Translating Tongzhi Identity in Qiu Miaojin’s Last Words From Montmartre

Student: Alexander Wayne Benninger

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中文摘要

2014年王德威(Ari Heinrich) 出版了《蒙瑪特遺書》的英譯本，向英文讀者介紹邱妙津，並將她定位為台灣女同志書寫的代表作家。如此的策略把台灣「同志文學」與美國「LGBT文學」納入「全球酷兒文學」的範疇。本論文以《蒙瑪特遺書》英譯來分析台灣同志身分與翻譯的關係。首先，筆者將管窺LGBT與同志族群的歷史、文化、國族等等元素如何形成各種性別身分。同時，剖析美台不同性別理論以及身分認同如何影響同志文學的英譯。最後，探討在全球化脈絡之下，英文讀者如何看待這位台灣代表作家。

關鍵字: 邱妙津、《蒙瑪特遺書》、同志文學、LGBT翻譯、性別理論、全球化
Abstract

Ari Larissa Heinrich’s translation, *Last Words From Montmartre*, frames Qiu Miaojin as a prominent lesbian voice to inspire solidarity among global queer communities. This translation strategy establishes regional queer genres such as American LGBT Literature and Taiwanese *Tongzhi* Literature as World Literature. The following thesis examines how this globalized translation strategy presents Taiwanese *Tongzhi* identity for consumption by American LGBT readers.

This begins by examining the historical, cultural, and national constructs that contribute to an understanding of LGBT and *Tongzhi* as global sexualities; before investigating how different cross-cultural conceptions of gender theory and “coming out” politics complicate translations of *Tongzhi* Literature. This thesis concludes by discussing how a globalized translation of Qiu Miaojin’s “permeable voice” impacts English cultural reception of the migrant Taiwanese author.

**Keywords**: Qiu Miaojin, *Last Words From Montmartre*, Tongzhi Literature, LGBT Translation, Gender Theory, Globalization
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Every journey begins with a single step and I’d be remiss if I didn’t thank any and all who guided me along the way. Thank you to the Taiwanese Ministry of Education for their generous scholarship and thank you to the Graduate Institute of Translation and Interpretation at National Taiwan Normal University. I am forever grateful for the educational opportunity you’ve given me.

This thesis is a labor of love that came to fruition because of many supportive teachers and individuals. To my advisor Professor Ken-fang Lee: I appreciate your guidance through the entire writing process. Your willingness to share tough conversations about cultural difference has encouraged me to not only learn more about Taiwan but also myself. Professor Sharon Lai: I appreciate that you’ve encouraged me to cultivate curiosity and share my research with others. Professor Ta-wei Chi: It’s been a real privilege to learn from your work. I’m so fortunate that you’re willing to open your classroom to others and start cross-cultural dialogue.

To Professor Ari Larissa Heinrich: Your translation is a queer student’s dream. Thanks for introducing me to such an experimental Taiwanese author. I’ve learned a lot from diving into both your work and the original narrative. It’s so cool to be studying in Taiwan at a time when open scholarship on Tongzhi activism is so prominent.

To Qiu Miaojin: Thanks for taking me on one emotional journey. It’s a comfort to know I didn’t have to be the only one figuring it out on the other side of the world.

I’m a long way from home but luckily I have many supportive friends. Ryah Rosenberg: Thank you for listening to all of it. I look forward to our nerdy translator talk. I joined a class of 15 spectacular professionals and I’m in awe of all of you. Thank you to Peter Rabbit for sticking with me through many interpreting practice sessions and just as many afternoon teas. Meixin Ng: You’re one brilliant Singaporean. You remind me to stay true to myself and pursue my passions regardless of what anyone thinks. Gina Chen: You brighten my day. I love that you’ve shown me the best of Taiwan and that I can always find you for advice. Héctor Muñoz Romeo: I have many sisters in Taipei but I’m glad that I found a brother in you. Ingrid Wu: Thank you for many delicious meals and a sympathetic ear. Jessica Chiang: I love that you smile at my antics but always keep me calm. Tim Smith: Thanks for always calling and sharing a heartfelt moment.

To Laurel Clutts: You’re my same time zone friend! You’ve been such a support throughout my graduate studies. I know you’ll be a wonderful archaeologist! Hope you can take me to see all your favorite museum treasures very soon. You deserve it all.

Skype is a wonderful invention. It’s almost like I never left the States. Alex Tomaso: You are my everything. Jess Adams: You’re a great friend who is always watching. Emrie Tomaiko: You are my Delta Nu sister. I will always fix your crown. Tabor Mothershead: I can always count on you to stop me from thinking too much. Baylor Sezate: Miss VANJIE! Rebecca Grace: I have
never laughed with anyone like I do with you. Elizabeth Coh: You’re the most effervescent woman I know. Keep achieving great things. Ann Marie: Your Line messages are the best encouragement. I’m glad to walk in your footsteps. I hope my Mandarin is as good as yours some day. The Shutts: Your home is always open. I love that you continue to mentor me from thousands of miles away. Millie Gittinger: My adopted grandmother who taught me anything is possible.

I’m glad that my family is stuck with me. Mom you taught me to set a goal and finish it. Dad taught me that I shouldn’t give up because there are many paths to that goal. Jake taught me to watch out for myself but that he’s always got my back. Renée taught me to celebrate the big successes but to make time for the little things. Grandma and Papa traveled to Taiwan for me. If you can do that then I should be open to any new experience.
I. Introduction

Qiu Miaojin is one of the first Taiwanese authors to openly declare her love of women. The young writer, who openly explores homoerotic themes, rose to popularity in the early nineties by publicly confronting taboos about homosexuality. She is an early lesbian voice within Taiwanese letters, considered to be a formative inspiration behind what became known as *Tongzhi* Literature.

The author’s autobiographical works reject linear realism in order to create a blurred or disrupted sense of time. She is known for frank depictions of both her love life and her artistic aspirations. She was elevated to cult status following her suicide in Paris at the age of 26.¹

Qiu Miaojin pushed back against biased media representation to shine a light on the loneliness and isolation that results from a homophobic society. She was forthcoming about the challenges in lesbian relationships and her emotional confessions won her a very loyal readership. As an artist, she experiments with gender variance, often adopting a masculine persona. Qiu is also remembered for deep emotional insights into the life experiences of her characters. These reflections on human nature later became an artistic achievement in their own right.²

Qiu published her first novel, *Notes of a Crocodile*, in 1994. The protagonist, Lazi, falls into a crowd of high achieving misfits at National Taiwan University, who help her come to terms with her sexuality. Lazi later befriends a whimsical crocodile who acts as an allegory for

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¹ 劉素雅。＜愛戀、性別與書寫—邱妙津的女同性戀小說＞。《性別論述與台灣小說》，梅家玲編，麥田出版，2000年，279-306 頁。

² 劉素雅 302-303 頁
her lesbian identity. Qiu capitalizes on this cartoon avatar to comment on media voyeurism that permeated homosexual communities in the early nineties.

The crocodile is a satiric representation of homosexuals and their perceived threat to heteronormative society. The cartoon avatar invites social scrutiny, from both the national and media apparatus, to mock contradictions that arise from a patriarchal Taiwan that is both fearful and fascinated by lesbian relationships. The beloved character is now an enduring symbol for the dangers of homophobia and heterosexism within society at large.

*Notes of a Crocodile* was a bestseller among Taiwanese audiences and eventually spread to China, where despite a lack of gay and lesbian representation in traditional media, internet chat rooms transformed Qiu into a fixture of underground pop culture. Qiu’s books were not authorized to be published in China until 2012 but even before officially recognizing her work, lesbians in both China and Taiwan long admired her as someone who was always true to her heart.

Her second book, *Last Words From Montmartre*, was completed just before she committed suicide. The book is written as a series of letters that document the final year of the narrator’s life across three cities: Taipei, Paris, and Tokyo. The letters are not connected by a central plot; instead, each is as a separate entry that contains the narrator’s musings about love, sexuality, and loss. The novel can be considered a final testament to her ex-girlfriend Xu, whom she considers to be the love of her life.
The narrator in *Last Words* speaks as an unnamed, non-descript voice, acting as Qiu’s veiled autobiographical personae. While *Last Words* provides no clear motivation, the emotional account leads readers to speculate about the nature of Qiu’s final act. Reader’s continued fascination perpetuates unique visibility politics central to 1990s *Tongzhi* Literature.

Qiu Miaojin is remembered for her strong homoerotic themes, but the young woman never participated in overt feminist writing, nor did she actively campaign for homosexual rights. She unfortunately died before the inception of the *Tongzhi* Movement, which did not take place until the millennium. *Last Words* is more about visibility politics that leverage a mass media spectacle to bring healthy visibility to the lesbian community. Qiu may not have “come out” in a political sense; however, this public visibility laid the foundation for modern *Tongzhi* activism.

It would take almost twenty years for Qiu’s books to be translated into various languages. The New York Review of Books was the first to publish complete English editions of both *Notes of a Crocodile*, translated by Bonnie Huie, in 2017 and *Last Words From Montmartre*, translated by Ari Larissa Heinrich, in 2014. The English translations were followed by subsequent French editions published by Notabilia, an independent press in Paris, France.5

*Last Words* enjoyed a positive critical reception from American audiences. Lambda Literary, a noted queer literature review, praises the novel for a global outlook ahead of its time. Lambda critics acknowledge Qiu for her “influence on the gay and lesbian culture in Taiwan and

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5 羅志華 製作人。第六集：《蒙馬特·女書 邱妙津》，華人作家II Podcast 源於港視電網，2017年1月。
in the Chinese speaking world at large,” while also maintaining that her almost universal pain speaks to much larger readerships.6

The Harvard Review further praises how the format fosters an intimacy with Qiu. As the narrator shares her struggles with depression, love, and rejection; she writes with an emotional vulnerability that evokes reader’s shared experiences. The reviewer concludes that such intimacy adds to the novel’s charm in that audiences remember the youthful struggle of “trying to work out what a person needs to feel truly a part of this world.”7

A final aspect that resonates with critics is the experimental queer narrative. Last Words not only rejects temporality but also contributes to what Rain Taxi calls, “The death of a stigmatic politically charged body.” As a Taiwanese lesbian living between nations, cultures, and genders, Qiu Miaojin is cast as a politicized queer presence. The reviewer almost celebrates the countercultural feelings of alienation that color the Western queer experience. As a marginal voice, Qiu embodies queer difference and her death is termed “suicide as art.”8

In the decades years since Qiu’s passing, new globalized understandings of queerness have expanded the outlook of Last Words From Montmartre. The narrator who navigates a transient, multicultural cityscape appeals to a more international world. Qiu appears to affirm queer solidarity born from the alienation and emotional trauma of those readers who dare to transgress the stringent confines of nation, culture, and gender.

6 Dinh, Viet. Review of Last Words From Montmartre translated by Ari Larissa Heinrich. Lambda Literary, 08 June 2014, Online.
8 Mar, Jenn. Review of Last Words From Montmartre translated by Ari Larissa Heinrich. Rain Taxi, Fall 2014, Online.
Ari Larissa Heinrich’s success demonstrates the potential for *Tongzhi* Literature in translation to foster queer cultural exchange between the United States and Taiwan. *Last Words From Montmartre* will introduce Qiu Miaojin to a new generation of readers. This will help to share a broader communicative message in line with Qiu Miaojin’s own global vision.

The translator works from a queer perspective that highlights gender and sexual variance. A broad interpretation of the source text avoids stringent, gendered language to capture the full breadth of Qiu’s personal expression. A close reading of Zöe, the narrator’s alter ego, also allows the reader to experience the fluidity of gender within *Tongzhi* Literature.

*Last Words From Montmartre* is a product of prominent visibility politics within 1990s Taiwan. The translator’s awareness of “outing” constructions like *puguang* (曝光) and *xianshen* (現身) communicates how these specific cultural pressures elicit Qiu Miaojin’s response to local homophobia. However, the translation does emphasize a posthumous lesbian identity that may not always reflect Qiu Miaojin’s political reality.

*Last Words From Montmartre* moves from lesbian visibility towards the notion of lesbian identity. While this strategy reflects significant advancements in queer politics, the translation amplifies discussions of sexual orientation and identity politics that may not be present in the original. A preference for “genderless” classifications also serves to limit larger critiques of gender variance in *Tongzhi* Literature. Finally, an emphasis on the narrator as a globalized, “permeable voice” may limit visibility of Qiu Miaojin’s specific socio-cultural and literary contexts.

Ari Larissa Heinrich’s translation frames Qiu Miaojin as a prominent lesbian voice to inspire solidarity among global queer communities. This translation strategy is part of an exciting
new area of literary translation that imagines regional queer genres, such as American LGBT Literature and Taiwanese Tongzhi Literature as World Literature.

A global understanding of Queer Literature presents an opportunity to study Tongzhi and LGBT Literatures as fully realized cultural products, which facilitate contact between queer communities in an age of globalization. A close reading of Last Words From Montmartre may also provide insight into how Taiwanese Tongzhi identity is translated for American readers.

Keith Harvey’s initial research primarily concerns how translations of LGBT Literature commodify Anglo-American gay identity categories for foreign readers. Years later, scholars may expound upon this same framework to examine how homosexual categories like tongzhi are presented to American readers.

Harvey’s framework emphasizes three key points. First, is the importance of homosexual reading communities in the target culture. He writes that often a lack of explicitly gay categories in the target culture results in a “translation deficit.” This deficit forces translators to superimpose homosexual identity models onto target readers to ensure proper reception. Anglo-American gay and lesbian identity are prominent fixtures of LGBT politics. Tongzhi Literature also supports social categories like tongxinglian (同性戀), tongzhi (同志), and ku’er (酷兒), which are already well integrated into Taiwanese society. This translation represents contact between two well developed and culturally distinct homosexual reading communities. Therefore, a translation deficit is of little concern.

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Harvey’s second point is that translators may introduce new representations of selfhood or community organization into a target cultural polsystsem. Translators must engage with homosexual identities that many not have been articulated in the receiving culture.\textsuperscript{10} Taiwanese \textit{tongzhi} identity is a collectivist political consciousness that does not exist in English. Translators will inevitably confront the implications of expressing such cultural unity in relation to the highly individualist nature of LGBT narratives.

Translators must further determine how to interpret the significance of the \textit{Tongzhi} Movement according to the specific objectives of LGBT Literature. American readers will look to Heinrich’s translation to reaffirm their personal LGBT identities. However, \textit{Tongzhi} Literature is a political genre more concerned with justifying homosexuality through public visibility of the community. \textit{Tongzhi} Literature may draw upon an author’s personal experience but sexual orientation is often a secondary characteristic of their work.

Third, translating gay identities is unique because gay communal signs and encodings are transformed in the process of translation. A translated text may enhance the presence of these gay signs, or diminish their specificity, according to the individual determinations of the translator.\textsuperscript{11} Heinrich presents Qiu Miaojin as a prominent lesbian author by amplifying discussion of her sexuality. This may reflect Qiu’s posthumous association with \textit{tongzhi} identity but it also contributes an element of identity politics that may not be present within the original work.

Harvey finishes by saying that translated literature provides cultural and textual otherness, which may represent the sexual otherness that LGBT readers wish to articulate in

\textsuperscript{10} Harvey 147

\textsuperscript{11} Harvey 150
themselves. He cautions that in a hunger to validate identity, an Anglo-American reading of translated texts, may even domesticate gay identities for target readers. A global understanding of Queer Literature relies on explicit discussion of Qiu’s sexual orientation. This construction may serve to domesticate tongzhi identity to reinforce domestic LBGT identity formations.

The following study will investigate Heinrich’s globalized translation of *Last Words From Montmartre* in order to understand how English translations of Tongzhi Literature are marketed to LGBT readers. I will argue that Heinrich’s globalized translation strategy domesticates Tongzhi (同志) identity formations for use within an American LGBT framework.

Chapter Two outlines LGBT and Tongzhi as global sexualities. This section traces the origins of queer as a unifying global mechanism before examining the sexual, historical, cultural, and national constructs behind the formation of the LGBT and Tongzhi communities. This chapter concludes by defining LGBT and Tongzhi Literatures as as distinct cultural products produced by these regional homosexual subcultures.

The Afterward suggests that Qiu Miaojin was part of an international community of writers “unrestrained by conventional labels and categories such as ‘lesbian,’ ‘Chinese,’ or even ‘woman.’” Qiu Miaojin is imagined as someone who embraces a queer subjectivity that operates outside traditional identity categories. While this perspective allows for broad interpretations of Qiu’s work, an outright rejection of conventional labels is dismissive of the pressure Qiu Miaojin faced as an author. Qiu Miaojin confronts the media apparatus through

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12 Harvey 148

public visibility. This implies that “coming out” politics remain a particularly relevant aspect of this autobiographical work.

In *Last Words*, the narrator adopts a queer persona, named Zoë, who is at times perceived as male, female, or even gender neutral. The abstract hails Zoë as a “genderless” character that transcends the gender binary to reach a pinnacle of personal expression. While Zoë does rebel against traditional gender roles, to attribute this to a “genderless” construct limits the possibility for larger critiques of sexual and gender politics within the novel.

Chapter Three will delve into these differences in Anglo-American and Taiwanese gender theory; as well as the challenges they present in translation. A close reading of Zoë’s gender fluidity and the narrator’s subscription to the T and Po relationship will demonstrate how Qiu Miaojin’s experimental writing subverts gender politics. It will continue with an explanation of how “coming out” and *xianshen* (現身) politics complicate LGBT and Tongzhi visibility.

Chapter Four will explore the global aesthetic that places Qiu Miaojin at the center of a literary scene known to be “multicultural, polyglot, ambitious and queer.”¹⁴ This globalized outlook is dependent on the multicultural appeal behind the Qiu Miaojin phenomenon.

This section will analyze the various environmental, cultural, and stylistic factors that contribute to Qiu’s global perspective. The chapter also examines how romanticization of the global metropolis relates to cultural perceptions of globalization. Finally, a comparison to Osamu Dazai will determine how a globalized “permeable self” divorces Qiu from her specific socio-cultural and literary contexts.

¹⁴ Qiu 153
II. LGBT and Tongzhi as Global Sexualities

An investigation of global queer literature begins by defining what it means to be queer. In the United States, the word queer, has historically been applied in many different ways. Queer typically signifies something strange, abnormal or weird. It describes that which lays beyond social norms and disrupts conformity. The word *queer* may also be used abusively or even endearingly, as a colloquial term for homosexuality.¹⁵

Nikki Sullivan states that queer activism in the US took shape in the early 1970s when activists became frustrated that traits such as sexuality and gender took precedence over other aspects of identity. These activists criticized the ethnic model of identity politics present within Gay Liberation (later LGBT) and Feminist movements for exhibiting white, middle-class, heteronormative values and liberal political interests. In response, these individuals began queer activism to question unitary gay and lesbian identity or community. This gradually developed into a political position focused on intersections of race, class, sexuality, and gender.

Queer became a countercultural phenomenon that exists on the periphery of the LGBT movement. Traditional definitions of queer celebrate intersectional difference beyond neatly defined gay and lesbian communities. Queer provides a new sense of belonging for those activists who want to expand traditional discussions of gender and sexual diversity. What began as a slur against homosexual and gender non-conforming communities, became a discourse whereby these individuals fought back against systematic oppression.¹⁶

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The word queer centers around the idea of inclusivity. The movement was born from questioning privileged narratives within gay and lesbian movements but it was never about excluding these individuals. Queer is about amplifying voices of difference to celebrate diversity within broader movements. It also seeks to understand how intersectional identities, like race and class interplay within LGBT activism, which is defined by the singular identity politics behind sexual orientation and gender identity.

Nikki Sullivan continues that the 1980s further challenged gay and lesbian theory after the arrival of Foucault and Poststructuralism. Poststructuralism rejects the idea of the subject as autonomous, unified, self-knowing, and static. The philosophy instead focuses on the constructed, contingent, unstable and heterogeneous character of subjectivity, social relations, and knowledge. Poststructuralism criticizes sexuality as a singular unifying force to liberate the individual self. This interrogative environment is the basis for queer theory.¹⁷

Queer theory was initially an area of academic inquiry that sought to express diverse perspectives beyond hegemonic notions of heteronormativity present throughout Western culture. Queer theory highlights sexual and gender diversity to challenge social convention but in the process, even as theorists fight for the inherent fluidity of queer, their investigations are confined within academia, which adheres to set scholastic definitions of queerness.¹⁸

The benefit of course is that queer theory has evolved into a fully realized academic discipline that is utilized by international institutions. Queer theory is no longer an isolated

¹⁷ Sullivan 41-43
¹⁸ Sullivan 47
aspect of American culture. Scholars worldwide adopt queer perspectives to explore gender and sexual diversity in various cultural contexts.

Fran Martin believes that queer may have originally been intended to communicate only gender or sexual diversity; but the term has grown into a global position defined by the intersection of multiple identities. She writes, “Queer could be understood as itself produced out of the fracturing of the homogenizing categories of ‘gay’ and ‘lesbian’ by the insistent irruption of the ‘other’ kinds of difference that became newly ascendant in the population flows resultant from decolonizations.”

Global queerness makes new adjustments for ethnic and cultural differences to examine gender and sexuality in specific cultural contexts. Martin cautions that theorists must recognize categories such as gay and lesbian or tongzhi are identities rooted in particular histories, cultures, and even nation-states, which are constantly in contact throughout the process of globalization.

This investigation refers to queer in accordance with a global awareness of how specific historical, ethnic, and cultural factors contribute to the formation of LGBT and tongzhi identities. The word queer is a unifying global mechanism that maintains a poststructural sensitivity to intersectional differences, including race, class, sexuality, and gender. This definition of queer requires separate examination of American LGBT and Taiwanese tongzhi identities to understand how these distinct homosexual subcultures communicate within Heinrich’s new understanding of global queer literature.

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20 Martin 7
2.1 The Origins of LGBT Identity

Robert Beachy states in *Gay Berlin* that modern homosexual identity took shape within a uniquely German milieu at the beginning of the nineteenth century, where debates over the innate character of sexual identity, whether governed by nature or nurture, biology or culture, genetics or environment brought about “the understanding of same-sex erotic attraction as a fundamental element of an individual’s biological and psychological makeup.”

The Weimar Republic (1919-1933) was a liberal environment that encouraged open discussion of homosexual issues. The vocabulary surrounding homosexuality was born through legal reformers who protested against Paragraph 175, a Prussian anti-sodomy statue. The lawyers argued that sexuality was an inherent aspect of identity and that homosexual communities deserved legal protections and due process under the law. Debates about anti-sodomy statutes were supported by an open and free press that facilitated collaboration between medical scientists and sexual minorities; leading to new theories about biological determinism and subjective expression of sexual personhood. Robert Beachy believes that these advances in German sexology are the beginning of the Western concept of sexual orientation.

Beachey argues that modern gay and lesbian identity is a social and cultural construction based on exclusively same-sex erotic attraction. This new social category began with the coinage of *homosexuality* by Karl Maria Kentbeny in 1869 and gradually developed into a hetero/homosexual binarism, where same-sex erotic attraction came to be understood as an aspect of personal identification.

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22 Beachy 22
Homosexual is therefore a social category, based on a sexual orientation, that defines
same-sex erotic attraction as a biological trait and innate sexual identity. While homosexuality is
an aspect of individual subjectivity, gay and lesbian is a cultural identity that takes on particular
political resonance through membership in the LGBT community.

Keith Harvey finds that in the United States, gays and lesbians for both political and
cultural reasons, have found it useful to foster a communal identity in order to resist oppression,
forge a sense of history, and create a distinct set of socio-cultural values. This political activism
began on June 28, 1969 when the Stonewall Riots initiated the LGBT civil rights movement.

The protests are commemorated yearly at Christopher Street Liberation Day, where the
modern notion of gay rights as human rights continues to inspire gays, lesbians, and transgender
people; to stand up, speak out, and celebrate their pride in the LGBT community.

LGBT identity is thus an individualist political movement based on personal identity
formation. Sexual orientation or gender identity is the definitive aspect of membership in this
community but the mantle of gay identity adheres to a distinct set of American socio-cultural
values, including resisting oppression, intersectional identity, and the power of individuality.

The Stonewall Riots celebrate diversity within the LGBT community. The riots launched
the careers of many prominent LGBT figures including Marsha P. Jonson, a local drag queen,
who advocated for the transgender community. Marsha along with Miss Major Griffin-Gracy, a
transgender community leader, were known friends to Silvia Rivera, a Puerto Rican drag queen,
who also fought back against police action. The protests, which took place on Marsha’s birthday,

23 Harvey, Keith. "Gay Community, Gay Identity and the Translated Text." TTR: traducion, terminologie,

24 “Stonewall: The Story of Resistance | Chosen Family | Part 7” Youtube, uploaded by Tyler Oakley,
28 June 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=B40AHBY4mNM.
place the contributions of these transgender women of color at the forefront of the modern
Stonewall narrative to remind activists that the LGBT movement is not exclusive to one singular
experience.25

2.2 LGBT Literature

The LGBT community occurs de-facto where gays, lesbians, and transgender people
materially and interjectionally relate. Gay identity is an internalized process of self-actualization
but it presupposes the existence of a larger community with whom to associate or dissociate.
This results in a mutually supportive construction where “I am gay,” means quite literally, “I
belong to the gay community.”

LGBT Literature connects readers to the history, culture, and values of the LGBT
community. This expansive genre explores the parameters of the gay experience to create an
interactive space for the formulation and reception of gay voices in American culture.

Readers turn to LGBT Literature for a sense of what it means to be gay and to associate
with the LGBT community. Reflections of their own experiences reaffirm LGBT voices, which
fosters a bond of fellowship that exists outside of actual settings. LGBT Literature validates
external identity formations through the simultaneous projection and expansion of the LGBT
community. 26

The commercialization of LGBT Literature means that gay and lesbian identity is now an
Anglo-American cultural product that circulates in global markets. LGBT Literature presents a
specific literary imaging of the LGBT community that inspires new models of global sexuality.

25 “What Caused the Stonewall Riots?” Youtube, uploaded by Kat Blaque, 15 August 2015,
www.youtube.com/watch?v=zLbaS9lejmM&t=35s.
26 Harvey 145-147
Harvey warns the commodification of Anglo-American gay identity privileges white middle class experiences, which threatens the heterogeneous and diverse nature of the LGBT community. The challenge is to balance this semblance of communal experience and identity along with intersectional queer politics.\textsuperscript{27}

The imperialist nature of U.S. politics sometimes leads to criticism that the appearance of recognizable homosexual subcultures or personal identity formations, similar to ‘gay’ and ‘lesbian,’ can be equated to Westernization, since these formations were initially produced in America and Europe.

Fran Martin acknowledges the impacts of American cultural imperialism but through a paradox she terms, “glocalization,” American personal identity categories like ‘lesbian’ or ‘gay’ are localized and transformed into visible, culturally specific homosexual subcultures. Tongzhi identity may appropriate aspects of American culture but scholar’s current understanding of the tongzhi community, history, and culture originates from Taiwan.\textsuperscript{28}

2.3 The Formation of Tongzhi Identity

Ta-wei Chi (紀大偉) attributes the formation of Taiwanese tongzhi identity to a series of translation encounters (翻譯遭遇), a process whereby original concepts such as homosexual subjectivity or gay identities enter Taiwan in translation. As the Taiwanese public sphere gradually assigns new meanings to these terms through adaptation, localization and public debate, the mis/use or overuse of such terms eventually leads to a merging of both ideas. The

\textsuperscript{27} Harvey 143
\textsuperscript{28} Martin 2-6
continued use of this new vocabulary transforms the public sphere by shaping a politically active and publicly recognized tongzhi identity.²⁹

Tongzhi identity is sometimes equivalent to the Anglo-American gay and lesbian, especially in global discussions of human rights, but this phrase primarily articulates a political and cultural identity specific to homosexual communities in the Mandarin speaking world. The origins of tongzhi identity begin with the construction of tongxinglian (同性戀) or the homosexual subject.

Pan Guangdan (潘光旦) is one of the first sexologists to examine homoeroticism in the traditional Chinese context. His research uncovered early stories like the “passion of the cut sleeve” (斷袖之癖), which describes male consorts favored by the emperor. The presence of “contract brothers” or “contract sisters” (契哥契妹) also points to acceptance of homosexual relationships between ordinary subjects. Ming Dynasty fiction later alludes to the southern winds (南風), a euphemism for male homosexuality or mirror rubbing (照鏡子), a code for lesbianism, but because these stories refer to sexual activity, rather than sexual identity, Pan determines that there is no phrase to encompass sexual or gender variance in pre-modern China.³⁰

Sang reaches similar conclusions during her investigation of emerging lesbian identity in modern China. She finds that tolerance of female homosexuality in ancient China is not the same as acceptance of lesbian identity. Sex between women was tolerated because women living in close quarters have an unlimited supply of yin (陰) and this alternative to heterosexual relations

²⁹ 纪大偉。《同志文學史：台灣的發明》, <第六章: 翻譯愛滋，同志，酷兒—世紀末>，台灣台北，聯經出版事業股份有限公司 2017年，341-406頁。
³⁰ 《誌同志》。崔子恩導演，dGenerate Films，2008年。
does not directly threaten a single legitimate male partner. Traditional ideas of cloistered femininity (閨中密友) also isolate women from men and therefore, female homosexual relationships remained largely private affairs.\(^{31}\)

The phrase tongxinglian, (同性戀) literally “same sex love,” represents a paradigm shift that refers to the homosexual subject who moves beyond traditional notions of private, isolated, sexual encounters; towards formation of an identity based on sexual orientation. Tongxinglian first entered the Chinese context by way of May 4th thinkers who translated contentious debates about sexual science from the Weimar Republic.\(^{32}\)

As May 4th thinkers continued to discuss sexual science, the notion of sexual modernity become synonymous with Republican Modernity, a new political platform that took shape at the turn of the 20th century. Tongxinglian was significant because there was no previous concept of sexual identity in pre-modern China. The phrase laid the foundation for homosexual subjectivity “as a social identity, with particular political and cultural importance, that describes homoerotic sexual practices and same-sex relationships.”\(^{33}\)

Republican Modernity spread to Taiwan following the arrival of the Chinese Nationalist Party in 1945. The Nationalist Party imported and strengthened Republican notions of sexual modernity through a subsequent Chinese cultural renaissance that continued into the 1960s.

\(^{31}\) Sang, Tze-lan, Deborah. The Emerging Lesbian: Female Same-Sex Desire in Modern Chinese Literature and Culture. Berkley, University of California Press.

\(^{32}\) Sang 216

\(^{33}\)《誌同志》。崔子恩導演，dGenerate Films，2008年。
Republican Modernity expanded circulation of (homo) sexual categories like *tongxinglian*, which later evolved into public articulations of homosexual identity, known as *tongzhi* identity.\(^{34}\)

*Tongzhi* (同志) is the positive politicization of *tongxinglian* (同性戀) or the homosexual subject. This adjective, used by both male and female homosexuals, is synonymous with the public sphere and empowers the homosexual community in public debates about gay pride and marriage equality.\(^{35}\) *Tongzhi* represents a collectivist political movement that advocates civil rights and mainstream acceptance for homosexuals, irrespective of class, gender, or political affiliation.\(^{36}\) *Tongzhi* politics is a form of local activism focused on collective advancement of the homosexual community in Taiwan; however, the word *Tongzhi* carries different regional significance for homosexuals in Hong Kong, China, and Taiwan.

### 2.4 The Etymology of *Tongzhi*

In China, *tongzhi*, meaning comrade, refers originally to revolutionary spirit. The term was widespread in Maoist revolutionary rhetoric and rose to prominence during the Cultural Revolution. Chinese activists eventually adopted this euphemism for homosexuals after Hong Kong director Lin Yihua (林奕華) used it to advertise a local queer film festival.

*Tongzhi* is characterized by potent political sensitivity in China. Chinese authorities occasionally censor appropriations of *tongzhi* because inciting subversive discussions about

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\(^{35}\) 紀大偉。《同志文學史：台灣的發明》，<第六章: 翻譯愛滋，同志，酷兒—世紀末>，台灣台北，聯經出版事業股份有限公司 2017年，341-406頁。

homosexual rights is viewed as degrading to the moral principals of the Revolution. Tongzhi nevertheless remains a source of cultural pride for many Chinese homosexuals.  

Ta-Wei Chi states that many Taiwanese tongzhi look to the words of revolutionary leader Sun Yat-sen (孫中), “The Revolution is not yet done. Let all our comrades strive for their consummation,” to inspire a unified homosexual rights movement. Chi cautions that this narrative emphasizes a connection to Chinese cultural tradition, which discounts international circulation of this neologism.

Chi’s research points out that prior to the defeat of the Revive China Society (興中會), the Chinese Revolutionary Party (中國革命黨) used the phrase, zaofan (造反) to mean rebellion. It was only after Sun Yat-sen discovered the phrase geming (革命) in a Japanese newspaper that he used it to translate revolution. Geming endured as the Chinese transcription of this phrase and it remains a testament to its Japanese origins.

Republican author and reformer Liang Qichao (梁啟超) also borrowed tongzhi (comrade) from Japanese modernists. His early writings use tongzhi to describe legal reformers killed by Empress Dowager Cixi (慈禧太后) in the Xinyou Coup (辛酉政變). This means that both geming (revolution) and tongzhi (comrade) existed in Japanese consciousness years before before they were attributed to the famous quote by Sun Yat-sen.  

37 《同志同志》
38 孫中: 「革命尚未成功，同志仍須努力。」
39 紀大偉 380-381 頁
The phrase *tongzhi* also appeared to describe male homosexuals in the Japanese periodical, *Bizzare Magazine* (猟奇雜誌), as early as the 1950s. Since this euphemism also appears in the Japanese context, it cannot be considered uniquely Chinese. Therefore, it is possible to attribute the later appropriation of *tongzhi* to widespread Japanese influence in Taiwan.40

Chi does not name a single individual responsible for *tongzhi*, rather he seeks to understand how these different etymologies of *tongzhi* are applied to certain political settings. *Tongzhi* covers various forms of homosexual modernity in the Mandarin speaking world, especially in connection with Hong Kong Cinema and Taiwanese Literature.

### 2.5 The Political Significance of *Tongzhi*

Chi starts from Singaporean author Maike (邁克) who is said to have used *tongzhi* earlier than Lin Yihua. Maike claims that he used *tongzhi* in the 70s to describe a group of homosexual friends in San Francisco. The Singaporean contends that Lin Yihua discovered *tongzhi* from his personal film reviews, which he says led to wider circulation of *tongzhi* in Hong Kong Cinema. The controversy arises from their personal interpretations of *tongzhi*.

Maike uses tongzhi to translate *homosexual* in his reviews of local Hong Kong cinema. This definition reflects his interactions with the American gay community in the sixties and seventies. This is quite different from the international queer film festivals discussed by Lin Yihua.

Lin Yihua translates *tongzhi* as *queer* in order to evoke rebellious connotations. He sought to embody the social dissonance and countercultural movements that inspired New Queer

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40 紀大偉 366-367 頁
Cinema, a subversive American independent film genre, most known for depicting the devastating effects of the AIDS crisis. This marked a departure from previous activists like Maike, who used tongzhi to refer simply to homosexuals or the gay community.\textsuperscript{41}

Chi does not dispute Maike or Lin Yihua’s contributions to Taiwanese society; but he is aware that their usage of tongzhi is different from the Taiwanese context because Hong Kong applies tongzhi to independent cinema, while the Taiwanese apply tongzhi in the realm of literature. This results in two distinct branches of larger homosexual rights or Tongzhi Movements (同志運動).

Lin Yihua’s definition of tongzhi is directly related to his film career. His explorations of New Queer Cinema means that Lin advocates tongzhi politics based on radical Anglo-American queer activism following the worsening of the AIDS crisis. While the Taiwanese celebrate Lin for encouraging the early success of Taiwanese directors like Ang Lee (李安) or Tsai Ming-liang (蔡明亮), there is no parallel tongzhi cinema movement in 1990s Taiwan. The Taiwanese use Tongzhi in conjunction with a separate homosexual rights movement that is rooted in Tongzhi Literature (同志文學).\textsuperscript{42}

2.6 Tongzhi Literature

Tongzhi Literature refers to a longstanding tradition of homosexual literature in Taiwan that began as early as 1960. This genre became known as an interrogative form of queer writing that encompasses the sexual, cultural, and national identities of Taiwanese authors writing about

\textsuperscript{41} 紀大偉 378-379 頁

\textsuperscript{42} 紀大偉 345 頁
their own homosexual experience. By the mid-90s, Tongzhi Literature transformed into a political movement where authors advocated greater representation of the tongzhi community through a variety of literary activities ranging from academic theorizing and community magazine publishing to novelistic writing.

The Tongzhi Literature movement intersected with feminism to challenge rigid classifications or stereotypes of homoerotic feelings, practices, and relationships; allowing homosexuality to speak on its own behalf as a legitimate and natural practice. Tongzhi Literature did not define homosexual identity but rather it legitimized homosexuality through clear political action. Tongzhi came to be understood in Taiwan as these politicized, public articulations of homosexual identity that are supported by the circulation of Tongzhi Literature.

2.7 Conclusion

Taiwanese tongzhi communities synthesized American, Chinese, and Japanese elements to formulate new homosexual identities. Chinese Republican Modernity promoted a new sexual subjectivity that expanded public declarations of homosexual identity. Japanese terms like tongzhi (comrade) and gémíng (revolution) also also led to new social codes about revolutionary spirit and identity politics. The American AIDS crisis further awakened homosexual political consciousness, inspiring the Taiwanese tongzhi community to mobilize in the public sphere.

The Taiwanese Tongzhi community emerged alongside Hong Kong Queer cinema and similar campaigns for homosexual representation in China; however, this parallel Tongzhi

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43 蔡惠民《台灣「同志書寫」的性別想像及元素》，《華文文學》，總78期，2007年，49-54頁。
44 Sang 190
45 Sang 89-91
activism did not change the singular trajectory of Tongzhi Literature. Tongzhi Literature developed as a commercially viable, cultural product specific to the Taiwanese homosexual community.

This thesis therefore refers to tongzhi in accordance with Chi’s theories about a local Taiwanese homosexual identity that evolved in the mid-nineties; when the tongzhi community simultaneously confronted the AIDS crisis, emerging political consciousness, and the mainstreaming of Tongzhi Literature.46

The following chapters will examine interaction between LGBT and Tongzhi identities within global queer communities. This study considers LGBT and Tongzhi Literatures as distinct cultural products, which reflect the historical, cultural, and national constructions behind these regional homosexual subcultures. This framework will facilitate a close reading of Qiu Miaojin’s Last Words From Montmartre in order to determine how tongzhi identity is translated for American LGBT readers.

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46 紀大偉 389-392 頁
III. Translating Gender and Sexuality

Heinrich writes that Qiu Miaojin was part of a community “unrestrained by conventional labels and categories such as ‘lesbian’, ‘Chinese’ or even ‘woman’.” The translation embraces a broad interpretation of the source text to incorporate the many possibilities of gender and sexual expression within Qiu Miaojin’s writing; however, different cultural conceptions of gender, as well as varying linguistic conventions, present unique challenges to decoding Qiu Miaojin’s contemplations. The narrator’s open discussion of her relationships with women also raises questions about how best to translate “coming out” politics for an American audience.

The narrator in *Last Words From Montmartre* is stereotyped as what many Taiwanese would call a Tomboy, T, or butch lesbian. She adopts the masculine persona of a possessive dominant player in her relationships with other Po (婆), or feminine women but Qiu Miaojin often uses this characterization to exemplify the limited scope of this identity. The young author carefully explores this butch-femme dichotomy to critique the oppressive mechanisms behind the T and Po construct.

Zoë, the narrator’s liberated alter ego, creates a queer aesthetic that further challenges traditional expectations about binary gender and sexuality because the ambiguous character may be male, female, or even gender neutral. The abstract hails Zoë as a “genderless character” who transforms the spiritual and physical identity of the narrator but to define Zoë as “genderless,” limits larger critiques of gender politics within *Tongzhi Literature.*

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3.1 Translating Gender Theory and Chinese Cosmology

One challenge to translating the gender politics in *Last Words* originates from differences in American gender theory and Chinese cosmology. American gender theory, in line with theorist Judith Butler, rejects gender as an essence of the individual. She defines gender as a performative aspect of self-expression regulated by a series of repeated stylistic acts in time. This stylistic repetition reinforces a set of regulatory discourses that understand male and female as gendered, sexed, and desiring bodies that naturally converge to perpetuate compulsory systematic heterosexuality. The construction of persistent and unattainable heteronormative ideals imagines gender identity as a social construct that exists along the spectrum between male and female.⁴⁸

Megan Sinnott recognizes that globalization of American gender theory contributes to expanded English-language literature on same-sex sexuality and transgenderism in Asia. She commends exploration of sexuality and gender as an identity (or subjectivity), practice, and cultural discourse, that leads to “new understandings of same-sex sexuality and transgenderism as not simply products of Westernization or indigenous sexuality but rather complex responses to culturally determined systems of gender, nationalisms and transnational movements.”⁴⁹ However, she does consider the ways in which gender and sexuality categories work across and through national boundaries.

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⁴⁸ 劉亮雅。＜愛欲、性別與書寫—邱妙津的女同性戀小說＞。《性別論述與台灣小說》，梅家玲編，麥田出版，2000年，279-306頁。

Sinnott maintains that queer is embedded in Western/Anglo-American academic settings that seek to identify moments in which gender, the sexed body, and desire do not line up with heteronormative social conventions. Since these categories are themselves Western constructions, queer cannot be defined or identified outside its particular historical and cultural origins in poststructuralist Foucauldian sexuality theory. This leads to critiques of queer as an analytical tool in Asian regions, where gender may subsume sexual behavior and identities.

A popular example is the use of “tomboy” to describe masculine women in various East Asian and Southeast Asian contexts. Tom in Thailand, tomboi in Indonesia, and TB in Hong Kong all describe female masculinities; as well as cultural assumptions and practices surrounding their sexual attraction to gender-normative feminine women. The Taiwanese refer to this construct as the T and Po relationship (T婆婆). The T is characterized by an intrinsic masculine gender expression that attracts the Po, a contrasting feminine woman, who could pass as heterosexual, if she were to marry and bear children.

Sociologist Pansui Ming observes that Chinese cosmology does not make any clear distinction between gender and biological sex. Typically, an active male (Yang) couples with a receptive female (Yin) but in terms of sexual activity, Yin and Yang can mutually transform, meaning that traditional cosmology does not necessarily exclude the notion of homosexuality.

Liu Liangya (劉亮雅) problematizes broad applications of traditional cosmology because the union of yin and yang creates a stereotype of “completeness” that imposes heteronormative roles upon the T and Po relationship (T婆婆). The cosmology model assumes that since the Po

50 Sinnott 18-23

51 《同志》。崔子恩導演，dGenerate Films，2008年。
is singularly attracted to masculinity that only the T may identify as a lesbian; however, neither partner is confined by the gender binary. The Po also has the agency to self identify as a lesbian who may be attracted to the T in terms of either masculine swagger or feminine charm.52

The narrator confronts T and Po stereotypes in Letter Seventeen when she articulates her sexuality in terms of the union between Yin and Yang:

Yes, in terms of the active (yang) and the passive (yin), the shape of Laurence’s passion was more active than mine. Her passion was fuller and more robust than mine, […] Passion. It’s not a male body’s, and it’s not a female body’s. (112)

The narrator has always identified as an active masculine figure. She previously pursued relationships with passive feminine partners, but in this scenario as Laurence arouses the narrator, she becomes a more active passionate partner, who overcomes the masculine narrator’s sexual freedom and power. Liu writes that the feminine mystique of Laurence relegates the narrator to a submissive position to achieve the balance of yin and yang.53

Qiu is clearly writing about a lesbian relationship but the passion (热情) which surrounds the encounter transcends the physical body. As Laurence assumes an active role, she channels masculine energy (Yang), which compliments the feminine energy (Yin) produced by a receptive narrator. This role reversal simultaneously subverts heteronormative stereotypes within the T-Po model and justifies the narrator’s homosexual orientation through traditional Chinese cosmology.

52 劉亮雅 279-280 頁
53 劉亮雅 290-291 頁
Heinrich borrows the concepts of *yin* and *yang* from the original Mandarin and successfully introduces these culturally specific elements to assist readers in understanding Chinese gender theory. The translation notes that passion does not inherently belong to a male or female body and in doing so achieves a parallel reading in both languages.

Qiu Miaojin further explores the T and *Po* relationship in Letter Eleven when the narrator returns from visiting her lover in Tokyo. She writes to Xu that she can feel a change within herself. The narrator is suddenly aware of her longer hair, feminized beauty, and the receptive qualities behind her desires:

> 我感覺到我「在變成」一個『女人』（一個庸俗般的『女人』的定義），或可能變成一個『女人』。月經變得非常規律，有一天清晨夢到你，驚醒的第一秒直覺道月經來了 …… (103)

> I could feel myself “becoming a woman” (according to some basic biological definition of “woman” anyways) or perhaps just becoming a *Woman* [my italics]. One morning I was dreaming about you and I suddenly woke up. I thought I had gotten my period, and in fact I had, precisely at the same time. (79)

Liu Liangya (劉亮雅) interprets this passage in terms of the T-*Po* relationship. The narrator is characterized by her masculine T identity but when she “becomes a woman,” she conforms to a sexualized image of traditional femininity. The act of menstruation is a physical marker of her womanhood, along with social signifiers such as long hair or a submissive demeanor. This proves distressing to the narrator as it threatens loss of her dominant masculine gender expression; however, it does destabilize the cosmology model because the narrator embraces a feminine personality, while still expressing her desire for Xu.\(^{54}\)

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\(^{54}\) 劉亮雅 281-283 頁
Heinrich’s translation does not focus on the narrator’s T identity. This passage instead emphasizes the physical and social impacts of her individual transformation. In accordance with American gender theory, Heinrich refers to the narrator’s menstrual cycle in terms of a “biological” definition of a woman. The translation later describes becoming a Woman, even capitalizing it in the last line, to refer to those individuals who identify as female; a gender identity category that is not necessarily exclusive to cisgender women.

Qiu uses two different sets of quotation marks around the characters nü ren (女人) to denote their rather ambiguous meaning. Nü ren may refer to a woman in terms of either gender or biological sex but the English translation makes this distinction very explicit. The phrase yongsu (庸俗) also has a vulgar or lewd connotation that may allude to a sexualized image of a woman. To translate this character as the “biological” definition of a woman, omits the social and sexual connotations of the original. The transformation is now less about the loss of T identity or conforming to heteronormative society and more about her changes at the individual level.

3.2 The Addition, Omission, or Modification of Gendered Language

Translating the subversive gender politics in Last Words is complicated by much more than differences in gender theory. Varying linguistic conventions in Mandarin and English change the ways in which characters express their gender identity. Heinrich favors a gender neutral translation strategy in order to encompass the wide range of gender expression in the narrative. The translation successfully preserves the experimental tone of the novel but adding, omitting, or modifying gendered language may influence overarching themes in a certain letter.
Chinese is an ideographic language. Chinese characters are composed of visual markers, called radicals, that denote certain meanings to the reader. In Mandarin, the third person singular pronoun, *ta* (他/她) is a homophonic structure that is only differentiated by a male or female radical (ㄆ 女). These characters rely entirely on this visual element to determine gender. This provides Qiu Miaojin a great degree of textual fluidity when imagining the gendered subject.

Qiu Miaojin is praised for her honest depiction of lesbian relationships but as a writer she refers to gender neutral lovers, drawing empathy from readers, before using stronger homoerotic language. This stylistic talent for the effortless manipulation of gender pronouns is very difficult to recreate in English. Consider the following passage from Letter One:

> 你永遠都是那個我見到她會跪下來吻她的全身，懇望她全部的人。
> […]我的靈魂，她打算一直屬於你，她打算一直愛你，一直跟你說話。
> (17)
>
> You’ll always be the one I get down on my knees for, whose whole body I will kiss and whose whole being I’ll desire…My soul is determined to belong to you; she is determined to keep loving you and to keep talking to you. (13)

This letter is written to Xu, the narrator’s former lover, but the passage initially addresses a gender neutral *you* (你). It also describes longing for a singular person (人) neither of which is a gendered subject. It is only through the third person pronoun *ta* (她) that Qiu emphasizes both Xu’s, and her own soul, are female. This defines the narrator’s female subjectivity and homosexuality to shatter the expectation that the author is addressing a male. At the same time, simultaneous use of prior gender neutral language underscores the universal pain of lost love.

In English, the third person singular *he* or *she* is an inherent gender marker. When faced with such constraints, Heinrich adopts the second person pronoun to avoid the limits of the
gender binary. The use of *you* throughout the entire passage forces readers to infer her gender through other contextual clues. The passage may describe the narrator’s female soul but the absence of Qiu’s additional gender marker (她) means that the visual subversion of the original is lost.

In Letter Six, the narrator reflects on her relationships with several ex-girlfriends including Xu (絮), Xiao Yong (小詠), and Xuan Xuan (玄玄). It is at this moment that the narrator meets with an old friend Qing Jin considering her for a potential partner saying:

我已經知道她是會像玄玄一樣無怨無悔深愛我的女人。

My sense was that, like Xuan Xuan, she could love me without regret or complaint. (33)

Qiu’s original carries two gender markers. The narrator addresses Xuan Xuan with the third person pronoun *ta* (她), while also acknowledging that she is a woman (女人) who will love her without regret or complaint. The narrator is careful to share her revelations about human nature but above all she marks her unapologetic love for another woman.

The English translation omits this second gender marker. The text does not again imply that Xuan Xuan is a *woman* who could love her without complaint. The use of a single pronoun dilutes the gendered language. This is further demonstrated by a later paragraph in the same letter:

更何況並非每個女人都能像輕津這樣經歷過完整，豐富的人生，且能脫落一切凡俗的迷障與羁縛，擁有一個如此自由飛翔，晶瑩剔透，洞穿真實的心靈。

Though not many people who have lived a life as rich and full as Qin Jin’s can later shake off all the bewildering and oppressive chains of the secular world and
emerge on her own wings, unscathed, with a crystal-clear perception of what’s real…(33)

This letter addresses the insecurity Qing Jin feels toward her relationship with the narrator. The narrator’s previous girlfriends have been much younger women. Qing Jin worries that the narrator is only attracted to a youthful feminine mystique and that she could never compare. The narrator counters that her attractions aren’t purely physical but that with time, she could develop a spiritual connection with any woman.

Qing Jin is characterized by a sense of maturity that satisfies the narrator in ways younger partners never could. When the narrator says that it is not every woman (女人) who could be as strong as Qing Jin, she is explicitly highlighting Qing Jin’s unique quality as a potential female partner.

Heinrich’s translation of “not many people” does not limit this observation to women. It notes that Qing Jin’s own wings set her apart from the rest, but this seems to overlook Qiu’s address to women. When her gender is omitted, the focus shifts to those resilient qualities that set Qing Jin apart from all others; changing the homoerotic tone of the passage to one of universal admiration.

While some passages are more subtle, there are also other moments where the gender politics of the translation are more pronounced than the original. In Letter 13, the narrator again professes her undying love for Xu, and likens herself to Alexandre le Grand, a hero of Angelopolous’s movies, who sacrifices himself for love:

我就是Alexandre，不是嗎？那正是我的原型，我內在的胚胎正銘印著如此的記號，我就是要如此地在我生命中去愛一個人，一個女人，實穿生命力
Alexandre is me, don’t you think? My archetype, the mark inscribed on my embryonic self, how I love a woman, my life saturated with her love, my soul consecrated before love…my sacrifice for a lover…ah but it is the greatest dream of my life; to find someone and to be true to her! (93)

In Mandarin, subjects are often omitted in favor of linked verb phrases. This structure varies greatly from the subject-verb agreement in English, which can lead translators to insert subjects into different clauses to clarify a passage for readers.

Heinrich inserts a female subject when describing how the narrator “loves a woman” and how the narrator’s life is saturated with “her love.” It is true that Qiu talks about loving a woman (一個女人) but since Qiu refers first to loving someone (一個人), this stylistic choice bolsters homoerotic undertones and erases the duality of the original.

3.3 The Gender Fluidity of Zoë

The gender politics in Last Words from Montmartre concern more than just the narrator. The letters also invoke the queer persona, Zoë, in order to better understand the narrator’s past relationship with Xu. The name, Zoë, is a Greek translation of the Chinese word, sheng ming (生命) or life, in English. The character embraces gender fluidity; presenting as a male, female, and even a gender neutral figure who embodies the vitality that sustains the connection between them. Zoë is an enigmatic element in that it is difficult to determine if this character is an artistic creation or the product of Qiu’s own musings about her gender identity.

55 邱妙津 144頁
The narrator sometimes channels Zoë to assume a more dominant role in her relationship with Xu. He is a stern father who assumes responsibility for their family and often chastises Xu for her childish nature:

You never stopped loving him, stopped feeling bound to his spirit; you could never cease the enormous space he occupied in your life, nor extricate your fate from his; you could never stop trying so hard to satisfy him, to grow closer to him. (26)

In this passage Zoë presents as male. He is described as an authority figure who occupies a large space in Xu’s life. He is a commanding force that sends her on an unending quest to grow closer to him. Sexually, he’s placed in a dominant position and Xu is compelled primarily to satisfy him.

Heinrich’s translation matches the tone of the original in that each Mandarin third person pronoun (他) is matched with male pronouns (he, him, his) in English. Here, Zoë is a strong masculine presence but there are also moments where Zoë is portrayed in a more feminine manner:

What would you do now? Would you treat it tenderly as something arranged by fate? And gently keep me company? You are the one I find hardest to let go of; I still haven’t given you a home! (pg. 126)

The Mandarin phrase wenrou (温柔) is a collocation synonymous with femininity. The usage implies an almost rhetorical expectation that Zoë will demurely accompany her lover in

35 of 78
life. This time Xu struggles to let Zoë leave and it is Xu who regrets that she is unable to give Zoë a home.

The word *jia*, (家) evokes ideas of the physical home; as well as the collective family unit that grants additional protection and security to their relationship. Confucian philosophy dictates that *jia* is a space reserved for women. Traditionally, men are those who work outside the home, while women are responsible for household matters. The idea of *jia* implies that Xu takes possession of Zoë, not only because she is relegated to the physical space of the home but also because Zoë assumes maternal responsibility for their family. In a complete reversal of previous dynamics, Zoë becomes more of a neglected wife than a faithful husband.

The English translation uses adjectives like “gently” and “tenderly” to project an image of femininity. This traditional language captures her feminine persona, as the word “home” conjures similar notions of feminine devotion and the loving wife for English readers.

There are points in the novel where Zoë rejects traditional gender roles completely. Heinrich considers these “genderless” moments to be the pinnacle of personal expression. These spiritual encounters, such as the following passage from Letter Six, are said to liberate the narrator:

希望七月給她看到一個抽菸斗，留長頭髮，騎腳踏車，熱中學小提琴重新恢復創作小說……個性歡笑開朗瀟灑俊秀漂亮的 Zoë. (46)

I want to present her with a Zoë who smokes cigarettes, who has long hair, who rides a bicycle, who is immersed in learning the violin, who has returned to the novel… who has a light, easy going personality, a Zoë who is handsome and beautiful! (35)

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56 李銀河。《兩性關係》，華東師範大學出版社，上海，2005年， pp. 9-22 頁。
Zoë enjoys activities such as smoking cigarettes and riding a bicycle, while also engaging in creative pursuits, like practicing the violin and novel writing. Zoë aspires to an optimistic and laid back personality but also wants be seen as both jun xiu (俊秀) and piao liang (漂亮). Both of these adjectives describe appearance, but they are typically gendered turns of phrase.

*Jun xiu* is used to describe a handsome, sophisticated, and upstanding gentleman. *Piao liang* describes a beautiful young lady and the feminine charm that sets her apart. When combined together, these adjectives challenge societal norms by erasing any obvious gender markers.

In English, the adjectives “handsome” and “beautiful” preserve the dissonance of the original and the various activities mentioned above do not allow for a singular, gender stereotype. These gender neutral moments are an intriguing progression in Zoë’s character development. It is at these moments that Zoë shakes the confines of gender to reveal the true nature of her soul.

There is power in such gender neutral expression but it is only temporary. Zoë’s strongest trait is that the character embraces male, female, and neutral identity. The character embodies how masculine and feminine personas influence relationship dynamics. To translate this character as a “genderless” construct limits the ability to acknowledge how heteronormative gender roles police sexuality and gender expression. Zoë, in conjunction with exploration of the T and Po relationship, helps readers to understand the heteronormative and homophobic pressures faced by the lesbian community in Qiu Miaojin’s Taiwan.
3.4 The American “Coming Out” Process

Qiu Miaojin never took an official political stance on her sexual orientation but she invites social scrutiny to challenge sensationalist media reporting that unfairly represented the lesbian community in the early nineties. The visibility and notoriety of Qiu Miaojin means that the politics of “coming out” color nearly all posthumous interpretations of her work.

The translation intercedes in this political discourse and makes Qiu’s sexual confession more apparent for readers. This leads to challenges in expressing how an American “coming out” process may be different from xianshen (現身), or the act of revealing oneself in Taiwan.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and her landmark research in Epistemology of the Closet points to the metaphors of “the closet” and “coming out” as the all purpose phrases for crossing or recrossing any politically charged lines of representation. The construction of the closet distinctly relates homosexuality to wider mappings of secrecy and disclosure, and of the private and the public, that are critically problematic for the gender, sexual and economic structures of heterosexist culture at large.57

The closet stems from societal pressures that impact all aspects of individual livelihood. Public disclosure of homosexuality may threaten academic or employment opportunities, kinship ties or long established friendships. The external pressure of the closet necessitates that an individual weigh these risks before acknowledging their sexual orientation. When someone “comes out” it is seen as an individual liberation that disregards economic incentives, social

networks or family approval to live openly and honestly. While some out homosexuals may lose social supports, many seek to establish new kinship ties through a “chosen family.”

Sedgwick discerns that the closet functions particularly as a metaphor for gay identity because unlike racial oppression or discrimination based on visible and physical characteristics, such as gender, age, size, or physical handicap; homophobia is an invisible stigma. Gay identity is distinct because homosexuals consistently confront interlocutors who may or may not know the specifics of their sexual orientation. There is also the uncertainty of whether one's sexual orientation is relevant to everyday life.  

The closeted homosexual is plagued by the anxiety of discretion. The divisions between public and private life mean that each individual must consider what bearing their sexual orientation has on their social life. The question of whether to be open professionally, socially, and personally is an individual decision that lands firmly between the freedom of self determination and the danger of disclosure.

Sedgwick articulates this dichotomy as a series of “double binds,” where homosexuality is not deemed a matter of public concern but because heteronormative conventions within societal institutions police the outward expression of sexual identity, the closet creates “systematic oppression of gay people, identities, and acts through contradictory constraints that undermine gay people on the basis of their very being.”

Sedgwick’s double bind is best exemplified by the political career of Harvey Milk, the first openly gay man ever to hold public office in the United States. He was elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 1977. Milk’s political activism focused on the fight against homophobia and for the rights of gay people. He was assassinated in 1978, but his legacy continued to inspire the LGBTQ+ community.

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58 Sedgwick 75
59 Sedgwick 70
Fransisco Board of Supervisors on January 8, 1978. After the election, he delivered his famous *Hope Speech*, on June 25 of that same year, to a crowd gathered at San Francisco City Hall. Milk spoke about the power of coming out and the importance of politically active homosexuals stating, “Unless you open the walls of dialogue, you can never reach to change peoples’ opinion.” Milk encouraged visibly gay leaders to represent their community because “invisible [gay people] remain in limbo, a myth.” Milk continued that coming out allows gay people to set a tone and command respect from not only the public but also “from the young people in our own [gay] community who need both examples and hope.”

The state credited Milk as a representative of the gay community; while simultaneously discounting his sexual orientation as insignificant to public office. Milk came out to promote visibility of his community, but this public disclosure ultimately led to his assassination on November 27, 1978 just eight months after taking office. The tragedy speaks to the “double bind” that constrains homosexuals who must strike a delicate balance between public and private life. An American coming out is certainly an empowered position but it carries both risks and rewards for the gay individual.

An American ‘coming out’ process disables suspicion and epistemological privilege by allowing individuals to claim pride in their sexual identity. The gay community derives power from the act of being seen because homosexual visibility neutralizes the shamefulness that gives power to individuals outside the gay community. This model differs from Taiwan, where an admission of homosexuality is less about being *seen* and more about how one is *received* by a larger community.

3.5 *Xianshen* (現身) and the Politics of Visibility

The idea of *xianshen* (現身), or to make oneself visible, does not emphasize individual liberation but rather suggests that homosexuals reconcile *tongzhi* identity with membership in their community. The pressure of homosexual visibility leaves many Taiwanese *tongzhi* to consider how being open about sexual identity could implicate their family or complicate social interactions.

Deborah Sang attributes the politics of lesbian visibility to a complicated relationship with the mass media. While the *Tongzhi* Movement may permit greater lesbian activism through group discussions, lectures, street demonstrations and public debate; it also invites the conservative mass media to perpetuate stereotypes, which capitalize on the eroticism of a formative urban lesbian scene. Activists recognize the potential of mass media to reach a much wider public, but it leaves them vulnerable to a distribution channel that monopolizes communication, reproduces dominant values and ideology, and distorts lesbian self-representation in the public sphere.

Sang continues that lesbian self-representation is the category that has the most difficulty making an appearance in the Taiwanese public sphere. A general distrust of the media means that most lesbian self-representations only circulate through feminist or lesbian magazines with a limited readership. The fear of disclosing lesbian identity also pushes many authors to protect themselves by publishing under pseudonyms or group names. *Last Words* is a rare exception
because it is considered one of few autobiographical lesbian novels in the *Tongzhi* literary genre.\(^6^1\)

Qiu Miaojin choosing to publish an admission of lesbian sexuality through a mainstream publisher, without a pseudonym, constitutes a courageous political act. However, she did not advocate a modern understanding of “gay rights” because she died before the inception of mainstream feminist or *tongzhi* movements. Therefore, it is important to contextualize her “coming out” as a response to local homophobia and homosexual visibility in 1990s Taiwan.

Fran Martin states that “media voyeurism” (媒體偷窺) is a unique aspect of *tongzhi* discourse. The dominance of television as a news and entertainment medium in 1990s Taiwan fostered the mass media’s sensationalist and homophobic obsession with homosexual subjects (*tongxinglian*). The television functioned as the “closet’s keyhole” and transformed questions of visibility into a central issue for the homosexual subject. Since *tongxinglian* is imagined as potentially yin (hidden), heteronormative society seeks to expose it by making it visible, or xian. This manifests as an epistemological endeavor of exposure, where the danger and invisibility of *tongxinglian* is sensationalized for the general public.\(^6^2\)

Scores of prime-time television news programs, variety shows, and documentaries across Taiwan offered various depictions of *tongxinglian*. One such example is the “TTV News incident” of 1992 (台視新聞時間). A female reporter, working for TTV News World Report (台

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used a hidden camera to film the patrons of a lesbian bar without their consent. The broadcast footage and homophobic commentary caused the unsuspecting outing of these women to their families. The National Press Council responded by forcing the network to apologize, but this voyeuristic documentary later popularized an outing culture, known as *puguang* (曝光), that persisted into the late nineties.\(^\text{63}\)

Outing refers to the non-consensual disclosure of an individual’s sexual orientation. While the threat of outing may not manifest as a direct character attack, this political discourse is closely related to the danger of disclosure. As Sedgwick observes, the closet provides shelter from the pressure to disclose and transforms “coming out” into a deliberate decision that allows an individual to take ownership of information surrounding their sexual identity. The danger of “outing” is that it violates the freedom of an individual to make a very sacred and personal decision.\(^\text{64}\)

*puguang* (曝光), literally meaning “to expose to light,” is an influential aspect of *Tongzhi* Literature in the nineties. *Puguang* implies that to be seen as homosexual is to be punished by the cultural authority represented by the predatory media lens. Unlike outing discourses in the US, which simply risks individual social or legal protections, *puguang* emphasizes the impact of interpersonal relationships. *Puguang* exposes the face of an individual tongzhi subject to a social collectivity and it is the act of being seen, by this antagonistic mass spectator, that injures the tongzhi subject.

\(^{63}\) Martin 220-223

\(^{64}\) Sedgwick 80
The anxiety of *puguang* centers around the face as both a marker of individual identity and an inscription of social positioning. The weight of face implies that to be exposed as homosexual, is essentially a loss of “face” that destabilizes social positioning. This creates a culturally specific construction that politicizes homosexual visibility within social networks, family relations, and overall social standing.

Qiu Miaojin is a visible lesbian subject who offers her real name and face in order to leverage the platform provided by the media apparatus. She openly discusses sex, love, and relationships, but she remains cognizant of her own spectacle by confronting the media through the realism of her lesbian experience and suicidal thoughts. The young author refuses a voyeuristic distinction between “us” and “them,” engaging in visibility politics that are “less about conforming to Western, post-Stonewall paradigms of lesbian or gay and more about a critical entanglement with local homophobia.”

Qiu Miaojin did not advocate for modern ‘gay rights’ but she was not a passive figure who acquiesced to social pressure. The pensive young woman offers an open, personal narrative that deliberately challenges media representation in order to bring healthy visibility to her community. Although she did not directly participate in identity politics, her acknowledgment of lesbian sexuality inspired transformative changes to Taiwanese society, which later became the foundation of the modern *Tongzhi* Movement.

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65 Martin 232-235
3.6 Translating LGBT and Tongzhi Visibility

The translation of gay visibility and identity politics is best exemplified by Letter Eight.

This letter recounts the events that take place when the narrator meets Geneviève, an older lesbian and “radical” feminist, at the local women’s center. Geneviève runs her own press, Geneviève Pastre, publishing materials focused on female sexuality and the gay rights movement. The narrator describes her as follows:

Geneviève was an older lesbian who brought warmth to my heart whenever I saw her. The word “lesbian” is a term that is really only meaningful in political contexts. She was also a political figure and publisher for whom gay rights was a cause. (44)

This scene is a humorous example of the culture shock that ensues when Geneviève, an individualist lesbian activist, meets Qiu Miaojin, a young author from collectivist and conformist Taiwan. Geneviève is an almost caricature of an out lesbian described as being laopai (老牌), an “old school” or veteran politician, who wears her identity on her sleeves. In Mandarin, biaobang (標榜) is a playful way to flaunt certain character traits or to advocate publicly for a cause. When used in conjunction with a lesbian character, Biaobang satirizes politically conscious individuals who derive their power from unapologetic lesbian visibility.

The idea of gay visibility sometimes invites strong reactions from outside the gay community because being open or “in your face” about homosexuality may be seen as disruptive to heteronormative society. While the narrator does not openly oppose this radical lesbian strategy, she does offer quiet commentary in the parenthetical, when she notes that tongxinglian
(同性戀) only serves political purposes. Therefore, translating biaobang as simply “gay rights”
eliminates Qiu’s observations about the politicized and visual nature of lesbian activism in
France.

The translation makes it evident that Geneviève advocates “gay rights” but it ignores how
her characterization relies on empowered gay visibility. This sacrifices an opportunity to connect
with American readers by poking fun at reactionary debates from heteronormative society about
overt or stereotypical gay behaviors.

Afterwards, Qiu encounters future girlfriend Laurence, a bold young woman with short
brown hair who speaks “forcefully and animatedly.” When Laurence suggests the university
screen a “lesbian” movie, many members refuse to attend for fear of “exposing their individual
identities,” but she is unbothered and decides she would go alone:

Laurence caught my eye immediately. I had been stealing glances at her for the
last two meetings, but she never met my eye. During the meeting, she
disappeared a few times. She gave the impression of being a little cold and
unsociable, but in fact she was very bold. At the first meeting, Laurence
proposed that the university screen a certain “lesbian” movie that everyone
present would attend, but when no one agreed to an action that would expose
their individual identities, she breezily declared, “Fine, no problem. I’ll go by
myself.” (45)

The original letter is focused on group dynamics. The suggestion that none of these
women are willing to dandu (單獨) gongkai (公開) or to independently and publicly disclose
their identities points to a fear of being alone. These women seem much safer expressing
themselves in groups; an idea that is further underscored by describing Laurence as not being *hegun* (合群), or an integrated part of the group. It is not only that she is cold and aloof but also that she is the only one willing to be brave and to stand out.

Heinrich does not translate this as to “come out” since this passage places the emphasis on their fear of being singled out. The anxiety about “revealing their individual identities” is reminiscent of *puguang* politics in Qiu Miaojin’s Taiwan. This strategy is not simply an adherence to the American coming out process but rather reflects the translator’s critical inference about ‘face’ and group dynamics within *Tongzhi* Literature.

The translation reflects cultural differences surrounding homosexual visibility but it also includes several heightened references to sexual orientation when the narrator writes to Xu about the nature of their breakup. She offers the following reflections on sexuality in Letter Three:

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身體成熟的那一點，身體的慾望是容易對身邊的很多人開放的，因為那慾望是漫溢的，需要被滿足的。身體的慾望較不具排他性，但若無法與靈魂的愛欲相結合，會產生靈肉的斷裂。而性或熱情終究不是單由身體發動的，真正的相互結合與給予，是由靈魂在發動的。(31頁)
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It’s easy for the body to be open to desiring different people because desire wells up and demands to be satisfied. It’s easy to categorize corporeal desire as sexuality, but if it has no means of merging with spiritual desire, then a rupture will occur between spirit and flesh. For ultimately passion and sex aren’t two expressed physically but through a true union between two spirits. (24)

The narrator talks about how during sexual maturity it is easy to be open to many people, (對很多人開放). She continues that the highest passion is that which is driven by the soul; stressing the importance of a union between the desires of the flesh (肉) and the soul (靈魂). She
acknowledges that physical desire (身體的慾望) is not exclusive (不具排他性); however, she warns that a rupture occurs where there is no union between body and soul.

The translation talks about how “it is easy to categorize corporeal desire as sexuality,” but this idea may not be present in the original text. The original talks only about how Xu may accept many partners since she is not picky about her physical desires. This does not insinuate the sexuality or gender of her partner, meaning that Xu could be physically available to both men and women.

Translating this idea as “sexuality” is a stronger allusion to lesbian identity. Xu may pursue possible physical relations with both men and women but her true nature craves a lesbian relationship because she only experiences a spiritual union with the narrator. The young Xu is encouraged to explore her sexuality but the translation implies she will ultimately end up content to be in a lesbian relationship with the narrator.

The aspirations of the narrator are most apparent in Letter Five. This separate entry is written directly to Xu, and is not considered part of the narrative. The passage directly addresses the high emotions and domestic violence that occurs during the last year of their relationship:

我並不認為整個的你真就如此。為什麼呢。因為我了解你的生命，我了解你在你成長史中所在的位置，以及當下那個位置的優渥與缺失，我也了解你是如何被我的狂爆發的如此的，所以，我並不認為這些深恨與不喜歡不可化解，也不會就此決定或截斷了你整個人之於我的意義。(95)

I refuse to believe that this year’s “you” represents the whole you. Because I understand you. I understand your maturation process. I can predict what gifts and what challenges lie ahead of you. And I know the effect my irrational explosions had on you. your loathing for me, your disgust–you weren’t born that way. So I refuse to cut you out of my life entirely. You won’t always be like this (72)
The original text talks about how the true you (真正的你) is not this way. The narrator claims a mature position, providing insight into Xu’s personal growth (长史中所在的位置). She also accepts that her own violent behavior lost Xu’s affection but that even this setback will not change what she means to her (你整个人至我的意義). The passage does not mention Xu’s sexual orientation or developing identity. Sexuality is a secondary characteristic because the true nature of their spiritual union transcends deep hatred (深恨), dislike (不喜欢), and unresolved issues (不可化解).

The English version mentions how this year’s “you” does not represent the whole you. The narrator acknowledges that her irrational explosions lead to Xu’s loathing and disgust but she chides that “you weren’t born that way.” The phrase “born this way” resonates particularly within debates about American LGBT identity politics. “Born this way” is a popular response to homophobic rhetoric, meant to instill pride in the fact that sexual orientation is an intrinsic aspect of personal identity formation. To suggest that Xu was not “born that way” means that her orientation is innate.

This discussion goes a step further when she states, “you won’t always be like this.” The tone of this passage means that Xu is still on a journey of self acceptance. The narrator views intense emotions, like loathing and disgust, as a natural but temporary response to Xu’s internal struggle with identity. However, she refuses to cut Xu out of her life because after an eventual coming out, the two will reconcile their differences in a healthy lesbian relationship. This translation is a familiar coming out narrative for American readers that forgoes discussions of
emotional empathy in favor of identity politics. This strategy, which places sexuality at the forefront of the letter, is employed in a later passage:

What I understood as “to belong” was very different and had nothing to do with you, nor with your impoverished love. There was no comparison for me. “To belong” to anyone–it’s not a choice. To love you is a suffocating form of fate for me. (72)

This paragraph talks about how a sense of belonging (屬於) means the narrator needs no reason (緣故) particular person (什麼樣的人) or impoverished love (愛我多寡) to be with Xu. The narrator does feel the suffocating (壓倒性) weight of their love but she trusts that there is no comparison (無可比較) or choice (無可選擇) behind their fated attraction. The narrator and Xu are destined to share a spiritual connection from the start. This realization leaves the narrator adamant that the joy and sorrow of their relationship was never a choice for her.

The translation states that “There is no comparison for me. ‘To belong’ to anyone–it’s not a choice.” The talk of choice, when paired with the above paragraph about being born a certain way, is typical of a coming out narrative. It creates a subtle reading that centers on sexual orientation and not fated romance or relationships. The narrator laments that Xu has yet to come to terms with her sexual identity; however, the narrator also knows that she is helpless to prevent this heartache since she cannot choose her own orientation or to be attracted to Xu.
3.7 Conclusion

Qiu Miaojin is an analytical author who deeply understood the heteronormative and homophobic pressures in society. The narrator accepts a T identity but only as long it affords her agency to critique heteronormative stereotypes behind the butch femme dichotomy. Zoë uses gender fluidity to demonstrate how gender roles are repressive constructs detrimental to personal expression. The strength of Qiu Miaojin is not that she rejects gender but rather how she fluctuates between masculinity and femininity to provide perspective on gender politics within society at large.

Qiu Miaojin never publicly “came out” in a modern sense but her brave admissions did promote positive visibility of the lesbian community. She provides an intimate look at burgeoning sexual identity that tempts audiences to draw their own conclusions about her life. Thirty years later, reader’s continued curiosity means that discussion of Qiu Miaojin continues beyond her literary legacy. As Taiwanese society advances, new understandings of prominent tongzhi politics, and the tragic nature of her suicide, are the new lens with which scholars examine her work.

_Last Words From Montmartre_ is a rare example of early queer aesthetics within Tongzhi Literature, but a globalized queer translation strategy does not always reflect the unique visibility politics at the heart of the Qiu Miaojin phenomenon. The translation claims to present an unrestrained Qiu Miaojin who is neither Chinese, lesbian, or woman; but when her narratives are used to advocate new understandings of queer politics, she is very quickly placed within a specific framework that prioritizes lesbian sexuality and identity.
Perhaps Qiu Miaojin would celebrate her contributions to this new global movement; however, as she predates the political momentum of *tongzhi* politics, we will never know her personal opinion. The subtlety and numerous possibilities within her complex, experimental narrative means that Qiu Miaojin is as ever a young woman actively defining her own sexual identity and relationships, amidst continued observation from the media, readers, and translators alike. She does not reject labels but instead embraces their many possibilities to push readers to critically examine their own reality.
IV. Globalizing Qiu Miaojin

Qiu Miaojin uses various techniques in Last Words to create a multicultural aesthetic. The novel is composed of an atemporal, multilingual narrative written in Mandarin, French, and English. The young author also employs extensive descriptions of city spaces such as Paris, Tokyo, and Taipei to establish a global milieu. This global outlook later extends into the realm of World Literature, as the narrator samples the work of French poet, Guillaume Apollinaire, Greek director, Theo Angelopoulos, and most notably, Osamu Dazai and the “alienated writers” of Japan.

Last Words is inspired by the “suicide narratives” popularized in Dazai’s No Longer Human. The book follows his autobiographical format, where a “permeable self” speaks to imagined readers in a nondescript, second-person voice. This style allows Qiu Miaojin to connect with an expansive readership, but she is careful to maintain her unique position as a Taiwanese author.

Heinrich writes that Qiu Miaojin came of age in a literary scene known to be “multicultural, polyglot, literate, ambitious and queer.”66 While she certainly embraced her experiences in other countries, to present her as a global author depends on the almost singular nature of the Qiu Miaojin phenomenon.

The following chapter will explore the cultural, environmental, and stylistic factors that contribute to Qiu Miaojin’s appeal in order to understand how the success of her multicultural perspective relates to Heinrich’s globalized translation strategy. While Heinrich successfully captures her cross-cultural aesthetic, strong emphasis on a fluent English reading reduces the

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visibility of Mandarin as the primary creative language in this novel. A broad translation of the narrator’s “permeable self” further reflects an appeal to global readerships, which may divorce Qiu Miaojin from her specific socio-cultural and literary context.

4.1 Environmental Factors

The multicultural aesthetic in Last Words is the product of a variety of environmental factors. One important aspect is Qiu Miaojin’s international education. As a graduate of both Taipei First Girls High School and National Taiwan University, she is a rare example of a young woman able to leverage educational resources to leave Taiwan and explore other cultures. She later pursued graduate studies at University of Paris VIII, where her knowledge of Mandarin, French, and English helped to synthesize the diverse cultural perspectives present throughout her artistic and intellectual pursuits.

Emily Apter warns that national boarders are an important aspect of World Literature. These boundaries serve as checkpoints that reproduce political distinctions between “us” and “them.” Global checkpoints exist on two fronts: The physical border that controls the flow of migrants and the extra linguistic practice of translation that deals with the transference of information, things, and commodities. Navigating global checkpoints strengthens a double standard, which simultaneously lauds wealthy multiculturalism and punishes “illegal immigrants” or migrant workers.67

Qiu Miaojin successfully navigated multiple global checkpoints. She crossed physical boarders by financing her graduate studies in France, while also passing through cultural

barriers, thanks to her language ability and cultural literacy. The young woman is considered a global author but this status depends on her perception as a highly cultured intellectual, a position that was often inaccessible to many female authors at the time.

According to Chang Hsiao-hung (張小虹), the main obstacle for female authorship in Taiwan is not rooted in identity politics (gender, race, etc.) but rather their access to cultural capital and consumption channels. Female authors in the eighties were forced to tailor their personal style to market conditions. The majority wrote about socially conservative values, such as marriage and family. The only exception were financially independent authors like Li Ang (李昂), whose social standing guaranteed creative freedom. By the early nineties, a rejection of KMT promoted, China-centric narratives encouraged a renewed search for Taiwanese identity. The market gradually began to support new female authors who wrote about the intersections of nationalism and gender politics.68

Qiu Miaojin entered a Taiwanese society eager to discuss diverse perspectives. She found success in the Taiwanese literature market, where high demand for lesbian narratives earned her critical acclaims like the China Times Literature Award. The notoriety of her death later secured a dedicated readership that assured continuous distribution of her work.

Deborah Sang notes that Qiu Miaojin may face a voyeuristic and discriminatory public; however, her non-linear, cinematic style and unusual subject matter, are highly marketable to mass media. The novel offers a private confession of inner truth, but as this essentialist subjectivity is constituted in part by the mass media, the autobiographical lesbian is easily

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68 張小虹。《性/別研究讀本》，臺北，麥田出版股份有限公司，167-195頁。
commodified as a piece of titillating, scandalous news or a fashion fad. Furthermore, the experimental novel, published by the China Times Conglomerate, is distributed by a much larger commercial network than that of alternative lesbian and feminist magazines. This serves to commercialize lesbian sexuality and transforms Qiu Miaojin into a veritable cultural commodity.69

Qiu Miaojin’s status as a global author is dependent on the almost singular nature of the Qiu Miaojin phenomenon. The cosmopolitan appeal of her multicultural narrative is the direct result of her unique access to foreign literatures and cultures. The young author is celebrated for sharing her personal truth, but her commercial success may also be attributed to a posthumous lesbian narrative created by the mass media. The eventual global appeal of Last Words results from this rare combination of environmental factors, including her posthumous notoriety, media representation, and critical reception.

4.2 The Resident Writer

Rebecca Walkowitz posits that in the age of World Literature, individuals whom she calls resident writers, “create works that begin in a foreign language; or more than one language, by distributing the narrative action across several continents, regions, or nations.” She argues that language acquisition is not innate but rather a relative construct based on context and education. She believes that as writers come to inhabit multiple languages, their novels are born translated, and that multilingualism provides new locations for literature.70

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69 Sang, Tze-lan, Deborah. The Emerging Lesbian: Female Same-Sex Desire in Modern Chinese Literature and Culture. Berklely, University of California Press.

70 Walkowitz, Rebecca L. “This is Not Your Language” Born Translated. New York, Columbia University Press, 2015, pp. 163-203.
Qiu Miaojin is a resident writer who inhabits both Paris and the French language. Many portions of the novel are inspired by her encounters with Parisian landmarks. She also makes frequent use of French idioms in Latter Four to anchor readers within local culture:

–“J’arrive pas” –我發現這是最近常從我身體裡飛出來的一句話，我也發現這一句法文好美哦！（我做不到）中文是這樣講的，但這樣一講就太死了，要不就說(我到不了) (我不及格) (我失敗了) …… (36)

J’arrive pas: This expression has repeatedly flown from my mouth lately. It’s so beautiful! In Chinese, it literally means “I can’t do it,” but that sounds so flat. Or it can be translated as “I can’t get there,” “I’m not up to standard,” “I’ve failed”… (28)

The narrator introduces her favorite French phrase, J’arrive pas to Xu. She writes that she finds this French expression (這一句法文) very beautiful, but cautions that too simple a Mandarin translation is devoid of meaning. She later actively interprets the phrase’s cultural significance by providing her own subsequent translations. She deliberately code switches because the specific cultural context of J’arrive pas is a nuance that is not found in Mandarin. This stylistic choice also uses her multilingual expression to strengthen the global setting.

In contrast, the English version does not state that J’arrive pas is a French expression. This vantage point ignores the supplementary nature of J’arrive pas, establishing Chinese and French as equally foreign languages within a primarily English narrative. This strategy reduces Qiu Miaojin's position as a native Taiwanese author residing in the French language.

Qiu Miaojin’s address to a global readership makes full use of multiple languages and locations but the young author nevertheless maintains a distinct Taiwanese identity. This Taiwanese identity is an important aspect of her relationship with Laurence in Letter Sixteen:
She walked over to the desk, flipped some pages of my novel, and asked me to read it to her in Chinese. I said that I had already sent out ten chapters and that I only had copies of the fifth and eleventh chapters and was in the middle of writing the sixteenth. (113)

This letter begins as Laurence pays a visit to the narrator. The young French woman, who is curious about her girlfriend’s creative pursuits, asks the narrator to recite (朗誦) sections of her novel. The narrator makes an intertextual reference to *Last Words*, the *xiaoshuo* (小說) or novel, which causes the pair to fall for each other. She mentions that she’s already mailed (寄出去了) the first ten letters (第十到十六書), before proceeding to read disjointed excerpts from the fifth (第五書), eleventh (十一書), and sixteenth (第十六書) letters that she is currently writing.

The English translation refers to each section as a “chapter” and omits intertextual references to each letter (書). This aids domestication of the book format for English readers. It also falsely suggests that the narrator is writing an abstract novel. This pattern continues in a following paragraph from the same letter:

I spread my manuscript out on her lap and then read aloud, one page at a time, and understanding absolutely no Chinese she listened quietly, almost not daring to breathe, just scratching her head from time to time. (113)

The narrator reads letter by letter (一書一書地念) captivating Laurence, who listens intently, even though she does not understand Mandarin. It is important to Laurence that the narrator
freely express herself in her native language. This allows the narrator to create an unprecedented closeness with the young woman. She welcomes global readers but her Taiwanese identity is at the forefront of her creative prowess.

This line is rendered as “page by page” in English. This again emphasizes a fluent English reading, which reduces the visibility of the original Mandarin, by omitting intertextual references to the original novel. This decision also impacts later letters, including Letter 10, where the visibility of Mandarin plays a more prominent role in an exchange between the narrator and her French professor:

隔著簽名的桌子，我說要親她一下，她站起來讓我在她左右兩頰各親一下，我害羞地在她耳邊以中文說: (我愛你)，再用法文 Je vous aime 告訴她意思，她給我一張白紙要我寫下中文: 我愛你。 (82)

Across the table, I said I wanted to give her a kiss, and she stood to let me kiss each cheek, and I shyly said in Chinese in her ear, “I love you,” and then repeated this in French in the courteous form, “Je vous aime”. She handed me a blank sheet of paper and I wrote down the Chinese for her: I love you. (63)

The narrator develops a crush on her professor. She attends a local book signing and bravely professes her love in Mandarin (中文說). By addressing her professor in her native language, she expresses personal vulnerability, while also asserting her position as a Taiwanese student. She then repeats herself in French (再用法文) to make sure her professor understands (告訴她意思). She is also careful to use the courteous form Je vous aime to maintain polite distance between them.

She closes by writing “I love you” (我愛你) in Chinese characters. The act of writing “I love you” in Chinese is significant for two reasons. First, literacy is the threshold for membership in intellectual circles. Chinese characters are steeped in the rich traditions of poetry
and classic literature. It is not uncommon for scholars to present calligraphy as a gift because the aesthetics of writing are considered a distinctly personal touch. Second, the Chinese characters visibly mark the cultural difference of a lone Taiwanese woman in the bookshop. This gesture affirms her unique affections, as only she may offer this piece of her cultural traditions.

The English version notes both languages spoken by the narrator. The passage describes saying “I love you” in Chinese, as well as the courteous nature of  

*Je vous aime*; however, the translation overlooks the idea of being understood. The narrator “repeated this in French,” but not to explain the *yisi* (意思) or meaning to her professor. The translation treats both Mandarin and French as secondary languages, which shifts focus from the fact that neither woman is speaking, nor do they understand, English.

Heinrich’s translation successfully highlights the multicultural aesthetic of Qiu’s narrative but at times, the translator omits intertextual references, and other linguistic features, specific to the original Mandarin. This strategy prioritizes a fluent English reading that diminishes Qiu’s position as a resident writer. This impact is not solely limited to her multilingual expression. A broad interpretation of her global setting, also impacts reader’s understanding of Qiu Miaojin’s cultural identity.

### 4.3 The Global Metropolis

*Last Words* does not offer a linear timeline of events but instead places readers within a transient, international locale. The story focuses mainly on life in the global metropolis, allowing the setting to take precedence over the novel’s own temporality.

The global metropolis liberates the narrator from restrictions in Taiwanese culture. As she connects with other migrants across Paris, Tokyo, and Taipei, the city space provides new
opportunities for self reflection. This sentiment is best expressed by Letter Ten when the narrator runs through the rain accompanied by her Icelandic classmate, Irma, her Italian classmate, Monika, and French classmate, Myriam:

I nearly burst with glee, singing one song after another deep down in my throat in unintelligible (to them) Chinese…We were four children under Heaven, without nationality or student credentials, far from home, each abandoned by her beloved. (63)

Qiu conjures a romantic image of inclusiveness as the narrator finds herself in the company of young women, from three different countries, who are joined together by the youthful promise of the opulent city center. Paris is cast as an urban hub of supposed global culture, where nationality is a distant concern, because little distinguishes these women from each other.

Having left their hometowns (家鄉), these friends find a new life in the city. The urban space is a cultural melting pot at the foundation of global society. The narrator remarks how each is without her nationality (國籍), student credentials (學籍), and other physical markers of identity and status. Since there are no obvious distinctions between each student, they can all share in the bittersweet experience of lost love.

The narrator refers to these women as “Children of Paradise” (天堂小孩). This is an allusion to the classic French film directed by Marcel Carné. As a connoisseur of French film, Qiu Miaojin was well aware of its cultural significance. The story of a loveless French courtesan, Garance, displaced in war-torn France, is strikingly similar to the narrator’s heartbroken
classmates. While not present in the English translation, this final delicate touch, truly romanticizes the image of the global metropolis.

Emily Apter cautions that the inclusiveness of city spaces is largely superficial. She writes that in global frameworks, city spaces are studied in abstraction from their national contexts. The city functions as a metropolitan center, where the wielders of economic power and social coercion remain anonymous. This results in a World Literature that often blunts critique in the name of liberal inclusiveness or cultural similitude.71

It is easy to temporarily suspend nationality, credentials, traditions, or language but these women only associate through their collective effort to assimilate into French society. When the narrator sings away sorrows in her native Chinese, she acknowledges that the language is unintelligible to her companions because she’s the only Taiwanese woman in the group. This clearly indicates that even in transient spaces like the city center, the narrator retains a distinct Taiwanese identity that is completely foreign to her friends.

Qiu Miaojin’s idealistic descriptions of the global metropolis suggest a consensus on global culture; however, closer examination of the city space gives readers insight into the varied impact of globalization on American and Taiwanese cultures.

In Letter Seventeen, the narrator and her former university classmate, Yong, ride their bikes through Tokyo. Yong and the narrator were once romantically involved but now share a close friendship. The letter talks about continuously separating and reuniting throughout their travels. The narrator visits Yong in Japan, where an appreciation for the cherry blossom festival

71 Apter 298-320
takes them through small villages and country roads, until they reach the hustle and bustle of Tokyo. The narrator offers the following reflections about the trip:

兩個遠離家園故土、遠離親舊所愛，又各自去了不同的陌生國度的人，中鋒在一條陌生的公路上，共踏著疲憊的腳踏車，而其中一人頻臨著死亡的命運，我們實在做著一種什麼樣的放逐、流浪與回歸呢? (119)

Two people so far from home, far from our loved ones, each of us having gone to live in a foreign country, reuniting on a foreign-beyond-foreign highway, pedaling on our rusted bicycles, one of us on the verge of death—what was this exile, roaming, and homecoming we were enacting? (153)

Chinese societies place great importance on geographical origins. Many Chinese are aware that their ancestors emigrated from specific villages, sometimes keeping accounts of both their mother’s and father’s family. While this may not be connected to shared cultural traditions, common geographical origins are important to conceptions of Chinese ethnicity.72

The narrator’s Taiwanese identity is similarly connected with *gutu* (故土) or her homeland in Taiwan. Consanguinity and family lineage are very significant in Taiwanese culture. A strong connection with *jiaxiang* (家鄉) or an ancestral home, further implies that interpersonal relationships and community are important to identity formation. The passage emphasizes having departed from their homes and native soil (家園故土). It continues by saying both women have left their loved ones (親舊所愛) in order to travel to two unfamiliar countries, (陌生國度) referring to France and Japan respectively. The impact of this decision would certainly cause feelings of loneliness, isolation, or homesickness for the narrator.

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In Mandarin, *mosheng* (陌生) means unfamiliar, strange, or unknown. The narrator describes being in a *mosheng* (陌生) *guodu* (國度) or an unfamiliar country, as well as *mosheng* (陌生) *gonglu* (公路) or unknown roadway. She and Yong enjoy exploring their lives amidst the vastness of Tokyo’s urban sprawl, but they are aware of this constant cycle of exile (放逐), roaming (流浪), and homecoming (回歸). For a narrator “on the verge of death” this projects feelings of being displaced. Once the narrator leaves her country, she sacrifices the geographical connection to her family, community, and culture in Taiwan.

Globalism presents new possibilities for migration. The narrator takes advantage of this opportunity for personal growth but migration also breaks with tradition by physically disconnecting the narrator from Taiwanese society.

The English version translates *mosheng* (陌生) as “foreign.” The translation strategy places less importance on the unfamiliarity or uncertainty of life in a foreign country because American society celebrates social mobility. The global metropolis is an adventurous atmosphere that rewards travelers for exploring different languages and cultures.

*Last Words* romanticizes the potential of the city space and the similitude of global culture. The multilingual narrator is free to explore foreign cultures as she forms relationships with other migrants, seeking the same advantages presented by the global metropolis. The narrator is enriched from by these experiences but she still grapples with isolation, homesickness and culture shock after being physically disconnected from Taiwan. This dichotomy challenges translation of her work because the translator must confront different reactions to globalization within both American and Taiwanese culture.
4.4 Osamu Dazai and the Suicide Narrative

Qiu Miaojin was an avid reader of Osamu Dazai, a prominent “alienated writer” in Japanese letters, who is believed to inspire her creative style. The narrator in *Last Words* traces his footsteps through Tokyo and her idolization of his work is integral to her character development. The confessional nature of *Last Words* also fosters an intimate connection with readers similar to the “suicide narratives” popularized in Dazai’s *No Longer Human*.

Osamu Dazai was born in 1909 to a wealthy landowning family in Kanagi Aomori Prefecture. His father, Gen’emon, was a member of the House of Peers, who spent much of his time in Tokyo. Dazai was given to a wet nurse at birth and later raised by a guardian until age eight. While he was born to privilege, he never felt a strong connection with his family. Many of his early works question whether or not he was a legitimate child of his parents.

Dazai became disillusioned by the aristocracy and sought refuge within the Japanese Communist Party. Marxist thought inspired his novel *Reminiscences*, a malicious “exposé of landholders,” that vilified his father, a man whom Dazai believes made his fortunes by exploiting peasant farmers. The controversial nature of his work soon alienated him from his family. He completed his novel, *No Longer Human*, just before his suicide by drowning in 1948.

The death of Dazai incited sympathy from Japanese society. The peak of his career coincided with post-war defeat, turning him into a symbol of Japanese despair. The idea that Dazai completed his lifework with his own death is an aesthetic that proved irresistible to the Japanese public. He became a superstar who is credited for tropes of the “alienated writer” in Japanese letters.
The personal narrative in *No Longer Human* continues to provoke widespread psychoanalysis of his alienation, identity crisis, and rebellion. Reader’s fascination perpetuates a process of “monument building” that contributes to Dazai’s lasting celebrity status in Japanese Literature.\(^7\)

The basis of the suicide narrative is a slightly enhanced autobiographical format. Traditional autobiographies seek to objectively capture the self-referential past; however, the suicide narrative is a careful creative process, where the narrator adopts a persona, behind which he references his own life. The intentional act behind suicide blurs the line between novel and biography to create a sense of romantic “truth” around the past.\(^4\)

The narrator in *Last Words* draws upon Qiu Miaojin’s personal experience but this character is not a realistic depiction of her life. The author engages this persona to actively construct the narrator as an alienated artist. Although she is fully confident in her ability to achieve creative success, she also resents being spurned by the public, and ultimately determines it is only in death that she may achieve true glory.

Qiu Miaojin creates the persona of an alienated artist by sampling many famous creatives within World Literature. A passion for the arts drives the narrator to attend a screening of *The Traveling Players* in Letter Four. Afterwards, she writes about her admiration for renowned Greek director, Theodoros Angelopoulos:

我愛他這個藝術家正是因為我懂得、我看出、我愛他的此種質素，所以白鯨覺得拙劣的這部片子仍然和其他的片子一樣令我滿足。(38)

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\(^4\) Wolfe 98
I love this artist precisely because I recognize this unfinished quality of his; and so this film, which White Whale found clumsy and inferior, is to me as satisfying and joyous as any of his other films. (29)

The narrator marvels at the “unfinished quality” of Angelopoulos films. She believes in his innate ability at all stages of the cinematic journey, trusting that even a clumsy or inferior attempt still shows progress. She recognizes that she too possesses the raw talent of a great artist and the trajectory of his career encourages her to find success. She later continues:

We should have recognized the enduring presence of “a certain quality” in his work even when it was still awkward and rarely screened, whether it was sixteen years ago or four years ago. (29)

The narrator regrets that audiences waited too long to celebrate Angelopoulos’s genius. The audiences commend his current success but they did not screen earlier films to help cultivate the “certain quality” in his work that has always been the key to his fame. Angelopoulos is an example of a dedicated emerging artist, who is underappreciated by the public. The narrator looks to his work as it reflects the pain of her own experience.

The narrator also shares similar feelings about the work of Osamu Dazai in Letter Ten:

Dazai and I basically share the same nature. Yong, I’d like to go to Tokyo to see the river where he drowned before I die. Will you take me there, to the place you didn’t have time to take me last time? (60)

She admits that Dazai is her kindred spirit and asks Yong to take her to see the river “before I die.” The river is an ominous physical reminder of how Dazai’s feelings of alienation lead to his
Here's the unformatted text:

untimely end. The character later invokes his memory to foreshadow the imminent nature of their shared fates:

我從小一直愛太宰，這也是你知道的，這和我對其他藝術家的愛都不一樣，太宰不夠好，還來不及偉大就死了。(78)

For a long time I’ve appreciated Dazai, as you know, in a different way than other artists. He hadn’t reached his potential; he died before he could become a great name. (60)

Dazai may have existed in creative obscurity but the narrator admires him precisely because of his posthumous success. She acknowledges that like Dazai, she too will not live to be a great name. It may be that she idolizes Dazai because he shows that death is another avenue for success.

Aside from a constructed personae, the suicide narrative is further revealed by what Alan Wolfe calls the “permeable self.” The permeable self is a technique where Dazai opens himself up and pulls in the audience. His readers are made actively complicit in his novel as they slip into the personae. The permeable self bridges the gap between writer, reader, and the written page, allowing readers to directly participate in the suicide narrative. This is the opposite of the Western self where, “You know you have come to the limits of your self because you feel the surface of another self.”75

The narrator in Last Words is an undisclosed, nondescript, permeable self; who speaks as a fictional character, pensive author, or testament of the deceased. Each letter initiates prolonged and intimate conversations with a you that signifies both the intended recipient and external readers. This intimate relationship closes emotional distance and draws readers into her narrative.

75 Wolfe 112
This permeable self is best exemplified by letter 19. This entire letter is written as a second person dialogue between the narrator and Xu, which could easily be extrapolated to any two heartbroken lovers:

現在打電話常常變成想你的暖身，回家吃完晚飯後就抱著枕頭睡覺，到時二點才起來，擁有這樣一個安靜的時刻。電話就在手邊，很想打一個不說話的電話，只要你在電話那端，我可以枕著電話筒就好了。(163)

Phoning you lately has become an exercise in missing you. I came home and after dinner I fell asleep clutching my pillow. I woke up at midnight, a silent moment. The phone was right next to me and I really wanted to call and say nothing, just have you on the other end of the line. Then I could just rest my cheek against the receiver and it would be enough. (127)

This passage makes no clear mention of either character. The narrator is an implied first person, who addresses an undisclosed you. The author does not describe any concrete setting, but rather lets the action of a phone call drive plot development. This midnight yearning for a lost love could theoretically happen to anyone at any time, anywhere within the expanse of Qiu’s global milieu. The pain of their breakup pushes readers to look beyond the novel and see reflections of their personal experiences. The permeable self draws empathy from readers in an impassioned plea that appears to transcend geographical, cultural, emotional, and temporal limits.

Rebecca Walkowitz believes that the use of such second-person voices is an integral part of World Literature. She demonstrates that the second-person voice functions both inside and outside a text by speaking to a you that may be either a fictional character or an external reader. The second-person “you” fosters an intimate relationship between the novel and its interlocutors.
The unspecified gender and nationality of this you further permits authors to address an ambiguous global readership in multiple languages and locations.\textsuperscript{76}

The narrator in \textit{Last Words} shares a global outlook much larger than her native Taiwan. She traversed an international landscape, using multiple languages, to share her truth with companions from many different backgrounds. She is open and honest but she resists the confines of a rigid narrative. The ambiguous nature of her artistic personae, draws upon reader’s emotional empathy, which results in varied interpretations of her work. She is at once a dejected artist, lesbian woman, or a spurned lover. She is aware of her creative presence and appears to create a narrative that endures through multiple generations, locations, and cultures. However, Wolfe cautions that too broad a reading of her work, may actually limit perception of Qiu’s worldview.

He acknowledges that the permeable self is easily globalized because the notion of a universal, transcultural, and transhistorical reader rises above boundaries between East and West. While this universalism may prove inviting, it is problematic because it abstracts the author from his or her own socio-cultural contexts. He stresses that despite international appeal, readers have a responsibility to examine these narratives within their specific literary contexts.\textsuperscript{77}

No one is certain of the motivations behind Qiu Miaojin’s final act, but her potential reasoning continues to inspire extensive scholarship on \textit{Last Words From Montmartre}. While such conjecture falls outside the scope of this investigation, it is important to consider how the translation of her poignant final testamentary shares her message with a broader audience. Any

\textsuperscript{76} Walkowitz 167

\textsuperscript{77} Wolfe 111
attempts to globalize Qiu Miaojin should be mindful of the specific temporal, cultural, and artistic contexts of her suicide narrative.

4.5 Conclusion

Qiu Miaojin’s status as a global author is an almost singular phenomenon that results from a rare combination of various environmental, stylistic and cultural factors. Her unique access to foreign literatures and cultures fosters an enduring cosmopolitan appeal. She makes extensive use of different languages and locations to create a multicultural aesthetic that speaks to global readerships. Qiu’s experimental and cinematic lesbian narrative is also a popular subject within mass media. This contributes to her lasting commercial success and presents her as an ideal candidate for the queer translator.

Heinrich’s translation successfully highlights the multicultural aesthetic of Qiu’s narrative but an emphasis on a fluent English reading omits intertextual references, and other linguistic features, specific to the original Mandarin. This strategy may diminish her position as a resident writer in the global setting and limit reader’s perception of her Taiwanese identity.

*Last Words* romanticizes the potential and cultural similitude of the global metropolis. The narrator relishes in exploring foreign cultures, as she forms relationships with other migrants, seeking the same advantages presented by globalization. She benefits greatly from these experiences but she still grapples with isolation, homesickness, and culture shock after being physically disconnected from Taiwan. This dichotomy results from the strong cultural importance of homeland, family and friends; a situation that presents challenges for the translator, who must navigate both American and Taiwanese perceptions of globalization.
The narrator in *Last Words* speaks with an open and honest, permeable voice, who resists the confines of a rigid narrative. The ambiguous nature of her personae draws upon audiences’ emotional empathy, which results in various readings of her character, as either an alienated artist, lesbian woman, or a spurned lover. The beauty of Qiu Miaojin lies within decoding her non-linear, multifaceted perspectives; however, any attempts to globalize Qiu Miaojin should be mindful of the specific temporal, cultural, and artistic contexts of her poignant final testimony.
V. Conclusion

A global understanding of Queer Literature establishes Tongzhi and LGBT Literatures, as fully realized cultural products that facilitate contact between queer communities in an age of globalization. Ari Larissa Heinrich’s success demonstrates the potential for Tongzhi Literature in translation to encourage continued queer cultural exchange between the United States and Taiwan. Last Words From Montmartre will present Qiu Miaojin to a new generation of readers, which will foster a better understanding of the Taiwanese tongzhi community.

Tongzhi Literature is born from a collectivist political consciousness and homosexual identity with great cultural significance in Taiwan. The proud tradition of Taiwanese homosexual reading communities provides a favorable incentive for a translator eager to introduce broader cultural perspectives. While the American market is receptive to these models of queer difference, the translator must interpret the Taiwanese Tongzhi Movement according to the specific goals of American LGBT readers.

LGBT Literature defines the parameters of gay and lesbian identity categories to affirm reader’s personal sexual identities. This creates queer politics that emphasize internal identity formations rather than the outward representation prioritized by the Taiwanese Tongzhi community. The strategy further domesticates the tongzhi experience by highlighting lesbian identity rather than the lesbian visibility at the heart of the Qiu Miaojin phenomenon.

Qiu Miaojin did not advocate a modern understanding of “gay rights” because she died before the formal inception of the Tongzhi Movement. This updated translation reflects a posthumous connection with identity politics; however, this may not reflect the young author’s
political reality. Qiu did not profess an overt lesbian identity; rather she confronted the media apparatus to bring healthy visibility to her community.

Heinrich’s writes that the narrator is unrestrained by labels such as lesbian, Chinese or even woman. This strategy may expand discussion of gender and sexual diversity but it is dismissive of the pressure she faced as an author. Qiu Miaojin did not reject gender but instead leveraged different vantage points along the gender spectrum to provide perspective on gender politics within society at large.

The narrator in Last Words accepts a T identity but only as long it affords her agency to critique heteronormative stereotypes behind this butch femme dichotomy. Zoë experiments with her self expression, occasionally embracing gender neutrality, but this character is not a “genderless” construct. As Zœ moves between masculinity and femininity, it is primarily to comment on how stringent gender roles are detrimental to personal expression.

Qiu Miaojin was not a passive figure who acquiesced to social pressure. The pensive young woman dared to engage media representation to declare her love of women. She does not reject labels but instead embraces their many possibilities to push readers to critically examine their own reality.

Heinrich places Qiu Miaojin in a literary scene known to be “multicultural, polyglot, literate, ambitious and queer.” This translation strategy celebrates her multicultural aesthetic but the globalization of her non-descript “permeable voice” emphasizes a fluent English reading that omits intertextual references, and other linguistic features, specific to the original Mandarin. This may diminish her position as a resident writer in the global setting and limit reader’s perception of her Taiwanese identity.
The beauty of Qiu Miaojin lies within decoding her non-linear, multifaceted characters. The ambiguous nature of her personae draws upon audiences’ emotional empathy, allowing her to speak as either an alienated artist, lesbian woman, or a spurned lover. As a young woman she defines her own sexual identity and personhood amidst continued observation from the media, readers, and translators alike. As Taiwanese society advances, prominent tongzhi politics and the tragic nature of her suicide are the new lens with which scholars examine her work. Heinrich’s translation will allow English audiences to better explore the many layers of Qiu’s complex narratives. However, it is important that global readers be mindful of the specific temporal, cultural, and artistic contexts of her poignant final testimony.
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