ABSTRACT

PERPETRATORS, RESCUERS, SCAPEGOATS, AND SECONDARY WITNESSES: REPRESENTATIONS OF THE NANJING MASSACRE IN CHINESE AMERICAN LITERATURE

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This research probes into the representations of the Nanjing Massacre in Chinese American literature, in particular Shouhua Qi’s *When the Purple Mountain Burns*, Ha Jin’s *Nanjing Requiem*, Geling Yan’s *The Flowers of War*, and Wing Tek Lum’s *The Nanjing Massacre: Poems*. In light of René Girard’s theories of violence, in particular his ideas of a circle of violence, mimetic desire, sacrificial substitution, and myth as connected with stereotypes of persecution, this research diagnoses the terrors and horrors depicted in the above-mentioned texts and argues that the Nanjing Massacre as represented in Chinese American literature is no ordinary act of war, but sheer violence—violence taking innocent civilians and surrendered soldiers as scapegoats. Focusing on how each text addresses violence through the lens of perpetrators, rescuers, scapegoats, and secondary witnesses, this research concludes that the surge of the Nanjing Massacre texts at the beginning of the twenty-first century is the collective efforts of Chinese American writers, who are concerned about the witnessing crisis of the Nanjing Massacre and wish to reconstruct the forgotten history by drawing a panoramic view of the intensity and scale of violence borne in this catastrophe.
PERPETRATORS, RESCUERS, SCAPEGOATS, AND SECONDARY WITNESSES:
REPRESENTATIONS OF THE NANJING MASSACRE
IN CHINESE AMERICAN LITERATURE

BY

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DEDICATION

To Xitian Liang, my mother and my inspiration
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The Nanjing Massacre, as it involved Japanese invaders killing “more than 260,000 [Chinese] noncombatants”¹ (Chang 4) and raping “20,000–80,000 Chinese women” (Chang 6) in 1937 and 1938 in Nanjing, is also known as the Rape of Nanjing, the Nanjing Slaughter, and the Nanjing Atrocity. A Chinese national trauma during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), the Nanjing Massacre has nevertheless remained an unpopular topic in Chinese American literature until the beginning of the twenty-first century. Prior to then, writers like Maxine Hong Kingston, Amy Tan, and Lisa See used Japan’s invasion of China as the backdrop for their works and alluded to the Japanese atrocities against Chinese civilians in their stories. Maxine Hong Kingston’s The Woman Warrior (1976) is perhaps the earliest Chinese American novel to choose the Japanese invasion of China as its historical background. Kingston uses the Sino-Japanese conflict to address an ethnic problem concerned more with the Chinese than the Japanese. In “Shaman,” one of five memoirs in The Woman Warrior, Kingston attributes Brave Orchid’s final decision to leave China to her witnessing the communal stoning of a mentally deranged woman, whose mad dancing during Japan’s air raid of the village makes her a suspicious “spy for the Japanese” (111). Thus, Kingston’s focus in this anecdote is the unbearable cruelty committed by the villagers who used their compatriots as scapegoats and treated them with barbarism similar to

¹ Chang’s number of 260,000 victims in the Nanjing Massacre is based on the estimation of the International Military Tribunal of the Far East. Other studies suggest the number can be over 300,000. See Iris Chang’s The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 99-104, and Mark Eykholt’s “Aggression, Victimization, and Chinese Historiography of the Massacre,” in Joshua A. Fogel’s The Nanjing Massacre in History and Historiography (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 46-47.
that of the Japanese invaders. Following Kingston, Amy Tan and Lisa See also used Japan’s invasion of China as the backdrop of their novels. Tan in *The Joy Luck Club* (1989), *The Kitchen God’s Wife* (1991), *The Bonesetter’s Daughter* (2001), and *The Opposite of Fate* (2003) and See in *The Shanghai Girls* (2009) write the lives of their characters partially or entirely into the dark period of Japan’s invasion of China and allude to Japanese atrocities, particularly those of indiscriminate killing and raping.²

It was not until the beginning of the twenty-first century that the Nanjing Massacre became a central topic in Chinese American literature, considering the fact that three novels and a collection of poems dealing entirely with the Massacre were published between 2005 and 2012. The interest of Chinese American writers in the Nanjing Massacre has much to do with Iris Chang, whose publication of *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II*³ (1997) spurred the Chinese diaspora writers to represent the Massacre through works of history and literature. At the age of 29, Chang became a legendary Chinese American writer, whose monograph was translated into 15 languages and stayed on the *New York Times* best-seller list for 10 weeks. In her book, Chang expresses not only her fury toward Japanese revisionists’ denial of the Nanjing Massacre but also her deep regret that in the United States the Japanese atrocities committed in Nanjing have never raised adequate attention from the general public. Along with wide acclaim of Chang’s book, which drew an unprecedented world attention to the Nanjing Massacre, there are critical voices as well. In Joshua A. Fogel’s review, *The Rape of Nanking* is

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³ Abbreviated as *The Rape of Nanking* in the rest of the dissertation. Also, Chang uses the Wade-Giles system of Romanization for the pinyin spelling of Nanjing in her book.
criticized as “a very angry book” and Chang as one who was “enraged at the perpetrators of the ‘rape’ of the city and at what she perceives as Japan’s failure to face up to a crime she openly equates to the European Holocaust” (818). However, I believe it is the very anger and regret of Chang that moved the Chinese American writers who felt what Chang had felt and wished to turn their shared anger and regret into literary works addressing the Nanjing Massacre.

Chang’s anger in The Rape of Nanking is not groundless. In her book, she contrasts how Japan dealt with its war crimes differently from Germany. Unlike the Germans who “have incorporated into their postwar political identity the concession that the wartime government itself, not just individual Nazis, was guilty of war crimes,” the Japanese, on levels of government and most social groups and individuals, have refused to acknowledge their crimes in Nanjing (200). Chang cites examples of Japan’s open denial of the Nanjing Massacre, in particular, Shintarō Ishihara, a Japanese politician, governor of Tokyo from 1999 to 2012, and author of The Japan That Can Say No (1991). Ishihara constantly denies the Nanjing Massacre, insisting that the Nanjing Massacre “is a story made up by the Chinese. It has tarnished the image of Japan, but it is a lie” (qtd. in Chang 201). Joining Ishihara, the Japanese ultranationalists maintain that Japan “bears no responsibility for the wholesale murder of civilians anywhere during the [Second World] [W]ar” but “ended up as the ultimate victim at Hiroshima and Nagasaki” (201). The Japanese revisionists’ bold denial of the Nanjing Massacre enraged Chang, who subtitled the tenth chapter of her book “The Forgotten Holocaust: A Second Rape.” In this chapter, she refers to the sad reality that the Nanjing Massacre, comparable to the Holocaust, is undergoing “a second rape” when the Japanese perpetrators of the Massacre remain silent about their mass violence in Nanjing and when the Japanese ultranationalists refuse to acknowledge that the
Massacre indeed happened (199).

Chang also expresses her deep regret that what happened in the Nanjing Massacre remains unknown to “most Americans—children and adults alike, including highly educated adults” (199). Addressing the lack of American scholarly attention to the Nanjing Massacre, Chang writes:

Delving deeper into the history of the [Nanjing] massacre, I learned that the raw source material for such a book had always existed and was available in the United States. American missionaries, journalists, and military officers had all recorded for posterity in diaries, films, and photographs their own views of the event. Why had no other American author or scholar exploited this rich lode of primary source material to write a nonfiction book or even a dissertation exclusively devoted to the massacre? (11)

Chang’s call for immediate and close attention to the Japanese revisionists’ denial of the Nanjing Massacre, along with her hope that the truth of this Chinese national trauma would be known to the general public, was enthusiastically answered by a group of Chinese diaspora writers who shared Chang’s anxiety about the forgotten atrocities. Following Chang’s tragic suicide in 2004 after a nervous breakdown, some Chinese American writers started addressing the Nanjing Massacre in literature. By acknowledging Chang as an inspiration and *The Rape of Nanking* as a documentary source, they began to reconstruct the tragic event so as to bring the forgotten history back to the conscience of the American public.4

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In 2005, Shouhua Qi, a native of Nanjing who came to the United States in 1989, published *When the Purple Mountain Burns*, the first Chinese American historical novel to portray the hellish lives of the Nanjing people the day before and the six days after the fall of Nanjing. Men and women, old and young, soldiers and civilians, hundreds of thousands of Chinese and a dozen foreigners, were caught up as hapless prey to be slaughtered, raped, burned, and humiliated by the Japanese military officers and soldiers. With parallel depictions of the Chinese, the Japanese, and the foreigners, the novel probes into the souls of victims, perpetrators, and rescuers at this atrocious time in human history. Following Qi, Ha Jin’s *Nanjing Requiem* (2011), Geling Yan’s *The Flowers of War* (2012), which is Nicky Harman’s English translation of Yan’s Chinese novel *Jinling Shisan Chai* (2006), and Wing Tek Lum’s *The Nanjing Massacre: Poems* (2012), all address the Massacre, each with different emphases on their representations of the horrifying atrocities committed by Japanese invaders.

Unfortunately, the above-mentioned texts dealing with the terrors and horrors of the Nanjing Massacre have not drawn much attention from American scholars and critics. Journal articles and critical reviews on these texts are rare. Up till November 16, 2016, my search of English publications on the four above-mentioned texts on several popular online databases yielded very limited findings. I have two relevant search results from the MLA International Bibliography; one is an article titled “Author/Subaltern Border Crossing: Recuperating Subaltern Subjectivity in *The Flowers of War*” by Zhao Tingting, and the other is a dissertation titled “Blood Wings: Feeling War in the Twenty-First Century” by Brenda Sanfilippo, who includes Ha Jin’s *Nanjing Requiem* as one of the three texts in her dissertation. I have another relevant search result from Historical Abstracts: Te-hsing Shan’s journal article titled “Sublimating History into
Literature: Reading Ha Jin’s *Nanjing Requiem.*” I have no relevant search results from JSTOR or Project Muse, two of my most frequently searched online databases for full texts of journal articles and critical reviews on literature.

The lack of adequate scholarly attention to both the history and the literature of the Nanjing Massacre in America is a most important reason that I undertook a dissertation on Chinese American writers’ representations of this tragedy. In addition to participating in the remembrance of the Massacre, I hope my research on these Nanjing Massacre texts can promote more scholarly interest in probing these texts as unremitting efforts by Chinese American writers, whose criticism of the violent nature of the Nanjing Massacre is indeed an expression of their sincere wish for peaceful solutions to international conflicts. After reading and rereading *When the Purple Mountain Burns,* *Nanjing Requiem,* *The Flowers of War,* and *The Nanjing Massacre: Poems,* I find that these texts, though dealing with a past Japanese invasion of China, reveal human greed, atrocity, ruthlessness, and bigotry similar to those displayed in contemporary international wars and conflicts. Filled with episodes of violence against civilians; indiscriminate mass killing for military strategy; zero tolerance for religious, cultural, and social differences; and hatred of other people in the name of nationalism, these texts not only help readers learn about atrocities during the fall of Nanjing but also provoke their deeper thoughts on practical solutions that may stop human brutalities now and in the future. Focusing on the depiction of persecution and suffering, these texts connect with other American literature addressing human terror and violence.

In this dissertation, I focus on depicting how the Nanjing Massacre is represented in Chinese American literature. The primary texts are *When the Purple Mountain Burns,* *Nanjing
*Requiem*, *The Flowers of War*, and *The Nanjing Massacre: Poems*, which were the extant texts dealing entirely with the Nanjing Massacre at the time I drafted my prospectus in 2014. As the primary lens for analyzing these four texts center on human terror and violence, I rely on René Girard’s theories of violence, in particular his ideas of a circle of violence, mimetic desire, sacrificial substitution, and myth as connected with stereotypes of persecution. By diagnosing the conflicts and confrontations depicted in each text, I argue that the Nanjing Massacre as represented in Chinese American literature is no ordinary act of war, but sheer violence—violence taking innocent civilians and surrendered soldiers as scapegoats.

To begin with, Girard believes that there exists a circle of violence. When the first act of killing occurs, the violence will lead to an inevitable consequence of revenge, as only new violence of killing the killer will satisfy the desire of the avenger. Therefore, in due time, the violence chain accelerates the blood feud into criminality on a greater scale and intensity. When violence initiates vengeance, which later becomes an “interminable, infinitely repetitive process,” it can “involve the whole social body” and “initiate a chain reaction whose consequences will quickly prove fatal to any society of modest size” (*Violence and the Sacred* 15).

Girard’s ideas of a circle of violence illustrates why texts of the Nanjing Massacre depict Nanjing as an earthly hell after the Japanese soldiers invade the city. In *When the Purple Mountain Burns*, Qi weaves episodes of Japanese soldiers killing, raping, looting, burning, and abducting to reveal the intensity and scale of their violence, highlighting the fact that the Japanese soldiers’ perpetual desire for indiscriminate killing is indeed their revenge on the Chinese who had fought fiercely and thwarted Japan’s ambition to conquer China within three
months\(^5\) (64-71). In *Nanjing Requiem*, Jin includes a Japanese colonel’s explanation of his soldiers’ unruliness as “vengeance,” since “the soldiers had lost many comrades in the battle on Purple Mountain” (85). Worse than indiscriminate killing are episodes where the Japanese soldiers take revenge on their POWs by torturing them in the most brutal and humiliating way. In *The Flowers of War*, Yan describes how a Japanese soldier “kick[ed] Wang Pusheng in the belly,” when Wang, a Chinese teenage recruit, was in great agony of dying from a fatal wound (191). In *The Nanjing Massacre: Poems*, Lum, in “A Real Soldier,” claims in the voice of a Japanese soldier that he is not bothered in the least by “tak[ing] his crap” above the face of a fatally injured Chinese soldier, assuming the other would do the same in his position (44).

Being a primary source of the Nanjing Massacre texts, Chang’s *The Rape of Nanking* also suggests explicitly that the tragedy can be attributed partly to vengeance evolving from the historical conflicts between China and Japan. In the 1880s, Japan’s clash with China caused by its invasion of Korea, a dependent state under the protection of China, led to the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and changed the two nations from peaceful coexistence to hostility. Also, Japan saw its suffering from the “most disastrous economic crisis” in the 1920s and the 1930s as a primary result of “an international conspiracy,” including boycotts of Japanese goods by Westerners and Chinese. This intensified Japanese hatred of and retaliation against the Chinese (24-25). Most important of all, Japan’s ambition to “conquer all of mainland China within three months,” a boast by its military leaders during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), was completely shattered in its attempt to take Shanghai, which was adamantly defended by the Chinese, a “primitive people, illiterate in military science and poorly trained” (33-34),

who nevertheless bravely fought their enemies for five months. As a result, Japan’s accumulated humiliation was transformed into the savage vengeance on the Chinese people perpetrated in Nanjing.

Girard’s concept of the circle of violence also offers an explanation of why the Nanjing Massacre texts never describe the Safety Zone as a safe shelter for Chinese refugees. These places, working as what Girard considers compensatory measures, cannot stop but only curb the violence of the Japanese perpetrators by checking the Chinese refugees’ impulse or attempt at revenge, a means of interrupting the violence circle on the part of the refugees. A conversation between John Rabe and Minnie Vautrin, two rescuers working for the Nanjing International Safety Zone, illustrates their concern about not being able to stop the Chinese refugees from taking revenge on their perpetrators:

“My worst fear,” Rabe told us, “is that if one Chinese man in the Safety Zone kills a Japanese soldier for violating his wife or daughter, then the entire neutral district will be bathed in blood. That would end all our relief efforts.”

“I’m worried about that too,” Minnie agreed. (Nanjing Requiem 81)

This explains why, in addition to providing food and shelter, the rescuers working at the Safety Zone had to make great efforts to appease the anger of the Chinese refugees. This also explains why these rescuers, despite their kind intention and hard work to help the refugees, suffered from an unspeakable guilt in seeing themselves as partially responsible for the sufferings and deaths of the Chinese refugees within the Safety Zone.

Then Girard’s ideas of mimetic desire explain why the four texts portray the Japanese soldiers as wild creatures insatiable with violent killing, raping, looting, burning, and abducting. Unlike modern theorists who believe a person is capable of either “know[ing] what he wants” or “possess[ing] an ‘unconscious’ that knows for him,” Girard argues that people know little of
what they want and often desire qualities that they themselves “[lack] and which some other person seems to possess” (Violence and the Sacred 146). Therefore, by imitating the desire of someone with the most acclaimed social qualities—however morally reprehensible those qualities might be—a person may become a disciple willing to follow the ideal model within the society.

The Nanjing Massacre texts depict Japanese soldiers as motivated to surpass others by committing more violence. When the will to conquer via killing and raping was widely accepted as a sign of an ideal manhood during the fall of Nanjing, the dividing line between heroism and violence blurred. Episodes like the incitement to violent killing by the “contest to cut down a hundred” between two Japanese second lieutenants in When the Purple Mountain Burns (70-71) and four Japanese soldiers’ “prod[ding]” a hungry Chinese boy and “cracking up” when “one of them pulled out his dick and started peeing into the boy’s mouth” in Nanjing Requiem (190) illustrate how mimetic desire among the Japanese soldiers devolves into brutal violence.

Also, Girard’s ideas of sacrificial substitution explain the scapegoat scheme depicted in the Nanjing Massacre texts. To Girard, as violence leads to vengeance and vengeance continues to lead to interminable violence, it is of crucial importance to quell violence within the community and to prevent the eruption of further conflicts. To curb violence, Girard points out that “violence is not to be denied, but it can be diverted to another object, something it can sink its teeth into,” and thus there appear victims of sacrifice, animals and human beings in both primitive and modern societies (Violence and the Sacred 4). Girard maintains that the most sacrificeable human victims include “prisoners of war, slaves, small children, unmarried adolescents, and the handicapped,” who are socially the weakest for being “parentless” and
therefore the least socially bound (*Violence and the Sacred* 12). One essential characteristic shared among these victims is that “between these victims and the community a crucial social link is missing, so they can be exposed to violence without fear of reprisal . . . and their death does not automatically entail an act of vengeance” (*Violence and the Sacred* 12-13).

Girard’s ideas of sacrificial substitution enable me to make several interpretations of the Nanjing Massacre texts. First, these ideas explain why the Nanjing Massacre was ruthlessly conducted by the Japanese and why the Chinese were ill-prepared for it. The Japanese soldiers faced little threat of vengeance from those Chinese trapped in Nanjing—the surrendered POWs and civilians of the poor, the powerless, the weak, the old, and the young. Being what Girard considers “sacrificeable beings” (*Violence and the Sacred* 13) because of their minimal social bond and small potentiality of future retaliation, these Chinese left behind in Nanjing were at the Japanese soldiers’ disposal. In *When the Purple Mountain Burns*, Qi’s Chinese protagonists are “the civilians too poor, too old, or too sick to join the exodus” (43). Left behind without protection, Ning-ning (a twelve-year-old girl), Grandpa (a bedridden old man waiting for his natural death), Eva (a teenage orphan), and Helen (a young woman three months pregnant) are simply helpless lambs to be slaughtered by the Japanese, who avenge their heavy losses in the battle of Shanghai by retaliating against these easy scapegoats. Jin in *Nanjing Requiem* suggests explicitly that the new military recruits defending Nanjing are simply scapegoats, as “[m]any of them were merely teenage boys from the countryside, emaciated and illiterate, who could hardly fend for themselves” (14). In *The Nanjing Massacre: Poems*, Lum challenges the rationale behind the scapegoat scheme with a debate in “This Reasoning” between two characters, Teacher and Nurse. Realizing that Teacher goes for the idea of using “one sex to sacrifice their bodies for
the other,” Nurse points out its problematic logic with a simple allegorical tale—“When a fox comes, why must we have to choose between the rooster and hen?” (150).

What’s more, Girard’s theory of sacrificial substitution explains why the rescuers who set up shelters and safety zones have to exclude some people for the sake of protecting others when all refugees need help. One such example is in *The Flowers of War*, where Father Engelmann decides to sacrifice the Qin Huai prostitutes to save the St. Mary Magdalene schoolgirls. Another example is in *Nanjing Requiem*, where Minnie Vautrin decides to shelter only young women, girls, and boys in Jinling Women’s College. Girard’s ideas of sacrificial substitution suggest that the Qin Huai prostitutes are more easily sacrificeable victims, as they are orphans and would lead to the least vengeance; therefore, they are chosen to substitute for the schoolgirls as a sacrifice to curb the Japanese violence. As for the men and old women who are refused shelter in Jinling Women’s College, Girard’s ideas of sacrificial substitution put them into the position of potential menaces to the community order at Jinling Women’s College, with the former a risk of Japanese attack and the latter a competing force for limited resources within the shelter.

Girard’s ideas of sacrificial substitution also explain why episodes of rape are frequently addressed in the Nanjing Massacre texts. Girard maintains that there is a close association between sexuality and violence. Examples of this association include “abduction,” “rape,” “defloration,” “childbirth,” “the ritualistic framework of marriage,” “incest,” “adultery,” “quarrels,” “jealous rages,” and “mortal combats,” which are mostly marked with bloodshed (Violence and the Sacred 35). Girard suggests that sexual desire, similar to violence, is likely to “fasten upon surrogate objects if the object to which it was originally attracted remains inaccessible; it willingly accepts substitutes” (Violence and the Sacred 35). In *When the Purple
Mountain Burns, Qi’s characterization of Brigadier General Nakamoto Tateo exemplifies this substitution. Suffering from a perpetual desire for Rieko, his cousin and childhood lover, Nakamoto rapes teenage girls who are forced to dress in kimonos and then kills the girls when he realizes they are only substitutes for Rieko. Also, Kuroda, who keeps singing the old Japanese folksongs of lovers “exchanging cups of wine” while missing his bride Miyoko (103), represents the psyche of the Japanese soldiers, who become anxious at not seeing a trace of hope that the war will end soon so that they can go back home to join their brides and families. In fact, a number of rape episodes in the Nanjing Massacre texts result from “thwarted sexuality” (Violence and the Sacred 35), which leads Japanese soldiers into desperate violence.

Finally, Girard’s ideas about myth as connected to stereotypes of persecution provide a theoretical framework in particular for Yan’s The Flowers of War. Girard defines myths as “documents” that “contain the stereotypes of persecution” and “emerge from the same total pattern as the treatment of the Jews in Guillaume de Machaut” (The Scapegoat 25). In Girard’s opinion, violence is often identified with four “stereotypes of persecution,” namely “a generalized loss of differences,” “crimes that ‘eliminate differences,’” “the identified authors of these crimes [who] possess the marks that suggest a victim,” and “violence itself” (The Scapegoat 24). When Girard suggests that a myth is a document that includes “the juxtaposition of more than one stereotype” (The Scapegoat 24), Yan’s The Flowers of War becomes a myth of myths, as it possesses all the four stereotypes on Girard’s list. When Yan sets her story in the contexts of intragroup and intergroup conflicts and competitions, Girard’s ideas of myth and the stereotypes of persecution work as a magic code to this novel. In Chapter 4 I shall discuss in more detail how Girard’s ideas of myth and the stereotypes of persecution can be applied to
understand Yan’s *The Flowers of War*.

In addition to Girard’s theories, I base my interpretations of the Nanjing Massacre texts on several other studies. I rely on Nancy Spivey’s “shifting lens of constructivism” to analyze Qi’s juxtaosition of multiple points of view in *When the Purple Mountain Burns*. I use Veena Das’s “triad [violence, poisonous knowledge, and subjectivity] in the act of witnessing” to explain Jin’s construction of Minnie Vautrin’s perception of the intensifying violence she has to deal with in *Nanjing Requiem*. I employ François Rochat and Andre Modigliani’s concept of the “ordinariness of goodness” to argue that, in Jin’s *Nanjing Requiem*, the rescuers, represented by Minnie Vautrin, are portrayed as ordinary human beings undertaking heroic actions at the time of a social crisis. Their dedicated help of the Chinese refugees makes their errors of judgment and failures to protect the refugees both acts of Aristotelian heroes and examples of the ordinariness of human goodness. I combine Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub’s “crises of witnessing” with Antony Rowland’s “poetry as testimony,” suggesting that Lum addresses with his poems the urgency of testifying about the Japanese atrocities in Nanjing and turns *The Nanjing Massacre: Poems* into testimony. I shall introduce and discuss these studies in more detail in my body chapters.

This dissertation consists of an introduction, a conclusion, and four body chapters analyzing the four Nanjing Massacre texts in the order of their publication. As each text reconstructs the tragic history with varying emphases on the perpetrators, the rescuers, the victims, and the witnesses, the focus of analysis is adjusted accordingly.

The second chapter of the dissertation is “Perpetrators, Violence, and the ‘Mimetic

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6 I take *The Flowers of War* (2012) as a publication separate from its Chinese version *Jinlin Shisan Chai* (2006) and therefore consider the text as a publication of 2012.
Desire’ in Shouhua Qi’s *When the Purple Mountain Burns.* Among the four texts to be analyzed, *When the Purple Mountain Burns* stands out with its extensive portrayal of individual Japanese militarists, represented in a pyramid of power from top to bottom by General Nakamoto Tateo, Lieutenant Colonel Tajima Masanori, and Second Lieutenant Kuroda. This is why I use the text as an attempt to probe Qi’s representation of Japanese perpetrators in the Nanjing Massacre. To challenge the Japanese revisionists’ denial of the intensity and scale of violence committed by their army during the fall of Nanjing, Qi weaves into his novel episodes of Japanese soldiers killing both Chinese civilians and surrendered POWs, raping and abducting Chinese women, and burning and looting the city of Nanjing, with almost all episodes being based on documented histories and historiographies. To depict the Nanjing Massacre as the Japanese militarists’ violent persecution of Chinese civilians and surrendered POWs, Qi includes episodes that address controversies regarding the factual truth of the Nanjing Massacre, including the killing competition of Chinese soldiers between two Japanese officers and the Japanese soldiers’ sadistic raping and killing of Chinese women, with those pregnant ones being no exception.

In this chapter, I argue that Qi centers his portrayal of the Japanese perpetrators on social transformation. Qi does not characterize the Japanese militarists as born devils. Rather, he includes incidents and establishes causalities that explain how they acquire the ability to carry on all manner of atrocities at a later stage of their lives. The transformation of these normal people into killing machines and sadistic rapists is explicable with what Girard calls “mimetic desire” (*Violence and the Sacred* 145). In the novel, Qi highlights the fact that what transforms General Nakamoto Tateo, Lieutenant Colonel Tajima Masanori, and Second Lieutenant Kuroda from
innocent young men into killing machines and sadistic rapists is their mimetic desire for an ideal manhood. Defined by qualities of patriotism, loyalty, courage, faith, and unwavering will to conquer, the Japanese imperial version of manhood materialized as competitions of killing and raping during the fall of Nanjing. As a whole, Qi maintains that the Japanese soldiers’ cruelty and violence are not their genetic properties; rather, they are acquired by imitating models that are highly destructive but, nevertheless, socially desired.

The third chapter of the dissertation is “Rescuers, Heroism, and the ‘Ordinariness of Goodness’ in Ha Jin’s Nanjing Requiem.” Focusing on the Nanjing Safety Zone established by a dozen American and European volunteers, Nanjing Requiem addresses this group of rescuers, whose transnational experiences bound them emotionally to the Chinese people and made them risk their lives to protect the Chinese refugees during the fall of Nanjing. However, working as what Girard sees as agents of compensation is not an easy job for the rescuers. While supporting the refugees with hope of survival, these rescuers, ordinary people who work as businessmen, missionaries, professors, and doctors with no experience of confronting military officers and soldiers eager to commit atrocities, suffer from stress over incidents of injuries and deaths for which they think themselves responsible. Jin portrays a dozen rescuers who are real historical figures risking their lives in Nanjing to help with the relief work. I focus my interpretation on how these rescuers are represented in the novel.

In this chapter, I argue that Jin selects Minnie Vautrin as a representative of the rescuers who suffer tremendously while attempting to help the Chinese victims. I relate her rescuing efforts and tragic suicide to Rochat and Modigliani’s concept of the “ordinariness of goodness.”
Nanjing Massacre, Minnie Vautrin does not foresee the challenge of her undertaking the role of a heroic protector. Not expecting herself to act as a daunting hero under all circumstances, the acting president, who manages to shelter 10,000 refugees on the Jinling campus, suffers from an unspeakable guilt for her constant failures to protect these refugees from the harm of the Japanese soldiers. Despite her will to protect the Chinese refugees, the best she can achieve is to reduce the frequency and intensity of the Japanese violence. Not always succeeding in stopping the Japanese atrocities within the Safety Zone, she sees herself as a failure by not being able to keep her promise of protection. Crushed by accusations of her motivation by a number of people, Minnie Vautrin chooses to end her life out of survivor guilt. Working as an agent of compensation in the Sino-Japanese confrontation, she becomes part of the compensation herself.

Chapter Four of the dissertation is “Scapegoats, Myth, and the ‘Stereotypes of Persecution’ in Geling Yan’s The Flowers of War.” By putting together several groups, the sixteen St. Mary Magdalene Chinese schoolgirls, the thirteen Qin Huai prostitutes, and the three wounded Chinese soldiers who seek shelter in an American church run by Father Engelmman, Yan depicts the conflicts among these different social groups, especially those between the schoolgirls and the prostitutes. The climax of the novel is the sacrifice of the prostitutes who take the place of the schoolgirls to sing as a choir for the Japanese army. As the novel centers on sacrificing one group of people for the sake of another group, I focus my interpretation on how the scapegoat scheme works as a solution to conflicts in times of social crisis.

In this chapter, I argue that the voluntary sacrifice of the Qin Huai prostitutes transforms their sacrifice into myth, upgrading them from socially despised creatures to mythological heroines. Also, by letting Father Engelmman decide to sacrifice the Qin Huai prostitutes to save
the schoolgirls, Yan turns justice, the nature of scapegoats, and human redemption into controversies. In this part, I use Girard’s ideas about myth as connected with stereotypes of persecution to explain how sacrifice, while used as a solution to solve the crisis of the church, turns out to be a problematic issue.

Chapter Five of the dissertation is “Secondary Witnesses, Accumulative Primary Witnessing, and the ‘Hard Truth’ in Wing Tek Lum’s The Nanjing Massacre: Poems.” Since Lum creates his poems as testimonies, I focus my interpretation on how secondary witnessing, in the absence of primary witnessing, can help preserve a forgotten history that is of crucial importance to the future generations.

In this chapter, I argue that Lum sees the Nanjing Massacre as a time of a witnessing urgency and calls for secondary witnessing of the Massacre via his creation of testimony poems, mostly in forms of primary witnessing. Based on Felman and Laub’s ideas of “crises of witnessing” and Rowland’s ideas of “poetry as testimony,” I argue that Lum’s poems of witnessing intend to achieve two purposes: witnessing for the witnesses and witnessing to make more witnesses. To fulfill both purposes, Lum applies several methods which I summarize as translation, transformation, and transposition.

The concluding chapter summarizes my major findings in this research. Also, by showing how Chinese American writers’ representations of the Nanjing Massacre bring up issues of people’s mimetic desire for violence, the compensatory nature of the International Safety Zone, scapegoating, and the extremity of human war crimes, the conclusion reinforces Chinese American writers’ contribution to help expand their American readers’ understanding of the Nanjing Massacre. To date, the primary subject covered to any extent by mainstream American
writers is the issue of “comfort women.” Delving into the Nanjing Massacre to reveal the destructive nature of war and violence, these Nanjing Massacre texts not only bring more historical truths of the Nanjing Massacre to the conscience of American readers but also endeavor to provoke their readers into a wide consensus on non-violent solutions to international conflicts.
Apart from their systematic slaughter of their war prisoners, the raping and killing of innocent Chinese women and children remains a permanent stain on Japan’s history—eclipsing even the later brutalities inflicted on Allied war prisoners and thousands of Chinese, Filipino, and Korean women forced into mass prostitution as the “comfort women” attached to the military \((jigun ianfu)\) of the Emperor’s Army. Over the six decades intervening, the disgrace has been compounded by the arrogant refusal of many postwar Liberal Democratic Party politicians—including cabinet officers—and alleged “historians” of Japan’s right wing to admit the monstrousness of the Massacre. Some were bold enough to challenge the fact that it had happened. (Gibney vii)

*When the Purple Mountain Burns: A Novel* (2005) by Shouhua Qi, a novelist and professor of English at Western Connecticut State University, is perhaps the first Chinese American novel that addresses exclusively the Japanese atrocities in the Nanjing Massacre. Being a Nanjing native whose grandfather is “the prototype of Grandpa in the novel” (Qi ii), Qi depicts a hellish Nanjing in December of 1937, attempting to inform English-language readers in general, the American public in particular,\(^1\) of the horrifying war crimes committed by Japanese perpetrators then and repudiated by Japanese revisionists today. In light of Spivey’s ideas about the “shifting lens of constructivism” and Girard’s ideas of “mimetic desire,” I would argue that Qi’s depiction of the intensity and scale of Japanese soldiers’ violence in Nanjing mainly involves two techniques: one is alternating narration in third-person multiple points of view, and

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\(^1\) In American public consciousness, the Japanese and the Japanese Americans in World War II were victims, with the former going through the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the latter the internment. To most Americans, they have not been well informed about Japan’s worst offenses as a victimizer during World War II.
the other is characterization of perpetrators through psychoanalysis. Qi’s first technique—
alternating narration in third-person multiple points of view—caters to his challenge of Japanese
right-wingers’ denial of the Nanjing Massacre. Qi includes narratives of victims, perpetrators,
and rescuers to address several widely debated Japanese atrocities. Building his reconstruction of
the Nanjing Massacre on documented histories and historiographies, Qi attempts to demonstrate
the irrefutability of the Imperial Army’s war crimes committed over the winter of 1937-1938 in
Nanjing. Qi’s second technique—characterization of perpetrators through psychoanalysis—
caters to his probe into the elements that change human beings into warmongers. Getting behind
the atrocities to locate their causes, Qi uses psychoanalysis to draw causal connections between
the atrocities of his Japanese characters with different combinations of individual, familial,
historical, social, and cultural factors, suggesting that these Japanese invaders became cold-
blooded killers and rapists after their innocence was destroyed by emulating the problematic
masculinities defined in Japanese society.

Qi’s depiction of the Japanese-Chinese confrontation is, in general, similar to that of one
of Aesop’s fables, “The Wolf and the Lamb.” On one hand, the Chinese, represented by Grandpa,
Ning-ning, Eva, Ling Yao-guang, and Wang Bao-zi, are either too old or too young to defend
themselves or too weak to win a battle against an overwhelmingly powerful enemy; they are the
lambs. On the other hand, the Japanese are the wolves; Brigadier General Nakamoto Tateo,
Lieutenant Colonel Tajima Masanori, and Second Lieutenant Kuroda are violent militarists who
execute and torture their defenseless victims and justify their war crimes in the name of
patriotism and heroism. To recreate Japanese violence in Nanjing on levels of representation and
interpretation, Qi takes the approach of constructivism, trying to create the two essentials that
Spivey refers to as “things” (the historical truth of the Nanjing Massacre) and “meanings” (understandings of the Nanjing Massacre) (1).

Dealing with a controversial past which needs to be clarified with narrative objectivity, Qi assumes the role more of a scholar than of a victim, endeavoring to reveal the historical truth of the Nanjing Massacre via narration and interpretation. Aspiring to create the historical truth out of which readers can form their own understandings of the Nanjing Massacre, Qi follows the practice of historians who build their construction of history by saying not only “true things” but “right things”—what Frank Ankersmit considers “statements that individuate their [historians’] ‘picture of the past’ . . . [and demonstrate] their historical insight and originality” (qtd. in LaCapra 10). To construct an account of the truth of the Nanjing Massacre, Qi first of all describes with precision and consistency how human atrocities go rampant in a conquered city.

Historians cited in Qi’s bibliographies conclude that the Nanjing Massacre was not war, but sheer violence. For one thing, the victims are either POWs or civilians who pose no threat to Japanese rule and safety. For another, the Japanese atrocities are more about vengeance than military assault. To inform the American public of the unimaginable human atrocities in the Nanjing Massacre, a number of scholars have compared this tragedy with the Holocaust, a dark history of human monstrosities that is more well known in American society. Noting parallels between the Nanjing Massacre and the Holocaust, Charles S. Maier observes that the Nanjing Massacre involved the “often gleeful killing of perhaps hundreds of thousands of civilians by individual soldiers using sword and bayonet as well as bullet,” but also seemed “unnecessary for the military objective, continued after the victory was secured” (vii-viii). Iris Chang claims that the practices of Japanese killing and rape were bitterly savage and degrading. While “Chinese
men were used for bayonet practice and in decapitation contests,” Chinese women were raped in still more horrifying manner, as the Japanese not only “disembowel women, slice off their breasts, nail them alive to walls” but also forced the Chinese men to rape their own daughters, sisters, and mothers “as other family members watched” (6). Frank Gibney suggests that the Japanese atrocities were both undeniable and disgusting. In his “Editor’s Introduction” for *The Nanjing Massacre: A Japanese Journalist Confronts Japan’s National Shame*, he mentions “the most shocking testimony” by a Japanese housewife, who overheard, “in an improvised dormitory in 1945,” the conversation of “some recently discharged soldiers,” with one boasting about raping Chinese women and “seeing how far into a woman’s body his arm would go” and others reminiscing about their days of having “the most fun in Nanjing” (xx-xxi).

Qi agrees with these historians and believes that the Nanjing Massacre was utterly senseless violence. To foreground the violence, Qi writes about what Ankersmit calls for—both the “true things” and the “right things” (qtd. in LaCapra 10). In representing the scale and intensity of the Japanese war crimes, Qi makes true claims about real dates (from the 13th to the 18th of December in 1937), characters (the Westerners who set up the ICNSZ), and events (the Japanese bombing of the Safety Zone and non-military targets and Japanese atrocities of mass killing, raping, looting, arson, and abduction). However, as he is also concerned with why controversial understandings of the Nanjing Massacre arise, Qi does not restrict his representation to “saying true things on the levels of both statements referring to events and broader narrative, interpretive, or explanatory endeavors” (LaCapra 11). He addresses as well the “rhetorical, political, affective, and ideological matters” (LaCapra 12), hoping to reveal what Hegel suggests is “the inner logic of past events” and “the structure for others to understand
them” (qtd. in Spivey 8). To represent the inner logic of the Nanjing Massacre, Qi uses what Spivey calls the “shifting lens of constructivism” (23) by including narrators representing a collection of perpetrators, victims, and rescuers. With alternating narration in multiple third-person points of view, Qi hopes to bring the tragic past alive by revealing these witnesses’ own experiences and reflections of the Massacre.

In the novel, Qi selects narrators representing all social groups—the Chinese, the Japanese, and the foreigners—and alternates their narratives on a daily basis for seven days. By juxtaposing their narratives, Qi demonstrates not only how individuals “associated with membership in a particular group” tend to construct similar knowledge but also how this knowledge differs from the knowledge of those outside their group (Spivey 24). Seeing through alternative points of view, readers are able to generate a collage offering a full picture of the Nanjing Massacre and understand that controversies over the tragic past do not result from uncertainty about the historical events narrated but from different interpretive perspectives on those events.

Qi represents the Nanjing Massacre through juxtaposition of multiple points of view and hopes his construction of the tragedy helps readers review the Japanese atrocities on three levels. On the individual level, readers can see how the Japanese perpetrators, though not born devils, are transformed into violent war monsters by going through a common process of social construction. On the communal level, readers can see how Japanese perpetrators unanimously justify their atrocities in the name of patriotism and heroism and therefore show no mercy to their victims. On the global level, readers can see how Japanese patriotism and heroism manifest themselves in violence and monstrosity in the eyes of the Chinese victims and the third-party
witnesses and therefore were never morally justifiable even if the individual and communal levels show them to be comprehensible.

To represent the Japanese atrocities on the individual level, Qi includes narratives of several Japanese invaders, mainly Brigadier General Nakamoto Tateo, Lieutenant Colonel Tajima Masanori, and Second Lieutenant Kuroda. Letting them narrate their experiences, observations, and reflections of the Nanjing Massacre, Qi gives his reader a chance to read these perpetrators’ minds and understand what drives them to become monsters. To construct Japan as a hierarchal society, Qi chooses his Japanese narrators from a pyramid of military ranking, attempting to represent how Japan’s militarism deprives people from all social levels of their humanity and leaves them with only a blind faith in unconditional courage and loyalty. By describing how his characters generate serious moral problems while transforming themselves into agents of Japan’s aggression and expansion, Qi discloses the destructive impact of Imperial Japan’s hegemonism and power politics that changed individuals into anti-social and anti-human warmongers.

Though capable of carrying on all manner of atrocities, Qi’s Japanese characters are nevertheless not born devils. As Yan Shao puts it, “The Massacre is not committed by a group of monsters that did what the monsters should do, but by a group of human beings that did what the monsters usually do” (qtd. in Zhu 94). While representing his Japanese characters, Qi tries to avoid simple categorization by “getting rid of some of the ‘set ways’ in which Chinese culture represents Japan—or the invading Japanese army” (Dai 140). Moving beyond stereotyping them as “Japanese Devils,” Qi focuses on how they become what they are. Qi allows Nakamoto, 2

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2 As a popular Chinese reference for the Japanese invaders, it is also the title of a documentary based on the retrospection of 14 Japanese ex-POWs about the Japanese Imperial Army’s war crimes during World War II.
Tajima, and Kuroda to narrate how they, in spite of their tremendous differences in personalities and backgrounds, go through a similar process of social construction so as to face masculine destiny imposed upon them by Imperial Japan.

Qi differentiates his Japanese characters by giving each a different story. The narrative of Nakamoto is primarily one of a chain rapist. A Japanese general whose brigade is among the first to enter Nanjing, Nakamoto is obsessed with an uncontrollable desire to rape. However, Nakamoto is basically a normal and loving human being until he goes to the Ichigaya Military Academy. In his teenage years, he used to vacation at his aunt’s house every summer and enjoy the company of his cousin Rieko, who became the dream of his youthful love. Qi includes an episode when the young Nakamoto felt a sexual impulse for Rieko by hearing the latter’s bathing and imagining her naked “in exactly the same water [in which] he bathed only moments ago” (27), a normal and healthy reaction of boys at Nakamoto’s age. At this point, he does not have an impulse to rape his cousin, which suggests that as a young man he was not a rapist at heart.

Qi builds Nakamoto’s change from an innocent adolescent into a rapist upon two accidents: his training at the Ichigaya Military Academy and his first sexual encounter. In the novel, Ichigaya becomes the turning-point that transforms Nakamoto from “a sheepish, first-year cadet” (129) into a tough war machine. He is not only physically ironed “after 6,147 hours of intense classwork and private study, [and] a ruthless regimen of daily exercises and drills,” but he is also mentally steeled by “the yelling, pushing, and slapping in the face from sadistic officers and upperclassmen” (28).

Qi’s description of the destructive impact of Ichigaya on Nakamoto is based on Chang’s The Rape of Nanking, which describes Ichigaya more as “a prison than a school,” with “its
overcrowded barracks, unheated study room, inadequate food” and “3,382 hours of classwork and 2,765 hours of private study” (32). Chang believes that “[t]he intensity of the training in Japan surpassed that of most Western military academies” so that the men “adopt ‘a will which knows no defeat’” once they become military officers (32). Chang points out that not all candidates were able to survive the training, as “[s]ome youths died under such brutal physical conditions; others committed suicide,” although “the majority became tempered vessels into which the military could pour a new set of life goals” (32).

In the novel, Qi’s Nakamoto is one of many who manages to survive his military training. However, his survival is more physical than mental, considering all the negative changes in his personality and temperament. Resentful of his “monk’s life” (28), he starts during his first year at Ichigaya visiting brothels and seeking “comfort and kindness” from prostitutes to counteract the brutalities of his “sadistic officers and upperclassmen” (129). However, his teenage fantasies of having sex with a beauty like his cousin Reiko are totally ruined when he later finds the appearance of the prostitute with whom he lost his virginity quite disgusting—“a hideous, toad-like face, with disheveled hair, and a limp mouth filled with crooked, yellow teeth” (129). Feeling a great insult and humiliation, he tries to redeem his purity and self-esteem with a “salty wet towel, feverishly wiping the stinky crust from his manhood” and later takes revenge by killing the prostitute “on a moonless night with a bloody sword in hand” (129-30). Qi makes the two incidents—the loss of his virginity and the murder of the prostitute—the end of Nakamoto’s innocent faith in love and beauty. Thereafter, he acts as a sadist, ready to take vengeance against anyone for his suffering. The murder of the prostitute is the beginning of his obsession with sexual aggression, in most cases killing after raping.
The narrative of Tajima is largely one of a ruthless killer. Unlike Nakamoto, whose narrative portrays him primarily as a rapist, Tajima is depicted as a stone-hearted killing machine who incarnates the Japanese moral spirit of Bushido. As with Nakamoto’s behavior, Qi makes Tajima’s exceptional courage and loyalty not born properties but acquired as a result of his school and family education on socially desirable manhood, which he further consolidates in the battlefield. Like Nakamoto, Tajima also has a traumatic childhood, but for different reasons. Born as a “sheepish” boy whose lack of self-esteem was mostly due to his being “thin and small in stature,” he “used to be pushed around by bullies as the notorious ‘sissy’ of the class” (68-69). Living in a patriarchal society where masculine toughness was honored as a desirable trait, Tajima was viewed as “a disgrace to the Empire” by his homeroom teacher, Mr. Sakawa, and a failure who “would never amount to anything” by his parents (68). Not willing to admit his lack of desirable manhood, Tajima was determined to prove otherwise.

Tajima’s narrative portrays him as one who upholds Bushido, the traditional code of the Japanese samurai, which gradually develops into a system of moral values honored by all Japanese society. *Bu-shi-dao*, which means “military-knight-way” in English, stresses self-discipline, bravery, and the simple life but often goes beyond the boundaries of the normal human condition. Inazo Nitobe, in *Bushido: The Warrior’s Code*, explains the brutal practices of the samurai to pass on the spirit of courage to their young:

>“Bears hurl their cubs down the gorge,” they said. Samurai’s sons were let down to steep valleys of hardship, and spurred to Herculean tasks. Occasional deprivation of food or exposure to cold, was considered a highly efficacious test for hardening them to endurance. Children of tender age were sent among utter strangers with some message to deliver, were made to rise before the sun, and before breakfast attend to their reading exercises, walking to their teachers with bare feet in the cold of winter; they frequently—once or twice a month, as on the festival of a god of learning,—came together in small groups and passed the night
without sleep, in reading aloud by turns. (29)

Any child who has experienced deprivation of food, sleep, pleasure, and a sense of security could grow numb to his own sufferings and might not react with sympathy to the sufferings of other people. In the novel, Qi implies that Tajima, like other stone-hearted warriors, is deprived of love and comfort in the name of acquiring his socially desirable manhood, and consequently he lacks love and sympathy for others.

Qi builds Tajima’s transformation from a despised, girlish boy into a fierce fighter upon his will to kill, satirizing Imperial Japan’s dehumanizing ideology that incites people to compete by the law of the jungle. Despite his lack of a masculine physique, Tajima manages to gain social power, respect, and self-esteem by killing recklessly and raising himself to be “the most dependable among Nakamoto’s battalion commanders” (24). However, Qi also portrays Tajima as one who has never really recovered from his childhood trauma over his lack of a masculine physique. While facing Minnie Vautrin at Jinlin Women’s College, he is quite disturbed with Minnie’s being “almost a full head taller than him” (147). Feeling “compelled” by Minnie who was “looking right into his face when she spoke, and looking down at him as well,” he reacts intuitively with a forced pose of self-importance and “puff[s] out his chest a bit more than usual” (147-48). Tajima’s awareness of his lack of conventional masculine physique reinforces his desire for other masculine qualifications, which, unfortunately, display themselves in aggressiveness, violence, and apathy. His contempt for the surrendered Chinese soldiers turns into a fuming hatred. He desires to demonstrate his courage and loyalty by killing the most and despises anyone who is reluctant to kill.

The narrative of Kuroda is mostly one of a morally degenerating soldier deprived of youthful love and innocence by war. Different from Nakamoto and Tajima, Kuroda does not lose
his innocence until he is in Nanjing. Qi portrays Kuroda as a loving young man when he first enters Nanjing. He reacts with sympathetic feelings toward others, including his enemies. He is reluctant to kill the surrendered Chinese soldiers the first time he encounters them, as he finds them miserable “with heads bowed” (105). Also, the Chinese civilians seeking shelter at the International Safety Zone remind him of his own parents. While searching for Chinese soldiers hiding there, he cannot help noticing that “[s]ome of the Chinese herded downstairs looked much older than otousan and okaa-san. They teetered along, leaning feebly on their walking sticks” (107). However, Kuroda’s innocence is soon destroyed as his sufferings become too intense to bear. To begin with, Kuroda suffers physically as a soldier fighting in a foreign land. Looking back on his military experiences, he sees them as nothing but “hell,” as he was “tired and cold” and his “thick winter coat” was unable to make him feel warm (102). He suffered from hunger as well, and consequently his platoon loots the city for food and other necessities once they enter Nanjing.

Kuroda also suffers terribly from homesickness. He is depressed about fighting in China, which keeps him away from home for four months. Qi makes Kuroda’s separation from his family more difficult because his parents were aging and he was a recent newly-wed. He missed his bride, and was in great joy even “at the thought of Miyoko” (104). Excited with the Japanese taking over Nanking, Kuroda, together with his peers, shouts with joy, “We’ve taken Nanking! . . . The war is over. And we will all be home soon!” (106). However, his hope of being reunited with his family is completely crashed by his commander who roars at him that “[t]he fight will continue tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow!” (106). Seeing no end to the war, Kuroda gets depressed with the idea that he might never be able to return home, like his “fallen
comrades” (102). The memorial he held for his dead folks with “a few lighted candles, incense sticks, and offerings of water and the canned food” (102) reminded him that sooner or later his name would be inscribed on the memorial tablet. The idea of his lying “rotting on the ground” (104) in a foreign land drove him insane.

Kuroda’s anxiety becomes unbearable when his superiors react with contempt toward him over his reluctance to kill the surrendered Chinese soldiers. His hesitation is soon replaced with a “massive bloodletting”; he is driven to this behavior by shame over his initial compassion for others (105). Thinking that he is branded as a coward by both his superiors and his peers, he is tortured with disgrace and humiliation. Ever since then, his only hope of redeeming himself is to prove his will and ability to kill, so he kills with singular determination.

To represent the Japanese atrocities on the communal level, Qi highlights the consensus among Nakamoto, Tajima, and Kuroda, who see their defeated enemies as cowards and justify their war crimes in the name of courage and loyalty. Regardless of their differences in military ranking, their perceptions of the surrendered Chinese soldiers are surprisingly similar. Filled with rage and contempt, they never regret imposing atrocities upon their disarmed prisoners.

In the novel, Qi’s Japanese perpetrators are in perpetual rage as they mourn their losses and sufferings in Shanghai. Nakamoto commands the attack on Nanjing from its China Gate, begrudging the “damn Chinese troops” who “had put up such a fierce fight in Shanghai and had caused thousands of Japanese casualties” (30). Tajima beheads the Chinese POWs “like an authentic reincarnation of Miyamoto Musashi” in memory of the bodies of his peers lying near the Wusong Dock in Shanghai (70). As a memorial for his “fallen comrades,” Kuroda orders a “ritualistic slaughter” of the POWs; they are “stabbed or slashed” to their prolonged and
therefore more terrifying deaths by bayonets rather than bullets (102-9). Blaming those captives in Nanjing for their losses and sufferings in Shanghai, the Japanese are eager to take revenge on the captured Chinese soldiers, in a ritualistic murder following the Girardian pattern.

Meanwhile, excited by an unexpectedly easy victory in Nanjing, the Japanese’s contempt for the surrendered Chinese soldiers skyrockets. Qi adds soliloquies of the Japanese, querying the problematic morality of their prisoners who cravenly clung to life instead of braving death. One soldier asks, “Surrendering to the enemy? Wouldn’t it be a hundred times worse than death itself?” (67). Another soldier reasons that “dying in battle was more honorable than being cut down like this” (109). Seeing that their prisoners outnumbered them but surrendered their arms, the Japanese become contemptuous of the Chinese soldiers in Nanjing, whose non-resistance makes them an easier target of revenge than the defenders of Shanghai.

Qi also offers a further cultural explanation for Japanese atrocities toward surrendering soldiers. Qi implies that the Japanese’s contempt for the surrendered soldiers results from Japan’s propaganda of an extreme patriotism which demands the individual’s unconditional sacrifice for the benefits of the military regime. In the novel, Japanese patriotism is objectified into swords passing from parents to sons as family treasures, glorifying the courage of killing as a desirable personal asset that honors one’s clan and community. Nakamoto’s Sadamitsu sword, given by his mother, and Tajima’s Wakizashi sword, given by his father, symbolize a clan’s expectation of their courage and will to kill. By equating violent patriotism to “the importance of filial piety in terms of obedience to parents and loyalty to the emperor and his laws. . . [and] the need to risk one’s own life in defense of country and the emperor” (Straus 34), Qi argues that the Japanese preferred desperate fighting to surrender and regarded sacrifice as fate. As a result of Japan’s
militarist propaganda, most Japanese soldiers preferred death to surrender, which seemed apparent in reference to the numbers of Japanese deaths and surrenders in Ulrich Straus’s *The Anguish of Surrender: Japanese POWs of World War II*:

When Japan surrendered on August 15, 1945, a total of 38,666 Japanese had been taken prisoner by the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom, on battlefields and oceans stretching from the Burmese-Indian border to Attu in the Aleutians, Midway Island in the mid-Pacific, and Guadalcanal and New Guinea in the southwest Pacific. . . . The ratio of Japanese POWs in Allied hands to the number of Japanese killed was phenomenally low compared with prisoners taken in the European/North African theatres. Japan had a total of 1,140,000 army and 410,000 navy personnel killed during the war, and just 26,304 army and 12,362 navy personnel taken prisoner. The number of POWs as a percentage of the number killed in action was 2.3 percent for the army and 3.0 percent for the navy. (49)

The Japanese saw surrender as a shame and an insult not only to themselves but also to their families, their communities, the Emperor, and the nation, which explains why the Japanese despise the Chinese POWs who chose to surrender.

Qi’s Japanese characters do not restrict their hatred and contempt to their POWs. They hate civilians as well. And their attitudes, Qi also shows, are tied to communal attitudes held by many Japanese. Learning that Matsui Iwane, commander of the Central China Expeditionary Force, wished to “hold a memorial service for the war dead tomorrow—all war dead,” Nakamoto objects and is pleased to find out that “all of the divisional commanders and top staff officers had voiced their objection to the idea, in chorus” (227). Feeling no scruples for the murdered and raped Chinese, he justifies his apathy and finds himself not alone in refusing to pay respect to those who suffered such cowardly and worthless deaths.

Nakamoto does not tolerate the backwardness of China, which is highlighted by his contempt for the bathing utensils used by the Chinese. Taking pride in his racial superiority, he sees the Chinese as disgusting and judges them as inferior to the Japanese because they do not
The Chinese were such useless, filthy people. Their land was vast, a hundred times bigger than that of Japan, perhaps, and a thousand times richer in natural resources, but what had they done with it all? Why didn’t they at least have a decent bathing facility installed in their residence? Did they ever bathe at all? (25)

Nakamoto’s contempt for China’s backwardness has profound historical reasons. Bonnie B. C. Oh suggests that the Japanese made attempts to modernize their country, especially during the 1930s and the 1940s, and became too proud to be grateful toward other Asian countries like “China, India, and even Korea,” even though “Japan owed much of its own philosophical and religious development” to these countries (7). Oh points out that “after the Meiji Restoration, Japan was not like other Asian countries; it alone had become modernized and ‘civilized’ in the new world, and it hated other Asian nations for failing to come up to its level” (7). Seeing itself as the only Asian country that could rival “the Western encroachment,” Japan never doubts “the superiority of its race and the absolute moral correctness of its mission in the military conquest of other parts of Asia” (7). In the novel, Qi uses the lack of tubs in Chinese homes to stress what the Japanese see as Chinese backwardness. The Chinese are backward because they do not even bathe.

To prove the unjustifiability of the Japanese’s violence, Qi represents their atrocities on the global level by assessing Japan’s militarism from the perspective of Chinese Buddhism and the foreigners’ Christianity and humanism. By doing so, he tries to demonstrate that what the Japanese consider patriotism and heroism only manifest themselves as greed and delusion when viewed through the eyes of the Chinese and the foreigners. In the novel, Qi interweaves counterpart narratives of the Chinese and the foreigners with those of the Japanese. Showing how the Japanese’s justifications of their atrocities in the name of courage and loyalty are simply
pretenses to cover their greed, delusion, and cruelty, Qi means to prove that the Japanese’s excuses for killing, raping, looting, burning, and abducting in Nanjing are biased and partial. As a whole, Qi’s narration consists of forty-two chapters, of which twenty-three are narratives of the Chinese, nine of the Japanese, and ten of the third-party foreigners. To demonstrate the absurdity, falsity, and futility of the Japanese perpetrators’ justifications of their atrocities, Qi includes not only narratives of the Chinese victims and the third-party witnesses, whose experiences and observations of the Japanese soldiers’ brutalities become testimonies against these perpetrators’ pretenses, but also narratives of the Japanese soldiers, whose very own experiences and observations of their army’s monstrosities become undeniable evidence of their crimes and betray their attempts for self-defense.

Qi uses Kuroda, a soft-hearted lieutenant at the beginning of the Nanjing Massacre, as an observer of atrocities committed by the Japanese Imperial Army in Nanjing. Kuroda sees the Japanese soldiers’ indiscriminate killing of their Chinese prisoners. Terrified by snipers, they search for men who simply look like soldiers and take them away by force to kill them. In one mission, Kuroda joined his fellow soldiers to search for Chinese soldiers out of civilians in a compound in the Safety Zone. Seeing a “terrified and confused” young man as a suspicious soldier, the Japanese soldiers “promptly beat and kicked” him, and “[h]is genitals were poked mercilessly with a stick” (108). Showing how the young man becomes a war prisoner simply because he looks “terrified and confused,” a normal reaction among non-combatant civilians, Qi uses Kuroda’s observation to illustrate the Japanese soldiers’ atrocious crime of indiscriminate killing, as the Chinese young man was taken prisoner and later killed not because he was a soldier but because he was about the conscription age. Based on Kuroda’s observation, Qi
portrays the Japanese soldiers as law-makers who interpret rules solely according to their own interests and judge others mercilessly. Showing how these perpetrators apply victor’s justice in Nanjing without pursuing any legal or ethical rules, this episode is ironic in light of the complaints of today’s Japanese revisionists, who insist that the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal is the result of “victor’s justice” rather than an accurate legal or ethical assessment” (Tucker 323). Whatever the faults of that tribunal might have been, it let off Japan all too easily on the crimes in Shanghai.

In addition, Kuroda sees how the Japanese soldiers use fire as a means of killing. In a following mission, Kuroda passed through “a burnt out three-story building” with its ground “littered with the twisted, broken, and burned bodies of dozens of men” (113). The sight of the burnt Chinese soldiers made him visualize how the Japanese soldiers had forced “about a hundred suspected Chinese soldiers up to the roof before setting the building on fire right under their feet with gasoline poured into every room” and how, driven by their intuitive desire for life, some prisoners leapt from the building only to be “engulfed in flames” (113). To illustrate the Japanese soldiers’ burning crimes, Qi adds in the later part of the novel a parallel narrative of the Westerners discussing these atrocities. In a photo Reverend Magee showed to Rabe, there was “the corpse of a man. . . with about seventy others, who were all bayonetted or sprayed first with rifle fire, then with gasoline, and set afire” (202). Combining Kuroda’s observations with photos taken by Magee, a third-party witness, Qi attempts to prove that the Japanese soldiers used fire to destroy conclusive evidence of their crimes, including human bodies, buildings, and residences with traces betraying their brutality. In fact, Qi names his novel from an old adage, “When the Purple Mountain burns, Nanjing is lost.” With the Purple Mountain set on fire by the Japanese,
Qi foreshadows the fall of Nanjing and the subsequent sufferings of the Chinese who were tortured and killed by the Japanese soldiers.

To represent Japanese soldiers’ atrocities, Qi includes narratives of Chinese victims, civilians as well as surrendered soldiers. Qi’s major Chinese civilian characters are Grandpa, a Buddhist who is preparing for his natural death, and Ning-ning, a twelve-year-old girl who is curious about the Japanese, of whom she has no knowledge. In the novel, Grandpa spends his last days trying to explain to the little girl who wants to know why the Japanese would “come all the way here to kill people” (142). He tells Ning-ning that the Japanese are “greedy” people who never bother to “borrow,” but simply “take from their neighbors whatever they want and they want so much,” like “mountains, rivers, land, air, everything perhaps” (142). As plunderers who covet their neighbors’ properties, the Japanese try to possess them with artillery, tanks, and warplanes. Not realizing they are uninvited guests who mean to kill their host for valuables, they blame the Chinese for a stubborn resistance to their invasion in the same way that robbers grudge their host for not preparing a welcome feast. The robber’s logic is the last lesson Grandpa teaches Ning-ning before he is killed by the Japanese.

Qi’s major characters representing the Chinese POWs are Lieutenant Ling Yao-guang and Colonel Wang Bao-zi, whose narratives prove the Japanese’s judgment of the Chinese soldiers’ surrender quite unfair. In the novel, Qi suggests that the Chinese soldiers’ decision to surrender is primarily the result of abandonment by their senior officers and allurement by the Japanese’s promises of humane treatment. On one hand, Chinese soldiers are determined to defend Nanjing to the death, but their courage is undermined by the order of retreat from their commander-in-chief, General Tang Sheng-chih. Lieutenant Ling Yao-guang, who was hit by a bomb in Japan’s
air raid while calling General Tang for “artillery support” (38), fights bravely before he is seriously injured and is later taken prisoner from the Nanjing University Hospital. Colonel Wang Bao-zi, who “emptied his last round of ammunition into the advancing enemy” before he joined the others to follow “General Tang’s retreat order,” finds there is no way to retreat but to be taken prisoner (74). On the other hand, the Chinese soldiers are literally tricked to surrender by both the Japanese commanders who promised them, “If you surrender, we won’t kill you!” (77), and the Japanese leaflets which in written form claimed that “all surrendered soldiers and the civilian population will be treated humanely in all respects” (119). Feeling abandoned by their own commanders, the Chinese soldiers become desperate in fighting a hopeless battle, which made the Japanese’s promises of humane treatment more alluring. To break their own promises by killing the surrendered soldiers, the Japanese are portrayed as tricksters who lure the Chinese soldiers into surrendering and then kill them.

Qi includes episodes which describe how Japanese soldiers commit atrocities of indiscriminate raping and in many cases become bolder and wilder with their officers’ connivance. In one case, Ling Yao-guang, while taken prisoner, gets furious to see how a Japanese soldier was trying to rape a pregnant woman and was causing a commotion as the woman was “screaming hysterically” (192). What enrages Ling more is the fact that the soldier’s officer is right on spot but “seemed unconcerned” (192). When the Chinese soldiers are defeated, their mothers, sisters, and daughters become spoils of war acquiescently awarded to the Japanese soldiers by their officers.

The Japanese perpetrators’ indifference to their violence against the surrendered Chinese soldiers and civilians is comparable to what Girard refers to as a human being’s inclination to
rationalize violence. Girard maintains that violence, in theory, can be rational at times, but in reality, it is always irrational because the reasons that justify the act of violence are no longer the ones that induce the violence. In *Violence and the Sacred*, Girard explains why violence is by its basic nature not justifiable:

> Violence is frequently called irrational. It has its reasons, however, and can marshal some rather convincing ones when the need arises. Yet these reasons cannot be taken seriously, no matter how valid they may appear. Violence itself will discard them if the initial object remains persistently out of reach and continues to provoke hostility. When unappeased, violence seeks and always finds a surrogate victim. The creature that excited its fury is abruptly replaced by another, chosen only because it is vulnerable and close at hand. (2)

In Girard’s view, people who commit violence often defend their misconduct by justifying what they have done. If the violence is reciprocal in nature, then their justification appears valid; however, this seldom happens in real life, as the original offender is often unreachable. Because of this, violence often appears irrational. When vengeful people cannot avenge those who offend them for reasons like unavailability, people will seek for a replacement, often weaker and easier to attack, as a substitute on which to release their anger. In this case, violence is more ritualistic in nature and is considered irrational, as the target of revenge is no longer the original offender.

Girard’s ideas about the criminal’s justification for his violence explicate the two prevalent moods among the Japanese toward their Chinese prisoners, hatred and contempt, out of which they kill, rape, loot, burn, and abduct most savagely and with no regret. Qi makes the Japanese’s two mass killings of almost two thousand Chinese POWs more about torture than killing, as the prisoners are beheaded or bayoneted to their slow and horrifying deaths. Meanwhile, with episodes of the Japanese’s indiscriminate killing, raping, looting, burning and abducting civilians, Qi reinforces the same brutal nature of Japanese violence against more vulnerable victims.
Qi also delves into Japanese culture for reasons that may explain their sexual atrocities against women. In the novel, Qi includes Japanese folksongs which describe how women are tortured to satisfy men’s sexual needs, indicating that the Japanese’s abusive treatment of women has much to do with their misogynous culture. In “The Difficult Bride,” the folksong includes several suggestions on how to tame a bride who cannot please her husband, each with increasing torture of the girl: “If she cannot//Rise high enough//A quilt underneath//Try to place//Even if with that//It is not enough//During the month of August//Some chestnut-burs//Pick up//And these under her buttocks//Try to place//If even that//Is not enough//With a frame//Hoist her up” (106). Other verses which appear pages later include several suggestions on how to get rid of the bride’s sexual smell: “Cook some salted codfish//Leach it//And put it//In a washing tub.//. . .//Even if this//Is not enough//Grind some spice and pepper//Into powder//And this is into the private part//Try putting//Nearly all the odor//Will disappear” (128-29). Describing women as uncooperative and filthy, this folksong reinforces, line by line, the key message that men are entitled to dispose of women with torture and punishment. Singing proudly, whole-heartedly, and repeatedly of their authoritative power over women throughout the novel, the Japanese soldiers became more obsessed with their misogynous beliefs that women are inferior and disgusting and therefore do not deserve men’s love and respect.

In fact, scholars suggest an increase of men’s misogyny in times of war, when men ecstatic about strength, power, and conquest tend to take the lead in national culture. To explain Japanese women’s second-class citizenship in war times, Bonnie B. C. Oh attributes it to Japan’s frequent engagement in war, during which “values of patriarchal order are pushed to extreme, when brutal force and physical strength are admired and rewarded” (6). Meanwhile, seeing
women as “real hindrances to carrying out warfare,” men either hope to “remove them” or penalize them by “inflicting violence (most often sexual violence) on them that is to women the ultimate shame and defilement, while to men, it is a source of conquest and even satisfaction” (6). Oh believes that the patriarchal ideologies prevalent in Japanese society were reinforced throughout the Fifteen-Year War (1931-1945), when Japan was dragged into “a prolonged war situation” (6). Growing up in a culture where women were belittled as disposable and filthy objects, Japanese military men never learned to treat Japanese women with love and respect, let alone the women who became their prisoners in Nanjing.

Qi also uses the third-party foreigners as narrators and allows them to witness the Japanese war crimes in their narratives. In one episode, Reverend Magee comes to John Rabe, Chair of the Nanjing International Safety Zone, with his “portable motion picture projector” to show Rabe a film he has made about the Japanese atrocities (202). Documented in the pictures are Japanese soldiers’ actions. The Japanese raped regardless of their victims’ age—girls as young as “eight years old” and women as old as “sixtyish” (202). They raped regardless of their victims’ conditions—including “Buddhist nuns” (202) and a “pregnant woman” (192). In all cases of raping and gang raping, the Japanese soldiers committed crimes more than rape; they killed their victims and defiled their bodies. Letting Magee discuss the pictures with Rabe, Qi proves the Japanese soldiers’ pretext for killing and raping both cruel and unjustifiable.

Qi employs foreigners as witnesses against the Japanese’s pretense of looting out of hunger. In the episode where John Rabe, together with several members of the Nanjing International Safety Zone, drives around the city to discover the true condition of the Japanese occupation, Qi records their observation as witnesses of the Japanese soldiers’ looting:
Japanese troops were scuffling around the city in groups of ten to twenty, smashing open windows and doors with guns, rocks, and bricks, and looting whatever valuables they could find. Not a single shop or home along Sun Yat-sen Boulevard and Heavenly Peace Road had been spared. Some of the Japanese soldiers dragged their booty away in crates, others forced Chinese laborers to transport for them the stolen goods in rickshaws, carts, or on carrying poles. (116)

The quantity and quality of the soldiers’ spoils betray their excuse for looting—that they are hungry. Their destructive means of forcing their way into the shops and residences for valuables made them no different from mobs who possessed goods through violence. Masahiro Yamamoto, in *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity*, quotes from a survey by the Nanking Municipal Autonomous Committee, in secret cooperation with some Americans, which suggests that “the Chinese residents in Nanking lost more than eleven million Chinese yuan—worth about 3.26 million U. S. dollars at the time—of property to Japanese looting” (132). The amount of Japanese looting was huge, considering that the Gross National Product in Japan that year was about 8.83 billion U. S. dollars (O’Neil 13).

Driven by greed, the Japanese did not spare the foreigners in looting, not even businesses run by their German allies. In the same episode, Rabe is enraged by the Japanese soldiers’ looting Kiessling & Bader, a German bakery “whose hand-made cheeses and fresh baked breads Rabe had enjoyed for the last ten years” (117). Seeing Rabe’s attempt to stop them, a soldier intimidates Rabe by pointing his rifle at Rabe, followed by “frantic gestures with his hand, pointing at his mouth and his belly” (117). However, Qi suggests that the soldier is lying about his motivation for looting the bakery. For one thing, the spoils were not only “taken from the bakery” but also from “upstairs, Herr Kiessling’s residence” (117). For another, among the spoils described by Rabe are “an expensive-looking fur coat, a large, gold-trimmed clock, and a small, exquisitely framed oil painting” (117), all luxurious items that did not ease the problem of
hungry people.

Yamamoto claims that the Japanese’s looting the possessions of the Westerners is a result of their lack of a proper attitude and knowledge on how to deal with the Westerners. With Japan’s increasing importance in Asia, the Japanese’s awe toward the Westerners is gradually replaced with pride and arrogance. Seeing themselves as no longer subordinate but “completely equal to Westerners,” they do not react with too much concern about how well they present themselves in front of the Westerners (146). Also, as Japan did not offer courses “in international relations or international law” to its army cadets, both Japanese soldiers and their commanders felt it not a big issue to loot the properties of the Westerners (147). Qi uses Japanese soldiers’ reckless looting of the Westerners’ properties to illustrate their growing perception that Imperial Japan was turning into a military empire. Having no scruples about the Westerners’ objection to their bold looting, these imperial soldiers are more callous in looting the properties of the Chinese in Nanjing—their prisoners.

The Japanese not only took unlawful possession of goods but also abducted people for service. Most notoriously, they abducted women for sexual service. As Ginling\(^3\) College was a refugee camp for women and children, Qi makes Minnie Vautrin, a Westerner working as the college’s acting President, a witness of Japanese soldiers’ frequent abduction of women from the camp. Despite her protests, the Japanese soldiers’ abduction of women never stops at Ginling. Qi describes the futile struggle of Eva when she was abducted like “a baby rabbit caught by two ravenous wolves” (162). In another case, the Japanese were tricky by taking the side gate after they abducted “two girls from East Court” and “at least twelve girls from the Science Hall”

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\(^3\) Qi uses the Wade-Giles system of Romanization for the pinyin spelling of Jinling in his novel.
(222), including Helen, who was three-months pregnant. The horrifying deaths of Eva and Helen may well represent the tragic fate of women missing during the Nanjing Massacre.

The Japanese perpetrators are notoriously known for their “Three All” policy—“Loot all, kill all, burn all”\(^4\) (Chang 215). To represent the intensity and scale of their atrocities, Qi uses the shifting lens of constructivism, weaving the perpetrators’ own observations of their crimes into narratives of the victims and the rescuers witnessing the unimaginable violence committed by Japanese soldiers in Nanjing. By doing so, Qi hopes to depict, with impartiality, a more truthful panoramic view of violence involved in the Nanjing Massacre.

To represent the intensity and scale of Japanese atrocities, Qi also relies heavily on characterization. Qi is perhaps the first Chinese American writer who portrays from top to bottom a group of Japanese perpetrators participating in the Nanjing Massacre. Following Georg Lukács’s claim about characters in the historical novel, Qi strives to make his characters “socially and psychologically true” (Lukács 19). In “To The Reader,” a personal annotation printed at the beginning of the novel, Qi declares that his characters, though fictional, are based upon “letters, testimonies, survivor accounts, diaries, and other documents made available through the work of many scholars, journalists, and others in China, Japan, and the United States” (ii). He acknowledges thirteen books, and particularly Iris Chang’s *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II*, which “brought global attention to the Massacre” upon its publication in 1997 (Zhu 86), and Honda Katsuichi’s *The Nanjing Massacre: A Japanese Journalist Confronts Japan’s National Shame* (1999), which “surely contribute[s]

\(^4\) In a note of reference given by Takashi Yoshida, the order is listed as “Kill all, burn all, loot all.” See Joshua A. Fogel’s *The Nanjing Massacre in History and Historiography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 125n85.
enormously to a more informed historical understanding of that brutal atrocity” (Tucker 322). Qi credits the thirteen books as sources which “have inspired me and shaped this book profoundly” (272). Qi uses historical data to construct a portrait of militarist Japanese society as well as to recount facts about Nanjing.

To characterize Japanese perpetrators especially, Qi uses psychoanalysis, hoping to contribute to what Iris Chang calls for as a deeper analysis of “exactly what went through the minds of Japanese soldiers and officers as they committed the atrocities” (Chang 217). Qi’s characterization through psychoanalysis enables him to reveal the minds of his Japanese characters. To locate the exact causes that transform them into war monsters, Qi inherits Hegel’s vision of historicism, highlighting the causal relationship “between cultural factors and psychological factors” (Spivey 8) that explains human motives and behaviors. By establishing the causes that incite people to become violent beyond reason and rationality, Qi proves that what the Japanese revisionists try to deny about Japan’s atrocities in World War II cannot be denied.

To summarize Hegel’s ideas about how cultural factors can affect individual psychology, Nancy Spivey states that “Hegelianism has a collectivist orientation, in which individuals are constituted, to a great extent, by the communities to which they belong” (8). To explain that individual psychology is similar within the same culture but tremendously different from culture to culture, she introduces what Hegel calls a nation’s “idiosyncracy of spirit,” a term that Hegel uses to describe a national psychology “which influences and connects such aspects of life as the political, religious, scientific, artistic, moral, and legal—those cultural products that differ in style, content, and reasoning from one society to another” (8). Qi describes in his novel the
dominance of such a peculiar idiosyncracy of spirit in Imperial Japan and its influence on the psychology of the Japanese people—Bushido. Originated from “a code of daily living for the fighting nobles,” Bushido eventually becomes “a system of moral principles” that prioritizes values like “rectitude, courage, benevolence, politeness, veracity, honor, loyalty, education, and self-control” (Nitobe 9-12). However, when Japan’s militarism took shape in the mid-nineteenth century and prevailed in the 1930s and 1940s, claiming its inheritance of Bushido by emphasizing only “exaggerated senses of loyalty and courage” but leaving behind other elements, “the Japanese seem to be headed for a spate of trouble, and sometimes the rest of the world gets some lumps, too” (Nitobe 4). Qi believes that Japan’s militarists distorted and dehumanized individual psychology, and it is via the construction of this causal relationship that he intensifies his characterization of the Japanese perpetrators in Nanjing.

To illustrate Nakamoto’s violent sexual tendencies in chain raping and killing, Qi portrays him as a narcissist whose self-love is symbolized in his constant desire for taking a bath and his need for looking at himself in the mirror while raping and killing. Like Ovid’s Narcissus, who suffers from not being able to join the love of the “reflection of his own face and body” through “the perfect pool of water” (McMurran and Howard 86), Nakamoto is also eager to embrace the love of himself and depends on bathing and mirror gazing as compromises.

Qi portrays Nakamoto as one whose moment of satisfaction comes only when he is pleased with his bath. Even in the battlefield, Nakamoto’s big concern is whether he can get a decent bath. Qi makes Nakamoto’s excessive desire for taking a bath highly metaphorical. For one thing, it is how a narcissist redeems his self-love “with the sight and pleasures of one’s own body” (McMurran and Howard 87). For another, it is how a sinner purges his poisonous body to
redeem his soul. After the bath, Nakamoto “felt so clean, like he had been many years ago, before he had become a cadet at the Ichigaya Military Academy. Now, he was still like the cute little son of *okaa-san* [mother]!” (130). Qi highlights the healing effect of the bath, which makes Nakamoto resume his humanity and awakens his tender love of his *okaa-san*:

> The last time he saw *okaa-san* was right before he left for China. That was six years ago. He had gone home to bid *okaa-san* farewell. Her frail figure, pale and bedridden with illness, brought tears to his eyes. The first thing he ought to do once the mopping-up campaigns in Nanking were over was to ask for leave to go back and see *okaa-san*. Otherwise, he would regret it for the rest of his life. (130)

Here, Qi makes Nakamoto a pitiful character by contradicting his social obligation as a fighter with his personal wish to be a filial son. By prioritizing his social obligation, Qi makes Nakamoto a social victim who has to suppress his personal desire. Nakamoto’s suppression of his personal desire, mixed with his troubled memories of Ichigaya, his first sexual experience, and his sexual fantasy of Reiko, drives him into desperate self-denial. Being an “injured” narcissist, he keeps raping and killing his victims, as his “self-righteous reaction . . . is intended to sexually humiliate or shame the victim just as the narcissist perceives himself or herself to have been sexually humiliated or shamed by their rejection” (McMurran and Howard 99).

Baumeister, Cataneses and Wallace, in their “narcissistic reactance theory of rape,” explain why an injured narcissist like Nakamoto would find raping hard to stop, as

> [t]he narcissist will desire sex more when it is refused. The risk of sexualized aggression towards the individual denying the narcissist the sex to which he or she feels entitled, therefore, increases. Consequently, the immediate goal of rape is to assert the narcissist’s freedom or entitlement to have sex with the person of his or her choice. Intercourse is desired more as a symbolic act of claiming the other person than as a means of gaining sexual satisfaction; while the narcissist’s initial desire was sex, the victim’s refusal made the narcissist then desire to prove that he could have the sexual access he desired. The primary goal then becomes egotistical rather than physical; the achievement of sexual gratification and orgasm becomes secondary. (Qtd. in McMurran and Howard 99-100)
Nakamoto’s attempts to redeem his self-love through sex are, unfortunately, never successful. His first sexual experience haunts him like a nightmare. Overwhelmed with the prostitute’s “limp mouth, filled with crooked, yellowed teeth” (132), projections from his injured memories of his first sexual experience, he rapes and kills girls who fall victims to his hand out of a narcissist’s “choice of the self as the object of libidinal interest” (McMurran and Howard 87). Not being able to “evolve” from his injured memories of Ichigaya and of his first sexual experience, Nakamoto develops even worse pathological forms of narcissism. Seeking redemption of self-love through revengeful raping and killing, he becomes a maniac, a fetishistic rapist, and a murderer, who hunts for beautiful virgins, forces them to dress in kimonos, rapes them, and then ruthlessly kills them.

Nakamoto’s narcissism is displayed at full scale in Nanjing. While waiting impatiently outside the city walls, Qi reveals Nakamoto’s two spontaneous desires on the spot: a satisfying bath and the conquest of Nanjing as if the city were a woman. In Nakamoto’s eyes, “[t]aking China Gate will be no different from deflowering a young geisha. You’ll have to peel off layers of barrier before reaching her naked self” (29). Meanwhile, Nakamoto had no sympathy for Nanjing, as it had lost its virginity and “had been torn and pounded many times before and was covered with deep scars” (30). Nakamoto’s merciless attitude toward Nanjing foreshadows his behavior toward the Chinese huaguniang, the flower-like (hua) virgin girls (guniang). To Nakamoto, the conquest of a city should be followed by the conquest of its girls, and he was well prepared for the second conquest by having “thoughtfully packed a small trunkful of kimonos before leaving Japan” (31).

Nakamoto’s virgin complex exemplifies “the Japanese man’s hostility toward woman,”
which, in Linda Gertner Zatlin’s opinion, displays similar “brutality, violence, and sadism” in Japanese shunga, paintings (ga) of sex (shun)\(^5\) (31). With her study of the representational change of shunga, Zatlin claims that the Japanese man’s hostility toward woman “culminated during World War II in the rape of a teenaged girl either in front of her parents or at ‘comfort stations’” (31). Knowing virginity is highly valued in China, the Japanese choose raping as a weapon to conquer the women in Nanjing. As Elisabeth J. Wood points out in “Multiple Perpetrator Rape During War,” wartime rape is an “instrumental violence,” which includes “sexual torture,” “sexual slavery,” “rape as a form of terror or punishment targeted at a particular group,” and “the decision (perhaps implicit) by commanders to reward troops for service with rape when strategically beneficial” (145).

Nakamoto hunted for beautiful Chinese virgin girls and raped them once he was in Nanjing. During the ceremony of the Japanese victory over Nanjing, he reflected on a similar victory of his own — taking over the city’s girls. He felt a sense of fulfillment, as “[t]he city had not disappointed him. At least, not as far as its huaguniang were concerned” (229). In fact, Nakamoto craved so badly for beautiful Chinese virgin girls that he boldly ordered Tajima to search for them at Jinling Women’s College, a refuge center for women and children which sheltered “somewhere near 10,000—far too many to count” (Thurston and Chester 99). With no intention to abide by international laws within safety zones, Tajima literally abducted Eva who “looked to be about thirteen or fourteen” with eyes “large and liquid. Perfect. Pure,” a girl who “would be perfect for Nakamoto” (149-50).

The rape of Eva climaxes Nakamoto’s narcissism with sexual aggression. To bring his

\(^5\) The literal meaning of shun is “spring,” a euphemism for sex as presumably the peak season for reproduction.
childhood fantasy of having sex with Reiko to life, Nakamoto made Eva dress up in a kimono, and “led her to the full mirror which stood on the floor next to the bed” (181). While the mirror serves for Nakamoto as a means of healing, it is where Eva is wounded by seeing all the horror and violence of her being raped:

He pressed his head against the back of her head, his face and chin rubbing against her hair and neck greedily. His calloused hands clawed at her scalp, grasping handfuls of black hair. She could see his face in the mirror, and with his hands he held her head, forcing her to fix her gaze on the abhorrent ravishment. (181)

If Nakamoto is turned into a victim of self-denial in Ichigaya, which, again, is the immediate cause of his first traumatic sexual experience, he becomes a cruel perpetrator by forcing his own trauma onto Eva, who will bear her own injured memories of the horror and violence of the whole rape scene—even if she is doomed to live only briefly thereafter. After the rape, Eva sees in the mirror “her disheveled hair, and the redness in her eyes and on her face” (183). Comparing Eva’s memories of her face and eyes to Nakamoto’s memories of the face and teeth of the prostitute in his first sexual experience, Qi highlights a similar process of victimization Nakamoto imposes on Eva and provides a symbol of his metamorphosis from a victim to a perpetrator.

Nakamoto’s narcissism is also exemplified with his insistence in preserving the cleanliness of the kimonos. Finding it hard to hold back her tears of terror and shame, Eva uses the kimono to cover herself and starts to sob. Seeing Eva messing up his kimono, Nakamoto bursts into “an uncontrollable rage” (183) and kills her as revenge for a messed dress. To contrast Nakamoto’s indifference to defiling the purity of Eva with his insistence on the purity of his kimono, Qi stresses Nakamoto’s severe narcissist symptoms.

Nakamoto’s narcissism turns into a revengeful weapon not only against his enemies but
also against his soldiers who offend him. To Nakamoto, there is only the most tenuous division line between his soldiers and his enemies. Anyone who enrages him becomes his enemy and can be punished to appease his anger. Without hesitation, he beheads Kuroda, who offends him by raping Ning-ning, a girl he has targeted for himself. Nakamoto never realizes that he is no different from Kuroda but is more dangerous in assuming his totalitarian power to dispose of others at will.

In *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity*, Yamamoto quotes from the diary of Matsui Iwane, the Japanese commander-in-chief in Nanjing, suggesting that Matsui knew about the atrocities committed by his soldiers but did not stop them. In his diary of December 20, 1937, Matsui wrote, “I was told that our soldiers committed a few cases of robbery (they mainly stole furniture) and rape for a certain time period. It was inevitable for a certain number of those crimes to happen in view of the situation” (129). By describing the tragic fate of Eva, Helen, and Ning-ning, Qi challenges Matsui’s assumption that the atrocities were committed by enlisted soldiers only. Rather, he reveals that the Japanese officers, instead of trying to stop their soldiers’ brutalities, engaged in war crimes and even surpassed their soldiers’ atrocities in intensity and scale. Thus, the Japanese war crimes in Nanjing did not follow the pattern of bottom-top violence that Matsui had suggested; on the contrary, the higher the military ranks, the more savage and atrocious the Japanese became. Qi claims that the senior officers’ involvement in atrocities made the Japanese war crimes multiply in intensity and scale, as the soldiers not only emulated their commanders but also competed to surpass one another. This is another reason why Qi characterizes the Japanese not as born devils, but innocent people who, by imitating the desire of their savage models, lose their human traits of sympathy and kindness.
In portraying Tajima and Kuroda, Qi describes their change from masochists to sadists as a result of what Girard calls “mimetic desire” (Violence and the Sacred 145). Girard argues that modern theorists are probably wrong when they “envisage man as a being who knows what he wants, or who at least possesses an ‘unconscious’ that knows for him” (Violence and the Sacred 145). Girard believes in the opposite, claiming that people do not know what they really want and can at their best wish for the “being”—the desirable qualities “they themselves [lack] and which some other person seems to possess” (Violence and the Sacred 146). To acquire the desirable “being,” a person “looks to that other person to inform him of what he should desire” and thus becomes a disciple by imitating the desire of that model (Violence and the Sacred 147).

In fact, the type of killing contest engaged in by Tajima is at the center of historical controversy. Historians like Chang, Yamamoto, and Yoshida all refer to Suzuki Akira’s publication of an article, “‘Nankin daigyakusatsu’ no maboroshi” (“The Illusion of the ‘Rape of Nanking’”), in April 1972 as the beginning of the Japanese revisionists’ open denial of Imperial Japan’s war atrocities in Nanjing (Chang 211; Yamamoto 236; Yoshida 82). In the article, Suzuki claims the innocence of “Mukai Toshiaki and Noda Tsuyoshi, who had been reported by a Japanese newspaper to have engaged in the sword contest to slash 100 enemies and were subsequently executed by the Chinese Nationalist government” (Yamamoto 236). Claiming the reporting of this incident as “politically motivated” (Yamamoto 237), Suzuki believes it “must be exaggerated” and therefore calls it an “illusion” (Yoshida 82). Joining Suzuki, Yamamoto Shichihei, a Japanese essayist, asserts from “his own military experience” that the competition “had no basis in fact” and the killing “was physically impossible,” considering Mukai “would

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6 “Suzuki” is the last name and “Akira” is the first name. As all three sources put this name with last name first in the Japanese way, I also do so accordingly.
have had to kill a person every 1 minute 36 seconds” if he would “have killed eighty-nine people in 6.25 miles” (Yoshida 81).

Qi wants to prove Suzuki and Yamamoto wrong in portraying Tajima, whose will to kill for revenge makes the killing competition possible and may be explained in terms of the mimetic desire shared by the Japanese perpetrators in Nanjing. Qi’s Tajima, whose childhood self-diffidence was gradually replaced with a triumphant self-respect, exemplifies Girard’s theory of violence and mimetic desire. In the novel, Tajima, who “had heard of the ‘contest to cut down a hundred’” followed by a new “one hundred and fifty campaign” assumes “he could perhaps surpass one hundred and fifty himself” (70-71). Qi highlights the episode of Tajima’s merciless killing of the Chinese POWs, incited by his wish of emulating the two contestants who aim to kill a hundred people first and keep raising their bar to a hundred and fifty later:

It had started two weeks ago in Ch’angchou and had been cheered along by glowing reports in the Tokyo Nichinichi Shimbun. By the time they reached the outskirts of Nanking, the second lieutenant from Yamaguchi prefecture had already killed 106 with his sword while the other second lieutenant’s tally stood at 105. They had decided to extend their game, and only two days ago a “one hundred and fifty campaign” had begun. (71)

Tajima believes that killing is the way to prove his capability. Apart from a strong desire to refute the misjudgment of him as sheepish and worthless by his schoolteachers and his parents, he desired to surpass the contestants. Viewing himself as no less competent than the two second lieutenants, Tajima embraces the idea of the killing contest with eagerness and assumes that “he could perhaps surpass one hundred and fifty himself” with ample time and a good sword (71).

Not only does Qi assert the reality of killing contests by presenting as fact Tajima’s rampage; he also asserts that such rampages were typical, even models for other soldiers, in the Girard pattern. Tajima aspires to incite such mimetic desire among his followers, who are
hesitant about killing the Chinese POWs at the beginning of the Massacre. Noticing an obvious reluctance in Kuroda to kill those unarmed Chinese soldiers, Tajima “roared to Kuroda, and marched to the first line of prisoners” (68), eager to demonstrate the will to kill. He “progressed further along the first line of prisoners with unabated ferocity. . . . He struck repeatedly. Three. Four. Five. Six. . . . He paused to check if his sword got bent or warped, and struck again. Seven. Eight” (70). Enraged with the presence of his Chinese enemies, who reminded him of the severe setbacks of the Japanese invasion of Shanghai with the expense of “thousands of Japanese casualties” and a delay in Japan’s overall plan to “take over the whole of China in three months” (30-31), he kills them with anger and hostility, taking no notice of the international laws that state war prisoners should be treated with humanity.

Tajima succeeds in stimulating Kuroda’s mimetic desire for violence and eventually changes him from a homely man to a war monster. Different from Nakamoto and Tajima, who are callous in their mechanical service for Japan’s imperial regime, Kuroda stands for the majority of the Japanese soldiers who dislike what they have to go through while fighting in a foreign land. Feeling it hard to bear physical and mental torture, he only wishes the war to end as soon as possible so that he can go back home to continue his normal life.

Qi presents a dramatic change in Kuroda when he faces mass killing: reluctance in the first instance, but willingness the second time. Burning with the desire to rectify his previous error of cowardice, he reacts with the skills he learns from Tajima. He knows how to give orders on lining the Chinese prisoners up so that his soldiers can kill those eight to nine hundred prisoners rapidly. Qi describes the mass killing as a most disheartening scene, which, unfortunately, arouses Kuroda’s sense of pride and satisfaction:
What a sight it had been. Kuroda had ordered his soldiers to stand at the front of each line of prisoners, and with bayonets at the ready, they made sport of who could cut their way through an entire line of men first. Having been stabbed or slashed, the men fell but did not die. More troops came down the line and finished them off, as well as any of those who tried to break out of their formation and flee. It was ritualistic slaughter. There were no bullets. The men were cut to pieces, impaled, eyes skewered, abdomens sliced open, and jugular veins severed by one decisive bayonet thrust. Blood sprayed in all directions, then poured forth in a relentless crimson torrent as the bodies writhed and thrashed in the dirt before they at last lay still. It was he, Kuroda, who had given the order. (109)

After his second mass killing, Kuroda becomes a different person, one who commits war crimes without suffering from guilt or shame.

Kuroda’s cruelty is highlighted in the scene of his raping Ning-ning. Qi includes an episode of Ning-ning trying to avenge her Grandpa’s death by biting into the hand of a Japanese soldier, who “gave shrill cry” and “pulled back his hand and struck her across the face again and again” before he “fell on top of her, pinning her arms behind her head with a bone crushing grip” (249). Judging from the short time elapsed between Nakamoto’s picking up Ning-ning with his binoculars and Nakamoto’s arrival at Ning-ning’s apartment only to find Kuroda raping her, the soldier who slapped Ning-ning must have been Kuroda, who not only bullied the teenage girl but also started a gang rape with his two peers waiting after him.

Qi makes the death of Kuroda highly symbolic. Different from the deaths of the Chinese and the Japanese who died at the hands of their enemies, he is beheaded by his own commander, not for raping, but for raping the wrong girl, the one who had already been targeted by his superior. In fact, the death of Kuroda results from what Girard calls the rivalry between the disciple and the model. According to Girard, “mimetic desire” is violent and destructive by placing the model in a rival position. While a man desires the same object his model desires, the “two desires converging on the same object are bound to clash. Thus, mimesis coupled with
desire leads automatically to conflict” (*Violence and the Sacred* 146). While his desire for Ning-
ing clashed with Nakamoto’s, Kuroda lost his life at the hand of his model. In this sense, Kuroda was not only a victim of war but also a victim of his mimetic desire, considering that he was neither a killer nor a rapist before he became a soldier.

Qi suggests that Kuroda’s loss of innocence begins with his fighting as a soldier for Japan. His change from a normal and loving human being to a cruel killer and rapist is the result of a socially mis-defined manhood and the bad modelling of his commanders. Qi portrays Kuroda as one who suffered like his victims, but for different reasons. Very often, his eyes welled up with tears of self-pity, anger, and desperation. He misses his parents and Miyoko, feels hopeless that the war will never end, and worries intensely that he might die at any time in a foreign land and might never be able to return home. To satisfy his physical and mental needs, he gives up the good part of his personality. He loots out of hunger and kills to save face. The prospect of never being able to return home makes him desperate. Never being treated with respect or sympathy by his superiors, he gets used to treating others with insult and cruelty. He slaps people across the face and beheads the Chinese prisoners with a sense of achievement. As Kuroda represents the majority of the Japanese soldiers, his death also symbolizes the fate of the common people in Imperial Japan, who pay a costly price to achieve the problematic desire of their state.

By constructing a causal relationship between mimetic desire and the metamorphosis of Qi’s Japanese characters from innocent and amorous adolescents into rapists and killers, Qi highlights the destructive impact of mimicking a violent manhood modelled in Japan’s Imperial Army upon the psyche of its youth. To reinforce how a violent manhood is mimetically desired
by Japanese soldiers, Qi also characterizes the perpetrators with a pattern of verbal emulation, where the junior officers talk to their subordinates in the same intimidating way they were talked to by their seniors. In the novel, Qi includes a top-to-bottom catchphrase frequently used by his Japanese characters—having someone “skinned.” While Nakamoto threatens to have Zenba, his orderly, “skinned” (25) if the latter is unable to provide a satisfying bath for him, Zenba picks up the catchphrase and uses it every time he speaks to his inferiors. He threatens to have the soldiers “skinned” (134) if they do not stop singing and to “skin” (251) Kuroda himself if the latter does not disappear immediately after being found raping Ning-ning. By making this catchphrase a sign of social power and superiority in the Imperial Army, Qi highlights the social construction of individuals through verbal mimesis.

Qi believes that the Japanese soldiers’ oppression of the Chinese results from mimesis of their senior officers who oppressed them verbally and physically. In addition to Zenba’s catchphrase of having someone “skinned,” there was Kuroda’s habit of threatening people by slapping them in the face. The memoir of a Japanese veteran recalling “the daily abuses of the recruits” describes how the expectations of the recruits reinforced the Japanese military hierarchy (Straus 35). Like Zenba to Nakamoto, “every recruit was assigned to an older soldier with great seniority” and was responsible for “preparing his senior’s food, washing his chopsticks, and taking care of his bedding in the morning and evening. . . . [and] rifle, boots, and horse. . .[and] noncommissioned officer’s underwear” (Straus 35-36). Like the ungrateful Nakamoto, the seniors did not feel thankful to the recruits for such service but abused them “for even the most insignificant transgressions, real or imagined” with the “custom of hitting recruits in the face, known as binta” (Straus 36). Tortured with humiliation by their seniors on a daily basis, the
Japanese enlisted men learn to oppress the Chinese whom they see as their inferiors.

In the novel, Qi implies that the Japanese assuming the role of a disciple following bad models also occurs on a national level. Qi maintains that Japan used to be an innocent nation which did not start the aggressive invasion of other countries until it learned from its own lesson of victimization during the Western invasion. The innocence of Japan until the mid-nineteenth century is reinforced in Chang’s *The Rape of Nanking*. Chang claims that Japan remained “insulated” from the rest of the world until 1852, when the invaders from the United States and other European countries forced it to “open its ports to commerce” (21). Seeing their “bow, sword, and musket” no rival to their enemies’ “swords and pistols,” the Japanese decided to bear their “humiliation,” “placate the intruders, learn from them, and quietly plan their retaliation” (21-22). After a hundred years, the Japanese “hurled themselves into the modern age—scientifically, economically, and militarily” (23). Not willing to remain a disciple, Japan joined its models and rivaled them by plundering China in a more violent way than how Japan had been plundered a hundred years earlier.

To highlight the idea of China being a sacrificial substitute in the chain of competition between Japan and the Western countries, Qi adds an episode when Katsuo Okazaki, the Consul General of Japan, comes to Rabe’s house and forces him to disperse the refugees in the Safety Zone. Rabe protests against Katsuo’s request, saying, “It is not safe for anyone to return home yet,” with reference to the fact that “[l]ast night [Wednesday, December 15, 1937] alone, at least a thousand women and girls were raped” (211). Not being able to refute Rabe’s accusation, Katsuo, first of all, warns Rabe of the equally brutal atrocities of the Westerners during “the fall of Constantinople, the Spanish Conquests, and, of course, the liberation of Peking from the
Boxers” (211-12), suggesting that the Japanese, if not better, were not worse than the Westerners regarding their treatment of the prisoners.

Then, Katsuo criticizes the foreigners’ rescue efforts to establish the Safety Zone, claiming that “history has not endowed the British, the Americans, or the Germans with any moral superiority to lecture Japan” (212). Not willing to be a disciple of the Westerners on “how to treat the people of a country she has just conquered after incurring heavy loss of life,” Katsuo is obsessed with his lecturing Rabe. Stimulated by Rabe’s silence, Katsuo “stood up, his face twitched” as he challenged Rabe with Japan’s ambition to rival the Western countries: “The Imperial Army of Japan is here to liberate China from Western imperialism which has been like a scourge on its history for a hundred years. The civilization of Asia shall now prosper together. . . .” (212). Katsuo’s claim of Japan’s attempt to lead China into civilization and prosperity echoes the ideology of the Western encroachment of Asia. Katsuo, though an ambitious aggressor, makes a plausible comparison between Japan and its models, all seeking prosperity through violence and war.

As a whole, Qi maintains that the Japanese’s cruelty and violence are not their genetic properties but were acquired by imitating models who possessed the destructive “being” which is socially desired. Using narratives in multiple points of view, Qi juxtaposes perspectives representing perpetrators, victims, and rescuers on individual, communal, and global levels. By doing so, he hopes to prove that the Japanese atrocities are unjustifiable on the global level even if the individual and communal levels show them to be comprehensible. Also, Qi uses psychoanalysis to draw causal connections between the atrocities of his Japanese characters with different combinations of individual, familial, historical, social, and cultural factors, suggesting
that these Japanese invaders became cold-blooded killers and rapists after their innocence was destroyed by emulating the problematic masculinities defined in Japanese society. By paralleling perceptions of the victims and the third-party witnesses with those of the perpetrators, Qi shows how Imperial Japan’s socially defined heroism and patriotism manifested themselves in cruelty, lust, hatred, and above all, delusions emerging from ignorance and bias.

Believing that a sincere apology comes after a willingness for understanding, Qi suggests implicitly that the Japanese revisionists today should not restrict their understanding of the Nanjing Massacre to the narratives of Nakamoto, Tajima, and Kuroda. They should open their hearts to the narratives of Grandpa, Ning-ning, Eva, Helen, Ling Yao-guang, Wang Bao-zi, John Rabe, Minnie Vautrin, and Reverend Magee. Kenzaburō Ōe, the Japanese novelist and Nobel Laureate, warns Japan of the danger of its being unwilling to acknowledge the Nanjing Massacre and make a sincere apology to its victims: “If we let this situation continue, Japan might commit another serious mistake in the twenty-first century. The Japanese people will not survive then” (Ōe and Kim 292). Qi proposes that only when the Japanese revisionists are willing to listen to the narratives of the Chinese victims and third-party witnesses and to reflect upon the Nanjing Massacre from perspectives of humanism and cosmopolitanism will they be ready to face their past errors and learn a lesson from history. In Qi’s hope, the narratives of the perpetrators, victims, and rescuers in his novel can also promote two understandings of the Nanjing Massacre among readers of the English world, and particularly the American public. First, the Nanjing Massacre approximates to the Holocaust in World War II regarding the comparable intensity and scale of violence involved in both human catastrophes. Second, considering the cost of lives and the suffering of ordinary people in Nanjing, war and violence are the least effective means of
solution to international conflicts. They leave nations in conflicts that increasingly intensify misunderstanding, bigotry, antagonism, and hatred. By highlighting the destructive and inhumane nature of war and violence, Qi suggests implicitly that people all over the world should work together and find more constructive and peaceful means to solve international conflicts.
CHAPTER 3
RESCUERS, HEROISM, AND THE “ORDINARINESS OF GOODNESS”
IN HA JIN’S NANJING REQUIEM

Dark times paralyze most people, but some very few, for reasons most of us will never understand, are able to set aside all caution and do things even they could not imagine themselves doing in ordinary times. It is hard to talk about a bright spot in the horror that is the Rape of Nanking, but if one can, it is surely to shine a light on the actions of a small band of Americans and Europeans who risked their lives to defy the Japanese invaders and rescue hundreds of thousands of Chinese refugees from almost certain extermination. These courageous men and women created the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone. (Chang 105-6)

As publications in English on the Nanjing Massacre had been few until Iris Chang’s The Rape of Nanking in 1997, the American public knows little about the heroic deeds of the rescuers, mainly Americans and Germans, who voluntarily organized and served through the International Committee for the Nanjing Safety Zone and the Nanjing International Red Cross Committee.¹ Names of the committees’ “core members” listed in alphabetical order are M. S. Bates, James McCallum, Charles Riggs, Lewis S. C. Smythe, C. S. Trimmer, Minnie Vautrin, Robert O. Wilson, and C. Y. Xu, who “work[ed] industriously for a very long time” and “endeavored to help 250,000 Nanking refugees within the Safety Zone” (Zhang xxi-xxii). While the names of Mies Giep, Oskar Schindler, Irena Sendler, and Raoul Wallenberg are well known by American school children for their heroic rescue of the Jewish people from the Holocaust, the

¹ Of the twenty-five people who participated in the organization work of the two committees, only half stayed after the fall of Nanjing and participated in the rescuing work. See Kaiyuan Zhang’s Eyewitnesses to Massacre: American Missionaries Bear Witness to Japanese Atrocities in Nanjing (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2001), xix-xxii, and Timothy Brook’s Documents on the Rape of Nanking (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999), 3-4.
names of the above-mentioned rescuers in Nanjing are new to most American adults.\(^2\) Impelled by a great respect for and a sincere gratitude to these forgotten or perhaps never-known heroes, Ha Jin, a novelist and professor of English at Boston University, wrote Nanjing Requiem (2011), a eulogy in memory of a group of rescuers described by Chang as “some two dozen foreigners [who] managed to do everything they did while fifty thousand Japanese soldiers ripped apart the city” (108). In light of François Rochat and Andre Modigliani’s concept of the “ordinariness of goodness,” I would argue that Jin’s casting these foreigners’ rescuing efforts in the shadow of their errors of judgment, failures to protect the refugees, and reluctance to prove their innocence makes their heroic deeds less a reflection of the virtues of Aristotelian heroes than an exhibition of what Rochat and Modigliani suggest is the “ordinariness of [human] goodness.”

In portraying these rescuers, (in particular, Minnie Vautrin), Jin focuses on the dual character of these ordinary people undertaking heroic actions in times of a social crisis. On one hand, they are heroes who demonstrate tremendous courage to protect the Chinese refugees and to preserve correspondence, photographs, diaries, and medical reports, which later became important documents used as undeniable evidence of the Japanese war crimes at one or both trials in Tokyo (from 1946-1948) and in Nanjing (from 1946-1947).\(^3\) On the other hand, they are ordinary people whose experiences as businessmen, missionaries, professors, and doctors are of no avail to stop atrocities but lead to their frequent failures and sufferings while confronting the Japanese soldiers. Structuring the novel in the narrative pattern of an Aristotelian tragedy, Jin


endows his rescuers with most traits of Aristotelian tragic heroes—“noble (spoudaios)” characters whose “fall from happiness to misery” is caused by an “error (hamartia) [of judgment]” and leads to the audience’s “pity” and “fear” (Golden 48). However, Jin’s rescuers differ from Aristotelian heroes in two fundamental ways. For one thing, they are ordinary people who seem to lack the greatness of Aristotelian heroes regarding their social status and power of influence. For another, their perception of the nature of their errors rather as “moral” than “intellectual” is the opposite to that of the Aristotelian heroes, whose downfall results from “some intellectual, not moral, error” (Golden 48). To elaborate these differences of Jin’s rescuers from the Aristotelian heroes, I borrow Rochat and Modigliani’s concept of the “ordinariness of goodness.” To consider that Jin portrays a group of ordinary people undertaking heroic deeds in times of a social crisis, I argue that Jin’s depiction of the “ordinariness of goodness” shared among these rescuers only reinforces the tragic nature of the Aristotelian heroes, making these rescuers’ errors of judgment more fearful, their sufferings for helping other people more pitiful, and their courage in accomplishing the relief work more heroic and admirable.

In “The Ordinary Quality of Resistance: From Milgram’s Laboratory to the Village of LeChambon,” Rochat and Modigliani propose the concept of the “ordinariness of goodness,” which describes the social psychology of human kindness in circumstances of war and violence:

Those who refused to obey the orders of authorities, and came to the aid of persecuted people, were neither saints nor heroes. Rather, their goodness was that of ordinary men and women who were responsive to the victims’ manifest need for help. The way they acted was part of their everyday life, and they did not perceive it as something extraordinary. They did not feel like heroes at the time, nor do they want to be seen as such in retrospect. . . . With respect to rescuers, we found that those who aided persecuted people acted in ways best conceptualized in terms of the ordinariness of goodness. (197-98)

As defined here, the “ordinariness of goodness” refers to the human kindness that is of the
ordinary people, by the ordinary people, and toward other ordinary people. This human kindness, lacking expertise and meticulous planning as it is rooted in an intuitive response to the needs of those persecuted in war and violence, seems to be different from that of the great Aristotelian heroes. In fact, the “ordinariness of goodness” is a key concept to understand Jin’s portrayal of the rescuers in the Nanjing Massacre. Risking their lives to save the Chinese from the harm of the Japanese soldiers, these rescuers never see themselves as heroes doing extraordinary things. Working as businessmen, missionaries, professors, and doctors, these rescuers are simply ordinary people who have no experience of dealing with atrocities and therefore cannot consistently respond to violence with sound judgment and wise decision. Also, in regard to the compensatory nature of the Safety Zone, despite the rescuers’ will to protect the refugees, the best result the Safety Zone yields would be a reduction of the frequency and intensity of violence. As most rescue work is “seldom premeditated” (Rochat and Modigliani 197), the rescuers are often under huge stress, seeing their efforts progress only little by little in “an unfolding process” (Rochat and Modigliani 198) and mixed with regression because of their mistakes from time to time. Not always succeeding in stopping the Japanese atrocities within the Safety Zone, they are burdened with the guilt of betraying the trust of the refugees by not keeping their promises of protection. Meanwhile, never preparing themselves to face outsiders’ unjust accusations about their motivation of protection by the Japanese perpetrators, the Chinese victims, and the third-party witnesses, the rescuers are overwhelmed by the consequences of their errors of judgment and dragged into a false perception that their errors are not “intellectual” but “moral.” Feeling their errors are beyond redemption, they pay a miserable price for their good will, in Minnie Vautrin’s case with her precious life.
Unlike Shouhua Qi’s *When the Purple Mountain Burns*, which focuses on the Japanese atrocities outside the Nanjing Safety Zone, Jin’s *Nanjing Requiem* depicts the Japanese war crimes inside the Safety Zone, particularly within Jinling Women’s College, where as many as 10,000 women and children were taken in as refugees at its peak time. The novel begins with a prelude that presents a short, yet horrifying reminiscence of Ban, the college’s errand boy, who narrowly escapes death after being abducted by the Japanese soldiers as a coolie. Thereafter, the novel discloses how a group of foreigners, in particular, Minnie Vautrin, the acting president of Jinling Women’s College during the Nanjing Massacre, voluntarily set up the Nanjing International Safety Zone, confront the Japanese soldiers in person, and risk their lives to protect the refugees.

In a talk at Brown University on Nov. 28, 2011, Jin discussed the challenges he faced while writing this novel. Upon his choice of representing the foreigners’ heroic deeds by focusing on just one rescuer and putting the others in the background, Jin claims, “Because the event was so big, it would always be better or productive to approach it through an individual’s experience, and then through that experience to make this story more suggestive and expansive.” After a long period of thinking and planning, Jin finally decided on “Minnie Vautrin as a possibility, as a point for entry. . . . [b]ecause she was an obscure figure to the Chinese and also to the Americans” (“Ha Jin Reading *Nanjing Requiem*”). To scholars and to ordinary readers, Minnie’s obscurity is highlighted by her tragic suicide. How could she risk her life to maintain the survival of tens of thousands of refugees during the Massacre but decide to end her

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4 See “Ha Jin Reading *Nanjing Requiem*” at www.youtube.com/watch?v=m0QfJYg2_zg, a talk given by Ha Jin at Brown University on Nov. 28, 2011.
5 For analytical convenience, this chapter addresses Minnie Vautrin as “Minnie,” the name Jin uses for this character throughout *Nanjing Requiem*. 
own life when the danger seemed to have passed over? To Jin, Minnie’s suicide becomes even more poignant as a result of his reading about Iris Chang’s tragic suicide. Jin seems to agree with Brett Douglas, Chang’s husband, who finds that behind his wife’s suicide at the age of thirty-six, seven years after her courageous writing and publicity of *The Rape of Nanking*, there “remain a number of myths and misunderstandings” (B. Douglas 230). Like Chang, who underwent a breakdown and several failed psychiatric treatments before she ended her life, Minnie suffered a similar nervous breakdown around May 1940, followed by several unsuccessful psychiatric treatments in the United States and her eventual suicide “a year to the day after she left Nanking” (Zhang 330). While Brett Douglas, Chang’s husband, admits his lack of certainty “about what caused Iris’s breakdown” (Chang 234), Minnie’s breakdown seems to Jin a significant point of entry to a truthful representation of her as a similar, if not identical, fallen heroine like Chang. Similar to W. G. Sebald, whose writing of *The Emigrants* (1996) resulted from his perception of an interconnection between “his former teacher’s suicide” and “the preceding suicide (1978) of the Austro-Jewish writer Jean Amery, the figurehead of the German literary tradition of testimonial writing regarding the Shoah,” Jin wants to delve into the similar trajectory of Minnie’s and Chang’s suicides so as to demystify what Sebald regards as the “sort of constellation [that]6 emerged about this business of surviving, and about the great time lag between the infliction of injustice and when it finally overwhelms you (13)”7 (Szentivanyi 356).

In the same talk at Brown University, Jin reiterates his wish to represent the foreigners “more objectively,” claiming he would restore the historical truths as they were (“Ha Jin Reading

6 This insertion is in the original passage.
city-Nanjing Requiem”). Like Kate Grenville, who “avows that ‘I didn’t want people unsympathetic to the idea of frontier violence to be able to say: it’s just a novel, she made it up, none of this really happened,’” Jin also wants his novel to address “combine[d] ethical and epistemological registers” (Dalley 54) so that readers take it more seriously. To achieve historical objectivity, Jin conducts substantial research on Minnie and credits in his “Author’s Note” eighteen publications for “the information, facts, and historical details,” including archival evidence like Minnie Vautrin’s Diary (1937-1940) kept by Yale Divinity School Library. However, the more Jin read about the “‘Living Goddess’ or the ‘Goddess of Mercy’” (Hu xv-xvi), the more he realized that existing scholarship on Minnie did not leave him much freedom to fictionalize her obscurity. For one thing, her “526-page diary covering the period 1937 to 1941” (Zhang 329) records her life during the Nanjing Massacre almost on a daily basis; for another, several biographies and one fictional work have already represented other writers’ interpretations of Minnie’s life and death. After “thirty-two drafts,” Jin found that his “four novellas” about Minnie still “didn’t gel” and that “to give Minnie a voice is beyond my ability” (“Ha Jin Reading Nanjing Requiem”).

Eventually, Jin decided to stop his research on historical evidence, as it seemed to be “endless . . . [and] a trap to write historical fiction” (“Ha Jin Reading Nanjing Requiem”). Instead, he started to frame his own interpretation of Minnie into what Hamish Dalley calls “a hybrid text”—a narrative which mixes “fictionality and actuality” and whose “plausibility is presented (through paratextual framing, say) as a criterion of evaluation” (55). Claiming that “the historical novel is one of the most popular and critically significant genres of postcolonial writing,” Dalley proposes an identifiable “commitment to plausibility” (51) in contemporary historical novels, whether postcolonial or not, which “demand to be read as serious
interpretations of the actual past and evaluated against norms similar—though not identical—to those of professional history” (57). As “the character ‘Napoleon’” in “a document, a historical novel, and a counterfactual historical novel . . . can be understood as varying interpretations of the same (historically existent) individual” (Dalley 55-56), Jin believes his Minnie in Nanjing Requiem is constructed upon his epistemological perception of the heroine’s courageous life and tragic suicide.

In general, the biographies and historiographies of Minnie have provided considerable analysis of her life in Nanjing and her suicide in the United States, yet many questions still need further exploration. For one thing, the existing interpretations have substantial variations regarding her breakdown. Hua-ling Hu in American Goddess at the Rape of Nanking: The Courage of Minnie Vautrin suggests that Minnie’s breakdown was a combined result of her feeling “exhausted and depleted of her energy” with all the rescuing work, her increasing agony with “Ginling’s administrative problems and disputes between staff members,” her worries that “she might not have a place to live for the year on furlough in the States,” and her self-accusation of “all the problems and failures that Ginling encountered” (132-33). Lawrence Thurston and Ruth M. Chester in Ginling College attribute Minnie’s breakdown to her “brood[ing] over those she had not been able to save” and her being “distressed over the prolongation of the war” (101-2). For another, the existing interpretations have made little satisfactory analysis regarding Minnie’s allowing the Japanese to search for prostitutes among the Jinling refugees on December 24, 1937, a huge mistake that threatened to eclipse her reputation as a rescuing heroine. Some interpretations of the event are based on mere assumptions, some offer just statements of the fact, and some do not mention it at all. Minnie records this event in her diary without explaining why
she grants the Japanese’s request:

The day before Christmas! About ten o’clock I was called to my office to interview the high military adviser for the—division. Fortunately he had an interpreter with him, an old Chinese interpreter for the Embassy. The request was that they be allowed to pick out the prostitute women from our ten thousand refugees. They said they wanted one hundred. They feel if they can start a regular licensed place for the soldiers then they will not molest innocent and decent women. After promising they would not take any of the latter, we permitted them to begin their search, the adviser sitting in my office during the search. After a long time they finally secured twenty-one. Some, they think, made off when they heard such a search was to be made and some are still hiding. Group after group of girls have asked me if they will select the other seventy-nine from among the decent girls—and all I can answer is that they will not do so if it is in my power to prevent it. (Vautrin 92-93)

Based on Minnie’s diary, Chang in The Rape of Nanking comes up with two possibilities, saying that “[p]erhaps she had no choice in the matter or perhaps she actually believed that once the Japanese left with the prostitutes for their military brothel they would stop bothering the virgins and respectable matrons in the refugee camps” (135). Hu in her biography of Minnie simply states the fact as it is, saying that “Minnie allowed them to make the search only after they promised that they would not take any decent women” (101). Thurston and Chester in Ginling College do not say a word about this incident.

Feeling the existing biographies and historiographies of Minnie leave some important gaps to fill, Jin creates his own story for Minnie’s breakdown and suicide. As a whole, Jin’s construction of Minnie differs from that of the others because of his focus on two aspects that are not well covered in the existing historical accounts: the cause of her breakdown and her mental state at the moment of her suicide. To explore the cause of Minnie’s breakdown, Jin puts the existing interpretations in the backdrop and foregrounds Minnie’s breakdown as a result of her accumulation of wartime knowledge and her awareness of her fatal mistake. For one thing, what Minnie learns from the Nanjing Massacre is her witnessing how atrocities, betrayals, and power
struggles drive the lives of ordinary people, herself as one of them, into havoc. For another, what Minnie becomes gradually aware of is her fatal mistake, accused as being immoral for surrendering the prostitute refugees to the Japanese soldiers and keeping reticent in her administrative report to the Board of Trustees. To describe her mental state at the moment of her suicide, Jin claims that Minnie’s choice of suicide is a conscious decision of not compromising on unjust accusations of her as an immoral human being. Not being able to prove her innocence, Minnie nevertheless feels it unfair that her rescuing efforts are judged negatively and hopes to use her suicide as an utterance of her final protest against the accusers.

In characterizing Minnie, Jin highlights her dual character as a hero and an ordinary woman. Though she is widely acclaimed as the “Goddess of Mercy” by the refugees in Jinling (140 and 214), Jin’s Minnie seems to be only a goddess in heart but not power to protect in her confrontation with the Japanese soldiers. Portraying her as an Aristotelian hero actively engaged in a noble course of protecting the Nanjing refugees, Jin also characterizes Minnie as an ordinary woman, making her descend from the altar of a mythological heroine. She makes poor decisions leading to grave consequences, suffers tremendously by regretting her mistakes, becomes exhausted physically and mentally, and feels it a great torture that her relief work is judged with bias and partiality. Despite her courage and dedication, she fails in stopping the Japanese from molesting the refugees at Jinling. Among her errors of judgment, two stand out as if they were “moral” errors: one is her acquiescence to the Japanese’s demand for a hundred prostitutes from Jinling, which causes some published commentaries to accuse her of collaboration with the Japanese persecuting the Chinese refugees; the other is her reticence on this incident in her end-of-semester official report to Jinling’s Board of Trustees in New York, which causes her to be
accused of cheating by Mrs. Dennison, the college’s former president. What saddens Minnie is her sense of powerlessness in protecting the refugees and herself, but what crushes her will to live is the accusation of her as an immoral human being. It is this maliciously negative judgment of her regardless of all her heroic efforts that leads to her sense of hopelessness in a world filled with violence, lies, betrayals, and injustice.

In his letter to “Dear Friends of Minnie Vautrin” on May 15, 1941, the day after Minnie’s suicide, C. M. Yocum, the executive secretary of the United Christian Missionary Society, compares Minnie to a “soldier who had fallen on the battlefield” and thus “was truly a casualty of the war” (qtd. in Hu 144). Jin embeds this information in his novel by presenting the sad response of Minnie’s friend who believes Minnie’s work as a rescuer is understated and Minnie is not just “a fighter” but really “a hero” (295). To Jin, Minnie is a hero in spite of her mistakes, and her undeserved misfortune elevates her to the level of an Aristotelian tragic hero, described by Amélie Oksenberg Rorty as one whose heroic character “makes him [or her] susceptible to a deflection—to an erring waywardness—that brings disaster, producing a reversal in the projected arc of his [or her] life” (2). It is this similarity that Jin uses to structure Minnie’s life and death. Divided into four sections, “The Fall of the Capital,” “The Goddess of Mercy,” “All the Madness,” and “The Grief Everlasting,” the novel, in regard to its depiction of Minnie’s downfall, displays an identifiable narrative pattern of an Aristotelian tragedy—exposition (Minnie’s preparing Jinling for refugees), complication (her awareness of her lack of power to protect the refugees), climax (her fatal mistake), falling action (her desperate redemption), and resolution (her breakdown and suicide). From the acting president of Jinling who saves tens of thousands of lives to a depressed woman who kills herself, Minnie is depicted as a falling
heroine, who is driven to desperation by her increasing awareness of her decreasing power of protection that makes her mistake beyond redemption. Working as agents of compensation in the Sino-Japanese confrontation, the rescuers become part of the compensation themselves.

To construct Minnie’s downfall, Jin not only depends on the narrative structure of an Aristotelian tragedy, but he also chooses carefully a narrative point of view. For fear that his English might give Minnie a false voice, Jin is reluctant to let Minnie tell the story or speak of her mind with lengthy monologues (“Ha Jin Reading Nanjing Requiem”). Instead, he invents fictional characters who get stuck in a variety of desperate situations and then projects Minnie’s mental state through her interaction with these characters. Believing in Ann Rigney’s claim that invention “is a possible way into understanding that which is absent,” Jin tries to incorporate into his novel what Rigney refers to as “‘invented exemplars’—tailor-made evidence that represents historical phenomena by substituting created objects for putatively verifiable facts, events, or individuals” (qtd. in Dalley 57). By turning these invented facts, events, and individuals into “referential statements . . . [that] take on meaning and significance” (LaCapra 1), Jin offers a variety of fictional situations that demonstrate his causal analysis of Minnie’s involvement in the rescuing work during the Nanjing Massacre and her eventual breakdown and suicide after the Massacre.

Jin’s most important fictional character is Anling, the narrator of the novel whom he feels more confident to give a genuine voice. While other fictional characters come and go in the novel, Jin makes Anling keep Minnie’s company from page 1 to page 285, leaving the last fifteen pages without Anling for Minnie’s medical treatment and suicide in the United States. A fifty-year-old Chinese staff worker who serves as Minnie’s assistant during the Massacre, Anling is a
perfect narrator of Minnie’s life because of her work bond with Minnie, whom she follows almost everywhere at anytime. Jin also makes Anling an ideal narrator of Minnie’s mental state because of their emotional bond, which is exemplified by their closeness in age (both in their early fifties), background (both working at Jinling for years and feeling a deep affection for Jinling), and personality (both in great sympathy with the refugees). In fact, Jin suggests explicitly their emotional bond at the beginning of the novel when Minnie jokes about Anling’s ability to “read my mind” like “a worm inside me” (23). In his Brown University talk, Jin denies that Anling is a version of Tsen Shui-fang, the real historical figure who worked as Minnie’s assistant at Jinling (“Ha Jin Reading Nanjing Requiem”). In spite of their similarities in age, personality, and habit of keeping a diary, Jin makes Anling a more complicated character than Tsen by inventing her son’s marriage to a Japanese girl while he was studying medicine in Japan. Anling’s familial bond with the Japanese, the Chinese’s enemy of war, expands the complicated social and emotional context of her work, which reflects the same complexities facing Minnie, who sees Nanjing as home in spite of her American nationality.

Jin invents facts and events as well. In the novel, Jin depicts Minnie’s suicide as her conscious choice, since it is fully prepared. Before her suicide, Minnie “left a note saying that she ended her life this way because she was sure that she could never fully recover. She also mentioned that she had a will in a safety-deposit box in the bank” (294). Here, by not telling from what Minnie was unable to “recover,” Jin suggests multiple explanations for Minnie’s suicide. What does she believe she could never fully recover from? Her physical depletion? Her shock of not being able to protect the refugees? Her guilt of her fatal mistake? Or the aftermath of her trying to rectify her mistake? In the novel, Jin includes all the above reasons but puts them
into the backdrop of the scenario. Instead, he proposes that Minnie’s daily routine as a witness living through lies, betrayals, and injustice generates the primary impossibility of her recovery. In other words, her tragic downfall is the result of her mental deterioration caused by her witnessing and memory of lies, betrayals, and injustice, which are equally destructive and catastrophic as violence. Corresponding to the narrative pattern of violence, Jin constructs a parallel pattern of Minnie’s state of mentality based on her witness and memory of lies, betrayals, and injustice. Via Minnie’s regressive mentality, Jin claims that these derivatives of violence, though not named violence, can hurt and kill as mercilessly as violence itself.

Overall, Jin depicts Minnie’s regressive mentality via descriptions of her daily routine as a witness of violence. Her experiences, observations, and reflections of the intensity and scale of violence in Nanjing become what Veena Das refers to as the triad in the act of witnessing—“violence, poisonous knowledge, and subjectivity” (205). To represent Minnie’s deteriorating self, Jin first of all portrays Minnie as constantly failing in her rescuing work and turns her awareness of her powerlessness against violence into her poisonous knowledge, which displays itself with Jenny Edkins’s two referents of trauma—“a situation of utter powerlessness” and “a betrayal of trust” (4). Then Jin invents dozens of fictional characters, mainly Chinese victims, who function in the novel as exemplars for the projective identification of Minnie’s subjectivity. Such identification is referred by Hanna Segal as a process of externalization when “parts of the self and internal objects are split off and projected into the external object” (qtd. in Sandler 13). Described by James S. Grotstein as “a mental mechanism whereby the self experiences the unconscious phantasy of translocating itself, or aspects of itself, into an object for exploratory or defensive purposes,” projective identification is generally considered “responsible for vicarious
introspection and, in its most sublimated form, for empathy” (123). Using the victims “to voice and to show the hurt” (Das 205), Jin projects Minnie’s deteriorating mental state by witnessing and feeling the hurt, which is transformed into fear, stress, guilt, grievance, and despair at each narrative stage. Her suicide, a voluntary decision on when and how to end her hurt, is indeed her final claim of subjectivity as a protest against the unjust world. By weaving Minnie’s regressive mental state on the psychoanalytical level into her witnessing triad on the narrative level, Jin builds Minnie’s suicide upon her perception of a miserable, weak, and useless self struggling in vain against wartime evils.

To begin with, at the narrative stage of exposition, Minnie’s witness and memory are depicted through her visiting injured and dying Chinese soldiers, who exemplify her mental state of fear. Jin describes Minnie as “shocked and also disturbed . . . by the sight of more than three hundred soldiers lying about in the train station” with “gunshot wounds” and “lost limbs” (20) and “infested with lice and fleas and depleted of strength” (21). While “[t]he waiting hall brought to mind a temporary morgue,” Minnie is upset by the men’s “moaning” in pain, “curs[ing] their superiors,” and “ray[ing] ‘Kill, kill!’” (20). Together with Anling, her assistant, Minnie notices a “motionless” man “whose right leg had been shot off close to the hip . . . [with] his gaping wound emitting a foul odor. . . . [and] four or five tiny maggots wiggling on the edge of the decayed flesh” (22). Demanding someone should “dress his wound and let him die like a human being” (23), Minnie learns that there is “no medicine, not even rubbing alcohol or iodine solution” (22). What adds to her knowledge of wartime violence is that these soldiers will die with perhaps neither “a list of their names” nor “a cemetery” in memory of them, a second betrayal of them by their superiors who “wouldn’t bother about these useless men anymore” (22). Thinking that the
volunteers’ work “to feed them and give them water” only means “to prolong their agony” (23), Minnie is disappointed with her own powerlessness in this situation. She shares with Anling her wish that she could be more useful, imagining, “If our students were still around. Then we could bring over two or three classes. Some of the well-heeled students would donate medicines and bandages for sure” (23).

The soldiers, who are left to their suffering once they become useless, are the first exemplars of Minnie’s perception of her self. According to Grotstein, projective identification “follows the principle of generalization, corresponding to Freud’s condensation, which accounts for the unification of objects on the basis of their similarities, contrived or natural” (123). To Minnie, the soldiers’ conditions become easy links via which she perceives her own condition before her suicide. Jin depicts Minnie’s pre-suicide condition as equally miserable to that of the soldiers. Minnie, who “gassed herself by turning on all the jets on the stove” (294), feels useless and deserted, just like the soldiers at Hsia Gwan. On the day of her suicide, “she was left alone in the apartment” (294); before her suicide, she was in agony of seeing herself as a burden that nobody would want to take in:

For months Minnie had been expecting to hear from Jinling and to be invited back to China. The only letter that she received was two weeks ago, from her niece in Michigan, who was willing to take her in and care for her. Evidently someone had made an agreement with her niece, which Minnie construed as a means of abandoning her. After reading her niece’s letter, Minnie smirked. She was too proud to become a responsibility to others. (294)

What Minnie fears is her prospect of ending up like the soldiers, whose dying is only “prolong[ed] agony” (23). Wishing to die like a human, Minnie decides to commit suicide and takes it as a voluntary claim of her subjectivity. As a means to end her phobia, Minnie’s suicide can be explained by Freud’s ideas of the defensive role of projection. Seen as “the attempts at
flight represented by phobic avoidances,” Minnie’s suicide results from her conscious decision,
when “[t]he ego behaves as if the danger of a development of anxiety threatened it not from the
direction of an instinctual impulse but from the direction of a perception” (qtd. in Sandler and
Perlow 2).

The soldiers’ misery, narrated with details of sight, hearing, and smell, marks only the
beginning of Minnie’s learning about the terror of war. At the narrative stage of complication, Jin
makes Minnie’s witness and memory more focused on the constant failure of her peer rescuers,
who exemplify her mental state of stress. In general, Jin’s depiction of the rescuers’ heroic spirit
is more of a eulogy, singing less of what the heroes achieve and more of what they fail to
achieve. Compared with an appraisal of the rescuers’ strenuous efforts to save the Chinese
refugees within the Safety Zone, Jin seems to be more concerned with a representation of their
sense of helplessness and powerlessness. Reinforcing their limitations as normal human beings,
Jin elevates their suffering and sacrifice to those of Aristotelian tragic heroes, whose errors in
judgment—in their case a blind trust of Japan’s Imperial Army as most disciplined—leads to
their own inevitable destruction. Consisting of missionaries, businessmen, professors, and a
doctor who have to confront the Japanese military in person, the International Committee of the
Nanjing Safety Zone (ICNSZ) cannot always succeed in ensuring the safety of their refugees.
What’s worse, the Japanese hate these rescuers, blaming them for interference with Japan’s
disposal of the Chinese as war prisoners. Also, the Japanese accuse the rescuers of not being able
to remain neutral when their sympathy and support go to the suffering Chinese, including
soldiers who try to seek shelter in the Safety Zone by surrendering their arms to these foreigners.
As a result, the Japanese never see the Safety Zone as an area where war crimes are forbidden.
Jin highlights the lame power of the ICNSZ, who find it hard to guarantee their own safety, let alone the safety of the refugees. Very often, physical abuse and threats to their lives from the Japanese become the rescuers’ daily routine. From December 14 to 22, approximately a week’s time, Minnie sees three rescuers lamenting over their failed attempts to protect the refugees. George Fitch, who feels sad about the “two hundred men” taken away from Nanjing University by the Japanese, “squat[ted] under a bulky linden, his head in both hands” (53). Plumer Mills, who comes to protect Jinling refugees by spending the night in the Arts Building, “wept and cursed” as he “suffered from pain in his chest caused by being hit twice by the Japanese with rifle butts that morning when he had attempted in vain to prevent them from taking thirteen hundred Chinese soldiers out of the police headquarters” (55). Going to John Rabe’s office to seek help, Minnie only finds him “sobbing at his desk, his bald head in both hands,” a shocking sight of the “cheerful man who loved jokes and wisecracks” (80). Following them, Minnie “cried” on December 24, when the Japanese abducted twenty-one women from Jinling to “start the entertainment business” (85). Jin highlights the weeping scene of the rescuers, which evokes Das’s account of “the eye not as the organ that sees but the organ that weeps” (208). Seeing through their own eyes the Japanese atrocities, the rescuers weep to acknowledge not only their sense of powerlessness against the Japanese but also their feeling of betrayal by the Japanese. In fact, they had hoped Nanjing would be in a better social order in the hands of the Japanese military, known as being more disciplined than the Chinese soldiers “who were notorious for their unruliness” (8). But to the rescuers’ dismay, the Japanese only turned out to be barbarians capable of committing war crimes. Cola, a Russian businessman who “used to believe that the Japanese, or the Greeks of Asia, as they called themselves, should rule China
because he thought they could make this country a better place for business” (89), changed his opinion after witnessing the Japanese war crimes and “joined the Safety Zone Committee to help the refugees” (89).

In addition to their lack of power to stop the Japanese crimes, the committee’s responsibility for several incidents that lead to Japanese killing, rape, and abduction raise the Chinese victims’ doubt, suspicion, and criticism of their work. In the novel, Jin puts the rescuers in a dilemma by adding the Chinese’s accusation of these foreigners. Questioned as collaborators with the Japanese to “oppress and persecute the Chinese” so that “the neutral zone had never been neutral” (158), the rescuers are grieved by misunderstanding and distrust among the Chinese whom they try to protect. Yet considering the fact that the rescuers are unable to protect the refugees, particularly those hunted by the Japanese like disarmed Chinese soldiers whom the Japanese want to massacre and beautiful Chinese girls whom the Japanese want to enslave in their brothels, the questioning of the effectiveness of the Safety Zone seems not out of reason.

In fact, the motivations of the rescuers, the nature of the Safety Zone, and the pervasive sense of failure among the rescuers become major concerns not only to historians, sociologists, and anthropologists but also to Jin, who aspires to address these complicated issues at the narrative stage of complication. In the novel, Jin portrays the rescuers as ordinary people and depicts their relief work as the “ordinariness of goodness,” which inevitably results in failures of protection because of their limited power of protection and lack of experience in dealing with the Japanese. Despite their advocacy of justice, they do not have sufficient power to bring justice to Nanjing after its fall into the hands of the Japanese military. Also, based on Girard’s theory of violence, the Nanjing Safety Zone cannot prevent the Japanese violence, as it is not a solution
but, at best, a “compensatory measure” (Violence and the Sacred 20) to the Sino-Japanese conflict.

In Violence and the Sacred, Girard points out that human society has practically adopted three kinds of measures to terminate violence. Listed in “ascending order of effectiveness,” they are “preventive measures,” “compensatory measures,” and “the establishment of a judicial system—the most efficient of all curative procedures” (Violence and the Sacred 20-21). Existing as “an intermediary stage between a purely religious orientation and the recognition of a judicial system’s superior efficiency,” the compensatory measures, in Girard’s opinion, stand out for “their pragmatic aspects” (Violence and the Sacred 21). Not comparable to a judicial system that effectively stops violence by punishing the guilty parties, the compensatory measures are at least superior to preventive measures which blame not the guilty parties but sacrificial surrogates—the third yet innocent party chosen as scapegoats. Diverting their attention to the victims, the compensatory measures try to end violence by easing the victims’ anger so that the chain of vengeance might be broken. For this purpose, the compensatory measures often make sure that the injured parties must be accorded a careful measure of satisfaction, just enough to appease their own desire for revenge but not so much as to awaken the desire elsewhere. It is not a question of codifying good and evil or of inspiring respect for some abstract concept of justice; rather, it is a question of securing the safety of the group by checking the impulse for revenge. (Violence and the Sacred 21)

Girard’s idea of “compensatory measures” explicated the function of the Safety Zone. Claiming to remain neutral in the Sino-Japanese confrontation, the rescuers of the Nanjing Safety Zone are more successful in keeping the refugees less desperate than in protecting their safety. With supplies of food, clothing, shelter, and medical care in the Safety Zone, though limited in quantity, the rescuers sustain the refugees with the hope of surviving the disasters and resuming their normal lives in the near future. In the absence of a judicial system, the Safety Zone, though
unable to stop the Japanese’s violence, is able to curb their violence by appeasing the Chinese’s impulse of avenging their victimizers. In the novel, Rabe and Minnie were extremely anxious about the future of the Safety Zone, implying that the rescuers should make efforts to placate the Chinese so as to avoid more deaths:

“My worst fear,” Rabe told us, “is that if one Chinese man in the Safety Zone kills a Japanese soldier for violating his wife or daughter, then the entire neutral district will be bathed in blood. That would end all our relief efforts.”
“I’m worried about that too,” Minnie agreed. (81)

However, working as agents of compensation is not an easy job for the rescuers. While supporting the refugees with hope, the rescuers nevertheless suffer from stress over incidents for which they think themselves responsible. In the novel, Jin highlights several tragedies for which the rescuers blame themselves. To begin with, Rabe, honored as the “Living Buddha” and nicknamed “Mayor Rabe” of Nanjing by the Chinese refugees (104), cries over his naiveté in sending his fifty-four Chinese workers to help the Japanese restore the power service in Nanjing, with only eleven coming back alive. Promising them “personal safety plus good pay” on behalf of the Japanese, he was heart-broken to find that “[o]nce the electricity was back, the Japanese tied up most of them, dragged them to the riverside, and shot them, claiming that they had served the Chinese government” (80). In addition to his grief over the deaths of his forty-three workers, he was even more saddened by the facts that he would not be able to “face their parents, their widows and children” or people who “believe I sold the men for some favors from the Japanese” (81). Regretting his credulity, Rabe tortures himself with guilt and feels his mistake can never be rectified.

Then, out of blind trust of the Japanese, a group of American missionaries “disarmed” hundreds of Chinese soldiers and “promised them personal safety,” assuming the Japanese would
take the soldiers as war prisoners and spare their lives at least (55). To the great dismay of the rescuers, “all the poor fellows had been dragged away and executed in the afternoon,” together with “[f]ifty policemen guarding the Safety Zone . . . for letting the Chinese soldiers enter the neutral district” (55-56). Later, when Minnie reviews this tragedy with Anling, she assumes the ICNSZ should be intellectually, if not morally, responsible for the deaths of these Chinese, believing that “[m]aybe we shouldn’t have offered protection to those Chinese soldiers in the first place. Some of them were reluctant to give us their weapons, but we were so foolish that we promised them more than we can deliver” (54).

The failures of her foreign friends serve as projective identifications of Minnie, who experiences the same sense of powerlessness and helplessness every day. Her witnessing of her friends’ stress over the failures of their rescuing attempts leads to her knowledge of an intense power struggle between the Japanese perpetrators, the winners using violence as weapons, and rescuers like her, bystanders of a global conflict with nothing but the “ordinariness” of human kindness to help people in desperate need of protection. Meanwhile, her friends’ mistakes caused by their errors of judgment foreshadow her ensuing errors and her subsequent sufferings from a sense of guilt about those errors.

For Minnie, her nightmare begins with her constant failure to protect the refugee girls and women in Jinling from being molested, raped, and abducted by the Japanese soldiers. Overall, Jin portrays Minnie as a noble hero but with intellectual limitations. Despite her good intention to fight for justice and help those in need, she misjudges the complication of her circumstances and makes a couple of poor decisions, among which two raise wide suspicions of her morality: her compromise with the Japanese’s request for a hundred prostitutes from the refugees to set up
military brothels and her reticence to include this accident in her annual report to the Board of Trustees of Jinling College. In the novel, Jin particularly employs the narrative stage of climax to trigger Minnie’s mental state of guilt, which results from her being gradually dragged into a misperception of the nature of her errors as “moral” rather than “intellectual.”

Minnie’s being stricken with guilt starts with two Japanese abductions at Jinling: “twelve girls” (68) in the first one and “twenty-one young women” in the second one (87). While seeing herself as too timid to stop the first abduction on December 17, five days after the fall of Nanjing, Minnie would never forgive herself for the second one on December 24, when she thinks she knows the Japanese better than to trust them. In this case, Minnie’s problem is with her betrayal of the refugees by mistakenly allowing the Japanese to take away prostitutes from Jinling, which literally makes her a collaborator of the Japanese perpetrators. Seeing it as her abuse of power, Minnie suffers the most from this incident and desperately tries to rectify her mistake. If ultimately the novel focuses on Minnie’s failure, Jin’s depiction of the incident is initially centered on the “intellectual” not “moral” nature of Minnie’s error of judgment, as it results from the Japanese’s betrayal of her trust. Assuming that the Japanese would not molest other women if they could set up their own brothels in Nanjing and that the prostitutes would get paid as promised by the Japanese officers, Minnie allowed the Japanese to take away one hundred prostitutes who had sought protection in Jinling. Breaking their promise of taking away those who were “willing to continue to do the work,” the Japanese soldiers targeted “young” women with “fine figures and relatively good looks” by “hauling [them] away” against their will (87). Detained by a Japanese colonel in her office, Minnie, together with Anling, is shocked by what she sees through the window. Among the girls picked by the Japanese,
[s]ome were crying and struggling to break loose, while one with an angular face hugged the foreleg of a stone lion in front of the Arts Building, screaming and refusing to let go. A soldier punched her in the gut twice, knocking her off the stone animal, and pulled her away. A little girl with two tiny brushes of hair behind her ears followed them, hollering madly, but two older women restrained her. I [Anling] recognized the young woman, Yanying, and her little sister, Yanping. (87)

As indicated in the novel, Yanying is not a prostitute, but a refugee who comes to Jinling disguised as an old man for fear of being molested by the Japanese. Therefore, Minnie’s witnessing of the Japanese’s drafting Yanying for their brothels is especially heinous, considering that the girl refugee is not only taken against her will but also is not a prostitute, and hence had been part of the group Minnie had specifically vowed to protect.

Bella M. DePaulo, in “The Many Faces of Lies,” argues that there is little difference between deceit and violence. As “two forms of deliberate assault on human beings,” deceit and violence, in Sissela Bok’s opinion, “can coerce people into acting against their will” (qtd. in DePaulo 304). Obviously, the Japanese use both forms in this incident, as they deceive Minnie and violently abduct the refugee girls. Right after the Japanese left Minnie’s office, Jin makes Anling comfort Minnie by pointing out Minnie’s powerlessness in stopping the behavior of the Japanese, saying, “Whether you allowed them or not, they were going to take some women” (87). Yet thereafter Jin puts Minnie in a situation where neither forgetting nor forgiving her mistake is possible. Jin lets six girls from the first abduction and one girl from the second abduction come back to Jinling, among whom are Meiyan, Wanju, and Yulan. If Minnie’s witnessing of Yanying’s desperate struggle against the Japanese is only the prelude to her guilt,

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8 The number of the returned girls is eleven in Tsen Shui-fang’s diary. See Hu and Zhang’s The Undaunted Women of Nanking: The Wartime Diaries of Minnie Vautrin and Tsen Shui-fang (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010), 50.
Jin makes Minnie’s witnessing of the aftermath of the returned girls her accumulating knowledge that she has made a big mistake by not refusing the request of the Japanese officer in the first place. She feels sorry that she was even credulous enough to believe that the Japanese soldiers would keep their promises of taking away only “the former prostitutes” and on the condition that “the women must be willing to continue to do the work” (86). Ever since her witnessing the miseries of the returned girls, she sees her guilt of credulity beyond redemption.

In the novel, the returned girls experience different tragedies. Meiyan, daughter of Big Liu, Minnie’s teacher of classical Chinese and Jinling’s temporary Chinese secretary during the Massacre, would never have imagined being abducted by the Japanese from Jinling, “the safest place for women and children” (33). That the girl returns raped by the Japanese is first revealed through her father Big Liu’s personality change, whose curse and hatred of the Japanese “sounded out of character” (73). Obsessed with her desire to take revenge on the Japanese, Meiyan herself engages in anti-Japanese activities. Among the girls singing anti-Japanese songs, Meiyan “was the loudest” (224). Leading the girls to chant the anti-Japanese slogans, Meiyan reacts with hostility toward Minnie, who comes to stop her for fear that “[i]f the Japanese find out about this, they’ll start an investigation, and you all will get into trouble” (225). “[B]urning with passion,” Meiyan challenges Minnie’s interference by asking, “Why are you so scared of the Eastern devils?” (225). When other girls followed Minnie’s advice, “leaving for the dormitories and the classroom buildings,” Meiyan is among the girls who stayed and “continued chanting patriotic songs” (225).

Meiyan’s hostility toward Minnie is not only distrust of her as a protector but also an accusation of her as a coward. As Meiyan is suspicious of the efficiency of Jinling in protecting
its refugees, she tries to flee from it shortly after her first failed attempt:

Meiyan again wanted to flee Nanjing, either to Sichuan to join the Nationalists or to Yan’an, the Communists’ base in the north. Meiyan hated everything here, even the air, the water, the grass, and the trees, let alone the people. She called Jinling a rat hole. She had stopped going to church and had thrown away her Bible, claiming she was convinced that God was indifferent to human suffering. She’d told Liya that she no longer believed in Christianity, which in her opinion tended to cripple people’s will to fight. (253)

Reporting his daughter’s second run-away to Minnie, Big Liu says that “[t]he girl has been in terrible shape ever since she was taken by the Japanese” and has been obsessed with the idea that “China needed a revolution if we wanted to defeat Japan” (265). With a burning desire to take revenge, Meiyan chooses violence to defeat violence, claiming blood must be repaid by blood. What’s worse, she directs her hatred of the Japanese to girl refugees whose fathers work for the Japanese. In a fight between Yuting, “whose father had been among the six IRC men arrested by the Japanese and had died in prison recently,” and a small girl whose father “designs boats” for the Japanese, Meiyan instigates Yuting to “smash her mug” and “rip her tongue out of her trap” (227), a sign of her violent revenge mistakenly taken on scapegoats rather than perpetrators. To a certain extent, the Japanese’s rape of Meiyan corrupts her personality and leaves her with nothing but hatred and violence. Meiyan’s personality deterioration is also exemplified by her second run-away with Luhai, Jinling’s business manager as well as a married man with “wife and kids” (265). Upon their departure, Luhai left Minnie a farewell letter written in English, pleading with her to “give some helps to my wife and children, because I can do nothing for them from today on” (266). In the novel, Jin suggests a romantic relationship

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9 In the novel, Liya is Anling’s daughter, whose miscarriage caused by the Japanese’s first abduction at Jinling makes her befriend Meiyan, who is also a victim in the abduction.

10 In the novel, IRC is the acronym for International Relief Committee (178).
between Meiyan and Luhai, which changes Meiyan from a victim to a victimizer because Luhai’s betrayal of his family leaves his wife a widow and his two small sons fatherless. Not willing to remain a Christian who believes in universal love, Meiyan undergoes a moral degradation in the sense that, for her, eloping with Luhai is only about herself. She does not take into consideration Luhai’s family. Jin depicts the great impact of the Japanese’s rape of Meiyan on her personality change and makes Minnie witness the change. Seeing with her eyes the deterioration of Meiyan, Minnie cannot stop blaming herself for not protecting the girl in the first place.

Compared with Meiyan, Wanju faces a worse situation. Realizing that she was pregnant with the child of the Japanese who raped her and that an abortion was impossible because Jinling “had no doctor,” Wanju buries the shame in her mind for days before she resolves to end her pain with suicide (115). According to the descriptions of other refugees, Wanju was the girl who “had a cog loose,” she “had cried a lot at night . . . had often skipped meals, just sitting cross-legged in the corner like a statue and studying the floor . . . had often read a thick book\(^\text{11}\) alone and also crooned movie songs to herself” (115). Judging from these descriptions, Wanju must have been tortured with great struggle and her suicide should not have been an easy decision to make. In the novel, Jin intensifies Minnie’s witness and memory of Wanju by making Minnie “ben[d] down to look at the dead girl closely” (114):

\[S\]he was in her late teens, a tad homely but with soft skin and abundant hair. She looked pallid; her eyes were closed, her lips dark and parted, and through them I could see sticky blood in her mouth. Her round cheeks were grayish, but her expression was relaxed, as though she were about to yawn. Her short-fingered hand was resting on her chest, which seemed to be still heaving. Next to her clothes bundle, which served as a pillow, was an empty ratsbane bottle, she must have found it in one of the defunct kitchens. A frayed blanket covered the girl’s

\(^{11}\) Judging from the context, the thick book is most probably a Bible.
abdomen, but her legs stuck out, one foot wearing a scarlet woolen sock and the other bare. (114)

The suicide of the teenage girl hurts Minnie’s pride badly, as it crushes her illusion that “compared to most of the other camps, our record [of preventing the tragedies] is exceedingly good” (101). She blames her cowardice and negligence for Wanju’s suffering and death. Eager to redeem her mistakes, she digs Wanju’s grave with all her strength and promises Wanju that she will protect the refugees like a hero in due time: “I will never let this kind of crime happen in our camp again. I’ll do everything I can to protect the girls and women. If I have to fight the soldiers, I will fight. I won’t be a coward anymore” (117).

Compared with Meiyan and Wanju, Yulan faces the worst situation, as her life is literally in hell after the Japanese abduct her and rape her. Unlike Meiyan and Wanju, who returned to Jinling the second day after they were abducted and molested by the Japanese, Yulan is found at the Quaker Mission’s hospital five months after she is abducted from Jinling. “[D]eranged” and “skinny,” Yulan reacts with hostility toward Minnie, calling her and Anling “the American spies” and claiming that she is no longer Yulan because the abducted and raped Yulan is “dead, sold by the American missionaries and murdered by the [Japanese] officers” (133-34). In the novel, Jin highlights Minnie’s intuitive differentiation of her responsibility for the Japanese’s two abductions at Jinling. She sees herself more responsible for the second abduction because she grants the Japanese’s request. Minnie does not know from which abduction Yulan was taken. Hoping Yulan was “one of the twelve girls taken by the soldiers last December [17].” Minnie is dumb-founded to find out Yulan “had been taken on December 24 last year, among the twenty-one ‘prostitutes’” (133-34). Later, when she learns that Yulan was an orphan and her father was among John Rabe’s forty-three electricians shot to death by the Japanese, Minnie is buried in
mountainous guilt, especially after Yulan’s disappearance when Minnie planned to bring her back to Jinling.

Another five months pass before Minnie hears about Yulan. Kept in Tianhua Orphanage, Yulan calls Minnie and Anling “the missionary bastards” the moment she sees them (151). She refers to Minnie as “a big-nosed spy” and “a liar” while refusing to go with her. Jin highlights the scene of Yulan’s mental deterioration when Yulan, teased by a group of small boys, is eager to do whatever the boys asked, imitating the cries of “a rooster,” “a duck,” and “a pig” (151). Though Yulan is willing to return to Jinling with the help of Miss Lou, “an evangelical worker in the neighborhood” (25), Minnie feels even more guilty to see Yulan’s mental deterioration getting worse. On her way back to Jinling, she could not help reflecting on her own as well as her team’s incompetence during the Japanese’s two abductions, imagining after the fact, “If only we had acted bravely . . . [w]e might’ve saved some of the women” (152).

Contrary to Minnie’s expectation of seeing an improvement in Yulan’s condition once she was brought back to Jinling, the deranged girl shows no sign of recovery and becomes a troublemaker and a burden whom the other staff members of Jinling want to get rid of. Anling, Minnie’s assistant, suggests that Yulan be sent to “the mental asylum funded by the puppet municipality” (155). Knowing the asylum was “like a prison” as it used to be “a jail,” Minnie refuses Anling’s proposal and insists, “We can’t just throw her into it. I’ll never let that happen” (156). Minnie’s insistence on keeping Yulan at Jinling is perhaps her secret remedy for rectifying her mistake, but her hope of seeing Yulan recover from her mental deterioration is crushed when the girl disappears the second time before “the first anniversary of Nanjing’s fall” (180).

Several days later, Minnie happens to see Yulan while she and Anling pass the street near
“the former Central Hospital” (182). Realizing Yulan is in danger by “holding a small triangular flag that bore these words: WIPE OUT JAPANESE DEVILS!” and by “addressing the crowd” whose cheers only incited her with her anti-Japanese speech, Minnie tries to stop her talk and take away her flag but fails on both counts. While pleading with Yulan to return to Miss Lou, the woman who had been taking care of her and was perhaps the only person she trusted, Minnie is surprised by Yulan’s refusal to stay with Miss Lou anymore: “I don’t want to live with that Bible freak anymore. She’s obsessed with Jesus Christ and says we’re all his slaves. Every day she made me memorize poems from the Old Testament. I’m sick of it. I want to be a free woman” (183). Before Minnie can persuade Yulan to return to Jinling with her, three Japanese policemen come, accuse Yulan of being “an activist against Japan,” and take her away (183-84). For the second time, she becomes the victim of the Japanese and lives a hellish life thereafter. In the novel, Jin implies that Yulan is kept as a comfort woman in a Japanese military “stopgap hospital” (185), and her vanishing together with the hospital around “mid-August” the next year (248) may result from her being transported to Manchuria and used as a human guinea pig by the Japanese for their “germ warfare” (252).

In fact, the three girls, after being abducted and raped by the Japanese, all undergo mental deterioration: Meiyan becomes violent, Wanju depressed, and Yulan lunatic. As it seems that God never listens to their prayers or cares to punish the evil perpetrators, the three girls all feel betrayed by their Christian belief in universal love and stop following God by replacing their love of others with hatred, distrust, and hostility. Letting Minnie witness the girls’ mental deterioration, Jin projects Minnie’s mental state by translocating the pain and suffering of the girls into Minnie. Blaming herself for granting the Japanese’s request of taking away prostitutes
from Jinling on a voluntary basis, Minnie is sorry for her credulity of the two empty promises of the Japanese officer and feels guilty about her error of judgment, which drags innocent girls to hell. Thereafter, granting the Japanese’s request becomes Minnie’s poisonous knowledge, which not only leads her to realize her intellectual error in making such a compromise with the Japanese perpetrators but also to raise her suspicion of the moral nature of her decision.

In the first place, once Jinling takes in the prostitutes as refugees, the college should not differentiate them from other refugees and should not treat them as inferior people who do not deserve protection. To surrender the prostitutes to the Japanese is Jinling’s, or rather Minnie’s, betrayal of this group of refugees, who had been granted protection before they were admitted into Jinling. Like the Chinese soldiers who are taken away from the Safety Zone to be massacred, the prostitutes, due to their disadvantaged economic, social, and political status, become convenient sacrifices to sustain the established social order. In the second place, the Japanese soldiers cannot really tell the professional prostitutes from non-prostitutes, and they simply take away young good-looking girls. Of the two named girls in this abduction, neither Yanying nor Yulan is a prostitute, but both are forced away by the Japanese during the second abduction. To some extent, the suffering of these women is even worse than that of the soldiers who are massacred, as they cannot die, but become the living dead who are tortured in a worldly hell. Believing she is not very different from the Japanese perpetrators because she causes an equally violent injustice to both prostitute and non-prostitute refugees, Minnie is overwhelmed with a sense of guilt.

In spite of her hope to redeem her guilt, Minnie finds it almost impossible to stop the wrong and to rectify the mistakes. It turns out that she soon falls into mental deterioration
herself: the more she sees the suffering of the girls, the more she wants to do anything to help them, and the more she fails in helping them, the more she suffers mentally. Her wish to redeem her guilt regardless of the cost leads to the narrative stage of falling action, her mental state of grievance.

Like the three girls, Minnie develops a similar uncertainty toward her Christian belief in universal love; now she has more reasons to doubt God’s power and justice, and this foreshadows her suicide. To begin with, the Japanese hate Minnie because she tries to protect their enemies. In spite of her being their mothers’ age, they never treat her with the respect that a woman her age deserves. Throughout the novel, the Japanese soldiers literally beat her four times when she tries to stop their atrocities; once she is hit “in the chest with fist” (60), twice they “slapped her on the face” (63 and 164), and once someone “dodged and punched her on the jaw” (184). To add insult to injury, Minnie finds the distrust and hostility from the Chinese even more heart-breaking. The three girls, the men refugees who “cursed” and “threw mud on our college’s sign and the steel-barred gate” for not being allowed in Jinling (33), and the women refugees who bear a grudge against Jinling for its separating them from their husbands, fathers, and sons do not trust her and react with hostility toward her. In addition to them, Minnie is grieved by the distrust and hostility from an invisible group of people, much larger in number, Chinese and foreigners, victims and witnesses, whose disapproval of the rescuers’ work is entirely based on their partial perceptions of the situation in Nanjing.

In general, the rescuing work of the ICNSZ is judged harshly. Jin makes Minnie witness how her friends face different accusations in spite of their risking their lives to help save the refugees. Rabe’s good will becomes suspicious not only for the families of his murdered workers
but also his Nazi Party leaders, including Hitler and Chancellor Scharffenberg. Believing Rabe was messing with the Sino-Japanese conflict by chairing the ICNSZ, Scharffenberg “chastised” him and “stressed that what the Japanese were doing here [in Nanjing] should not concern us Germans, because . . . the Chinese, once left alone to cope with the Japanese, would cooperate with them” (106). When Siemens Company closed its Nanjing office in February 1938, two months after the fall of Nanjing, Rabe, who headed the office, was forced to go back home to Germany. Too embarrassed to say farewell to “[m]ore than three thousand women and girls . . . kneeling on the ground, wailing and begging” for him to stay, Rabe bowed six times to the desperate refugees, thinking, “There’s no way I can justify my leaving” (108).

Rabe is not alone in facing accusations from multiple parties: the victimizers, the victims, and people from a third party. In the novel, the rescuers working for the ICNSZ have to “take heart” (160) not to be overwhelmed with hatred from the Japanese, suspicion from the Chinese, and misunderstanding from the rest of the world. Plumer Mills, who succeeds Rabe as the Chair of the ICNSZ, is “hit twice by the Japanese with rifle butts . . . . when he had attempted in vain to prevent them from taking thirteen hundred Chinese soldiers out of the police headquarters” (55). The Japanese “hated” John Magee, a minister and chairman of the International Red Cross Committee of Nanjing, “particularly for the hospital he had managed—a number of foreign reporters had visited it and published photos of victims of the war atrocities in newspapers in the West” (143). The Japanese police “ransacked” the home of Searle Bates, a history professor at Nanjing University, hoping to discover “the documents and eyewitness statements” he had prepared for a recently published book on the Japanese atrocities (159). To stop the Japanese’s drafting Yaoping as an interpreter, Bates “blocked the door, insisting that Yaoping was on the
faculty . . . [so] he could not release the lecturer to anyone” (159). As a result, the Japanese “became so angry that they pushed” them both “down the stairs” and left with “Searle groaning and Yaoping unconscious” (159).

Enduring the hatred of the Japanese, Jin’s rescuers also face the accusation by the Chinese that they are “a gang of double-crossers” (159), a denial of their kindness. Critical articles on the ICNSZ, dissolved and reorganized as the International Relief Committee, appeared in Chinese newspapers and flyers by early October 1938. Jin refers to one article in particular, within which

> [t]he author cited several examples of the Westerners’ collaboration with the invaders, such as disarming the Chinese soldiers and then handing them over to the Imperial Army, attending its celebratory ceremonies and concerts, and teaching Japanese in Christian Schools. (158)

Jin lets Minnie bring the article to Searle Bates, Lewis Smythe, and Robert Wilson and therefore is able to witness their reactions. While Searle is not bothered with the accusations, saying, “We’ve done nothing we should feel ashamed of and can hold our heads high,” Lewis is too grieved to hold himself up, moaning, “This hurts, really hurts” (160).

Minnie’s witnessing of her friends’ kindness not being returned with appreciation foreshadows her own grievance when she has to face harsh criticism of her rescue work, especially when her morality is questioned and judged negatively. In addition to the accusations her friends face, Minnie has extra ones. As Jinling is a refugee camp for women and children only, families have to be separated and men must seek refuge in other camps. This arouses some refugees’ hostility toward Jinling. What’s worse, the tragic fate of women abducted from Jinling makes Minnie face the charge of betraying the refugee girls to please the Japanese, which is highlighted by the abduction of Yanying, the suicide of Wanju, the lunacy of Yulan, and the flight
of Meiyan. Due to her acquiescence to the Japanese’s demand for a hundred prostitutes from Jinling, Minnie is accused of being “a chief collaborator” of the Japanese (282). Jin actually includes a newspaper article titled “The Real Criminals,” which has a lengthy criticism of Minnie:

Minnie Vautrin, the deputy principal of Jinling College, agreed to provide 100 good-looking young women for the Japanese, and on that day they abducted 21. Acting like a madam of a brothel, she later kept apologizing to the officers and promised to let them choose the other 79 women. To add insult to injury, she assured them that the school’s gate would always be open to them. Small wonder the Jinling camp entertained dozens of Japanese policemen every night with hot tea, meat pies, and roasted peanuts even after they had raped girls there. Brothers and sisters, it’s high time to reevaluate the tragedy that happened to our city and to see through the so-called Goddess of Mercy. Minnie Vautrin is actually a trader in human beings and a traitor to the Chinese people. We must expose her and hold her accountable for the numerous women and girls whom she proffered to the soldiers. (282-83)

This article distorts a lot of facts described in the novel. Minnie “sputtered to the [Japanese] colonel” on the spot, claiming, “This is abduction. I’m going to protest to your superiors” (87). She does not apologize to the officers but “went to the Japanese embassy and delivered the letter” (89) she had written “on behalf of several women whose family members had been seized by the soldiers” (88). When the refugee girls are upset and fear the Japanese will come back “for the other seventy-nine ‘prostitutes’ to make up the number, one hundred,” Minnie assures them, “Over my dead body they will!” (88). Yet the lies in the newspaper article reach a large reading public, so they are as destructive as any deadly weapon to Minnie. For one thing, Minnie’s wish to redeem her guilt seems beyond hope because she thinks the whole world will take the distorted facts as truths; for another, anyone who wants to get rid of Minnie can use the article as a convenient weapon of attack, like Mrs. Dennison, the former president of Jinling.

If distrust and hostility from the Japanese and the Chinese grieve Minnie, the distrust and
hostility from Mrs. Dennison “kill” her when the former president accuses Minnie of being reticent in granting the Japanese’s request and calls her silence “a sin and a crime” (282). This becomes the novel’s narrative stage of resolution, which describes Minnie’s mental state of despair. Basically, Jin makes Mrs. Dennison obsessed with her desire to restore Jinling her own way. To accomplish what she wants, she needs to regain administrative power over Jinling. When Dr. Wu, the president, is not around, Minnie becomes her rival by not supporting her revival plan. An old woman in her late sixties, Mrs. Dennison is bureaucratic, sophisticated, and jealous. With different personalities, Minnie finds they seldom get along. In spite of her being “just an adviser” to Jinling (205), Mrs. Dennison asks Minnie to let her “take over the treasury,” which in Anling’s opinion becomes “a step toward her taking full control of the college” (214). Jin makes Anling’s prediction come true by exemplifying Mrs. Dennison’s bureaucracy once she controls Jinling’s treasury. Not once does she use the college funds properly. To begin with, though “the donor specified [that the four thousand yuan] should be spent on education programs for the poor” (231), she spends the money on rehabilitating the school buildings, which leads to a bitter argument with Minnie, who wants to use the money to set up a local school for children. Also, Jin implies that Mrs. Dennison uses the funds to renovate Professor Eva Spicer’s bungalow and moves into it herself, which leaves Minnie “nonplussed, and also outraged” (233), since Eva had asked Minnie to move in. Moreover, when Minnie proposes that Jinling should sponsor its staff for a “reconciliatory trip” to Japan so as to “improve the communication and mutual understanding between the Japanese and the Chinese” as well as to “strengthen our college’s position here in the long run,” Mrs. Dennison refuses, suggesting Minnie’s proposal emerges from her own interest in befriending the Japanese and that Minnie should not “mix too much
with them” (263). Later, when a local named Boren sells “1.3 acres” of his family’s estate right next to the campus of Jinling “at half price—four hundred yuan,” Mrs. Dennison again refuses Minnie’s proposal to “grab it” (270). Not willing to lose the opportunity, Minnie buys the piece of land using her own money and wills it to Jinling before her suicide.

Jin also exemplifies Mrs. Dennison’s sophistication and jealousy through her attempts to weaken Minnie’s influence at Jinling. Often, she embarrasses Minnie in public by finding fault with her words and deeds. When the local women address Minnie as “The Goddess of Mercy” and “Principal Vautrin,” she tells those women that Jinling does not have a “principal” but “only a president” (214-15), indicating her superiority to Minnie as being the first president of Jinling. She also tells Anling that Minnie’s allowing the women to address her as “goddess” is an indulgence in a “personality cult” (216). Grudging Minnie’s running the Homecraft School for poor women, whose presence still gave Jinling the look of “a refugee camp,” she forbids Minnie to use Jinling’s banner for these women, claiming “these are not students of our college” (221). Later, in the absence of Minnie, she decides to get rid of these women by decreasing the number of enrollment to “less than half” (249). Knowing she could not do it herself, she forces Anling into assisting her, threatening to dismiss Anling from Jinling if she is unwilling to cooperate. To add insult to injury, Anling is willing to compromise with Mrs. Dennison’s demands so as to secure her position at Jinling. Jin suggests that Anling is uneasy about her offering company to Mrs. Dennison upon the former president’s return, first a campus trip and then a trip downtown. She feels embarrassed about her deliberately trying to establish a rapport with the former president and worries that Minnie might find out. Under the pressure of Mrs. Dennison, Anling seldom supports Minnie in public as she used to do. In spite of her being Minnie’s assistant,
Anling chooses to remain silent whenever Mrs. Dennison behaves unreasonably and abuses her power to veto Minnie’s proposals, even though they are more practical. The only time Anling supports Minnie is upon Mrs. Dennison’s accusation of Minnie’s not reporting the Japanese’s second abduction at Jinling to the college’s Board of Trustees, perhaps a defense more of herself rather than of Minnie. When Minnie needs Anling’s support to push Mrs. Dennison to make a better decision for the interests of Jinling, she is disappointed with Anling’s silence and perceives it as a sign of betrayal of her trust in Anling.

Upon Minnie’s return to Jinling, she was shocked to see that the two programs—the middle school and the Homecraft School under her supervision—had lost half of the students. Learning from Anling that Mrs. Dennison was behind it, she called the incident “a betrayal” and “an insult” (249). Yet Mrs. Dennison’s biggest betrayal is her accusation of Minnie’s not reporting the Japanese’s second abduction. Ignoring the other witnesses’ testimonies that Minnie “made a mistake,” Mrs. Dennison chooses to believe in the newspaper article with distorted facts and insists that Minnie’s exclusion of the incident from the annual report is her conscious attempt to “cover it up all along” (282). Jin makes it apparent that Mrs. Dennison cares little about learning the truth. For one thing, she would “turn on” others who tried to explain “the circumstances in which Minnie couldn’t have responded otherwise” (283); for another, her hostility toward Minnie stops the day Minnie “handed in her resignation” (284). In her power struggle against Minnie, Mrs. Dennison behaves like a sophisticated politician who uses Minnie’s mistake as a weapon of attack. Jin implies that Mrs. Dennison probably agrees with the others that Minnie made a mistake, but she must call the mistake a crime so as to defeat Minnie, who is not supportive of her renovation plan.
Minnie responds to Mrs. Dennison’s accusation with silence, the same way she responds to her huge mistake. In fact, she is silent most of the time thereafter, “refus[ing] to see anyone except for Big Liu, Alice, and me [Anling]” (284). On a rare occasion when she speaks, she says, “I’m responsible for their [the girls’] deaths. I’ll answer to God” (284); this is the only response she gives to friends who want to help her. Mrs. Dennison visited her once, but Minnie “didn’t speak to her” (284). Jin highlights Minnie’s silence in the farewell scene when she leaves Jinling for the States to start her furlough. To her friends’ farewell wishes, she “didn’t reply, but simply smiled vaguely, as though all emotion had seeped out of her” (285). To Mrs. Dennison, who told Minnie that she should “get well soon. Remember you’re one of us and Jinling is your home—we’ll always take you back,” she “gazed at her with a faraway look, the corners of her mouth wrinkling a little” (285).

Toril Moi, in “Hedda’s Silences: Beauty and Despair in Hedda Gabler,” argues that there is a “connection between Hedda’s silence and despair” (449). This connection can explain Minnie’s silence and despair as well. Her first silence about her granting the Japanese’s request is a sign of her despair created by her awareness that she had made a huge mistake. Her subsequent silences toward Mrs. Dennison’s accusation, the criticism of her rescue work, and the comfort of her friends reveal her despair at not being able to rectify her mistake and redeem her guilt. Moi also claims that Ibsen uses Hedda’s later silences as clues to her former one, referring to Hedda’s later silences as “what Freud called Nachträglichkeit [deferred action], for the two silences enacted onstage give new meaning to the one that happened in the past” (447). Jin also uses Minnie’s later silences as deferred action to construct meaning for her earlier silence. Upon Mrs. Dennison’s accusation and other people’s criticism of her rescue work, Minnie is heart-broken
and “dumbfounded” by not being able to find a word to defend herself (282). If Minnie’s reticence toward the disapproval of Mrs. Dennison and other people is a result of her belief in the powerlessness of words to prove her innocence, then her choice of silence about granting the Japanese request is perhaps her same despair in the power of words. Seeing that words are powerless to elaborate the circumstances of her mistake, she hopes to redeem herself with actions that benefit the refugees and Jinling, among which the most significant are her confrontations with the Japanese soldiers to protect the refugees, her refusal to dismiss refugees from Jinling on the basis of protection, her setting up the Homecraft School for the poor and homeless women, and her donation of 1.3 acres of land to Jinling. Therefore, her silence has nothing to do with an intentional cover-up, as Mrs. Dennison claims.

Acclaimed as the “Goddess of Mercy,” Minnie is one who has the heart of a goddess but suffers greatly from her constant failures to protect the refugees from the harm of the Japanese soldiers. The dual character of Minnie as both a hero and an ordinary woman, like the dual character of other rescuers, makes her a complicated Aristotelian tragic hero. For one thing, assuming she is responsible for the security of the Jinling Women’s College, she blames herself for the sufferings, injuries, and deaths of the refugees and finds it hard to free herself from survivor guilt. For another, finding it hard to vindicate herself and to prove the nature of her error of judgment “intellectual” (because she wasn’t able to see the tricks of the perpetrators), not “moral” (because she never wanted to sacrifice the victims to please the perpetrators), as accused by biased and partial commentaries on her relief work, Minnie suffers tremendously by not being able to prove otherwise. Portraying Minnie as an ordinary woman undertaking the role of a heroic protector in times of a social crisis, Jin highlights her perpetual suffering from an
overwhelmingly unspeakable pain, the perception of her errors as beyond redemption, and the eventual price she pays for her voluntary relief work, all of which make her “ordinariness of goodness” more heroic and therefore more memorable and respectful.

In spite of the rescuers’ constant failures to protect the Chinese refugees, Jin feels the world should know about these rescuers in the Nanjing Massacre and depicts their rescue efforts as heroic sacrifice. To Minnie, the world, and especially the Chinese, owe her an acknowledgement. While describing Minnie’s funeral in the voice of her friend Alice, Jin highlights Alice’s regrets that Minnie receives a small funeral and that her achievements are understated. In her diary of May 16, 1941, Alice notes that Minnie’s funeral is too simple, saying that “no hymn was sung, since there were just the six of us” attending the funeral (294). Also, in Mrs. Doan’s memorial speech, Alice wishes Mrs. Doan, by appraising Minnie’s life, would have described Minnie as “a hero” instead of “a fighter” (295). Feeling grateful for Minnie’s courage and sacrifice while sympathizing with her suffering, Jin turns his novel into a requiem, singing her ordinariness of goodness as the Goddess of Nanjing. Addressing both her weaknesses and her strengths, Jin hopes to eulogize her courage, kindness, and sacrifice, the precious human assets the world should remember. Likewise, the book is also a requiem to Iris Chang, whose courageous writing and publicity of the Nanjing Massacre, drew worldwide attention to Japanese atrocities in WWII for the first time. Though criticized for her “emotion-filled Chinese views of the war and Japan” (Eykholt 56), *The Rape of Nanking* is a token of Chang’s ordinariness of human goodness—a warning by a twenty-nine-year-old writer¹² who feared that nations in conflicts would repeat war and violence if the history of the Nanjing atrocities is forgotten.

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¹² *The Rape of Nanking* was published in 1997, when Iris Chang was twenty-nine years old.
CHAPTER 4

SCAPEGOATS, MYTH, AND THE “STEREOTYPES OF PERSECUTION”

IN GELING YAN’S THE FLOWERS OF WAR

I [John Rabe] had an interesting conversation with Colonel Huang. He is absolutely against the Safety Zone. In his opinion it demoralizes the troops in Nanking. “Every inch of soil that the Japanese conquer should be fertilized with our blood. Nanking must be defended to the last man. If you had not established your Safety Zone, people now fleeing into the Zone could have helped our soldiers.”

What can you say to such monstrous views? And the man is a high official very close to the generalissimo! And so people who had to stay behind because they didn’t have the money to flee with their families and a few small possessions, the poorest of the poor, are supposed to pay with their lives for the military’s mistakes! Why didn’t they force the well-off inhabitants, those 800,000 propertied citizens who fled, to stay? Why is it always the poorest people who must forfeit their lives? (Rabe 51-52)

Publications on the Nanjing Massacre in history and literature suggest implicitly and explicitly that the operation of the scapegoating mechanism within Chinese society was a marked feature of this hideous human tragedy. Following the historians who argue that the injured and killed Chinese were mostly underprivileged people, writers of literature portray these victims as not random but selected scapegoats “standing-in for others in order to accept blame and responsibility” (T. Douglas 6) for the fall of Nanjing. Among these writers, Geling Yan, a novelist and screenwriter writing in both Chinese and English, stands out with The Flowers of War (2012), her novel in which she mythologizes a group of Qin Huai prostitutes as scapegoats and addresses the scapegoating mechanism thoroughly.

In fact, historical studies of Chinese casualties and deaths in the Nanjing Massacre have

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1 Here refers to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek.
been making steady progress with new discoveries, among which historians, especially Chinese, direct their attention to the internal causes of “the massive loss of Chinese lives” instead of “place[ing] the responsibility squarely on the Japanese side” (Yang 158). To claim the Nanjing victims as scapegoats, they highlight the fact that the city, right before its fall, was indeed in a chaotic state of abandonment with little governmental administration or military protection. Realizing the resistance against the Japanese was doomed to fail, the Chinese, from top down, departed from Nanjing, “leaving approximately 50,000 troops behind to defend the city” (Brook 258). Following the “farewell salute” of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek “at around 5 o’clock” in the morning of December 7, 1937, Mayor Ma Chaojun of Nanjing “was missing at the 6 o’clock press conference [that afternoon]” (Rabe 52-53). Upon Chiang’s request for a general military retreat on December 11, General Tang Shengzhi, the commander-in-chief in charge of defending Nanjing, held two emergency meetings on December 12 and left Nanjing the next morning, failing to command “an orderly retreat” (Yang 158). As a result, the Chinese plan of defending the city until the last man was changed abruptly and the Chinese morale was replaced overnight with a desperate flight of soldiers who “streamed north towards Hsia Kwan by the thousands” and “threw away all their guns and equipment which lay scattered all over the roads” (Wilson 209). By December 13, when the Japanese conquered Nanjing, the city had been deserted by her government officials and half of her residents and left in a defenseless state with the retreat of military commanders and “most of the remaining 50,000 troops” (Brook 258). In fact, Iris Chang’s portrayal of the victims falling into the hands of the Japanese strongly suggests that the people left behind were indeed scapegoats who were tortured and killed in part because of Chinese misconduct in office and neglect of duty:
By the time the Japanese passed through the gates of the city, all those residents who possessed any degree of money, power, or foresight had already left for parts unknown. Approximately half the original population departed: before the war, the native population of the city exceeded 1 million people, and by December it had fallen to about half a million. However, the city was swollen with tens of thousands of migrants from the countryside who had left their homes for what they believed would be safety within the city walls. Those who remained after the soldiers departed tended to be the most defenseless: children, the elderly, and all those either too poor or physically weak to secure passage out of the city. (81)

The scapegoating mechanism operating in Chinese society during the Sino-Japanese War is also a major subject in the works of Chinese American writers that do not reference the Nanjing Massacre. Disapproval of the mechanism appeared in the late 1970s in the works of Maxine Hong Kingston. In “Shaman,” one of five memoirs in Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior*, a mentally deranged Chinese woman is picked on by the villagers, who believe she has had sex out of wedlock and stone her to death, accusing her of being “[a] spy for the Japanese” (111). Thus, a defenseless woman becomes a scapegoat for the villagers’ fear of the Japanese. As would happen in the scapegoating process described by C. Allen Carter, “[i]n a moment of paroxysm, all blame some more or less innocent party for their own troubles and then sacrifice him, her, or it” (86). Following Kingston, Amy Tan in *The Kitchen God’s Wife* laments the sufferings of the lower class Chinese, who are always convenient sacrifices in social upheavals. As Walter S. H. Lim suggests, Tan’s characters, in addition to enduring the Japanese invasion, have to manage to survive the constant struggles of the divided Chinese, in particular those “between ‘the old revolutionaries, the new revolutionaries, the Kuomintang and the Communists, the warlords, the bandits, and the students’” (18).

Among texts focusing on the Nanjing Massacre, scapegoating is addressed with open and intense criticism. In *When the Purple Mountain Burns*, Shouhua Qi’s Chinese protagonists are “the civilians too poor, too old, or too sick to join the exodus” (43). Left behind without
protection, Ning-ning (a twelve-year-old girl), Grandpa (a bedridden old man waiting for his natural death), Eva (a teenage orphan), and Helen (a young woman three-months pregnant) are simply helpless lambs to be slaughtered by the Japanese who avenge their heavy losses in the battle of Shanghai and retaliate against these easy scapegoats. Qi also suggests that Chiang Kai-shek’s appointment of Tang Shen-chih as the commander of defense in Nanjing was not based on Chiang’s trust of Tang, but on his secret wish to get rid of Tang, a rival of Chiang. Qi states explicitly that Tang is Chiang’s “convenient scapegoat,” since Chiang knows very well that the chance of organizing a successful defense of Nanjing is quite slim (37). The prospect of Tang’s commanding the defense of Nanjing is Chiang’s plan of one stone killing two birds: saving face by showing the world his determination to defend Nanjing and letting Tang take the blame for the fall of Nanjing when (as was likely) the defense fails.

Ha Jin in *Nanjing Requiem* also indicates evidence that marks the common Chinese as scapegoats. Jin describes the inexperience of the military recruits for the defense of Nanjing: “Many of them were merely teenage boys from the countryside, emaciated and illiterate, who could hardly fend for themselves” (14). Jin points out that these young men were sheer sacrifices who “were sent to the front as nothing but cannon fodder” (14).

In *The Nanjing Massacre: Poems*, Wing Tek Lum challenges the rationale behind scapegoating. In “This Reasoning,” two characters, Teacher and Nurse, argue over the dilemma facing the married women taking refuge in the Safety Zone. Teacher suggests these women be sent home to stay with their husbands, for “[w]hen the [Japanese] demons break into a home, if they find only a man there, they think that he is one of our deserter soldiers hiding out, since he

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2 Qi uses the Wade-Giles system of Romanization for the pinyin spelling of Tang Shengzhi in his novel.
has no family. So then they take him away” (150). Nurse makes a counter-argument, saying, “But if the wives go home, the demons will push the husbands out so they can rape the wives” (150). Realizing that Teacher goes for the idea of using “one sex to sacrifice their bodies for the other,” Nurse points out its faulty logic with a simple allegorical tale—“When a fox comes, why must we have to choose between the rooster and hen?” (150).

Joining the voices of others claiming the Chinese victims in the Nanjing Massacre to be scapegoats, Geling Yan published her novel, 《金陵十三钗》 (Jinling Shisan Chai³), in 2006, attempting to mythologize a group of Qin Huai prostitutes whose nature as scapegoats does not change in spite of their voluntary sacrifice for the good of the St Mary Magdalene schoolgirls. Yan’s novel drew national and international attention when Zhang Yimou, a worldwide-celebrated Chinese director, adapted it into a successful movie released as Jinling Shisan Chai in China and The Flowers of War in North America in 2011. The novel’s English movie-tie-in edition, The Flowers of War, was translated by Nicky Harman and published in the United States by Other Press in 2012. Except for a few changes of “facts” to convey their symbolic meaning to its English reader, The Flowers of War keeps the plot, theme, structure, and characterization of Jinling Shisan Chai and is overall a faithful translation.

In the novel, Yan depicts the Japanese’s conquest of Nanjing as a social crisis that intimidates the Chinese left behind in the city of death. Putting the Japanese atrocities in the backdrop, Yan foregrounds the intragroup and intergroup conflicts and struggles in an American church, a counterpart of the Nanjing Safety Zone as the shelter for Chinese refugees. In general,

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³ This is the title of the novel in Chinese pinyin. The literal translation of the title is Thirteen (Shisan) Girls (Chai) in Nanjing (Jinling). The novel’s 2007 Chinese edition by Workers’ Publishing House of China includes an English translation of the title as Thirteen Girls in the Nanjing Slaughter.
Yan’s choice of an American church as the setting of her story facilitates her depiction of scapegoating and, at the same time, adds more complexities to her story. To begin with, the church as a miniature of Nanjing represents a much smaller, but equally divided community facing a social crisis. Then, the church as a religious institution symbolizes its close connection to scapegoating, which originated as a religious ritual. Also, the church as a shelter governed by Christian beliefs makes it an interesting counterpart for a comparative study of the Safety Zone, which was governed by judicial laws. Moreover, the church as an American territory technically changes it into a Chinese American community and therefore endows the story with ethnic appeals evident in Chinese American literature. By representing the sequential sacrifices of the wounded Chinese soldiers and the prostitutes to protect the schoolgirls from the Japanese soldiers, Yan mythologizes the scapegoating mechanism which selects and punishes certain marked victims for the crimes of others within the community. Claiming the church as a religious institution to facilitate persecution of one social group for another, Yan incorporates elements of myth into her novel, revealing what Ben La Farge considers to be “a fundamental truth about the culture” (77). By turning a group of prostitutes from passive scapegoats into voluntary sacrifices and elevating them from socially despised creatures to respectful mythological heroines, Yan affirms the sublimity of initiative sacrificing and its healing power for a divided community. Delving into scapegoating, Yan reviews subjects like the nature of human beings, the nature of religion, and the nature of the church as both a religious and a social institution and invites her reader to contemplate these fundamental questions that have been debated for centuries and still remain controversial.

Yan constructs her story as a myth by weaving a number of mythical elements defined in
literature. As myth is a broad concept evolving with the progression of human society and often involves slight variations from culture to culture, writers and critics define myth by emphasizing certain mythical elements epitomizing the corpora of their studies. Robert Segal defines myth as “the unfolding of a story” that is “about the creation of the world” and “may seem self-evident” (4-5). To Segal, a myth involves characters “divine, human, or even animal” who accomplish “something significant” but is after all “false” (5-6). To Alan Watts, myth means “a complex of stories which use concrete narratives, images, symbols, and rituals to express inner truths about the universe and human life” (qtd. in Sienkewicz 57). Based on his studies of Greek myths, Carl Kerényi defines mythical characters as “tragic figure[s] who expressed the plight of the human condition” (qtd. in Sienkewicz 49). These definitions of myth and mythical heroes cater to many features of Yan’s story. For example, the main figures, though human beings, bear strong metaphorical similarities to mythical personalities: “divine” (Father Engelmann), “animal” (the prostitutes, the Chinese collaborators, and the Japanese soldiers), and “human” (the rest of the others). Also, the novel turns Father Engelmann’s church into the Garden of Eden, where the schoolgirls become Eves who cannot resist the seduction of evil in spite of the priest’s constant warning to them not to see, hear, or have contact with the prostitutes. Then the prostitutes’ sacrificing their lives to protect the girl students accomplishes something significant, as it subverts the stereotype of a group of women who are legally and socially defined as being “mercenary” and are always associated with “immorality and promiscuity,” “ill-fame,” and “bad character for chastity” (Flowers 156). In fact, the prostitutes’ success in taking the place of the schoolgirls without being discovered by the Japanese soldiers cannot be true. Knowing the prospect of their being raped and tortured by the Japanese soldiers, the prostitutes are unlikely to
be taken away by their predators without reacting with intuitive disgust, fear, and hatred, which should betray their real identities.

Based on the definitions of myth by Segal, Watts, and Kerényi, I would argue that Yan highlights the mythological nature of the novel with some “factual” changes in the novel’s English edition. For example, Yan replaces the knowledgeable but second-hand narrator, “my aunt Shujuan,” in Jinling Shisan Chai (3) with “Shujuan” in The Flowers of War (1) so as to make the truth of the story more self-evident. The change of the narrative perspective turns the novel from an overheard story retold by a non-witness into a reliable testimony of a historical crisis. Also, Yan chooses numbers with tragic implications for her groups of victims, trying to endow historical “facts” with symbolic meaning in both cultures. Changing the numbers of the refuge students from “四十四” (forty-four) in Jinling Shisan Chai (6) to “sixteen” in The Flowers of War (2) does not alter the tragic implications for these schoolgirls, as “four” (四) is the homophone of “death” (死) in Chinese, and “sixteen” as the product of “four times four” does not lose the tragic meaning of forty-four. Meanwhile, the number “sixteen” makes a convincing reduction of the students’ number to the English ominous “thirteen”—the number of the refuge prostitutes—after Xiaoyu’s father takes Xiaoyu and two other students away from the church.

However, as Segal, Watts, and Kerényi define myth more in a literary context, their definitions do not elaborate other features of Yan’s story, especially its implications of the scapegoating mechanism. Interestingly, when Segal points out in Myth: A Very Short Introduction that “Girard’s theory . . . would seem hopelessly inapplicable to the myth of Adonis” (75), he might be surprised to see how Girard’s theory of myth provides substantial
explanations that help decipher the mythical features of Yan’s *The Flowers of War*. When Yan sets her story in the contexts of intragroup and intergroup conflicts and competitions, war, religion, violence, and above all, life and death, Girard’s theory of religion, violence, and scapegoating works as a magic code to this novel.

In “What Is a Myth?” in *The Scapegoat*, Girard defines myths as “documents” that “contain the stereotypes of persecution” and “emerge from the same total pattern as the treatment of the Jews in Guillaume de Machaut” (25). In Girard’s opinion, four stereotypes of persecution are identifiable “[e]ach time an oral or written testament mentions an act of violence that is directly or indirectly collective” (*The Scapegoat* 24). In the list he asserts, the four stereotypes are “a generalized loss of differences,” “crimes that ‘eliminate differences,’” “the identified authors of these crimes [who] possess the marks that suggest a victim,” and “violence itself” (*The Scapegoat* 24). When Girard suggests a myth is a document that includes “the juxtaposition of more than one stereotype” (*The Scapegoat* 24), Yan’s *The Flowers of War* becomes a myth of myths, as it possesses all the four stereotypes on Girard’s list.

To depict “the first stereotype”—“a generalized loss of differences” (*The Scapegoat* 24), Yan uses biblical and cultural allusions and makes them conspicuous throughout the novel. Like Girard, who traces the origin of the scapegoat violence back to the Bible and regards the New Testament as “a radically new genre of scapegoat narrative” (Carter 87), Yan depends heavily on biblical allusions to scapegoating and thus turns her novel into a scapegoat narrative. Right after the Japanese’s conquest of Nanjing, the American church is turned into a state of chaos, when general differences are eliminated between day and night, the modern and the primitive, the civilized and the barbarous, children with parents and orphans, and virgins and prostitutes.
To begin with, the refugees, sheltered in the attic of the church and the cellar under the church kitchen, fall into a confusion of day and night by living in hiding. To prevent the Japanese soldiers from discovering the sixteen St. Mary Magdalene schoolgirls, Father Engelmann has “the small oval attic windows” “covered” with “blackout curtains” (2) so that the candlelight in the attic does not betray the girls’ presence. To ensure their safety, the old priest demands that the schoolgirls “stay upstairs in the attic as much as possible” (2). When the Qin Huai prostitutes, followed by the wounded Chinese soldiers, seek shelter in the church, the old priest has them hidden in the cellar with three ventilation shafts, each “covered with a rusty iron grille” (33). The refugees’ state of living in darkness instead of natural daylight has a clear biblical allusion, suggesting a similarity between their world of “chaos or nothingness” (Norman 21) and the remote past that is before God’s creation of “the heavens and the earth” when “darkness was over the surface of the deep” (Genesis 1:2). To foreground the world under the complete control of the Japanese’s violence, Yan makes her story begin in darkness, proceed almost entirely in darkness, and end in darkness. Throughout the novel, few episodes expose Yan’s Chinese characters to daylight and none to sunlight or moonlight, indicating the church has become a land of death with the absence of growth, “creativity,” or “the procreative power” (Norman 25). As “Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light” (II Corinthians 11:14), any light available to these victims is ominous and connected with violence: light from the candle that “went out like a sigh” (4), “light from the fires” set on the “[b]UILDINGS all over Nanking” (30), light from “the [Japanese] officer’s torch” (155) and “dozens of torches which lit up the [church] courtyard” (217), and “the headlights of the vehicle” (177) that brings the Japanese to the victims.

Then, Yan exemplifies the loss of differences between the modern and the primitive with
the cutoff of modern conveniences like power and water in the church. After the fall of Nanjing, the church is lit with candles and its “cistern” becomes the only available water resource for nearly forty people hiding there (43). Gone with the modern facilities is the loss of differentiation between the civilized and the barbarous. Father Engelmann is shocked to see the Japanese atrocities in Nanjing with his own eyes and to learn many more barbarous ones from “the wireless broadcasts” (73). Believing the Japanese’s massacre of their prisoners of war is “an affront to all civilized, humane values” (68), the old priest cannot help comparing the Nanjing Massacre in 1937 to human war crimes in “the Middle Ages” when “the Qin dynasty buried four hundred thousand Zhao kingdom prisoners of war alive” (73). As a witness of war atrocities in modern society, the priest is heart-broken to face “a greatly worsened situation,” claiming that human civilization does not “seem to have advanced much since then” (73). After the burial of Ah Gu, the church’s “old servant” killed by the Japanese soldiers, Father Engelmann stays in the graveyard and cannot help noticing the “mighty good cypresses” that are “good enough to build another Noah’s Ark” (142). Claiming the Japanese’s atrocities as the very cause of turning “the earth” into a “corrupt” place “full of violence” (Genesis 6:11), the priest wishes he could board Noah’s Ark and save his flock of refugees from being murdered by the Japanese.

Next, the differences between orphans and children with parents are no longer clear. Among the sixteen pupils taking shelter in the church, all but Shujuan and Xiaoyu are orphans, who nevertheless lived in the same state of orphanage when their parents “were abroad and had waited until too late to come and fetch their daughters” (5). After the return of Xiaoyu’s father, who manages to rescue his daughter by doing “business with the Japanese, putting antiques, jewellery and paintings their way, [and by] selling his integrity and his conscience” (171),
Shujuan is literally the only girl who has parents, but she lives life as if she were an orphan. Seeing herself “utterly betrayed” by her parents (5), Shujuan is in a mixed state of self-pity and jealousy of her sister being their parents’ “favorite” (11), blaming her parents for having left her “to witness such a vile scene” (11) when they themselves are “spared all of it” (204). Each time she experiences hunger, cold, loneliness, disgust at the prostitutes, or fear of the Japanese soldiers, she strengthens her grudge against her parents. In general, Yan’s depiction of Shujuan’s conception of her loss of her parents’ favor is similar to that of Cain, who “was very angry, and his face was downcast” as he is jealous of his brother Abel, upon whom “[t]he Lord looked with favor” (Genesis 4:1-5). Meanwhile, through Shujuan’s voice explaining that “her cowardly parents had not wanted to come back to a capital city abandoned even by the Chinese government” (5), Yan compares the fate of Shujuan to the fate of Nanjing, as both become orphans overnight when they are deserted by their protectors and left to the Japanese’s disposal.

Moreover, virgins and prostitutes seem no different in the social crisis. To the schoolgirls’ dismay, in spite of their firm belief in their moral and social superiority, they find they have the same female bodies as the prostitutes. “[T]orn between curiosity and disgust” at her menstrual blood, Shujuan sees her body as a sinful place “where any demon could implant a seed which would put forth shoots and bear fruit” (5). In a bitter quarrel between Shujuan and the prostitutes whom she accuses of being “[s]hameless bitches,” Shujuan is taken aback by the retort of Hongling and Nina:

“You wait until the Japs make you into a bitch!” Hongling shouted back.
“You think you’re better than us, but when they pull your trousers down, you’re just the same!”
Nani joined in.
“Don’t you know the Japs love making whores out of nice young girls?”
“The Japs have searched the Safety Zone and taken dozens of young girls
away!” Hongling gloated cheerfully. (136-37)

Therefore, for the first time in her life Shujuan realizes that the Japanese will take away the schoolgirls’ sense of superiority over the prostitutes by ruining the chastity they are so proud of. When Shujuan sees the truth in the words of Hongling and Nina, she tries to warn the other schoolgirls of the forthcoming danger from the Japanese soldiers, who “are on the hunt for any females—old women, little girls of seven or eight, anyone!” (160). To Shujuan’s disappointment, Xiaoyu would rather take her warning as “rumours” (160) by refusing to acknowledge their miserably identical prospect with that of the prostitutes, just as Shujuan used to do.

The Japanese invasion also takes away the schoolgirls’ refined lifestyle and cultivated manners. Hidden in their shelters, they use “a tin bucket to urinate in” (2), just like the prostitutes. They curse and fight against the prostitutes and later attack each other in the same foul language and fierce attack of “punching and kicking” (226) that they learn from the prostitutes. By eliminating the differences between the virgins and the prostitutes, Yan highlights the scapegoat marks of the prostitutes who seem to become the surrogates of blame for the Japanese invasion and the sinning of the schoolgirls. Meanwhile, implying that the Qin Huai prostitutes are worshippers of Ashtoreth, in whose “temples sacred prostitution lured the backsliding Hebrews” (Fulghum 19), Yan seems to allude to a biblical connection between the fall of Nanjing and “the Lord’s anger because [the prostitutes] forsook him and served Baal and the Ashtoreths” (Judges 2:12-13).

In addition to biblical allusions, Yan uses cultural allusions to depict the church’s loss of general differentiation between the divine and the secular and the honorable and the shameless. Father Engelmann, having served God for years, loses his divine foresight and feels as helpless and hopeless as the rest of the people living in the church. Throughout the novel, the old priest’s
ability in prophesy and judgment keeps decreasing until he has no idea what to do. To begin with, he “hadn’t expected that he would have to give the St Mary Magdalene schoolgirls shelter” (2). When the wounded Chinese soldiers “pushed the girls aside” to board the steamer that would take the girls away from the city of death, he has no other choice but to bring them back to the church (3). Then, after hiding the girls in the church attic, the priest does not expect that he would have to shelter two other groups of Chinese: the Qin Huai prostitutes and the wounded soldiers. Being too optimistic in his assessment of the Japanese’s conquest of Nanjing, he persuades Deacon Fabio Adornato to take in the prostitutes, telling his young assistant that the church will probably provide a shelter for those women for only a day or two because “[t]he Japanese people are well known to be law-abiding” and “their troops will soon impose order on this chaos” (13). Fearing that the wounded Chinese soldiers will be discovered and killed by the Japanese, the priest is reluctant to take them in unless they are willing to let him confiscate their weapons. However, facing the Japanese’s intensifying atrocities, the priest is increasingly at wits’ end and has to prepare himself and his refugees for the worst outcome. Each time the Japanese soldiers force their way into the church for food, valuables, Chinese soldiers, and virgin girls, Father Engelmann feels more dependent on other people for strength and hope. In his desperate worries about the church’s food and water crisis, George “cheered” him up by assuring him that “a bit of rancid butter” and “a jar of pickled vegetables” have not been thrown away and would be added to their food storage (19-20). Learning from Fabio that “a pond” discovered by Yumo would become a solution to the church’s water crisis, the priest “rewarded Fabio with a warm smile, very different from his usual, polite, cold smiles” (69-70). Yan depicts Father Engelmann’s loss of confidence via his increasing dependence on Fabio, whom he used to treat with
“unchallengeable superiority” (14). Yet soon the Japanese atrocities exhaust the combined wits of the two clergymen, so when for the last time the priest deals with the Japanese soldiers before his death, he feels he is just like Fabio, who “sounded terrified out of his wits” and “looked desperate, as if he had no idea what to do” (214).

Yan’s portrayal of Father Engelmann and Deacon Fabio’s exhaustion of wits in dealing with the Japanese soldiers is in several ways an implicit association with the cultural notion that “God is dead” discussed in Western societies at the time. First, describing God’s seeming indifference to a human predicament by never answering Father Engelmann’s prayers for His protection of the church, Yan compares the violence of the Nanjing Massacre to that of the Holocaust, which people (represented by Nietzsche) claimed as the result that “the old traditional Jewish patriarchal god, whose Providence shielded His Chosen People, is dead” (Patai 174). Then Fabio’s behaviors contradict the qualifications of a deacon described in the Holy Bible as one who is “not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome” (Timothy 3:3). Describing Fabio as a frequent drunkard who is both censorious and quarrelsome, Yan implies that Fabio’s lack of control of himself is perhaps due to his loss of faith in God. As radical theologians put it, the notion that “‘God is Dead’ is that in our modern world the God in whom Christians had traditionally believed can be and is no longer believed in” (Patai 168). Next, by representing Father Engelmann and Deacon Fabio as father-god and son-god, the sacrifice of the old priest in contrast to the survival of the young deacon is what Raphael Patai sees as the death of the father-god in “our modern Western culture” (174). In contrast to the ancient culture which respects “old age” and believes that “a son was nothing more than an adjunct to the father,” the modern culture believes in the opposite when “youth is idolized and old age deprecated” (172).
Also, Yan highlights the loss of differences between the honorable and the shameless through Father Engelmann’s co-sheltering two polarized groups in the church cellar: the wounded Chinese soldiers and the prostitutes. To be sure, unlike the prostitutes, who are treated with contempt, the wounded soldiers are regarded as honorable heroes and are respected by everyone in the church. The polarization of these two groups is primarily due to the social judgment of them. The soldiers are willing to sacrifice their lives for others, but the prostitutes are only supposed to care about their own pleasure. To blame the prostitutes’ disregard for the tragic state of Nanjing, Fabio quotes from an ancient Chinese poem which criticizes prostitutes in general as “singing girls heedless that national calamity looms” because “on the far bank, they sing the lament Courtyard Blooms” (140). Yet in spite of the cultural allusion to the prostitutes’ indifference to the fate of their nation, Yan seeks to place the prostitutes on a footing at least equal to that of the supposedly patriotic soldiers.

By degrading the soldiers because of their surrendering to their enemies and by upgrading the prostitutes because of their dedicated care of the soldiers, Yan questions the polarization of the two groups, suggesting that the conventional judgment of them is wrong. To subvert the social prejudice against prostitutes who are accused of “emotional apathy” (Flowers 156), Yan makes her prostitute characters full of tenderness while taking care of the wounded soldiers and lets sincere affection grow between Yumo and Major Dai as well as Cardamom and Wang Pusheng. In her great passion for Pusheng, Cardamom even risks her life to go back to the Qin Huai brothel for pipa strings so that her beloved one could hear her play some beautiful songs before his death. In fact, Cardamom’s sacrifice of her life for her love of Pusheng proves that prostitutes are capable of dedicating themselves to love as are other human beings.
Following Cardamom, the prostitutes make a group sacrifice for the schoolgirls targeted by the Japanese soldiers, though they are not much older than the schoolgirls and feel the same fear, knowing what is to become of them once they are taken away by the Japanese. By putting groups with presumably incompatible moral characteristics in the same space, Yan satirizes the Chinese soldiers who degrade themselves by surrendering to their enemies yet take credit for their supposed defense of their country. Meanwhile, Yan questions the rationale of the existing social values regarding the prostitutes, inviting her readers to reconsider some widely acceptable beliefs that may turn out to be ungrounded and biased.

When Yan’s characters commit crimes that make them all sinners, *The Flowers of War* becomes a Girardian myth by possessing what Girard refers to as the second stereotype of persecution—“crimes that ‘eliminate differences’” (*The Scapegoat* 24). Selected examples of crimes from the novel that correspond to those prohibited by the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17) are as follows: (1) The prostitutes are not worshippers of God; (2) the schoolgirls adore the power of Xiaoyu’s father and compete to befriend her; (3) the Japanese officer misuses the name of the Lord; (4) the church no longer observes the Sabbath day during the fall of Nanjing; (5) Shujuan hates her parents who have left her behind; (6) the Japanese soldiers murder Au Gu, George, the wounded Chinese soldiers, and Father Engelmann; (7) Hongling and George commit adultery; (8) the prostitutes steal water from the cistern; (9) the burial man gives a false testimony against Major Dai, who is not saved from the execution ground and brought to the church by him; (10) the Japanese soldiers covet Father Engelmann’s car, the church’s scarce amount of food, and the schoolgirls. In fact, sinning is so ubiquitous that even the church’s clergymen are not free from it. Father Engelmann is too proud of his divine power, and Deacon
Fabio is a frequent drunkard. Yan’s connection between the crimes of her characters and those forbidden in the Ten Commandments has two functions in the novel: to attribute her characters’ crimes to the church’s transformation into a community without differences and to foreground the scapegoating process via which marked sinners are selected as scapegoats.

Yan draws a causal connection between her characters’ crimes and the confusion of the church that eliminates the pyramidal social differentiation among Father Engelmann, Deacon Fabio, the schoolgirls, the church workers, the wounded Chinese soldiers, and the prostitutes. These crimes, first of all, threaten the supreme power of Father Engelmann. In all episodes when the church has unexpected intruders—the prostitutes, the wounded Chinese soldiers, and the Japanese soldiers, Father Engelmann’s decision of opening or not opening the door of the church to these intruders is challenged by Deacon Fabio, who questions and distrusts the old priest’s judgment and motives. Joining Fabio, Au Gu and George betray the old priest at the sight of the prostitutes, showing no sincere support for Father Engelmann’s early decision of not allowing the prostitutes into the church. George “was half-hearted in the way he brandished his stick” without really trying to keep the prostitutes out of the church (9), and Ah Gu “was cheerfully leading the women down in the cellar under the kitchen” right after Father Engelmann changed his mind (16). While the prostitutes attempt to be taken in by begging the old priest and seducing his church workers, the wounded Chinese soldiers and the Japanese soldiers threaten him with guns and bayonets, assuming the priest would only let them in out of fear of death. Overall, Yan constructs a parallel loss between Father Engelmann’s divinity and his prophetic ability, suggesting that crimes pollute the church and turn it into a chaotic world with no difference between the divine and the secular.
Then sins of promiscuity, theft, and coveting break the schoolgirls’ naive illusion that their respectable social status, in contrast to that of the prostitutes, should guarantee them prioritized support and care under all circumstances. Contrary to what they have expected, the schoolgirls not only lose their limited food and water supplies to the prostitutes but also become Japanese soldiers’ more favorable targets of attack because of their state of virginity and chastity, honorable traits that they have been always taking pride in. Seduced by the prostitutes, George betrays the schoolgirls by giving a big ratio of food to the prostitutes. Out of the four loaves of bread, “[t]he sixteen girls, the two clergymen, George and Ah Gu had made to do with two of them so that the prostitutes could have the rest” (58). To curry favor with the prostitutes, he gave them the schoolgirls’ meagre supply of biscuits and was very likely to cook some potatoes for Hongling after their affair. Meanwhile, the prostitutes “pilfer” the scarce water in the cistern “for washing clothes or faces” (43) when it should be used for drinking and cooking. The theft of the prostitutes worsens the water supply crisis and threatens the lives of the schoolgirls. However, the gravest threat to the schoolgirls’ superiority over the prostitutes is the Japanese soldiers’ prioritizing the girls as their targets. Assuming “young virgins had restorative powers” and “could protect them from a hail of bullets in battle,” the Japanese soldiers “collected their pubic hair which they hung around their neck to ward off evil” (220). Yan’s subversion of the schoolgirls’ superiority over the prostitutes reiterates the chaotic state of the church and foreshadows the selection of the prostitutes as scapegoats who sacrifice themselves for the good of the schoolgirls.

Also, crimes of blasphemy, dishonesty, and adultery degrade the wounded Chinese soldiers and make them as disgraceful as the prostitutes. First, these soldiers lack respect for the
church. While the prostitutes sleep on the “books from the [church’s] workshop” (33) and dry their “garish assortment of underwear” by the fireplace in the church’s library “full of sacred books and holy pictures” (46), Major Dai points his gun at Father Engelmann, assuming the priest will yield to his armed force by taking in the wounded Chinese soldiers. Then, just like the prostitutes, these soldiers are liars. While Hongling lies about seducing George for extra food, Sergeant Major Li lies about his “two minds as to whether he should leave this boy [Wang Pusheng] behind and make good his own escape” (113), and Major Dai lies about the soldiers’ drinking and asking Yumo to dance for them as their means “to warm up a bit” (140). Also, these soldiers cannot resist the attraction of the prostitutes. When they are co-sheltered with the prostitutes in the cellar, Sergeant Major Li wants Hongling to “dance for him” (124), Wang Pusheng “keep[s] watching” Yumo in her dancing (128), and Major Dai seems “to be getting amorous with this Yumo” (122). In fact, Yan mythologizes the soldiers’ absorption in Yumo’s dancing as adultery in the biblical sense, since in the Holy Bible, “anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28). To symbolize the degradation of the honorable wounded soldiers who become despicable like the prostitutes, Yan goes further to make these soldiers dress in the attire of the prostitutes. In his last days of life, Wang Pusheng wears “Hongling’s mink coat” and “patterned silk scarves” as bandages (121). After the soldiers were killed by the Japanese, they were buried with the prostitutes’ “scarves, dresses, wraps” to “put between their bodies and the earth” (204). In fact, Yumo could not hold her tears of pity when she sees Major Dai’s body “wrapped in ridiculously colourful clothing” (204). Letting the soldiers be buried in the prostitutes’ attire, Yan highlights the disgrace of the Chinese soldiers who choose to surrender to the Japanese and die in humiliation and shame.
While using the Ten Commandments to portray her characters’ crimes, Yan foregrounds the scapegoating process in which a community blames “the identified authors of these crimes [who] possess the marks that suggest a victim,” and this is what Girard calls the third stereotype of persecution (The Scapegoat 24). Claiming that “[t]he more signs of a victim an individual bears, the more likely he is to attract disaster [by becoming a selected scapegoat]” (The Scapegoat 26), Girard reveals the persecution nature in myth by pointing out how it misplaces the blame of a social crisis on an innocent victim. Like Oedipus, who “did not do what he was accused of but that everything about him marked him as an outlet for the annoyance and irritation of his fellow citizens” (The Scapegoat 29), Yan’s Qin Huai prostitutes become scapegoats as they bear more blamable signs than any other group taking refuge in the church. According to Abraham Flexner, the problems caused by prostitutes include “(1) economic waste, (2) spread of sexually transmitted disease, (3) personal demoralization, and (4) social disorder and criminality” (qtd. in Flowers 157), and Yan incorporates them all into her story to substantiate the blame of her prostitute characters within the church community.

To begin with, Yan includes many descriptive details to suggest the luxurious living conditions of the Qin Huai prostitutes, which implies the economic waste they are responsible for. The prostitutes’ first appearance in the novel makes a stunning impression of their wealth, with one “wearing a bright pink satin dressing gown” and another “a fox-fur stole over a tight cheongsam” (7). Even on their perilous journey of running away from the Japanese soldiers, they still possess an astonishing amount of valuables, including “baskets, bundles and satin bed quilts from which tumbled hair ribbons, silk stockings and other intimate articles” (11). Upon Father Engelmann’s permission to let them stay, one prostitute simply “relieve[s]” herself in front of the
“foreign monks” behind “an expensive-looking bottle-green velvet cape,” saying “[s]he could not wait any longer” as “they had been on the run all night” (12). There is no misjudgment of the prostitutes’ “fine-quality [mah-jong] pieces” by the “clinking noise they made as they fell” (14). While arguing with Fabio for “four meals” a day as the prostitutes used to have, Hongling checks time through “a tiny watch” on her “plump wrist” and describes their night-time meal as “a few snack dishes, a soup, a nice glass of wine” (41). To contrast the prostitutes’ expensive assets and their sumptuous meals to Father Engelmann’s “grandest cassock and surplice, full of moth holes” (203) and the schoolgirls’ meals of soup with “a few overcooked strips of cabbage and scraps of noodle” (58), Yan highlights signs that the prostitutes are engaged in a most profitable business, yet also a shameful business condemned in the church community.

Then, condemned as virus carriers in a literal as well as a metaphorical sense, Yan’s prostitute characters are portrayed as highly infectious by spreading sexually transmitted disease and demoralizing the church community. Assuming that the schoolgirls will find her lost mah-jong pieces and will return them upon her request, Hongling is nevertheless enraged by the girls’ humiliating pretext that they do not keep her tiles for fear that they might “catch nasty diseases from them” (28). Claiming her lost tiles “were covered in the pus” and “[a]nyone who touches my tiles will catch my boils” (28), Hongling pours her furious curse at the girls who are not alone in believing the poisonous nature of the prostitutes. Knowing they are “like a virus” which can “spread everywhere” (46), Father Engelmann refuses to take in the prostitutes in the first place, making an explicit suggestion about their infectious nature by referring to them as a potential “harm” (10). When Father Engelmann is unable to prophesy about other matters after the fall of Nanjing, his foreseeing of the prostitutes’ harm to the church is nevertheless quite
accurate until their voluntary sacrifice. Behaving like shameless women, the prostitutes do not
abide by moral principles and are capable of polluting wherever they go and demoralizing
whomever they come in contact with. They pollute the community the first day when one of
them relieves herself in the churchyard. They use the church toilets when the water supply is cut
off and make them “smell terrible” (39). They change the cellar “into an underground brothel”
with their “silk quilts in impossible pinks and greens” spreading “over the cots” and “mirrors of
various shapes standing on book stacks along the walls” (33). They bring on a food and water
crisis and pollute the morale of the church workers, the schoolgirls, and the wounded Chinese
soldiers.

Ah Gu and George, the church workers, soon yield to the prostitutes’ tricks of seduction
in their short-lived struggle to keep the prostitutes out of the church. While Yumo begs for Father
Engelmann’s protection on her knees, “her chignon suddenly came undone and [her beautiful]
hair cascaded down over her shoulders” (10). Joining Yumo, another woman “suddenly fainted”
and “fell into Ah Gu’s arms, her mangy mink coat slid open to reveal a white, naked body” (10-11).
Here, by using the word “suddenly” in both cases, Yan dramatizes the good timing of both
incidents, suggesting that the prostitutes have their secret weapon of womanly beauty to battle
against men and defeat them. As a result, Ah Gu and George are no longer faithful supporters of
Father Engelmann’s earlier decision of not taking in the prostitutes.

Under the prostitutes’ influence, the schoolgirls soon pick up their coarse behavior and
obscene language. For fear that they might be taken away by the Japanese soldiers, the girls
curse and fight each other with “blows and insults” just like the prostitutes (226). In fact, even
the wounded Chinese soldiers are not immune from the prostitutes’ infection. Major Dai feels he
“couldn’t carry on playing mah-jong with the prostitutes” if he would be “useful” again—which creates an incentive for him not being useful again (145). These women’s daily routine of “kick[ing] up such a fuss about the most trivial thing” simply makes him “thoroughly dejected and confused” (146). In spite of their attending the soldiers’ wounds, he feels demoralized by their amusement of dancing, wine, and mah-jong and “would rather have died cleanly in battle than spend his time with these powdered and painted women” (146). Overall, episodes that reveal the prostitutes’ crimes of demoralization run through pages of the novel. The prostitutes’ crimes are equivalent to what Girard calls “the moral or physical poisoning of the community” and therefore make them potential scapegoats similar to those “in Guillaume and in the witchcraft trials” (The Scapegoat 27).

Moreover, the prostitutes are accused of being responsible for social disorder and criminality. In the novel, Yan portrays Shujuan and Fabio as fulminators against the prostitutes’ vulgarity and tries to illustrate the scapegoating process by representing the faulty logic in their reprimands. Yan includes a long passage that describes Shujuan’s analytical reasoning of the prostitutes as the primary cause for a series of misfortunes:

Shujuan felt a surge of hatred for these prostitutes. If they had not forced their way in, the water in the cistern would have been enough for the sixteen girls. The women had used up all the water washing their clothes, their faces and their bums, and made the schoolgirls drink from a filthy pond. In fact, if they had not run out of water, Ah Gu would not have needed to leave the compound, and would not now be missing. Even the heroic Major Dai was letting them have their way with him, right now, before her very eyes. He had let down his defences. He had become dissolute. (122)

In Shujuan’s contemplation, the prostitutes are the evil initiators responsible for recent tragedies. Never once does it occur to her that the Japanese soldiers are responsible for cutting off the water supply, killing Ah Gu, and wounding Major Dai, not the prostitutes. Joining Shujuan, Fabio
accuses the prostitutes of their seeming indifference to the loss of their nation and the pain of their fellow countrymen. Calling them “animals” (12), he is as contemptuous of their unrefined language and behaviors as he is infuriated by their obsession with pleasure seeking in times of social crisis. Using an ancient Chinese poem to allude to the prostitutes’ seeming indifference to their nation’s calamity, Fabio censures the Qin Huai prostitutes for their apathy when Nanjing has become a city of death with “its population decreasing every second of every day” (140). Here, Yan makes Fabio’s accusation of the prostitutes as faulty as that of Shujuan. For one thing, the prostitutes do not cause the national calamity; for another, would it really make a difference to the nation’s calamitous status if the prostitutes were to behave gracefully? In fact, Yan makes Shujuan and Fabio representatives of conventional prejudices against the prostitutes, who bear the most signs of the victims upon whom the community can lay their blame. Yan portrays Shujuan and Fabio as biased persecutors by letting them share a common hatred of the prostitutes, an identifiable mood elaborated by Girard as typical “[i]n all the vocabulary of tribal or national prejudices . . . not for difference, but for its absence” (The Scapegoat 22). Seeing the loss of their moral and social superiority over the prostitutes after the fall of Nanjing, the schoolgirls, like Fabio, cannot help using the prostitutes to vent their fury, which in Alfred Adler’s opinion is caused by “an unconscious feeling of inferiority” (qtd. in Neumann 48). According to Carter’s comparative studies of the scapegoat theories, the schoolgirls’ and Fabio’s condemnation of the prostitutes represents the reason why Eliade sees the history of religion as “so much sacred violence” and why Girard and Burke believe “so many people—hunters, gatherers, peasants, workers in the modern factory—seek to blame others for their own inadequacies” (87). Showing how the prostitutes become scapegoats by taking on the blame for
the war atrocities and the negligence of duty of the Chinese responsible for the chaotic state of Nanjing, Yan reveals the scapegoating process via which innocent victims are selected to appease the anger of a community in times of social crisis.

In addition to their criminal status, the Qin Huai prostitutes bear extra ominous signs that foreshadow their eventual scapegoat status. With the death of Cardamom, their group number is reduced from fourteen, an unlucky number in Chinese culture, to thirteen, an unlucky number in American culture. They live in the cellar, the lowest place in the church during their days as refugees. Sold to Qin Huai brothel by opium-addicted parents or money-driven relatives or kidnappers, they are literally orphans who “can be exposed to violence without fear of reprisal” (Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* 13). Speaking of their replacing the schoolgirls as prey of the Japanese soldiers, Yumo asks the prostitutes to think of “anyone who gives a toss whether you live or you die” (231). As they are the least socially connected ones in their community, the prostitutes’ deaths will not “automatically entail an act of vengeance” (Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* 13), since nobody really cares about them. Also, being “the eldest” with “two sisters and a little brother” (207), Yumo bears an extra scapegoat mark as a first-born, the Lord’s preferred sacrifice like other “first-offspring” sacrifices (Exodus 13:2). As the prostitutes bear the most criminal and ominous signs, they are selected as scapegoats and sacrificed for the good of their community after the fall of Nanjing.

In fact, Yan holds so much sympathy towards the prostitutes who are sacrificed as scapegoats that she brings some of them back to life to testify on the subject of the persecutions they have gone through and thus immortalizes their marks of scapegoats by writing their sacrifice into history. With their voluntary sacrifice, Yan transforms them into mythical heroes
and makes them embrace their moment of transcendence, which according to Girard is the revelation of “the sacred” (*The Scapegoat* 38) in the way that “[t]he universal execration of the person who causes the sickness is replaced by universal veneration for the person who cures that same sickness” (*The Scapegoat* 44). Yan reinforces the mythical transcendence of the prostitutes when she goes further to add an epilogue to the English version of the novel about the aftermath of Yumo and Cardamom. While Yumo survives the seemingly unsurvivable torture by Japanese soldiers and testifies to their war atrocities as an eyewitness, Cardamom leaves among the archives that exhibit the Japanese soldiers’ monstrous crime, a photo of her being “bound to an old-fashioned wooden chair, her legs forced apart and her private parts exposed to the camera lens” after their mass rape of her (246). In fact, Yumo’s magical return from her death and Cardamom’s perpetual survival in her “lingering death” (246) in a photograph immortalize the two women as scapegoats. As Girard suggests in his scapegoat theory, “The causality of the scapegoat is imposed with such force that even death cannot prevent it” (*The Scapegoat* 44).

Choosing Nanjing and the Nanjing Massacre as the geographical and temporal settings of *The Flowers of War*, Yan tells her story with tremendous “violence,” which is listed by Girard as the “fourth stereotype [of persecution]” (*The Scapegoat* 24). Putting the violence of the Japanese atrocities in the backdrop, Yan foregrounds the church’s internal violence—the violence described by Girard as “all the dissensions, rivalries, jealousies, and quarrels within the community that the sacrifices are designed to suppress” (*Violence and the Sacred* 8). In fact, via description of the church as a divided community filled with verbal and physical fights after the collapse of its hierarchal order, Yan attempts to draw her reader’s attention to the internal violence of a community in times of a foreign intrusion, when the internal persecution imposed
on the underprivileged groups by those privileged tends to be overlooked. In other words, Yan wants her readers to notice that the Japanese intrusion in the church is a catalyst which does not initiate but accelerate the prostitutes’ sacrifice as scapegoats. Here, I would argue that Yan, by paralleling the church’s internal violence with the external violence, suggests that persecution of vulnerable victims by their community members is scarcely different from that imposed on them by their aggressive enemies from outside the community—which persecutions are violent in nature.

To begin with, Yan’s characters have experienced violence before the coming of the Japanese soldiers. The story begins with Shujuan’s waking up from her sleep only to discover “a warm stain on her cotton nightgown” (1), the blood from her first menstruation. Not pleased to see the maturing change of her female body, Shujuan reacts with “curiosity and disgust at the dark liquid issuing from deep within her belly” and rejects the impurity of the menstrual blood that “had turned her flesh into fertile soil” of sexuality (5). After her first conflict with the prostitutes, she starts to “hate herself,” realizing she is no different from them, as she “had the same body and organs” that go through “the same cramping pains expelling the same unclean blood” (23). She sees herself as no longer innocent or pure after she becomes a sexualized being by bleeding just like the prostitutes. In fact, Girard sees menstrual blood as a symbol of violence because of its close associations to sexuality:

Sex and violence frequently come to grips in such direct forms as abduction, rape, defloration, and various sadistic practices, as well as in indirect actions of indefinite consequences. Sex is at the origin of various illnesses, real or imaginary; it culminates in the bloody labors of childbirth, which may entail the death of mother, child, or both together. Even within the ritualistic framework of marriage, when all the matrimonial vows and other interdictions have been conscientiously observed, sexuality is accompanied by violence; and as soon as one trespasses beyond the limits of matrimony to engage in illicit relationship—
incest, adultery, and the like—the violence, and the impurity resulting from this violence, grows more potent and extreme. Sexuality leads to quarrels, jealous rages, mortal combats. It is a permanent source of disorder even within the most harmonious of communities. (Violence and the Sacred 35)

Here, by revealing the bloody nature of sexuality, Girard argues that menstrual blood with its “direct relationship to sexuality” is similar to “the blood of a murdered man,” as both are symbols of violence (Violence and the Sacred 34). Therefore, when Yan opens her story with Shujuan’s discovery of her menstrual blood, she foreshadows the forthcoming violence and bloodshed in the rest of the novel.

Then the church’s practice of segregation to maintain its hierarchal order initiates other forms of violence, especially toward the prostitutes who are on the lowest rung of the social scale. Unwilling to take in the prostitutes, Father Engelmann suggests implicitly the inappropriateness of sheltering these women in the same space with the schoolgirls, as some of the girls are “from the highest echelons of society” and their parents are “long-standing members of his congregation” (10). Though Father Engelmann yields to the prostitutes’ request later on, he is reluctant to put them “down into the cellar under the kitchen” (16). Compared with Father Engelmann, Deacon Fabio goes even further in showing his contempt for the prostitutes. Several times, his remarks suggest explicitly the inferior position of the prostitutes. To find out what news Father Engelmann has brought back to the church, the prostitutes “burst in through a side door” of the church only to be told by Fabio that they should “keep to the cellar in future and don’t come upstairs” and particularly “[w]herever the schoolgirls are” (25). Fabio also censures the prostitutes for using the church toilets, as they should be “for the use of ladies and gentlemen of the congregation and their children during Mass” (39). In the novel, Yan suggests that Fabio’s sense of superiority over the prostitutes results from his belief in his higher social status. In fact,
to illustrate the church’s hierarchal order in accordance with its members’ class differences, Yan uses Fabio as a typical example. When Fabio despises the prostitutes because they are “several rungs below him in the social scale,” Yan puts him in the same inferior position in front of Father Engelmann, who simply “regarded him as inferior because of his rural upbringing” (14). To parallel the church’s hierarchal order with that of society, Yan argues that the church is never an independent institution which upholds the Christian belief that God’s children are equally loved. Rather, the church and the people who run it are closely connected to the society and function as an institution that helps maintain the social hierarchal order.

Repressed under segregation, Yan’s prostitute characters face persecutions from the rest of the community. Not blind to their underprivileged condition, these women often try to befriend people in the church so as to avoid more persecution. Compared with other groups, the prostitutes are more defenders than offenders in the church’s internal crossfire of violence. In fact, Yan portrays these women as docile victims in most cases and attributes their occasional violence to their intuitive rebellion against whoever becomes their persecutor. Up until their group sacrifice, the prostitutes live under the most frequent verbal and physical attacks by the schoolgirls, who take pride in their prejudices against these women. First, arguing with George who betrays the girls by giving their biscuits to the prostitutes, Shujuan shows her great contempt toward these women by telling them that they are not worth talking to. Feeling offended, Shujuan even attempts to beat Hongling by “raising a hand threateningly at her smiling adversary” (22). Then, when Hongling asks the girls to return her lost mah-jong pieces, the girls first humiliate her by referring to those tiles as causes for “nasty diseases” (28) and then “shouted belligerently” about their change of mind and later “hurled [some tiles] through the windows so
hard” that one “hit Hongling on the cheek” (29). Also, when Cardamom is disappointed with her not being tall enough to ladle some of the girls soup, she is more enraged by all the humiliating nicknames the girls give to her—from “dwarf” to “rotten winter melon” that “[n]o one but the flies would want” (60). Hearing Sophie refer to her as “Stinks,” Cardamom “picked up Sophie’s bowl and flung the dregs of her soup in her face,” only to be “pin[ned]” down on the floor by the girls who joined in the fight “by landing a kick or a pinch where they could” (60). The most violent episode of the girls’ violence is Shujuan’s attempt to burn the prostitutes with some embers:

Driven by her fury, Shujuan went to the ash pit behind the kitchen and collected a shovelful of coal dust in which a few embers still glowed. She went back to the ventilation shaft and weighed the shovel speculatively in her hands: if she could get half of it down the shaft and a couple of sparks fell on the faces of those sluts who fed off men’s weaknesses, how happy she would be! How good it would make her and her classmates feel! (122-23)

In fact, in the novel’s English translation, Yan changes the causality that drives Shujuan into dire revenge toward the prostitutes so as to mythologize the girl’s hatred of these women. In Jinling Shisan Chai, Shujuan’s intention of burning the prostitutes is primarily caused by her personal hatred of Yumo, who is her father’s secret lover. In The Flowers of War, her hatred of the prostitutes emerges out of her blind inheritance of a general hatred of these women under religious, social, and cultural influences. When Yan highlights the destructive power of prejudices, she reinforces the concept of persecution originated in religious, social, and cultural biases. Describing the church as a community full of violent persecutions even before the coming of the Japanese soldiers, Yan questions the violent nature of segregation that is adopted to maintain the hierarchal order of the church.

Also, upon the Japanese soldiers’ frequent invasions of the church for valuables, food,
Chinese soldiers, and virgin girls, Yan portrays Father Engelmann as one who depends solely on the practice of sacrifice in its primitive rituals in the hope of protecting his refugees. Yet to the dismay of the old priest, the more he sacrifices, the more violence the church encounters. Yan endows Father Engelmann with a blind optimism in his practice of sacrifice. Each time he makes a sacrifice to the Japanese soldiers, he assumes they will be satisfied and will leave the church alone, but they just come back and ask for more until he has nothing to give to them except his own life. The first time the Japanese soldiers come, the old priest sacrifices his “old Ford,” a possession which is “one of his most cherished” (23-24). The second time the Japanese soldiers come, the priest sacrifices the wounded Chinese soldiers, who nevertheless are willing to embrace their deaths to protect the prostitutes and the schoolgirls. The third time the Japanese soldiers come, the priest sacrifices the prostitutes, believing “[t]hey had to be sacrificed because they were not pure enough, because they were second-rate lives, because they were not worthy of his protection, of the church’s protection or of God’s” (228). However, to the priest’s surprise, the prostitutes are willing to follow the example of the wounded Chinese soldiers and embrace their fate of sacrifice to protect the schoolgirls.

In fact, the order of Father Engelmann’s selection of sacrifices, each time the Japanese soldiers come, is quite revealing in the way it reflects the priest’s philosophy of religious values. However, when Yan leaves Father Engelmann with little doubt towards his prioritization of human lives over valuable possessions and women over men, she nevertheless puts the priest in contemplation to figure out why he should sacrifice the prostitutes to save the virgin girls on the condition that both groups are orphans and of about the same age. In fact, as portrayed by Yan, the priest is burdened with guilt when he discovers that the prostitutes nevertheless initiate their
voluntary sacrifice. At the sight of the prostitutes “dressed in wide-sleeved black choir robes” (234), Yan makes Father Engelmann realize how unfair the sacrifice is to the prostitutes who “came here seeking protection” (235), only to be handed over to the Japanese soldiers as scapegoats, as Girard says, “in the skins of the sacrificed animals” (Girard, *Violence and the Sacred 5*). In this sense, the priest sees his sacrifice of the prostitutes as no different from murder. To redeem his error, he insists on going with the prostitutes and expresses his sincere wish of making a compromise with them by calling these women “my students” and “my child” (237). Yan dramatizes the death of Father Engelmann, who asks Yumo for her “hand” in his desperate struggle to climb onto the truck but is shot to death by the Japanese soldiers and “fell off the truck” (237). By letting the priest feel guilty over his violent sacrifice of the prostitutes and later desirous for their love and forgiveness, Yan mythologizes the transformation of the prostitutes into innocent lambs by empowering them with a certain divinity.

In addition to Father Engelmann’s practice of sacrifice in religious rituals, Yan depicts a similar practice of sacrifice in its modern form—the schoolgirls’ drawing of the lottery. Upon the return of Xiaoyu’s father, a powerful businessman who buys off the Japanese and is able to take his daughter out of Nanjing, Xiaoyu requests that her father take two classmates of hers as well. Not knowing whom to take except for Anna, Xiaoyu suggests the rest of the girls “draw lots” and later takes away “the winner . . . who had hardly even exchanged a word with Xiaoyu” (173). To Girard, the practice of a lottery by modern man to select the victim is “meant to simulate that original violence”—the selection of God’s sacrifice by choosing the ones who bear most signs of differences. Basically, Girard does not see the lottery as a symbol of human progression by eliminating violence involved in scapegoat selection. Rather, he claims that the fairness in the
practice of a lottery is only a transformation of sacrifice to “succumb to the reciprocal violence” (Violence and the Sacred 314). With its “deliberate confusion of distinctions” and “merger into communal togetherness,” the modern lottery does not alter its nature of violence by leaving the selection of the victim to “divine Chance” (Violence and the Sacred 314).

In spite of his claiming myth as “lie,” Plato suggests “it is necessary for people to believe in good myths” (O’Flaherty 25-26). Calling them “the ‘noble lie’ in the Republic,” he believes in good myths’ nobility that “distorts an outside surface in order to convey an inner truth” (O’Flaherty 26). The Flowers of War is a good myth of this type by letting its readers question the credibility of a story which is nevertheless full of truths. With the Qin Huai prostitutes, the novel subverts the social prejudice against these women who become courageous martyrs and dedicated lovers. Sold to the brothel and later turned into scapegoats, their experiences through several transformations make them no different from the heroes in a Girardian myth, which “turns the scapegoat into a criminal, who deserved to die, and then turns the criminal into a hero, who has died voluntarily for the good of the community” (Segal 75). With the St. Mary Magdalene schoolgirls, the novel is an allegory of Paradise Lost. Not realizing their prejudice against the Qin Huai prostitutes is returned by the prostitutes’ voluntary sacrifice, the schoolgirls feel guilty and shameful of how they have bullied the prostitutes mercilessly. Like Eve, they eat of “the fruit of the wonder-tree” and thereafter lose their “animal innocence” and know shame (Campbell 138-39). Their new understanding of the world, though filled with lies and injustice, endows them with more divine power of differentiating the right from the wrong and leads them into what Dorothy Norman suggests is “a conscious state of being” (Norman 25). Represented by Shujuan, the schoolgirls experience their moment of epiphany by witnessing the sacrifice of the
prostitutes, whom they had persecuted by joining the other social forces blindly. In the social crisis, the girls evolve by possessing what Joseph Campbell refers to as human consciousness:

   In the long course of our biological prehistory, living creatures had been consuming each other for hundreds of millions of years before eyes opened to the terrible scene, and millions more elapsed before the level of human consciousness was attained. Analogously, as individuals, we are born, we live and grow, on the impulse of organs that are moved independently of reason to aims antecedent to thought—like beasts: until, one day, the crisis occurs that has separated mankind from the beasts: the realization of the monstrous nature of this terrible game that is life, and our consciousness recoils. (138)

   Though Yan feels it unfair to blame surrogate victims for the crimes of others, she nevertheless confirms the nobility of sacrifice as a healing power that can reunite a divided community with seemingly irreconcilable social conflicts. In the epilogue of the novel, Yan lets Shujuan and Yumo meet again after Yumo’s eye-witness testimony against the Japanese’s crimes of rapes at the Japanese War Crimes Tribunal in Nanjing in 1946. Yan gives Shujuan a chance to express her sincere gratitude of the sacrifice made by the prostitutes, though Yumo seems to be more eager to “chang[e] her identity [so] that she could go on living” than to be remembered as a heroine who has made a great sacrifice to protect the schoolgirls (244). When Shujuan tells Yumo, “I was one of the group of schoolgirls you and the other sisters saved” (243), Yan bequeaths Shujuan with what Dorothy Norman refers to as “the hard-won gift of awareness” (Norman 25) by letting her claim an intimate sisterhood symbolized by sacrifice and solidarity between the schoolgirls and the prostitutes. Also, seeing in an archive the photograph of Cardamom as she is tortured to death by the Japanese soldiers, Yan makes Shujuan reconcile with Cardamom by letting Shujuan have a vision of hearing Cardamom “playing ‘Picking Tea’ [for her beloved Wang Pusheng] on her one-stringed pipa,” which no longer sounds “like a dirge” but “the most beautiful music she had ever heard” (248). To unite Shujuan with Yumo and
Cardamom, Yan calls for her readers not to inherit social opinions with blind faith but to take a cautious attitude towards social prejudices that make a community more divided than united. Claiming Shujuan’s salvation through which one possesses a “higher, positive aspect of new life or fresh growth” (Norman 25), Yan asks her readers to empower themselves with knowledge and critical thinking and elevate themselves from blind support to social understanding.

Meanwhile, to consider that Yan sets her story of scapegoating in an American church instead of a Chinese temple, I would suggest that perhaps Yan wants to send an extra message particularly to her American readers. In addition to informing them of the intensity and scale of violence in Nanjing, Yan hopes that her American readers see the unjust nature of scapegoating, review particularly America’s racial and ethnic conflicts, and by all means avoid using scapegoating as a solution to social problems. If this is true, then Yan makes The Flowers of War similar to what Wendy Doniger O’Flaherty calls “a complex folie à deux,” which combines myth with reality (156). Directing their attention to O’Flaherty’s reference of mythical events like “the sudden transition from childhood to adulthood, falling in love, marriage, death,” Yan hopes her readers achieve what O’Flaherty suggests is “our experience of the deaths of others and our contemplation of our own deaths” (156). Setting a scapegoating myth in a divided American church, Yan approximates the church to American society, both with multi-nationalities, multi-ethnicities, multi-religions, multi-cultures, and multi-languages. As the church is a miniature of an equally divided American society and as Yan exemplifies scapegoating as an unjust yet practical solution to social conflicts, one of Yan’s concerns about her story could be her wish to see that her American readers probe into America’s economic, social, and political realities and, by all means, avoid solutions that benefit one group of people at the cost of another.
CHAPTER 5
SECONDARY WITNESSES, ACCUMULATIVE PRIMARY WITNESSING,
AND THE “HARD TRUTH” IN WING TEK LUM’S
THE NANJING MASSACRE: POEMS

Too often history is written by those who survive, those who won (the pen then works in service to the sword). The victims of war, especially those who did not survive, seldom have their experiences told. No one knows what happened to them, too often no one cares. Their lives, their suffering must be recounted to provide a true memorial. It is up to creative writers to imagine the stories of those who have been forgotten, whose existence may have been deliberately erased. These are stories which are perforce fiction, not autobiography, not memoir, yet nonetheless can ring true. In doing so, bearing witness also provides some small measure of revenge against their victors (in this case the pen is taken up in opposition to the sword). (Lum, “Notes” in The Nanjing Massacre: Poems 223)

Consisting of one hundred four poems created over a span of fifteen years from 1997 to 2012, The Nanjing Massacre: Poems¹ (2012) by Wing Tek Lum, a businessman and poet, is a remarkable contribution to the growing publications of Chinese American writers who wish to bring to the consciousness of English readers an uncovered and neglected history of human atrocities in the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). Born in 1946 in Honolulu, Hawaii, and growing up in the United States, Lum attributes his concerns over the Nanjing Massacre to three major factors: the inspiration of Iris Chang’s The Rape of Nanking (1997),² a familial bond to the Nanjing Massacre,³ and his moral obligations to speak on behalf of the silent victims and

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¹ Abbreviated as Poems in the rest of the chapter.
³ Lum indicates in his poem “Epilogue” that his mother “had been lucky to escape” the Nanjing Massacre and that the family relatives “could have been” among the victims of the Massacre. See “Epilogue” in Wing Tek Lum’s The Nanjing Massacre: Poems (Honolulu: Bamboo Ridge Press, 2012), 217-20.
survivors, whose deaths and inarticulacy prevent them from bearing witness to their suffering.⁴ Like Shouhua Qi, Ha Jin, and Geling Yan, Lum acknowledges Chang’s *The Rape of Nanking* as a significant influence that initiated his creative interest in the Nanjing Massacre. Chang’s outrage toward Japanese revisionists’ denial of the Nanjing Massacre became Lum’s primary inspiration to read extensively, conduct research on the tragedy, and eventually confirm that the Massacre “did indeed occur” (*Poems* 223). By testifying to the Japanese atrocities in Nanjing, Lum turns his poems into an act of witnessing and himself as well as his readers into secondary witnesses, hoping more people can learn about the “hard truth” of the Massacre (*Poems* 14). Giving voices to primary witnesses, Lum lets his poems speak in monologue and dialogue form comparable to “[t]he legal model of the trial [which] dramatizes . . . a contained, and culturally channeled, institutionalized, *crisis of truth*” (6).⁵ In light of Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub’s ideas of crises of witnessing and Antony Rowland’s ideas of poetry as testimony, I would argue that Lum’s major strategies—claiming his legitimacy of witnessing as a second-generation survivor and bearing testimony in accumulative primary witnessing—make his representation of the Nanjing Massacre a continuation and development of the testimonial tradition of twentieth-century poetry. With the purpose of bearing witness similar to that of the poems of the Holocaust, the two World Wars, the Vietnam War, and 9/11, Lum’s poems enable him to showcase the scenarios of individual tragedies and provide for his readers a panoramic view of the horror and violence of the Nanjing Massacre.

Lum gained his knowledge and understanding of the Massacre by conducting a decade of research, mainly based on publications by World War II veterans and by scholars and journalists

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⁵ “Dramatizes” is italicized for emphasis by author of this dissertation; italics of “crisis of truth” is in original.
with expertise in this history. According to an estimation by Gayle Sato, Lum’s research includes “more than a hundred published sources,” and among these sources, “at least 50 books have gone into the creation of the entire Nanjing series” (Sato 213). Consisting of primary sources like diaries, memoirs, photographs, interviews, and testimonies, these books are carefully documented in Lum’s book in epigraphs and/or endnotes. In spite of his accumulation of information about the Massacre, the poet is fully aware of his disadvantageous position for his poems to be taken as seriously as testimonies by primary witnesses would be. Being neither a veteran poet of World War II nor a Nanjing Massacre survivor, Lum lacks firsthand experience of the Massacre and may encounter what Charlotte Delbo refers to as “potentially unreceptive audiences, fueled by the worry that secondary witnesses may not be able to ‘see’ events of suffering” (qtd. in Rowland, Poetry as Testimony 2). Therefore, the poet has to find ways to prove that his secondary witnessing is legitimate and thus is able to testify in the absence of primary witnesses. The first of Lum’s strategies to assert this legitimacy is his claim as a second-generation Nanjing survivor who is both emotionally and morally obliged to testify to the Japanese atrocities at the crisis of primary witnessing.

Lum uses his first and last poems—“Dedication” and “Epilogue”—to highlight his emotional commitment to bearing testimony to the Japanese atrocities as the son of a Nanjing survivor. The two poems both refer to the poet’s mother and her family who were among the Nanjing survivors and victims. Seeing photographs of his mother during her visit to Nanjing shortly before the Massacre, Lum reacts with little optimism to the fate of his “younger aunts . . . crowded about” his mother (Poems 219). Based on his research findings of the Massacre, Lum responds with a heavy heart to his view of these women, raising tremendous doubt concerning
“how many were there ten years later? / How many survived The Rape?” (Poems, “A Young Girl in a Cheongsam” 219). His familial connection to the victims establishes the poet’s personal bond to the Nanjing Massacre and makes him emotionally involved in bearing witness to the suffering of the dead and the survivors. In this sense, his claim to be a legitimate witness is comparable to that of the second-generation Holocaust survivors who have joined their parents and made “Holocaust testimony” what Robert Eaglestone describes as “an intensification of writerly and readerly activity over the last 60 years which responds to the act of witnessing” (qtd. in Rowland, “Poetry as Testimony” 488).

In fact, secondary witnessing has been prospering since the 1990s, with published memoirs, diaries, fiction, poetry, drama, art, music, and videos by the children of Holocaust survivors. Régine-Mihal Friedman attributes this upsurge to a witnessing “urgency,” which in turn results from “the vulnerable state of the aging eye-witnesses” and “the Revisionist and Negationist scheming regarding the Shoah” (82). Distinguishing these testimonies from those of Holocaust survivors themselves, Friedman acclaims the uniqueness of testimonies by their children, “whose gaze and voice define a new space of empathy toward the plight of their victimized parents” (82). Scholars have used different names to refer to these second-generation witnesses of the Shoah. In addition to “surrogate witnesses,” the terms include Geoffrey Hartman’s “witnesses by adoption,” Norma Rosen’s “witnesses by the imagination,” Alan Berger’s “Children of Job,” and Froma Zeitlin’s “vicarious witnesses” (qtd. in Friedman 81-83). Friedman argues that these names, in spite of their slight distinctions, are all applicable to “the second and even the third generation of the [Shoah] ‘Aftermath’” and do not have to be accurate “in the biological sense of the word” (81-82). More than a biological bond to the victims, it is
this kind of generational relation that helps Lum claim his legitimacy as a second-generation survivor of the Massacre. For one thing, Lum is not a child of a Nanjing survivor in a strict biological sense, as his mother did not experience the Massacre and therefore should not be regarded as its survivor. For another, Lum indicates that his “relatives in Nanjing,” especially those “younger cousins” of his mother, might have been victimized in the Massacre, as her mother’s “letters were returned” and there was family correspondence about “who was still living / and who had died and why” (Poems, “A Young Girl in a Cheongsam” 219-20). So although his mother was not an immediate victim, escaping the city before the attack on it, Lum clearly establishes his generational bond to the Massacre. By claiming himself as a second-generation survivor, Lum endows his testimonial poems with a comparable legitimacy to that of the second-generation survivors of the Shoah.

Recognizing that the Nanjing Massacre is experiencing a crisis of witnessing, Lum also uses his “Dedication” and “Epilogue” poems to show his moral commitment to testifying to the Japanese atrocities. As with the Shoah, the eye-witnesses of the Massacre are aging and the Japanese revisionists still deny their atrocities in Nanjing. Lum reinforces the urgency of witnessing by using his personal experience as examples. Both his “Dedication” and “Epilogue” are elegies in memory of his deceased mother. The two poems work together to express the poet’s regret of his belated knowledge of the Nanjing Massacre, explicitly referred to as “the horrors in the world” (Poems 219). In lamenting his mother’s death, Lum confesses that the only information he learned from his mother about the Massacre was her silence. Here, by referring to his mother’s attitude toward the Massacre as silence, Lum identifies her as a trauma survivor, whose “mind and body [must] skip over the event temporally in order to survive” (Steele 3).
Realizing that his only inheritance from his mother about the Massacre is witnessing how she had tried to survive it by not speaking a word of it, Lum feels equally sad about his loss of a reliable source from which he might have been able to learn some truths about the Massacre. Based on his personal experience, Lum suggests that the world’s lack of awareness of the Nanjing Massacre is due to both the survivors who remain silent and their children who never ask. He wishes that his mother could have been able to tell and he could have been able to ask about the Massacre before her death. He suggests that he would have been able to find out more about the Massacre if his mother were alive, as she “would have found out, / word of mouth from refugees / or at least after the war / . . . if others . . . / had whispered of its immensity” (Poems, “A Young Girl in a Cheongsam” 219-20). In Lum’s opinion, to learn nothing about the Massacre from a reliable source like his mother is an irrecoverable loss. Speaking from his personal experience, Lum calls for an immediate action of witnessing from both the survivors and their children, fearing that all existing sources of information regarding the Nanjing Massacre will disappear before its truths are fully unearthed.

In the absence of primary witnesses, Lum expresses his faith in secondary witnessing, which should be able to restore the historical truths of a given event with collected, sorted, and patched traces bit by bit. In his “Dedication” and “Epilogue” poems, Lum includes an implicit analogy between his successful recovery of the unknown knowledge of his mother and the hopeful prospect of recovering the truth of the Nanjing Massacre if secondary witnesses take initiative in their search after it. Lum titles his “Dedication” poem, “What I Learned from Your College Annual,” suggesting that the truth of the past lies in the survivors’ persistent search after it. In memory of his mother, the poet tries to search into her life by reading through her college
annual — records of her life that he preserves. In the poem, Lum’s study of his mother’s college
annual rewards him with many new discoveries about his dead mother, who lived in a near past
but now seems to him remote. Among the long list of his discoveries, three are worth mentioning
because they seem to be the least likely shared information between a mother and her grown-up
son should she had remained alive. The first one is the “uniform” his mother wore while playing
basketball, “a sailor’s top and black tights” (Poems 13). The second one is the name of the shoes
his mother used to wear in college. They are the ones “with straps across the insteps” and are
called “Mary Janes” (13). The third one is a romantic love of the mother, whom “another
classmate was sweet on” (14). The reasons why his mother had never mentioned these things to
her grown-up son may include her concern about his lack of interest, her reluctance to share
privacy, or her inability to talk about her past. Listing his findings of his mother’s life, Lum
acclaims his search as rewarding because it brings to him surprising discoveries about his
mother’s life. Using his own experience, the poet stresses the necessity and possibility of the
second generation’s search for a disappearing past and argues that truth can be uncovered and its
available traces can be pieced together. Showing that secondary witnessing can revive the past
with pasted historical fragments, Lum reinforces the importance of secondary witnessing and
calls for people’s initiative in bearing witness in the absence of primary witnessing.

What worries Lum is the seemingly irreversible trajectory of the information
disappearing day by day. In Lum’s opinion, there are traces more vulnerable than the family
albums because they cannot be preserved and passed on to future generations. They are traces
that we run into just by chance and perhaps exist only in oral form. They live in our memories
and can easily get lost before we see their value as primary sources of information. In “What I
Learned from Your College Annual,” Lum recalls his meeting “[i]n Hong Kong twenty-five years ago” with “an old couple” who “were classmates” of his mother and told him that “there was another classmate who was sweet on [her]” (*Poems,* “What I Learned from Your College Annual” 14). However, at the moment of his recollections of his mother’s life, the couple, as primary witnesses of her college years, were not included “in this annual” and therefore seemed to have never existed (14). As shown in this poem, Lum’s expression of his disappointment with losing track of the old couple, a primary source of information about his mother, reinforces the importance of both primary and secondary witnessing. For one thing, he calls for immediate action to preserve any primary sources, especially those oral ones, and to make sure they are properly recorded and can be passed down to the future generations. As reliable primary sources of information, these types of evidence, if not preserved, will be lost and with no way to recover them. They will keep dwindling until there is no trace of them. For another, secondary sources, including responses to and reflections on the primary sources, are crucial to help promote the truth that the primary sources hope to accomplish. This is perhaps the most important reason why Lum spends fifteen years writing his poems and having them published. Through his poems, Lum hopes that more people will become aware of the Nanjing Massacre and can join the transnational and transgenerational efforts to uncover its truths. As Freddie Rokem argues for the witnessing power of the arts, Lum hopes that his poems will function in the same way to “continue to bear witness even after there are no more direct witnesses at all, extending the chain of witnessing, bridging the inevitable gaps between the generations” (Rokem 21).

While trying to extend the chain of witnessing, Lum experiences the inevitable generation gap himself. Inspired by the growth and success of the second-generation witnessing
of the Holocaust, Lum nevertheless feels less capable of testifying to the Nanjing Massacre as a second-generation survivor. For one thing, lamenting that “[m]y mother died before I was aware / of all of the horrors in the world” (Poems, “A Young Girl in a Cheongsam” 219), the poet confesses his regret that the death of his mother has driven her from a temporary traumatic silence into a permanent silence and made her unable to tell him her traumatic experiences. For another, not realizing that his mother is in many ways connected to the Nanjing Massacre, the poet has never taken her as a Nanjing survivor and himself the son of a survivor, let alone observed her life traumatized in the aftermath of the Massacre and his life a partial inheritance of that trauma. With his mother being unable to tell and he being unable to retell about the Massacre, Lum has to find other voices for his poems so as to bridge his generation gap of bearing witness to the Massacre.

The speakers Lum eventually chooses for his poems are mostly real witnesses documented in a variety of primary sources of the Nanjing Massacre. Among these witnesses are perpetrators, victims, and rescuers whose lives have been recorded in photographs and documentaries. Lum uses epigraphs and endnotes to specify each primary source, which documents his witnesses’ experiences and their inner feelings of guilt, shame, or pain. With patient and careful accumulation over a decade, Lum eventually comes up with one hundred two poems bearing testimony to the Massacre in the voices of primary witnesses. As Lum showcases his poems that were written in first-person narrative, either implicitly or explicitly, and by consulting primary sources of documented histories and historiographies, I would refer to Lum’s second strategy to claim the legitimacy of his poems as accumulative primary witnessing. A more comprehensive strategy to claim his poems as legitimate testimonies as compared with his
claiming himself as a second-generation witness, Lum’s accumulative primary witnessing has several features that are worth discussing.

To begin with, what makes Lum’s poems an act of “witnessing” involves his efforts to achieve two goals, which I call witnessing for the witnesses and witnessing to make witnesses. Because few witnesses remain alive, Lum hopes his poems can speak on behalf of the silent victims and at the same time draw the world’s attention to this atrocious tragedy.

Whereas the “Dedication” and “Epilogue” are written in the poet’s voice in memory of his mother, Lum chooses the voices of primary witnesses for the rest of the one hundred two poems. With a marked voice shift from that of the poet to those of the primary witnesses, Lum encapsulates these poems to archive his collection of individual testimonies, making his representation of the Massacre a continuation of what Ana Douglass and Thomas Vogler refer to as “[a]n interesting late twentieth-century mode of representing collective traumatic events” (33). Letting individual primary witnesses speak about their contemporaneous or retrospective reflections of the Massacre, Lum expects to restore the truths of the Massacre because “the accumulation of witness accounts will somehow ‘add up’ to a collective view” (Douglass & Vogler 33). Lum’s poems are mostly narratives of disheartening wartime moments, filled with descriptive details of killing, rape, torture, humiliation, hunger, cold, greed, betrayal, mourning, death, and above all, human capacity for evil. The one hundred two poems addressing the hundred freeze-framing moments of human cruelty and suffering bring the Nanjing Massacre to life for people who have been little informed about this tragedy. When Lum’s poems are filled with images to project the horror and violence of the Massacre, they become what Cassie Premo Steele calls “the poetry of witnessing” (1). Using “images, feelings, rhythms, sounds, and the
physical sensations of the body as evidence” (Steele 3), Lum is able to reconstruct the horror and violence of the Massacre. Speaking in the voices of primary witnesses, these poems become testimonies bearing witness for the witnesses.

Lum’s poems of witnessing for the witnesses address situations of victimization and involve silent survivors/victims whose experiences of extreme pain from hunger, cold, confusion, fear, anger, hatred and desperation make their trauma inarticulate. This inarticulacy mostly results from what Dori Laub sees as

not only the reality of the situation and the lack of responsiveness of bystanders or the world that accounts for the fact that history was taking place with no witness: it was the very circumstance of being inside the event that made unthinkable the very notion that a witness could exist, that is, someone who could step outside of the coercively totalitarian and dehumanizing frame of reference in which the event was taking place, and provide an independent frame of reference through which the event could be observed. ("An Event" 81)

Laub believes that one’s “loss of capacity to be a witness to oneself and thus to witness from the inside [of a given situation]” leads to the “annihilation” of one’s existence, because “when one’s history is abolished, one’s identity ceases to exist as well” (82). Laub’s argument for a trauma without a witness is referred to as “annihilated” subjectivity by Kelly Oliver, who joins Laub to argue that “[o]ppression, domination, enslavement, and torture work to undermine and destroy the [witness’s] ability to respond and thereby undermine and destroy subjectivity” (17). To restore the “annihilated” subjectivity of the Massacre survivors/victims by enabling them to respond to their suffering, Lum employs speakers who are able to testify on behalf of these inarticulate survivors/victims. One way to differentiate the testimonies with speakers testifying on behalf of the inarticulate survivors/victims from those with speakers testifying on behalf of

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6 Here the word “bystanders” refers to eyewitnesses who obtain the firsthand knowledge of a given situation.
themselves is the absence of first-person pronouns, which I refer to as implicit first-person testimonies. These speakers/witnesses, similar to the speakers/witnesses of the Holocaust, share the knowledge of the silent survivors’/victims’ trauma and are able to report, comment, and reflect on behalf of them. With separate or combined reports, comments and reflections of the pain and suffering of the silent survivors/victims, these speakers are able to testify to the victims’ traumatic experiences. Speaking about their knowledge of a given situation and their empathy with the victims, these witnesses stand out to testify on behalf of the silent victims, whose deaths, illnesses, absence, reluctance or inability to speak in public make their primary witnessing impossible.

In “The Seamstress,” the poet addresses the moment when the seamstress decides to pack her belongings and flee the city at the fall of Nanjing. The first several lines of the poem enumerate her packed items, all essential to help her make a living during her flight from home. Using the list of the packed items to indicate that the flight is to last for an unpredictable length of time, the narrator suggests explicitly that the seamstress’s flight may result from a calamitous situation:

Yes, she has packed all her hard cash,  
her ring and brooch,  
an extra set of clothes and shoes,  
her small tin box of needles and shears,  
a cushion of pins  
and her measuring tape,  
a small bundle of steamed buns,  
and a sharp knife,  
all wrapped up in a heavy blanket  
which she can carry in her arms. (Poems, “The Seamstress” 21)

The poem goes on to name a list of the seamstress’s other favorite items that she cannot pack into her blanket and must leave behind, followed by her feelings of uncertainty for her future:
But she has left her mirror and brush,
her scarves and fan,
the embroidered coverlet,
her beloved sewing machine
with its smooth-stepping treadle,
the bolts of cloth she has hoarded,
her larder of rice and coal,
dough figurines from her childhood,
a ceramic pillow
once used by her grandfather,
the now faded paper cuts on the wall.
Whether all of this world will be here
if she ever comes back
does not cross her mind.
She turns to walk away
the moment she shuts the door,
steeling herself
for the days and years to come,
without memories, without tears.
There is only the gunmetal sky overhead,
the white-capped river relentlessly flowing,
mountains rising to razor sharp peaks,
a path often vanishing,
wending through gnarled forests,
the vast, forsaken fields. (21-22)

Throughout the poem, the absence of first-person narrative pronouns seems to suggest that it is not narrated in first-person point of view. Yet, by opening the poem with the word “Yes,” Lum implicitly puts it into a context similar to a trial interrogation. With “Yes” to indicate an affirmative answer, the poem sounds like a witness’s reply to an omitted question from the jury or the judge regarding the witness’s knowledge of the seamstress’s moment of fleeing. Lum’s choice of a surrogate witness on behalf of the seamstress is perhaps his consideration of the seamstress’s inability to speak about her circumstances at the fall of Nanjing. The seamstress, at the moment of fleeing, is too confused to speak about her experiences and feelings. This surrogate witness, with every bit of knowledge about the seamstress’s response to her situation,
is able to testify on behalf of the seamstress—her fear, dilemma, bewilderment, and saddest of all, her sense of being uprooted from her peaceful life. In the absence of the seamstress’s witnessing, Lum reveals her victimization with a surrogate witness’s trial testimony, making it known to people who have been little informed of how this historical tragedy drove ordinary people like the seamstress into terror and desperation.

Unlike “The Seamstress,” where the witness report deals with just one silent victim, many of Lum’s poems are more complicated witness reports involving two or more parties of silent victims, of whom some are dead and others perhaps still alive. By juxtaposing these silent victims, the poet reinforces the urgency of bearing witness on the part of the survivors whose on-spot knowledge makes them relatively reliable primary witnesses. One such example is “A Village Burial.” Sounding like an excerpt of a witness testimony that addresses the request of the judge or the jury at court, the poem, with a speaker whose identity is absent from the context of this poem, testifies to the villagers’ burial of four beheaded Chinese soldiers and works as a legal report on the speaker’s witnessing of the burial. The poem begins with the speaker’s describing the villagers’ vision of a violent and horrifying death scene:

Four bodies lie slumped over
at the pond’s edge,
one prone, the others on their sides curled up.
They are wearing soldier’s uniforms,
ragged and caked with mud,
shorn of their belts, one without shoes.
They have been decapitated,
the spaces above their neck
where their heads should have been now empty,
the feeling of something missing,
ennerving like a small pin boring through
to prick the heart. (Poems, “A Village Burial” 82)

The descriptions of the dead soldiers are shocking. In contrast to their heroic fighting against
their enemies, the soldiers are now lying lifeless. Their uniforms, belts and shoes—symbols of their soldierly honor and pride—are now torn, dirty and lost. The speaker then describes how the villagers react with shock at the sight of these beheaded soldiers and are quite disturbed with “the feeling of something missing.” Here, going beyond the literal reference of the missing heads of the Chinese soldiers, the speaker tries to allude to the cold-blooded nature of the Japanese soldiers, who, with missing hearts, behave atrociously and have no mercy on their POWs. Thinking that the destiny of soldiers is to live or die on the battlefield, the speaker implies that it is perhaps more the feeling of the missing hearts of the perpetrators that really upsets the villagers and makes them “unnerving like a small pin boring through to prick the heart.”

Then the speaker continues to describe how the villagers’ work of burial becomes more complicated with their having to first find the missing heads. Following this step, the speaker suggests that the villagers have to go through a still more challenging and painful process of matching the heads with the bodies:

The heads are soon discovered, floating, half submerged, in shallow waters—no doubt dumped or kicked in. They are waterlogged, rapidly decomposing, one still with spectacles. Each body is laid out on the bank, turned over onto its back, and heads are pressed on top of the necks to see which fits. It is hard to determine which matches are correct—the long, thin face perhaps goes with the one with slender fingers, or maybe another set can be paired because of the same darker complexion. They look like they belong, and yet do not. (82)

Here, the speaker highlights the villagers’ difficulty in matching the heads with the bodies. For
one thing, the heads, once cut off and thrown into the pond, are deteriorating and have become deformed. For another, unlike a missing eye, ear, arm, hand, leg and foot that has a paired one to match, there is really no easy rule to follow to match the heads with the bodies once they are cut off. Implying that the villagers are trying to achieve a seemingly impossible accomplishment, the speaker goes on to explain how the villagers, after a couple of failed attempts, decide to give up:

Together they are loaded onto a two-wheeled cart and pulled up to the mountains to a burial pit dug in the hard earth for all the recent dead. (82)

However, the speaker immediately points out that the villagers’ attempt to give up is only a momentary decision, as their sense of guilt soon surpasses their sense of failure at not being able to give the dead a right burial:

But it does not seem right to cast these four so haphazardly among the other corpses, though some are also maimed, with severed arms, their bellies blown out. (83)

Considering that the dead soldiers have suffered miserable deaths, the villagers are torn by guilt and pity and therefore decide to give it another try:

So one last attempt is made to set them down gently, to rejoin each head to its rightful body. (83)

However, the moment when the villagers succeed in matching the heads and the bodies does not bring to an end the speaker’s witnessing of the sufferings of the beheaded soldiers and the villagers of the burial. The speaker, sharing the villagers’ empathy with the beheaded soldiers, utters an angry curse of revenge on the perpetrators:

Hopefully then one of them at least might be reborn whole,
to re-enter this desecrated world again,
to seek revenge for himself and his comrades,
rending apart these invaders,
hacking limbs, ripping out entrails
crushing bone, and shredding flesh,
splatterring every drop of their blood
across this wide, perverted face of hell. (83)

The speaker’s solution to the villagers’ empathy with the beheaded soldiers is to speak on behalf of the villagers their apparent, sincere wish that the dead may come alive and impose a punishment on the invading perpetrators. Likewise, Lum’s response to the speaker’s empathy with the villagers is his creation of this poem, an expression of his sincere wish that more survivors like the villagers, if they are still alive, might stand out and bear witness to the Massacre. When death prevents the soldiers from speaking about their deaths and decapitalization, it is the villagers’ moral obligation to stand out and bear witness to the Japanese soldiers’ brutal killing of the Chinese POWs and their own traumatic work of burial. By doing this, Lum hopes that more people can learn the truth of the Massacre and render their moral support to the victims. When the world is able to learn about the Japanese atrocities from Iris Chang’s *The Rape of Nanking*, Lum hopes that, by giving voices to speakers who are able to testify on behalf of silent witnesses/survivors, he can continue Chang’s rally of publicity of the Nanjing Massacre by motivating those silent survivors, primary as well as secondary witnesses of the Massacre, to stand up and bear witness to the Japanese atrocities. This is also the justice he personally has sought for years on behalf of the silent Nanjing victims, a writer’s revenge on the perpetrators with “the pen . . . in opposition to the sword” (*Poems*, “Notes” 223).

Meanwhile, using witnessing to spread the truths of the Nanjing Massacre, Lum’s poems also endeavor to make witnesses of the Nanjing Massacre out of the act of witnessing. Speaking
in the voices of eye witnesses, Lum’s poems, working similarly to testimonial performances before a tribunal, bring the readers into a specific scene of horror and violence and turn them into secondary witnesses at this poetically staged trial. By establishing a speaking-listening bond between the speakers of his poems and his readers, Lum engages his poems in “making witnesses,” a process that Michael Bernard-Donals and Richard Gleizer claim

> give[s] [primary] witnesses the opportunity to speak, so the images that passed before their eyes, and the traces that are imprinted upon their bodies, can be translated into the language of narrative so that others [as secondary witnesses] may be made aware of what history came to. (qtd. in Bennett 164)

With images passed on to the readers, Lum tries to help them create an imaginary live trial scene, which transposes them to the on-site horror and violence and transforms them into secondary witnesses. Addressing the Massacre in accumulative primary witnessing, Lum’s poems turn their readers into observers of a massive national trauma. While listening to the collective “narrative of extreme human pain, of massive psychic trauma,” Lum’s readers become secondary witnesses by “com[ing] to be a participant and a co-owner of the traumatic event” (Laub, “Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening” 57). Meanwhile, exposed to a variety of situated scenes of “bewilderment, injury, confusion, dread and conflicts” (Laub, “Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening” 58), these readers are invited to respond to the speakers’ testimony with empathy.

While making his monologue poems sound like dramatic monologue, Lum goes even further in two poems in his collection that are in the form of dialogue. Commenting on his poetic style, Lum suggests implicitly that he has “tried to keep up with contemporary American poetry” (Poems, “Notes” 224). As my reading of several popular anthologies of contemporary American poetry of war and witnessing like Winning Hearts and Minds: War Poems by Vietnam Veterans
(1972), *Against Forgetting: Twentieth-Century Poetry of Witness* (1993) and *The Voice of War: Poems of the Second World War* (1996) leads me to no discovery of a single poem in dialogue, I would argue that poems bearing witness in dialogue are indeed Lum’s unique contribution to the testimonial tradition of the twentieth century. In addition to maintaining the speaking-listening bond to the readers, the two poems work more like plays, which, by staging conflicting speakers facing each other to resolve a dramatic conflict, enable “the past [to] come alive for both participants/performers and observers/audience through [dialogic] performance” (Dean, Meerzon, and Prince 9).

“This Reasoning” appears in a dialogue and looks like a script of a one-act play. As the only noticeable component to make it not a script is the absence of stage direction, I would argue that Lum’s focus in creating this poem is the truth conveyed in the dialogue, which is not to be affected by variations of stage direction. The poem begins with one character, Teacher, paying a visit to the Safety Zone and discussing the challenges facing the Safety Zone with Nurse, who works there. Soon their conversation turns into an argument as they try to resolve the dilemma facing the married women taking refuge in the Safety Zone:

**TEACHER:** But I came to ask you to send back the married women so they can return to their husbands at home.

**NURSE:** Why would you ask that?

**TEACHER:** Not the young girls. Only the wives. When the demons break into a home, if they find only a man there, they think that he is one of our deserter soldiers hiding out, since he has no family. So then they take him away.

**NURSE:** But if the wives go home, the demons will push the husbands out so they can rape the wives. Do you really want one sex to sacrifice their bodies for the other? When a fox comes, why must we have to choose between the rooster and hen? (*Poems, “This Reasoning”* 149-50)
In the argument, Teacher and Nurse explicitly represent a man and a woman speaking on behalf of men and women. Teacher suggests that married women be sent home to stay with their husbands while Nurse makes a counter-argument, saying these women would face the Japanese soldiers’ threat of rape all the more directly once they are sent home. Realizing that Teacher promotes the idea of using “one sex to sacrifice their bodies for the other,” Nurse points out its faulty logic with a simple allegorical tale—“When a fox comes, why must we have to choose between the rooster and hen?” Here, by staging Teacher and Nurse involved in the dramatic conflict of whether to send back the married women, Lum not only gives the conflicting speakers a chance to reveal their inner ideas about the communal violence of scapegoating, a subsequent internal violence used as a temporary solution to appease the Japanese atrocities; he also provides the readers with the epiphanic moment to reflect the seemingly practical yet fundamentally destructive nature of the scapegoating mechanism. It is hard to imagine that a society of roosters can survive long when the hens are sacrificed to the foxes.

Antony Rowland suggests that “poems by Holocaust, World War I, and World War II poets—among others—can be read afresh as testimonial performances” (1). As Rowland’s defined features of the Holocaust and the two World War poems—“function as testimony” (Rowland, Poetry as Testimony 2) and “focus on the epiphanic moment of witnessing” (Rowland, Poetry as Testimony 5)—correspond to Lum’s witnessing for the witnesses and witnessing to make witnesses, I would follow Rowland and argue that Lum’s poems can be read as testimonial performances as well. In forms of monologue and dialogue, these poems sound exactly like witnesses’ statements at a staged trial, ready to impact the readers—who serve implicitly as a kind of jury—with empathy and epiphany.
Two features that highlight Lum’s poems as “primary” witnessing are first-person narrative and primary source documentation. Lum uses first-person narrative, explicit as well as implicit, for all his poems, turning the speakers into primary witnesses bearing testimony to the Massacre. These poems testify to war atrocities and crimes through the speakers’ contemporaneous or retrospective reflections. Of Lum’s one hundred two testimonial poems, one hundred appear in the form of monologue and two of dialogue. The one hundred monologues all sound like dramatic monologues, addressing a critical moment the speaker has to face. Of these one hundred poems in monologue, sixty-eight choose explicit first-person point of view, using pronouns like “I,” “me,” “my,” “we,” “us,” and “our” to claim their testimony as primary witnessing. The rest of the thirty-two poems, though with no explicit first-person pronouns, all indicate their implicit first-person narrative because each has a speaker as a surrogate primary witness. Letting the surrogate witness report his or her knowledge about situations of victimization and speak on behalf of the silent victim(s) and/or survivor(s), Lum succeeds in giving a voice to the silent victim(s) and/or survivor(s) and making the testimony a primary witnessing. As I have used “The Seamstress” and “A Village Burial” as examples to illustrate Lum’s choice of implicit first-person narrative, I shall choose several of his poems written in explicit first-person narrative to explain the other feature that makes Lum’s accumulative witnessing “primary.”

Something else that makes Lum’s accumulative witnessing “primary” is the poet’s documenting primary sources in epigraphs and endnotes. As the burden of proof is on Lum to show his readers the factual causes for the horror and violence in the Nanjing Massacre, the poet has to engage himself in documenting the primary sources which lead to his findings of fact
about the Massacre. To restore the historical tragedy in the form of testimony, Lum uses epigraphs and endnotes to acknowledge the primary sources upon which his poems are based. Lum is serious in documenting his primary sources. Of the one hundred two testimonial poems, eighty-four have epigraphs and/or endnotes as references to their primary sources, mainly diaries, memoirs, photographs, interviews, and testimonies. In addition to crediting the authors of his primary sources and sharing with his readers his accumulative findings about the Massacre over a span of fifteen years, Lum has another important reason to document his primary sources—to prove that his poems are a more careful reconstruction than simple documentation of the existing sources.

My comparative study of Lum’s poems and their corresponding sources suggests that Lum does not simply document but rather carefully reconstructs the witnesses’ experiences. To uncover the hard truth of the Massacre, Lum applies a variety of methods for his reconstruction. He transforms a drawing or photograph into a poem, translates a memoir or autobiography into a poem, and transposes a documented experience from another theatre of the Second World War to the Nanjing Massacre. As Lum’s methods of reconstruction can be described with verbs sharing the prefix “trans-,” I shall refer to these methods as Lum’s “trans-methods” for the convenience of my discussion. I shall use Lum’s poems as examples and explain in turn these methods of reconstruction, which strive to turn his poems into testimony and reveal the hard truth of the Massacre.

Lum’s first trans-method of reconstruction is his transformation of documented drawings or photographs into poems. Typically, these documented images fall into two categories: one from the hands of the rescuers and the victims, who record the Japanese perpetrators’ atrocious
mass killing, rape and torture, and the other from the hands of the Japanese soldiers, who take
photos as souvenirs of their victors’ power of life and death over Chinese soldiers and civilians.
Among the souvenirs of photographed Japanese triumphs by Japanese “soldier-cameraman” are
pornographic pictures of “group-raped” Chinese women forced into pornographic postures (Yin
& Shi 194). In fact, Lum’s poems address drawings and photographs from both categories, but
those written about the photos of Japanese atrocities against women have caught more attention
from the public. These poems, published as single pieces before their being anthologized with
others as a book, have drawn attention from scholars and critics. For example, based on his view
of “a photograph of a young girl in a cheongsam . . . in The Rape of Nanking: An Undeniable
History in Photographs,” Lum writes “A Young Girl in a Cheongsam,” which was published in
2005 “in an issue of TriQuarterly, guest edited by Kimiko Hahn” (Lum, “Notes to Gayle Sato”
226). The publication of this poem has stirred up critical interest.

Among the general appraisal of this poem and other similar ones, many speak highly of
Lum’s descriptive skills that bring to his poems an imagistic precision. Gayle Sato, a literary
critic and a professor at Meiji University, refers to the poet’s attentiveness and accuracy to the
details of “the perceptual apparatus of the ‘atrocity photo poems’” (220). On June 4, 2010, at the
Asian American Studies in Asia International Workshop, Sato shared a conference paper titled,
“Atrocity Photo Poetry: A Reading of Wing Tek Lum’s Nanjing Series,” which “included a close
reading of this specific poem [‘A Young Girl in a Cheongsam’]” (Lum, “Notes to Gayle Sato”
226). Two years later, right after the appearance of Lum’s Nanjing poems as a book, Sato
published in Inter-Asia Cultural Studies an article titled, “Witnessing Atrocity Through Auto-bi-
ography: Wing Tek Lum’s The Nanjing Massacre: Poems.” In both his conference paper and
journal article, Sato refers to Lum’s poems from drawings and photographs as “atrocity photo poetry” and claims that “their graphic depiction of violence arises partly from references to actual photographs and oral histories of the event, but mainly from Lum’s style of documentary realism” (211). In Sato’s opinion, Lum’s documentary realism is displayed in two aspects—“photographic replication’ through citations of documentary sources for the poem’s key details or narrated events” and “graphic details from a scene of atrocity . . . compris[ing] part or all of a poem’s verbal content” (213). As Lum and Sato both have used “A Young Girl in a Cheongsam” for a close reading, I would pick up another poem, “In This Pose,” to illustrate what Sato defines as Lum’s documentary realism.

According to Lum, “In This Pose” is indeed “a companion poem” to “A Young Girl in a Cheongsam,” as both address the “pornographic violence” committed by the Japanese soldiers (“Notes to Gayle Sato” 227). The endnote for the poem states clearly that it “was based on a photograph in Yin and Shi” (Poems, “Notes” 229). By specifying the documentary source, James Yin and Young Shi’s The Rape of Nanking: An Undeniable History in Photographs, Lum suggests that his knowledge and understanding of the photograph also include the text of the photograph, which goes like this: “Three victims were forced to have this photo taken after they were group-raped. In the foreground is the shadow of the soldier-cameraman” (Yin & Shi 194). To reconstruct the atrocious scene replicated in the photograph, Lum has to set his narrative boundary within graphic details of the pornographic violence—the three women’s reluctance, passivity, and defenselessness to pose for this pornographic picture in contrast to the soldier-cameraman’s eagerness, aggression, and apathy to impose a new round of violence on these victims who have just been group-raped. The poem is divided into six stanzas, beginning with
detailed descriptions of the three women forced to pose for this pornographic picture:

There is a sense of nonchalance in this pose,
two women basking in the sun
sitting against the side of a boulder
or a slant of earth;
a third woman to the left of them
is also lying against this incline,
but we can only see her from the side,
the bottom half of her body in this photograph.
The one in the centre faces us squarely
though her head is slightly bowed.
The other has turned her head,
her lips somewhat pursed,
and looks over at the third woman
or at others beyond her whom we cannot see.
Their eyes seem to squint
as they face the sun, coming over
from behind the right side of the camera. (Poems, “In This Pose” 105)

Lum’s descriptions of the postures of these women bring to this poem what Sato calls “an aura of factuality and matter-of-factness,” which he further explains as “a studied neutrality . . . like a photograph, in replicating an already existing image ‘out there,’ rather than in creating the images we see in the poem” (213). All Lum’s descriptions of the three women, their postures as a group and with individual uniqueness, seem to be true to the photo itself. In this first stanza, Lum uses his descriptions to highlight the first graphic detail of these women—their reluctance to have this picture taken. Showing “a sense of nonchalance in this pose,” they all dodge the camera lens in their own way, with the first woman having her head “slightly bowed,” the second woman “turn[ing] her head” away, and the third woman stretching beyond the lens’s view to make her head and her upper body invisible in the picture (Poems, “In This Pose” 105). Then, in the next three stanzas, Lum continues to highlight the second graphic detail of these women—their passivity to have this photo taken:
At least this is what I infer
because I cannot really see their eyes,
their hair and foreheads in shadows,
deliberately so, as the women are wearing shawls
or small pieces of patterned cloth
to shade the tops and sides of their heads
as protection from the sun.
Look down I note that their shoes are black,
simple slip-ons made of cloth without arch straps;
instead, thin makeshift strips of ribbon
have been tied around the shoes
looping underneath the soles and over their arches.
More ribbon strips, their long bows dangling,
also keep their stockings up around their calves.

I had never realized that footwear was worn so,
but these feminine secrets have been bared
because that is all that they have on,
even for the third woman
(though it seems she may only be wearing stockings
or very light colored shoes).
They are stark naked otherwise,
and while today we are used to seeing
full frontal nudity in magazines and movies,
it is the very incongruity of this footwear
against this nudity, their exposed bodies,
which reminds me that they should not be,
for it is 1937, and in Nanjing, China.

These women like maybe tens of thousands of others
have been raped, maybe once, maybe dozens of times,
the rest of their clothes of no use anymore,
just their small breasts,
just their dark nipples against their pale skin,
just the plumpness of their bare midriffs,
the few wrinkles around their waists,
just the inward curving of their torsos
where the thighs meet, hinting of their clefts,
made even starker for the sparseness of pubic hair,
just their legs, white as jade in this winter light,
which, it is obvious, they have been told to spread. (105-6)

In these three stanzas, the poet focuses on several details that make the women’s dressing in the
photograph so odd. With apparently careful efforts to cover and protect their heads by “wearing
shawls / or small pieces of patterned cloth / to shade the tops and sides of their heads” and their feet and calves by wearing shoes of “simple slip-ons made of cloth without arch straps” and “their stockings up around their calves,” these women, whose “feminine secrets have been bared,” produce a shock in readers who find their carelessness incongruous.

Here, Lum is careful to build up a contrast of descriptions between the women’s covered and bared bodies by using active voice and passive voice accordingly. For the descriptions of the women’s covered bodies, Lum uses the active voice, but for the descriptions of the women’s bared bodies, Lum uses the passive voice. To elaborate the passivity of the women’s “full frontal nudity,” Lum suggests explicitly that these women’s “feminine secrets have been bared” and “their legs . . . they have been told to spread.” By choosing the passive voice to define the causes of these women’s nudity, Lum draws the readers’ attention to the pornographic violence facing these women, who are group raped first and then forced to bare their feminine secrets and spread their legs to the camera lens so that their perpetrators can take a picture of them and keep it as a souvenir. To complete his reconstruction of the pornographic violence in this photo, Lum uses the next stanza to depict the third graphic detail of these women—their defenselessness:

And they do so in this glaring sun
without regard for any shame
for they are beyond such pornographic violence.
I discern no fear or horror in their expressions.
The woman in the center could be crying,
but it could as easily be her tired frown
merely welcoming the respite, I would guess,
savoring at least the fact
that they are still indeed alive. (106-7)

Having undergone two rounds of violence—first the violence of rape and now the violence of pornography—the three women seem to lose all their human feelings of “shame,” “fear” or
“horror” and fail to respond to their situation accordingly. Detained as the subjects of sexuality by the Japanese soldiers earlier and as the subjects of pornography by the Japanese photographer now, these women, threatened by death, lose their intuitive guard of their bodies against shame.

Not being able to defend themselves from being humiliated in the violence, these women are degraded as objects who cannot shed tears of sadness. In contrast to the women’s reluctance, passivity, and defenselessness in having this picture taken, Lum depicts, in the last stanza, the eagerness, aggressiveness, and apathy of the Japanese cameraman, whose act of pornographic violence has been accidentally recorded in the picture:

These women would, though, still know that, if he were like his comrades, the cameraman, after raping them one last time, would shoot or otherwise dispose of them inevitably as just a few more cunts. Except in his case it would not be before he had captured them in this one last souvenir with the shadow of his head protruding, inadvertently, at the bottom of the photograph, a ghost, a demon on the ground, and throughout the night. (107)

Lum reinforces a big irony in the picture. Just as the Japanese cameraman’s head “inadvertently” protruded into the picture, his act of pornographic violence has been recorded forever in the picture. Thus, the picture he takes as a souvenir ironically turns into a testimony against his crime. As the cameraman’s head appears at the bottom of the photograph, Lum finds a vivid metaphor for the cameraman to highlight his apathy toward his victims—“a ghost, a demon on the ground.” Using an extended metaphor to imply that the Japanese soldiers were indeed invaders who protruded into Nanjing, Lum compares the city where these women used to live in peace to “hell rising from beneath their feet.”
To reconstruct the recorded scene of atrocity in the photograph, Lum does not limit his poem to depicting its graphic details. He also finds a voice for the silent victims, whose inarticulacy prevents them from speaking about their misery in going through the process of “objectification,” when they become “nothing more than objects—not human beings” (Flowers 117). In the process of “objectification,” these women lose not only their intuitive human responses to their extreme situation but also their human aptitude to offer any speech in great terror and misery. This voice, from a sympathetic viewer of the photograph, utters the victims’ pain and sorrow and passes on their experiences of extreme horror and violence to the readers of the poem.

Regarding Lum’s depiction of pornographic violence in his Nanjing poems, some critics, represented by Gayle Sato, express their concerns with the aesthetic value of these poems. To address Sato’s question toward readers’ growing “concerns about pornography and aestheticization of violence” depicted in the Nanjing poems, Lum, using “A Young Girl in Cheongsam” as an example, wrote a short essay titled “Notes to Gayle Sato” and published it in *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*. In the essay, Lum explains how his view of “a photograph of a young girl in a cheongsam... in *The Rape of Nanking: An Undeniable History in Photographs*” shocked him and made him write the poem “A Young Girl in Cheongsam” (226). What enraged Lum was the Japanese soldiers’ pornographic violence against a young girl, who was forced to have a pornographic picture taken with her cheongsam “pulled up around her waist” and her cunt “spread open by her fingers” (228). In the concluding paragraph of the essay, Lum explains why he insists in transforming photos of pornographic violence into poetry of atrocity:

The pornographic violence still exists. It happened historically to this young girl, and it continues to exist in the photograph at each viewing. Yet the poem re-lives
the suffering of the young girl for a different purpose, not to revel in her humiliation for the sexual arousal of the reader. Rather, my hope is to call attention to the soldier’s act of photographing as pornographic, and to recognize the young girl’s act of posing as an unwilling pornographic object. The poem must work through her nakedness, not to expose her more, but to re-clothe her, to comfort her, give her back her modesty, return to her the dignity that we all seek. (228)

Here, what Lum claims as his purpose in addressing the Japanese pornographic violence is his wish to re-clothe the naked women so that they regain their “modesty” and “dignity.” When the Japanese soldiers stripped off these women’s clothing, they seemed to strip off these women’s last defense of their modesty and dignity as well. However, by demonstrating how these women, as prisoners of war, become pathetic prey at the disposal of their predators, who raped them, took pictures of them in pornographic postures, and kept the pictures as souvenirs of their triumphant conquests, Lum only suggests that it is the Japanese soldiers, not the women in stripped clothing and pornographic postures, who should be in shame and humiliation. Showing these women’s momentary attempts to survive the Japanese soldiers’ pornographic violence, Lum utters, on behalf of these women, their unspeakable pain and suffering and expresses his deep concerns about the physical and mental persecutions they had to endure for mere survival.

Bearing witness to the Nanjing Massacre, Lum feels more obliged to speak on behalf of the women victims who suffered most miserably as toys to the Japanese soldiers, who “invent games of recreational rape and torture when wearied by the glut of sex” (Chang 94). Among Nanjing women survivors, especially those who were raped or even drafted by the Japanese military as comfort women, only a few have been willing to testify to their suffering in public, and “not a single Chinese woman has to this day come forward to admit that her child was the result of rape” (Chang 89). Because of the silence of these women, history can never record the true magnitude of sexual crimes the Japanese soldiers committed against women. Fearing that
history is distorted with the dying voices of the victims on one hand and the growing negations of the Massacre deniers on the other, Lum decides to testify on behalf of the women victims, whose war suffering must be known to the public before they incur what Chang warns against in *The Rape of Nanking* as “a second rape” (199).

Lum’s second trans-method of reconstruction is his translating documented works of prose into poems. These poems, more than being translations of facts in documented sources from prose language into poetic language, aim to highlight human responses and inner feelings in times of war and conflict. In other words, the primary focus of these poems is not to repeat the objective facts documented in works of prose but to take advantage of the “lyrical tradition” by “focus[ing] on the epiphanic moment of witnessing . . . briefly and illuminatingly . . . intense moments of subjective experience” (Rowland, *Poetry as Testimony* 5). It is exactly this epiphanic moment of witnessing human subjective experience that gives poetry its testimonial possibilities.

In *Poetry as Testimony*, Antony Rowland quotes from Susan Gubar, Slavoj Žižek, Robert Antelme, Shashana Felman and Dori Laub, hoping to prove that poetry not only works as testimony but works more effectively than prose. Rowland suggests that poems of testimony, by “abrogating narrative coherence,” become what “Susan Gubar illustrates—as ‘spurts of vision’ that are effective in their engagements with baffling experiences of suffering” (*Poetry as Testimony* 5). In Rowland’s opinion, Žižek “goes so far as to state that—contra Adorno—the Holocaust made prose, rather than poetry, impossible” (*Poetry as Testimony* 5). Here, to understand what Rowland refers to as the contradictory opinions between Žižek and Adorno regarding prose testimony and poetry testimony, I would add some details of Žižek’s argument favoring poetry testimony over prose testimony in *Violence*. To counter Theodor Adorno’s belief
that “[t]o write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric” by leaving out the realistic narratives (Žižek, 219), Žižek in Violence proposes “a distinction . . . between (factual) truth and truthfulness” (4). To illustrate the differences between factual truth and truthfulness, Žižek in Violence uses a report of a raped woman as an example, saying that what renders a report of a raped woman (or any other narrative of a trauma) truthful is its very factual unreliability, its confusion, its inconsistency. If the victim were able to report on her painful and humiliating experience in a clear manner, with all the data arranged in a consistent order, this very quality would make us suspicious of its truth. The problem here is part of the solution: the very factual deficiencies of the traumatized subject’s report on her experience bear witness to the truthfulness of her report, since they signal that the reported content “contaminated” the manner of reporting it. (4) With the example of a raped woman’s report, Žižek claims that poetry, by leaving out reliable, clear, and consistent narratives of factual details, surpasses prose in narratives of trauma in at least two aspects—speaking of the truthfulness of the trauma and speaking of the trauma more truthfully.

After Žižek, Rowland quotes from Antelme, who suggests that “prose accounts may be all too understandable, leaving readers unaffected as they turn to the next book” (Poetry as Testimony 9). Based on his study of “the drawbacks of prose testimony, which only provides a ‘photograph’ that ‘makes you shudder,’” Antelme argues that “[p]oems do not ‘run so great a risk of creating that naked, “objective” testimony, that kind of abstract accusation, that photograph that only frightens us without explicitly teaching anything’” (qtd. in Rowland, Poetry as Testimony 8). To Rowland, what makes Felman and Laub believe in the power of poems as testimony is that the fragmentary openness of poetic writing contributes to—rather than negates—its testimonial function, since such language ‘does not possess itself as a conclusion, as the contestation of a verdict or the self-transparency of knowledge [. . . but rather] in process, and in trial.’ (qtd. in Rowland, Poetry as Testimony 6)
Based on his reviews of the favorable arguments of poetry as testimony by Gubar, Žižek, Antelme, Felman, and Laub, Rowland claims that poetry as testimony works more effectively than prose. Using the fragmentary expressions to address the fragmentary moments of human experiences (Žižek’s idea of speaking more truthfully), poetry surpasses prose in narratives of trauma, as it conveys the torn and fragmented memories of the pains and sufferings in a designated past more truthfully up to the epiphanic moments of witnessing (Žižek’s idea of speaking the truthfulness).

To illustrate Rowland’s claim that poetry is a more effective form of testimony than prose, I would use Lum’s poem “Our Scorched Earth Policy” as an example. This poem is based on the diary of Xihui Jin, who was “train[ed] to be a leader in the Zhejiang Boy Scouts” during the Japanese invasion of the province (Schoppa 98). In his diaries, Jin recorded with details the fear that he, his family members, and the villagers felt toward “the Japanese invading force . . . in Dongyang [County],” his hometown. What is translated by Lum into the poem “Our Scorched Earth Policy” is Jin’s diary entry written on Thursday, May 15, 1941, the second day of the Japanese invasion of Dongyang. The diary goes almost three pages long with approximately 1,400 words and is a continuing record of Jin’s fear of the vulnerable state in which he found himself. A passage from Jin’s diary states:

Last evening after I returned home, I was uneasy and fidgety—as if all my vigor and spirit were lost. . . . I led my whole family to sleep in the woods behind the cemetery at the foot of Tomb Mountain. The cawing of birds and the crying of small children filled me with fear. It was late in the night when villagers came to tell me that the enemy was in the center of the village, going from door to door and knocking—a very shocking situation. My usually quiet temperament became tense. . . . There was, of course, no alternative but for us to leave together. Ordinarily, in both day and night travel, people feared ghosts. Now, given the frightening

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7 The endnote mistakenly identifies the name of the diarist, who should be Jin Xihui, not Wang Mengsong.
The clarity and coherence of Jin’s diary writing betray the narrator’s repeated claims that he is “uneasy,” “fidgety,” and in great “fear.” In spite of all the commotion, the level of accuracy Jin gives to his detailed narrative is beyond most people even in a peaceful state. His attentive observations of his circumstances remain consistent and apply to every stage of his narrative: his fearful responses during his sleeping in the woods (“the cawing of birds and the crying of small children”), his returning home (“over four hundred enemy troops occupying aspects of war, ghosts were no longer the threat. . . .

. . . People were really like mice trying to escape a cat: they would hide and then try to escape so that there would be no trace of their existence. Throughout the day, rumors wafted through the air from other refugees: the Gu Yuan township head, a Mr. Li, had been killed. A baojia head had almost died of fright in a lengthy aerial bombardment. . . .

. . . We decided we would be safer if we once again returned home. But we had to do that warily, step by step, constantly aware of any changes in our surroundings that might portend danger. We could see from the road over four hundred enemy troops occupying the mountain behind Gaotaimen Village. Even at dusk, the cannons and the machine guns, no more than half a li \( \text{about 900 feet} \) away, dazzled the eyes. The villagers imitated neighboring villages in trying to ingratiate themselves with the enemy: two village elders took a picul of wine \( \text{about 133 pounds} \) and three hundred eggs to the troops on the mountain. Then, at night, the villagers stealthily killed all their chickens and cooked the meat so that their families might eat what they owned before the Japanese stole it \( \text{a none-too subtle culinary scorched-earth approach} \).\(^8\)

At nightfall after we were home, about fifty or sixty enemy soldiers entered our village, probably to serve as sentries. I hid in the garden; . . . After the soldiers had passed by, I hurried her [Jin’s wife] up to pack up household goods for a possible night flight from home. Moving quietly, we packed up and moved my books in several square-bottomed bamboo baskets to the pigsty. We stuffed Western-style clothes into a large crock. My wife was paranoid about everything so she burned quite a few things including an old newspaper; that made me angry because it had some things in it that I wanted to save. We put legal papers in a hole that we dug. We covered it with a lid slathered with mud, and on top we placed the wooden pail we used for urine.

For dinner, we didn’t dare turn on a lamp. So we fumbled around, using our hands to tear the chicken meat. We wolfed it down amid panicky fear, so strong, in fact, that the chicken didn’t have any taste to me. . . . (Schoppa 103)

\(^8\) All the parenthetical annotations in italics are added by R. Keith Schoppa, the author of the book.
the mountain behind Gaotaimen Village” and “the cannons and the machine guns, no more than half a *li* away, dazzled the eyes”), his hiding (“about fifty or sixty enemy soldiers entered our village”), his preparations for flight (“we packed up and moved my books in several square-bottomed bamboo baskets to the pigsty,” “we stuffed Western-style clothes into a large crock,” “we put legal papers in a hole that we dug,” and “we covered it with a lid slathered with mud, and on top we placed the wooden pail we used for urine”), and his dining (“we didn’t dare turn on a lamp,” “we fumbled around, using our hands to tear the chicken meat,” and “the chicken didn’t have any taste to me”). The clear, consistent, and coherent narrative in Jin’s diary leaves little trace of the “traumatic impact” on his report of his great fear and thus makes him what Žižek suggests is a narrator who “would disqualify himself [as a reliable witness] by virtue of that clarity” (Žižek 4). In contrast, these accurate and abundant details are nowhere to be seen in Lum’s poem, “Our Scorched Earth Policy.” Divided into eight stanzas, with each consisting of a couplet, the poem, in fragmentary expressions, attempts to convey the speaker’s fragmentary experience facing the Japanese invasion:

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We hardboil all our eggs
to carry and eat with ease.

As for the chickens,
they are too numerous.

But we are loathe
to leave them behind

for the invaders to consume
and then thus fortified

come hard on our heels.
So we slaughter them

and stuff ourselves full.
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This night is like a grand feast
for a wedding
or one of our festival days.

Though for me
I can taste only my fears. (Poems, “Our Scorched Earth Policy” 23)

Though each of the first two stanzas of the poem manages to maintain a syntactic unit by itself, the following five stanzas turn into enjambment, with each of the three syntactic units running over several lines and continuing into the next stanza without a pause. The lack of a pause after each stanza suggests explicitly that the narrator is under great stress or agitation and therefore fails to narrate his traumatic experiences properly, as required by the fragmentary form of the poem itself.

The enjambment in this poem represents truthfully the speaker’s stressful memories of his fragmentary experiences facing the invaders and builds the poem to its epiphanic moment of witnessing in the last stanza the speaker’s perpetual fear, which is also the speaker’s subjective experience—the truthfulness the poem aims to represent. Of the eight stanzas, seven try to avoid mentioning what the speaker cares the most about, the fact that he is unable to protect himself, his family, and his fellow villagers and that one or some or all of them may be killed by the Japanese. Therefore, what is avoided in the majority of the narrative is indeed the most important message the narrative tries to report. Because of this narrative avoidance, I would argue that Lum’s poem represents more truthfully the fear in the speaker, described by Steele as “[t]he survivor of a traumatic event [who] survives by leaving the event behind” (17). Under the cover of a seemingly celebratory “grand feast” of eggs and chickens, the speaker forces himself not to speak of the upcoming danger that threatens him until the very end of the poem. With a
purposeful delay, the speaker’s endurance of his overwhelming fears becomes what Freud defines as “an accident that one walks away from, apparently unharmed, only to discover later a series of grave psychical and motor symptoms, which can be ascribed only to his shock or whatever else happened at the time of the accident” (qtd. in Steele 17). While Jin in his diary refers to his fears as no taste in the chicken, Lum illuminatingly claims that the taste of the chicken is exactly his taste of fear. Shifting the narrative focus from the speaker’s collected factual truth to the speaker’s subjective experience, Lum makes this poem a more effective testimony, which passes on the empathy and epiphanic moment of witnessing to his readers.

Lum’s third trans-method of reconstruction is his transposition of documented violence and human suffering from other sites of violence from World War II into the Nanjing Massacre. To Lum, what changes in wars is the space, the time, the victims, and the perpetrators, but what remains with little change in wars is the horror, the violence, the brutality, and the atrocity. From Nanjing to Auschwitz and from Stalingrad to Hiroshima, the world followed the jungle law and men fought in the jungle to kill and to be killed. Comparing the Japanese as victims of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki with the Japanese as perpetrators of the Nanjing Massacre, Ritsuko, a thirteen-year-old Japanese school girl, discovers the destructive power of war on soldiers after she watched a documentary video about the Massacre:

I always associated the war with Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But the nuclear bombings happened after 1940. Before that, Japan did things which were even worse. Watching the video, it seemed almost unreal. Before this, I could only think of Japan as the loser in the war, but we Japanese must know what happened before 1940. What impressed me more than anything else, seeing this video, was the scene of Japanese soldiers laughing as they watched Chinese people being killed. How could they have done that? I cannot understand the feelings of the Japanese at that time. (qtd. in Buruma 114-15)

What seems to Ritsuko the unbelievable cruelty of the Japanese soldiers in the Nanjing Massacre
is just one example of the inconceivable soldiers’ brutalities documented in the Second World War. Facing extreme conditions, these soldiers often behaved with extremely shocking apathy in witnessing the pain and suffering of others.

To address the extremity of this apathy, Lum writes several poems in the voice of a soldier/perpetrator, hoping readers see the intensity of the soldier’s atrocity and understand his apathy which goes beyond imagination. In the endnote of “The Boots,” Lum states clearly that the poem, although portraying a Japanese soldier, was actually based on a true war story recorded in Catherine Merridale’s *Ivan’s War: Life and Death in the Red Army, 1939-1945*, and therefore is a “transposed” piece of writing about soldiers’ war atrocities (Lum, *The Nanjing Massacre: Poems* 227). What the poet did with the original story was to transpose the documented experience of horror and violence from a Soviet Red Army soldier to a Japanese soldier, from Europe to Nanjing, and from the Second World War to the Second Sino-Japanese War. What has been transposed into the poem, entitled “The Boots,” is not just the harshness of the cold winter but also the apathy out of the cold heart of soldiers fighting deadly battles continuously. Lum strives to highlight the fact that wars are more similar than different in their destructive power. As argued by John Dower, war crimes are rooted in war hates and are “surely in large part racial” (34). Narrated in the voice of a soldier/perpetrator, the poem describes his lack of emotion while committing some unimaginably cruel human atrocities—possessing a pair of boots by despoiling an enemy’s corpse. The poem begins with the soldier’s discovery of a new pair of boots on the corpse of an enemy:

We pulled the bodies
out of the rubble.
My eyes immediately spied
the shiny ankle boots
on one of the corpses,
most likely a new officer.
The soles of my shoes
had worn through.
I wanted his and wondered out loud
how warm they would be,
so thick and smooth. (Poems, “The Boots” 69)

Here, by describing how the speaker is fully absorbed with his longing for “the shiny ankle boots
/ on one of the corpses,” Lum depicts a disheartening subversion of human values on the
battlefield—the lives of the enemies are worth nothing, not even as valuable as a pair of “warm,”
“thick” and “smooth” boots on the corpse. However, considering his claim that “[t]he soles of
my shoes / had worn through,” the soldier’s attention to the boots seems understandable and
perhaps even forgivable under the given conditions. The poem then continues with the soldier’s
narration of his attempts to “pull the boots off” the corpse:

But he had died some time ago,
his body frozen stiff.
Again and again
I tried to pull the boots off,
but they clung to the feet
like bark on a tree.
Everyone laughed,
and someone even suggested
I cut through the leather
and then try to sew it back up. (69)

Describing the soldier’s attempts to pull off the boots, Lum highlights the soldier’s
objectification of his enemy with his metaphorical comparison of the boots “cling[ing] to the
feet” of an enemy’s “frozen stiff” corpse to the “bark on a tree.” Reducing the corpse of the
enemy to an object, the soldier is not discouraged with his failed attempts and soon comes up
with an idea, which seems to him much better than the one suggested by his peer—that he should
“cut through the leather / and then try to sew it back up.” The poem then continues with the
soldier’s narrative of how he manages to get the boots without doing the least damage to them:

But I came up with another idea, and with my bayonet I stabbed away around the knees chipping off flesh, hard as wood. Finally I hit bone all around and sought to pry open the joints. I stacked a mound of bricks underneath the knees like a fulcrum, and then with some others weighing down on the chest I jumped on top of his feet to crack the legs off. Once they were severed, I cradled them in my arms like two logs over to where the cooks had built a fire. By the end of our meal the feet had thawed soft enough for me to tug off the boots. I sat on the ground holding the exposed knee joint while my buddy clutched the heel. I scooped out the rest of the flesh, and cleaned the insides flushing them thoroughly with hot water. Quickly I dried them inside and out. I polished the leather before trying them on. (69-70)

Following a careful plan of “stabbing,” “chipping,” “hitting,” “prying,” “cracking,” “thawing,” “tugging,” “scooping,” “cleaning,” “flushing,” “drying” and “polishing,” the soldier eventually gets the boots with the least damage at the cost of a total despoiling of the enemy’s corpse.
However, the poem does not stop when the soldier succeeds in owning the boots but continues with his narrative of how his possession of this pair of boots may bring up more of his atrocities:

The boots were a size too large,  
but I just needed to steal  
a second pair of socks to wear.  
Now they will last me  
throughout the war  
and keep me warm and dry.  
It was my luck—  
I surely will survive. (70)

After stealing the boots, the soldier starts making a new plan of stealing a pair of socks. By describing how the soldier’s violent possession of a pair of boots may lead him to committing more atrocities, the poem suggests that human evil, once stirred up in extreme conditions, can go wild with no control on its limits.

Written in methods of transformation, translation, and transposition, Lum’s poems address both intensively (regarding each poem) and extensively (regarding the collection of his poems) the Japanese atrocities committed in the Nanjing Massacre. With an effort to expose human brutalities in time of war, it seems that the truth of the Nanjing Massacre Lum hopes to bring to his American readers is the unimaginable intensity and scale of violence induced by war. Such a truth is especially important to American readers because they have not had to witness, within the national boundaries of America, the destructive power of human lives in international conflicts and wars, at least not up till 9/11. To Lum, violence and war are simply inseparable in their relation of symbiosis, and most of his poems reveal the sad reality that perpetrators, in name of war, take their atrocities for granted. Born around the end of the Second World War, Lum nevertheless did not miss much of the war because of the mass media. In addition to the Second World War, Lum’s access to the news of wars continued as he grew up in the United States,
which was involved in intermittent wars overseas, the Korean War (1950-1953), the Vietnam War (1961-1975), the Gulf War (1990-1991), War in Afghanistan (2001-2014), and the Iraqi War (2003-2011). To Lum, the majority of Americans, in spite of their routine access to “[e]ach morning news stories from Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Palestine, Chechnya, and Darfur [which] report the violent deaths of combatants and civilians” (Winn 1), do not really understand the destruction of violence in war. Except for the number of casualties and deaths, their knowledge of war violence seems to be both vague and far-reaching. In contrast to the soldiers fighting overseas, what has been missed by the majority of the Americans who stay at home to hear or to watch the news broadcasts are the true horror and violence only soldiers can witness. James Giles in *The Spaces of Violence* describes his youthful memory of the Second World War while he grew up in Bowie, Texas, his hometown:

My father did not serve in World War II, and even though I had uncles who did, that horrendous and historically decisive conflict seemed distant and unreal, at least until popular culture periodically brought it home to me through graphic and, I now realize, often racist images. The racism was most blatant in the 1940s war movies. I especially remember *Gung Ho!* (1943), starring Randolph Scott and Robert Mitchum, which depicted the creation of a special forces marine unit recruited on the basis of their bloodthirstiness and hatred of “the Japs” for a mission to retake a Pacific island from the Imperial Japanese Army. In one scene, a platoon of Japanese soldiers comes across a wounded and dying American soldier, who begs for water and is promptly bayoneted to death. In addition, a native of Bowie was one of Jimmy Doolittle’s pilots in the 1942 U.S. bombing raid of Tokyo. The pilot’s plane was shot down, and he was reported missing. Postcards of the dead pilot were sold at various stores in Bowie, including the Bowie Drug Store. (x-xi)

Giles’s description of his war memory is a true representation of what the majority of Americans have missed from the mass media about the Second World War and perhaps other wars following it—the scale and intensity of human destruction. It’s not the death of one American soldier and the missing of one American pilot; rather, it’s the deaths of millions of soldiers and civilians in
Europe, in Asia and in the Pacific. Unfortunately, for the sake of propaganda, journalists and film directors often replace the enormity and brutality of the wars with glorification of them in the name of justice and patriotism. It was perhaps not until 9/11 that the American public witnessed the true violence and horror of war from the mass media and became more aware of unimaginable human cruelties in extreme conditions.

When Lum tries to recover from his initial shock of the Japanese atrocities in the Nanjing Massacre by turning his secondary witnessing into poems of testimony, he realizes that human cruelties in the Nanjing Massacre never ameliorate as history evolves into a new millennium. These cruelties only repeat and make the world a butcher’s house, especially for women and children. This is perhaps the most important reason the poet transposes documented primary witnessing of the Second World War to the Nanjing Massacre, showing to his readers that war horror and violence do not vary fundamentally in spite of spacial and temporal differences, as exemplified with his creation of “The Boots.” Using his poems to bear witness to these human cruelties, Lum hopes that the American public, who may urge the US government to promote more peaceful solutions to international conflicts, will become more aware of the fact that human brutalities never improve but repeat in subsequent wars and conflicts. Showing in his poems that war is rooted in violence, Lum wishes that more American people would participate in a joint effort to stop the on-going wars and find more constructive solutions for resolving national and regional conflicts.

Finally, what makes Lum’s witnessing “accumulative” is the poet’s patient collection of voices that represent all parties involved in the tragedy. With fifteen years’ research and reconstruction, Lum empowers the speakers of his poems to state the accumulated findings about
the Massacre. To restore the historical truth by giving the Massacre a full view, Lum does not restrict his poems to victims’ testimony only. Instead, he collects (from the existing documents) and creates (with his research of the tragedy) voices that represent witnesses of all parties—perpetrators, collaborators, victims, rescuers, relief workers and bystanders—hoping these individual testimonies of the Massacre can “‘add up’ to a collective view” (Douglass & Vogler 33). Though the speakers fall into different judicial categories, Lum does not organize his poems accordingly. Unlike Raul Hilberg, whose “Perpetrators Victims Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe 1933—1945 is split into these three eponymous sections” (qtd. in Rowland, Poetry as Testimony 49), Lum’s poems are divided into five parts following a rough chronological order, with each part consisting of mixed voices of all parties and the five parts sounding similar to “the parade of witnesses in a trial” (Douglass & Vogler 33).

However, when these speakers all use first-person pronouns like “I”, “me,” “my,” “we,” “us,” and “our,” there is likely an ambiguity concerning their identity, especially in poems where the speakers are Japanese soldiers whose suffering of cold and hunger, sense of loss and despair, and fear of injury and death cannot differentiate them from Chinese soldiers and civilians but make perpetrators and victims undifferentiated human beings. Lum seems to agree with Primo Levi that “to confuse [perpetrators]9 with their victims is a moral disease or an aesthetic affection or a sinister sign of complicity” (qtd. in Rowland, Poetry as Testimony 49). While mixing the voices of all parties together, Lum is careful not to leave the speaker with an ambiguous identity. To avoid what Levi “warns against [as] too much blurring” (qtd. in Rowland 49), Lum names some of his poems after the speaker’s marked identity—“The Peach Boys,” “Stretcher Bearers,”

9 A square bracketed note from the original text.
“A Real Soldier,” “The Beheader,” “The Sniper,” “Army Doctors,” “White Tiger,” “The Collaborator” and “The Professional Mourners.” For other poems, he uses epigraphs, endnotes, and/or historical references to differentiate a perpetrator from a victim. One such example is “In a Deserted Camp”:

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We are so hungry
that when we come across
a hidden crate of canned meat
we lose all discipline
and climb over each other
to grab what we can.
We do not notice
the airplane overhead
until it starts strafing us.
Everyone dives for cover.
And when my buddy gets hit
instead of attending
to his wounds
I just scramble for his tins. (Poems, “In a Deserted Camp” 41)
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This poem, in explicit first-person pronouns, makes it a soldier’s testimony. Readers with no sufficient knowledge of the Massacre would not know that the speaker “I” here speaks on behalf of the Japanese soldiers, who “had brought with them lots of ammunition, but few supplies” (Gibney xiv). In spite of their best guess of the speaker as a soldier with the clue that “we lose all discipline,” it would be still hard for them to tell if the speaker is a Japanese or Chinese soldier. Thus, among Lum’s readers, there could be a tendency of misinterpreting this poem as Lum’s conscious blurring of the soldier’s identity and thereafter claiming the Japanese perpetrators as victims who suffer in the same way as the hungry Chinese soldiers and civilians. To avoid this tendency of misinterpretation, Lum states clearly in the corresponding endnote that “‘In a Deserted Camp’ was inspired by an anecdote in Craig Collie and Hajime Marutani, The Path of Infinite Sorrow (Crow’s Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2009), describing the experiences of the Japanese
soldiers on the Kokoda Trail” (*Poems*, “Notes” 226). With reference to this endnote, Lum’s reader will not take the poem’s ambiguous first-person pronouns as the poet’s intentional blurring of the soldier’s identity. Rather, the endnote’s recognition of the victimized soldier as a perpetrator explains what Adam Gilbert argues as the victim perpetrator’s “irretrievable loss of innocence . . . as, in part at least, self-inflicted, a result of the violence of the perpetrator reflected back on the self” (10). To inform his readers of the speaker being a Japanese soldier who speaks on behalf of the Japanese soldiers driven desperate by hunger, Lum hopes his reader can understand the injustice of the Japanese invaders’ follow-up looting, killing, and raping the Chinese POWs and civilians—scapegoats whom they avenge for their self-inflicted suffering.

I would borrow Lorrie Goldensohn’s comments on *Winning Hearts and Minds: War Poems by Vietnam Veterans* (1972) as a brief summary of Lum’s *The Nanjing Massacre: Poems*, as it is similar to *Winning* by “aim[ing] at history rather than literature, at ethics rather than aesthetics” (qtd. in Gilbert 17). To uncover the historical truth by bearing witness to the Nanjing Massacre, Lum extends his subject from Japanese war atrocities to human suffering in general—soldiers and civilians, men and women, the old and the young. In “What I learned from Your College Annual,” the dedication and opening poem, Lum chooses a polysemous word to define the nature of the truth he aspires to reveal about the Nanjing Massacre—“hard” (*Poems* 14). By documenting primary sources, he proves that the truth of the Massacre represented in his poems is indeed “undeniable.” By employing a speaker who speaks on behalf of the silent victims, he proves that the trauma is “too painful” to be articulated. By addressing the horror and violence, he proves that human atrocities can become “unimaginably shocking” in times of war and conflict. By lamenting the death of his mother, he proves that historical truth is to be gathered bit
by bit through the “extremely difficult” effort of the survivors for generations to come. In spite of all the unpleasantness, Lum feels obliged to join other writers in preserving the existing historical traces of the Massacre, fearing they will soon be “deliberately erased” if “no one cares” (*Poems*, “Notes” 223). He reconstructs carefully, patiently, and creatively, hoping his “100-odd creative pieces, written over the past fifteen years” can “serve as a cumulative testament to the qualitative and quantitative immensity of this massacre” (*Poem, “Notes”* 223-24).

Lum’s opening and concluding poems put him into the position of a secondary witness of the Nanjing Massacre. His secondary witnessing can be understood in two ways. First, his knowledge of the Nanjing Massacre is obtained almost entirely from reading history books, visiting museums, and going to conferences involving the reading of poems. At the same time, by connecting with his mother as a survivor of the Nanjing Massacre, Lum takes the position of a second-generation survivor, who is both emotionally and morally obliged to bear witness to the atrocities. The rest of his poems work in accumulative primary witnessing and make them a continuation and development of the twentieth century poetry of testimony. Dealing with the horror and violence of the Massacre, these poems must face the challenge of “‘Speaking the Unspeakable’ (Leak and Paizis), ‘Bearing the Unbearable’ (Aaron), ‘Thinking the Unthinkable’ (Gottlieb), and going ‘Beyond the Conceivable’ (Diner)” (qtd. in Douglass & Vogler 32).

Realizing that the silence of the primary witnesses, like that of his mother, is perhaps more a result of their incapacity than reluctance to tell, Lum finds it crucial to give voices back to these silent witnesses. Telling the stories in the voices of these witnesses, Lum makes his poems function as what Laub calls “the act of bearing witness” (85). Meanwhile, by making his readers listen to these discursive testimonies, Lum turns them, too, into secondary witnesses by what
Casie Premo Steele suggests is “participat[ing]” in the traumatic experiences (2). Bearing witness and reliving the trauma of the Massacre victims and survivors, Lum hopes that his poems, by uncovering the hard truth of human horror and violence from a silent past, can help the Nanjing survivors and their future generations heal from this trauma. More importantly, by spreading the hard truth of this atrocious past, Lum wishes that the world will discard war and violence forever. It is only when nations all over the world are willing to respect one another and come up with constructive and peaceful solutions to national and international conflicts that human horror and violence as atrocious as testified by the Nanjing Massacre can be stopped and will never happen again.
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

Throughout my research on the Nanjing Massacre texts, *When the Purple Mountain Burns, The Flowers of War, Nanjing Requiem, and The Nanjing Massacre: Poems*, I have come up with three major findings regarding Chinese American writers’ representations of the Massacre as literature.

First, these texts reinforce that violence can go to practically unbelievable depths if it is justified by perpetrators in the name of patriotism and heroism. To depict the intensity and scale of violence unimaginable to the American public, the Chinese American writers reconstruct episodes of extreme violence based on documented histories and historiographies of Japanese soldiers’ indiscriminate killing, torture, and rape in Nanjing. In addition to numerous episodes addressing Japanese soldiers’ crimes of looting, burning, and abducting, the Nanjing Massacre texts include episodes depicting some most notorious atrocities of the Japanese militarists, namely the mass killing of the Chinese POWs, the killing competition between two Japanese officers, the raping and killing of Chinese virgin girls and pregnant women, the pornographic photographing of raped Chinese women, and the biological and medical experiments on living Chinese for germ warfare. Weaving these episodes into the tragic history of Nanjing, these texts not only challenge the Japanese revisionists’ denial of the Massacre but also diagnose how a blind faith in nationalism can drive people into acts of extreme violence.

Then these texts maintain that violence often finds substitutes as scapegoats who are chosen as more sacrificeable because of their underprivileged political, economic, and social
status. Grandpa, Ning-ning, Eva, and Helen in *When the Purple Mountain Burns*; the teenage Chinese recruits in *Nanjing Requiem*; the thirteen Qin Huai prostitutes in *The Flowers of War*; and the surrendered and dying Chinese POWs in *The Nanjing Massacre: Poems* are only representatives of a large body of scapegoats who are unable to escape the city and become the object of the Japanese soldiers’ resentment of their terrible loss in Shanghai and their failure to conquer China within three months. In this sense, these texts point out the double nature of violence as a social evil, as it not only causes brutal human injuries and deaths but also misplaces the blame on the heads of innocent scapegoats.

Also, the four texts, combined together, make a rough quadrilateral representation of the Nanjing Massacre, with each lateral highlighting the Japanese violence through the lens of perpetrators, rescuers, victims, and witnesses, respectively. Overall, by providing a panoramic view of the terrors and horrors involved in the Nanjing Massacre, these texts hope to bring the forgotten history back to the conscience of American readers with two concerns. For one thing, by knowing the atrocious persecution that the Chinese suffered at Nanjing in 1937-38, American readers may develop a sympathetic perception of the Chinese Americans as a victimized ethnicity bearing a past of atrocious persecution. For another, as America has been lately involved in several regional wars, like in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria, these texts also call for American readers’ awareness of war violence in the hope that more American people will support peaceful solutions to international conflicts and, even more hopefully, that they will come up with joint efforts to prevent future war and violence.

As the Nanjing Massacre texts are largely based on documented histories and historiographies, I see more consensus than discrepancy between my three findings of Chinese
American writers’ representations of the Nanjing Massacre as literature and what Joshua A.
Fogel describes as the three major concerns shared among Chinese diaspora writers in their
writings of the Nanjing Massacre as history.

While probing into what seemed to be a sudden increase of Chinese diaspora writers’
publications on the history of the Nanjing Massacre at the turn of the twentieth century, Fogel
suggests in “Introduction: The Nanjing Massacre in History” that Chinese diaspora writers’
increasing interests in writing the history of the Massacre result from their growing resentment of
the sad reality that this modern historical tragedy has not been sufficiently addressed on the part
of the Chinese victims and is still denied by “certain Japanese” (2). Based on his studies, Fogel
claims that there are three major concerns shared among Chinese diaspora writers regarding their
writings of the Nanjing Massacre as history. First, these writers maintain that the Chinese
government made a mistake by not demanding reparations from the Japanese victimizers due to
an “extraordinary efflorescence of nationalism” and a “concomitant unwillingness to play the
victim” (2). Then these diaspora writers are enraged by the Japanese right-wing conservatives’
bold and constant public denial of the Nanjing Massacre, especially during the 1980s and 1990s.
Also, living as diaspora poorly “grounded in the sources, languages, and histories of the
[European, American, Canadian, Australian, and other English] cultures,” these writers see the
Nanjing Massacre as a historical event that will combine all Chinese diaspora as “an ethnic
group in victimhood” (3-4).

Apparently, the construction of the Nanjing Massacre as history by Chinese diaspora
writers and as literature by Chinese American writers prioritizes two of their group consensuses:
to challenge the Japanese revisionists’ bold denial of the Nanjing atrocities and to claim China as
a victimized nation with a past of atrocious persecution from Japan. Both groups see the urgency of representing the Nanjing Massacre as utterly senseless violence. To counterargue the Japanese ultranationalists’ public denial of the Nanjing Massacre, both groups attempt to prove the opposite, suggesting that the Nanjing Massacre not only happened but also involved intense and large-scale atrocities. Also, seeing themselves as victims bearing a past of violent persecution, both groups wish to uncover the shocking brutality of a mass violence in the hope that readers of the world see the destructive nature of violence and work together to prevent it from happening in the future.

Different from representations of the Nanjing Massacre in Chinese American literature, two novels in mainstream American literature are worth mentioning as they use the Nanjing Massacre as the backdrop of their stories: one is R. C. Binstock’s *Tree of Heaven* (1995) and the other is Paul West’s *The Tent of Orange Mist* (1995). Some factual coincidences between the two novels include the year of publication, characterization of the victimized Chinese girls, and thematic implications. In each novel, while the female protagonist is a young Chinese girl who becomes homeless in and after the Nanjing Massacre and is in dire need of food, clothing, and shelter, the male protagonist is a Japanese military officer who casts favor upon the desperate girl and is able to provide her with some level of protection. In *Tree of Heaven*, it is Colonel Kuroda who takes Li, a tramp after the Nanjing Massacre, as his servant and mistress and thus temporarily saves her from the risks of being raped and killed by other Japanese soldiers. In *The Tent of Orange Mist*, it is Colonel Hayashi who runs a military brothel in the house of Scald Ibis, daughter of a Chinese professor. Noticing the girl’s gift for calligraphy and poetry, Hayashi decides to train her to be a Japanese geisha and thus temporarily releases her from being raped
by Japanese soldiers as a comfort woman. Though the shelter provided by Kuroda and Hayashi does not ease the pain and suffering of Li and Scald Ibis, the fact that the girls’ miserable existence tempers them and makes them survive the Japanese violence adds elements of Bildungsroman into both novels. In *Tree of Heaven*, Binstock goes even further to make Li feel grateful of her rescuer and fall in love with Kuroda, and thus a passionate romance between people representing two hostile parties evolves in the chaos of the Massacre.

I find the mainstream American writers’ representations of the Nanjing Massacre problematic in several ways. First, the portrayal of the Japanese invaders as cultivated and sympathetic knights, in particular Kuroda in *Tree of Heaven*, represents more of an American ideology of individualism and heroism, which is not a true representation of Japan’s violent and destructive militarism in the 1930s and 1940s. Second, both novels include plots that are too fictional to represent the Nanjing Massacre truthfully. In *Tree of Heaven*, Kuroda develops a passionate love toward Li regardless of the hostility of his fellow soldiers against the Chinese girl. By the end of the story, Kuroda even sacrifices his life to save Li. In *The Tent of Orange Mist*, Hong, Scald Ibis’s father and a Chinese professor, returns to his house and tries to protect his daughter by working as a cleaning man and at the same time succeeds in killing Hayashi, whom he believes responsible for both the miserable life of his daughter and the violent death of his son, who was mercilessly beheaded and thrown in the well of the family. I find these episodes too fake to be included in a novel addressing the Nanjing Massacre. Speaking of *The Tree of Heaven*, I do not doubt that human passion grows between hostile parties; however, among the references I come across in my research, there is no documented histories or historiographies of the Nanjing Massacre including the Japanese officers’ protection of their
Chinese female victims, especially when the protection is against the will of their fellow soldiers. Even if there is documented evidence to suggest a romance between Japanese perpetrators and Chinese women victims, the representation of a catastrophic situation like the Nanjing Massacre through the lens of romanticizing the power of love would weaken the depiction of the intensity and scale of violence waged by Japanese soldiers in Nanjing. Speaking of *The Tent of the Orange Mist*, I find it beyond the reasonable boundary of a historical fiction that the Japanese’s search for Chinese men as suspicious soldiers would spare Hong to hide in his house as a cleaning man for a Japanese military brothel and later succeed in taking his revenge. Third, I see both novels’ choice of addressing the Nanjing Massacre through the lens of the issue of comfort women a stereotyped representation of Japanese atrocities in World War II. In fact, the crimes committed by Japanese soldiers in Nanjing were not restricted to comfort women. Rather, they included Japanese soldiers’ ruthless killing, raping, looting, burning, and abducting displayed in various extremities. Focusing their representations of the Nanjing Massacre on the issue of comfort women, the two novels at least partially, if not entirely, reveal how in the consciousness of mainstream American literature the Nanjing Massacre is perceived narrow-mindedly as the issue of comfort women and how this literary projection may limit the American readers’ view of the intensity and scale of atrocities involved in the calamity.

To rectify the potential misconception of the Nanjing Massacre in mainstream American literature and to bring the historical truth back to the conscience of the American public, the Nanjing Massacre texts by Chinese American writers represent the tragedy by focusing on the intensity and scale of violence committed by the Japanese soldiers. Addressing violence through the lens of perpetrators, rescuers, scapegoats, and secondary witnesses, these texts present
Chinese American writers in the act of documenting Chinese history. By showing how violence in Nanjing goes wild and beyond imagination, they take what Žižek sees as “[a] step back [that] enables us to identify a violence that sustains our very efforts to fight violence and to promote tolerance” (1). Also, these texts, though dealing with a past Japanese invasion, reveal human aggression and violence similar to those present in current international conflicts. To remember the past, to learn from past mistakes, and to promote tolerance for political, religious, and cultural differences are the primary concerns of Chinese American writers in representing the Nanjing Massacre.
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