The theme of this issue of the journal, “Taiwan Literature and Childhood,” combined with that of Issue 21, “Taiwan Literature and Home-Longing,” is intended to explore nostalgia as expressed in Taiwan literature from the perspectives of time and space. In terms of time, the formative experiences of one’s childhood are carried throughout one’s developing life, with inerasable memories becoming the source of nostalgia.

The term “childhood” usually refers to the stage of life before reaching the age of eighteen—a physical and intellectual developmental period subdivided into “early childhood,” “juvenile,” and “adolescence.” During this growth stage when life has just begun, routine habits have not yet been formed and one has not seen much of the world, so that every experience is novel and fresh. Children are pure and innocent, understanding the world by intuition; their minds are full of discovery and the joy of surprise, and they are sensitive and easily wounded. Thoughts and feelings aroused by life experiences and sensory stimuli remain in one’s memory for a lifetime, becoming the source of recollections and reflections. Childhood memories, conjuring the bygone days with emotion—either recollected or reflected upon, sentimental or full of regret—often become appropriate subjects or themes for narra-
tive or lyrical expression in creative writing. Taiwan literature is no exception.

The essence of Taiwan literature lies in its capturing the Taiwan-related life experience; thus the stage of childhood depicted in Taiwan literature will be relevant to Taiwan and its society and environment. Childhood experience, especially childhood experience with reference to Taiwan, is reflected in almost every Taiwanese writer's work, be it reminiscence in autobiography or fiction. Ch’en Ying-chen’s *Lingdanghua* [Bellwort], which describes the White Terror of the 1960s through the eyes of a child, exemplifies this. Tung Nien’s *Chulü* [First Trip] describes a child's experience taking the train from Chilung to Yilan for the first time, representing the “first trip” of his life. Symbolically life is a journey and “childhood” represents the “first trip.”

As we know, many writers of Taiwan literature spent their childhood in Mainland China, and their childhood memories have produced quite a few touching stories. Ch’i-chun’s collection of essays, *Qijun shuo tongnian* [Ch’i-chun on Childhood] (1981), has been well received and given a prominent place in Taiwan literature. Ch’i-chun (1917–2006) spent her childhood in China, and her essays describe the good and bad nature of the people in bygone times and her open-minded understanding and magnanimity. Even though more than half a century has elapsed, she has never lost her childlike naiveté. Many of her works have been included in high school textbooks, impressing students who grew up in Taiwan during the 1960s and 1970s with a remote and yet immediate image of China in the early twentieth century, so distant from the social reality of contemporary Taiwan.

In the matter of reflecting the current social reality, Taiwanese director Hou Hsiao-hsien’s film, *Tongnian wangshi* [Past Events of Childhood, translated as A Time to Live and a Time to Die], is perhaps the most well-known work. A highly autobiographical movie, it is based on the fragments of Hou Hsiao-hsien’s memory of his growth from a seven- or eight-year-old to a high school teenager. It details memories of his family move from Meixian in Guangdong to Fengshan in Taiwan, and reflects upon the cultural, political, economic, and social changes in Taiwan after the war, providing personal insights and perspectives in the history of Taiwan.
From the characters and incidents portrayed in the film, we can see the transformation in identity consciousness caused by social change in Taiwan since 1949. The old generation was entrenched in a deep-rooted nostalgia for the Mainland, and the middle generation lived in Taiwan with the mind-set of a temporary sojourner, depressed and disappointed in reality as their longing for the Mainland gradually dissolved day by day. However, Taiwanese consciousness grew stronger and stronger in the following generation, as people became increasingly attached to the land. The cinematic shots of children playing picture cards, whipping a top, gnawing at sugarcane, stealing guavas by the roadside, lounging around in a billiard saloon, and muddling along with a gang of teenagers, realistically reflect the process of a child’s growth and the facets of childhood.

Works interwoven in a texture of childhood remembrance and engagement with a Taiwanese locale will exhibit patterns of generational variation running through the history of Taiwan literature. Emphasizing these kinds of literary works and examining the writers from this perspective will lead to a refinement of the image of writers well-known in past literary circles and a readjustment of their place in the history of Taiwan literature. The works selected in the recently published *Qingshaonian Taiwan wenku* [Children and Young Adults’ Library of Taiwan Literature] demonstrate such an intention, revealing the course of readjustment in terms of Taiwanese subjectivity. Thus, works by writers of the Japanese Period, such as Yeh Jung-chung’s essay “Yantan cangsang” [Vicissitudes of the Saline Beach] and Chang Wo-chun’s “Caicha fengjing ouxie” [A Sketch of Tea-Plucking] are recovered from the historical remains and included in this *Library of Taiwan Literature*.

In the development of Taiwan literature, the postwar generation has demonstrated a particular excellence in writing about the childhood experience. Living in rural poverty through the 1950s, moving to the cities to work or study in the 1960s and 1970s, this generation became the backbone of society. When Taiwan’s economy boomed in the 1980s, they had already established their families and careers and improved their social status. In reflecting upon the past, it became apparent that childhood recollections provided a trail by which to understand one’s origins; their child-
hood experiences provided inspiration for their writings, especially in the form of lyrical essays expressing their memories and nostalgia. Lu Han-hsiu’s critique, “Jiyi xianlu: fanxiang zhi lu” [The Line Graph of Memory: The Return Road to One’s Hometown], was selected for translation because it eloquently explains this generation’s definition of “contemporary” and reflects the common themes and characteristics of this generation’s works.

Selection of articles for this issue places more weight on essays, because this art form is more conducive to writing about the childhood experience; it facilitates the expression of subjective emotions and thoughts, and effectively maintains realism together with traces and tones of bygone times. From the selected titles, “Guxiang na tiao huangnilu” [The Dirt Road of My Hometown], “Tongnian, xia, mianhuatang” [Childhood, Summer Days, and Cotton Candy], “Guzhen liangti” [Two Old Towns], “Chi bing de ziwei” [The Taste of Eating Ice], “Shandi xiaohai de paopaotang” [Mountain Children’s Bubble Gum], we can discern glimpses into the authors’ childhood experiences. On the premise that realism is embodied in writing about one’s childhood experience, we have selected “Kajū” [Overburdened] from the Japanese Period and “Bînô kago” [A Betel Nut Basket] by Chang Wen-huan. Also ingrained in the social reality of Taiwan is the aboriginal writers’ perspective, thus we have selected essays by three young, recently published aboriginal authors.

Regarding fiction, Weng Nao’s “Rakankyaku” [Scamp] displays another facet of the author’s writing style in dealing with social realities, which contrasts with Ping Lu’s “Tongnian gushi” [Childhood Stories], portraying the protagonist’s ethereal psychological changes stimulated by the fleeting memories of childhood. Ping Lu’s “Childhood Stories” cuts and pastes her on-and-off memories crisscrossing with intermittent consciousness of reality. The author’s intent and creative technique can be seen in the opening paragraph of the story:

Everyone’s self-claimed memory is a repetitive process of adding, deleting, continuing, reshuffling, retelling, and fabricating a story. Moreover, by means of forging your own memories or those of others, the attempt to tell a novel and
intriguing story is what is interesting about fiction as a literary form. A crossroad is a home garden, and memory extends indefinitely; let's continue each other's unfinished stories.

Tzeng Ching-wen is an outstanding writer of children's fiction. “Chuntian, zaochen, banjia de jiaosheng” [Spring, Morning, and the Cry of the Spotted-Neck Doves] is the first chapter of his novel, Tiandeng, muqin [Heavenly Lantern, Mother]. The background of this children's story is set in the countryside, described by the author in the postscript: “I write about the countryside; not only is it my own memory but it is also the common memory shared by many Taiwanese. I wrote it in the form of a children's story with the hope that more Taiwanese could experience Taiwanese things and objects early in life.” Late Professor Ch’en Yu-ling wrote a brilliant insightful critique on this novel, from which we have selected, “Nongcun: tongnian de Wutuobang” [The State of Taiwan Literature—Feminine, Nativist, and Anti-Colonial Discourse] as an introduction to the study of Tzeng Ching-wen's children's story.

We are very grateful for the support and assistance of our translators that has enabled us to continue the journal, now entering its twelfth year. In addition to our constant translators, Professors John Balcom and Yingtsih Hwang, Professor Rosemary Haddon of Massey University has kindly lent us her expert hand to translate Tzeng Ching-wen's story and two other essays. Professor Lili Selden's translations of Weng Nao’s “Scamp” and Chang Wen-huan’s “Overburdened” were rendered directly from the original texts in Japanese and deserve special appreciation. In addition, Professor Terence Russell recommended the recently published essays by aboriginal authors, which are complementary to the selections in this volume. As for poems, in the early 1970s when I came to study in the United States, I was so homesick that I wrote a series of twelve poems on “Childhood Memories,” which are included here simply because they fit the theme of this issue perfectly.

Professor Selden offered her expertise in English editing despite her busy schedule. My thanks also go to Ms. Karen Doehner at the Center for Taiwan Studies, who worked hard with copy editing the manuscripts, design, and layout, and to Raelynn Moy,
who, as office assistant, has also contributed to the continued publication of the journal.

Hereafter, based on the chosen theme for each issue, we will invite scholars in related research fields to guest edit the journal. We should all look forward to the coming two issues, “Taiwan Literature and the February 28 Incident” (Issue 23), to be edited by Professor Sylvia Lin, and “Taiwan Literature and Aboriginal Myths and Legends” (Issue 24), by Professor Terence Russell.