

Linguistic Flows and Subjectivity in Cross-Writing: Language Experiments in Modern Taiwan Literature*

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ABSTRACT

This paper looks into the translingual practice in modern Taiwan literature, a local literary production that inscribes the problematic of locality in a mixed, heterogeneous cultural context. It argues that translingual practice in writing connects and traverses boundaries of languages and cultures, and accordingly, informs a process of deformation, transformation, and becoming. Concurrently, translingual practice involves an opening process of creation that provokes a new literature. Translingual writing has played a vital part in Taiwan's literary production. This paper highlights the crossing of linguistic boundaries as well as the condition of the subject in the liminal writing space. The translingual practice in Taiwan's literary production not only depicts an alternative history that emphasizes hybridity and multiplicity as evidenced by literary texts, it also signifies transformative force that induces literary creation in the local context.

KEY WORDS

translingual practice, Taiwan literature, linguistic flow, linguistic nomad



Due to the historical factors, translingual practice has been one of the primary features of modern Taiwan literature. In his essay “One Hundred Years of Taiwanese Literature and Styles,” Chen Fang-ming (陳芳明) addresses the linguistic “dislocation” in modern Taiwanese literary practice, which consequently reveals particular literary “styles” (44–55). Historically speaking, Taiwanese writers were constantly caught in the dilemma of choosing a language for their literary practice. When Japan occupied Taiwan in 1895, it adopted assimilation as its primary colonial policy in which language education and cultural assimilation were overwhelmingly emphasized. As Patricia E. Tsurumi remarks, a “segment of traditional China” was forced to be transformed into “an integral part of modern Japan” (11). Consequently, local classical Chinese literary circles withered away and the new generation began to adopt Japanese as the medium in their literary production. Before the dawn of World War II, with the intensification of the imperialization (*kominka*) movement, the circulation of Chinese was totally banned. And yet when Kuomintang took over Taiwan after the war, history repeated itself. Except for Mandarin Chinese, which has been the only official language on the island since then, other languages including Japanese and local tongues were silenced. Given this historical background and language experience, a particular way of literary expression in modern Taiwan literature has resulted in which multiple languages are combined, mixed, and synthesized.

This paper looks into this particular linguistic style, recognizing it as a form of cross-writing in which the writers cross linguistic boundaries in seeking ways of expression. It will argue that translingual practice in writing connects and traverses boundaries of linguistic and

cultural realms, and accordingly, informs a process of deformation, transformation, and becoming. Concurrently, translanguaging practice in writing forms an opening process of creation that provokes a new literature. This paper highlights the crossing of linguistic boundaries, a liminal writing space occupied by polyglot writers, whom I will call “linguistic nomads.” First, I will examine various linguistic experiments in modern Taiwanese literary history according to different historical periods. Secondly, I will introduce the concept of the nomad, following Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s conception of nomadism, and further relate it to the subject in cross-writing. I will argue that translanguaging practice in Taiwanese literary production not only depicts an alternative history that emphasizes hybridity and multiplicity, as evidenced by literary texts, but also signifies the transformative force that induces literary creation in the local context.

Varieties of Language Experiments in Modern Taiwanese Literary History

1) Lai Ho’s Vernacular Writing: Blending of Multi-Languages

Known as the “father” of New Taiwan Literature in local nativist discourse, Lai Ho (賴和, 1894–1943) inaugurated a new literature that centered on local people and affairs, which was accomplished through the use of the native language. His insistence on the use of the native tongue—i.e. vernacular Taiwanese—in his composition consequently led his writing to reflect a hybrid linguistic mixture. Despite the distinction between the intentional/conscious and unintentional/unconscious hybrid, as M. M. Bakhtin deliberates in his theory of novelist discourse, Lai Ho’s particular linguistic form displays not merely a mixture of multiple languages, but also demonstrates an effort to mold a new language “*in the light of another language*” (362).¹ The former case may be seen as a historical result of the development of a language; the latter, however, registers Lai Ho’s literary mode and style. It is acknowledged that Lai Ho’s experience of

writing is composed by a process of translation from Classical Chinese to vernacular Chinese and then to vernacular Taiwanese. In an article devoted to the discussion of the ideologies of Lai Ho's novels, Shih Shu (施淑), an eminent Taiwanese critic, addresses Lai Ho's struggle for language in his composition and recognizes it as a companion to his life experience of fighting with imperialist colonialism: "In composition, he had to translate classical Chinese into colloquial words, and then [into vernacular Taiwanese], until they stood independently on their own" (11). Shih argues that Lai's composition implies "a reversal of translation," "a psychological reversal of historical and social conflict," which "reflected his personal tragedy" (11). His literary taste and aesthetic concepts were molded by Classical Chinese literary canons, and he desired to create a new one by disrupting this continuity by way of translation. For Lai, the struggle for language is not simply the difficulty of translating words from one language into another, but also the process of transporting and appropriating literary canons in a new literary field.

One is also aware that Lai Ho was a medical practitioner, a modern intellectual trained in scientific knowledge by the Japanese educational system. Given the socio-political environment of the time when Japanese colonial assimilation policy was carried out through the enforcement of the imperial language (Japanese), the use of a local tongue took on an anti-colonialist character. By his seemingly infeasible practice of the native tongue, Lai Ho heralded the plight and predicament of using language in the face of colonialism. And in his attempt to catch the aura of a new age and depict lives of local ordinary people, Lai Ho inevitably experienced a process of self-translation, which resulted in a hybrid mixture of multiple languages. Alongside Japanese words that would symbolize the modern world, vocabularies, syntactic structure, and grammar of the local tongue are embedded—intentionally or incidentally—in the narrative inscribed by Chinese, the dominant language in the early stages of Japanese occupation.²

Not surprisingly, Lai Ho's hybrid linguistic form of writing displays traces of translation and its remainder.³ The following excerpt

is taken from the short story “Disgrace” (辱), one of Lai Ho’s early writings:

It’s the next day of the birthday of the Birth-Blessing Goddess, plus the birthday of the Sun Princess, the field theater has lasted for three days.

The daytime performance has ended. The sun has gradually dropped into the sea. A dried soybean peddler drags his voice, coming out from a small lane; few cubes are left in his loads. A tofu peddler has returned from the end of the market; few are left also. The power company has delivered electricity. Street lights are on now, but they seem dim due to shining sunset clouds.

Lights on the stage are not yet on. Food vendors alongside the road are not ready for the night market yet; they squat by the stall, having their dinners.

It’s still early for the nighttime performance, but from the stage to the front yard of the temple has already been filled by benches and stools for occupying the seats. Some kids who came earlier stay in their seats they previously occupied, having sugarcane and ice sticks, laughing and fighting. Some kids are throwing sugarcane dregs at one another; some are grabbing and hitting one another for better seats; some boys are flirting with girls. These activities on the ground yard are even more boisterous and funny than those on the stage. (Lai Ho 91, my translation)

是註生娘媽生的第二日了，連太陽公主，戲已經連做三日。日戲煞鼓了，日頭也漸漸落到海裏去。賣豆干的拖長他的尾聲，由巷子內賣出來，擔上以無剩幾塊；賣豆腐的也由市仔尾倒返來，擔上也排無幾角。電火局也已送了電，街燈亮了，可是在餘霞滿天的幕空之下，也放不出多大光明。戲台上尚未整火；兩平街路邊的點心擔，還未上市，賣點心的各蹲在擔腳吃晚飯。

戲離起鼓的時候雖然還早，但戲棚前一直接到廟仔口，已經排滿了占位置的椅條、椅頭仔。一些較早的囡仔，有據在他們先占的位置上，喫甘蔗，吃冰枝，講笑相罵的；有用甘蔗粕相擲的，有因爭位置揪著胸仔相打的，有查浦囡仔在挑弄查某囡仔的，比做戲更熱鬧更有趣。（賴和〈辱!?〉81）

The English translation may disguise the quality of hybrid linguistic mixture in the original writing. In the original passage, local readers may easily observe that local vocabularies (註生娘媽 [*chhit-niū-má*;⁴ Birth-Blessing Goddess], 日戲 [*jít-hí*; daytime performance], 煞鼓 [*soah-kó*; has ended], 日頭 [*jít-thâu*; the sun], 電火局 [*tiān-hóe-kiók*; the power company], 擔腳 [*tàⁿ-á-kha*; stall], 廟仔口 [*biō-kháu*; front yard of the temple], 冰枝 [*peng-ki*; ice stick], 椅條 [*i-tiáu*; benches], 椅頭仔 [*i-thâu-á*; stools]) are embedded in the narrative; syntactic structures (無剩幾塊 [*bô-chhun-kúí-tè*; few cubs were left], 倒返來 [*tò-túg--lāi*; has returned], 排無幾角 [*pai-bô-kúí-tè*; few are left]) and grammar patterns of the local tongue (有用甘蔗粕相擲的 [*ū iōng kam-chià-phoh sio tàn--ê*; Some kids are throwing sugarcane dregs at one another], 有因爭位置揪著胸仔相打的 [*ū in-ūi cheng ū-á khiú heng-khám sio phah--ê*; some are grabbing and hitting one another for better seats], 有查浦囡仔在挑弄查某囡仔的 [*ū cha-po gín-á teh thiau-lāng cha-bó gín-á--ê*; some boys are flirting with girls]) are also appropriated in the seeming “Chinese” writing. By mixing these local vocabularies and syntax, transcribed in Chinese characters and embedded in a Chinese narrative, Lai Ho actually invents a new form of language, a new writing system which can no longer be recognized as either classical Chinese or vernacular Chinese. The hybrid mixture of multi-languages marks the primary characteristic of this new form of literary expression. These local vocabularies and syntax that strongly suggest local essence should not simply be recognized as “impure” substances of narrative or “remainder” in the process of translation. On the contrary, in the scope of cross-writing, they should be regarded as vital ingredients that mark the peculiar style of Lai Ho’s writing. These ingredients, although transcribed as Chinese characters, distinguish themselves from Chinese and cause a certain degree of alienation for

the Chinese readers. In such a seemingly Chinese narrative, the intervention of the local tongue and Japanese violates the regulation of Chinese and disrupts signification chains in the Chinese narrative. The violation, as indicated, is not merely simple *linguistic* amalgamation but also *grammatical* intrusion. As a result, a new language is born and a new semiotic system waits to be formatted. It is from this perspective that Lai Ho invented a new linguistic form of expression and inaugurated a new literature. To put it more precisely, vocabularies and syntax of Chinese, Japanese, and Taiwanese, along with their linguistic significations and cultural connotations, depart from their original semiotic systems and conjoin in a linguistic sphere composed of previous linguistic elements through a process of deforming and transforming. This new semiotic system, albeit one that still subsists on previous significations, invents regulations and institutions of its own. In other words, these linguistic elements that are emitted from their previous semiotic systems, vanishing or merging into others, projects a new linguistic terrain through a process of linguistic transformation.

Many critics have treated the hybrid linguistic quality of Lai Ho's vernacular wiring, regarding his attempt either as an alternative project to preserve Chinese characters in the face of Japanese assimilation or as an literary exercise responsible for the rise of Taiwanese cultural nationalism that provokes a distinct Taiwanese identity (Chen Chien-chi 246). Also, Lai Ho's vernacular writing should be understood in contemporary literary environment where the "social realistic" aesthetic prevails and *yen-wen yi-chih* writing ideology dominates; the former maintains that the primary ends of literature is to voice concerns about the local and to serve the masses,⁵ and the latter advocates a language reform that seeks the unification of the spoken and written languages.⁶ The promotion of the "social realistic" aesthetic is known as the *hsiang-t'u* literary movement in the local context, and it considers *yen-wen yi-chih* its indispensable vehicle. Initially, *yen-wen yi-chih* was promoted, for the most part, as a movement to popularize the vernacular and to publicize a new writing style by employing colloquial Taiwanese in place of Chinese writing, for the latter had been criticized as a "dead" language and literature.

Due to the fact that a system of written Taiwanese had not been well developed by that time, the effort of the movement was eventually directed toward the reform of the Taiwanese written language. Except in its primary purpose of establishing the “correspondence” between the spoken and written languages, *yen-wen yi-chih* in fact advocates a phonocentric ideology⁷ that gives priority to the spoken language and regards writing as subordinate to speech; also, it preaches a “realistic” aesthetic that aims at “truthful” presentation of sounds and emotions of the local masses. To most Taiwanese writers during that time, Mandarin, like Japanese, was actually a borrowed tongue. *Yen-wen yi-chih* has denied Chinese writing—a borrowed written form—for the writing of local literature; the debate on the reform of the Taiwanese writing system has centered on the issue of whether or not Chinese characters should be abandoned. This is of course endorsed by the phonocentric ideology. Although those arguments didn’t lead to any final agreement, *yen-wen yi-chih* surely gave priority to vernacular Taiwanese, thus profoundly undermining the privileged status of Chinese writing.

Lai Ho’s experiment with vernacular writing embodies the linguistic and writing ideology of *yen-wen yi-chih*; it aims to record lives of local ordinary people with recourse to the manipulation of the local tongue. As mentioned above, *yen-wen yi-chih* is not merely a linguistic reform that demands a new writing system, it is also a revolutionary writing ideology that advocates the priority of local speech and “realistic” presentation. In a sense, Lai Ho’s mixed linguistic form of writing reveals that the reconstruction of the Taiwanese language is not through a total “abrogation” of Chinese characters, but rather a profound “appropriation” of Chinese writing. From the perspective of cross-writing, Lai Ho’s vernacular writing inscribes emitted linguistic flows that move among multiple linguistic and cultural realms, and in so doing, it heralds a linguistic and literary revolution in which linguistic elements are forced to escape from their previous semiotic systems, forming a new linguistic terrain and new aesthetic principles. Such linguistic transformation and aesthetic revolution is of course accomplished through the intervention of the

local tongue endorsed by the phonocentric ideology of *yen-wen yi-chih*.

2) Taiwan's Japanese Writing: A Hybrid Form of Colonial Translation

As mentioned above, as an effect of Japanese assimilation and imperialization, young Taiwanese writers were forced to choose Japanese as the medium in literary production. Their writings actually possess great aesthetic quality and have received high praise from Japanese literary circles. What is more intriguing is that Taiwanese-Japanese writing during the colonial period presents a very different linguistic landscape, in which a migration of signs takes place. Signs alongside their significations detach from their previous language systems—i.e. Chinese and the local tongues—and enter the linguistic terrain of Japanese. Traces of the migration of signs are evident in the bulk of Taiwan's Japanese writing. They appear in various ways. Mostly, Chinese and local vocabularies are disguised as “Japanese” in the narrative. The following are some examples taken from a short story by Long Ying-tsung (龍瑛宗), “A Town of Papaya Trees” (パパイヤのある街). For further discussion, the English translations are followed by the original Japanese writings.

1. The street is filthy and aged; the wood-pillars under *teishikyaku* (a particular style of Taiwanese architecture similar to Japanese *kairō*) appear smoky and shaky because of being eaten by termites. To block strong sunlight, in front of the door of each shop hangs a big cloth screen on which such names of shops as *rōgōsei* and *kinyasukazu* are printed with bold strokes [街は穢く、くすんでゐる、停子脚(臺灣市街に在る獨特の建築様式で迴廊みたいなもの)の柱は煤け、白蟻に蝕ばれて倒れかゝつてゐた。そして強い日ざしお避けるために軒毎に筆太に屋號—老合成、金泰和—とか書いた幕を張つてゐた。](Nakajima and Kawahara 11)⁸

2. *zubon* (black pants), [黒褲仔]; *womma* (woman) [女査媒] (15)

3. *heikin* (similar to the Japanese *yuinōkin* [結納金], but for the islanders, it means marriage trade) [聘金(内地人の結納金のごときも

の、本島人は賣買結婚なり)] (21)

4. “Hey, you” (it corresponds to the Japanese word *kimi* [君, you], but it might sound disdainful to the islanders) [汝や (君といふ意なるも本島人は侮蔑せられてゐるやうに感じる)] (26)

In these passages above, one may observe that to translate the local essence, local vocabularies (*teishikyaku*, for example) are retained and disguised as “Japanese” words woven in the Japanese sentences, and mostly, followed by Japanese interpretative “translations.” This is not an exception, but a common strategy for Taiwanese-Japanese writing during that time. These local vocabularies, with their local essence and cultural implications, resist being translated in the process of wiring. These quasi-Japanese words often appear as *kanji* (Chinese characters) following by corresponding Japanese interpretative translations, and in most cases, they appear as a bizarre combination of *kanji* and *kana* notation (both *katakana* and *hiragana* are used and function differently). As one may argue, the interpretative “translations” cannot be recognized as a form of *translation proper*; it is “intralingual translation” or “rewording” in the same language rather than “interlingual translation” or “*translation proper*,” according to Roman Jakobson (114). Likewise, the *hiragana* cannot be recognized as a “real translation” in a rigid sense, not simply because a proper name or signifier cannot be transported from one language system into another,⁹ but also because of the juxtaposition of the original and translation. In addition, one may argue that in its expression, *kanji* serves as a common ground that makes possible the communication among these different languages. *Kana* is added on the top and functions as a pronunciation sign; mostly, *hiragana* is for the Japanese pronunciation (*zubon*, *wonna*, *heikin*) and *katakana*, by contrast, indicates the sound of the original local tongue (*li*).

Such Japanese writing can be seen as a particular form of colonial translation. In her book, *Japanese Literature and Taiwan*, Lee Yu-hui (李郁惠) has looked into such a particular form of expression adopted by Taiwanese subjects, which she characterizes as “abstract translation,” an inner, self-translating process which inevitably occurs

in the writing by the colonial subjects who write in a non-native language (183; 205, n. 2). According to Lee, in some cases, the added *hiragana* has to function as a translation for the communication between the original and translation. As in the example #2 above, local vocabularies 黒褲仔 [*zubon*; black pants] and 女查媒 [*wonna*; woman] are retained as *kanji*, in which *hiragana* (ずぼん、をんな) serves as a translation. And it is in such a notation that one can observe the function of *hiragana* as a translation, although the act of translation employed by *kana* must be joined by the Japanese reader. However, in other cases, the translation procedure is reversed. As in the example #4, *katakana* (ㇿ-) is applied and still functions as a role of translation, and yet the particular use of *katakana* reverses the direction of the translation process. The *kanji* (ㇿ) can be regarded as a translation (Japanese) since the word was legible to most educated Japanese readers of that time, and the *katakana* (ㇿ-) above *kanji* indicates the sound of the original language (a local vocabulary). In reading, the reader will experience a “reverse” process of translation, from translation to the original, from the empire to the local. And such a reversal of translation is of course made possible by the juxtaposition of the original and translation, and more importantly, “the untranslatable” in the process of translation, as recorded in the *kanji-kana* notation.

What interests us most is the “mixed, hybrid” (Lee 201) nature of such *kanji-kana* notation. The juxtaposition of the original and translation makes the *kanji-kana* notation half Japanese and half local tongue. The notation *is* the Japanese translation, and yet it always signifies back to the original. *Kana* (both *hiragana* and *katakana*) functions as both an act and representation of translation, making possible the communication between the original and translation. The *kanji-kana* notation is a *contingent, provisional* combination of the two different systems of signification, which permits the oscillation between the translatable and untranslatable across difference. From the perspective of cross-writing, local vocabularies, disguised as Japanese, are woven into a Japanese narrative and yet still subsist on significations and institutions of the original. In a similar way, *kana*, as

a form of Japanese, must function as a translation by indicating the pronunciation of either Japanese or the local tongue. The “difference” inherent in Taiwanese colonial translation appears as a form of cross-writing, a hybrid form of linguistic topography in which linguistic boundaries never cease shifting in a virtual field made possible by a line of continuous linguistic variations. In these cases, new ways of expression are being sought out and new significations are being invented in the continuous changing of linguistic boundaries.

The bulk of Taiwan’s Japanese literature has often been recognized as a repertoire of the inscription of Taiwanese colonial subjectivity and cultural difference under Japanese occupation. The writing thus becomes the very space of its own elaboration since the Japanese colonial discourse has imposed the colonizer’s language and deployed its significations through the dominant forces of assimilation and acculturation. The writing also reflects the ultimate paradox of the colonized, the paradox of having to write in the colonizer’s language. Albert Memmi has described such a “colonial bilingual” as a “stranger” as he/she remains “exiled” in a linguistic realm of not his/her own (106-07). In addition, this paradox of colonial bilingualism echoes Homi Bhabha’s claim that the space of writing is a space of both “splitting” and “doubling” since adoption of a master’s tongue makes the subject become native and stranger, self and other at the same time (44).

To the extent that the writing subject is trapped in-between languages and discourses, the Taiwanese-Japanese writers remain exiled in their writing. They travel as foreigners in two separate linguistic and cultural domains, bringing up the sense of linguistic and cultural withdrawal that Memmi has termed “foreignness” (107). This is precisely the dilemma faced by the colonial subject in the construction of identity through the colonizer’s language. Paradoxically, in such separations from self, language, and discourse, the colonial subjects create for themselves a valid and coherent sense of identity. In other words, the writing in the master’s tongue enables the colonial subjects to inscribe subjectivity through rewriting the established codes of self and other. This is the power that Bill Ashcroft

and others have ascribed to the practice of (post)colonial wiring, “a radical subversion of the meanings of the master’s tongue” (146).

Thus, for the Taiwanese Japanese writers, the splitting and doubling of writing space is also a space of both “destruction” and “creation.” Haunted by the paradox of having to write in the colonizer’s tongue and driven by a sense of exile, the Taiwanese-Japanese writers understand well that the master’s tongue provides the means for writing and eventual subversion as well. Viewed in this light, the hybrid form of colonial translation presents a linguistic experience that makes possible the rewriting and subversion of the discursive framework of oppression from the very space of its own elaboration. And yet, the crossing of different linguistic and cultural domains always implies something missing and yet something gained. The migration of linguistic signs and significations, which always move toward a new linguistic and aesthetic domain unknown, reveals the authors’ effort to rewrite the established codes of self and other, and consequently, to constitute their own history of subjectivity. By interrupting and subverting the standard and regulations of the Japanese language, the Taiwanese writers relocate the implementation of the Japanese colonial discourse and re-examine the effect of the Japanese assimilation and imperialization.

3) Wang Chen-ho: Heteroglossia

In the genealogy of Taiwanese cross-writing, local writers during the Japanese colonial period, including Lai Ho and contemporary Japanese authors, depict linguistic flows that have escaped from their previous semiotic systems and resided in a new linguist terrain, which results in a new form of literary expression. In their writings, one may observe a continuous shifting of language boundaries in which linguistic flows are blocked, limited, compartmentalized, regulated, reorganized, and recoded in a new linguistic territory. The tendency of such linguistic flows is no doubt challenged and influenced by social change and political force, and that is vividly evidenced by the writing of Wang Chen-ho (王禎和) in postwar Taiwan in the face of

neo-colonialism. The renowned Taiwanese writer has been known for blending heterogeneous languages in writing, in which the flow of dominant Mandarin, including its rhythm, syntax, semantics, and signification, is constantly disrupted and changed by such languages as Japanese, English, Min, Hakka dialects, and aboriginal languages. The hybrid nature of Wang's linguistic style is evident, and a great many comments have been made on Wang's peculiar use of languages under a certain social and political circumstance. For example, Chiu Kuei-fen (邱貴芬), from a postcolonial standpoint, uses "heteroglossia," a literary term borrowed from Bakhtin, to indicate the quality of multi-voices and the potential linguistic counter-force inherent in Wang's blending of multiple languages (181). The term heteroglossia is used by Bakhtin to indicate "the diversity of speech types" which permits "a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships" inherent in the novel as a genre (263). Chiu underscores the dialogized and social-ideological aspect of the term and recognizes "parodic stylization" in Wang's language, particularly in *Rose, Rose, I Love You*, as a form of heteroglossia in the novel. Heteroglossia, in this sense, pertains to Bakhtin's idea of the carnivalesque, which he discovers in Rabelais's world, whose "emphatic and purposeful 'heteroglossia'" and "multiplicity of styles" appear opposed to the "official" language (Pomorska x). It is in the same vein that Chiu ascribes the potential for overcoming the dominant language in the given context to Wang's linguistic manipulation.

Bakhtin postulates the opposition between "unitary language" and heteroglossia, the poetic genres and the novel. He argues that "[e]very concrete utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear." That is to say, "[t]he process of centralization and decentralization, of unification and disunification intersect in the utterance" (272). Seen in this light, it would be interesting to observe the active participation of the utterance in heteroglossia that determines Wang's writing style, in which he cuts, splices, and synthesizes heterogeneous linguistic elements.

When Wan-fa came home from his carting job he would go to the *ryoriten*¹⁰ for a good meal. He had finally come to own his own ox and cart. With his oxcart he got as much as thirty dollars for a hauling job. Things are going rather well for him, of late. Compared with the past, one might say the present was quite comfortable for Wan-fa. He no longer needed to support his family, so he could spend everything he earned on himself. And this after being released from prison! He had not expected it, certainly. It was strange, was it not? (“An Oxcart for Dowry” 75)

定到料理店呷頓嶺底（作者注：吃頓好的），每次萬發拉了牛車回來。今日他總算是個有牛車底啦！用自己底牛車敢運趟別人底貨件，三十塊錢的樣子。生意算得過去。同以前比量起，它現在過著舒鬆得相當的日子哩！盡賺來，盡花去，家裏再不需要他供米給油，一點也沒有這個必須。詎料出獄後他反倒閒適起來，想都想不到底。有錢便當歸鴉去，一生莫曾口福得這等！村上無人不笑底，譏他入骨了。實實在在沒有辦法一個字都不聽進去。雙耳果然慷慨給全聵了。萬發也或許會比較的心安理得，尤其現在手裏拎著那姓簡底敬慰他底酒。（《嫁粧一牛車》72）

The passage above is an excerpt from Wang’s famous short story “An Oxcart for Dowry.” Again, the English readers would ignore the mixture of multi-languages and its effect. In the original passage, a large number of local vocabulary and Japanese words are embedded in the Chinese narrative, in which neologisms, arabesques, circumlocutions are widely used. In addition, plenty of classical vocabularies, rare words, abstruse words, newly coined words, short segments, fragmented phrases, and wrongly-put punctuations are added to a series of syntactic and grammatical errors. These fragmented phrases, syntactic hybrids, and grammatical “errors” apparently deviate from standard usage. Bakhtin has emphasized the “disruptive and transfiguring power” (Ashcroft et al., *Post-Colonial Studies* 118) and the “decentralizing, centrifugal forces” inherent in heteroglossia of the novel (*The Dialogic Imagination* 273). I would further argue that these fragmented phrases and syntactic hybrids, whereby Wang

“detritorializes” the language, not only bring freshness to Mandarin, but they also introduce transformative forces that induce vibration and disequilibrium in Mandarin. In other words, by cutting and splicing words and phrases, blocking and redirecting linguistic flows, alongside the use of neologisms, arabesques, circumlocutions, among others, Wang’s linguistic experiment pushes linguistic flows to go beyond the limit of language boundaries. Consequently, linguistic elements that have been forced to depart from their original designations reside in new linguistic terrain, forming new regulations and institutions.

Many critics have pointed out the linguistic and cultural significance of Wang’s frequent crossings of linguistic boundaries. Thus, such linguistic hybridization, often ironically, conveys political, social, and cultural implications. As Hsiao Jin-mian (蕭錦綿) notes, they are expressed through particular use of quasi-homonym or pidgin English: for example, *Meijun jiushi meijin* (美軍就是美金 American Army is American money); *Neisin duei neisin, pigu duei pigu* (內心對內心，屁股對屁股 Nation to Nation, People to People); *Mani jishi danichusi ya* (罵你即是打你去死呀 My name is Patricia) (266). In fact, Wang constantly travels and transverses in-between multiple languages, whose tension manifests itself in his highly syntactical hybrids. This quality appears in his earlier works such as “An Oxcart for Dowry” and “Hsiao-Lin Comes to Visit Taipei”; and in his later works, including *Portrait of Beauties (Portrait of Americans)* and *Rose, Rose, I Love You*, one sees more intensive and extensive operation of such a narrative strategy. As a matter of fact, the hybridization of multiple languages has become a trademark of Wang’s writing. Such mixture of languages is primarily, yet not exclusively, between Mandarin and Taiwanese, Mandarin and English, Taiwanese and English, Mandarin and Japanese, Taiwanese and Japanese, and also English and Japanese. The crossing of language boundaries forces linguistic elements to detach from their original semiotic systems and enter absolute deterritorialization, a linguistic terrain in which words are deprived of signification and become multiple circuits of intensities. The process of deterritorialization, however, is immediately followed by a process of reterritorialization through which a new semiotic system is formed.

The process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization thus constitutes a process of linguistic transformation. Seen in this light, the hybridization of heterogeneous languages becomes for Wang a convenient, if not indispensable, strategy to violate regular semantic patterns and grammatical structures of Mandarin Chinese and to invent the line of continuous linguistic variation that formulates a new semiotic system.

There always exist centrifugal forces in Wang's heteroglossia, as opposed to centripetal tendencies toward unitary or normative language. In this regard, Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "minor literature" is illuminating in that it is conceived as a way to undermine or "minoritize" the normative or "major" usage of a language. For Deleuze and Guattari, minor literature is fundamentally a particular way of linguistic usage or style that they discover and develop in Franz Kafka's precise and ascetic writing of Prague German. Lacking actual textual examples, the concept of minor literature remains obscure and controversial. According to Deleuze and Guattari, the first characteristic of minor literature is that "in it language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization" (*Kafka* 16). Ronald Bogue remarks: "Central to the concept of minor literature is a particular use of language, a way of deterritorializing language by intensifying features already within it" (*Deleuze on Literature* 91). Following Deleuze and Guattari's concept of minor literature, understood as an effect of deterritorialization of language from within, Wang's employment of fragmented phrases, syntactic hybrids, and grammatical "errors" may exemplify "minor" utilization of language, as these elements tend to intensify the inherent features of Chinese writing and deterritorialize the language itself by continuously violating its standard usage and regular patterns (the major usage).

Deleuze and Guattari designate a production of minor literature by means of a minor use of the major language: "To be a foreigner, but in one's own tongue, not only when speaking a language other than one's own. To be bilingual, multilingual, but in one and the same language, without even a dialect or patois" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 98). This does not mean to speak a language other than one's own, rather, to

speak in one's language like a foreigner: "Multilingualism is not merely the property of several systems each of which would be homogeneous in itself: it is primarily the line of flight or of variation which affects each system by stopping it from being homogeneous" (Deleuze and Parnet 4). From this perspective, with his idiosyncratic writing style characterized by the intermingling of heterogeneous language, Wang has invented his own bilingualism and multilingualism in the language he has created. As a result, his writing is not merely a vivid presentation of the subaltern languages of contemporary Taiwanese society that accounts for his satirical comedy, it is also an excellent exemplification of "minor" usage of language, whereby the author invents his own means of escaping from the "major" usage of the dominant language. And in these unexpected traces of the line of continuous linguistic variation in Wang's stylistic writing, one witnesses a transforming process of a developing literary canon inaugurated by a complex linguistic experiment.

The socio-political dimension of Wang's mixture of multi-languages is frequently emphasized. Bakhtin consistently reminds us of the socio-ideological aspect of heteroglossia of the novel. Similarly, Chiu Kuei-fen's postcolonial view of Wang's "heteroglossia" on the one hand embodies the linguistic experience of Taiwanese subjects under colonialism, and on the other hand registers the potential of subverting the privileged status of the dominant language. Such views are also informed by the fact that linguistic manipulation is also a socio-political act. As Chiu comments, "Wang's hybrid linguistic form is actually a political gesture" (182). One is aware that Deleuze and Guattari characterize the production of minor literature as a socio-political event: "everything in them is political"; "in it everything takes on a collective value" (*Kafka* 17). From this perspective, Wang's linguistic experiment, whose multilingualism induces vibration and disequilibrium within Mandarin Chinese and forms new regulations and institutions in turn, becomes a social practice and a political event with a potential to shape new social relations and political order.

Nomadism and the Subject

The crossing of heterogeneous linguistic boundaries, as heralded by Lai Ho's vernacular writing, Taiwanese Japanese writing, and Wang Chen-ho's hetroglossia, informs limits of linguistic and cultural realms and renders a moment of displacement. In Lai Ho, the intervention of local tongue breaks the original signification chains of Chinese writing and forces escaped linguistic elements to flow and to compose a new semiotic system. In the hybrid form of Taiwanese colonial translation, the "untranslatable" local vocabulary creates ruptures in the representation of translation, announcing "difference" inherent in this particular form of writing. In his blending heterogeneous languages, Wang Chen-ho "deterritorializes" the language itself by continuously violating its standard usage and regular patterns from within. "Deterritorialization" in this sense becomes the term for the displacement of language and subjectivity. Borrowing the term "deterritorialization" from Deleuze and Guattari, Caren Kaplan locates the mode of displacement in language and literature: "In one sense, it describes the effects of radical distancing between signifier and signified. Meaning and utterance become estranged. This defamiliarization enables imagination, even as it produces alienation" (188). Kaplan further relates the paradoxical nature of the moment in displacement to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of minor language and literature: The writing "travels, moves between centers and margins . . . this process . . . [is] both deterritorialization and reterritorialization—not imperialism but *nomadism*" (358–59, my emphasis).

Deleuze and Guattari define nomadism through a complex concept of "smooth space." In their discussion, "smooth space" is frequently opposed to "striated space," whose opposition seems easy to comprehend. As Bogue explains: "smooth space is space undivided and unmeasured, whereas striated space is crisscrossed with grids of dividing and measuring lines" ("Nomadic Flows" 14).¹¹ However, the distinction is not as evident as it might initially appear. As Bogue summarizes, first, they are not necessarily two separate spaces, but

“exist in fact in mixtures of one another”; second, the distinction is not strictly spatial and can be extended to “such figurative spaces as music, art, and mathematics”; third, and most significantly, the terms “smooth’ and ‘striated’ describe not simply space per se, but also ways of inhabiting and using space, and in this sense, ways of *creating* a smooth space or a striated space” (“Nomadic Flows” 14, emphasis original). Thus, the difference between smooth space and striated space depends not only on their different modes of composition but also on different ways of inhabiting space. And Nomadism refers to the composition and *creation* of smooth space.

The intervention of nomadism is essential here because it permits the discussion of language in a deterritorialized space, a “smooth space” free of linguistic limits and regulations. Rather than assuming power hierarchy and political opposition among languages, nomadism centers on the flows of dispersed linguistic signs that indicate the line of flight escaping from structured semiotic systems. Nomadism envisions an extensive “space” where linguistic signs encounter and relate to one another, defining the transformation of language boundaries. The language of flows is thus salutary here because it encourages an empirical analysis of the interconnection and interchange of various linguistic signs and semiotic elements. Therefore, the space of cross-writing becomes a linguistic site, composed by lines of transit and transgression. From this perspective, the genealogy of Taiwanese cross-writing demonstrates a map or diagram of constant shift of language boundaries where the authors travel and transverse with a pack of signs. And of course, the deterritorialization of language is constantly accompanied by a process of reterritorialization whereby “striated space” is measured where linguistic power hierarchy is established and semiotic system is structured.

Such nomadic aesthetics should not be confused with those of exile, migrant, and postcolonial literatures. For this issue, Rosi Braidotti provides insight into the nature of these genres. According to her, exile literature, based on “an acute sense of foreignness, coupled with the often hostile perception of the host country,” is “marked by a sense of loss or separation” (24). On the other hand, the migrant

literature, “caught in an in-between state,” is about “missing, nostalgia, and blocked horizons,” in which “the past acts as a burden” (24). In postcolonial literature, as juxtaposed to the migrant genre, the sense of home or culture of origin is being activated and conditioned by the host culture, and the memory of the past participates in the living experience. Braidotti states that “the ethical impulse that sustains the postcolonial mode makes the original into living experience, one that functions as a standard of reference” (25). The nomadic aesthetic, by contrast, aims neither at homeless sentiment nor at compulsive displacement, neither at nostalgia for the past nor at subversion of the master; rather, it is an active, continuous momentum toward the unknown. The nomadic consciousness, for Bradiotti, is akin to Foucault’s idea of “countermemory,” “a form of resisting assimilation or homologation into dominant ways of representing the self” (25).

In the scope of nomadism, Taiwanese cross-writing obtains a more positive and creative reading. In it linguistic boundaries collapse and blur. Linguistic elements emitted from heterogeneous semiotic systems appear approximately and contact directly. Therefore, the reminder in the process of translation that characterizes Lai Ho’s composition as a form of cross-writing should be taken seriously. They should not simply be recognized as marks of rhetorical strategy that aim to preserve the local spirit and memory, but rather as positive linguistic ingredients that help mold new aesthetic ideology and modern society. In Deleuze and Guattari’s language, these heterogeneous elements preserve linguistic multiplicities that are engaged in an ongoing literary and cultural transformation process. Likewise, local vocabulary embedded in Japanese translation is not simply historical residue or frozen memory that provokes nostalgia, but active substance that sustains identity with reference to the other. Wang’s efforts are always directed toward creating a minor literature, which mostly relies on deterritorializing the language from within and pushing linguistic elements beyond their limit. The production of minor literature emphasizes the line of flight, which is also a line of *becoming*, of escaping from history and of constant socio-cultural transformation. In this regard, nomadic linguistic flows in Taiwanese

cross-writing always encourage a literary and cultural invention based on the local, while avoiding preaching an authentic identity and promoting indiscriminate hybridization.

Consequently, the authors who constantly move in between languages and write in the interstices of semiotic systems, gain a different name. They are no longer “strangers” but “nomads.” The figure of the nomad, as opposed to the exile, allows us to think of the dispersion and dissemination of signs in the linguistic terrain, not only based on the hegemonic model but also as forms of resistance to “the stable, the eternal, the identical and the constant” (Kaplan 189, n. 8). The authors are bilingual and multilingual in the language that they have created. They are polyglots, whom Braidotti calls “linguistic nomads” (8). The linguistic nomads, being in between languages, have no vernacular. And yet, they constitute “a vantage point in deconstructing identity” (Braidotti 12). It is precisely at this vantage point that local Taiwanese writers are allowed to inscribe their own history of subjectivity by way of deconstructing the dominant mode. More significantly, the linguistic nomads are in the margins: “nomadic thinking is a minority position,” remarks Braidotti (29). One recalls that the writer of minor literature is in the margins, whose situation allows him/her “all the more the possibility to express another possible community and to forge the means for another consciousness and to express another sensibility” (*Kafka* 17). Nomadism for Deleuze and Guattari is a mode of becoming, an ultimate resistance against or escape from the dominant hegemony. Viewed in this light, the performative act of Taiwanese cross-writing authors in their linguistic experiments not only inscribes a history of subjectivity with the local as a standard of reference, it also entails an aesthetic and a socio-political revolution that seeks a new literature and a “people-to-come.”

NOTES

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¹ In his elaboration of hybridization, as an artistic device in the novel, M. Bakhtin distinguishes intentional/conscious hybrid from unintentional/unconscious hybrid. He argues that “unintentional, unconscious hybridization is one of the most important modes in the historical life and evolution of all languages,” and a conscious hybrid, “as distinct from a historical, organic, obscure language hybrid,” is “precisely the perception of one language by another language” (358–59).

² Critics have pointed out the various degrees of influence of the Chinese language, including classical and vernacular, in the different stages of Lai Ho’s literary career. For further discussion of this issue, see Chen Chien-chung, 234–50. Here I would emphasize the hybrid nature of his writing.

³ In her essay “Lai Ho’s Literary Spirits and Linguistic Style: A Steelyard,” Wang Chen-huang provides many examples of the kind. See 116–17.

⁴ What is indicated here is the transliteration of the local tongue (the Min dialogue).

⁵ This aesthetic ideology is actually the one for the writing of *hsiang-t’u* (鄉土) literature, a literary trend provoked by Huang Shi-hui (黃石輝) to express concerns for local people and matters. It also involves the use of local tongue as Huang Shi-hui claims that one should “use Taiwanese to write poems, novels, and folk songs and to depict Taiwanese matters” (Liao 488). The term “*hsiang-t’u*,” which literally means “country and soil,” can be roughly translated into English as “native,” “local,” or “regional.”

⁶ The *yen-wen yi-chih* movement in the early twentieth century in Taiwan, introduced by Huang Shi-hui and Kuo Chiu-shen (郭秋生), is usually recognized as the Taiwanese Written Language Reform Movement (台灣話文運動) by Taiwanese literary historians and critics. The idea of *yen-wen yi-chih* can be found as early as 1920 in Chen Hsin’s (陳忻) article “Literature and Its Mission” (文學與職務). In the article, however, Chen did not touch the issue of reforming the Taiwanese written language, although he complained that Taiwanese colloquial speech could not be completely transcribed through Chinese characters. He accordingly viewed the *yen-wen yi-chih* movement—as practiced in modern China—primarily as a movement to popularize the vernacular in order to educate the populace. The issue of *yen-wen yi-chih* has been argued with enthusiasm among Taiwanese intellectuals, including Huang

Ch'ao-ch'in (黃朝琴), Huang Cheng-ts'ung (黃呈聰), and Chang Wo-chun (張我軍), who suggested that Chinese writing be reformed for use in Taiwanese. In contrast, Huang Shi-hui, who gave the name of *hsiang-t'u* literature, proposed the Taiwanese written language reform in order to create Taiwan *hsiang-t'u* literature. For a detailed discussion of this subject, see, for example, Hsu Chun-ya, 142–6.

⁷ Phonetic writing is usually seen as the transcription of speech. Saussurean linguistics, for example, treated writing as secondary and exempted it from the analysis of *Langue* as a system.

⁸ The translations from Japanese into English are all mine.

⁹ Jacques Derrida writes: “Recourse to apposition and capitalization . . . is not translating one tongue into another. It comments, explains, explains, paraphrases, but does not translate” (172).

¹⁰ The English version gives a footnote, a Japanese-style restaurant for the word *ryoriten*. And yet original Japanese (Chinese characters) is provided in the original language, for the Chinese characters are intelligible to all Chinese readers.

¹¹ The distinguishing features of the smooth and the striated space offered by Deleuze and Guattari are more complicated and not always illuminating. My summary of their difference relies mainly on Bogue’s succinct essay, “Nomadic Flows,” especially 13–18.

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