Realism, a conscious and recognizable movement in modern European literature, found its way into China, Japan, and Taiwan in the early 20th century. The trio developed a peculiar literary alliance through the efforts of writers of fiction in the first three decades of the century: during the time when Taiwan was ruled by the colonial Japanese government but at the same time still retained close ties with its “fatherland” in terms of literary creation.\(^1\) This double identity was painful enough to incur anxiety and uncertainty among writers who were already brooding over Taiwan’s self-identity. For many writers, national identity and literary identity were intertwined. In 1895, the Taiwanese people became subjects

\(^1\) In *Mirrors of Multiple Modernities*, Huang Mei-e offers a wealth of data regarding the development of Taiwan literature since the late 19th century, focusing on the transition from the traditional to the modern phase. Many of the data are valuable because they record first-hand foreign influences and Taiwanese interactions with Japanese and Western literatures.
to a foreign colonial power: its almost overnight cessation to Japan stipulated in the Shimonoseki Treaty was a bitter humiliation. About three decades later, in the mid-1920s, the first wave of Realism was making its way to the island’s literary circle, named as “New Taiwan Literature.” This first attempt at defining Taiwan’s literary identity focused on the use of the Taiwanese language as the medium of writing, a gesture of resistance against both the Mandarin and the Japanese language. This literary self-identity deliberately downplayed Taiwan’s ethnic as well as linguistic ties with China and also asserted a Taiwanese autonomy in defiance against the imperial decree that the local Taiwanese be changed into “the Emperor’s subjects.” The self-fashioning of colonial Taiwanese writers as their own masters received inspiration from the left-wing writers who were then gathering momentum in China and also Japan.2) Georg Lukács, a major theorist of Marxist literary criticism, was a pivotal figure in the reception and dissemination of the notion of Realism in Taiwan, by way of China and Japan.3) The Lukácsian Realist legacy persisted to the late 1970s. During a period of about 50 years, it took on vocally political tones, fueled by a zeal to seek a national (and) literary identity. This paper will first trace the journey of the Lukácsian Realist discourse to Taiwan; it will then discuss Realist texts by writers such as Lai He, Wu Zhuo-liu, Lu He-ruo, Yang Kui, and Li Qiao as illustrations for the historicity and problematics involved in this national (and) literary project of self-fashioning.

2) Ye Shi-tao, Peng Rui-jin, and Chen Fang-ming have made significant contributions to this topic.
3) The Impact of Lukács on Chinese Literature by Li Huo-ren offers a seminal and systematic study on the subject. The book is the fruit of many years’ research in Japan and China.