

**Competition, Infiltration, and Paradigm Formation:  
A Survey of the Literary Awards of Taiwan Newspaper Supplement**

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**Abstract**

When it comes to literature writing in Taiwan, literary supplements (Fukan) printed in company with major newspapers have been considered a dynamical field for literary activities. Bolstered by immense influence of newspaper on mass culture, literary awards hosted by the literary supplements are endowed with tremendous influential status in the literary arena of Taiwan. These awards, involving various calls for different genres and the publication of the award-winning works, directly correlate with the development of literature in Taiwan. This article aims to explore the key roles played by both literary supplements and the literary awards as their orientation has undergone drastic transformation from being led by government policies to market-oriented. Opinions vary in regard to the “effectiveness” of literary awards: while amateur writers made their debuts and successfully entered the literary arena by winning prestigious prizes, and the awards also have helped stimulate creative writing of various genres, effectively broadening the horizon of literature, it is also true that many award entries were specifically written with the intentions of winning the prizes, falling into stereotypes that paradoxically discourage genuine creativity. Taking both perspectives into account, this study tries to re-evaluate the literary awards hosted by newspaper supplements and attempts to explore their different orientations. As literary awards have been recognized as possessing a formative function in shaping the literary paradigm and establishing certain literary trends for contemporary literature in Taiwan, this survey hopes to shed a new light on the formation and the paradigm shift in the literary field of Taiwan.

**Keywords:** Newspaper in Taiwan, Literary Supplement (Fukan), Literary Award, Literary Field.

## 1 Introduction

In July 2016, “the China Times Literary Award” (时报文学奖) hosted by Renjian Fukan (人间副刊), the literary supplement of the China Times, unexpectedly announced to be suspended all of a sudden. Less than three years ago, “the United Daily Prize for Literature” (联合报文学奖) was transformed into “the United Daily Literary Grand Prize” (联合报文学大奖), reducing to a single prize for celebrating lifelong literary achievements of one individual writer. These so-called “two grand literary prizes of newspaper,” which had been leading the trend of literature writing in Taiwan for almost half a century officially became the relics of history. Up to the present time, there is only “the Lin Rung-San Literary Award” (林荣三文学奖) hosted by *the Liberty Times* left for single literary works to compete, and it now became the only award that is considered of comparable credibility and of similar scale with the two above-mentioned prizes hosted by major newspapers.

Back in 1976, *the United Daily* founded its prize for literature with an announcement made on 18 March, calling for short stories with a first prize amounting to TWD\$100,000, and a more detailed announcement regarding the submission of entries was subsequently made ten days later. It instantly became the first and foremost significant literary award hosted by the literary supplement of a major newspaper company. Later in 1978, as *the China Times* also founded its own literary award, two mainstream newspaper companies started to compete and cultivate the literary dynamics in Taiwan thanks to their enormous influence on mass media and their massive resources. Both awards had led the way for the development of contemporary literature in Taiwan and encouraged countless literary novices and amateur writers. Furthermore, both awards disclosed the names of the jurors to the public, hence considerably establishing their credibility. The literature awards hosted by literary supplements, so to speak, became an essential chapter that never affords to be overlooked in the history of Taiwan Literature (Jiao, 1998, p. 240-244).

In the twenty-first century, however, the politics and economics in Taiwan have undergone drastic changes and transformations, while the course of globalization as well as the popularization of the Internet radically modified the way we received and processed information. Since then, literature has been deeply affected and gradually lost its former attention. In the midst of an ever-growing huge amount of social / political issues that are being instantly updated and popped up on screen by seconds, literature was marginalized if not totally falling out of sight. The “temporary suspension” of the China Times Literary Award in effect exposed the awkward existence of literature in Taiwan society: even though the China Times has gradually lost its significance and the amount of its printing copies has drastically declined after China Times Group was sold to Want Want China Holdings Limited in 2008, a sudden announcement of suspending the 38-year-old vintage literary award made in less than two weeks before the original submission deadline would have incurred massive damage for the newspaper’s reputation. Quite surprisingly, it turned out that the announcement of suspension of the award almost went unnoticed, and even young writers who usually pay great attention to this “road to fame” scarcely discussed about it. Yu-Hsun Chu (朱宥勋), one of the most promising active young writers in Taiwan, pointed out in the column of the Apple Daily (苹果日报) that the

suspension announcement of the China Times Literary Award was first noted on the Internet by a writer from Hong Kong, and not a single Taiwan literati was even aware of it. Chu also indicated that there was no discussion whatsoever after the news of the suspension was confirmed, as if people belonging to the literary arena in Taiwan did not even care about it. As literature is seeking its *raison d'être* and the discourse of its future is not yet established, the literary awards – once playing the leading role in the development of Taiwan Literature for almost half a century – had already gone out of business. In view of the current crisis of literature as exemplified by the unnoticed suspension (or “transformation”) of the literary awards, this article attempts to elucidate the history and the development of literary awards hosted literary supplements of newspapers, the ever-changing orientations of these awards, as well as their once-influential status in the literary field in contemporary Taiwan.

## 2 The Literary Field in Contemporary Taiwan and the Categories of Literary Awards

The contemporary literary field in Taiwan can be categorized into several sectors, including literary media, literary criticism, and literary education. In regard to the literary media, it can be further broken down into smaller segments, such as literary supplements in newspaper, publishing companies, magazines, and the Internet. Among them, literary supplements of newspaper have long been considered to possess massive significance. In 1997, “the Academic Conference of Chinese Newspaper Supplement in the World” (世界华文报纸副刊学术研讨会), hosted by the Council for Cultural Affairs of the Executive Yuan (行政院文化建设委员会, upgraded as the Ministry of Culture since 2012) and organized by the *United Daily News Group*, officially acknowledged the significance of literary supplements in newspaper and gave rise to the emergence of “the study of literary supplement,” which continue to the present day and brought about valuable contributions to the history writing of Taiwan Literature. In the twenty-first century when literature in Taiwan gradually loses its appeal to the mass and the opportunities to have works published became scarce, there are only a handful of literary supplements that continue to pay its contributors. Yet, it is in this dreadful scenario, in which traditional print media has lost its former shine, that literary supplement does not afford to be overlooked.

Traditional print media is considered to possess the power of interpretation, acknowledgment, and exclusion; more importantly, it provides a public platform of considerable visibility before the new media – the Internet – emerged and radically transformed the reception of literary works. When it comes to the traditional literary field in Taiwan, almost every literary novice or enthusiast who wants to enter the mainstream literary realm, to publish their work, or to encounter their potential readers, can only achieve these goals by getting their work published by newspapers and magazines or by winning the literary awards hosted by the print media.

In 1996, when the results of the 18th the United Daily Prize for Literature were announced and published in a collection, the editor in chief briefly yet stringently noted:

Literature is the tear of God, reflecting the mind, sentiment, precaution, and pursuit of mankind. Life grows old, yet tears never run dry. The glittering, dazzling, and salty prickling of tears witnesses the vigor of the world. This collection, titled *a Brave New World*, hereby proclaims: the hope of life lies in tears just as the beauty of the world exists in literature (Ya, 1996, p. 11).

Awakening and sentimental as this epitome resounds, it ultimately reveals the joy and pride of a novice upon entering the literary realm.

Nevertheless, as there are more than a hundred literary prizes regardless of scale and with varying extent of validity, giving rise to hundreds or even thousands of award-winning works of every possible literary genre, we cannot help but ask ourselves whether these literary prizes that collectively constitute the driving force of literature produce only joy and pride of a new comer. Bearing this question in mind, scrutinizing the development of both the literary supplement of newspaper and the awards they provide becomes a valuable task for the purpose of explicating the “effectiveness” of this phenomenon of pursuing (and sometimes over-valuing) literary prizes.

Plenty of discourses have been established in the efforts of stressing the importance as well as the essential role that literary supplements of newspaper have been playing in the development of Taiwan literature. Relevant remarks that have been often quoted include “literary supplement itself is the literary arena,” “a literary supplement (is a representation of) a government body,” and

the academic study of literary supplement, as it gradually takes shape in universities, effectually exemplifies that the development of literary supplement has reached the stage of maturity, becoming an essential cultural phenomenon and emerging research focus (Ya, 1997, p. 4).

Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang also indicates that literary supplement played an indispensable role in accelerating the transformation of the literary field in Taiwan from being led by the government policy to market-oriented. As Chang suggests, during the transformation process, literary supplements have appropriated and modified the existing aesthetics, successfully translating/transforming the ideology of the dominant culture into an aesthetic that appeals to the market, thus establishing considerable reputation and achieving influential status among the homogeneous mainstream readers (Chang, 2015, p. 288-289). Since literary supplement played such a crucial role in translating/transforming dominating cultural ideology, the literary awards established by them unsurprisingly are considered tremendously influential in the contemporaneous literary arena and more likely tended to steer the dominating aesthetic taste of the literary field. For instance, once a lesbian-, gay-, or queer-themed work won the first prize of the *China Times* Literary Award, the writing of LGBT culture subsequently became more vigorous than ever. Literary awards also change the literary field considerably: when the United Daily Prize for Literature ceased to call for original works

and was transformed into the United Daily Literary Grand Prize that celebrates the lifelong literary achievement of an individual, an essential arena for literary competition was shut down, and for literary novice the traditional road to fame by winning prize became blocked.

Literary awards vary from their nature and sponsorship. In terms of nature, the awards can be categorized into two kinds: celebrating one's literary achievement or acknowledging the outstanding literary quality of one single piece of work. The former category targets on one single prestigious writer and commends his or her achievement in literature; National Awards of Art (国家文艺奖), Zhongshan Arts Award (中山文艺奖), and Chinese Writer's & Artist's Association Medal (中国文艺协会文艺奖章) all belong to this category. When it comes to original literary works, awards differ from acknowledging the literary quality of a published book or calling for unpublished single piece of work. Taiwan Literature Golden Awards (台湾文学金典奖), Golden Tripod Awards (金鼎奖), and Ten Best Books of the Year selected by the Openbook (the literary supplement) of the China Times (《中国时报·开卷》年度十大好书) commend the published work of literature, while most of other literary awards call for one single piece of poem, prose, fiction, or other genre.

In terms of sponsorship, government-sponsored literary awards include Golden Art Award of National Military (国军文艺艺术金像奖), Literary and Artistic Creation Awards of Ministry of Education (教育部文艺创作奖), Tung Flower Literature Prize of Hakka Affairs Council (客委会桐花文学奖), and so on. Municipal or local government also hosts various literary awards, including Taipei Literature Award (台北文学奖), Kaohsiung Takao Literature Award (高雄打狗文学奖), Miaoli "Dream Flower" Literature Award (苗栗梦花文学奖), Nantou "Mount Jade" Literature Award (南投玉山文学奖), and so on. In addition, notable literary awards organized by higher education institutions include National Taiwan University Literary Awards (台大文学奖), Tamkang University "Wu Hu Kang" (Five Tiger Hills) Literary Award (淡江五虎岗文学奖), National Central University Golden Pen Award (中央金笔奖), NCKU Feng Huang (Flame Tree) Literary Award (成大凤凰树文学奖), Chung Hsing Lake Literary Prize (中兴湖文学奖). As for literary prizes hosted by newspaper, there are (or were) aforementioned the China Times Literary Award, the United Daily Prize for Literature, and "the Lin Rung-San Literary Award."

Literary awards are often considered more authoritative and influential when sponsored by the government, mainstream mass media, or a private foundation. To a large extent, these awards facilitate not only the formation of literary paradigm but also the integration and the communication of the sinophone literary realm. Moreover, these awards once helped consolidate the structure of literary community and reinforced certain ideologies promoted by the government. As for award winners, they were not only conferred an honorary title and a certain amount of prize money but also bestowed with a significant starting point for entering into the literary arena with the help of mass media. Taking also into account the awards sponsored by local governments or the ones that call for certain genres, it becomes obvious that literary awards also correspond to the dominant ideology of promoting "Taiwanese consciousness" and of emphasizing "the nativist point of view" in the certain timespan. As some literary awards put much stress on specific local

cultural aspect, certain subgenres, aesthetic stances, and social ideologies were celebrated and thus incorporated into the formatting process of a new literary discourse, helping to re-constitute the power structure of the literary field.

In comparison to the awards of larger scale that are sponsored by the government or mass media, the literary awards hosted by educational institutions have relatively less to do with engaging in the formation of literary paradigm. Generally speaking, the awards sponsored by universities or high schools often lack the stress on local characteristics or specific cultural aspects. In a way, the literary awards hosted by schools aim no more than to promote literary education or to provide a small playground, in which young literary enthusiasts can cultivate their skill and practice their writing.

In regard to the “effectiveness” of the literary awards hosted by mass media, opinions vary to a significant extent: many scholars have indicated that amateur writers successfully made their debuts and were then acknowledged to be “eligible” to enter the literary arena by winning prestigious prizes, while some other find this phenomenon only a “myth.” The awards may have helped stimulate creative writing of various genres, effectively broadening the horizon of literature; yet, there are also submissions that were specifically and intentionally written for competing the prizes or appealing to the taste of jurors, thus falling into stereotypes and in turn discouraging real creativity.

Taking both perspectives into account, this study tries to re-evaluate the literary awards hosted by the literary supplements while exploring different orientations and possible intentions of the awards. As literary awards hosted by the newspaper supplements have been recognized as possessing a formative function of the literary paradigm in Taiwan and helping to establish the contemporary literary trend, a survey of the awards and the literary supplements will shed a new light on the formation and the paradigm shift of contemporary literature in Taiwan, a field full of dynamics and mutual infiltration.

In retrospect, the practice of encouraging creative writing and cultivating talented writers with a large amount of prize money or payment was started first by the Prize Committee of Chinese Arts (中华文艺奖金委员会) founded by the Kuomintang (the KMT Party). Implementing governmental policies of art and controlling the artistic field by one single political party only came to a halt by the 1960s and was later replaced by the so-called “two grand literary prizes of newspaper” established in the 1970s. Since then, literary awards of all sorts and sizes have flourished and are regarded as an essential mechanism of literature production, standing among the key roles played by publication firm, newspaper supplement, and literary magazines. Generally speaking, the literary awards regarded to be more authoritative and influential are those sponsored by the government, private foundations, artistic associations, and mass media such as *the China Times*, *the United Daily*, *the Liberty Times*, and *the Central Daily News* (中央日報). To a large extent, these awards facilitate not only the formation of the literary paradigm in Taiwan but also the integration as well as the communication of the sinophone literary realm (Chuang, 2003, p. 44). Furthermore, these awards help consolidate the structure of literary community and reinforce certain ideologies promoted by the government (Xiang, 2003, p. 38). As Jiao

Tong puts it in the article “The Styles and Power Structures of the Two Newspaper Literary Awards”, both *the China Times* and *the United Daily* conducted the award selection process with jurors’ names publicized so as to enhance the credibility of the awards; apart from this, both awards provide huge sum of prize money, and the award-winning works are guaranteed with more visibility and publicity provided by the newspaper. All these advantages enabled the two grand prizes of literature boost the dynamic of literary writing, and both prizes unsurprisingly became the arena for young literary enthusiasts to cut a striking figure of themselves (Jiao, 1997, p. 209).

Apart from these two literary prizes of larger scale and with longer histories, there are also plenty of literary awards sponsored or hosted by the local and municipal government. It is on account of these literary awards of all sizes and scales, as well as their participants, that the splendid landscape of Taiwan Literature is continuously rejuvenated.

### 3 The Effectiveness of the Literary Awards Hosted by Literary Supplements

For the literary supplements of major newspapers, hosting their own literary awards is an effective way to further extend their influence on literary arena. The so-called “writers born in the fourth decade of the Republic Calendar” (alternatively referred to as writers of the baby-boom generation) who later acquired prestigious status and possessed the right of discourse, such as T’ien-wen Chu (朱天文), T’ien-hsin Chu (朱天心), Ta-chun Chang (张大春), and Wei-chen Su (苏伟贞), almost all started their literary careers by winning respective major literary awards in the 1970s. Prestigious as these writers became, there have been very few studies of the effectiveness of the literary awards in cultivating and promoting literary novices. Several noteworthy remarks on this aspect of literary awards appeared in the essay “From the United Daily News Novel Prize to the United Daily Prize for Literature: Commenting on Novel-writing with Respect to the Prizes for Novel” by Tung Nien (novelist, the prize winner of both the United Daily Short Story Competition and the China Times Literary Award, the former managing director of Linking Publishing, one of Taiwan’s major literary publishers and the subsidiary of the United Daily Group), in which he succinctly indicates that

the winners of the prizes for novel hosted by major newspaper companies were endowed with a certain extent of authority; when one is properly equipped with real talents, he or she may gain the publicity provided by all kinds of media without having to queue up with others. This is the function as well as the respectable intention of the prizes for novel, held for the purpose of encouraging creative writing (Tung, 1997, p. 11-12).

In the 1997 Academic Conference of Chinese Newspaper Supplement in the World, Jiao Tong in his conference paper “the Styles and Power Structures of the Two Major Newspaper Literary Awards” argued that “literary awards are in effect a form of power struggle, in which the participants compete for power by the designated rules and regulations.” Jiao Tong also pointed out that

over the past twenty years, the winners of the two major newspaper literary awards have been able to lead the trend of the current literary field. The leading figures of the literary arena in Taiwan are often the previous recipients of the two newspaper literary awards, and they would very much like to mention these honorary award titles in the introductory section about the author when their works are published either in single volume or appearing in a collection (Jiao, 1997, p. 211).

In the twenty-first century, however, the publishing industry underwent a drastic recession, which also deeply affected literature. Being an essential segment of the literary field, literary awards and their effectiveness were consequently impaired and could not afford to keep themselves aloof from the bleak scenario.

According to the survey “The Facet of New Book Releases in the Age of the Touch-Screen Generation: Analysis of the Current Status and the Trend of Taiwan Publishing Industry in 2015,” conducted and announced by the National Central Library in January 2016, newly published books in the year 2015 amounted to approximately 39,000 volumes, among which language- and literature-related books (including the so-called Light Novels) reached roughly 13,000 volumes, representing one third of the total sum of the newly published books. Comparing with the figures of the same category ten years before, the number in 2015 did not show a significant change. If we look closely into the gross sales amount of books, however, a disheartening decline is revealed. According to the article “the Collapsing Five Years of Taiwan Publishing Industry” (Chen, 2015), a survey based on the statistics provided by the Ministry of Finance in the “Database for the Number of the Profit Seeking Enterprise and Gross Sales Amount” (财政部营利事业家数及销售额资料库), the gross output of the Taiwan publishing industry in 2014 amounted to TWD\$22.26 billion, representing a 16% decline in comparison to the gross output in 2013, which had reached TWD\$26.99 billion. Even though another survey conducted by the Ministry of Culture showed that the number of books read by every Taiwan resident annually amounts to 13.5, the statistic is not generally considered convincing, as the publishing industry unanimously suggested that the more plausible number should be 2.

These numbers revealed the bleak situation of the publishing industry in Taiwan, and we cannot help but imagine worse circumstances for the publication of literature, which occupies a relatively minor a marginal proportion in the industry. It is fortunate for Taiwan to have kept alive various kinds of literary award so that the whole society would still pay attention to its literati and their creative works. The prestigious poet Chou Meng-tieh (周梦蝶) was finally awarded with the laureate title of the National Awards of Art after living so many years in his Lonely Land (孤独国, Chou's first poetry collection, published in 1955, romanized as *Gudu Guo*); after living in obscurity for many years, Huang Chun-ming (黄春明) was also conferred the National Awards of Art for literature, enabling him to enter into academic institutions and become the writer in residence. The recipients of the Lin Rung-San Literary Prize also became the hunting target of numerous publishing firms that wish to have the prize-winning work published in collection. As the publishing industry is



facing a situation more unfavorable than ever before, with literature more marginalized, what else may constitute the *raison d'être* of the literary awards hosted by newspaper supplements, or their effectiveness in contributing to the development of literature in Taiwan?

What distinguishes the literary awards hosted by newspaper supplements from those sponsored by governmental bodies or municipal governments may not be very conspicuous at the first glance. To a certain extent, all literary awards serve for the same purpose: to provide a platform for competition, in which works of exceptional literary value will stand out; the prize winners are granted with honor and a large sum of money. It is undeniable, however, that the literary awards hosted by the newspaper supplement are considered more authoritative and legitimate than others owing to the fact that prize-winning works will be more widely publicized due to the unique characteristic of newspaper that is also the function of mass media. The prize-winning works of the literary awards of the newspaper supplement, as a result, obtain more attention, and their literary value are also more often confirmed and justified.

If we are to sum up the “effectiveness” of the literary awards hosted by the newspaper supplements in terms of their influence upon the literary arena in Taiwan, several conclusions can be reached, as exemplified below.

### **(1) Forming Literary Paradigm**

According to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of field (2001), the more a cultural field achieves the state of autonomy, the more its producer or agent will be capable of controlling the distribution of the symbolic capital; as a result, the producer or agent of an autonomous cultural field will always be positioned in a highly competitive and dynamic relationship with the externally derived principle of legitimacy. There is no denying that the cultural field in Taiwan was strictly controlled by the dominating political ideology for many years after 1949 before the Martial Law was lifted. Yet, as the government intended to present Taiwan as a “free society of market economy” to the outside world, it somehow slackened the control over the field of cultural production to the extent that the cultural field at times appeared to be “semi-autonomous,” as exemplified by the market dominance of the *China Times* and the *United Daily*, the two major enterprises of mass media that are privately owned, over the *Central Daily News*, owned by the dominating KMT party. The rapid development in the realms of the social and the economical after the 1970s further accelerated the process of the cultural field towards the state of autonomy. After the Martial Law was lifted in 1987, the political realm finally and completely lost its control over the literary field, and the literary underwent a drastic transformation from being controlled by the government to being market-oriented. It was in this transforming process that literary supplements and the literary awards they hosted have played essential roles.

The major driving force in the field of literary production comes from the dynamics in the competitive relationships among various positions. The participants of literary activities, occupying different positions in the field, keeps competing for the authority of demarcating the dominant literary discourse. In terms of literary awards,

the competitive literary activities are presented in the form of call for entries, the assessment of submissions, and the publication the awarded piece. Owing to literary supplements' tremendous power of dissemination, the results of the competition for literary awards are still attentively observed and highly regarded even when the influence of printed media gradually subsided. As a result, the genre these literary awards call for as well as the publication of the awarded works directly affect the literature development and consequently impact upon the shifting of power in the literary field.

Just as jurors are authorized to determine the award winner, upon whom the laureate title will be bestowed, the process of selection and the announcement of the competition results, so to speak, complete the paradigm formation of the award-winning works. The process and the results of literary awards then give shape to the general literary paradigm in Taiwan, especially as the works winning the first prize of major literary awards are so often compiled into the annual collections of novel or prose, helping these award-winning works to be disseminated to wider publicity. In the twenty-first century when publishing industry undergoes significant recession and the reading preference of the public gets narrower than ever, resulting in lesser visibility and lower popularity of works published by authors who have already established their literary status, the award-winning works gain more public attention by comparison, and their function in shaping the literary paradigm becomes more apparent.

## (2) Promoting Novices in Literature

As literary awards are always empowered with a huge sum of prize money, and the award-winning works were picked out by the most meticulous selection process, the artistic value of the prize-winning works are often unanimously confirmed. Also, the literary awards hosted by the newspaper supplement in the early years were relatively large in scale and abundant in funding, the invited jurors always being the prestigious writers, winning the prize is regarded by novices or literary enthusiasts as tremendous encouragement. Yet, in the article "Literary Awards as the Qualification for Writers?" Professor Hsiu-Ling Lin inquired whether the selection process of literary awards could really seek out new writers whose works are truly outstanding and would be fully capable of cultivating new literary generation, or that literary awards have fallen into a sort of hunting target for writers who have already established their status but in the meanwhile participated in competitions so frequently for the purpose of obtaining more prize money and honorary titles (Lin, 2003, p. 51). The phenomenon suggested in Lin's article, written in 2003, still prevails in the present time, yet many competent writers of younger generation had gradually withdrawn from participating in the competitions to the extent that literary awards have truly become an arena for novices and literature enthusiasts. Admittedly, there are still novices who keep submitting their works to various kinds of literary awards, and certain names keep recurring in the prize-winning announcement. In the bleak scenario for literature today, however, there are very few other places for these novices of literature to have their works publicized; as a result, novices who have already acquired the "entrance ticket" to the mainstream literary realm and are no longer "amateur" still continuously take part in the competitions for literary awards even though they are branded negatively as "the prize hunters" or "award-reaping troopers." All kinds of literary awards, regardless of scale and size, be it local or nationwide, calling for submissions or taking subsidy applications, fall into their hunting targets.

That being said, there is no denying that literary awards are still considered the primary choice for novices of literature to enter the literary arena, as exemplified by 2,484 entries – a huge amount of number – submitted to the 12<sup>th</sup> Lin Rung-San Literary Award in 2016. Among the prize winners, the proportion of “real novices” is still considerably high: at the age of 23, Yang Fu-min (杨富闵) won the first prize of the 5<sup>th</sup> Lin Rung-San Literary Award in 2009 for short stories; when Chung Ruei (钟旻瑞) won the first prize for short stories of the 11th Lin Rung-San Literary Award in 2015, he was only 22 years of age. The winners of the 12th Lin Rung-San Literary Award in 2016, Hsiao Chun-Yi (萧钧毅) and Hsiao Yi-Hui (萧诒徽), who received the first prize for short stories and poetry respectively, are also notable literary novices.

### (3) Leading the Trend for Literature Writing

Thanks to the powerful dissemination and the spreading influence of mass media, works winning the literary awards hosted by the literary supplement usually receive more attention from the reader. Naturally, the subject matter as well as the writing style of the award-winning works often become the standard or writing model for literary enthusiasts who attempt to draft their own entries. Examples can be seen from the prevalence of lesbian-, gay-, or queer-themed work during the 1990s: starting from Cao Lijuan (曹丽娟)’s “Tongnü zhi wu” (童女之舞, translated as “the Dance of a Virgin” or “the Maiden’s Dance”), winning the first prize in the 1991 United Daily News Short Story Competition, many queer-themed works dealing with similar subject matters were selected in sequences, including Ling Yan (凌烟)’s “the Silent Thrush” (失声画眉, Shisheng Huamei), awarded the first prize of the Independent Evening News One Million Fiction Contest (自立晚报百万小说奖) in 1991; Cao Lijuan’s “Regarding Her White Hair and Other Matters” (关于她的白发及其他), winning the Unitas Honorary Novella Prize; Du Xiulan (杜修兰)’s Rebel Woman (《逆女》), the first prize of the Crown Popular Fiction Prize (皇冠大众小说百万首奖); as well as Dong Qizhang (董启章)’s Double-self (《双身》), winning the 1995 United Daily News Special Novel Prize.

Fran Martin has made a similar observation in her “Taiwan’s Literature of Transgressive Sexuality” (translated and collected into *Taiwan and Its Context*) that literary arena of the 90s were heavily marked by works of “transgressive sexuality,” and the queer-themed works almost always won the literary competition at that time, regardless of their size (Martin, 2012, p. 327). In my previous working experience as a chief editor, numerous widely-read queer-themed award-winning works were also selected in the collections I compiled. Among them, the most famous ones include Chu T’ien-wen (朱天文)’s *Notes of a Desolate Man* (《荒人手记》), which won the China Times Novel Prize in 1994; Qiu Miaojin (邱妙津)’s *Notes of a Crocodile* (《鳄鱼手记》), winning the China Times Honorary Novel Prize in 1995; Chi Ta-Wei (纪大伟)’s “Membrane” (《膜》), which won the United Daily News Novella Prize in 1995.

In 1999, writer Chang Ying Tai won the first prize of the 21st United Daily News Novel Prize by her short story “Tibetan Lover”(〈西藏爱人〉); the next year, surprisingly, she won another first prize of the novel genre in the 23rd China Times Literary Award by her “Hunting the Oroqen”(鄂伦春之猎). In terms of theme and style, Chang Ying Tai’s “Tibetan Lover” and “Hunting the Oroqen” both share certain similarities such as ethnographical-writing, exoticism, the theme of love occurring during journeys, and these striking similarities that might have helped Chang to win two grand literary prizes in such a short span of time stirred quite a lot of debates at that time. Also in 1999, Chang Ying Tai won the first prize of the prose genre in the 22<sup>nd</sup> *China Times* Literary Award by “fictionalizing” the story of a middle-aged man, bald and divorced, who went abroad to document the life of sea seals. When the “fictional-ness” of the work was exposed, discussions and debates simultaneously emerged. Even though the fictional/truthful extent of a piece of prose writing (which is supposed to be non-fictional) is still a subject under debate, it goes without saying that prose writing mixed with some fictional elements somehow became popular in the next few years. No matter how many similarities were shared by the award-winning works of a certain timespan, there is no denying that these works were soon regarded by many as the model for creative writing (and for making award entries) and helped to establish the trend and taste for literature at that time.

#### 4 Conclusion

This article explores both the categories and the development of the literary awards hosted by the newspaper literary supplement in Taiwan. In the meantime, it attempts to analyze the impacts as well as the “effectiveness” of these literary awards on the literary field in Taiwan, in the sense that these awards helped to establish the literary paradigm, promote literary novices, provide guidance to creative writing, as well as leading the trend in literature. It is on account of newspaper’s tremendous power in information dissemination that the literary awards hosted by them were capable of achieving these goals.

In the twenty-first century, as the study of Taiwan Literature becomes a new research focus and obtains much more attention from academic communities than ever before, it is paradoxical to have observed that the essential role literary works once played in the daily life for people in Taiwan, both for intelligentsia and general reading public, have now become of less importance. In the meanwhile, there is no denying that even newspapers themselves are losing their former glory, as their influential status gradually declined and was replaced by the new media on the Internet. It is hoped that this article will bring about more detailed documentations as well as more focused researches and analyses of the phenomenon, so as to shed light of the road and the unknown future these literary awards are heading to.

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