

In Search of an Identity through Education in *The Girl Friends* and *Orphan of Asia*

One of the most powerful quotes of Nelson Mandela is about education: “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” Education is important for a country to develop the people’s consciousness as citizens and their awareness of the world around them; education is likewise important to individuals for their personal development and their search for self-fulfillment and identity. This paper deals with how education helps a Ukrainian woman, Lyubov, to find her identity in a confusing yet empowering time in Ukraine’s history in *The Girl Friends* by Olena Pchilka and how it fails to help Hu Taiming, a colonized subaltern, to find his identity in a chaotic wartime setting in Taiwan in *Orphan of Asia* by Wu Zhuo-liu.

According to the “History of Ukraine” in the *Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, Ukrainian national historiography has traditionally divided Ukrainian history into eight periods, beginning with “the so-called Princely era of Kievan Rus’ and the Principality of Galicia-Volhynia and ends with “independent Ukraine” after 1991.¹ Set in the 1860s, *The Girl Friends* reflects the

¹ Other periods include the period of Lithuanian-Ruthenian State, the period of the Cossack and the Hetman State, the national and cultural revival of the 19th century, the Ukrainian nation State of 1917–1921, the interwar occupation of Ukrainian territories by four foreign powers, and the consolidation of most Ukrainian ethnic territory into

society of the 4th period, which is described as “the national and cultural revival of the 19th century.”

After the Partitions of Poland in 1772, 1793 and 1795, the extreme west of Ukraine fell under the control of the Austrians, with the rest becoming a part of the Russian Empire. As a result of the Russo-Turkish Wars, the Ottoman Empire’s control receded from south-central Ukraine, while the rule of Hungary over the Transcarpathian region continued. Ukrainian writers and intellectuals were inspired by the nationalistic spirit stirring other European peoples existing under other imperial governments and became determined to revive the Ukrainian linguistic and cultural traditions and re-establish a Ukrainian nation-state, a movement that became known as Ukrainophilism.

Within the vast and ethnically diversified realm the concept of an All-Russian nation was promulgated in an attempt to unify its varied inhabitants under one state. The concept served to recognize the distinctiveness of the peoples of present-day Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, but sought to subsume them, viewing them as ‘deviations which obscured a fundamental cultural and historical unity.’

Concerned that a growing nationalist sentiment would become widespread among the “Little Russians,”² Tsar Alexander II banned the use of the Ukrainian language in 1876 and decreed that Russian be the language of political administration and education among the Ukrainians. The Russophile policies of Russification and Panslavism led to an exodus of a number of Ukrainian intellectuals into Western Ukraine. However, many Ukrainians accepted their fate in the Russian Empire and some were able to achieve great success. Nationalist sentiment was still on the rise, notably in Kiev, where it developed around the Brotherhood of Saints Cyril and Methodius in the mid-1840s. This underground political society that promoted Ukrainian national consciousness had as one of its members the poet Taras Shevchenko (1814–1861), who

the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Limited by the length, the paper focuses only on the fourth period when Ukrainian intellectuals and authors tried to promote the unique Ukrainian culture and identity in the 19th century.

² Though nationalist sentiments were growing along the Dnieper in and around Kiev, it was not until the late 1800s that the concept of a “Ukrainian nation” arose, and “Ukraine” more frequently became the accepted name of the region and the emerging nationalist movement, with Ukrainians rejecting the condescending term “Little Russia” and the historical term “Ruthenian”.

is revered as Ukraine's national poet. By the 1840s, the Brotherhood called the people of the region "Ukrainians," even though the appellation was never adopted by Shevchenko himself. He continued to use the term "Little Russian" even in his most patriotic texts. Later in the century, the term "Ukrainian" became entrenched among nationalists who saw themselves as a distinct ethnic group. The usage spread beyond the banks of the Dnieper over the subsequent decades.

From the end of the 18th century, when Ukraine was partitioned between the Russian Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, women's status was determined by the Russian legal code. The lot of noblewomen improved because they were allowed to inherit land and estates. Middle-class women were generally dependent on their fathers, brothers, and husbands and did not earn an income outside the home. The worst off were serf women. They had no legal protections and were oppressed by both their husbands and their owners, and bore the brunt of the exploitative *corvée*, domestic chores, and work in cottage industries.

During the Ukrainian social and cultural revival of the 19th century many middle-class women gained prominence as writers, actors, and cultural activists. Many more were teachers and contributed to the growth of literacy and elementary education. Before the First World War, women did not have the right to vote or other fundamental rights, such as the right to higher education, the freedom to enter and work in professions, or political equality. Those became the main goals of the women's movement, which emerged in the late 19th century. Women were granted suffrage only in 1914 in Austrian-ruled Galicia and Bukovyna and only after the February Revolution of 1917 in Russian-ruled Ukraine. The Constitution of the Ukrainian National Republic of April 1918 proclaimed complete gender equality and rejected any differences in rights or obligations between men and women.

Olena Pchilka (Olha Drahomanova-Kosach) was born into a privileged family of landowners in Eastern Ukraine—a family that actively opposed the oppressive political and cultural policies of the Russian Empire. In 1868, at the age of 19, Olha married a lawyer, Petro Kosach. The first source instilling in Olha national consciousness was Ukrainian folklore and ethnography,

through the influence of her intellectual parents.³ During the years that the Kosach family lived in smaller centers outside of Kyiv, she collected material on local customs, folk songs, and embroidery samples, and began her career as a writer in 1876 by publishing articles about Ukrainian folklore. Her literary activities coincided with her involvement in the Ukrainian women's movement and her political activism in the cause of unifying Eastern Ukraine and Western Ukraine.⁴

In 1905, Pchilka participated in a successful effort to lift tsarist bans (1863 and 1876) on Ukrainian-language publications in Eastern Ukraine. The same year, in the province of Poltava, she founded an organization which fought for women's rights and issued a manifesto demanding autonomy for Ukraine. Even though she had been persecuted for her anti-Soviet views and activities during and after World War I, in 1925, in recognition of her many achievements, she was made a member of the Academy of Sciences. A highly principled woman, she challenged deeply ingrained norms governing the status of women in society, played a leading role in the struggle for Ukraine's reunification and independence, and made a noteworthy contribution to Ukrainian literature and the enrichment of the Ukrainian literary language.⁵

The Girl Friends, published in 1887, is a story set in the 1860s when Ukrainian women had no way to pursue higher education in their homeland, and for a woman to go abroad to study was traditionally unacceptable. This is seen in the dialogue at the beginning of the story between Kateryna Panteleymonivna (Kost's mother) and Mariya Petrivna (Lyubov's mother):

“But it's not at all fitting for a young woman to wander off—who knows where and for what—to study to become a doctor of some kind. God knows what's come over them.”

³ Her father was a lawyer who tried his hand at writing poetry and short stories, while her mother pursued interests in Ukrainian literature, songs, folk tales, customs, and traditions. See *Women's Voices in Ukrainian Literature: The Spirit of the Times* (vol. 1), p. 2.

⁴ N. Kobrynska, O. Pchilka, *The Spirit of the Times: Selected Short Fiction*, by Olena Pchilka and Nataliya Kobrynska (*Women's Voices in Ukrainian Literature*), Saskatoon 1998, p. 3.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

“You’re right! That’s what I think too, but I can’t refuse Lyuba. I can see she’s pining away, and sometimes she cries secretly. I’m afraid she’ll come down with tuberculosis.”⁶

According to her mother, Lyubov, who “came from a petty noble family” and whose father wants his daughters to be educated,⁷ loves studying and “when she makes up her mind about something, she doesn’t change it very easily.”⁸ When Lyubov first appears, she comes home from the library with “a large, thick, bound book of science.”⁹ And when she expounds on the theory of revolution, she seems to have persuaded the two older women, or at least influenced them to a certain extent. The narrator then describes in length the landscape around the residence that Lyubov always enjoys looking at and being in, in order to show her love for her homeland.

Rayisa Pavlina, Lyubov’s good friend, who first appears in Chapter 2, is described as a beautiful young woman who “seemed to wish to appear bold and unoppressed, even here. She spoke forcefully, firmly, and more than anyone else.” Moreover, “the gleam in her eyes had something cold about it, and the smile on her beautiful lips seemed to be arrogantly self-assured; her movements were bold and a trifle abrasive, and her voice, despite its freshness, had a metallic ring to it.”¹⁰ Apparently, Rayisa has decided to go abroad to study which is proudly announced by her mother who emphasized the word “abroad” in “a decidedly Russian pronunciation” and was further confirmed by the girl herself:

“Yes, I’m going away to university,” the daughter added. “Yes! We’re not allowed to enroll in universities here, so I’m going abroad. That’s even better! When we return, people will bow and scrape even more before doctors from abroad.”¹¹

⁶ O. Pchilka, *The Girl Friends*, translated by R. Franko, *Women’s Voices in Ukrainian Literature: The Spirit of the Times*, vol. 1, p. 29.

⁷ Ibidem, p. 44.

⁸ Ibidem, p. 30.

⁹ Ibidem, p. 31.

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 39.

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 40.

The author tells us that Rayisa is “a grand young lady” and “her family put on airs and pretended they were aristocrats” because her father “was of noble lineage and had married a woman from one of the more important families.” So “in general life in the family went along in a lordly fashion.”¹² The author also describes in an undertone that since the serfs were freed, “[t]he old foundations of community life, of thinking, of taste, broke up like river ice in the springtime and, crushed to pieces, they swirled away, driven by a warm, free current.” So young people “looked with shining eyes directly into the rising light of justice and freedom, without ever thinking that the light could fade.”¹³

On their way to Geneva, Switzerland en route from Kiev,¹⁴ the beautiful scenery of Ukrainian countryside is amply described again, which shows the author’s love for her homeland. When the three have to spend a night in a hostelry in a village, they have a discussion about the country people. Rayisa sneers at the country folk, saying: “None of the common folk can, to my way of thinking, evoke more interest than a vegetable. They lead a purely vegetative existence.” She retorts to Kost’s comment that she doesn’t know her own people since she is “a lady” by saying that “[m]asses cannot progress, they simply can’t.”¹⁵

Once they arrive at the university, Lyubov gets to know Kuzmenko and Korniyevych, two young men from the province of Poltava and Slobodian Ukraine, who develop a true friendship with her, as the group of Ukrainian students often spend time together and help each other out. Their performances in class, especially those of the girls, impress the professors and often earns them compliments. Rayisa, in particular, is so proud of herself and is laughed at by Kuzmenko as one who “turned up her nose.” She is thus described by the narrator: “Her behavior was the most serious, her voice the most assertive. She learned to talk in the tone of a person who knows everything, even in situations where she did not know very much.”¹⁶

¹² Ibidem, p. 47–48.

¹³ Ibidem, p. 48.

¹⁴ Besides Lyubov and Rayisa, Konstantyn Mykhaylovych, son of Kateryna Panteleymonivna and a friend of both girls who grew up with Lubov, also goes with them to study abroad.

¹⁵ Ibidem, p. 57.

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 84.

She even gives a public speech on her research on the recommendation of her German professor, who eventually marries her and moves with her to St. Petersburg.

At the end of the university study, Lyubov goes to Vienna to complete a short, practical course in midwifery. She explains to Kost, who is going to Paris, that “[i]t will stand me in good stead. When I apply for a position back home, I’ll be able to carry on with both midwifery and my medical practice. And, as I’ll be living in the provinces, in a village, it will come in handy.”¹⁷ When Kost asks what she is going to do while living “in the backwaters,” she laughs and responds, “What do you mean? I’ll heal people. That’s what I studied to do.”¹⁸

When she finally returns home, Lyubov starts her medical practice as a “*feldsharytsya* [a general medical practitioner]”. She not only looks after people who come to her, but also makes trips out into the countryside to offer her help to whoever needs her assistance. So, even though the peasants are “terribly distrustful” and “avoided the most sincere efforts of the best doctors who tried to assist them,” the number of their visits increases. Lyubov concludes that “[b]ecause, if you actually approached the peasants with advice and gave it to them frankly and capably, they were not at all distrustful; nor did they shun assistance.”¹⁹

One day, she miraculously saves the life of a peasant woman who has been suffering for two days from being in labor while being treated by local peasant women in the traditional way. The scene that Lyubov sees is vividly described:

Two old women standing near the bed were supporting a young woman holding on to a rod suspended over the bed near the ceiling. The hands of the young woman were numb, her head had fallen weakly to one side, and her groans tore through her teeth, filling the quiet room.²⁰

Lyubov takes over and saves the lives of mother and new-born child from the brink of death.

¹⁷ Ibidem, p. 97.

¹⁸ Ibidem

¹⁹ Ibidem, p. 107.

²⁰ Ibidem, p. 112.

In the last two chapters of the novella, Kuzmenko and Korniyevych come to pay Lyubov a visit as they promised, and there is a scene of a heated discussion on “nationalism”. Lyubov, after criticizing Kuzmenko’s view of “nationalism” as artificial and narrow, sums up her view (and the author’s view) in the following way:

No, you should take folk elements—not shun them—and, out of them, create a wider, more beautiful structure that will benefit the entire nation! Why separate the common people with an uncrossable line from the intelligentsia which has moved ahead? No, the best that this nationalism of Kuzmenko’s can do is make you cry over your nation’s sad fate, over the past. It’s not tears that are needed, and not milling around in a single spot that is slipping out from under you; what matters is that you get the job done!²¹

The next and the final development of the story is the confession of Korniyevych, who loves and admires Lyubov and has the same view as her.

From the above discussion, it is easy to see Olena Pchilka’s position as a Ukrainian writer who promotes Ukrainian identity consciously throughout the story. In fact, she quotes several lines from Taras Shevchenko at one point and ends the story with a line from another (unspecified) Ukrainian poet: “But happiness had been so close, so possible!”²² The description of the Ukrainian landscape and the demeaning tone she applies when “German” and “Russian” are mentioned further strengthen her efforts in asserting Ukrainian values and identity. Education, too, is a main issue in the story since Lyubov has to go abroad to study before she can practice medicine to help her people. Through education, she can pursue her ideals and fulfill her dream to assist the peasants as a doctor. In fact, it even helps her to find an ideal partner of a lifetime. This plotline is implicit to the Ukrainian women’s movement that promotes women’s education among other appeals and that the author strongly supports.

“Education” as an issue in *Orphan of Asia*, on the other hand, is not dealt with in such rosy tones. In fact, as the protagonist of the novel, Hu Taiming

²¹ Ibidem, p. 122.

²² Ibidem, p. 123.

is a colonized Taiwanese during the time of the Sino-Japanese War;²³ he is a subaltern who is socially, politically, and geographically outside of the hegemonic power structure of the colony and of the colonial homeland. Though the novel can be read as a colonial bildungsroman²⁴ since it chronicles a child's formation as he internalizes Taiwanese values and social practices alongside Japanese rules and ideals, it emphasizes the protagonist's travel experiences, which relationally construct his identity.

When the English version of the novel was published in 2006 by Columbia University Press, a Western critic who apparently did not know much about the background of the author and the colonized history of Taiwan characterized the novel as a short novel covering a lot of ground: "Often it seems rushed yet plodding, the sequence of events not always flowing smoothly." Moreover, "[i]t reads like something Wu wanted to set down very quickly; the comparison to a Chinese brush-painting is perhaps appropriate, appearing almost sketchy, in large parts, to the Western eye ... quite unlike the heavy, many-layered European oil paintings." It is, in fact, not entirely surprising, as the original version of the novel, titled *Hu Zhi-ming*, is much longer than the translated version,²⁵ which was cut short by the author for various reasons.²⁶

Wu Zhuo-liu explained that he had started writing the novel in 1943, having finished it in 1945. Japan recognized by 1943 that her war ambitions

²³ The First Sino-Japanese War was fought between the Qing Empire and the Empire of Japan, which, despite lasting less than one year (from July 1894 to April 1895), resulted in Japan's occupation of Taiwan that lasted for more than fifty years, when Taiwan was turned over to the KMT government in 1945. The Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945) was fought between the Republic of China and the Empire of Japan, and is viewed as part of the World War II from 1941.

²⁴ The use of the term is explained in detail by Tsai Chien-hsin in his article. Tsai Chien-hsin, "At the Crossroads: Orphan of Asia, Postloyalism "and Sinophone Studies." "Sun Yat-sen Journal of Humanities", July 2013, vol. 35, p. 28.

²⁵ In "A Study of Wu Zhuo-liu's *Hu Zhi-ming*," the author calculates that *Orphan of Asia* is only 58% of the original length of *Hu Zhi-ming*, with a 50% cut of the 4th and the 35th chapters, the essence of the novel (77).

²⁶ In the "Preface of the Chinese Version," Wu Zhuo-liu explains that he wrote the book to show Japanese with a conscience and the later generations of Taiwanese how Taiwanese intellectuals suffered in the colonized homeland and one can only take so much, as the protagonist of the novel. He also explains that the book went through a lot before it was finally published in Japan; the change of the title was because "Hu Zhi-ming" might cause some misunderstanding as it is the same name of Ho Chi Minh, the Vietnamese Communist revolutionary leader, and the cut of the length of the novel is to save paper ("Preface to Chinese Version, 1–3").

were doomed, but the Japanese government in Taiwan continued to draft Taiwanese young men to fight at the front; some were even assigned to suicide squads. Wu said that during that horrific time so full of confusion, suspicion, and dissatisfaction, he was anxious to finish the novel, so he wrote the fourth and fifth chapters stealthily and “always hid his manuscripts under the charcoal box in the kitchen, especially because where he lived was right across from the police dormitory of Taipei Police Station” (“Preface to Japanese Version, v–vi).

Hu Taiming’s education begins when he is a little boy living in a farming village. In the pastoral countryside that starts the story, Hu Taiming, led by his grandfather Old Hu, arrives at the school, “Ladder to the Clouds”. Master Peng, the old teacher of the school, is a disillusioned scholar who originally dreamed of passing the imperial examination to become a high-ranked official. But Japanese imperialism changed all that. He smokes opium whenever he has time and “lovingly used literary words to bemoan the decline in the study of Chinese classics and spoke formally even to Hu Tai-ming” (5). Hu Taiming is thus initiated on his path of education.

The first five chapters begin with a new phase in Taiming’s life, culminate in unexpected misunderstandings and mishaps, and end with a transitional journey. Overall, this episode is the most peaceful, and relatively short. This design suggests the short-lived innocence of a young and carefree protagonist.²⁷ Section 2 tells us the traditional Chinese texts that Taiming learns from in school, such as *San-zi Jing* (*Three Character Book*) and introduces some folk beliefs and New Year’s traditions and customs. But signs of Japanese rule appear with first, the appearance of Zhida, the son of Old Hu’s elder brother’s son, who “spoke Japanese and was a police deputy” and who suggests to Old Hu to send Taiming to “a real school”²⁸ and second, the incident at the lantern festival procession when the Japanese officers “swung their clubs to chase away intruders” and Old Hu was “hit hard and crumpled to the ground.”²⁹ However, at the end of this section, Old Hu takes over the task of teaching Taiming to read on his own the Chinese classics *Si-shu Wu-jing* (*Four Books and Five Scriptures*).

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 30.

²⁸ Wu Zhuoliu, *Orphan of Asia*, translated by I. Mentzas, New York 2006, p. 11–12.

²⁹ Ibidem, p. 14.

Section 3 of this chapter begins with the line: “the tremors of the new civilization that was rocking their sluggish existence were beginning to reach Taiming’s everyday life.”³⁰ This is evident since Taiming’s father, Hu Wenqing, agrees with Zhida and begins to repeat: “Those who can’t speak Japanese are as good as fools in the civil service today.”³¹ And Taiming, between his grandfather and his father, “became a small, rudderless boat drifting between the currents of two epochs.” This is the first time we see Taiming torn between two different concepts. Soon Taiming is sent to the public school to learn Japanese. But by the end of this section, when Taiming goes home with his pigtail cut off, his mother cries and his brother makes fun of him. His father has a concubine who lives with the family. As a result, “a kind of rift separated him from the rest of the family. A vague uneasiness propelled him back to school as soon as he was through with whatever he had come home for. This lack of fulfillment fueled his desire to study and to know more.”³²

The next section, “Into Roiled Water” (in Chinese “Zhuo-liu”) is actually the author’s name in Chinese. Taiming continues his education by entering the teacher’s program in the Department of Japanese. When he graduates four years later, he is assigned to a school in the countryside. His civil officer’s uniform causes a sensation in his village, and the village people hold a celebration party for him to the sound of firecrackers. However, Taiming, “a product of the new education, felt not only alienated but repulsed by the mindless spree. He cut short his stay and departed to fill his post.”³³ In the school where he teaches, Taiming soon falls in love with a Japanese female teacher named Naito Hisako, though a Taiwanese teacher Ruie shows her interest in him. Chapter One ends with Taiming’s disillusionment of his love for Hisako and his further alienation from his family and his home culture. He decides to go to Japan for the reason that “I’ll forget the past, everything, and start over in Japan, from page one.”³⁴

Different from Lyubov in *The Girl Friends* who chooses to study abroad with the goal of coming back to her hometown to serve her people after she earns her medical degree, Hu Tai-ming chooses to go to Japan for a new start

³⁰ Ibidem, p. 15.

³¹ Ibidem.

³² Ibidem, p. 24.

³³ Ibidem, p. 22.

³⁴ Ibidem, p. 51.

once he experiences a sense of inferiority for being a colonized Taiwanese man in love with a Japanese woman. His sense of inferiority, however, is strengthened when his old classmate Lan warns him not to tell anyone that he is from Taiwan. Lan, who seems to have a firm Taiwanese identity, is enthusiastically involved in the movement of Taiwanese youth. He invites Taiming to join the staff of the group's magazine, *Taiwan Youth*, but Taiming refuses: "Although he understood why young Taiwanese might be attracted to politics, Taiming thought he had a cause, too: the pursuit of knowledge."³⁵

Lan and his friend, Zhan, criticize both the policy of Japanese-Taiwanese coeducation, which, in fact, limits the number of Taiwanese students enrolled in schools, and also the policy of regional limits, which was merely an excuse to prevent the natives from making money. To which Taiming thought "[it] certainly was irrational, but what could he do?" and he says to his friends, "[i]t's knowledge that matters to me." The author comments: "This was Taiming's usual refuge. When the two friends leave out of irritation by his indecisiveness, Taiming lies down on the tatami and "underneath his feeling of emptiness stirred another, a dull self-hatred."³⁶

The above incident reveals Taiming's confusion because of his passive attitude and his nonchalance toward his homeland, Taiwan. However, if Taiming believes China is his mother country because of the Chinese education he received from Master Peng and his grandfather, the incident in the next section negates his identification as a Chinese. Taiming is taken by Lan to a lecture sponsored by the Academic Association of China. Before the lecture, Taiming meets many Chinese students from China. Because he is not confident about his Mandarin, and so in the social occasion after the lecture, he introduces himself as a student studying physics from Taiwan. Chen, a Chinese student from Guangdong, immediately "sneered in disgust and, with obvious contempt, quickly strode away."³⁷ Other Chinese students also murmur among themselves that "[he]e might be a spy." This incident foreshadows a later development when Taiming goes to China where he is actually treated as a Japanese spy and eventually forced to leave his Chinese wife and his daughter.

³⁵ Ibidem, p. 58.

³⁶ Ibidem, p. 59.

³⁷ Ibidem, p. 62.

When he returns to Taiwan, his first feeling is disappointment when he sees how slowly everyone moves compared to the fast pace of Tokyo. At the welcome party in his village, Taiming feels “vacant and lost, and could not blend in in this environment.”³⁸

By the end of this chapter, Taiming is disillusioned toward his hometown and his family: his family property is divided, his grandfather died, he leaves his sorrowful work in his friend’s sugarcane farm, and he has no friends. In the last section, “The Call of the Continent,” one day when Taiming is arranging the books left by his late grandfather, he comes across some Chinese books and unconsciously reenters the ancient world of Laozi, Zhuangzi, and the fifth-century Chinese poet Tao Yuan-ming. After Instructor Zeng’s visit and the arrival of his letter from China two months later, Taiming decides to go to China and makes up his mind that he will never return to his homeland.

Technically, Hu Taiming’s formal education, both at home and in school, ends when he leaves Japan to return to Taiwan. The rest of the novel is about his life experiences in China and Taiwan during the final stage of the Sino-Japanese War, which will not be recounted here. However, because of the conflicts between his multiple identity and his Taiwanese consciousness, or orphan consciousness, he finally loses his sanity and disappears without leaving a trace.

In his article, “Multiple Identity and Taiwanese Consciousness: An Interpretation of Zhuoliu Wu’s *Orphan of Asia*,” Huang Shin-yang contends that the orphan consciousness in the novel arises from the divergence of “China bonds” and “Taiwan bonds”³⁹ Taiming’s “China bonds” come from his childhood education, which is represented by his wise grandfather. Thus he looks at China as his original homeland (*yuan-xiang*) that is equivalent to the ideal world implicit in Chinese classical teachings and verses. Thus he escapes to this ideal world when he is frustrated by reality. However, he is soon disillusioned by his experience and what he sees in China. When Zeng, his good friend who invites him to China in the first place, is leaving China, he gives Taiming this advice: “at least give up all your ideas. What’s

³⁸ My translation, for the Chinese “茫然不安，無法和這種環境取得協調” since the English translation completely omits this expression.

³⁹ Huang Shinn-Young, “Multiple Identities Within The Taiwanese Consciousness: An Interpretation of Wu Zhuo-Liu’s *Orphan of Asia*”, 2009, s. 137–164.

going on now isn't just other people's business. It's your own, Hu, and it eventually will affect you".⁴⁰ However, the advice does not arouse in him an urge to identify with his homeland and return to join the fight between local Taiwanese and the Japanese government.

Earlier in the section of "Into Roiled Water", Taiming does not agree with Instructor Li's criticism of the Japanese principal for being a hypocrite who calls for "staff harmony" and "Japanese-Taiwanese unity" but obviously favors Japanese teachers, feeling disgusted by "their mean-spirited talk in a manner that did not become educators."⁴¹ In fact, the "roiled water" (or "muddy water") of the section actually refers to Hu Tai-ming, a self-acknowledged intellectual with both Chinese and Japanese education who cannot distinguish between the clear water (a metaphor of someone who stands out among confused crowds or a unique individual with a conscience in a chaotic time) and the muddy water for having being exposed to a foul environment too long. Taiming is a scholar who hides in his ivory tower with many "ideas" and without taking any action.

Taiming's "Taiwan bonds" in fact run through the whole novel, represented by his family who lives in a small Hakka village in Taiwan. Besides the fact that he always returns home at the end of each journey, his mother, and to a certain extent, his father, consolidate his bonds. In Chapter Four, as soon as he returns home, his mother "brought a basket with her which contained a chicken and some incense sticks. A guardian deity or the clan's ancestors were about to receive word that her son had returned safely."⁴² Local rituals and customs are often present along with the appearance of his mother. Taiming "could not observe all this without feeling a lump in his throat: his mother's wetness touched him deeply." He feels that he wants to weep his heart out on his mother's lap forever, and "seeing how much sadness his endless traveling had inflicted on her, he was full of contrition." When his mother dies under the unfair enforcement of programmed planting by the Japanese authorities near the end of Chapter Four, Taiming suffers from depression:

⁴⁰ Wu Zhuoliy, *Orphan of Asia*, p. 142.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 24.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 158.

The death of Taiming's mother further eroded his already dwindling zest for life. He had no desire to see anyone, and the pastoral lifestyle that had once been his soul's comfort now seemed enshrouded in a dreary hue of gray. Even after the hundredth-day memorial service, he was loath to leave his study.⁴³

Taiming's family bonds are further cut off when his half-brother, Zhinan, is forced to sign an application to join the volunteer work for the country (Japan) and eventually dies of exhaustion when he serves in an Imperial Service Squad after just a month. At his brother's death, Taiming is forced to confront a problem that he has long avoided but cannot any longer. He has accepted everything as fate, and now he realizes "there was no way out; the only path open was the one leading to death."⁴⁴ When he imagines "what it would be like when all his family had died and he was the only one left. He felt his soul freeze over as if he were in the middle of a living cemetery."⁴⁵ He starts to have regrets about his compliant attitude toward life and asks himself: "He had graduated with a degree in physics and received the highest education possible for a Taiwanese, yet what had he done with it? In the end, wasn't he a useless, impotent being, no better than a worm?"⁴⁶ He further tells himself, "[s]tudying in Japan, and then in the mainland... at first glance such actions seemed proof of a robust strength, but they were empty, without substance."⁴⁷ A storm of guilt raged within Taiming, and, with the crazed screaming of Ah-Yu, his half-brother's mother, he suddenly snaps and loses himself in insanity.

Whether Taiming is a victim of his split consciousness or not is hard to say. What is clear is that Taiming is the victim of his times, of imperialism, of wars, and of drastic changes. According to Chen Fang-ming, "*Orphan of Asia* has been unanimously perceived as an archetype of orphan consciousness because the protagonist Hu Taiming experiences not only a physical exile on the outside, but also a psychic exile on the inside."⁴⁸ It is the spir-

⁴³ Ibidem, p. 192.

⁴⁴ Ibidem, p. 243.

⁴⁵ Ibidem.

⁴⁶ Ibidem.

⁴⁷ Ibidem, p. 244.

⁴⁸ Ibidem, p. 248.

itual emptiness that cannot bring any fulfillment to Hu Taiming. Whatever education he may receive, he is fundamentally a subaltern who is a subject with no subjectivity, no voice, and certainly, no identity.

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SUMMARY

The Girl Friend (1887), set in the mid-1860s in a small district town in the province of Poltava in Eastern Ukraine and written by Olena Pchilka (Olha Drahomanova-Kosach, 1849–1930) is a story about Lyubov Vasylivna, a young Ukrainian girl, who goes to Zurich to study "to become a doctor" (29) and comes back to her hometown to serve "the common folks" (54) in the rural country. She is contrasted by her friend, Rayisa Pavlina, a girl of aristocratic blood who despises the country people and eventually marries her German professor and moves to St. Petersburg. Lyubov, who seems to have set her goal of serving her people early on, finds fulfillment and true love through education.

In contrast, *Orphan of Asia* (1945), written by Wu Zhuoliu (1900–1976), offers a powerful depiction of the political, cultural, and psychological impact of colonialism. The central character in this autobiographical novel, Hu Taiming, is a man marked

both by his Chinese cultural heritage (inspired by his grandfather) and the opportunities for education and advancement through the adoption of the Japanese language when Taiwan became a Japanese colony (between 1895 and 1945). However, he finds that his Japanese education and his adoption of modern ways have alienated him from his family and native village. When he quits his job as a teacher in the Japanese colonial system after a disappointing love affair with a Japanese teacher, he leaves Taiwan for Japan to embark on a long journey to search for his identity. But neither in Japan, where he makes his mark in the colonial Japanese educational system and graduates from a prestigious college, nor in China, where he marries and has a daughter, does he ever come to feel at home or find his calling; rather, having repudiated his roots, he, a colonized subject, doesn't seem to belong anywhere. Though he returns to Taiwan in the last two chapters of the novel, Hu Taiming ultimately loses himself as he is estranged from all three cultures.

This study focuses on the efforts of minority subjects to establish their identity through education and attempts to show how their sense of belonging and dedication to their homeland could affect their sense of fulfillment.

Yauling Hsieh – pochodząca z Tajwanu doktor w dziedzinie literatury porównawczej na Uniwersytecie Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Pełniła funkcję profesora na Wydziale Anglistyki Uniwersytetu Soochow, gdzie prowadziła między innymi zajęcia z literatury porównawczej, angielskiej poezji romantycznej i literatury europejskiej. Była autorką licznych esejów na temat takich pisarzy jak: Henry James, William Styron i Katherine Mansfield, a także wybitną tłumaczką na język chiński. Ma na swoim koncie ponad sto przekładów, w tym takie dzieła literackie, jak *Imię róży* i *Wahadło Foucaulta* Umberto Eco, *Wybór Zofii* Nata Turnera i *Wyznania* Williama Styrona oraz *Wybrane opowieści* Edgara Allana Poe. Jej ostatnim tłumaczeniem był zdobywca nagrody Bookera *Młeczarz* autorstwa północnoirlandzkiej autorki Anny Burns. Profesor Hsieh zmarła w czerwcu 2020 roku.
