

Recognition of the Impaired Subject: Hwang Suk-young's *The Shadow of Arms*¹

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Korean novels on the Vietnam War attempt to heal the wounds of Korean soldiers while omitting the life and wounds of the Vietnamese. The reason why they fail to reveal the true nature of the Vietnam War or avoid doing so is because the nation forced them to do so and also because the mechanism of self-censorship was too strong. Against the collective memory that was distorted and controlled by the state, Hwang Suk-young revives the hidden memory of the war and reveals the fact that the Korean Army was dispatched to Vietnam so that Korea would receive economic aid from the United States of America.

The literary achievement of *The Shadow of the Arms* is that it locates the Vietnamese in the place of the subject by recording their lives of fighting for survival during the war. In contrast, he places the Korean Army as the other and highlights the immorality of participating in the Vietnam War. When we disclose the fact that 'Liberty's Crusade' was a fraud, then we can dream about the possibility of reconciling with the Vietnamese.

Keywords: Hwang Suk-young, "The Shadow of Arms," memory, impaired subject, other, Vietnam War, disgrace, commodification.

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1. Subject and Memory of War

1) Competing Memory

How are Vietnam and the Vietnam War remembered by Koreans who were born at the end of the war? When I was a boy, Vietnam was not a battlefield but a place where Rambo was rescuing American POWs who were being tortured and brutalized by the Viet Cong. The Viet Cong were described as evil, striding through jungles and committing atrocities. The staccato of Rambo's machine gun, shooting down Viet Cong, still rings in my ears. These *Rambo* films misrepresent the Vietnamese just as much as cowboy pictures misrepresent Native Americans.

For reconciliation with the Vietnamese, Korean veterans contributed money for the construction of a Vietnam War memorial in Ha My hamlet. However, Korean veterans argued that the inscription on the memorial ignored their sacrifice in the war and overemphasized the expressions of 'Blue Dragon' and 'massacre.' About this head-on confrontation between villagers and Korean veterans over the expressions inscribed on the war memorial, Kim Hyun-sook writes:

The intriguing aspect of this Ha My hamlet memorial debate, which might have significance for resolving other similar international conflicts, is how and whether it would be possible for civilian survivors of massacres and soldiers who committed wartime violence, from two oppositional nation-states in Asia, to find a common ground. In other words, Ha My is a litmus test to see whether a consensus is possible between perpetrators/assailants and victims/survivors, whose shared history is covered by competing memories and struggles. (Kim 2001:623)

Here, 'competing memories and struggles' means the difference between villagers who remember only themselves as victims and Korean veterans who desire to define themselves as victims rather than assailants. Defining the position of Korean troops dispatched to the Vietnam War is a matter of defining the victim. The desire to exclude the memory of 'the other' is expressed in this matter.

This paper begins by examining Korean novels' perspectives on the Vietnam War. Obsessed with their own wounds, most Korean novelists excluded the Vietnamese from their novels on the Vietnam War. However, "the subject cannot

be interpreted if it does not take the other into consideration” (Kim 2002: Preface). The subject is revealed intact when it looks at the other with its own eyes and at the same time looks back on itself with the eyes of the other. Kōjin Karatani states that “in the war depicted in Ooka, Shohei’s *Fires on the Plain*, others, that is, Asians under Japanese or American control are not included and therefore the novel falls into the void” (Karatani 2001:106). The importance of Hwang Suk-young’s *The Shadow of Arms* is that it has put the other, the Vietnamese, back in the place of subject of the Vietnam War. Further, the hero of the novel, Ahn Yong Kyu, always tries to define himself as the other.

The place of the Korean Army, dispatched to the Vietnam War, can be categorized as that in Korea and in Vietnam. Though their just cause, Liberty’s Crusade, was a lie, Korean soldiers could be viewed as the subject and victim of the war in Korea. While the Vietnam War was delivered to Korea indirectly, through TV and newspapers or stories by Vietnam veterans, to soldiers, the war was a struggle for life in hellish jungles. However, in Vietnam, they were not and will not be put in the place of subject or victim because they were paid by the U.S., but not to protect freedom or democracy. Crashing into collective memory forced by the state, Hwang Suk-young’s individual memory clarifies these facts and tries to correct the memory of the war.

Hwang Suk-young’s *The Shadow of Arms*² has been highly praised for revealing the truth of the Vietnam War, while other novels on the war simply disclose miserable states, inhumanity, and personal wounds of the war from a narrowly humanist perspective. How does he overcome paternalism and naïve humanism in order to tell the truth about the war? It is from the way and the content of memory in his novel. His memory of the war does not reflect the state’s desire to remember only brutality and the naïve humanism that it aroused. On the contrary, he fights against the state’s desire to distort collective memory by using the pretext of Liberty’s Crusade for an unjustifiable war. Hwang stresses in the novel that identity and ethics of Korean and Korean troops in the Vietnam War are severely impaired. The true value of *The Shadow of Arms* is that it does not end by refuting the state’s false justification of the war, but it raises the possibility of reconciliation with the Vietnamese and the restoration of identity.

2. Other novels on the Vietnam War by Hwang are *Tap*, *Naktanukgal*, and *Molgaewol ui sae*.

2) Memory and Identity of Subject

According to Aleida Assmann, “memory is something fundamentally reconstructed and it always starts from the present.” If memory is reconstructed under the necessity of the present (society), “the struggle over memory is the struggle over the interpretation of the present.” Therefore, memory is “the matter of ensuring identity and interpreting the present and is connected to the justification of value” (Assman 2003:34). S. J. Schmitt mentions the relation between memory and identity. He emphasizes that “memory does not depend on the past and the past acquires its identity through memory act.”³

It is very difficult for writers under censorship to break down the state’s memory on the war and get to the truth of it. Park Chung-hee’s dictatorship did not allow people to replace or compete with the reconstructed memory to justify the participation of the Korean Army in the Vietnam War. Of course, this harsh regulation might force individual writers to censor themselves unconsciously. Im Ji-hyeon argues that the relation between controlled (or reconstructed) collective memory and individual memory standing is more complicated than it seems to be. Though it is a comment on imperialism and memory of the colony, his assertion is very important.

When memory on the specific past is transformed into ‘cultural memory,’ it does not mean memory of the past anymore. The discourse on memory running under it is the reflection of the present demand of society. More specifically, isn’t it the process of constructing collective identity the society desires to build and aims at? There is a strong suspicion that the subject of producing collective memory and identity is state power and civil society is just a passive subject consuming them; however, the aspect seems to be more complicated in that coercion by the state is hidden under the form of social agreement, rather than being revealed outwardly. (Im 2002:10)

The Korean government and society have desired that the memory on the Vietnam War should not ethically impair their collective identity. However, Hwang refuses ‘national history’ regulated by the state and into which an indi-

3. Re-cited from Jeong (2005:142).

vidual voluntarily incorporates oneself and brings suppressed and hidden memory to life. This allows him to disclose the naked truth that the Vietnam War was nothing more than part of the U.S. quest for world domination and that Korea participated in the war in exchange for economic assistance from the U.S.

To disguise the political and economic purpose of the state, collective memory emphasizes the violent nature of the Vietnam War. A war is “a gigantic violence which makes human beings most brutally as the other of its history” and “the imaginary approach of the writers on a war is merely an adventure of transforming the otherized history as that of subject” (Yu 2005:249). Here, the history of the subject is the history of people who accept and endure their painful conditions of life in a war. To Koreans, the Vietnam War is a part of history as the other, not as the subject. Calling the Vietnam War ‘American War’ or ‘National Liberation War,’ the Vietnamese clearly define their enemy and the purpose of their fight. Therefore, literary adventure and accomplishment of Vietnam War novels should be in putting the Vietnamese back in the place of subject and depicting the lives of those who struggled to liberate their country and to survive the war. Hwang Suk-young’s *The Shadow of Arms* offers an important perspective to the understanding of literature and art on the Vietnam War in that it “locates the U.S. as a radical outside,” “denying it the position of subject” (Hughes 2003:236)⁴ and because it locates Koreans as the ultimate other.

2. Way of Life and Memory

1) Otherized Life and Keeping Distance

In *The Shadow of Arms*, composed of thirty-five chapters, Ahn Yong Kyu and Pham Minh meet only once, in the last chapter, and the encounter ends with Pham Minh’s death. The first two chapters of the novel describe the crossing of Ahn Yong Kyu’s and Pham Minh’s destinies. As his coming to Vietnam was by order of the Korean government, Yong Kyu is transferred from jungles to the city of Danang by an external power. On the other hand, Pham Minh voluntarily

4. Hughes quotes Chow (2002:3) and emphasizes that in Hwang Suk—young’s text, “Western man is now...*thrown back* to his proper place in history, where he, too, must be seen as an object.” Italics in original.

chooses the life as a National Liberation Front (NLF) cell member.

Ahn Yong Kyu's entry into the black market of Danang from 'the dark jungles of hell' is described as follows:

From now on you'll be in the heart of the black market. Even when you
are just loitering on the street, dollars will pile up in your pocket.
Beneath the helicopter the dark jungles of hell were gliding past slowly.
(11-2)

Sergeant Yun's remark, "Even when you are just loitering on the street, dollars will pile up in your pocket" (11) means that wherever Ahn Yong Kyu goes, to jungles or to Danang, his destiny defines him as the other in Vietnam. "Like a hunting dog trained to behave reflexively, for months he had done nothing but crawl on his belly or run until he was breathless" (8). However, he is a hunting dog again in Danang, following the command of his superior officers.

In Danang, Ahn Yong Kyu feels that "the odor of death seemed to have left him" (31) and sees himself turning into a tourist. As Yong Kyu gets out of the dichotomy of life or death, he starts to see the truth of the war. Though he does not try to make money for himself, he becomes actively involved in the black market and takes responsibility for that. However, he keeps placing himself in the position of other. A conversation with Toi makes Yong Kyu and the readers perceive the position of Yong Kyu and the Korean Army as the other:

You don't understand. Perhaps until the end you'll never understand. So much the better for you. For after all this place is our country and this war is our war. We are the masters of the house, so to speak. You people just serve time here and return back home. (94)

Of course you people have no responsibility. This is an American taxpayer's war. (94)

Toi ceaselessly endows Yong Kyu with the position of other. Toi defines Yong Kyu as the man trapped between the Vietnamese and the American taxpayers' war. The American taxpayers' war means that the purpose of the war is money. Toi points out that the subject of the war and the life in Vietnam is only for the Vietnamese people and that Korean soldiers should stay in the position of the third party, the other.

Ahn Yong Kyu's self-recognition as the other is reinforced as he perceives the true nature of the war; symbolized by the PX (Post Exchange) and the black market. Though Major Krapensky says he was joking, his remark "No, you came here to make money." (50) can be interpreted as the writer saying "We came here to make money." 'We' are all Korean soldiers dispatched to the Vietnam War, including Yong Kyu. Symbolized as 'money' (dollar), the unethical and immoral nature of the dispatch relegates Korean troops to the position of internally and externally excluded other. The pretext of the war forces them to feel alienated.

While tracing the black market dealings in Danang, Ahn Yong Kyu meets black market dealers such as Oh Hae Jong (Mimi). Yong Kyu does not report information on Oh Hae Jong to his captain as Toi asked him to. This gives him an opportunity to get a line on the most lucrative dealings in Danang. To Yong Kyu, however, all these things are just another responsibility he has to take. Though he tells Toi "I don't make deals." (139) in Vietnam, he is destined to do just that to investigate the line, funneling military supplies to the NLF. So, Yong Kyu is taking responsibility and at the same time wants to escape everything in Vietnam.

Ahn Yong Kyu plays his role as a sergeant, assigned to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), and he gets involved more deeply in the black market of Danang. Yong Kyu stops the Korean beer dealings of the Hong Kong Group, investigates C-ration (combat ration) dealings, tries to help Stapley, an AWOL American who wants to escape from Danang to Saigon, gathers information on NLF's black market dealings, and makes deals with Nguyen Thach who is in charge of NLF supplies in Danang. However, Yong Kyu's involvement in the black market is coerced, not voluntary. He is just accepting passively. He keeps repeating that he is going to forget about everything and leave this country soon. The deeper his involvement as a subject, the stronger his sense of himself as the other is.

Right. Whether I get lost from here or just forgotten, in the end that's a problem for you to solve. (280)

He thought himself, "Why, that's no business of mine." The moment he sets sail over that sea, everything in this place will become vague and sink into the darkness of forgetting. (464)

As Toi excludes Yong Kyu from life in Vietnam, Yong Kyu also places himself in the position of other. Yong Kyu's remarks that he will forget about it as soon as he goes back home mean that he will distance himself from the realities of Vietnam. This distance will enable him to look at the realities of Vietnam from an outsider's perspective. In this way, Yong Kyu maintains an objective sense of the realities of Korea.

Our land is divided, like a body severed into two. My real home is in the North, you know. It was only after I came to Vietnam that I began to see my homeland objectively. You people here... you taught me to do that. (342)

These conditions we're living through now are the same exact conditions almost all Asians have endured for the past century. (343)

Ahn Yong Kyu can look at his birthplace (the North) objectively since he, by seeing the truth of the Vietnam War, could overcome memory distorted and forced by Cold War ideology. The American government has caused the war in Asia to firmly construct a world system with America as the central figure and it controls the Vietnamese economy through the black market. The Korean government has deployed soldiers to Vietnam in exchange for American money. Both governments are forcing their people and soldiers into the dichotomous world of choosing between democracy and communism. However, through the experience of the Vietnam War, Korean soldiers realized that Liberty's Crusade was a lie. The perceptions of Vietnam and Korea that were held by Yong Kyu, the writer, Korean soldiers, and readers extends to the perception of the history of Asia. This makes it possible for Koreans to escape from the Cold War ideology and obtain the decentralizing, post-modern and the Third World's viewpoints.

2) Subjective Life and Responsibility

Pham Minh's rebirth as an NLF fighter is led by Nguyen Thach and his friend Thanh. As the leader Ho Chi Minh had been born Nguyen Thach Thanh, then changed his name to Nguyen Ai Quoc, and finally to Ho Chi Minh, Pham Minh, an ordinary university student, is reborn as an NLF fighter with the help of Nguyen Thach and Thanh. Pham Minh's rebirth as a fighter symbolizes that an ordinary Vietnamese influenced by Ho Chi Minh can become an NLF fighter.

A former medical student at Hue University, Pham Minh leaves Danang, and goes into the jungle to become an NLF fighter. “For the next three months he would have to survive struggling through the swamps and marshes, embracing the wretched reality of Vietnam” (17). Although Yong Kyu also has been ‘struggling through the swamps and marshes’ for the last six months, he does not have the reality to embrace. ‘The wretched reality’ he should embrace is his divided motherland. However, while on the battlefield and then in the black market, Yong Kyu could not look objectively at his motherland.

Pham Minh’s friend and NLF fighter Thanh speaks to Minh about ‘the wretched reality of Vietnam’ where thousands of Vietnamese are dying:

As long as we keep fighting, no one is to be pitied. It’s all because this is a struggle for the people. (21)

He means that the subject of national liberation struggles is the Vietnamese people and though their struggles lead them to death, they are not to be pitied. Pham Minh has chosen the subjective position, an NLF cell member, in a world where people “can’t go on living without choosing one side or the other” (43). However, he could not settle his internal conflicts on methods of struggles. His internal conflicts are a matter of choice between the life of Nguyen Thach and Thanh leading him to NLF and the corrupted life of his elder brother Pham Quyen, dreaming of the paradise called Singapore. Minh chooses the life of an NLF fighter, and under the harsh reality of Vietnam this means his jumping into the dichotomy of life and death.

A conflict among family, love, and the NLF is caused by his inability to understand what a struggle against American imperialism is and also by his vague passion to become a doctor who saves Vietnamese lives. His friend Thanh tells Pham Minh what it means to fight against a gigantic nation like the U.S.:

In this business of warfare against a gigantic nation like the U.S., you have no other means but to endure, holding out to the end while endlessly exchanging human lives for things. (76)

Chapter 22 of *The Shadow of Arms* begins with the story of Pham Minh who has come back to Danang as an NLF cell member. He carries out his duty as an assistant agent of NLF one by one, suffering from the conflict between family, love, and the NLF. In Chapters 22 and 25, Minh deceives his elder brother

Quyen and gets a job at Nguyen Cuong's office. To deceive Quyen, he even buries his face in Quyen's knees, shrieking "I don't want to die!" (259). However, Pham Minh's family members hate Quyen who is corrupt and works for the government, and see Minh as a hero when he left Danang and went to Atwat training camp to become an NLF agent. When Minh is falsely accused of desertion, they shun him. The attitude of Minh's family clearly shows that what the Vietnamese people really care about is the victory of the NLF.

Toi, a typical Vietnamese, plays an important role in the novel. The destiny of Toi, like that of all other Vietnamese, is to live in Vietnam, accepting the way of life they "owe to the French colonial regime, to Ngo Dinh Diem, and to the United States" (140). While his conditions of life are determined by external powers, the way Toi lives his life is extremely active.

All I want is to survive this war with my family. (141)

The only thing certain is that I won't move a single step from here. I live in Vietnam. My children, too. When you go home, remember Toi as that kind of man. (141)

Toi's determination to live in Vietnam, no matter how much damage the war causes, and his hope to be remembered by Yong Kyu, compels Yong Kyu to remember and write about his war experiences in Vietnam as a novel. Hwang Suk-young said that the thematic focus of this novel is that "the subject of the Vietnam War is the Vietnamese people" (Choe 1988:77). In this novel, Toi's remarks, behavior, and perspectives resemble those of most Vietnamese as the subject of the war.

Toi allows Yong Kyu to see the reality of Vietnam. Toi exists in-between the axes of 'American forces-Korean Army-Ahn Yong Kyu' and 'NLF-Nguyen Thach-Pham Minh' and symbolizes the Vietnamese people. Though Toi is assisting the Korean Army in the CID, he has chosen his life in Vietnam, not an ideology of democracy and not communism. He works for the CID and makes deals in the black market to remain in Vietnam, not in Singapore or in any other country, with his family during and after the war.

Same goes for me, Toi said. As I told you before, I am an opportunist created by the reality of Cochinchina and South Vietnam. Even so, we have to know this. I'm just an informant employed by your detachment, but

even when you're gone I still have to make a living here. (436)

His remark, 'I still have to make a living here,' emphasizes that he is a product of Vietnamese history. The Korean mercenaries are products of contemporary Korean history. In a sense, their destiny is the same as Toi's because they have to go back home; they are not pawns in the ideological conflicts between the left and right.

The Vietnamese who enter the government army and who are parasites on the black market in Danang, of course, are the subject of life in Vietnam during the war. Pham Minh calls them traitors, but Uncle Trinh persuades him to accept the fact that "they also are part of the history produced by Cochin China" (43). He tells Minh that someday, all the Vietnamese people drawn into the whirlpool of the war "must be remembered" (43). His assertion has the same contextual meaning as Toi's remark. Toi asks Yong Kyu to remember him as a man who will live in Vietnam with his family. *The Shadow of Arms* is Yong Kyu's memory of Toi. And Toi represents the memory of the Vietnamese people who went through the war and lived in Vietnam as the subject. To depict their ways of living and surviving the war is the best way to show the true nature of the war and the tragedy of the Vietnamese people.

3. Recognition of the Impaired Subject.

1) War and Commodification

The Vietnam War is shown to be an imperialistic and capitalistic war through the PX and the black market of Danang. Hwang describes in detail the black market in which Americans, Koreans, and Vietnamese (government soldiers and NLF agents) blend together rather than portraying mortal combat scenes or civilians being murdered by soldiers.

Le Roi market is like a pipkin in which medicinal concoctions are blended, anything that comes in here turns black and melts away. (237)

The characteristics of the black market where people make deals with friendly forces and at the same time with the enemy nullify the ideological confrontation of democracy and communism. American military supplies flow into the NLF

and the Vietnamese home from the black market. The black market is thriving under the U.S. government's economic operations. This proves that the Vietnam War is not to defend democracy but to achieve political and economic goals of the U.S. The Korean Army is sent to Vietnam in exchange for American economic assistance and industrial development. Therefore, readers very often witness scenes in which soldiers are only worth forty dollars:

Listen, five hundred is the price of a dozen soldiers' lives. (67)

He had heard a rumor of a police superintendent's wife who had openly staked several soldiers as a bet in a poker game. (261)

Their way of buying and selling human lives emphasizes that the war can sacrifice soldiers for economic interests. Since the Korean Army has been dispatched to Vietnam for economic purposes, they can be called 'mercenary.' Mercenary is a kind of commodity the state has exported to earn money and therefore it is evaluated as dollars. Many characters of the novel confirm this fact to Yong Kyu:

You're coming to make money, no? (11)

No, you came here to make money... (50)

Nevertheless, having fought in jungles, Yong Kyu does not accept the fact at first. However, he grasps the situation of black marketing and finds himself "deep in filth up to his neck" (29).

The products at once reproduce the loyal servants of the producers. Those who lay hands upon the wealth of America will have the label U.S. MILITARY branded on their brains. [...] The PX is an attractive wooden horse. Also, it is America's most powerful new-model weapon. (47-8)

A commodity is just like a narcotic. People addicted to commodities become loyal servants of the U.S. and long for the commodity for the rest of their lives. A commodity is more powerful than a bomb. The black marketing of commodities through which the U.S. makes the Vietnamese get drunk with materials and attempts to rule them are what Hwang Suk-young really wants to describe in the novel.

The war defines everything, including people, in terms of money. Therefore, there is no place for paternalism or naïve humanism. It is simply a matter of profit. A war is “the most merciless form of business” (324) and people who live through a war should have to accept this. The NLF, the Government Army, and the Vietnamese all accept their fates. When Yong Kyu understands the different goals of the NLF and the Korean Army, he is ashamed of himself. Though both NLF and Korean troops live within the food chain of the PX and black market, the NLF struggles to break this chain and escape from the rule of the U.S. Korean soldiers, however, just want to earn money. This shame he feels for Koreans leads to the feeling of disgrace and the recognition of the impaired subject.

2) Recognition of the Impaired Subject

In the last chapter of *The Shadow of Arms*, Toi's death leads to the death of Pham Minh. Toi is executed by NLF “in the name of the People in Vietnam” (488). The direct cause of his death is his reckless threatening of Nguyen Thach, but it is also because Yong Kyu did not report the NLF dealings to his captain. Toi's death, like the death of NLF fighters, is brought about by the life of the Vietnamese in the mixture of the war and the black market. Toi's death is perceived as a disgrace by Yong Kyu. It is because they share the same conditions of life: Yong Kyu is a mercenary being paid by the U.S. Army and Toi is a mercenary employed by the Korean Army. Toi's struggle is a fight to survive the brutal war and the capitalist system symbolized by the PX and the black market. Though Toi's and the NLF's goals are different, both of them live in the middle of a fierce war and dream of an ideal life in Vietnam after the war is over. When the tragic lives of the Vietnamese become the center of the novel, the true value of the novel emerges.

After Toi's death, Yong Kyu, with CID agents and Vietnamese police, searches for NLF agents. During the search, he meets and shoots Pham Minh. The shooting means that Yong Kyu returns to the battlefield, though he is still in Danang. Yong Kyu returns to the place of other and though he was temporarily involved in the reality of Vietnam, he is essentially a mercenary fighting in someone else's war and therefore he returns to the place of the aggressor. This makes us “recognize a stern reality that the role of Korea in the Vietnam War is just an assailant of collective violence which cannot be offset with individual conscience.” (Im 2003:362)

While waiting to board the ship, Ahn Yong Kyu thinks that “A big contin-

gent of middle school girls wearing white ahozai [*ao dai*] and broad-brimmed hats, waving bouquets of flowers and national flags of both countries was sure to appear on the scene” (495). The departure ceremony attempts to glorify what the Korean Army has done in Vietnam under the guise of Liberty’s Crusade. However, scattered commodities from broken boxes such as “Left over C-ration tins, saved up paper sacks of powdered milk, cartons of cigarettes, American military uniforms and jungle boots, and occasional electrical appliances with labels like Sony, Akai, National, Sanyo, Sharp, or Hitachi” (495) remind readers of what the reasons for Korea’s participation in the Vietnam War really are. Yong Kyu sits “on a chair watching this unfamiliar city with a detached mind” (496). Then, Oh Hae Jong comes and tells him of Pham Minh’s ‘disgraceful death.’

Thinking of Toi’s death at the hands of Pham Minh, Ahn Yong Kyu confronts his experiences in Vietnam as a mercenary, a perpetrator, and an aggressor. He reaffirms the fact that he is a permanent other who cannot stay in Vietnam any longer.

He walked back toward the ship. The thought of going somewhere and drinking until dawn no longer seemed attractive. He did not want to run into any of the faces he had known while he was there. (497)

What Yong Kyu really wants to avoid are the common Vietnamese people like Toi and Pham Minh. After Yong Kyu has sailed back home, Toi’s and Minh’s families will live the traditional life of the Vietnamese people. With Toi’s remarks, behavior and death, Ahn Yong Kyu realizes that his identity as a soldier in Vietnam is seriously impaired. Readers also recognize this by looking at Pham Minh’s decision to become an NLF fighter and the subsequent fatal confrontation with Ahn Yong Kyu. At the moment when he realizes that his existence in Vietnam is unethical and immoral, he is ashamed and does not ever want to see anybody he knew in Vietnam again.

If ‘sin’ is a self-imposed feeling, ‘disgrace’ will be a heteronomous feeling. ‘Disgrace’ is an objective feeling which cannot be controlled by my subjective intention [...] In the feeling of disgrace, the way of my existence which is open toward the other and should have to depend on the existence of other is revealed. (Sakai 2002:23-24)

Ahn Yong Kyu's sense of disgrace is from the recognition of the existence of the Vietnamese and thinking them as the subject of the war. In the novel, Hwang explains that the identity of Ahn Yon Kyu, representative of Korean soldiers as seen by the other (the Vietnamese), is disgraceful and impaired. The dictatorial government framed the war under the pretext of Liberty's Crusade and forced the Korean people to believe it. The memory of the war as reconstructed in Hwang's novel collides with the collective memory distorted by the state. The wave of this collision comes to us as disgrace. However, with this feeling of disgrace, Koreans can dream of the possibility of restoring the ethics as the other and of reconciliation with the Vietnamese.

4. Conclusion

Most of the Korean novels on the Vietnam War exclude the Vietnamese and end in attempting to heal the wounds of Korean soldiers while looking paternalistically at the Vietnamese. Their failure to reveal the true nature of the war is caused by the government's control and also by their own self-censorship. However, Hwang Suk-young's *The Shadow of Arms* rejects this distorted and controlled memory of the state and recovers the suppressed and hidden memory. This allows him to show that the true purpose of the war was economic. The literary achievement of *The Shadow of Arms* is that it depicts the Vietnamese struggle for national liberation and survival amid the brutality of a war.

The subject-centered way of thinking and rationalism of modern ages has paved the way to destroy the authority of God and has left open the possibility for them to oppress the other and drive the subject to destruction. To overcome these problems and to redeem the ruined subject, the subject should look back on and heal the other's wounds and restore the other's dignity. Though there is no guarantee that the other will restore the impaired identity of the subject, rescuing the other is the only possibility. This is the ethics as the other which the subject should internalize and what Hwang Suk-young's *The Shadow of Arms* really attempts to address.

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