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# Mother of the Nation: A Short Translation History of Yang Qianhe's 'Flower Blooming Season'

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## Abstract

First published in 1942, Yang Qianhe's Japanese-language short story 'Flower Blooming Season' depicts a schoolgirl named Huiying who seeks out female role models to help her navigate the realities of womanhood beyond the school gates. This article uses close readings of the 1979, 1992, and 2001 Mandarin Chinese translations of the text to argue that the translation process politicised the text's depiction of girlhood through omitting or foregrounding the protagonist's interest in cultural and social markers of Japanese womanhood. In examining the translators' differing approaches, the article explores how literary translation reflects and reinforces narratives concerning the period of Japanese rule in Taiwan, as well as questioning the tendency to view imperial subjectivity from a male perspective exclusively.

## Keywords

Yang Qianhe – translation – Japanese Empire – girlhood

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In a society under Japanese colonial rule, a young Taiwanese girl was able to push past the dual discrimination of race and gender, and through her writing give voice to the perspective of Taiwan's female intellectuals. Yang Qianhe is unprecedented. She is an exception.

Q. YANG (1999: inside cover)<sup>1</sup>

In August 1989 Yang Qianhe (楊千鶴 1921–2011) arrived unannounced to the seventh Taiwan Literature Conference at the University of Tsukuba, Japan. Word of her arrival spread as she mingled with other conference attendees, inducing such excitement among the assembled cohort of writers and academics that the prearranged schedule of events was almost eclipsed entirely (Zhong, 1993). Six years prior, the conference organiser, Professor Liangze Zhang, was equally struck by Yang's attendance at the North American Taiwanese Association's East Coast summer meeting. He recounts his astonishment upon seeing Yang among the crowd of guests, and his disbelief on entering into conversation with her: 'Miss Yang Qianhe? Are you the Yang Qianhe from before, the Yang Qianhe who published work in Taiwan's literary magazines before the war?' (Zhang, 1999: 31).

As Zhang rightly deduced, between 1940 and 1943 Yang's writing featured in several colonial-era publications in Taiwan, including *Literary Taiwan* (文藝台灣, J.<sup>2</sup> *Bungei Taiwan*), *Taiwanese Customs* (民俗台灣, J. *Minzoku Taiwan*), *Taiwanese Literature* (台灣文學, J. *Taiwan bungaku*), and *Taiwan Daily News* (台灣日日新報, J. *Taiwan nichichi shinpō*). Though only active for three years, the volume and variety of Yang's published works are extensive enough in comparison to her peers that she is arguably the representative Taiwanese woman author of the period. Her publication record was certainly part of the reason why her name proved recognisable to Zhang in 1983, and later to those present at Tsukuba in 1989.

Their excitement, though, was more likely due to Yang's absence from literary circles following 1943. Like many other writers of her generation, Yang withdrew from the literary scene from the mid-1940s onwards, entering a self-imposed creative exile for political and personal reasons. Her writing also faded from view. As Yang wrote in Japanese during a period when the Imperialisation movement (皇民化運動, J. *Kōminka undō*) was intensifying apace in Taiwan, her work was left untranslated following 1945 along with

1 All translations into English are my own unless otherwise indicated.

2 The initial 'J.' is used throughout to indicate the Japanese language.

many other Japanese-language texts from the late colonial period. Her refusal to write in Chinese post-1945, unlike her contemporaries such as Yang Kui (1906–1985) and Lü Heruo (1914–1950), meant that what might have only been a break in her career transformed into an early retirement. As such, her attendance at Tsukuba marked a homecoming as Yang, in her mid-sixties by 1989, returned to the literary community to which she had first belonged as a young woman.

One outcome of this return was a burst of translation work answering a renewed interest in Yang and her work among Taiwanese academics and literary intellectuals. The staggered publication of her complete works in Chinese by SMC Books between 1998 and 2001 marked the culmination of this enthusiasm for retrospective. The three volumes featured translations of Yang's essays, her only work of fiction 'Flower Blooming Season' (花咲く季節, J. Hanasaku kisetsu), as well as a selection of reviews and essays by Taiwanese, Japanese, and Taiwanese American commentators remarking on her life and works. Yang's memoir *The Prism of Life* (人生のプリズム, J. *Jinsei no purizumu*), published in 1993 by the Tokyo-based Soubun publishing house, took centre stage; volume 1 republished the Japanese text in full, volume 2 its Mandarin Chinese translation. Overseen by Liangze Zhang and Yang's daughter Zhimei Lin, both of whom were involved in the translation work, the collection reads as an overdue recognition of Yang's contribution to Taiwan's literary history. It is effective in emphasising that Yang is unique not only as one of a small group of women authors who published work during Japanese rule, but also as one of an even smaller number who retrospectively entered their memory of that time into the historical record through memoirs in the style of *The Prism*.

While the SMC volumes were certainly landmark publications, it was not the first time that 'Flower Blooming Season' had appeared in translation. The 1942 text tells of a young woman named Huiying who is on the verge of graduating high school. She spends the story considering the future that awaits her, contemplating life as a housewife and mother versus life as a working woman. Around her is a cast of women who appear as potential role models for her adult life—from her Taiwanese classmates who are engaged before graduating high school, to her friend with a Japanese name who helps her find employment at a newspaper. The story was first translated into Mandarin Chinese in 1979 during the initial surge of public translation activity focused on colonial-era texts that began around 1975. It was translated again in 1992, partly in response to events at Tsukuba, before the third translation appeared in the SMC collection in 2001. Though each version keeps the substance of the plotline summarised above intact, an observant reader will notice differences between the translations. Particularly striking are several details missing from the 1979 version,

including the kimono worn by the protagonist's beloved music teacher, her references to Japanese literature, and her encounters with Japanese film.

While these omissions may seem slight, they point to a politicised interpretation of the text established by 'Flower Blooming Season' 1979 to which each succeeding translation then responds. This interpretation focuses specifically on the protagonist's interaction with signifiers of Japanese womanhood, and the potential to politicise Yang's representation of a young woman navigating colonial modernity and its presentation of desirable femininity in a Japanese guise. In this reading, Huiying's existential dilemma is not just centred on whether to marry young or not, whether to work or have children, but also a consideration of her proximity to Japanese identity and its role in her future. Whether the product of state-led censorship under martial law or self-censorship on the part of the translator and his editors, it is evident that these parts of 'Flower Blooming Season' were deemed untranslatable in the first iteration of the text in Mandarin Chinese. The translations that followed respond to this initial omission: the 1992 version restores many of the missing details, the 2001 version adds to them. In this sense, a text that is frequently read as politically ambiguous was treated as anything but in translation. By dissecting this reframing process and the texts it produces, we are presented with marks of historical interpretation, memory, and controversy set in what Yang Shuangzi (2021: 367) sees as the 'amber' of literary text, as well as the words omitted from that record.

This article begins by outlining translation's role in the history of 'Flower Blooming Season', before moving to discuss the politics of femininity in the context of imperial subjectivity. I highlight the capacity to read the schoolyard in 'Flower Blooming Season' as a site of assimilation, and the trappings of the sophisticated Japanese women in Huiying's life as representations of an identity crisis that runs deeper than the question of marriage. I then go on to demonstrate how these details are treated differently in 'Flower Blooming Season' 1979, 1992, and 2001. My intent is not to pinpoint a 'correct' version, nor the most faithful. Instead, what I seek to show here is the value of examining closely and comparatively the work of translators to glean something of their interpretative stance, and how said stance relates to the larger enterprise of cultural production, narrative-making, and public sentiment towards the period of Japanese rule. Rather than understanding these texts as manifestos, I view translation as the coalface of interpretation, where the opinion and experience of the translator spill over onto the text they produce.

## 1 A Life in Translation

*The Prism of Life* stands out among the swell of colonial-era memoirs published by older Taiwanese in the late 1990s thanks to its specific record of a girlhood lived out under Japanese rule. It begins in Kodamachō, a southwestern district of colonial Taipei where Yang was born in 1921, before moving to describe her experience at Taipei Girl's High School. Upon graduation from high school in 1940, Yang was hired by Japanese author and editor Mitsuru Nishikawa as part of a new team of women writers at *Taiwan Daily News* (Nishikawa, 1999: 25). During her time on the household and culture desk, she wrote on 'Taiwan's culture, arts, and humanities' while also publishing 'book reviews under different pen names' (Z. Lin, 2001: 65). Between 1941 and 1943, Yang worked as a freelance writer, publishing 'Flower Blooming Season' in *Taiwan Literature* in 1942. Following 1945, Yang took part in local elections held in 1950, going on to serve a three-year term as Provincial Assembly Representative for Taitung. Yang's time in what Lifa Xie terms 'the political whirlpool' ended abruptly, however, following the arrest of her husband, Jiaxiong Lin, in 1953 (Xie, 2001: 483). In 1977, Yang followed her adult children to live in America, and it was there she died in 2011.

'Flower Blooming Season' shares an intimate relationship with the story of Yang's early life. The draw of Huiying's character is strengthened by her similarities with Yang: both attend elite girls' schools in Taipei, and both decide to work at a newspaper immediately after graduating. Moreover, Huiying's decision to seek out employment in lieu of a husband captures an independence of spirit often expressed in women's fiction. The timeless quality of this sentiment is reflected in how the text has continued to resonate with readers spanning multiple generations in the decades that have followed. The latter publication of *The Prism* only exacerbates the overlap between Yang and Huiying, with the memoir appearing almost as an extended coda to the fragmentary text that preceded it.

The appeal of Yang's short story to translators is arguably a combination of its historical topicality and its status as one of the most substantial surviving pieces of fiction by a Taiwanese woman written during the period of Japanese rule. Its proximity to Yang's own life story makes 'Flower Blooming Season' fertile ground for historicising, and it is in translation that this historicising takes place. Aside from the 1979, 1992, and 2001 translations, more recently the author Shuangzi Yang has drawn inspiration from Yang Qianhe's writing on multiple occasions after discovering 'Flower Blooming Season' in translation while at graduate school in 2009 (S. Yang, 2018: 56). Her novel published in 2017,

as well as a short story published the year following, are both inspired by the 1942 text whose title they share. Though consideration of Shuangzi Yang's reading and reworking of the older Yang's writing are beyond the remit of this essay, her reimagining of 'Flower Blooming Season' through the lens of Girl-love (百合, *baihe*, J. *yuri*) serves as testament to the continued relevance of Yang's text, and the capacity for its reinterpretation. From this viewpoint, Yang Qianhe not only merits the title of 'unquestionably the most studied colonial-era woman author' and 'probably the most famous Taiwanese woman writer from Taiwan's colonial period', as Bert Scruggs (2015: 104) and Anne Sokolsky (2010: 245) have respectively described her, but she is also the most translated woman author of the period by a considerable margin, with 'Flower Blooming Season' receiving three translations, as well as Shuangzi Yang's two quasi-adaptations, in the space of four decades.

Despite the substantial volume of translation work undertaken on this single text, existing scholarship does little to explore why 'Flower Blooming Season' has inspired reinterpretation on so many occasions. Instead, we encounter two approaches: a semi-historical reading of Yang's work that reflects its proximity to her life story or a comparative structure that places Yang's depiction of girlhood alongside those of contemporaries in Taiwan and other parts of the Japanese Empire. Representative work from the former includes I-chun Chen's (2008, 2016) approach, which takes 'Flower Blooming Season' and *The Prism* as source texts to discuss girls' education and the position of women writers in Taiwan during Japanese rule. In the latter category, Bert Scruggs (2015) places Yang alongside fellow women authors of the period, Zhang Bihua, Huang Baotao, and Ye Tao, highlighting their thematic similarities and stylistic idiosyncrasies. Anne Sokolsky (2010) places Yang alongside Huang Fengzi (1928–), who primarily wrote non-fiction. Others have looked beyond Taiwan, including Pei-Jean Chen (2013) in her comparative treatment of Yang Qianhe and Korean author Ye Kwang-su's, Satako Kakihara's (2017) comparison of Yang and Ōsako Rinko, and Mingchun Lü's (2010) reading of Yang's writing alongside Yang Xu, who wrote in Manchuria during Japanese occupation.

In short, commentary and analysis are plentiful, though remarkably silent on the ways in which translation has mediated Yang Qianhe's work over time. They do not address, for example, the contribution of translation in elevating a relatively unknown figure to an individual not just of academic interest, but of interest to the general public. This article considers translation an important component of that reframing process. It offers an analysis of the translation and retranslations of 'Flower Blooming Season' between 1979 and 2001,

arguing that each of the translators concerned—Xiaonan Chen, Zhaozheng Zhong, and Zhimei Lin—either emphasise or diminish the text's depiction of Japanese femininity. By reading these interpretations in parallel, it is possible to grasp the nature of what Scruggs (2015: 9) terms the 'politically driven translation' that pervades Mandarin Chinese versions of Japanese-language texts written during Japanese rule. We also establish how this politicised textual practice evolves over time.

## 2 Subjective Imperial Subjectivity

In a 2012 essay, Yang's daughter Zhimei Lin (2012: 198) questions the need for politicised readings of 'Flower Blooming Season'. There is little disputing her point that the perceived politics of a text is often the projection of a reader and not an intrinsic quality of the story itself. I preface the section that follows with these remarks as it is evident from Lin's interventions that her mother did not intend for her work to make political comment. Her intention, from what Lin outlines, was to simply record her life experiences. Whether these experiences were indirectly political or not is, in her opinion, beside the point.

It is important to make this distinction, particularly as Taiwanese literature containing political commentary from the 1940s has been used as a pretext for questioning the author concerned and their political loyalties. That is not my intention here. The remarks herein do discuss Yang's work from a political standpoint, expanding on how 'Flower Blooming Season' can be read through the lens of colonial politics. This discussion is not intended to raise questions about Yang's designs as a writer. Rather, it aims to piece together how the text could be politicised, and indeed how it *is* politicised by its 1979 translation. For even if we maintain that 'Flower Blooming Season' 1942 is an apolitical record of girlhood in colonial-era Taiwan, the 1979 translation cannot be bracketed under the same judgement. To understand that translation, and the versions that later responded to it, it is necessary to explore what made sections of 'Flower Blooming Season' 1942 untranslatable in 1979. Arguably that first translation did read the political in Yang's work, leaving out a collection of details that made Japanese femininity appear desirable. In other words, aspects of the narrative that could be understood as flirting with the notion of imperial subjectivity, of becoming Japanese, are downplayed.

Huiying's admiration for the women around her is a far cry from the established image of so-called 'Imperial subject literature' (皇民文学, *J. Kōmin*

*bungaku*), works that appeared in greater number during the 1940s as censors encouraged authors to incorporate explicitly pro-imperial themes into their work. These texts often feature young male protagonists who are tormented by their desire to become Japanese, aspiring to enter exclusively male spaces of assimilation such as the Japanese Army. Given the hyper-masculine representation of imperial subjectivity in these works, it is unsurprising that the established image of the imperial subject is that of an ambitious, conflicted man in the prime of his youth. Joyce C. H Liu (2009: 279) characterises the policy in these terms, viewing *Kōminka* as a rejection of the ‘weak, the private, the irrational, the feminine old world’, and imperial subjectivity as a state of being open to men and men alone.

Despite its considerable distance from ‘Imperial subject literature’ as it is conventionally understood, it is possible to see how ‘Flower Blooming Season’ could be aligned with that group of stories. The text arguably fulfils Leo Ching’s (2001: 125) definition of ‘Imperial-subject’ literature as a body of works that grapple with ‘identity struggle’, as various protagonists reckon with the process of becoming Japanese. In Yang’s work this ‘struggle’ can be read from a different perspective—with the crossroads between marrying young and working as a writer being superimposed on the generalised categories of ‘Taiwanese’ and ‘Japanese’. In the short story at hand, these arbitrary categories act as thematic through-lines that the reader can choose to interpret politically if they desire. The political potential of the text’s themes is amplified when one considers the broader politicisation of women’s identity within Japan’s colonies. The tension between the path of the ‘modern girl’ and the traditional household was an identity struggle unique to women, precipitated by what Theodore Yoo (2008: 11) calls Japan’s ‘own brand of modernity’ projected onto the well-educated, upper-class women of Taiwan and Korea. From this perspective, the classroom becomes the site of assimilation, influencing female students’ image of themselves and their place in society. It is this image of self that Huiying wrestles with throughout ‘Flower Blooming Season’, and as such it is possible to attach the text to political themes, regardless of the author’s intent. The 1979 translation does exactly this through its omissions.

### 3 Omission: Removing the Kimono

‘Flower Blooming Season’ 1979, translated by Xiaonan Chen, appeared in volume 8 of the anthology *A Complete Collection of Taiwan’s Literature from before the Retrocession* (光復前台灣文學全集, *Guangfu qian Taiwan wenxue quanji*), a watershed collection collating short stories and poetry from the colonial era

en masse. Within literary circles, the anthology led to the increased recognition of authors such as Yang Kui, who previously were 'more often encountered in memoirs than seen on library shelves', as Joseph Lau notes (1983: ix). The anthology's attempt to canonise a generation of forgotten writers contributed to what Pei-yin Lin (2017: 2) describes as the small-scale 'rediscovery' of Taiwan's literary past taking place at the close of the 1970s.

It is clear from the preface to volume 8 that the anthology's deputy editors, Henghao Zhang, Fan Lin, and Ziqiao Yang, were aware of the historical significance of their undertaking. They describe the 'vigour of being responsible for history' as they reintroduce the works published before 1945 long maligned through 'oversight or misunderstanding' (Lin, Yang & Zhang, 1981: 1). This exercise entailed not only translating the works and reframing their political significance, but also inserting them into the literary historical timeline (Lin et al., 1981: 1). The preface is unremitting in this regard, describing the works it precedes as a constituent part of 'China's anti-Japanese cultural struggle', as well as 'the history of China's New Literature' (Lin et al., 1981: 1). From the outset, then, the volume's works are presented as a manifestation of the cross-Strait struggle against Japanese aggressors.

Later in the preface, though, the editors do widen the remit for inclusion. While they emphasise the importance of an 'anti-imperialist, anti-feudalist national consciousness' within a work, they nonetheless state that they are not 'limited to this theme' and look to also include works that 'reflect ideas of love and romantic personal life during the colonial period' (Lin et al., 1981: 3). The basis for exclusion is also outlined here in full, as 'works serving the imperial agenda with a strong yet concealed sense of imperialisation' would receive the editors' 'unspoken and tolerant criticism' through their omission (Lin et al., 1981: 4). In other words, the works included did not necessarily have to be as thoroughly anti-Japan as the preface's opening statements imply, though they certainly could not harbour any pro-imperial sentiments.

'Flower Blooming Season' is framed as one of these less political works reflecting attitudes towards love and romance during the colonial period. Ziqiao Yang (1979: 173) paints the story in these terms in his preface, where he summarises the plot as 'reflecting the way girls at high school in that era thought of marriage, and their married life'. While the translation does certainly retain these themes, the sections of the text it omits suggest that some modifications were necessary to allow the text to wholly fit said description in the eyes of the translator and editors. When viewed in isolation, these interventions may appear small enough to amount to acts of the subconscious, the kind of 'non-deliberate construction' that A-chin Hsiao (2000: 19) views as endemic to Taiwan's cultural nationalism. Taken as a collective, however, the

pattern of omission is consistent enough that it can be viewed as deliberate. The omission of the text's depiction of Japanese femininity points to the political contentiousness of those details—if they were wholly inoffensive, then why would extraction be necessary?

The first notable omission comes in the story's opening pages. Huiying, who is still in school, attends a music class where she and her peers prepare a performance to mark their graduation. The school's music teacher is a commanding presence in the story's opening, in which she suggests that the girls take her as a role model. She is described as 'refined' (洗練, *J. senren*) like an 'artist' (芸術家肌, *J. geijutsukahada*), dressed in a kimono with a wide, blackish collar. In the 1979 edition, however, mention of her kimono is removed entirely:

黒っぽい、しかもキモノの衿が広い程似合う洗練されたきこなしをする私達の好きな芸術家肌のその先生は。。。。

We all loved this teacher, with her artist's disposition, wearing a blackish, wide collared kimono that suited her and gave her an air of refinement . . .

Q. YANG, 1942: 146

黝黑的的皮膚，穿着相當講究，具有藝術家風度，而且深受同學們愛戴的這老師。。。。

This teacher was deeply loved by my classmates—she was dark-skinned, well dressed, with an artist's demeanour . . .

Q. YANG, 1979: 178

Chen attributes the 'blackish' colour to the teacher's skin (黝黑的的皮膚, *youhei de pifu*), removing the kimono present in the 1942 text. The absent kimono can be viewed as an attempt to neutralise the political symbolism of the teacher character, who Sokolsky (2010: 252) views as a 'symbol of Japanese authority' within the world of the story. In this scene, the teacher's apparel signals her association with Japanese womanhood, an association that complicates the class's affection for her. While this association is superficial, its political resonance is clearer when one considers how some colonial-era literary works depict the kimono as a symbol of the cultural control exercised on Taiwan's citizens by the colonial state. Wu Zhuoliu's 1945 short story 'The Doctor's Mother' (先生媽, *Xiansheng ma*), for example, reflects the heightened politics of apparel. In one scene the title's namesake shreds her kimono with a kitchen knife, attempting to ensure that she isn't posthumously buried in the outfit against her will (Scruggs, 2015: 45–49). The cast of characters is small in 'Flower Blooming Season', and the music teacher is the only adult whom Huiying seems to truly admire throughout the story. By omitting the details of

her dress that could be read as political, Chen removes an opportunity for the teacher to represent a desirable projection of womanhood appavelled in the Japanese style.

Later in the text, Huiying continues to search for role models to inspire and guide her passage into adulthood, and finds some direction in Ōsako Rinko's *A Girl's Age* (娘時代, J. *Musume jidai*), published in Tokyo in May 1940 and followed by *A Girl's Truth* (娘の真実, J. *Musume no shinjitsu*) in December of the same year:

丁度私たちが学校を出た頃「娘時代」が盛に読まれていた。  
Around the time we left school, *A Girl's Age* had a great number of readers.

Q. YANG, 1942: 151

Yang does not mention Ōsako Rinko by name, though she does reference the book's immense popularity and the influence it had upon Huiying and her friends. Indeed, the themes of the works are remarkably similar, as Satoko Kakahara (2017: 199) reflects, with both commenting on the preordained movement from 'student to wife to mother', insisting that women should have the 'freedom not to marry'. Xiaonan Chen's translation omits the name of Ōsako's text entirely, removing half a page of prose about the book and its impact on Huiying and her friends—a considerable contraction in a translation of only 27 pages. Here omission serves a dual purpose. First, as in the example of the music teacher, it removes an emblem of Japanese womanhood—one idealised and enjoyed by the young protagonist. Second, it removes evidence of the intertextual relationship between 'Flower Blooming Season' and a bestselling Japanese work of the period. Here the onus falls not only on removing links between the protagonist and Japanese womanhood, but also any suggestion that Yang modelled herself as a writer on a Japanese contemporary.

In each instance, Chen destabilises the connections established in the original text between metropole and colony, between Huiying, Yang Qianhe, and the kimono-clad, intellectual Japanese women who surround them. In his translation, we encounter a version of 'Flower Blooming Season' that de-emphasises cultural alignment between Japan and Taiwan, allowing the story to meet the rhetoric of the anthology's preface with greater ease. It is difficult to say whether said political posturing wholly reflects the editors' or translators' genuine views, or whether it amounts to rhetorical grandstanding with censors in mind. This is especially difficult to determine given Xiaonan Chen's relative anonymity—besides 'Flower Blooming Season', much of his translation work focused on the works of Herman Hesse. If we take the translation at face value, though, there is a clear reshaping of the story's contents to remove the appeal

of Japanese womanhood in various guises from the protagonist's musing. So, while the translation may present itself as apolitical, there is an implication that it was only through removing these references that such an assessment could be reached. In turn, this suggests that the group working on *Taiwan's Literature before the Retrocession* did consider aspects of 'Flower Blooming Season' contentious enough to merit them untranslatable. Further examples of omission consistent with these early examples are revealed when 'Flower Blooming Season' 1979 is read alongside Zhaozheng Zhong's 1992 translation, as we shall see in the next section.

#### 4 Restoration: A Stop-Gap Translation

'Flower Blooming Season' 1992 maintains a close relationship with its predecessor. Its translator, Zhaozheng Zhong, a prolific Taiwanese author and contemporary of Yang Qianhe, frames his 'Flower Blooming Season' as a necessary return to the text in the wake of Yang's re-entry into literary circles. When Zhong's work is read alongside 'Flower Blooming Season' 1979, however, it quickly becomes apparent that large swathes of his work imitate that earlier version word-for-word. Over 75 percent of Zhong's translation is a replica of Xiaonan Chen's prose, mirroring the earlier publication to the smallest details—word order, punctuation, and so on. Of note are two prolonged sections of unbroken imitation: a section on Huiying's relationship with her father, and a page detailing the visit of two friends to Huiying's house (Q. Yang, 1979: 181–182, 191; Q. Yang, 1992: 295–296, 304–305). Among these extensive similarities, however, Zhong does make some changes to the text. In between small alterations to sentence length and punctuation, he restores a selection of details omitted from the 1979 version. By reinstating these passages, Zhong's translation appears as a halfway house, somewhere between an edited version of Chen's translation and a new translation in its own right. Zhong's (1993) commentary on translating Yang's writing reinforces the sense that his interventions are a wholly necessary yet incomplete return to Yang's short story. His translation of her work appears as a restorative, stop-gap translation—one that provides much needed updates, but defers a more thorough reworking to future translators.

The lengthiest restoration concerns the passage on *A Girl's Age* mentioned in the preceding section. In Zhong's 1992 iteration, the omitted paragraph returns in full, detailing the impact of the text on Huiying and her contemporaries:

正好也是我們畢業的那一陣子 【姑娘時代】很風行，擁有大量的讀者。她把我們這些未婚少女的無形煩惱很巧妙地提出來討論，然而我們畢竟是台灣女子，很多地方都不就見得切合我們的情形。那麼，我們又以什麼樣的心情過我們的小姐日子呢？那是我們日常裏所接觸，所感愛的，可就是怎麼也沒法讓它具體地成行。唯一知道的是在我們來說，舊時代的因習和新時世的動向之間的摩擦，更強固地糾結在一塊。

As it happens, around the time we graduated high school, *A Girl's Era* was very popular and had a large readership. The author discussed with great skill all the invisible worries of us young girls who were yet to be married. Yet, at the end of the day, we were girls from Taiwan, so there were many parts of the book that didn't suit our situation.

So, in what mood did we pass the days of our girlhood? This 'girlhood' was everything we encountered, everything we felt love for in our everyday lives, but it was also something we had no means to actualise. As far as we were concerned, there was only one certainty: the clash between customs of the past and trends of the new age was strongly intertwined with our lives.

Q. YANG, 1992: 299

The second restoration comes later in the same section. Huiying describes how she and her two closest friends regularly visit a doctor's wife whom they regard as culturally sophisticated. Unlike her Japanese teacher, Huiying and her companions regard this woman as a peer, viewing her lifestyle as one of the possible paths for them to tread after high school. During their visit, the doctor's wife mentions two Japanese comedians whom she is particularly fond of: Ken'ichi Enomoto (榎本健一; written in the abbreviated form of his name 'Enoken' 榎健) and Roppa Furukawa (古川ロッパ; written in Zhong's edition as 'Lü Bo' 綠波):

といふ言葉も付け加える奥様然としたかの女は、この頃ではエノケンやロッパの喜劇とか、チャンバラ映画がかえって面白くなったといふ

She added that that she had recently come to find the comedies of Enoken and Roppa, as well as samurai films, very entertaining.

Q. YANG, 1942: 152

她還談起如今她居然開始喜歡「榎健」和「綠波」的喜鬧片子(註：此二人均為早期著名的喜劇演員)和打鬪電影。

She also brought up how recently she has unexpectedly started to enjoy the comedies of Enoken and Roppa (Note: these were two famous comedians from the early period of Japanese rule) and martial art films.

Q. YANG, 1992: 299–300

The mention of Enoken and Roppa dates the text to the 1940s, when films featuring both performers were shown in cities throughout Taiwan. Following the Mukden Incident in 1931, limitations were placed on Chinese films that had been a popular mainstay in Taiwan's cinemas during the 1920s, with pro-imperial productions—such as the films featuring Roppa and Enoken from the late 1930s—being shown in their place (Baskett, 2008: 18).<sup>3</sup> As the doctor's wife has a penchant for these films, they become attributes of feminine sophistication to Huiying. In a similar fashion to the music teacher example, an interest in Japanese cultural products combines with what Huiying perceives as a more mature, sophisticated image of womanhood. Such idealisation explains the passage's absence from the 1979 translation, while the 1992 inclusion is consistent with the passage on *A Girl's Age*. Similarly, the kimono reappears in Zhong's translation: the teacher is described as wearing 'a black kimono, with a wide collar' (黑色的和服，而且領子越寬的, Heise de hefu, erqie lingzi yue kuan de) (Q. Yang, 1992: 292). In other words, there is far less reticence in the 1992 edition about surrounding the feminine ideal, as perceived through the eyes of the story's protagonist, in the trappings of Japanese influence.

There are many reasons for Zhong's translation taking the shape that it did. Firstly, the reappearance of some of the text's Japanese details points to the shift in political atmosphere by 1992. From the late 1980s onwards, there was a significant thawing in Taiwan-Japan relations after nearly two decades of diplomatic tension following the severing of official ties in 1972. The reinvigorated relationship, which Peng-er Lam (2004: 249) argues was largely thanks to Lee Teng-hui's presidency beginning in 1988, had a profound effect on the visibility of the Japanese language in educational and cultural contexts. In 1989 the first Japanese language department established since 1972 in Taiwan was founded at National Chengchi University (Huang, 2015: 134), while in 1993 Japanese TV

3 The Mukden Incident, also referred to as the Manchurian Incident or the 9.18 Incident, involved the bombing of Japanese-owned railway services near the city of Mukden (today's Shenyang) in northeast China on 18 September 1931. The Japanese government accused Chinese militants of placing the bomb, using the incident as an excuse to invade and occupy Manchuria (Manchukuo). It later emerged that the Japanese Army had planted the bomb.

shows were legally broadcast for the first time since the severing of diplomatic relations (Ishii, Su & Watanabe, 1999: 418). This contextual backdrop goes some way to explaining Zhong's decision to include the references to a Japanese novel and two Japanese actors that were noticeably absent from the 1979 edition. The reappearance of these details in turn sheds light on their absence in the earlier iteration—a retrospective reflection of the sociopolitical context into which *Taiwan's Literature from before the Retrocession* was published in 1979.

It would be a mistake, however, to view Zhong's translation as an absolute rebuttal of Chen's earlier work. As noted above, the two translations are closely connected, indeed in many passages they are almost identical. The absence of extensive reinterpretation, along with the obvious edits to include passages previously omitted, suggests that Zhong simply intended to update Chen's version to allow readers to access a more complete version of the text. His motivation seems linked, in part, to Yang's reappearance in 1989, as he notes how her writing, once considered 'works of the past', became 'of the time'. This renewed interest in Yang's work, though limited to literary circles, provided a clear impetus for retranslation. At the same time, Zhong explains that he struggled with translating Yang's writing after 1989:

This task is one I couldn't turn down, though I have to say that it was a struggle. My eyesight has badly diminished thanks to years of overwork, and I have too little spare time.

ZHONG, 1993

Aside from the limitations Zhong identifies, it is also possible that his translation of 'Flower Blooming Season' was a vote of confidence—omissions aside—in Chen's earlier work. This is especially true given Zhong's involvement as an editor for *Taiwan's Literature from before the Retrocession*. Strikingly, Zhong does not mention the necessity of restoring the previously omitted passages—though when reading the two versions side by side the reader is left in little doubt that this is his translation's major contribution. There is a continued reluctance here to discuss the possibility of interpreting the sections of the text omitted in 1979 in connection to the attractions of a 'Japanese' identity over the alternative.

## 5 Addition: A Treasure of Taiwanese Literature

'Flower Blooming Season' 2001 appeared during a moment of flux in Taiwan. The first island-wide presidential elections were held in 1996, and the election

of the first Democratic Progressive Party president Chen Shui-bian in 2000 brought with it a shift in attitudes towards Japan at a political level along with a rise in reinterpretations of Japanese rule (Lam, 2004: 249). It is no coincidence that this political softening coincided with an uptick in the translation of Japanese writing from the colonial period. Spearheaded by Avanguard (Qianwei) publishing house, several anthologies were published at the turn of the millennium featuring colonial-era authors who wrote in both Chinese and Japanese. A multivolume anthology of Yang Kui's work, published by the Taiwan Literature Centre appeared in 2001, a complete anthology of Wang Changxiong's work by the Taipei Cultural Bureau in 2002.<sup>4</sup> Viewed as a collective, the appearance of these anthologies is certainly a moment of note in the creation of what Scruggs (2015: 27) terms Taiwan's 'translated canon'.

Zhimei Lin's 2001 translation of 'Flower Blooming Season' reflects the overarching mood of its time, with Japanese features included as an integral part of the text's historical fabric. The version was published alongside a Japanese copy of the text, allowing the reader to consider the versions side by side should they have the language proficiency. In tandem, the translation also fleshes out the text in an unprecedented fashion. Described by Ziqiao Yang (1979: 173) 37 years later as 'prosaic', the narrative style in 'Flower Blooming Season' 1942 is unadorned, recounting events with a degree of detachment. Lin's translation intervenes on several occasions to heighten the text's confessional tone, while also styling Yang's writing in a fashion more accessible to the twenty-first-century reader. Read in the context of the anthologising process, these stylistic amendments appear as part of a 'bid for canonicity', a feature that Lawrence Venuti (2004: 27) argues recurs in retranslations of marginal texts. To put it another way, by situating 'Flower Blooming Season' firmly within the context of its first language, along with added rhetorical flourishes, the 2001 translation emphasises both the text and Yang's historical import. By humanising Huiying, Lin in turn humanises Yang Qianhe, and as Yang's daughter, she is uniquely placed to carry out this task.

Lin's retranslation foregrounds Japanese elements of the source text in an unambiguous fashion, more so than either of the preceding versions. The music teacher's kimono, for example, is pointedly 'a Japanese kimono' (日本の和服, *Riben de hefu*), the title of *A Girl's Age* is left untranslated as 娘時代, with a Chinese translation following in brackets (少女時代) (Q. Yang, 2001b: 146, 154). As the sites of intervention align between Lin's translation and the earlier

4 Pei-yin Lin (2017: 216n97) notes how the seven different translations of Wang Changxiong's short story 'Torrent' (奔流, *Hon'ryū*) were included in the 2002 anthology of his work—a reflection of the value in archiving not only the source text, but also its various translations.

versions, her work is arguably as much in conversation with its predecessors as the source text. This is especially true given how Yang Qianhe (2001a: 49) suggests Lin consulted earlier editions while putting together her own, as well as Lin's (2012: 191) own comment that her intention in retranslating the text was to amend the 'translation errors' of earlier versions. From this standpoint, the refashioning seems neither coincidental nor accidental, but a premeditated marker of difference in contrast to earlier editions. There are two additional instances worth considering in this vein. The first comes at the story's opening; the schoolgirls are gathered in music class rehearsing a song to mark their upcoming graduation. Together they sing the first two lines of the final verse of the Japanese graduation song 'Aogeba Tōtoshi' (仰げば尊し). Lin's version replicates the lyrics closely:

朝夕なれにし、学びの窓  
螢のともしび、つむ白雪。

The window where we studied morning and night,  
The light of the fireflies, stacked white snow.

Q. YANG, 1942: 145

朝夕相處，同窗共學  
螢燭之光，白雪輝映

From morning till night, we studied together by the same window,  
The light of the fireflies reflected in the snow.

Q. YANG, 2001b: 144

The replication of the romantic imagery in 'Flower Blooming Season' 1942 marks a departure from the approach taken in each of the earlier editions, where the established Chinese translation of 'Auld Lang Syne' by Wenxian Hua is used in its place (Jia, 2014: 695):

驪歌初動，離情輾轉  
驚惜韶光匆促

Our leaving song is beginning,  
The pain of separation rumbles,  
Shocked as cherished youth hurries by.

Q. YANG, 1979: 176; Q. YANG, 1992: 290

By opting to delicately mirror the famous song in the source text, Lin explicitly designates the language of the school environment from the outset, anchoring the text in its historical moment. A similar approach comes towards the close

of 'Flower Blooming Season', where Huiying details a meeting with a student named Tagawa, through whom she learns of an employment opportunity at a local newspaper:

テニスの試合で〇〇高女出身の田川さんといふ文學をやる人と知り合い、翠苑さんたちとはしなかつた議論につばを飛ばしたりしたが。その頃であつた。私がある新聞社に入る機会を与へられたのは。

At a tennis match I got to know Tagawa-san, a high school graduate who was a writer. We talked animatedly about topics I could not discuss with Cuiyang and the others. Through Tagawa-san, it was around that time that I had the opportunity to begin working at a newspaper.

Q. YANG, 1942: 153

The narrator displays an affection for Tagawa, who is the only character with a Japanese name in the story. There is an implied comparison between Tagawa, the sophisticated author with knowledge of the world of work, and Huiying's classmates, whom she insinuates are ignorant of the world Tagawa occupies. Lin's version expands on the description of this conversation, emphasising Huiying's enthusiasm for her conversation partner and their lively exchange:

我曾經在一次網球比賽的機緣，結識了一位〇〇高女畢業的文學同田川小姐。我們兩人在一起盤局談闊論，連我與翠苑她們所未能話及的議題，我與田川也都能談得口沫橫飛。我就是在這段期間，由田川處獲知機會而進入一家報社工作。

One time at a tennis match, I had the luck to get to know high school graduate Tagawa-san, who was also interested in literature. The two of us chatted together loudly and indulgently about topics that I had never even talked about with Cuiyang and the others. Tagawa-san and I were able to have brilliant discussions about all of that. It was during that period that I learnt of a job opportunity, through Tagawa-san, and started work at a newspaper.

Q. YANG, 2001b: 158

The expansion of this passage is arguably an example of Lin (2012: 191) putting into practice her criticisms of the 1979 translation: '[I]f the meaning of the source text is lost when translating, then the mood of the text, and its internal logic, will be washed away substantially. The reader may not know all that is said [in the source text]'. The contrast between the 2001 and 1979 versions of

this scene provides an apt demonstration of the shortcomings Lin perceives in the latter:

在一次網球比賽中我曾認識一位出身xx高女的田川小姐，她是個文學工作者。在她的引介下，在翠苑她們的反對聲中，我終於進入報社服務。

One time at a tennis match, I met high school graduate Tagawa-san, she was a writer. Through her introductions, despite Cuiyang's protestations, in the end I started working at a newspaper.

Q. YANG, 1979: 187

There is no mention of the enthusiastic dialogue shared between the two young women, only a detached recital of events. Absent too is the comparison between Tagawa-san and Huiying's classmates contained in all other versions of 'Flower Blooming Season'.<sup>5</sup> Read in the context of other omissions within the 1979 translation, the understatement of Tagawa's connection with Huiying appears consistent with the removal of small yet specific details that cast images of Japanese femininity in a desirable light. Sokolsky (2010: 257) suggests that this tension is apparent in the 1942 text—a suggestion that Lin (2012: 192) strongly disagrees with. Despite this, the diminished depiction of Tagawa in 1979, when viewed consecutively with the other omissions, does seem to continue a politicised reading of female characters interested in, or associated with, Japan and Japanese cultural products.

Besides the reprisal of details from 'Flower Blooming Season' 1942, Lin makes several stylistic changes to the text that range from cosmetic alterations that aid the reader in navigating the plot to rhetorical flourishes that add empathetic appeal to the story's protagonist. With regards to the first, Lin explicitly teases out the story's structure, dividing the text into seven micro-chapters. The source material, as well as earlier translations, carry the latent feeling of these break points, though they are not marked explicitly. In Lin's version the narrative no longer darts from scene to scene in a disorientating fashion and is instead structured around brief logical episodes. Readability also likely lies

5 The 1992 edition reads as follows: C: 在一次網球比賽中我認識了一位出身XX 高女，在學文學的田川小姐，開始和她高談闊論一些以前跟翠苑她們從未交談過的議論。也是正在這樣的時候，我獲得一個機會，進了一家報社會。E: One time at a tennis match I met high school graduate Tagawa-san, who was studying literature. I started to talk excitedly with her about a number of topics I had never discussed with Cuiyang and the others. And it was at that time I was given the opportunity to start working at a newspaper (Q. Yang, 1992: 301).

behind other small interventions in textual presentation, such as the addition of short, clarifying phrases in Huiying's conversation with her aunt about marriage (Q. Yang, 2001b: 148).

Lin also makes amendments to the long passages of narration in the piece to draw out the emotional resonances of the text, creating a set of asides that strengthen the presence of Huiying's voice within the narrative. She achieves this primarily through the addition of parentheses, exclamations, and rhetorical questions absent from the 1979 and 1992 versions—giving explicit expression to the emotional cadence of the source text. The following example comes early in the text as Huiying reflects on her classmates who are already engaged prior to graduation:

乙女の日への惜別と結婚といふはなやかなスタートをきらうとする胸おどるやうな希望とが、どのやうにこの人達の胸に交叉しているだらうか。

The painful separation from the days of our girlhood, a new start through marriage—do they loathe this? Are they thrilled by hopes for the future? How are they interweaving these feelings in their hearts?

Q. YANG, 1942: 145

不知她們的心靈中如何複雜的交織著「道別少女生活」和「憧憬絢麗的結婚生活」

I don't know how the complex feelings of 'leaving behind girlhood' and 'looking forward to a glorious married life' are interweaving in their hearts

Q. YANG, 1979: 176; Q. YANG, 1992: 290

要告別少女時代，開始跨人多彩的婚姻生活，幾多惜情？幾多憧憬？這些人的心中，不知正交織著多麼複雜的感情！

Do they want to leave behind girlhood, and start striding towards a colourful married life? How much pity do they feel? How much do they long for the future? I don't know how they are interweaving such complex feelings in their hearts!

Q. YANG, 2001b: 143

These unanswered questions are twinned with an increased use of exclamation within the narrative, lending a confessional tone to Huiying's musings. A notable instance comes later in the story, as Huiying recounts her desperation at the prospect of her sick father's death:

そのころ私はまだ女学校にいたが、今父に死なれたら！！と実に悲壯な気持ちで、母の病のときにしたよりも真剣に祈った。私にはどんな神様でもよかったのだ。この哀れな少女の願ひをきいてくれるありとあらゆる神に。父！この世に私がただ一人頼ることの出来る者、ああそれはむつつりとやさしい言葉一つかけてくれない父その人なのだ。

Around that time, I was still at the girl's school, so if father had died!! In a truly solemn mood, I prayed more earnestly than the time my mother was sick. For me, any god would do. Gods, please listen to the prayers of this pitiable girl. Father! The only person in this world who I can rely on, my very solemn father who doesn't say a single kind thing to me.

Q. YANG, 1942: 149

The passage thrums with Huiying's earnest appeal to a higher power—and Lin exacerbates this confessional tone by explicitly reorganising the text to have Huiying address the gods directly:

那時候我還在上「女學校」。如果父親去世了，我可怎辦呀！懷著悲壯的心情，我全心祈求神明保佑父親平安，甚至還比母親臥病更用心祈禱（以前實在還不懂事情的嚴重性。）我在心裡呼喚著。。。 「什麼神明都好，各方神明啊！請聽聽我這可憐少女的祈願吧！父親可是我在這世上剩下一個依賴的親人呀！雖然他是常繃著臉，沒能說出一句親切的話。」

At that time, I was still at the girl's school. If my father had died—what would I have done! Filled with solemnity, I prayed to the gods with all my heart to bless and protect my father and keep him well. I prayed even more earnestly than when my mother was on her sickbed (**before I didn't really understand the seriousness of the situation**). In my heart I cried out . . . 'Any god will do, all gods! Please listen to the prayers of this pitiful girl! My father is the only relative left in this world who I can rely on! Although his expression is always serious, and he's incapable of saying anything affectionate to me'.

Q. YANG, 2001b: 151<sup>6</sup>

The combination of emotive requests, along with the addition of an explanatory side in parentheses, heightens the intimacy of this moment. The added punctuation and aside capture a sentiment that is discernible in 'Flower Blooming Season' 1942, and indeed Lin seems best placed to articulate the

6 The emphasis here is added.

emotional resonances underlying that first version. The result, in this moment and others, is a narrative voice that is at some moments irritable, others excitable.<sup>7</sup> In contrast to the restrained patter of Xiaonan Chen's and Zhaozheng Zhong's Huiying, 'Flower Blooming Season' 2001 is most convincing in its portrayal of a schoolgirl in her late teens.

In her comments on the translation process, Zhimei Lin (1999: 344) makes it clear that the anthology work was a labour of love—an act to restore her mother's personal story and a corner of Taiwan's history. She also suggests that parts of the translation process were collaborative, with drafts passing between Yang, Zhang, and herself (Z. Lin, 1999: 346). Lin (1999: 345) does comment on her desire to reflect the 'artistic quality and tone' of Yang's writing, and it is perhaps a combination of this desire, as well as an intense awareness of her writing's historical import, that explains its embrace of Japanese as an integral aspect of the story's character. After decades of being left unread, or read only in part, the 2001 anthology marked a transparent return to Yang's writing not just as an exceptional piece of Taiwan literature, but specifically as a foundational work in the history of Taiwanese women's fiction.

## 6 History in Translation

In his preface to the 1999 translation of Yang's memoir, Liangze Zhang includes a letter he wrote to Zhimei Lin in 1993. Among his praise of Yang's writing, Zhang (1999: 30–32) addresses Lin directly, declaring: 'friend (your) mother is ours'. His meaning here, as interpreted in a 1995 essay by Shuguang Lin (2001: 468), is to suggest that Yang will become a figurative 'collective mother for new generations', cementing her significance as a figure of note. A similar sentiment runs through many of the newspaper articles republished in volume 3 of the SMC retrospective. Yang is cast as the 'mother of the Taiwanese people' (Chen, 2001: 500) in an *Epoch Times* article from 1999, with her writing receiving praise as a surviving record of Taiwan's history in *The Taiwan Independent* in 1995 (Zheng, 2001: 488). Shuangzi Yang (2018: 56) echoes this familial tone, exploring a sense of intimacy derived in part from their shared surname. Elsewhere, Yang Qianhe is regularly referred to as 'Taiwan's first

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7 Other instances of note include: Huiying's comments while walking by the estuary at Tamsui (compare Q. Yang, 2001b: 168; Q. Yang, 1942: 159); Huiying's reaction to discovering her childhood friend has given birth to a baby (compare Q. Yang 2001b: 160; Q. Yang, 1979: 198; Q. Yang, 1942: 157); and Huiying's reaction to a sobbing classmate (compare Q. Yang, 2001b: 144; Q. Yang, 1979: 192; Q. Yang, 1942: 145).

female journalist', an accolade that provided the title for a documentary detailing Yang's life broadcast by the Public Television Cultural Foundation in 2007. Though it would be an overstatement to consider Yang Qianhe a household name, there is no doubt that her fame was amplified significantly throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, to the point where her writings could be lauded as milestone publications in Taiwan's literary history.

Of course, translation is far from the only process at work in this reframing and rediscovery of Yang's work. The gradual softening of the public, political, and academic mood towards the period of Japanese rule certainly contributed to the renewed openness towards the representative woman author of the period. At the same time, the translation of Yang's work is a vital metric in gauging the process of history-making. A close examination of her translated work emphasises the role of translators in rewriting, obscuring, or exaggerating the features of Taiwan's historical Japanese-language fiction. At stake here are not only the trappings of 'literary fame' that André Lefevere (1992) famously tied to translation, but also the sway of the historical interpretation and narrative-making that influence how communities view their past, and the individuals who lived during those periods. It is a tool that allows translators and editors to navigate a text's political depths; a way around what Yvonne Chang (1997: 103) terms the 'invisible stigma' affixed to Japanese-language texts from the war period, whether they be labelled 'Imperial-subject' literature or otherwise.

Taiwan's twentieth-century history is entangled with the politics of language—its expression, its suppression, its purposeful elimination. The role of translation in these processes is underacknowledged, perhaps due to a functionalist view of translation as an unremarkable means to a more valuable end. Yet oppressive state-led language policies are arguably attempts to enforce translation on a grand scale; the dissolution of those policies an opportunity to reclaim the right to language choice, and in turn the use of translation as an act of interpretation. Given the prominence of repressive language policies in Taiwan's twentieth century, first under the Japanese imperial government then under martial law introduced by their Chinese Nationalist Party (i.e. Kuomintang) successors, it is necessary to acknowledge the reciprocal relationship between linguistic politics, the act of translation, and translators who confront either the history or reality of those policies in their work.

The role of the translator is especially pronounced in the history of works written in Japanese in the final decade of Japanese rule, such as 'Flower Blooming Season' and stories like it. These texts sit in the confluence of controversy thanks to the political symbolism of their language of composition. For a translator to

work with such a text, they are obliged to wade into the mire of linguistic and colonial politics that accompanies the work in their care. To translate, in this instance, is to pass judgement—however subtle or slight—on the historical moment from which the text sprung, and the significance of that moment to the current time. Appreciating the role of translators in dealing with Taiwan's historical Japanese-language literature complicates the history of that selection of texts. It leads to avenues of inquiry that abandon the simplistic divide between restriction and publication, and instead values the patterns of interpretation and reinterpretation that occupy the murky interstices between those polarities.

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