Since its publication in 1996, this biannual journal has produced 39 issues, each with a particular theme or a special focus. In our mission to explore various themes in Taiwan literature, since the 25th issue (July 2009) we have brought forth a series of special issues on major writers, starting with the representative writers of the Japanese colonial period, such as Lung Ying-tsung, Chang Wen-huan, Lü Ho-jo, through the postwar writer Chung Li-ho, and all the way to contemporary senior writers like Yeh Shih-t’ao, Chung Chao-cheng, and Lee Chiao. In our continued effort to explore and trace the lines of historical development in Taiwan literature, we present this special issue on Wang Wen-hsing, who represents the Modernist school in Taiwan. This issue introduces a different dimension of Taiwan literature, and presents its complexity and multivariate features.

In the development of Taiwan literature, Wang Wen-hsing’s great tenacity in pursuit of literary art, his special language style, and his meticulous writing attitude are unique, and they have also become a source of controversy. This is especially true of his experimental novels. Wang Wen-hsing published his first short
story “Shou ye” [The Lingering Night] in 1958, and has published three novels to date: 1) *Jia bian* [Family Catastrophe], which he started to write in 1966 and published in 1973, having taken seven years; 2) *Bei hai de ren* [Backed Against the Sea], which he started to write in 1974, publishing Part I in 1982 and completing Part II in 1999, for a total of twenty-fours years; 3) *Jian yi shi* [Clipped Wings, a History], which he published in 2016, having taken thirteen years to complete.

Thus we can see the stern attitude and earnest persistence Wang Wen-hsing has maintained in his creative writing. Every novel he published caused a great uproar in the literary world, mainly because his works, regardless of their content or the form, their language or grammar, the plot or the structure, all aim to break new ground and force readers into new reading habits. Some consider him a “heretic,” but critics such as Professor Yan Yuanshu have admired him for his novelty in the use of language, his strong sense of “presence” (on-the-spot experience), his real portrayal of human feelings, his precision in detail, and his implicit delicate touch.

His creative technique lies in the precision of his choice of words, making every effort to be real. To achieve such a goal, he often creates new character graphics and punctuation marks, and even purposely leaves spacing between characters or words, a violation of Chinese writing and punctuation conventions. His purpose is to keep the consistency of harmonious sounds, to maintain a certain “rhythm,” and to express the “atmosphere” of the plot. Thus every written character and every punctuation mark functions to orient the text. In *Clipped Wings, a History*, there are cursive script, simplified characters, traditional characters, and even rarely used archaic characters, all mixed with his newly created characters. The sizes of the characters are enlarged or printed in bold font according to the development of the plot. Wang Wen-hsing indicates that the reason he uses cursive script is that he hopes that when the reader reads it, it won’t be too light or too
heavy, as it is necessary to coordinate with the psychology of the character in the story. His usage of words must consider the sound and the corresponding effect of the visual image. Wang Wen-hsing indicates that this is the demand of being real in writing. As far as precise and measured wording is concerned, Wan Wen-hsing may be said to be a through-and-through realist, and as far as his pursuit of artistic technique is concerned, he may be considered an uncompromising aesthete.

With this understanding as a premise, we believe that Wang Wen-hsing’s novels represent a difficult challenge to translate into English, and therefore we have provided only a small excerpt from one of his novels as an example. The reader must slowly read the original text in Chinese to really appreciate these elaborate works that embody utmost exertion on the part of the author. In delving into his works, the reader may find that some of Wang Wen-hsing’s thoughts and opinions are unusual. His opinions are his own, and we leave it up to the reader to determine their relative merits.

The purpose of this special issue is to confirm the importance of Wang Wen-hsing’s works in the history of Taiwan literature, and the significance of his unique literary achievement. To provide some additional material for the study of the author, we invited Professor Shu-ning Sciban of the University of Calgary, an expert in Wang Wen-hsing studies, to be our guest editor. Professor Sciban has published two books on the works of Wang Wen-hsing: 1) *Endless War: Fiction & Essays by Wang Wen-hsing* (coauthored with Fred Edwards), *Cornell East Asia Series*, 158, 2011; 2) *Reading Wang Wenxing: Critical Essays* (co-authored with Ihor Pidhainy), *Cornell East Asia Series*, 178, 2015.

The former includes Wang Wen-hsing’s early works, twenty-two short stories, one novella, one play, and five essays. The latter includes research materials about the author’s biographic essays, social and cultural critiques, questions of style, reflections on translation, and the connection of his fiction with traditional Chinese literature and the stream-of-consciousness technique of
the Modernist writers in the West. For this issue of the journal, we tried to avoid overlapping with the above two books, but rather to complement and enhance the available research materials concerning Wang Wen-hsing. Regarding the actual selections in this issue, and for an introduction to the author and his works, please see Professor Sciban’s foreword.

Professor Sciban’s expertise, and the time and effort she has put into the preparation of this issue have enabled us to bring its publication to a smooth culmination. During the process of preparing and editing the manuscript, the cooperation of the translators and the copy editor Fred Edwards, as well as the assistance of Angela Borda and Raelynn Moy at the UCSB Center for Taiwan Studies, and Chia-yun Yen at the National Taiwan University Press, have been invaluable, and greatly appreciated. Needless to say, I am very thankful to my co-editor Terence Russell for his devotion to the editing work and the timely responses in making judgments and suggestions. These are all sincerely appreciated.