness" (*zaidixing* 在地性), which can be understood as the discursive concept of "Taiwanese-ness." Besides Shih, the Taiwan-based scholar Zhan Minxu 詹閔旭 has written a few articles to explore the relationship between the Sinophone framework and Taiwanese literature. On the basis of Shih's framework, Zhan adds that place-based practice is multilayered. By applying this framework to look at the reception of Malaysian Chinese (Mahua 馬華) literature in Taiwan,<sup>22</sup> Zhan demonstrates that the framework is not only useful in rescuing Taiwanese literature from its usual reference point of Chinese literature, but also conducive to a relational comparison between Chinese and non-Chinese communities.

Shih's indefatigable emphasis on "place-based" literary expressions is manifested fully in her Chinese monograph *Fan lisan* 反離散 (Against Diaspora: Discourses on Sinophone Studies), which investigates the peripheral Sinitic-language cultures in three interrelated historical processes that have yielded Sinophone communities: continental colonialism, settler colonialism, and immigration. This thought-provoking book, as anticipated, has triggered criticisms in Taiwan from, for instance, Zhao Gang and Ng Kim-chew.<sup>23</sup> Although Zhao and Ng have different backgrounds—Zhao is often labelled as a pro-unification leftist, and Ng is vigilant about the notion of "Chineseness"—they share some similar viewpoints. Both question the accuracy of Shih's new Qing history-inspired description of China as an empire, her glossing over America for its multiculturalism, and her own position of speaking. Zhao's and Ng's essays provide food for thought regarding how Taiwan and its literary production is related to China, the United States, and beyond. Shih's Sinophone concept is indeed not perfect, and its popularity in Taiwan is to some extent related to its alertness toward China. However, the framework should not be hastily abridged as a "desinicization" theory per se. Instead, it continues to evolve with revised and more sophisticated definitions to correspond to the changing sociopoliti-

<sup>22</sup> Zhan Minxu, "Duodi gonggou de huayu yuxi wenxue: Yi Mahua wenxue de Taiwan jingyu weili" [Sinophone Literature as Places-based Production: On the Predicament of Sinophone Malaysian Literature in Taiwan], *Taiwan wenxue xuebao* 30 (June 2017): 81–110.

<sup>23</sup> Zhao Gang, "Xinufeng yu luohuasheng: Ping Shi Shumei de 'huayu yuxi' gainian" [Sinophone and Peanut: On Shih Shu-mei's "Sinophone" Concept], *Liang'an benbao* (November 2017): 162. Accessed June 14, 2021. <http://ben.chinatide.net/?p=13272>; Ng Kim-chew, "Zheyang de 'huayu yuxi' lun keyi xiuyi! Shi Shumei de 'fan lisan' daodi zai fan shenme?" [This Kind of Sinophone Notion Can Stop! What Exactly Is Shih Shu-mei's "Anti-Diaspora" against?] January 2018. Accessed June 14, 2021. <https://storystudio.tw/article/sobooks/sinophone-literature-review/>.

cal realities. Its currency keeps growing as it serves as a point of juncture intersecting with other disciplines, such as queer studies.<sup>24</sup>

The last emerging framework that has been applied to the study of Taiwanese literature is the “world literature” framework. Efforts to link Taiwan to the world have been made over the past two decades. In the first decade of the new millennium, attempts were sporadic. Shih Shu-mei’s 2003 essay “Globalisation and the (In)significance of Taiwan” and Liao Ping-hui’s 廖炳惠 *Taiwan yu shijie wenxue de huiliu* 台灣與世界文學的匯流 [The Convergence of Taiwan and World Literature] mark the earlier “reaching out” examples in English and Chinese scholarship.<sup>25</sup> The timing—early 2000s—is hardly a coincidence. It can be taken as reflecting Taiwan-concerned (or Taiwanese) scholars’ awareness of the possibility of studying Taiwan from a larger, and more worldly and comparative, perspective, which was roughly simultaneous with the ongoing discussions on the concept of “world literature” in Western academia, especially among scholars of comparative literature.<sup>26</sup> It is also in this first decade that critics began to probe the problematics between world literature and Chinese literature.<sup>27</sup> However, this shared “re-orientation” of literary studies to the broader “world” map has different causes in America, Taiwan, and China. In the United States, it can be understood as a post-Cold War and post-9/11 reconfiguration of the world order through literature. In China, it is associated with the country’s self-positioning in the world of literature following its increased visibility globally. As for Taiwan, this research trend can be expounded as a combination of scholars’ wish to seek an alternative framework in addition to the potentially chauvinistic Taiwanese cultural nationalism that has been flourishing since the 1990s and a tactic to enhance Taiwan’s “soft power” through literature.

Entering the second decade of the new millennium, the “worlding” approach, or the tendency to study Taiwanese literature either transculturally or relationally, gained greater momentum. For instance, *Positioning Taiwan in a*

<sup>24</sup> Howard Chiang and Ari Larissa Heinrich, eds. *Queer Sinophone Cultures* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014).

<sup>25</sup> Shih Shu-mei, “Globalisation and the (In)significance of Taiwan,” *Postcolonial Studies* 6.2 (2003): 143–53.

<sup>26</sup> This reappraisal of the notion of “world literature” is itself a reflection of the proliferation of “large-scaled” upstart courses on world literature in American academia in the 1990s. Examples can be found in Franco Moretti, “Conjectures on World Literature,” *New Left Review* 1 (January–February 2000): 54–68; David Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Emily Apter, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (London and New York: Verso, 2013).

<sup>27</sup> See, for instance, Yingjin Zhang’s “Cultural Translation between the World and the Chinese: The Problematics in Positioning Nobel Laureate Gao Xingjian,” *Concentric: Literary and Cultural Studies* 31.2 (July 2005): 127–44. However, this endeavor became more apparent after Mo Yan had won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2012.

*Global Context: Being and Becoming* (2019) underlines not only the worldly mapping of Taiwan but also the multicultural inspirations that have shaped Taiwanese literature and culture.<sup>28</sup> A remarkable phenomenon of this decade is that some scholars published bilingually to maximize the accessibility of their research findings. Peng Hsiao-yen's study on Liu Na'ou, a significant modernist author from colonial Tainan, is available in both English and Chinese.<sup>29</sup> Shih Shu-mei published two theory-savvy co-edited volumes—one in English and the other in Chinese.<sup>30</sup> Another productive scholar to be added to this effort is Kuei-fen Chiu, who has written bilingually in relation to Taiwanese literature's "worlding" strategies. In 2019, she examines in her Chinese article the implications of different framings of Taiwanese literature—as an integral part of "world literature in Chinese," as "Sinophone literature," and as "world literature."<sup>31</sup> She also uses colonial Taiwan's avant-garde poetry society Le Moulin to reappraise Taiwanese literature within cross-cultural contexts.<sup>32</sup>

The three frameworks discussed in chronological order in Chiu's 2019 article denote paradigm shifts in the studies of Chinese and Taiwanese literature in general. The coinage of the term "World literature in Chinese" can be traced back to 1986, when Joseph Lau and the late German sinologist Helmut Martin put together a conference entitled "The Commonwealth of Chinese Literature." The term "Sinophone literature," as mentioned, entered academia after the millennium, whereas the "world literature" model only began to be applied to Taiwanese literature fairly recently. To the three major frameworks within which Chiu analyzes Taiwanese literature, one can also add the notion of "shihua 世華" (world literatures of Chinese) literature proposed by Tu Kuo-ch'ing 杜國清, which refers to literature written by Chinese people, regardless of whether or not the works are written in Chinese.<sup>33</sup> Hence, its scope is

<sup>28</sup> Bi-yu Chang and Pei-yin Lin, eds. *Positioning Taiwan in a Global Context: Being and Becoming* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2019).

<sup>29</sup> Peng Hsiao-yen, *Dandyism and Transcultural Modernity: The Dandy, the Flâneur, and the Translator in 1930s Shanghai, Tokyo, and Paris* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2010). The Chinese version was published in 2012 by Lianjing.

<sup>30</sup> Shu-mei Shih and Ping-hui Liao, eds. *Comparatizing Taiwan* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2014); Shih Shu-mei et al., eds. *Taiwan lilun guanjianci* (Keywords of Taiwan Theory) (Taipei: Lianjing, 2019).

<sup>31</sup> Chiu Kuei-fen, "'Shijie huawen wenxue', 'huayu yuxi wenxue', 'shijie wenxue': Yi Yang Mu tance sanzong yanjiu Taiwan wenxue de kuawenxue kuangjia" (World Literature in Chinese, Sinophone Literature, and World Literature: Yang Mu and Three Theoretical Frameworks for Taiwan Literary Studies), *Taiwan wenxue xuebao* 35 (December 2019): 127–57.

<sup>32</sup> Kuei-fen Chiu, "Performative Historiography and the Reinvention of Taiwan Literature in a New Age," *Journal of World Literature* (December 2019): 467–87.

<sup>33</sup> Tu Kuo-ch'ing, *Taiwan wenxue yu shihua wenxue* [Taiwan Literature and World Literatures of Chinese] (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2015).

much broader than the similarly termed “world literature in Chinese” (*Shijie huawen wenxue* 世界華文文學). If “Sinophone” can be understood as a concept in which the nation-state is replaced by the language as the most fundamental structuring unit, then Tu’s “*shihua*” notion diverts our attention away from the language and toward writers’ ethnicity.

Each of the frameworks has its pros and cons and is bonded with its own agendas. Hence, depending on the critic’s intention, he or she can select the most effective framework. To tease out why a specific literary work, or a certain writer, is more likely to be translated or warmly received by readers in the target societies, world literature would make a good bet as it is concerned with the global circulation and recognition of literary works. Apropos global recognition, Shih’s 2014 essay in which the concept of “Sinophone” is used to discuss possible tactics to garner recognition for literature in Chinese has something in common with the notion of “world literature.” The relationship is evidently shown in Chiu’s English essay in which she extracts four models—the global multicultural, the globalization, the transnational, and the cross-medial—epitomized by four Taiwanese writers (Li Ang, Wu Mingyi, Yang Mu, and Chen Li respectively) as viable “worlding” strategies for literatures from the periphery.<sup>34</sup> This exploration of “worlding” Taiwanese literature also resonates with, and can benefit from, the methods of translation studies mentioned above.

The most recent output related to this “worlding” approach is the multi-authored volume *Shijiezhong de Taiwan wenxue* 世界中的台灣文學 (The Structure of Feeling Resonating with the World: Papers on Taiwan Literature) edited by Huang Mei-e.<sup>35</sup> Huang’s preface, “‘Small Place’ and ‘Big World’—The Structure of Feeling of Taiwanese Literature,” echoes with Shih Shu-mei’s aforementioned 2003 article and the “world vs. Taiwan” dialectics addressed in *Positioning Taiwan in a Global Context*. It also reinforces the importance of studying Taiwan “relationally.” The adjectives “small” and “big” in the title are nevertheless relative terms. As some of the chapters demonstrate, the term “Taiwanese literature” and its scope are discursive and in constant negotiation with a myriad of outside forces and stimuli and are eventually deemed “Taiwanese” literary styles or articulations. The last two chapters jointly deal with the tension between the global and the local, with case studies dedicated to contemporary Taiwan’s homosexual and environmental writing. They tally with my observation above identifying the two as burgeoning topics in present-day Taiwanese literature.

<sup>34</sup> Kuei-fen Chiu, “‘Worlding’ World Literature from the Literary Periphery: Four Taiwanese Models,” *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* (Spring 2018): 13–41.

<sup>35</sup> Huang Mei-e, ed. *Shijiezhong de Taiwan wenxue* (The Structure of Feeling Resonating with the World: Papers on Taiwan Literature) (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2020).

A few works on the two topics have been translated, suggesting that thematic universality is a feasible tactic facilitating the export of Taiwanese literature.

## CONCLUSION

Looking back on the trajectory and accomplishments of Taiwanese literature as an academic discipline, the field has undergone several changes. The diversity and refinement of research topics as well as the continued search for fresh perspectives and methodological adjustments suitably recapitulate the vitality and self-reflection in the field. If the 1990s were a decade of radical indigenization during which Taiwan-centric postcolonial identity construction was the kernel, the first two decades after the millennium witnessed a critical redressing of easily essentialized Taiwanese cultural nationalism. A newer and more open-minded historicism-inspired attitude toward Taiwan's literary historiography became noticeable. In other words, despite the validity of a (quasi-)nationalist literary framework, many critics strive to excavate preciously marginalized voices—be they the voice of women, the voice of indigenous peoples, the voice of the LGBTQ community, or even the voice of nature and non-human animals. This approach to Taiwan's literary history resonates well with the story-based *A New Literary History of Modern China*.<sup>36</sup> In fact, a comparable effort entitled *Bainian jiangsheng: 1900–2000 Taiwan wenxue gushi* (100 Years of Taiwan Literature) was made by a group of young-generation critics mostly in their 20s or 30s.<sup>37</sup> It contrasts well with the “classical” historiography—Chen Fangming's monumental *Taiwan xin wenxueshi* [A History of Modern Taiwanese Literature].<sup>38</sup> As the title suggests, it goes beyond the state-sanctioned version of literary historiography. The term *gushi* 故事, which can be rendered as tales, stories, or narratives in English, seems to suggest that these young contributors are eschewing a coherent history for more reader-friendly anecdotes. One of the contributors, He Jingyao, is known for his fantasy writing full of ghostly legends, which offers yet another alternative approach to Taiwanese literature.

Parallel to the thematic variety and the new historicist turn in approaching Taiwan's literary development is the continued steering away from the insularism of studying Taiwan in isolation. Instead of this, a relational turn is discernible. As Taiwan can be related to different reference points, the three fram-

<sup>36</sup> David Der-wei Wang, ed. *A New Literary History of Modern China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017).

<sup>37</sup> Li Shiyong, ed. *Bainian jiangsheng: 1900–2000 Taiwan wenxue gushi: 1900–2000* [100 Years of Taiwan Literature] (Taipei: Lianjing, 2018).

<sup>38</sup> Chen Fangming, *Taiwan xin wenxueshi* [A History of Modern Taiwanese Literature], 2 vols. (Taipei: Lianjing, 2011). It clearly demonstrates Chen's “postcolonial” literary perspective.

ing possibilities—the East Asian, the Sinophone, and the “worldly”—have been applied to elucidate the innate complexity and richness of Taiwan’s literary works. However, this does not mean that indigenous voices are no longer important or valuable. Rather, it can be comprehended as critics’ own repositioning with a wish to better grasp and illuminate the uniqueness of Taiwanese literature. This relational method is also an ethical method by default, as Taiwan’s capacity to relate to others through literature within a transcultural context is intimately associated with the specific historical circumstance in which a text is produced, circulated, and perceived. In this regard, indigenization climaxed in the 1990s and the more recent “worlding” attempts are not incompatible with it, but can be seen as the other side of the same coin. After all, teasing out the multilayered external stimuli and multidirectional cultural exchange with the world that Taiwan has undergone and scrutinizing the process of becoming indigenous makes for a more nuanced appreciation of Taiwan’s homemade literature.

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