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Writing Taiwan is the first volume in English to examine the entire span of modern Taiwan literature, from the first decades of the twentieth century to the present. In this collection, leading literary scholars based in Taiwan and the United States consider prominent Taiwanese authors and works in genres including poetry, travel writing, and realist, modernist, and postmodern fiction. The diversity of Taiwan literature is signaled by the range of authors treated, including Yang Chichang, who studied Japanese literature in Tokyo in the early 1930s and wrote all of his own poetry and fiction in Japanese; Li Yongping, an ethnic Chinese born in Malaysia and educated in Taiwan and the United States; and Liu Daren, who was born in mainland China and effectively exiled from Taiwan in the 1970s on account of his political activism.

Because the island of Taiwan spent the first half of the century as a colony of Japan and the second half in an umbilical relationship to China, its literature challenges basic assumptions about what constitutes a "national literature." Several contributors directly address the methodological and epistemological issues involved in writing about "Taiwan literature." Other contributors investigate the cultural and political grounds from which specific genres and literary movements emerged. Still others explore themes of history and memory in Taiwan literature and tropes of space and geography, looking at representations of boundaries as well as the boundary-crossing global flows of commodities and capital. Like Taiwan's history, modern Taiwan literature is rife with conflicting legacies and impulses. Writing Taiwan reveals a sense of its richness and diversity to English-language readers.