

# In the Era of Fading Testimonies: War Narratives in Wu Ming-Yi and Higashiyama Akira's Works\*

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## 日台現代文学における戦争描写 —呉明益と東山彰良の創作を中心に—

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### Abstract

This paper charts how contemporary Taiwanese and Japanese writers, who did not directly experienced WWII, present the war in their works. Differing from the previous generation of writers who integrated their personal war experiences into their fiction, or interspersed interviews with war veterans into their works, young writers embark on historical research to construct narratives that depict the wartime context or experiences. I try to discuss Wu Ming-Yi (呉明益)'s work, *'Routes in the Dream'* (睡眠的航線, 2007),<sup>1</sup> *'The Stolen Bicycle'* (單車失竊記, 2015)<sup>2</sup> and Higashiyama Akira (東山彰良)'s *'Ryū'* (流, 2015),<sup>3</sup> *'Monster'* (怪物, 2022)<sup>4</sup> as examples to explore how war narratives are represented in contemporary Taiwanese and Japanese literature.

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1 Wu Ming-Yi (呉明益), *睡眠的航線 [Routes in the Dream]* (Taipei: Fish & Fish, 2007).

2 Wu Ming-Yi (呉明益), *單車失竊記 [The Stolen Bicycle]* (Taipei: Rye Field Publishing, 2015).

3 Higashiyama Akira (東山彰良), *流 [Ryū]* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2015).

4 Higashiyama Akira (東山彰良), *怪物 [Monster]* (Tokyo: Shinchosha, 2022).

As the narratives of wars and its legacies remain controversial in East Asia, rethinking war memories through transborder perspectives may offer an alternative approach to challenging the nation-state-centric account. In this paper, I aim to clarify the issues of how war narratives are reconstructed and represented in post-war Japan and Taiwan and their impacts on the post-colonial situation in East Asia.

戦争をめぐる小説創作とそれが及ぼす社会的影響力は、東アジアで依然として議論的となっている。本稿では、現代台湾と日本の小説家が、自身の創作の中で戦争をどのように表現していくのかを考察する。呉明益『眠りの航路』(2007)、『自転車泥棒』(2015)と東山彰良『流』(2015)、『怪物』(2022)という代表的長編小説を例として、台湾と日本における同時代の現代文学で戦争をめぐる記憶がどのように表現されているのかを探る。その考察を通して、現代台湾と日本の創作で戦争の記憶がどのように再構築され表現されているのかという点を解き明かし、それが東アジアに残るポスト植民地主義の現状に及ぼす影響について検討することも目指す。

**Keywords :** war narratives, Taiwanese literature, Japanese literature, war experiences, historical testimonies

## I. War narratives in Taiwanese and Japanese literature

With the decline of the generation that experienced war, Japan observes events such as the annual commemoration of the end of the war. On these occasions, television and major newspapers highlight how memories of war are passed down. They encourage the younger generation to inquire about the history of the wartime from their grandparents or vice versa, prompting grandparents to share their war experiences with their children and grandchildren. The ongoing discussion of war, preventing the disappearance of war experiences with generational shifts, has become an increasingly important issue, and it is also a key aspect of post-war reconciliation studies. This paper aims to contemplate the possibilities that young writers from generations not directly exposed to war might bring to the inheritance of war experiences through their literary creations, along with exploring the limitations and boundaries of these possibilities.

After the end of WWII, several significant historical events occurred in Taiwan, including the relocation of the national government, the martial law period (White Terror Era), the democratic movement and the Taiwan strait crisis, all of which have influenced the trajectory of social development. We can see many Taiwanese literary works directly or indirectly portraying these historical transitions in various ways.

With Chiang Kai-Shek (蔣介石)'s publication of 'Two Supplementary Treatises to What of the People's Livelihood' (民生主義育樂兩篇補述) in 1953, the anti-communist and anti-Soviet (反共抗俄) policies essentially shaped the foundation of Taiwanese literary trends. Chen Ji-Ying (陳紀滢)'s *'Redland'* (赤地, 1955) and *'Eight Years in Huaxia'* (華夏八年, 1960) depict the rise and fall of families in China during the Chinese Civil War. Similarly, Wang Lan (王藍)'s *'Blue and Black'* (藍與黑, 1958) and Hsu Chung-Pei (徐鍾珮)'s *'Echo'* (余音, 1961) portray the helplessness and struggles of the Chinese people amid the upheavals of war.

The influence of anti-communist and anti-Soviet policies gradually waned, and political restrictions on literature loosened in the aftermath of the 1970s. The second-generation mainland writers (外省作家, literally “writers from other provinces”) emergence in this period. Their publications included works such as Wang Wen-Hsing (王文興)’s *‘Dragon-Heaven Tower’* (龍天樓, 1967), Pai Hsien-Yung (白先勇)’s *‘Taipei People’* (台北人, 1971), and Chu Hsi-Ning (朱西寧)’s war novel *‘August 23rd Note’* (八二三注, 1979). These pieces predominantly depict how mainland Chinese immigrants established new lifestyles in Taiwan,<sup>5</sup> providing vivid portrayals of war or the very early post-war everyday life through their personal experiences.

Unlike mainland writers, local writers began portraying their war experiences later, in the late 1950s. Works such as Liao Ching-Hsiu (廖清秀)’s *‘Gratitude, Hatred, Blood and Tears’* (恩仇血淚記, 1957), Chen Chien-Wu (陳千武)’s *‘Portrait’* (遺像, 1976), *‘Hunting Captive Women’* (獵女犯, 1976) capture the forced conscription during WWII under Japanese colonial rule, exploring the psychological conflicts and pains endured after the war. Furthermore, Zong Zhao-Zheng (鍾肇政)’s *‘The Composition of Zongyuan’* (中元的構圖, 1968), Wen Hsin (文心)’s *‘Muddy Path’* (泥路, 1968), Lee Chiao (李喬)’s *‘Mountain Woman’* (山女, 1969), *‘The Sound of Weeping’* (哭声, 1969), and Huang Chun-Ming (黃春明)’s *‘Uncle Gan-Geng’s Twilight’* (甘庚伯的黄昏, 1971) also use war as a background, depicting the physical and psychological pain endured by Taiwanese during wartime.

After the Kaohsiung Incident (美麗島事件) in 1979, Taiwan’s democratic movement gained momentum, eventually resulting in the lifting of martial law in 1987. With reduced political constraints, writers sought to depict the violent nature of war in more sophisticated way, and maturing in their representation of the trauma associated with wartime. After the year 2000, depictions of war

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5 Ma Yi-Hang (馬翊航), “生産・禁制・遺緒—論台湾文学中の戦争書写 1949-2015” [Production, Forbiddance, Heritage: The War Writing in Taiwan Literature 1949-2015] (PhD diss., National Taiwan University, 2017), pp.33-65.

did not come to a halt in Taiwanese literature, Works such as Li Yu(李渝)'s *'Summer Hesitation'*(夏日踟躕, 2002), *'The Story of Golden Monkey'*(金絲猿的故事, 2012), Wu Ming-Yi(吳明益)'s *'Routes in the Dream'*(睡眠的航線, 2007), *'The Stolen Bicycle'*(單車失竊記, 2015) and Gan Yao-Ming(甘耀明)'s *'Killing Ghost'*(殺鬼, 2009), can no longer be easily categorized as the creations of either mainland or local writers. For the new generation of writers who have not directly experienced war, they delve into war narratives through historical records or documents, rather than personal experiences, aiming to explore their "war experiences" of their generation.

Compared to Taiwan, Japan emerged as an Asian powerhouse nation vying for colonies with the Western world since the last century. Following the establishment of the state of Manchuria(滿州国) in 1932, Japan actively expanded its influence in China, culminating in the aggressive initiation of Marco Polo Bridge Incident(盧溝橋事件) in 1937. The Pacific War erupted in 1941 with a surprise aerial attack on Pearl Harbor. Throughout the war, Japan, already constrained by limited resources such as steel and oil, devoted all available means and manpower to the conflict. This exceedingly brutal war remains a profound and painful legacy for Japan, one that the country continues to grapple with.

After Japan's defeated in 1945, the country was occupied by the Allied Powers until 1952, resulting in the prohibition of all pre-war literature that glorified the war. Left-wing Japanese writers, who had been forced into prolonged silence before the war, began expressing their war experiences through literary works. Works such as Noma Hiroshi(野間宏)'s *'Dark Pictures'*(暗い絵, 1946), *'Feeling of Disintegration'*(崩解感覺, 1948), Haniya Yutaka(埴谷雄高)'s *'Departed Souls'*(死霊, 1948), and Takeda Taijun(武田泰淳)'s *'The Judgment'*(審判, 1947) were published in the very early post-war period. The sense of defeat, stemming from censorship and the painful personal experiences during wartime, forming the fundamental characteristics of the first generation of post-war writers' works—marked by the dual scars of censorship and wartime suffering.<sup>6</sup>

The continuous exploration of self by Japanese writers and increasing awareness of war responsibilities have been ongoing. Ooka Shohei (大岡昇平)'s *'Account of a Prisoner of War'* (俘虜記, 1948) and *'Fires on the Plain'* (野火, 1952) fictionalize his firsthand war experiences, probing the ethical boundaries of humanity by depicting the extreme conditions of war. Writers like Nakano Shigeharu (中野重治), Honda Shugo (本多秋五) and Hanada Kiyoteru (花田清輝) also reevaluate the pre-war and wartime conditions, emphasizing concepts of humanity and ego.

These works, reflecting on war, ego, and humanity, brought unprecedented stimulation to young Japanese readers of that time. In the 1950s, Cold War tensions between the U.S. and Russia escalated successively. In Japan, the economy underwent a surge due to post-war reconstruction and the specific economic demands of wars such as the Korean War and the Vietnam War. At the same time as economic development, the signing and revision of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty (日米安保条約) by the Second Kishi Cabinet (第2次岸内閣) in 1960 sparked intense debates. The swift changes in the economy and politics, coupled with drastic social movements, were also reflected in Japanese literature. Themes that were previously restricted under GHQ rule, such as the Okinawa reversion and the Hiroshima atomic bomb issues, became new subjects for Japanese writers. Oe Kenzaburo (大江健三郎)'s *'Hiroshima Notes'* (ヒロシマ・ノート, 1965), *'Okinawa Notes'* (沖縄ノート, 1970) and Ibuse Masuji (井伏鱒二)'s *'Black Rain'* (黒い雨, 1965) are representative works in this context.<sup>7</sup>

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- 6 Kono Kensuke (紅野謙介), “太平洋戦争前後の時代—戦中から占領期への連続と非連続” [Era Before and After the Pacific War: Continuity and Discontinuity from Wartime to Occupation], in *コレクション戦争と文学 別巻 [Collection: War and Literature - Separate Volume]* (Tokyo: Shueisha, 2013), pp.81-102.
- 7 Tsuboi Hideto (坪井秀人), “朝鮮戦争・ベトナム戦争の時代—冷戦と経済成長の中で” [The Era of the Korean War and Vietnam War: Amidst the Cold War and Economic Growth], in *コレクション戦争と文学 別巻 [Collection: War and Literature - Separate Volume]* (Tokyo: Shueisha, 2013), pp.103-122.

Even entering the 1970s, Japanese writers who had experienced war, continued to turn their war experiences into novels, such as Furuyama Komao(古山高麗雄)'s *'Death Register'*(点鬼簿, 1979), and Tanaka Komimasa(田中小実昌)'s *'Poroporo'*(ポロポロ, 1979). Besides, some young writers who did not go to the battlefield but experienced the war through air raids and hunger in Japan, or Japanese famous writer like Murakami Ryu(村上龍) who spent his childhood near U.S. military bases, also began to write fiction on his experiences of 'war' that weren't traditional front-line battlefield experiences. Hayashi Kyoko(林京子)'s *'Ritual of Death'*(祭りの場, 1975) and Murakami Ryu(村上龍)'s *'War Begins Beyond the Sea'*(海の向こうで戦争が始まる, 1976) coincidentally shift the focus from the front-line battlefield back to everyday life.

After the 1980s, there was a significant decrease in works reflecting on personal war experiences. Instead, there was a relative increase in works that observe wartime daily life from different perspectives. Simultaneously, there is a noticeable growth in works depicting war from a female perspective. Nakazono Eisuke(中園英助)'s *'Ghost of Beijing'*(北京の鬼, 1982) portrays a woman who, during the war, marries through arranged matchmaking and follows her husband to Manchuria. After her husband tragically loses his life due to the war, she becomes alone in Manchuria. Kato Yukiko(加藤幸子)'s *'Wall of Dreams'*(夢の壁, 1982), Ohara Tomie(大原富枝)'s *'My Izumi Shikibu'*(わたしの和泉式部, 1983), Yoshida Tomoko(吉田知子)'s *'I Don't Know Manchuria'*(満州は知らない, 1985), Saegusa Kazuko(三枝和子)'s *'That Summer Day'*(その日の夏, 1987) use the female perspective as a narrative device to recall and present a distinctly different aspect of war in their works.<sup>8</sup>

In the 1980s, the Chernobyl Accident and the nuclear arms race

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8 Jinno Toshifumi (陣野俊史), “冷戦の終結と新たな戦争の時代—多様化する戦争文学の流れ” [The End of the Cold War and the Era of New Wars: Diversifying Trends in War Literature], in コレクション戦争と文学 別巻 [Collection: War and Literature - Separate Volume] (Tokyo: Shueisha, 2013), pp.123-143.

between U.S. and Russia created international intense. The outbreak of the First Gulf War in 1990 reignited discussions on the theme of war in the Japanese literary sphere. In 1991, Karatani Kojin (柄谷行人), Kawamura Minato (川村湊) and other writers organized the “Literary Scholars’ Symposium” (文学者の討論集会) at the International House of Japan (国際文化会館), initiating a series of discussions on the Gulf War. In the course of these discussions, some writers took the opportunity to reconsider the current situation by revisiting the topic of WWII. Examples include Okuizumi Hikaru (奥泉光)’s *‘The Stones Cry Out’* (石の来歴, 1994), Saegusa Kazuko (三枝和子)’s *‘The Usori Mountain’* (うそりやま考, 1995), Oda Makoto (小田実)’s *‘Osaka Symphony’* (大阪シンフォニー, 1997), Inoue Hisashi (井上ひさし)’s *‘Tokyo Seven Roses’* (東京セブンローズ, 1999), Miki Taku (三木卓)’s *‘Barefoot and Shells’* (裸足と貝殻, 1999).<sup>9</sup> In recent years, works such Shibasaki Tomoka (柴崎友香)’s *‘In the City I Was Not’* (わたしがいない街で, 2012) and Akasaka Mari (赤坂真理)’s *‘Tokyo Prison’* (東京プリズン, 2012) have published. These two new generation writers have not experienced WWII. Similar to the younger generation of writers in Taiwan, they explore themes related to war through various historical sources or documents. They tend to engage in war narratives by intertwining fantasy, memories, and reality in their works.

Whether in Taiwan or Japan, writers who personally experienced war and transformed their war experiences into novels have gradually diminished from the 1990s onwards. Instead, writers who have not personally experienced war have started to use historical materials and documents as sources for their writing. In this paper, I will discuss the works of Wu Ming-Yi’s work, *‘Routes in the Dream’* (睡眠的航線, 2007) and *‘The Stolen Bicycle’* (單車失窃記, 2015) and Higashiyama Akira’s *‘Ryū’* (流, 2015) and *‘Monster’* (怪物, 2022) as examples. Through examining these four works, I will delve into how young post-war generation writers in Japan and Taiwan depict and imagine war. Moreover, I also aim to consider the possibility of the “inheritance of war experiences”, particularly as we enter an era where witnesses to history are

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9 Ibid., pp.123-143.

gradually fading away.

## II. Historical Tracing in Wu Ming-Yi's War Narratives

Since the publication of his first short story *'We're Closed Today'* (本日公休) in 1997, Wu Ming-Yi has gradually gained attention in Taiwan. He has subsequently published well-received novels such as *'Routes in the Dream'* (睡眠的航線, 2007), *'The Man with the Compound Eyes'* (複眼人, 2011), *'The Magician on the Skywalk'* (天橋上的魔術師, 2011), *'The Stolen Bicycle'* (單車失竊記, 2015), *'Sea Breeze Hotel'* (海風酒店, 2023). In *'Routes in the Dream'*, two intertwined storylines unfold. One follows 'Saburo' (三郎), a juvenile worker in aircraft manufacturing during WWII, while the other storyline features the present-day character, 'I'. Saburo's son, 'I', travels to Japan seeking treatment for a sleep disorder after his father's disappearance. During this journey, 'I' explores the sites where Saburo worked on manufacturing airplane components during the wartime. As 'I' retraces Saburo's youth, he begins to dream again, and his sleep mysteriously returns to "normal". The estrangement and rupture between father and son find some kind of repair through 'I's' historical tracing.

In my other paper discussing the imagery of the juvenile workers in Taiwanese literature, I pointed out that in Wu Ming-Yi's novel, he employs extensive descriptions of auditory and olfactory, visual sensations, guiding the readers back to the past battlefield through Saburo's sensory experiences.<sup>10</sup>

The smell of the sea changed since the beginning of the war. Before the war began, the sea was filled with the smell of crabs, octopus, mackerel schools, the scent of reefs, and underwater volcanoes. However, since the war started, the sea began to carry the smell of

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10 Aketagawa Satoshi (明田川聡士), "戦後台日双方の少年工意象比較" [A Comparative Study of the Imagery of juvenile workers in Post-war Taiwan and Japan], in *新竹在地文化與跨域流轉—第五屆竹塹學國際學術研討會論文集* [Local Culture and Cross-Border Circulation in Hsinchu: the Fifth Zhu Zhan Academic International Symposium Book] (Taipei: Wan Juan Lou, 2023), pp.195-228.

gunpower and the stench of corpses, suppressing all other smells.<sup>11</sup>

Extensive visual, auditory, and olfactory sensory descriptions in Wu's 'Routes in the Dream' guide both the readers and 'I' to enter Saburo's intimate sensory experiences. This brings forth the era's atmosphere that cannot be expressed through historical documents. It also enables the readers and 'I' to transcend the gap of generations, fostering an imaginative understanding of the previous generation's war experiences.

In 2015, Wu Ming-Yi published his next novel titled *'The Stolen Bicycle'*, which similarly revolves round the protagonist 'I' searching for his father's bicycle. Starting from this quest, the story unfolds through the process of searching for the bicycle, encountering curious people, and discovering their life stories. Apart from mentioning that his father went to Japan to build fighter planes, the novel delves into different theaters of war during WWII, such as Burma Campaign, the Nanjing Massacre, and the Eight-Year War (八年抗戰). In the story, Abbas's father, Pasuya, was a member of the Silverheels Squad in northern Burma, Pasuya describes the northern Burma forest in the following way in the novel.

Though the monsoon was at its most intense, the Allies kept up their bombing every day. Human bodies and tree branches, mud and stones flew high in the air and scattered in all directions. Logistics was bombed with particular intensity, lifting the soil five or six stores in the air. They were bombing the hell out of us. Every time we got hit, a black rain would fall.<sup>12</sup>

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11 Wu Ming-Yi (2007), p.122. In the novel, Wu Ming-Yi incorporates extensive descriptions of sensory experiences and smells. For instance, he writes, 'As Saburo walked on the cement path outside the factory, the scent of anxiety and despair near the grassy willows and even the burned Tokyo streets he walked through closely resembled each other' (p.165). Another example is, 'The smell near the ground is different from when you're standing. It's a bit warmer than the air, a warm smell of sadness and unease' (p. 200).

The sensory-rich descriptions provide readers and Abbas with the imaginative materials to visualize not only the landscapes but also the tension of the northern Burma battlefield. From the perspective of the younger generation, Wu Ming-Yi attempts to comprehend the experiences of his father's generation and the wartime circumstances. I think this is the approach of young generation writers who have not directly experienced war; they try to create a form of secondhand experience.<sup>13</sup>

In *'The Stolen Bicycle'*, the 'I' narrator, rides on the midwife's bicycle that Little Hsia (小夏) has repaired. When I was asked by Little Hsia: "Do you feel what a midwife feels on her way to deliver a baby? Do you?", 'I' shook my head, then nodded. My heart was racing so fast I felt like I was holding a perfect infant in my arms.<sup>14</sup> I think the simultaneous shaking and nodding is highly symbolic. Both 'I' and Abbas, in the process of these two characters' quests for objects, past, or their fathers, they try to reconstruct secondhand experiences through secondhand objects. Passed time, lost history, or memories are forever secondary things, not firsthand experiences. This kind of secondhand experiences are simultaneously real and unreal. When 'I' rides the repaired midwife's bicycle, 'I' is "really" experiencing the midwife's life, but at the same time, 'I' is not "really" experiencing the original event but rather creating a simulated scenario.

The two works, *'Routes in the Dream'* and *'The Stolen Bicycle'*, similarly develop the stories from the communication gap between generations. In

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12 Wu Ming-Yi, *The Stolen Bicycle*, trans. Darryl Sterk (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2017), p.215.

13 Regarding the repair, at the beginning of the chapter "Bike Notes VII" (p.313), Wu Ming-Yi quotes a sentence from Professor GASTONE TOGNACCINI, "The restoration of artefacts, or any kind of restoration technique or procedure, depends on unstinting daily physical labor. It is not a kind of theory or discourse, but rather a specialty that requires knowledge, experience, and technique, and which has seeped into memory." We can also use Wu Ming-Yi's exploration of narrative writing to reconsider how it creates a secondhand experience to 'repair' the history and memories.

14 Ibid., p.132.

'*Routes in the Dream*', it is the 'I' narrator and Saburo, while in '*The Stolen Bicycle*', it is Abbas and his father Pasuya. The intergenerational gap, encompassing linguistic, emotional, and experiential ruptures between father and son, has become a problem that can never be solved. The death or disappearance of the father makes history an eternal mystery, just like A-Pu (阿布)'s Fuji lock in '*The Stolen Bicycle*'—the lock will never be open again because 'the old man took the combination to the grave'.<sup>15</sup> For Wu Ming-Yi, the intergenerational ruptures are like an unopenable lock; there never exists a correct answer for historical mystery. What we can always do is continue tracing back along the clues to enter moments of history we have never experienced.

From Wu Ming-Yi's novels, we can see that his historical tracing/repairing do not stem from a seemingly "objective" external standpoint but rather carry more empathy and sympathy. In '*Routes in the Dream*', the 'I' was once a journalist, but after undergoing treatment for sleep disorders, he chose to resign. This decision was fueled by a contradiction feeling for reporting, the 'I' detested the idea of people using a tone of pity or assumed objectivity to narrate anything that happened in the world.<sup>16</sup> The novel ends with a report on the Indian Ocean tsunami. On the TV, individuals are depicted as objects, and journalists casually say "deaths were revised upward" to describe people's death. I think this kind of historical tracing/repairing is just what Wu Ming-Yi resists.

Wu Ming-Yi's sensory-rich style guides readers to create secondhand experiences. This writing style also compensates for shortage of "human character" in "macro-history". Through multi-layered sensory descriptions, Wu Ming-Yi hails intimate personal experiences through visual, auditory, and gustatory writing. The secondhand experiences created through words fill in the gaps left by historical fragments. In comparison to the objective tone and

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15 Ibid., p.114.

16 Wu Ming-Yi (2007), p.255.

stance of reporting, the sensory writing may be Wu Ming-Yi's way of "tracing/repairing" history and a potential means for personal experiences to be passed down through generations.

### III. Multiple Realities in Higashiyama Akira's Narratives

The another writer I aim to discuss in this paper is Higashiyama Akira.<sup>17</sup> He was born in Taiwan, but moved to Japan at the age of 5. His father is from Shandong, China, and his mother is from Changhua, Taiwan. In 2002, his short story *'Escape Method: Turd on the Run'* (逃亡作法 TURD ON THE RUN) won the Silver Prize at the 1<sup>st</sup> "Kono Mystery ga Sugoi!" (このミステリーがすごい!) awards. Following this, he gained attention in Japan. He has since published several novels, such as *'Ryū'* (流) in 2015, *'The Person I Killed and the Person who Killed me'* (僕が殺した人と僕を殺した人) in 2017, *'A Small Place'* (小さな場所) in 2019, and *'Monster'* (怪物) in 2022, these novels also received numerous literary awards in Japan.

The work *'Ryū'* played a pivotal role in Higashiyama Akira's writing career, not only earning him the highly acclaimed Naoki Prize (直木賞) in Japan but also establishing his writing style for his subsequent works. Against the backdrop of 1930s China and 1970s Taipei, the novel depicts the protagonist, Ye Qiu-Sheng (葉秋生)'s growth over a span of approximately 10 years, from the age of 17 to 27. Ye's grandfather, was born in Shandong, China, killed over fifty civilians in Shahe Village (沙河庄) during the Chinese Civil War (国共内戦). After the war, he fled to Taipei via Hong Kong and eventually operated a fabric store on Dihua Street (迪化街) in Taipei. Ye's grandfather meets a tragic end, murdered in the store, and the main story of the novel follows Ye's growth experiences as he investigates his grandfather's murder case.

In the past, literary works depicting the Chinese Civil War often carried a sense of sorrow, narrating the war experiences of family separation and

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17 Higashiyama Akira's real name is Wang Zhen-Xu (王震緒). He was born in 1968.

trauma from the perspective of the victims. In contrast, the portrayal of the Chinese Civil War in *'Ryū'* is filled with the suspenseful and dramatic elements. Ye Qiu-Sheng's grandfather, Ye Zun-Lin (葉尊麟), vividly describes the wartime scenes to his grandchildren as below:

One day, Captain Xu Er-Hu (許二虎) ordered us to completely wipe out the Communists hiding in a village. There were only five of us, you know! And other side had around twenty or thirty people! But it's a piece of cake! We were used to such things; we carried guns, and it wasn't the first or second time donging this kind of things, so we were accustomed. They had guns too, but they had no bullets! They intentionally stuffed tree branches in their ammunition belts to make it look full. At that time, you see, as long as you had a GUN, even if there were no bullets, you were fearless, like a king of grasslands.<sup>18</sup>

In the manner of storytelling, the grandfather narrated with a tone that was somewhat exaggerated and filled with dramatic tension. For the reader and his grandson, Ye Qiu-Sheng, the war seemed like a heroic movie. Some researchers of Higashiyama Akira have pointed out that his writing style, filled with a sense of chivalry (義侠心), it might downplay the atrocities of the war.<sup>19</sup> However, I think that *'Ryū'* and *'Monster'* precisely illustrate how the new generation of writers, based on their personal experiences, reinterprets and imagines the wars they have come to know.

In Japan, after the end of WWII, besides the aforementioned post-war literature (戦後派文学), writers turned their personal war experiences into works, some authors explored a more entertaining and popular style in

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18 Higashiyama Akira (東山彰良), *流 [Ryū]* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2015), p.20.

19 In Liao Tien-Li's master's degree thesis, 'Taiwan Writing in Higashiyama Akira's works', she pointed out that the writing style of the war in the novel strengthens the passivity of the acts of slaughter. Refer to Liao Tien-Li (廖恬儷), "東山彰良作品中的台湾書寫" [Taiwan Writing in Higashiyama Akira's Works] (Master Thesis, National Chung Hsing University, 2022), pp.33-65.

depicting war. For instance, Yokomizo Seishi (横溝正史)'s *'Gokumon Island'* (獄門島) in 1948, Yamada Futaro (山田風太郎)'s *'The Devil in the Eye'* (眼中的悪魔) in the same year adopted the style. Both works employed the style of detective or mystery fiction to illustrate death on the battlefield. Using a nihilistic way, these works effectively satirized the meaninglessness of war. Afterwards, in the 1960s, there are successive publications of works such as Komatsu Sakyo (小松左京)'s *'Japanese Apache Tribe'* (日本アパッチ族) in 1964, Ikushima Jiro (生島治郎)'s *'The Torrent of Yellow soil'* (黄土の奔流) in 1965, Yuki Shoji (結城昌治)'s *'Under the Flag of the Rising Sun'* (軍旗はためく下に) in 1969. These writers chose to transform the brutal war into adventure or science fictions. I think Higashiyama Akira's works like *'Ryū'* or *'Monster'* should be re-examined within this genealogy.

In the end of *'Ryū'*, Higashiyama unravel the mystery of the grandfather's murder case. Uncle Yu-Wen (宇文), whom the grandfather brought from mainland China to Taiwan, is not the biological son of his teammate Xu Er-Hu (許二虎) but the son of traitor Wang Ke-Qiang (王克強). Uncle Yu-Wen eventually confesses his motive for the murder, saying:

Your grandfather buried the villagers and all of my family members alive, flattened the upheaval of the ground with his feet before leaving. My sister held onto my mom tightly until her death. Xu Er-Hu even spat on the ground. After they left, my friend and I desperately dug the soil, digging and digging until the sun went down. Our hands were cracked, nails were broken. Finally, we unearthed the top of a head. We continued digging, and it turned out to be the head of a man from the grocery store, known as Hei-Zi (黑子). I didn't know his real name; he has a little intellectual disability, so everyone called him Hei-Zi. Your grandfather, Ye Zun-Lin, didn't spare even Hei-Zi. It's true that my dad worked for the Japanese, and it's possible that he, along with the Japanese army, massacred your grandfather's village. I don't know what the truth is. If Ye Zun-Lin says so, then this is your reality. And this is war.<sup>20</sup>

This detailed and paradoxical confessions juxtapose the concepts of “truth” and “reality”. It not only questions the binary opposition between good and evil but also challenges the positivist and objectivist historiography. I think that the cruelty of war is not erased or set aside by the chivalrous style in Higashiyama’s works. Instead, Higashiyama Akira uses an extremely dramatic folk-telling writing to highlight the problematic issues with war testimonies, records, and the positivist and objectivist historiography. Although wars always raise the banner of national righteousness, there is no absolute justice or truth, but only “temporary truth” or “someone’s reality” in Higashiyama’s *‘Monster’*.

Higashiyama’s *‘Monster’* interweaves two storylines: the world of the novel author Kashiyama Kohei (柏山康平) and the embedded narrative within *‘Monster’*, also called *‘MONSTER’*. *‘Monster’*, with its intricate metafictional techniques, reevaluates the concepts of “truth” and “reality”. The protagonist, Kashiyama Kohei, is the author within the embedded narrative of *‘MONSTER’*. In this embedded narrative, he references his uncle, Wang Kang-Ping (王康平)’s experiences, depicting the post-war early days of the Black Bat Squadron (黒蝙蝠中隊) member’s story. However, as the narrative unfolds, readers discover that the world of the novelist Kashiyama is simultaneously the fictional world written by another “Monster”. Higashiyama Akira utilizes the concept of a story within a story to blur the boundaries between realities belong different worlds. For Ku Kang-Ping, Su Da-Fang (蘇大方) is the monster, while in the world of Kashiyama, his cousin may be the monster. The “monster” is the writer but also the one being written about.

Higashiyama’s mockery of “realities” doesn’t stop there. In Kashiyama’s *‘MONSTER’*, after Lu Kang-Ping flying to mainland China in 1959, all communication was lost. The official report stated, “The plane’s tail caught fire, the fuselage was riddled with bullets, and eventually the plane crashed in the billowing black smoke. It occurred in the junction of Enping City (恩平市)

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20 Higashiyama Akira (2015), p.386.

in the central-south part of Guangdong Province and coastal Yangjiang City (陽江市). All personnel on board perished.”<sup>21</sup> However, the “truth” was not as the official report. Lu Kang-Ping not only survived the plane crash but lived through during the Great Leap Forward (大躍進) period in mainland China, and returned to Taiwan in 1962. Moreover, for the “real world” of the author of *MONSTER*, Kashiyama Kohei, what he experienced during this three years in mainland China remains an eternal mystery, especially after his uncle's suicide.<sup>22</sup> Although Kashiyama eventually realizes that Su Da-Fang (蘇大方) may only be a fictional character, he still retains Su as a character in his novel. This is not only because, just as Shiiba Lisa (椎葉リサ) says: “for the readers, a fictional story seems more real than reality, and real stories sometimes sound false”<sup>23</sup>. At the same time, the fictional character Su Da-Fang is also necessary for the Kashiyama and his family, he says:

The illusion that my uncle shot Su Da-Fang was not for the sake of his reputation but for all of my family members. Perhaps we couldn't bear the idea that there might be a monster within our family. We didn't want to believe that our loved ones could be a monster. That's why Lu Kang-Ping was crushed by guilt and the regret of killing 200 people and abandoning Xiao (シヤオ), and he had to commit suicide. Whether consciously or unconsciously, I imposed my wishes on my uncle.<sup>24</sup>

The fictional character Su Da-Fang assumes the guilt that the “real world” of Kashiyama cannot bear, representing the war, but through the lens of color filter. For Wang Kang-Ping, Kashiyama's uncle, he must narrate and recall war experiences through Su Da-Fang. And for the Kashiyama family, if Su Da-Fang did not exist, the monster would exist within the family itself. It

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21 Higashiyama Akira (東山彰良), *怪物[Monster]* (Tokyo: Shinchosha, 2022), p.20.

22 Ibid., p.80.

23 Ibid., pp.208-209.

24 Ibid., p.315.

means they have to admit that “we” might not only be victims of war but also perpetrators as well. And this “reality” is difficult and embarrassed for the family to recognize. In the preface of *‘Monster’*, Higashiyama mentions that this story is his dream, but this dream is not just a fictional story. Dreams have the power to influence and dominate reality. Dreams permeate the narrative of the novel, and truth captured by the novel once again returns to the reality.<sup>25</sup>

Writers who personally experienced war portrayed aspects and oppressions of wartime based on their own experiences, memories or historical testimonies. In contrast, young writers with no firsthand war experience must construct their perceptions of war by pursuing or acknowledging it. For them, the “realities” of war become plural, and the traditional forms of signifying “truth”, such as personal experience, recollection, memory, or testimony, cease to exist. Therefore, in the complex narrative structure of *‘Monster’*, Higashiyama begins to question the “truthfulness” of personal experience, recollection, memory, or testimony, using his dramatic and suspenseful writing to challenge the positivist historiography.

#### IV. As the Privilege of Testimony is Fading out

Since 1895, Taiwan became Japan’s first colony following the Treaty of Shimonoseki. During the colonial period, Taiwanese were mobilized for war in various capacities, including as the voluntary army members, laborers in the Japan’s southward expansion in the South Seas, juvenile workers in aircraft manufacturing, comfort women, or in support roles on the home front. Although WWII ended in 1945, the civil war between Taiwan and mainland China persisted. Military conflicts occurred intermittently across the Taiwan Strait. The prolonged experience of being in a state of war inevitably made war narratives a compelling and unavoidable theme in Taiwanese literature.

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25 Ibid., p.7.

While Taiwan endured the impact of prolonged wartime conditions, Japan, too, experienced profound transformations after WWII. The defeat in 1945 marked a critical juncture for Japan, leading to a period of post-war reconstruction. As the nation navigated the challenges of occupation, demilitarization, and constitutional reforms under the GHQ, Japanese writers also reflect the complex sentiments resulting from the self-reflection on the wartime experiences on their works.

This paper focuses on discussing four works, including Wu Ming-Yi's '*Routes in the Dream*' and '*The Stolen Bicycle*', as well as Higashiyama Akira's '*Ryū*' and '*Monster*'. I aim to explore how contemporary young writers in Japan and Taiwan depict war in their works. The trajectory of changes in war narratives in contemporary literature in Japan and Taiwan not only involves the reconsideration of historical perspectives on war but also relates to how history and experience are continually reconstructed in literature.

In '*Routes in the Dream*' and '*The Stolen Bicycle*', war is vividly recreated through detailed sensory descriptions. On the other hand, '*Ryū*' and '*Monster*' employ intricate storylines with elements of suspense and adventure to present wartime events. For the previous generation of writers, their war narratives were often constructed based on personal experiences, memories, or testimonies, emphasizing the "truthfulness" of war and highlighting its brutality. However, for contemporary writers like Wu Ming-Yi and Higashiyama Akira, the equation of personal experiences and testimonies with truth has become insufficient. This is because it fails to provide the necessary resources or ideas to reexamining and reconnecting both the present and history. In '*The Stolen Bicycle*', Wu writes: 'an old iron horse is fated to be put-tsuân(不全) in life, in time, in story'.<sup>26</sup> To "save" the bicycle, one has to use parts from another bicycle. And history is much like an old bicycle; it is inherently incomplete, with no perfect personal experiences, memories, or testimonies capable of constructing a "total" and flawless

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26 Wu Ming-Yi (2015), p.246.

history. Therefore, in *'Monster'*, Wang Kang-Ping's historical testimony about Su Da-Fang is false. Higashiyama problematizes the issue of testimony and weakens the privileged of testimony through the narrative structure. As we start enclosing personal experiences and historical testimonies within quotes that demand reexamination, we can open up space for the emergence of multiple realities from different individuals. This allows for the diverse "experiences" of different people during wars to come to the forefront.

Although Wu Ming-Yi and Higashiyama Akira belong to a generation that did not directly experience war, the war narratives has not vanished in their works. Instead, the past war manifests different aspects through their exploration. Contemplating how the inheritance of wartime experiences can be possible, and exploring mutual understanding across generations and nationalities are questions we must continually inquire into.

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