



## Violence, Silence and History in the Love of the Nightingale and the Man Who Ended History: A Documentary

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**Article Citation:** Dou, J. (2023). Violence, Silence and History in the Love of the Nightingale and the Man Who Ended History: A Documentary, *Journal of English Literature and Cultural Studies*, 4(2): 1–14.

**Received Date:** June 13, 2022

**Accepted Date:** June 17, 2022

**Online Date:** July 30, 2023

**Publisher:** Kare Publishing

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E-ISSN: 2667-6214



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### ABSTRACT

Warfare, rape, Holocaust, different forms of violence in war, and silence on the crimes are the main themes in the history of twentieth century. Timberlake Wertenbaker rewrites the Greek myth to voice the injustice of women in sexual violence and calls for the awakening of female awareness to make their own history in *The Love of the Nightingale*. In depicting the rape, violence, silence, resistance, and myth, Wertenbaker examines modern violence politics, hegemony discourse and tragic history so as to make the muted, silenced violence public for a possible yet belated judgement and trial. Focusing on the painful body in Great World War II, Ken Liu examines modern violence politics, hegemony discourse and tragic history so as to make the muted, silenced violence public for a possible yet belated judgement and trial in *The Man Who Ended History: A Documentary*. Brave enough to write the events other writers are afraid of, Liu and Wertenbaker are transgressor as well as a moral parrhesiastes, who seek to get rid of Western hegemonic discourse and voice their own sober opinion toward personal memory and transnational history. The themes of rape, violence, injustice presented in their works are far more than gender, family, society, but relate to the political ideology regarding to race, cultural and state. They endow the past myth with contemporary societal and political meaning, thus, the rape is not on the sexual desire of male to female, but the hegemony rapes the truth, the imperial ideology rapes the history.

**Keywords:** silence, The Love of the Nightingale, The Man Who Ended History, violence, history

### Introduction

Warfare, rape, Holocaust, different forms of violence in war, and silence on the crimes are the main themes in the history of twentieth century. So many people die, suffer, survive, write, tell, retrospect and fight for the mistakes made, crimes committed, and experiences unbearable emerging in the war time. Highly concerned with female experience in war and life, Timberlake Wertenbaker, a representative of the Third Wave of post-war British Drama, rewrites the Greek myth to voice the injustice of women in sexual violence and calls for the awakening of female awareness to make their own history in *The Love of the Nightingale* (1988). Focusing on the painful body in Great World War II, Ken Liu, a Chinese American science fiction writer, turns his eye to the extreme violence and injustice done to the Chinese civilians by Japanese Unit 731, who occupied Harbin and made it the Asian Auschwitz, unearth the crimes, silence, denial of Japanese government in his sci-fi *The Man Who Ended History: A Documentary* (2011).

In depicting the suffering bodies, Wertebaker and Liu examine modern violence politics, hegemony discourse and tragic history so as to make the muted, silenced violence public for a possible yet belated judgement and trial.

"Fiction gives eyes to the horrified narrator. Eyes to see and to weep." (Paul Ricoeur, V) As a feminist retelling of the Greek myth of Procne, Philomele and Thereus, *The Love of the Nightingale* exposes the suppression, discipline, violence, attitude of the female, represented by Procne, Philomele, and Niobe, especially Philomele's being raped and cutting the tongue, and the patriarchal self-justified ideology, presented by the discourses of Thereus. Using various meta-theatrical devices, the play intends to "remind the audience of the contemporary relevance of this ancient myth. At its core, this play admonishes those who remain silent in the face of violence, horror, and tyranny" (Green 159). Violence causes violence, meantime, silence breeds more violence. Similar idea can be found in Ken Liu's 'proudest' work *The Man Who Ended History: A Documentary*, which is nominated but misses the 2012 Hugo Award due to its "political sensitivity", narrating the sexual violence, live test, extremely cruel biological experiment done to Chinese civilians by Japanese Unit 731 in Pingfang district, Harbin, where was part of the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo from 1932 to 1945. Brave enough to write the events other writers are afraid of, Liu, borrowing the form of documentary, which can function as a standalone archive and bring together diverse materials within one framework of experience from an objective perspective, aims to retrieve the neglected truth, gain redemption for the silenced victims, and demonstrate "how the surfacing of this historical trauma intersects with, and has ramifications for, the personal, political, historiographical" (Tan 7). In this sense, Liu is a pure and pure transgressor, who seeks to get rid of Western hegemonic discourse and voice his own sober opinion toward personal memory and transnational history. Seen from this perspective, Wertebaker, rewriting the marginalized and muted female suppression and questioning the standers-by as conspirators of the violence, is also a transgressor, who examines modern violence politics and predicts that the 21st century will remain haunted by terrorism issues represented by 911 (Wu, 42).

In presenting the painful body in war and violence, Wertebaker and Liu concerns themselves with the individual suffers, injustice, and their memory, impresses the audience of their image as Foucaudian pastorship, which cares more about every individual acts, good or evil, morality rather than the group (Foucault, qtd in Wang, 84). Respectively discussing the tragedies of Procne, Philomele, and Niobe, Wertebaker rationally rethinks on Aristotelian tragedy and reflects on contemporary society through meta-theatrical narrative writing (Wu, 42). Feeling her responsibility to the individual female victims in sexual violence, she adapts the Greek tragedies of Sophocles's *Tereus*, Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, Euripides's *Hippolytus* and *Bacchae* from the perspective of feminist mythology to construct a fresh-new political narrative in order to discover the myths of the truth obscured and distorted by traditional narration in goddess religion (Chen, Zou, 80). The tension between individual history and collective history continues to underlie the debate about Sino-Japanese relationship, which is recontextualized in twenty-first century in Ken Liu's work. Taking the voice of the victim from the grave, Liu invents the technology of time travel to the past to provide testimony to the atrocities by Japanese troop, and aims to protect his individual, his race, his former mother country China to gain the justice they deserve.

The themes of rape, violence, injustice presented in Wertebaker and Liu's works are far more than gender, family, society, but relate to the political ideology regarding to race, cultural and state. The rape is not on the sexual desire of male to female, but the hegemony rapes the truth, the imperial

ideology rapes the history, the Japan government as well as its protector America rapes Chinese nation. In the new era, such violence continues to happen and being ignored intentionally, which enrages the people who longs for peace and justice. In *The Love of the Nightingale* and *The Man Who Ended History: A Documentary*, Wertenbaker and Liu deal with the issues on rape, violence, silence, truth and history.

### **Rape, Violence and Resistance in *The Love of the Nightingale***

*The Love of the Nightingale*, the representative work of Wertenbaker who is one of the most important and prolific women dramatists in contemporary British theatre, rewrites the myth to connect the past and present, endows the past myth with contemporary societal and political meaning, questions the stance of the witnesses that whether they are peepers, standers-by or inflictors? Adapting the myth of two Athenian sisters, Procne loathly marries Tereus, the king of Thrace, and Philomele is abused and muted by her brother-in-law, forcing her to be the victim of incest taboo, morality and patriarchy. "The play weaves together various dramatic devices that yield a story too complex to be reduced to a single theme" (Green 159).

The play is usually taken from the perspective of adaptation. Reading it as a recasting of Phaedra Syndrome, Joe Winston confirms Philomele's straightforwardness, agency on sexuality which is contrasted with the destructive and shameful attitude by the male playwright (513). For Winston, the Phaedra syndrome, in fact, when viewed from the perspective of female experience, is a distortion of social reality; sexually motivated violence and incestuous abuse are largely perpetrated by males against females through the act of rape. Wertenbaker's play immediately identifies the destructive forces within society as emanating not from expressions of female sexuality but from acts of male violence and the warped sexuality it engenders (ibid).

Here, Winston explains the real reason of the rape: it is from the male desire for sexuality, and masculinity, rather than the beauty of the female. From the perspective of Feminist mythology and constructing a political narrative, Chinese scholar Chen Hongwei and Zou Daizhao highlight the hidden discourse beneath the myth, purporting to reveal how the goddesses are muted, silenced, and turned into the wives or harem of the gods, finally reduced to silent others, furthermore, to rewrite the grand theme of human cognition in Greek mythology (83). Though seeing the play as a rewritten masterpiece, Wu Jing focus more on the meta-theater technique, which functions as a play-in-play to promote the plot and a means of self-reflexive to reverse the classical tragedies, thus to realize the rational reflection on tragic art (43).

The role of chorus welcomes much criticism. Laura Monrós Gaspar pays special intention to the role of the chorus and the figure of Echo, achieving to update the function of the classical chorus throughout a discursive itinerary that digs into the twists and turns of the history of the female voice in the arts (1). Following her approach, a play director Sharon L. Green emphasizes the ways in which violence is perpetuated by silence, the fe/male chorus seem to lurk in the shadows of the stage, and reiterates its own helplessness in altering the course of action (160). To Green, passive watching, which is contrasted in the play by Philomele's penchant for asking questions, allows violence to continue and its effects to fester, later generating yet more violence and conveys to the audience the danger, perhaps even complicity, of silence in times of war (ibid).

## 1. Rape and Violence

The play begins with a war in Athens and death, which is full of violence, blood, and brutalization. Procne is married Tereus as a tribute, far away from home and a stranger, an outsider in Thrace, thus asks for the companion of her sister, Philomele. During the journey, Tereus possesses Philomele by violence. Wertebaker uses three different techniques to deduce the rape: off-stage, metaphor and play in the play by the big dolls. Though differ in the methods, the common of them is to convey the pain and suffer of female bodies (Shih 160). The first rape scene is offstage where Niobe narrates while Philomele screams, rendering the helplessness, fear, resistance and pain generated in the rape. The scene after Tereus cutting Philomele's tongue with a knife revives the sexual violence before, the knife intrudes Philomele's mouth and causes it bleeding, falling into the substitute signifier of the penis, and the blood symbols the wound and agony of female body (ibid). In the last scene where Philomele performs her rape and being silenced, the blood cloth forces the audience fully immersed in the violence and harm done in the realities. Because there is no actual physical rape on stage, the sexual pleasure or pleasure that might arise from the rape scene is removed. It is because focusing on the damage in violence that the audience gaze and care about the victim rather than identify the perpetrator. As a result, these rape scenes manage to escape the prying eyes, refusing to satisfy the fantasies or fetishes of sexual violence (ibid).

According to Susan Brownmiller, "rape became not only a male prerogative, but man's basic weapon of force against woman, the principal agent of his will and her fear." (14) Despite physical protestations and struggle, men's forcible entry into women's body, became the "vehicle of his victorious conquest over her being, the ultimate test of his superior strength, the triumph of his manhood" (ibid). During wartime, everything happens, rape is only a incidental enactment, thus an unfortunate but inevitable consequence of war. However, rape is a way to show men's contempt toward women, further prove masculinity and newly won superiority. "In the name of victory and the power of the gun, war provides men with a tacit license to rape. In the act and in the excuse, rape in war reveals the male psyche in its boldest form, without the veneer of 'chivalry' or civilization" (Brownmiller, 33). In Niobe's monologue in Scene Thirteen, not only Philomele's raping is indirectly told, but also her own experience. Knowing these things coming for weeks, Niobe has witnessed many cases like this when her island is conquered. "Too tense. More brutal." (Wertebaker 330) Men force themselves into women's body, force female to accept the discipline and control of the phallus ideology. Women is the object to be conquered, a symbol of the soldier's superiority and masculinity.

Generally, it is the winning side that does the raping. Two specific reasons, one pragmatic and one psychologic can be used to illustrate the reasons, and neither has much to do with the nobility of losers or with the moral superiority of an heroic defense. First, a victorious army marches through the defeated people's territory, and thus it is obvious that if there is any raping to be done, it will be done on the bodies of the defeated enemy's women. Second, rape is the act of a conqueror. This is more than a truism. It helps explain why men continue to rape in war (Brownmiller, 35).

Based on such logic, Tereus's possession of Philomele, Niobe and her female civilians' being assaulted, demonstrate the resurgence of Athens's possible defeat if without Thrace's aid, it is a medal for the triumphant country, men prevail over women, masculinity over femininity. When a victorious army rapes, the sheer intoxication of the triumph is only part of the act and the rape may be viewed as part of a recognizable pattern of national terror and subjugation (ibid, 37). As pointed out by Brownmiller, "rape in warfare has a military effect as well as an impulse", and the effect is "indubitably one of intimidation and demoralization for the victims' side " (38). Niobe's monologue connects the

particular act of violence against Philomele with a larger societal phenomenon: the way in which women become the 'booty' of war. Her monologue and presence in this play, allows the author and director to refocus the lens of inquiry from rape as only an individual act of violence, to sexual violence as an inevitable byproduct of political violence (Green 161).

The male violence against women is further expanded by Wertebaker into the conflict between Self and Other, exposing the consequence of Western discrimination and exclusion of its Other (Shih 151). The opposition between Self and Other in war is the dynamic of killing and raping. The difference between Self and Other is more than gender, but racial, cultural and political. From the beginning, Tereus rejects the philosophical culture of Athens, adores military and power. Throughout the play, violence continues to happen. Athens at war, Tereus demanding Procne, the army of Thrace "had become expensive, rude, rowdy" (Wertebaker 297), six Athenian soldiers being sent to accompany Philomele and disappearing, Tereus killing the captain, Tereus sexually assaulting Philomele, Niobe being raped and her country taken, Tereus cutting out Philomele's tongue, Tereus imprisoning Philomele as "caged bird" (ibid 338), performance of Philomele being rape and silenced, Philomele killing Itys, Tereus revenging Procne and Philomele. The female body and the weak countries share the same destiny: being raped and trod on. Therefore, Wertebaker deftly relates the personal rape to the political repression, which is the most distinguished feature of the rewritten myth (Shih 158).

## 2. Silence, and Chorus

Philomele utters her questions on the origins of the violence and is passively muted, while Niobe chooses to be silent after internalizing the patriarchal ideology. She knows what will happen but never tells Philomele. To her, power is something women can not resist, so women should be obedient and accept what comes to her, just like the old Lear, who embraces the total resignation and discovers that a human being can accept an enormous lot and survive it, and whom Edward Bond greatly opposes to. "The shame" (Wertebaker 330) is used by Niobe to refer to Philomele's lost her innocence, implying the imposed sense of shame caused by rape becomes an effective method to make the women suffer, suppressed and keep silent. When asked to wash Philomele, Niobe asks her not "be so mighty", she is nothing but another victim, what she has to do know is grovel and keep low (ibid, 334). As such, Niobe represents the kind of women who accept the opinion, norms and moral codes as a whole without any thinking.

The dual presence of the chorus in the play is visible proof of Wertebaker's positioning as a link between the two ends of the history of theatre: antiquity and today (Gaspar 1). There's no denying the fact that the chorus do not exert its functions as the objective media to show what happens and tell the truth. When Tereus wonders at Philomele's beauty, the male chorus confine their role as observer, "journalists of an antique world, putting horror into words, unable to stop the events" will soon be recorded (ibid, 308). Acting the role of journalists, the male chorus establish the link between the hero Tereus and the audience, although they remain outside of the development of the plot of the play, functioning as a voyeur of the private tragedy of Tereus and Philomele and the spokesperson of their actions in the public sphere (Gaspar 3). Then, they question what is a myth and redefine it as the "oblique image of an unwanted truth, reverberating through time" (ibid, 315), echoing the adaptation of the Greek myth in new context. The fact hidden behind the myth is that rape has been used as a weapon by the patriarchal society, hegemonism and power politics. Tracing back to the ancient Greek, *Nightingale* historilizes the theme of rape, manifesting the cruelty and

damage to individual, family, culture and nation, and such violence stems from a culture that embraces war, silences any doubt, difference and criticism (Roth 50).

When Tereus kills the captain, the male chorus carry the body off and declares they see nothing, saying nothing about the crime about murder, fully submit themselves to the rule of power. The crime should be their news headlines, instead, they speak about life, destiny, war and peace (Gaspar 3). Consequently, they represents the "discourse of History in recalling the return of the heroes without giving voice to the parallel sub-stories that retell the myths from the archives" (ibid). Watching as a peeper of the tragedy, the male chorus let the violence happen, becoming the complicit of the violence. In doing so, Wertenbaker forces the audience to question themselves whether they are indifferent, silent and submissive onlookers, or whether the questioning and revealing witnesses in the face of sexual violence. "The aggregate implication of such incidents that are repeated throughout the play is that looking the other way and not asking questions allows violence to continue and its effects to fester, later generating yet more violence" (Green 160). When the soldier rapes Cordelia and causes the miscarriage, she rebels the present violence by means of violence, rules the country by violence and fosters potential violence against herself. Therefore, it is not only the perpetrator who is responsible for rape, but also the society that allows it to occur (Gipson-King 228). Though the male voice overwhelms the female ones, the male chorus are also the words that unveil, in the topicalisation of their discourse, the weaknesses of the traditional ways of telling stories and emphasis the need to recover other silenced experiences that still remain concealed in human past (Gaspar 3).

What backs the male chorus is Tereus's hegemonic discourse, which self-justifies his action in the name of protector, moralist, king and authority, but in fact he is a profiteer, liar, rapist, and loser. King Lear justifies his fall in the name of country's safety and citizens' freedom, Cordelia justifies her rule in the name of moral, societal and political stance, while Tereus weakly justifies himself in the name of phallus, in fact, a lack.

Female chorus is completely different from the male chorus, they predict what will happen, discover the truth, state the contemporary gender issues, racism, but they can not communicate with others thus fall into the trap of no one will listen, albeit not like Niobe chooses to "be quiet now, very quiet" (Wertenbaker 315). Complementing Procne's experiences and reinserting her story from the female chorus, Laura Monrós Gaspar believes that it is not only on the search of a new language of the feminine that Wertenbaker focuses the representation of the duality of the ancient and the modern world, but also by exhibiting two different ways of approaching antiquity, and ultimately history (3). To Gaspar, the figure of Echo is the epitome of the presence of the ancient world, modern drama and women in the play (4). The fragmentation of her discourse and the non-representation of her body have been transformed into positive signs of identity, hence, Echo is the mythic woman able to speaker her own voice, truth and experience (6-9).

### 3. Resistance and Myth

Distinctive from Niobe's total subordination, Philomele speaks that she will never be silent and asks Tereus to explain the cause of the rape. She questions that female body is bleeding, spirit ripped open, why the women is the cause? Using consecutive interrogative sentences begin with "Did you tell her", Philomele targets Tereus who is nothing inside, only full when filled with violence. Tereus is an unworthy king, unable to lead the army, to rule the country and she must let the women and men of Thrace know the truth (Wertenbaker 335-337). All of these shows that Philomele is a brave woman

who can disclose the truth and ask for justice, which makes her rather than a victim, but a subject with courage to unite more suffering female.

Though being cut the tongue, she manages to make Tereus's violence public in the Bacchae. The setting of Bacchae is the most important symbol of the breakthrough of the patriarchal cultural limitations, which coincides with men's oppression onto women through the spatial confinement (Chen, Hu 54). In this way, she, her sister and more women are linked together to question the class and order system constructed by the patriarchy, to resist the oppression and violence against women, and form a form of collective resistance. In short, she turns her own tragedy into a political event, thus rape in war becomes a military act, and a political issue (Shih 160). Here, Philomele uses the speaking silence to construct a ritual poetic discourse full of metaphors, furthermore, the the ritual is a kind of cultural memory to represent the past and the cultural collective unconsciousness (Chen, Zou 85). As the epitome of female discourse, the truth of silence revealed in Philomele's puppet performance confronts the lies lying in Tereus's power discourse through the narration of meta-language (ibid).

The nightingale starts to sing when Itys asks "what is right" (Wertenbaker 354), it can be said that Philomele finally breaks free from the captivity of Tereus's discourse and recovers her lost voice (Chen, Zou 86). But it's a pity that her voice utters no useful answers, aesthetically beautiful but devoid of all rational or moral content (Winston 518). Confronted with such dilemma, a series of effective measures should be taken to enable the female, the suppressed to get their real voice. For one thing, the form of self-sacrifice to seek revenge and justice should be avoided because violence generates more violence. For another, more people should be involved to take action rather than being the onlookers. Rewriting the marginalized and muted female suppression and questioning the standers-by as conspirators of the violence, Wertenbaker is a transgressor, who discusses how the female get the right of discourse, how to define identity and establish self-consciousness and subjectivity, voices the deepest desire of the female suffering violence everywhere. In the current political context, *Nightingale's* searing, intertwined critique of tyranny, sexual violence, and silence gives the community much to contemplate (Green 161).

### Conclusion

When Wertenbaker herself describes her heritage, she privileges the absence of fixity. Plurality is the very point from which she writes, and she glosses her culturally mixed roots (qtd. in Carlson 267). By retelling the Greek myth in new era, Wertenbaker endows the female certain agency to utter their desire for sexuality, doubts on the imposed ideology, resist and revenge for the injustice and pain. Though there is no easy answers, and sadness permeates, there are still twilight for the brightness. Two soldiers dare to question Tereus why they have to stay for nothing, it implies that Philomele's character has been inherited and leaves hope. Starting questioning, the answer is on the way. Keep asking and digging, the soldiers will find the truth just like Gus.

### Atrocity, Parrhesia, and History in *The Man Who Ended History: A Documentary*

A playwright might have to "remake tragedy in the context of world events more tragic than any stage can seemingly record" (Williams, qtd in Tan 14). A case of this point is the post-Holocaust literature regarding to the Nazism, genocide and Auschwitz Concentration Camp, which arises much sympathy, pity and anger international. Other cases are 1940 Katyn Events, in which more than 22,000 people were killed are Russia claims to be responsible for it; 1994 Rwandan Genocide, in which 0.8 to 1 million people were slaughtered. All of the three atrocities are publicly known and get their justice,

however, how many people in the world know what happens to Chinese people during World War II? 1937 Nanjing Massacre may be mentioned sometimes, but few public apologies from Japanese government can be heard. The brave female author Iris Chang, who wrote *The Rape of Nanking*, was battered by criticism and threatened day and night, eventually, she finished her life with fear. Whereas, history will never be forgotten, and the truth can not be hidden and denied. Touched by Chang's book and her suicide, Chinese American author Ken Liu decides to reveal another atrocity done by Japanese Unit 731 in Northeast China, revealing the violence West and Japan unknown or reluctant to acknowledge, and the wrong perceptions towards the credibility of the atrocity.

*The Man Who Ended History: A Documentary* (2011) tells the story of a Chinese American historian Dr Evan Wei, and his wife, a Japanese American physicist Dr Akemi Kirino, use the Kirino Process for time travel to expose the horrific war crimes committed during World War II by Unit 731 of the Imperial Japanese Army. As a biological and chemical warfare research and development medical group, Unit 731 covertly undertook lethal human experimentation, within a sprawling complex located in the Pingfang district, Manchuria, Harbin in northeast China, then part of the puppet regime of the Japanese Empire. In a form of scientifically recognizable to people, the scientific technology of travelling back to the past via memory, which is not to "create a wholly alternate reality, but to make our reality, and our recent past, more acute" (Tan 3), is not the center, but the testimony and the debate arose. Much of the novella focuses on the geopolitical fallout resulting from the scientists' methodologies, "mirroring and magnifying the chillingly familiar ways in which memory, history, and historiography have played out - and will continue to play out - in response to the traumas of our world" (ibid).

Ken Liu's work needs more attention. Much criticism about Ken Liu's work centers on his role as translator of *The Three-Body Problem*, and *Folding Beijing*, the Hugo Awards works. However, Ken Liu himself is an excellent sci-fi writer who has won the Hugo and Nebula Awards. Some Chinese scholars examine his "Future Trilogy" and address on the heated theme of embodiment and disembodiment (see Xiao Wei 2019; Li Fangming and Xia Zhiqiang, 2021). Yuan Peili (2016), Liu Hanbo (2016) and Zhen Zongbo (2019) focus on Chinese image in Liu's representative works, know as *Silk Punk*, touching upon the combination of classical aesthetics and scientific spirit. Scholar Huo Shengya (2018) notices *Documentary* and puts forward the notion that only by acknowledging history can people grasp the future (4). Berny Tan, using an analogy between the black hole and the time travel to stress the unseen, unacknowledged, buried past and memory, questions how to deal with the cruelty and injustice and approach truth and redemption (Tan 4). Zhang Zhehui (2020) and Xu Gang (2021) highlight Dr. Wei's role of intellect to stress the duty of Said's secular critic and exiling intellectual concept and their confrontation with the Western discourse. What calls for special attention is that the start point for Zhang is post-colonial criticism, while Xu calls for the heterogeneous space created for the possible conversation between fiction and reality (60).

Recovering memories like the victims in Pingfang district, the Asian Auschwitz, where "Japanese army doctors directly killed thousands of Chinese and Allied prisoners through medical and weapons experiments, vivisections, amputations, and other systematic methods of torture. At the end of the War, the retreating Japanese army killed all remaining prisoners and burned the complex to the ground [...] There were no survivors." (Liu 117) in the historical record entails different processes of knowledge archeology. However, affirming their presence can help people disrupt inherited fictions and violent erasures that have been crucial in sustaining discourses of the subaltern, the silenced dead and forever victims. Historicizing their erasures from the grave and the denialists'

discourse means a duty, a thing must do and has to do for Dr. Wei, the incarnation of Iris Chang and Ken Liu. The long buried past and injustice calls for a narration. If there is a narration, there is also a narrator who “contaminates the historical representation, setting it within the frame determined by his or her own subjective, epochal and ideological position” (Giacobazzi 114), which can be represented by the Japanese ambassador and government, indifferent on-lookers, denialist, and General MacArthur, the supreme commander of the Allied forces, granted all members of Unit 731 immunity from war crimes prosecution in order to get the data from their experiments and to keep the data away from the Soviet Union. However, the parrhesia must be spoke, which has been a key to the living of a philosophical life since ancient Greek and Roma. The ancient thinkers concerned themselves not just with truth-telling but also with the true life (Foucault, 2008: 315), and did not limit their work to the classroom, for their goal was to improve people's souls (Stone 148). Judged by this sense, Dr. Wei is Foucauldian parrhesiaste: frankness, truth, danger, criticism and duty which Foucault highlights to differentiate moral truth-telling from other forms of communication (Foucault, 2001: 12).

### 1. Memory and Violence

The title of the fiction *The Man Who Ended History: A Documentary* contains two part, the first is a hyperbolic declaration that a man can end the history, the second is a deliberate reference to a nonfictional medium that examines and records some aspect of reality. This juxtaposition is immediately reaffirmed by Liu's narrative structure: the entire story is written as a transcript of a documentary film (Tan 4). Stating the documentary is a collaboration between “Remembrance Films HK Ltd.” and “Yurushi Studios” in which yurushi (許し) is Japanese for forgiveness, and a “Heraclitus Twice Production”, the documentary is a meta-documentary full of metaphors. Referring to pre-Socratic Greek philosopher Heraclitus's famous statement “No man steps in the same river twice”, the fiction suggests that time travel, or any return to history, is a return to the same river, its same pain and trauma (ibid 5). On the other hand, the political climate setting is “banned by the Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China and is released under strong protest from the government of Japan” (Liu 115), which sets up the expectation, even before the introduction of the specific history of Unit 731, that the narrative will examine a contested history related to World War II, given the extant tensions between Japan and China regarding the events of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1931-1945) (Tan 5). The year is identified as an indeterminate near future within the twenty-first century “20XX”, rendering the audience to believe that the story proposes a possible future reality; perhaps it is a cautionary tale (ibid). It is within such a narrative structure, where the historical fact and fictional elements are repeatedly overlapping that the readers encounter the brutal realities of Unit 731.

Importing the form of a documentary, the novella constructs and unfolds a complicated archive, comprised of scenes ranging from memory of Dr. Kirino, interviews, opinions, debates and confessions. As pointed out by Tan, only a quarter involve a direct description of Unit 731 experiments, the rest demonstrate how the surfacing of this historical trauma intersects with, and has ramifications for, the personal, political, historiographical (7). To revive the memory of the past is to maintain a nation's history, “the moments of violence, the victimization of women, the actions and experiences of men, and the trauma produced as a consequence” (Saikia 275) must be probed into. Lillian C. Chang-Wyeth, who is the offspring of the victim, takes her part in re-actualized the memory,

first by picking a name of Changyi, 长忆(long remembrance) to remember her aunt, whose name is the same pronunciation 畅怡(smooth happiness), contributing to receive and extend the victim's life.

Later, she goes back to the past to witness the crimes Unit 731 has done to her aunt, and testifies before US Congressional Subcommittee, which makes personal experience into a public space and a step closer to the truth. Just like Philomele manipulates the dolls to tell the violence in Bacchea, Lillian successfully breaks the siege, ensuring the memory persists as lived experience, not just in the mind of individual, but in a larger communal understanding of Unit 731, facilitated by an official state acknowledgement of the victims (Tan 13) - in 1981, "the Japanese author Morimura Seiichi published *The Devil's Gluttony*, which was the first Japanese publication ever to talk about the history of Unit 731" (Liu 130).

"Language shows clearly that memory is not an instrument for exploring the past, but its theatre. It is the medium of past experience, as the ground is the medium in which dead cities lie interred." (Benjamin 314) During the Subcommittee, Lillian narrates what she sees in the travel to the past. Shiro Yamagata, a former member of Unit 731, confesses his crimes as a first-hand material in an interview, verifying what Lillian recollects. "By pivoting between victim (by proxy) and perpetrator, two witness perspectives from seemingly opposing sides of that history become mutually reinforcing. *The Man Who Ended History* is, if not a true documentary, then at very least a surrogate for one" (Tan 6). Lillian thinks her aunt may serve as a sex slave for the Japanese soldiers and goes back to January 6, 1941, when the Chinese prisoners are under frozen experiment with an aim to "study the effects of frostbite and extreme temperatures on the human body" (Liu 133). the prisoners are called maruta (丸木), wood logs (ibid 132), which demonstrates that Japanese view prisoners not as human, but an object to discover, a tool to use. Micheal Foucault put forwards the notion of biopower, in which the power is not to slaughter life, but to keep life alive, raise the value of life, to control incidents, defects and diseases. Its purpose is to eliminate disease, to establish medical knowledge and public health, in general, it is responsible for life (Wang, 243). however, the genocide in Nazism purposefully misuses this idea to kill other races in order to let their own race survive. The distinction between Self and Other are expanded to such an extreme. Within such framework, Japanese troops uses 'inferior' race to run the amputations, vivisection, and biological weapons. Once verify the practicability, the method will be used to better treat the Japanese army, leaving the civilians die.

Lillian supposes her aunt of one of the Comforting Women is correct, as rape is "a kind of sex education" (Liu 134) for Unit 731, the doctors even takes turns "raping the women and girls", one rapes woman on the operating table and others watch and laughs, or forces Chinese men rape Chinese woman as entertainment (ibid, 133-134). As a humiliating method, a kind of sex education, a means to study syphilis, rape has been widely used on the victorious side. Pregnant, but still be vivisected without use of anesthesia, Lillian's aunt entreats the doctors not to hurt her child, however, the baby's brain maybe dissected by Kirino's grandfather, who can write poetic letter in beautiful calligraphy (ibid, 163). The intimate recollections of Dr Kirino forms the emotional core of the documentary, creating the narrative not from the position of the victor, but from the margins of that silenced history (Tan 14). Here, Liu sets up a paradox: a doting husband, father, grandfather, a man of literary learning, can also be a war criminal; one who exudes a deep love for his family, can also retract that humanity in the cruel treatment of his victims (Tan 14). Human is capable for evil and morality,

kindness and cruelty. In declaring that "There are no monsters. The monster is us." (Liu 164), Liu indeed warns that human beings is "at one and the same time human and monster, and we cannot so easily compartmentalise those parts of ourselves and of humanity at large" (Tan 15).

Juxtaposing victims' personal memories and Japanese survivor's confession, Liu aims to reveal the atrocity done to the Chinese people, eliminate ethnocentrism, racism, unilateralism and hegemony, keep history in mind and justify the names of innocent humans who have been persecuted, safeguard world peace, and build a community with a shared future for mankind (Zhang 53).

## 2. Parrhesiaste and Denialist

Dr. Evan Wei, a Chinese-American historian specializing in Classical Japan, is "determined to make the world focus on the suffering of the victims of Unit 731" (Liu 55). He feels strongly guilty for the unknown past, responsible to voice the suffering, to bring justice to the victim. He must speak the parrhesia frankly and firmly. In "telling it like it is", Foucault describes, "the speaker is supposed to give a complete and exact account of what he has in mind so that the audience is able to comprehend exactly what the speaker thinks" (2001: 12). The unmediated frankness of the truth-teller, compared to the prophet's mediated, representative speech, gives the parrhesiastes moral authority and culpability (Stone 149). Dr. Wei speaks for the persecuted people and tries to eliminate the cultural hegemony on the victims by sending their relatives back.

As a parrhesiastes, Dr. Wei "says what is true because he knows that it is true; and he knows that it is true because it really is true ... his opinion is also the truth ... there is always an exact coincidence between belief and truth" (Foucault, 2001: 14). Trying to move beyond the boundaries of nation-states, Wei allows people around the world to empathize with the victims, to condemn the perpetrators, to affirm the universal humanity. Refusing Chinese government's monitor and American sponsorship, Dr. Wei, who embodies the good qualities that a public intellectual should have distances himself from various parties, ensures his independence and criticism are not influenced by any interest groups (Xu 60). However, the truth puts the truth-teller in some kind of danger: experiments are banned by US, fired by university, threatened by phone calls, being called "tools of propaganda" by his teacher. "No risk, no parrhesia" (Stone 150). After keeping low in the countryside, Dr. Wei returns to keep his voice heard. The truth-teller "takes a risk. He risks the relationship that he has with the one whom he addresses. In telling the truth, far from establishing a positive line of common knowledge, heritage, affiliation, recognition, and friendship, he can, to the contrary, provoke anger" (Foucault, 2009: 24). Truth-telling requires stepping outside of the alleged "shared values" held by the interlocutor. This "stepping outside" will be the grounds for the critical dimension of parrhesia (Stone 150).

It is not his aim or goal to humiliate Japan, Wei's commitment is to the victims and their memory, not theatre. What he is asking for is Japan to acknowledge the truth of what happened at Pingfang. He wants to focus on specifics, and acknowledgment of specifics, not empty platitudes. Indeed, in a moral sense, the truth is something that the hearer does not like. In other words, parrhesia must have a dimension of criticism and is the opposite of self-interested, cowardly, unhelpful flattery (Stone 151). Dr. Wei speaks the truth with frankness in the face of danger in order to help those for whom violence is the easier solution.

Fully committed to the victims, Dr. Wei confuses why there are so many questions and doubts about the reliability about the great atrocity. Victor P. Lowenson, a denialist, criticizes Wei "has

crossed the line that divides a historian from an activist" (Liu 153), while the supports advocate that "[o]ne of the more tragic aspects of the dispute between China and Japan over history is how much their responses have mirrored each other. Wei's goal was to rescue history from both." (Liu 147) Actually, Wei is a transgressor, who dares to tell the truth, even if doing so is dangerous, and do other intellectuals do not. He deconstructs Ambassador Yoshida's statement that Japan has apologized by pointing out that the "grand and abstract, and they refer to vague and unspecified sufferings. They are apologies only in the most watered-down sense." (ibid 150), what the Ambassador hold is that "the Japanese government's continuing refusal to admit many specific war crimes and to honor and remember the real victims." (ibid) He further reveals the hypocrisy of Japanese government: for more than fifty years the official position was absolute silence regarding Unit 731, even the Unit's existence was not admitted until the 1990s, and the government consistently denied that it had researched or used biological weapons during the War until 2005. In silencing the archives, the government silences the memories, thus denies the existence of the atrocity, ultimately, history.

Japanese Ambassador uses the excuse of war that "perhaps it is possible that some unfortunate things happened" (ibid 151) to skip the cruelty what his race has done, and suspects the time travel is a lie, creating only hallucination, the witness is not reliable to make up a story, thus "stories are not evidence" (ibid). Dr. Wei firmly refutes that "the deniers are committing a fresh crime against the victims of those atrocities: not only would they stand with the torturers and the killers, but they are also engaged in the practice of erasing and silencing the victims from history, to kill them afresh" (ibid). He can not keep silent, just as Foucault claims that parrhesia is the result of a moral decision to tell the truth. "No one forces him to speak, but he feels that it is his duty to do so ... Parrhesia is thus related to freedom and to duty" (2001: 19). The parrhesiastes "risk[s] death to tell the truth instead of reposing in the security of a life where the truth goes unspoken ... he prefers himself as a truth-teller rather than as a living being who is false to himself " (ibid. 17). Dr. Wei is trying to "uncover to the world a great injustice, and yet in the process he seemed to have only stirred up the forces of denial, hate, and silence." (Liu 157) Feeling he has let the victims down, Dr. Wei commits suicide.

As a parrhesiastes, Wei is morally obligated to speak. He must proclaim the truth, again and again, just like preaching. Foucault states that preaching "is still one of the main forms of truth-telling practiced in our society, and it involves the idea that the truth must be told and taught not only to the best members of the society, or to an exclusive group, but to everyone" (2001:120). Entirely different from Wei's asking for truth, the denialists persist in the most detailed thing to deny the existence of the authenticity of the testimony. Liu's narrative reflects not only that the political entities are mutable and cannot merely be defined by their present geographical and legislative boundaries, but also that these political entities might choose to have control over the historical narrative at the expense of the disclosure of truths, even in situations where the truth might be potentially beneficial to them (Tan 9). But the desire to repress and silence historical traumas originates not just from governments, but from layfolks as well (ibid 10). A mixture of indifference or resignation of the past, the impracticality of revisiting such traumas, stigmatization of China, skepticism about the existence of Unit 731, accusations of the confession of the survivor bring shame upon Japan, are shown in the segments of the opinions said by all walks of life. As Tan sums, what is consistent across all these perspectives, regardless of the interviewee's country of origin, is a compulsion to erase, or to find excuses to do so. The truth is painful and difficult and overwhelming;

it is a fragment entangled with numerous other painful and difficult and overwhelming fragments (10).

Liu's exploration of the perpetrator-and-victim framework through Kirino's grandfather's story challenges readers to consider crimes against humanity beyond the paradigm of good and evil. The dynamics of his narrative mirror social divisions in the world today. Throughout history, only Yukio Hatoyama, the 93rd minister, admitted Japan's history of aggression, apologized for Nanjing Massacre, and was denounced by the Japanese people as a "traitor". Considered as a place for the honored, Yasukuni Shrine welcomes much consecration, totally contrasted from the hatred of the Chinese. The personal identity and the more complex network of marriage relationship of the protagonists, Wei and Kirino, are intentionally created to enable them to get rid of extremism and have a cultural vision beyond a single nation (Zhang 55). The mixed identity of Chinese, Japanese and American creates a trio, which makes cultural communication possible, so it is with the elimination of ethnocentrism, racism, unilateralism and hegemonism, which is conducive to safeguarding world peace and building a community of shared future for mankind (Zhang 56).

### Conclusion

Borrowing the form of documentary, Ken Liu aims to retrieve the neglected truth, gain redemption for the silenced victims, and demonstrate how the historical trauma interact with the personal, political, historiographical. Touching upon the 'controversy history', Liu is a transgressor, seeking to be free from hegemonic discourse and encourage the victims and the persons who are pursuing justice. Rewriting the Greek myth and endowing them with new intonations, Wertebaker speaks for the marginalized and muted female, questions the standers-by as conspirators of the violence. In this sense, she is also a transgressor, who examines modern violence politics as Liu. Phelomele, Lillian, doctor of Unit 731, Wei, all make their personal memories heard to the public, uniting sisterhood and the suffered to fight for justice. The authors, Liu and Wertebaker, endowing extraordinary courage to such truth-tellers, are moral parrhesiastes, who insist "the truth has to be said", regardless of the risk. The past and present intermingle with each, conveying the everlasting theme: multicultural interaction makes communication and reconciliation possible and helps to build a community of shared future for mankind.

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