

Bastardizing Memory Through *Shōjo*: Cultural and Historical Translation in Yang Shuang-zi's *Taiwan Travelogue: A Novel* 《台灣漫遊錄》¹

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Introduction

Yang Shuang-zi's *Taiwan Manyoulu* (台灣漫遊錄 *Taiwan Travelogue: A Novel*,² 2020; hereafter referred to as *Taiwan Travelogue*) is a light novel (*raito noberu*) that blends multiple genres. The narrative is framed as a fictional travelogue written by a Japanese woman, Aoyama Chizuko 青山千鶴子, who documents her travels throughout Taiwan. Each chapter is titled after the Taiwanese and Japanese dishes that Aoyama enjoys during her journey. The story centers on the romance between Aoyama and her Taiwanese translator, reflecting the Taiwan-Japan colonial relationship within the conventions of the *shōjo shōsetsu* (girls' novel) genre. Yang's novel thus represents a hybridized form of Taiwan's historical *yuri* fiction (歷史百合小說), a new genre in Taiwanese literature pioneered by Yang herself. The novel's hybrid genre, revisionary force, and polyphony illustrate a translation process within the feminine text of the *shōjo shōsetsu*. This essay explores how *shōjo* serves as a composite emblem of coloniality, nationhood, and otherness in *Taiwan Travelogue*. In unpacking the figure of *shōjo* in this work, I discuss how intertextuality and translation function as two inextricably intertwined literary concepts that engage with the contradictory conceptualization of *shōjo* since its inception in late 19th-century Japan.

Upon its release, *Taiwan Travelogue* attracted a degree of controversy; the book was promoted as a genuine travelogue coauthored by Yang Shuang-zi and Aoyama Chizuko. Compounding this literary deception, the preface identified Yang as the second translator of Aoyama's work on the very next page. This promotional strategy falsely asserted that Aoyama Chizuko was a historical figure and implied the existence of an original version in Japanese, which Yang Shuang-zi purportedly had translated. The controversy subsided only after Yang and her publisher clarified that the novel is "fiction by the name of another" (*tuoming weizuo* 託名偽作) (Lin 2020, para. 14). By challenging the author's authoritative position, the novel becomes a metafiction that

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² Here, I refer to the title of Lin King's 金翎 translation of Yang's novel. This translation was published by Graywolf Press in 2024.

highlights its own fictionality and intervenes in the practice of historical representation. In debunking narrative credibility, *Taiwan Travelogue* is also rife with literary allusions. The novel revives and reinterprets colonial and contemporary literary genres, hybridizing elite and popular literary conventions and shifting the focus of the historical novel from grand historical narratives to quotidian life and personal sentiments.

Performing intertextuality on multiple levels, *Taiwan Travelogue* epitomizes what Linda Hutcheon refers to as “historiographic metafiction” (Hutcheon 1989, 3). Hutcheon characterizes this postmodern genre as follows:

Historiographic metafiction works to situate itself within historical discourse without surrendering its autonomy as fiction. And it is a kind of seriously ironic parody that effects both aims: the intertexts of history and fiction take on parallel (though not equal) status in the parodic reworkings of the textual past of both the “world” and literature. (Hutcheon 1989, 4)

Hutcheon (1989) notes that postmodern texts cast doubt on authorial intent as the sole basis for “ironic allusions,” “re-contextualized quotations,” and “double-edged parodies both of genre and of specific works” (7). In this context, intertextuality becomes the anchoring point from which the relationship between texts and the world is established. Historiographic metafiction allows for future re-inscription, disavowing the notion of a singular and unified authorial intention. It “put[s] into question the authority of any act of writing by locating the discourses of both history and fiction within an ever-expanding intertextual network that mocks any notion of either single origin or simple causality” (Hutcheon 1989, 12). Thus, intertextuality initiates a reproductive and multiplying process, resisting monolithic signification and engendering a literary afterlife. As a form of parody, it underscores “art’s critical relationship to the ‘world’ of discourse and beyond that to society and politics” (Hutcheon 1989, 28). Formally, intertextuality is manifested in *Taiwan Travelogue* as Yang intertwines the genres of the historical novel, *shōjo shōsetsu*, *dōjinshi*, travelogue, and culinary ethnography. This hybrid genre facilitates the revision of colonial travelogues written by Japanese male authors, particularly through *Taiwan Travelogue*’s multiple fictitious editions and translations undertaken by its characters.

Defined by intertextuality, translation serves as a dominant trope in *Taiwan Travelogue*. Although Yang composes her fiction solely in Chinese, the relationship between the two protagonists is mediated by the act of translation. As the characters engage in conveying cultural connotations from one language to another, they produce a heterogeneous cultural memory. Through reiteration and heteroglossia, the characters’ translative efforts create a mode of speaking by the other and an act of writing that challenges totalized cultural identities and transcends the colonizer/colonized binary. This paper investigates the fracturing and decentering present in Yang’s rewriting of the masculinist travelogue genre into a feminine text framed by the *shōjo* narrative. The act of translation in the novel performs what Hélène Cixous calls *écriture féminine*, a type of text that demonstrates how the act of writing is recursive, embodied, and “infinitely dynamized by an incessant process of exchange from one subject to another” (Cixous et al. 1976, 883).

Intertextuality in a Hybridized Genre: *Shōjo* in Historical *Yuri* Fiction

Set in 1938, *Taiwan Travelogue* is narrated in the first-person voice of Aoyama Chizuko, who has been invited by the Office of the Governor-General of Taiwan and the Women's Association in Taiwan to the island to deliver a series of lectures. She is wined and dined and provided with a schoolteacher, Wang Chien-ho 王千鶴, whom Aoyama affectionately nicknames Chi-chan 小千, as her translator and tour guide. During her travels, Aoyama documents Taiwan's culinary practices while detailing the growing mutual affection between herself and Chi-chan. The novel provides an ethnographic and cartographic account of the local Taiwanese landscape, culture, and history during Aoyama's journey from the north to the south of Taiwan while articulating her grievances regarding patriarchal conventions and her awareness of the colonizer/colonized relationship between herself and Chi-chan.

The novel's discursive power stems from Yang's fusion of the historical novel and *yuri* fiction, a contemporary popular cultural form that originated from *shōjo shōsetsu*. Known as "Lily" in English, *yuri* is a literary, manga, and anime genre that has centered on lesbian relationships since the 1970s. It is believed to have evolved from *shōjo shōsetsu*, a literary genre that emerged around the 1880s and developed into "a recognizable aesthetic and literary style" by the mid-1920s to mid-1930s (Shamoon 2012, 11–13). While the relationships among young women in *shōjo shōsetsu* often assume the form of spiritual love or intimate friendship, the *yuri* genre encompasses a broader spectrum of intimacy, ranging from platonic friendships between female students to lesbian sexual relationships. The hybridization of *yuri* and historical fiction thus merges the subversive power of both genres.

Yang's novel is set during the colonial period, where two educated young women develop an intimate yet platonic friendship modeled after the S (エス, the first letter of the word "sister") relationship portrayed in Japan's *shōjo shōsetsu*. This genre, pioneered by Yoshiya Nobuko 吉屋信子, portrays high school girls' romantic relationships. In *Taiwan Travelogue*, the relationship between Aoyama and Chi-chan is often paralleled with that of two high school girls. In this context, Yang's historical *yuri* fiction deeply engages with the *shōjo* figure. Her ambition to revisit and revise Taiwan's colonial literature has persisted throughout her career. Yang's efforts to engage with Taiwan's colonial history and literary practices are evident in her two other works, *The Season When Flowers Bloom* (Huakai Shijie 花開時節) and *The Resplendent Island of Blossoming Maidens* (Huakai Shaonü Hualidao 花開少女華麗島), a collection of short stories. According to Yang Shuang-zi, both works pay tribute to literary works from the colonial period by Japanese and Taiwanese writers (Yang 2018, 6). *The Season When Flowers Bloom* is the original title of a short story written by Yang Chian-Ho³ 楊千鶴 in Japanese in 1942. This semi-autobiographical piece

³ This paper employs the same romanization of 楊千鶴 as that used in the 2023 translation of Yang Chian-Ho's *The Season When Flowers Bloom*. Originally written in Japanese, Yang Chian-Ho's book was translated into Mandarin Chinese, English, and Hoklo by his daughter, Chihmei Lin Chen, in the 2023 edition. However, I use the romanization "Chien-ho" when introducing Aoyama's Taiwanese translator in Yang Shuang-zi's *Taiwan Travelogue*, following the romanization adopted by Lin King, the translator of *Taiwan Travelogue*.

by Yang Chian-Ho explores the contemplation and questioning of women's conventional gender roles through the perspective of a girls' high school graduate named Huiying. Yang Shuang-zi elaborates on the friendship among the young female characters in Yang Chian-Ho's short story and adopts the *yuri* genre to weave narratives about women's intimate relationships into Taiwan's colonial memory. *Taiwan Travelogue* continues this intertextual practice, as both *shōjo* characters' names contain the Chinese characters, or *kanji*, 千鶴, paying homage to Yang Chian-Ho. *The Resplendent Island of Blossoming Maidens* is a collection of stories featuring the female characters from *The Season When Flowers Bloom*. The stories in this anthology also bear the same titles as those of Taiwanese writers Weng Nao 翁鬧 and Yang Chian-Ho, as well as Japanese writers Masuge Shizue 真杉静枝 and Yoshiya Nobuko, all of whom were notable authors of the *shōjo shōsetsu* genre during Taiwan's colonial period.

The romantic relationships among the *shōjo* in Yang's works often unfold as an alternative historiography. In her analysis of the queer narrative in Yang Shuang-zi's *The Season When Flowers Bloom*, Fan-Ting Cheng employs the concept of *mê-kak* (鋸角 in Hoklo, referring to the edge or corner of an object) and explores the subtle, reserved, and ambivalent relationships among the novel's female characters. She argues that "the structure of *The Season When the Flowers Bloom* is an allegory about the key details in the margins which, as a form of resistance, influences the operations of a larger environment" (Cheng 2020, 108–109). In other words, the feminine experience in *The Season When Flowers Bloom* represents Yang's intervention in contemporary national discourse, rendered as quotidian and decentered. By inscribing an alternative and open national allegory, Yang's historical *yuri* fiction embodies "necessary anachronism," a significant characteristic of the historical novel discussed by György Lukács (1962). Citing Goethe and Hegel, Lukács notes that "necessary anachronism" in historical writing "reveals an immanent tendency to turn the past into a *parable of the present*, to wrest directly from history a 'fabula docet'" (Lukács 1962, 338).

As a historical *yuri* novel, *Taiwan Travelogue* manifests a strong intention to intervene in discursive practices through intertextuality, serving as "a means for writers around the world to experiment and meditate upon identity, colony, gender, and selfhood" (de Groot 2016, 263). Although Jacques Rancière (2015) critiques the concept of anachronism, he proposes the concept of "anachronies" as "modes of connection" in historical writing (47). According to Rancière, "An anachrony is a word, an event, or a signifying sequence that has left 'its' time, and in this way is given the capacity to define completely original points of orientation (*les aiguillages*), to carry out leaps from one temporal line to another" (Rancière 2015, 47). Rancière identifies the discursive power of "anachronies" in historiography. His notion of "points of orientation" (*les aiguillages*) resonates with Cheng's notion of *mê-kak*. While the French word *aiguillage* refers to a railroad switch that alters the direction of a train, *mê-kak* signifies a pivotal point—a significant detail within some subject matter. Cheng's association of the feminine experience with the vernacular term *mê-kak* illustrates how Yang Shuang-zi advances Lukács' and Rancière's conceptualizations of the historical novel. The revisionary and subversive force, or the "point of reorientation," in Yang's *Taiwan Travelogue* is evident in how the relationship between Aoyama and Chi-chan

navigates the allegory of the Taiwan/Japan relationship and the *écriture féminine*, which recognizes the unique and singular feminine experiences shared across cultures.

In other words, *Taiwan Travelogue* reframes history through the “anachronies” of feminine experience. This feminine perspective contests colonialism and patriarchy through Aoyama and Chi-chan’s intimate friendship, which occasionally borders on romance. While a “girls’ novel” is typically intended for a mainstream audience, characterized by straightforward language and entertaining subject matter, *Taiwan Travelogue* adopts the gravity of a historical novel, drawing on Yang’s research into the social environment during the colonial period, as well as its landscape and cultural practices. Yang’s work thus constructs cultural knowledge and historical narratives from the everyday experiences of local individuals.

Engaging with Taiwan’s national discourse through a feminine lens, *Taiwan Travelogue* performs rewrites of colonial literature at both formal and content levels, presenting a parodic and polyphonic reiteration. Although the novel is written in Chinese, Yang’s stylized language mimics what Hannah E. Dahlberg-Dodd (2020) calls *O-jōsama kotoba*, a linguistic style found in Japanese *yuri* narratives, thereby creating the impression of a translated novel from an original Japanese work. Dahlberg-Dodd notes that in the *yuri* genre, there exists a “characterological voice” characterized by “a heavy concentration of normatively ‘feminine’ sentence-final expressions and other linguistic features” (Dahlberg-Dodd 2020, 7). She refers to this voice as “Japanese women’s language” (*Joseigo*) (Dahlberg-Dodd 2020, 7). Typical sentence-final expressions in *Joseigo* include *yo*, *wa*, *ne*, and *kashira*. Yang frequently employs the Chinese equivalents of these sentence-final particles, such as *o* 哦, *ya* 呀, *ne* 呢, and *ba* 吧, in the dialogues of female characters.

In the *O-jōsama kotoba*, *Taiwan Travelogue* alludes to travelogues by male Japanese writers in Taiwan during the colonial period, including Nishikawa Mitsuru 西川滿, Satō Haruo 佐藤春夫, and Hikage Jōkichi 日影丈吉. Minxu Zhan notes that the novel is set in 1938–1939, a time when the Government of Taiwan (台灣總督府) was producing its propagandist documentary *South Expansion to Taiwan* (1940) and asserts that the novel “holds a conversation” with this work (Zhan 2020, para. 4). In contrast to these colonial narratives, Aoyama’s travelogue is characterized in *Taiwan Travelogue* as a fictional account whose “main thrust has jettisoned national policies, focusing on the affection between Aoyama *sensei* and Ms. Wang Chien-ho, who assumes the position of a translator” (Yang 2020, 4). This fictional travelogue distinguishes itself from male-dominated colonial narratives by emphasizing women’s stories. The feminine genre is underscored when, in the novel’s preface, a fictional literary critic mentions the efforts of Yang Shuang-zi and her twin sister to retranslate the work into Chinese.⁴ Although Yang Shuang-zi is the sole author, the fictitious commentary alludes to the twin sisters’ authorial position as *yuri* fiction writers engaged with Taiwan’s modern history. The rewriting of colonial genres fuses the present with the past, as well as the real with the fictional, highlighting that history can be retold from heterogeneous perspectives and voices.

⁴ Yang Shuang-zi was originally the pen name shared by twin sisters Yang Ruoci 楊若慈 and Yang Ruohui 楊若暉. After the latter passed away in 2015, Yang Ruoci continued to use Yang Shuang-zi as her *nom de plume*.

Subverting Colonial Literary Genres Through Intertextuality

By revising the representation of colonial Taiwan, Yang's novel also questions the very act of representation itself. In a self-disruptive vein, *Taiwan Travelogue* adopts the intertextual practice of *dōjinshi* to undermine the assumption of singular, authoritative authorship. Yang Shuang-zi is part of a cohort of authors of light novels associated with the *dōjinshi* tradition, where writers participate in self-publishing within a writers' circle (*sākuru*) and often collaborate. In her study of a 21st-century Taiwanese literary trend led by writers born after the 1980s, Kuei-fen Chiu (2021) characterizes Yang's cross-referential works, *The Season When Flowers Bloom* and *The Resplendent Island of Blossoming Maidens*, as belonging to the *dōjinshi* genre. According to Chiu, *dōjinshi* is a literary practice that emphasizes creativity in adapting or revising existing literary works (Chiu 2021, 23–24). This practice not only engages in dialogue with literary predecessors but also challenges and competes with them, innovating and reinventing cultural heritage (Chiu 2021, 26), which is precisely what *Taiwan Travelogue* accomplishes.

Already in the preface, a fictitious commentator, Hiyoshi Sagako 新日嵯峨子, simultaneously highlights the revisionary force and challenges the writer's authority. She provides Aoyama's biographical information, the novel's genealogy, and its historical context. Hiyoshi points out that Aoyama's transformation of her travelogue into fiction represents a gesture of "insinuating an acknowledgment of faults" (*yinhui de rencuo* 隱晦地認錯) (Yang 2020, 7). In other words, the book serves as an apology for colonial authorship by writers like Nishikawa Mitsuru, who crafted an imaginary and exotic portrayal of Taiwan to align with the imperialist narrative while condemning Taiwanese writers who criticized social realities. Hiyoshi describes this apology as being offered to Chi-chan, who, according to Hiyoshi, symbolizes Taiwan's colonial experience within the novel. In Chi-chan's friendship or romantic relationship with Aoyama, the former inevitably occupies the position of the colonized, regardless of the depth of Aoyama's affection and admiration.

Hiyoshi's credibility is, nonetheless, undermined and complicated by the name's association with Taiwan's *dōjinshi* circle. Hiyoshi Sagako is a fictional character created by contemporary Taiwanese *dōjinshi* writer Luo Chuanqiao 羅傳樵, who often writes under the pen name Xiao Xiang Shen 瀟湘神. As Hiyoshi is a fictitious writer and literary critic co-created by Yang Shuang-zi's literary cohort, her comments inevitably parody the act of interpretation and literary creation. This highlights that the writing of history and collective memory is both a private and social endeavor. Similarly, the novel filters history through the female characters' subjective perspectives, which are both shaped by and shape communal memory and social environments. The reinvention of a pre-existing character, along with the act of writing over and with previous texts, challenges the notions of origin and authenticity, resisting a monolithic writing practice that seeks to establish fixed meanings and perpetuate social values.

This resistance is reinforced by Hiyoshi's *wansheng* 灣生 (Taiwan-born Japanese) identity, which occupies an ambivalent position in Taiwan. Hiyoshi proclaims that, as a *wansheng*, she is akin to a ghost inhabiting a liminal space within the hierarchy between the Japanese and the

Taiwanese. She notes, “In this novel that demonstrates the superiority of the colonizer, there are perhaps things only a *wansheng* can see” (Yang 2020, 4). *Wansheng*, as a product of historical contingencies, embodies the complex and often violent relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Hiyoshi’s liminal, “ghostly” perspective does not fully align with either Taiwanese or Japanese subjectivity. This liminality resonates with the theme of feminine friendship in the novel and offers a historiographical vision that transcends national identity. Consequently, this feminine friendship charts an alternative cultural memory constructed through the interplay between quotidian life and cultural norms.

Yang’s novel emphasizes a fluid and unstable authorial position that resists alignment with nationalist and colonial discourses despite its quasi-ethnographic portrayal of the island. The subversion of representation is further suggested by the title of the preface, “Disrupted Dream, the Resplendent Island in the Foreign Land” (“Garanerzhi de Meng, Yixiang de Hualidao” 嘎然而止的夢，異鄉的華麗島). The phrase “resplendent island” references the literary magazine *Resplendent Island* (華麗島 *Kareitou*), created by the Taiwan Poets’ Association. Nishikawa was among the Japanese and Taiwanese intellectuals who founded the association in 1939, and “Resplendent Island” was commonly used to refer to Taiwan in colonial literature. In a collective effort to reappropriate and reinvent Taiwan’s colonial memory, this term has inspired recent Taiwanese fiction set during the colonial period, including Yang’s *The Resplendent Island of Blossoming Maidens* and a collaborative work titled *Anecdotes of the Resplendent Island: A Key* (Hualidao Yiwen Jian 華麗島軼聞:鍵). The contributors to the latter are predominantly Taiwan’s postmillennial writers, including Yang Shuang-zi herself and Xiao Xiang Shen. In this context, the preface’s title counters the notion of an exotic, idyllic island, suggesting both the disruption of the colonial gaze and the simultaneous union of the two female characters. By crafting a narrative centered on the friendship, or even romantic sentiments, between two unmarried women from different cultures brought together by colonization, *Taiwan Travelogue* portrays history as a negotiation of power between women in their personal relationships, social conventions, and colonial identities. Throughout the novel, Aoyama and Chi-chan navigate the cultural tensions that shape their bonds. While Aoyama frequently critiques Japan’s cultural supremacy, Chi-chan often perceives Aoyama’s affection as patronizing.

Aoyama’s implicit colonialist thinking is illustrated by her evolving perceptions of Taiwan. The novel depicts a trajectory in which Aoyama gradually shifts her view of Taiwan from a tenuous extension of the empire to a distinct cultural entity. This trajectory coincides with the evolution of the relationship between Aoyama and Chi-chan; the latter gradually transforms from a subordinate translator into the main interpreter and chronicler of Taiwan’s local culture, history, and the experiences of young women. Aoyama’s encounter with Taiwan is initially framed as an adventure into the colony in the South Seas, even though her first impression of the colony is already intertwined with a feminine experience. The novel opens *in media res*, with Aoyama already in Taiwan. She is assailed by visual, auditory, and olfactory stimuli as she exits the Taichung train station. The colorful and busy market reminds her of a performing troupe led by the female magician Tenkatsu Shokyokusai, whom she encountered in Nagoya during high school. The

narrative then flashes back to an earlier moment when Aoyama expresses her interest in visiting Taiwan for the first time. As a writer whose work has been adapted into a popular Japanese film, Aoyama often receives invitations for lecture tours. When invited by a magazine editor to visit and write stories about the “South Seas,” Aoyama questions whether the visit is intended to promote the empire’s southern expansion doctrine. Although she declines the invitation, during her trip to Okinawa, Aoyama glimpses a remote isle from the ship’s deck and wonders about “the island further south” (Yang 2020, 23).

Aoyama’s reluctance to endorse the empire’s southward policy does not prevent her from initially viewing the island as a colony. However, her experience of traveling south is described as a journey in which the colonial relationship diminishes. For instance, after disembarking at Keelung Port, she takes a train and enjoys a bento box that “does not seem dissimilar from the mainland” (Yang, *Taiwan Travelogue*, 29) in Taoyuan. Upon her arrival in Taichung, she refers to the locals as “Taiwanese,” only to be politely corrected by a train station ticket collector, who informs her that the appropriate term is “Islander.” This exchange highlights Taiwan’s legal status as an annexed territory of mainland Japan. Later, at a market in Taichung, her inability to communicate with a vendor further emphasizes the cultural differences between the two groups. Chi-chan, who is fluent in Japanese, comes to her rescue, which eventually leads to a love affair between the two women. Through Chi-chan’s translations, their relationship becomes a discursive pathway toward the creation of an alternative history.

Decolonizing History with the Ephemeral and the Feminine

Unlike Yang’s earlier works, which directly follow the *shōjo shōsetsu* convention, *Taiwan Travelogue* features the narrative frame, albeit fictional, of an ethnographic account. While the annotations in the novel invoke official historical documents, the historical archive is re-articulated through the women’s conversations and experiences. In these moments, the ethnographic explanations of Taiwan’s culinary culture and landscape often transform the narrative into a mnemonic and embodied language.

The most prominent example is the dish “muâ-ínn soup 麻薏湯,” which serves as the title of Chapter 3. In Changhua, Aoyama and Chi-chan encounter the latter’s distant relatives, who sneer at Chi-chan as a person who “grew up drinking muâ-ínn soup” (Yang 2020, 79). A plant known as white jute, muâ-ínn, is described in the novel as a key ingredient for a Taiwanese summer staple. The soup is nicknamed “poor folk’s dish” (94). The association between Chi-chan and the dish reveals her humble background as the daughter of a concubine. Chi-chan’s marginal relationship with the powerful elite in Taiwan echoes women’s subjugation to patriarchal culture and the Taiwanese’s assumed inferiority to the colonizer. Her “bastardized” lineage, combined with her tenuous relationship with the social elite, inspires her to elevate her status by working as a translator.

Ironically, Chi-chan’s socioeconomic association with muâ-ínn soup places her on par with Aoyama in Chapter 3. Chi-chan prepares muâ-ínn soup and shares it with Aoyama, and the dish

serves as an equalizer that brings Chi-chan, the local translator, and Aoyama, the Japanese explorer, to dine together as friends for the first time. Chi-chan demonstrates a healthy appetite by consuming sizeable side dishes. Stunned, Aoyama uses the epithet “monster” (*yaoguai*) to describe Chi-chan (Yang, *Taiwan Travelogue*, 98). Throughout the novel, Aoyama often uses the term *yaoguai* to refer to herself as a woman whose eating habits repel prospective suitors. The Japanese counterpart of the Mandarin Chinese *yaoguai*, *yōkai*, refers to supernatural beings with either neutral magical powers or malevolent intentions toward human beings. In early 20th-century Japan, *yōkai* were considered the opposite of scientific knowledge: otherworldly beings that defy the material world order and laws of nature (Hirota 2021).

An epithet denoting irrationality and transgression, *yaoguai/yōkai* marks Chi-chan and Aoyama as outliers of the patriarchal order and same-sex allies existing outside the binary colonial relationship. More significantly, their *yōkai*-like appetite underscores the contradictory and fluid connotations of *shōjo* since the term’s emergence in late 19th-century Japan. As a product of Japan’s modernity, educated upper-middle class young women embody “a certain refinement, marked by chastity, sentimentality, and the use of polite language,” characteristics that shape future wives and mothers who will nurture Japan’s national body to be competitive against the West (Shamoon 2012, 2). However, this new identity also encompasses a romantic subject who pursues autonomy and participates in girls’ culture, using a secret girls’ language “incomprehensible to outsiders, create[ing] a sense of community and authenticity” during the Meiji period (32). Aoyama’s and Chi-chan’s inappropriate appetite, suggesting a desire to consume more than what is regulated and approved by patriarchal culture, nurtures their friendship through every meal they share together. On almost every occasion when Aoyama and Chi-chan dine together, the interpretation and negotiation of Taiwanese and Japanese culture occur.

The translation and negotiation of cultural meanings epitomize Hélène Cixous’ notion of *écriture féminine*, a writing practice that focuses on the female body’s quotidian experience and “surpasses the discourse that regulates the phallogocentric system.” This practice is “conceived of only by subjects who are breakers of automatisms, by peripheral figures that no authority can ever subjugate” (Cixous et al. 1976, 884). The peripheral position circumventing authority’s subjugation is exemplified by the ambivalent phase occupied by Aoyama and Chi-chan as young unmarried women. In their intimate relationship, maidenhood is portrayed as a rebellious moment that empowers both characters. They are temporarily exempted from commitment to patriarchy, and in this moment, they express a desire to articulate, appropriate, and collaborate on cultural memory.

During Aoyama’s sojourn in Taiwan, Chi-chan aids her in translating and introducing Taiwan’s culinary culture and ethnographic history while they develop a fleeting romantic relationship outside the patriarchal order. In the convention of the girls’ novel, the moment of intimate friendship is destined to yield to mature womanhood, defined by roles of a wife and a mother. *Shōjo*-hood—or maidenhood, as described in this genre—began to be widely discussed during the Meiji period. *Shōjo* originally referred to young women who received modern education and is a term associated with modernity. The term *shōjo*, among many others that refer to unmarried female

youth, has several distinctive connotations, including what Sharalyn Orbaugh describes as “a period in life when a female was neither a naïve child nor sexually active woman,” suggesting “a state of being that is socially unanchored, free of responsibility and self-absorbed—the opposite of the ideal Japanese adult” (Orbaugh 2002, 458–459).

Moreover, *shōjo*-hood, according to Masuko Honda (2010), is also associated with the notion of the “fluttering” (*hirahira*) of a girl’s ribbons or frills, which simultaneously indicates maiden charms, capriciousness, and the transient and transitional phase of a woman’s life. The fleeting moment is often considered immature, impermanent, and rebellious, characterizing the maiden’s susceptibility to normalization and her potential destabilization of norms. Throughout the novel, both Aoyama and Chi-chan are confronted with the prospect of marriage. While Aoyama uses traveling assignments as an excuse to escape from arranged suitors, Chi-chan is already betrothed and set to join her fiancé in Tokyo soon. Yang’s novel empowers the transience of girlhood in two dimensions. First, the historicization of Aoyama and Chi-chan’s romance contests the colonial relationship between Japan and Taiwan. Second, the novel enacts a translation process that gives afterlife to a feminine romance that is supposed to end after Aoyama returns to Japan, transforming history into heteroglossia (I will return to the second point in the next section). In Yang’s novel, the love between two characters who enjoy their autonomy, however briefly, becomes a site of alliance and power negotiation.

Within this love relationship, a colonial narrative is transformed, adding a perspective of reconciliation. Aoyama and Chi-chan embrace mobility and agency, their conversations expressing their aspirations and discontent about women shackled by patriarchal conventions, even though their mobility and agency will end once they enter marriage. However, the racial and class differences and colonial dynamics between Aoyama and Chi-chan complicate their feminine solidarity. Aoyama’s growing affection for Chi-chan, her pleas for the latter to reject marriage, and her increasingly ardent articulation of her love for Chi-chan are constantly frustrated by the latter’s elusive responses. In Aoyama’s words, Chi-chan often wears a “Noh mask,” circumventing Aoyama’s demand for candid responses with demureness and formality. While engaging in flirtations and repartees and fulfilling Aoyama’s requests for local delicacies, Chi-chan resists the protection imposed by Aoyama’s affection and appreciation. On several occasions, Aoyama protests other characters’ treatment of Chi-chan as an inadequate interpreter based on her ethnic identity and occupation as a schoolteacher.

The disruption of the colonial binary that colors the relationship between Chi-chan and Aoyama is vividly illustrated in a self-referential anecdote in Chapter 6 about two girls’ high school students, the Japanese student Ōsawa Reiko and the Taiwanese student Tan Tshio-k-bi. Aoyama characterizes Ōsawa and Tan’s relationship as “a *shōjo shōtesu*-like scenario” (Yang, *Taiwan Travelogue*, 154), in which a taller and stronger Ōsawa tries to protect the smaller-framed Tan. This anecdote and literary reference closely mirror the relationship between Aoyama and Chi-chan. The anecdote is brought up along with a Taiwanese term, *ria*, a Hoklo phrase meaning “hey you,” which was appropriated by Japanese colonizers and turned into a derogatory form of address for the Taiwanese. The anecdote about Ōsawa and Tan revolves around a so-called “*ria* incident” in the

girls' high school, during which one student hurls the epithet at another. The chapter narrates Chi-chan's and Aoyama's attempts to solve the mystery of a midnight tryst between two girls' high school students. Chi-chan concludes that the two students are indeed Ōsawa and Tan and that Tan used *ria* to address Ōsawa to protest the Japanese student's patronization of her.

The *shōjo shōtesu* story of Ōsawa and Tan serves as a foil for Aoyama and Chi-chan's relationship. While the colonial connotation of the term *ria* is transformed into a term of endearment between Ōsawa and Tan, it illustrates Aoyama's desire to protect Chi-chan by making her masquerade as Japanese. In the same chapter, Aoyama mentions that Chi-chan is also addressed as *ria* by a hotel receptionist in Tainan. Chi-chan attributes the hotel personnel's contempt to her wearing a cheongsam. In Chapter 7, the incident motivates Aoyama to invite Chi-chan to dinner at a hotel restaurant and offer her a new tailor-made kimono to wear for the occasion. Detecting Aoyama's intention to prevent further discrimination, Chi-chan subtly protests with a metaphor, introducing Aoyama to a plant named *turenshen*, which refers to fame flowers in English. Meaning "soil (i.e., native) ginseng" in Chinese, *turenshen* tastes like ginseng and is often consumed as a local dish. Chi-chan tells Aoyama that the plant is known as "fake ginseng." She then compares herself to *turenshen* as the daughter of a concubine, who is often perceived as a woman of base lineage posing as one of the elites in the Wang family. Even though Chi-chan accepts Aoyama's offer with proper etiquette, her rebellion against Aoyama's protection is acknowledged by the latter when she describes Chi-chan's change of expression as "putting back on the sweet Noh mask" (Yang, *Taiwan Travelogue*, 207).

Postcoloniality in Translation: The Afterlife of *Écriture Féminine*

Throughout the novel, it is Chi-chan's circumlocutory responses to Aoyama's tendency to protect or defend her that cause Aoyama's fictional travelogue to eventually veer away from subsuming the representation of Taiwan into a grand colonial narrative, in which Taiwan is "civilized" into a "resplendent island." Rather, through Chi-chan's translation, which questions colonial discourse, Aoyama reads into and recognizes Chi-chan's feminine, marginal, and adulterated cultural heritage. This reading culminates in a reconciliation in the last chapter, in which Aoyama figures out Chi-chan's upbringing as a daughter "raised by *Kohaku* 琥珀" (Yang, *Taiwan Travelogue*, 341), the name of a café. In this final chapter, Chi-chan, during a chance encounter with Aoyama, reveals her lineage and upbringing, which shaped her formative years as a young woman brought up by her now-deceased mother, a former geisha, and her mother's girlfriends: a small-business owner, a merchant, and a geisha madam. "Raised by *Kohaku*," therefore, refers to a location occupied by women of all trades, and Chi-chan symbolizes Taiwan, a geopolitical entity nurtured by hybrid cultures. Chi-chan's translation as a trope in Yang's novel thus performs a multidirectional address—an act that resists a one-way colonial appropriation of native culture. In the fictional travelogue co-created by a Japanese sojourner and a Taiwanese translator, the translation re-presents Taiwan as a dynamic cultural entity rather than a static one.

This dynamic is foregrounded in the novel's preface, which identifies the travelogue as a new translation of an earlier edition. As *Taiwan Travelogue* is a novel written in Chinese but posing as a translated work from Japanese fiction, translation features as a central trope. The affectionate yet occasionally strained relationship between Aoyama and Chi-chan revises Taiwan's colonial history and transforms it into a dynamic process of translation. In playing the role of a translator, Chi-chan commits herself to articulating the unique cultural connotations in the languages she mediates. In "The Politics of Translation," Gayatri Spivak (2012) contemplates the role of the translator of third-world literature and the tension between logic and rhetoric in language. Arguing that an ethical translator should first be an intimate reader of the original text, Spivak stresses the significance of the rhetoricity of language. While "logic" refers to the syntax and grammar of a text, rhetoric implies cultural and social connotations conveyed through the words. Besides addressing grammatical and language issues, an ethical translator must pay close attention to social and cultural specificity. In converting a third-world text into European languages, for example, articulating cultural nuances prevents the perpetuation of neocolonial violence, which inserts colonial assumptions into the original texts. As Spivak notes,

The ways in which rhetoric or figuration disrupt logic themselves point at the possibility of random contingency, beside language, around language. Such a dissemination cannot be under our control. Yet in translation, where meaning hops into the spacy emptiness between two named historical languages, we get perilously close to it. By juggling the disruptive rhetoricity that breaks the surface in not necessarily connected ways, we feel the selvages of the language-textile give way, fray into *frayages* or facilitations. (Spivak 2012, 313)

To express the complex and unique cultural implications in the deceptively straightforward system of signs (i.e., language), a translator must honor the "rhetoricity of the original" (Spivak 2012, 313) and allow the "fraying" or disruption of language to be expressed in the target language.

Following Spivak's argument, Chi-chan and Aoyama's relationship illustrates a collaborative effort to articulate a feminine cultural memory that "frays" into the colonial travelogue genre, destabilizing the reified imperial discourse. Yang's novel is both a travelogue in translation and a story about translation, and Aoyama's narrative strongly depends on Chi-chan's translation of Taiwanese culture. After Aoyama returns to Japan, Chi-chan initiates the project of translating Aoyama's work back into Chinese. As a Taiwanese native transporting cultural practices into the language of a visitor from the empire, Chi-chan reappropriates the text in the imperial language back into Chinese. Aoyama's travelogue also serves as her inquiry into what translation means for Chi-chan—a Taiwanese woman struggling against subjugation due to her gender and birth status. In turn, Chi-chan's translation for Aoyama is imbued with the desire to articulate her subjectivity and represent Taiwan from a local, singular perspective. Thus, the translation "breaks the surface" of colonial historiography through the fuzzifying, negotiating, and undoing of cultural, ethnic, and gender monolithism.

Chi-chan's translation and meaning-making are sustained by intertextuality, which constitutes Yang's historiographic metafiction. While *Taiwan Travelogue* revises the imperialist travelogue

and ethnographic documentation of Taiwan, it also modifies colonial literature, establishing both quotidian and disruptive personal and episodic encounters through local practices, anecdotes, and sensory perceptions. Chi-chan represents the colonizer/colonized dynamic, and her aspiration to become a translator stems from a desire to articulate the experiences of diverse peoples. As the daughter of a concubine, she becomes a “well-learned person whose ambition is to become a novel translator, an uncommon occupation, and who is well-versed in modern popular culture” (Yang, *Taiwan Travelogue*, 340). It is important to note that she was raised by three women in a café named Kohaku, frequented by “the Han Taiwanese, Chinese, westerners, and indigenous women” (341). Chi-chan’s aspiration to translate literature signifies an intention to traverse cultural and national boundaries and historicize multifaceted feminine experiences. This intention is clearly articulated in the epilogue penned by the fictional translator Yang Shuang-zi.

Why did Aoyama not anthologize her writings about traveling in Taiwan but rather rewrite her experiences in the form of a novel? Moreover, is travelogue/history more realistic? Is fiction/literature relatively fabricated? I do not intend to answer these questions in the form of an argumentative essay. Allow me to put it poetically. Fiction is a piece of *kohaku* [amber]. It congeals the actual past and fictionalized ideals. It is intriguing and has unparalleled beauty. (Yang, *Taiwan Travelogue*, 367)

Using the namesake café, Yang, the pseudo-translator and novelist, disavows the authenticity and facticity typically associated with colonial translation (whether it is of Japanese culture into Chinese or *vice versa*). The passage above illustrates, through the “unparalleled beauty” of fictional narrative, an ambition to undermine cultural representation in the masculine colonial documentation and archiving of Taiwan. In contrast to translation as “one component of a vast project of codification and knowledge production” that aims to represent the colonized (Baer 2014, 234), Chi-chan the translator and Yang Shuang-zi the fiction writer “speak after” and “speak over-again” (Baer, 241) about cultural artifacts and practices, thereby adulterating the official meanings assigned to them.

To complicate the translating process, the allure and transience of *shōjo*-hood are transformed into and sustained by multiple afterlives in the four afterwords of the novel, written in turn by Aoyama’s adopted daughter, Chi-chan, Chi-chan’s daughter, and Yang Shuang-zi, who serve as the novel’s fictional translators. In the afterwords, each daughter details how they fulfill their mothers’ wishes in different ways. Chi-chan recounts an anecdote about Aoyama’s marriage proposal during a visit when Aoyama was down with a cold. Aoyama’s adopted daughter, Aoyama Yōko, brings her mother’s novel to be republished in Taiwan after Aoyama’s death. Chi-chan’s daughter, Wu Cheng-mei 吳正美, a professor of comparative literature based in the United States, edits Chi-chan’s translation of Aoyama’s novel. In her afterword, the fictional translator Yang Shuang-zi articulates her thoughts on the significance of Aoyama’s transformation of her travelogue into a novel. Diverging from Hiyoshi Sagako’s lament about Chi-chan being part of the colonized, Aoyama’s authorial voice in the travelogue is supplemented, supplanted, and fractured by multiple voices. This transformation revamps Chi-chan’s position from that of the other into a constitutive voice in Taiwan’s history.

Within and outside the fictional text, the ambiguity surrounding the various titles of the travelogue-turned-novel contests a singular authorship. The afterword written by Chi-chan's daughter indicates that Aoyama's original Japanese title, *Taiwan Manyoulu* 台灣漫遊錄, is retitled and re-edited by her daughter, Yōko, as *Wo yu Qianhe de Taiwan Manyoulu* 我與千鶴的台灣漫遊錄. This can be interpreted in at least three ways. In Chinese, it could mean “*Taiwan Travelogue* by me and Chien-ho.” It could also mean “A Travelogue of my sojourning in Taiwan with Chien-ho.” While the first interpretation suggests co-authorship, the second denotes two women as traveling companions. A third possibility is “Chien-ho's Taiwan Travelogue and me,” which shifts authorship from the Japanese sojourner to the Taiwanese translator. The double perspectives implied by all three interpretations convey shifting and compounded visions. These connotations shuttle between or merge the viewpoints of a female Japanese sojourner and a Taiwanese interpreter. The fluid authorial position erases the colonizer/colonized binary, opening the text to multifarious inscriptions. In the fictional narrative, when the Japanese original is translated into Chinese for the first time, Aoyama's novel is re-titled *Yiwei Riben Nüzuoja de Taiwan Manyoulu* 一位日本女作家的台灣漫遊錄, meaning “*Taiwan Travelogue by a Japanese Woman Writer.*” While the title highlights gender and national identities, it nonetheless places the Japanese author in a third-person perspective, thus returning the gaze to the colonial sojourner and placing her in the position of a foreigner.

Outside the fictional narrative, translations of Yang Shuang-zi's novel engage in conveying the rhetoricity in Yang's writing. Like Aoyama's original title, the titles of Yang Shuang-zi's Chinese original and Lin King's English translation indicate a reluctance to claim authorship, underscoring historiographical writing as a process of intertextualization and commingling. In King's translation, the chapter titles, each named after a Taiwanese or Japanese dish, are rendered in romanizations of Hoklo or Japanese, depending on the dish's origin, along with an English phrase explaining the meaning of the dish's name. Compared to the Chinese original, in which Yang uses only Mandarin Chinese characters to designate these dishes, King's translation exercises agency to highlight the multilingual environment of 1930s Taiwan. This setting underscores Chi-chan's liminal position when her full name 王千鶴 is translated into Japanese (Ō Chizuru or Chi-chan) or Hoklo (Ōng Tshian-hóh). In Chapter 12, particularly, when Aoyama ruefully reflects on her colonial relationship with Chi-chan, she laments, in free indirect speech, “Capricious Aoyama Chizuko and accommodating Ō Chizuru—Ōng Tshian-hóh—who submitted to the former's every whim: no, theirs was not an equal relationship in any sense” (Yang 2024, 246–247). In the Chinese original, however, Chi-chan's full name is only written in Chinese characters. King's decision to spell out both the Japanese and Hoklo pronunciations highlights Chi-chan's self-making (as shown in the juxtaposition of the languages of the colonizer and the colonized) and casts her friendship with Aoyama in a critical light, foregrounding the ethnic and class differences not only *between* the two *shōjōs*, but also *within* the Taiwanese translator herself.

In comparison, the 2023 Japanese translation by Miura Yūko—三浦裕子—focuses on the *shōjo* relationship, recalling the complex meanings of Taiwan's colonial modernity. In 2023, Chūōkōron-Sha Inc. published Yang's novel in Japanese, featuring both Japanese and English titles

on the book cover. The Japanese title is *Taiwan many ū tetsudō no futari* 台湾漫遊鉄道のふたり, meaning “Two People Travelling by Railway in Taiwan,” while the English title, *Chizuko & Chizuru’s Taiwan Travelogue*, pronounces the two *shōjos*’ names in the title. While the Japanese translation’s bilingual titles emphasize Aoyama and Chi-chan’s rapport and co-authorship, the Japanese title specifically draws the reader’s attention to the railway system, underscoring colonial modernity. Taiwan’s railway systems were first built by the Qing dynasty in the late 19th century to defend against Western incursions and later rebuilt and advanced by the Japanese colonial government. The Japanese title’s focus on the two *shōjos* using this vehicle to traverse the island foregrounds the feminine text’s intervention into the meaning-making of modernizing and colonizing projects. All these titles resist a coherent and original authorial voice and illustrate a continual effort to rewrite Taiwan’s modern history.

Coda

This paper investigates Yang Shuang-zi’s *Taiwan Travelogue: A Novel* as a historiographical metafiction. I contend that Yang’s historical *yuri* fiction performs a discursive intervention through its intertwined tropes of *shōjo*, intertextuality, and translation. While history writing is inevitably intertextual, Yang’s engagement with the colonial *shōjo* genre to revise another colonial genre, the travelogue, constitutes a translative act. In *Taiwan Travelogue*, translation is embodied by the platonic romantic friendship between two *shōjo* characters in a colonial setting. The in-betweenness of Aoyama and Chi-chan’s *shōjo* status, along with Chi-chan’s translative practice, reopens colonial narratives to negotiation.

To delve into the novel’s discursive power, I bring Yang’s historical *yuri* fiction into dialogue with Cixous’ *écriture féminine* and Spivak’s discussion of translating third-world texts. Both literary practices—feminine writing and third-world literature translation—are undertaken with the intention of intimately engaging with subaltern cultural and social experiences by addressing, transporting, and inserting these experiences into a patriarchal, colonizing political and cultural order. In the case of *Taiwan Travelogue*, it is the articulation and reinterpretation of and by a subjugated and “adulterated” other, i.e., Taiwan, that compels the other to interrogate self-same ideologies. In the novel, Ō Chizuru—Ông Tshian-hóh—Chi-chan carves out a translative position as the other. Occupying a subordinate role in interpreting the culture of the colonized in the language of the colonizer, Chi-chan (a nickname that conveys both endearment and patronization) disrupts Aoyama’s native language and her feminist consciousness as an educated Japanese maiden. The multiple aliases of the translator reveal the paradox within colonial assimilation: while colonial assimilation is intended to discriminate, Chi-chan’s aliases demonstrate her desire to both mimic and appropriate the colonial language. This intent to reinvent cultural memory also manifests in the discursive afterlife facilitated by the multiple editions of Aoyama’s novel, which resist narrative closure.

On November 20, 2024, Yang Shuang-zi and Lin King received the National Book Award for Translated Literature together. While delivering her remarks (which King then reiterated in English), Yang stated,

Some people asked me why I write about things from a hundred years ago, I always tell them, “writing about the past is a means of moving toward the future.” [...]. I write in order to answer the question of what is a Taiwanese person. I write about Taiwan’s past as a step into its future.⁵ (“Yáng Shuāng-zǐ and Lin King,” National Book Foundation 2024)

While Yang also identified in her speech colonial Japan and the PRC as two imperialists against which the Taiwanese have defended or continue to defend their sovereignty, she associated her writing about the past with the present and the future. Yang’s practice of the “necessary anachronism,” or, in Rancière’s terms, “anachronies,” in *Taiwan Travelogue* is brought to bear by Chi-chan’s translative act. In the novel, Chi-chan’s translation foregrounds a hybridized culture, whose “impurity” carries subversive power. In other words, Chi-chan’s translation produces an effect of what Homi Bhabha (1984) calls “mimicry” in a colonial context. Her translation, along with those of other female characters, “destroy narcissistic authority through the repetitious slippage of difference and desire” (132). In view of Taiwan’s complex postcolonial conditions, answering the question of what it means to be Taiwanese is inescapably intertwined with writing about and by the other.

⁵ 有些人會問我，為什麼要書寫一百年前的事情。我總是回答：「書寫過去是為了走向未來。」[...]我書寫是為了回答台灣人究竟是什麼人。而我持續地書寫過去是想要迎向更好的未來。The quote in the text is from Lin King’s translation.

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