

Telling (Hi)story: Illusory Truth or True Illusion?

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ABSTRACT

*The history never exists. There are only histories as texts or discourses. This paper attempts to display, through the analysis of the four works by Ch'en Ying-chen, Lan Po-chou, Yang Chao and Chang Ta-ch'un, how histories, by means of different writings of history, are either inherently ideological and moralized as a rational progress or detotalized as indeterminate, heterogeneous fragments of psychotic experiences. In both cases, the historical truth has been tortured: either by the unattainable *relax* or by the disillusioned chaos. For Ch'en Ying-chen and Lan Po-chou, history, however cruel and barbaric it may be, still operates as the teleological function of its subject. Yang Chao and Chang Ta-ch'un, on the other hand, tend to reveal the irrational phenomena of history by tracing the contingent, ambiguous, paradoxical, and yet lethal elements of the past. Without turning into metanarratives that totalize the historical discourses, the metafictionality in Yang Chao and Chang Ta-ch'un's stories questions the rationality of history and suggests the infinite *difference* of the language game in the writing of history. Thus the metahistorical form of fiction is a problematic, unauthentic one: it is established as ruins or debris.*

KEY WORDS

<i>Anti-Oedipus</i>	metafictionality and metahistoricity
(de-)subjectification of history	repetition and circularity
heterogeneity of historical experiences	paranoia/schizophrenia
histories as discourses	postmodernism
history and fiction	teleological/eschatological history

Historical consciousness is considered the basic characteristic that distinguishes human beings from animals, which are ignorant of the past. Memory, our biophysical function to preserve history, determines man to be existent not only at present, but also in the past simultaneously. It is probably true that man can recognize the world merely because he has the power of memory, which sums up various phenomena in any moment, beyond the spatio-temporal limits. However, is historical consciousness essentially based on human intelligence that animals are unable to obtain? This biological question, I believe, should be explained by anthropological and philosophical approaches concerning the metaphysical (metabiophysical?) mode of historical experience. We cannot imagine a pure memory immune from any ideological preoccupations imposed by cultural, epistemic influences. Furthermore, as I will argue, historical memory is itself constituted within linguistic systems. Memory is a determinant function for historical consciousness; the forms of this function, nevertheless, vary with the change of socio-cultural paradigms (in a Kuhnian sense).

To understand history has been one of the major interests of writers since the origin of literature. To textualize the past in memory not only means to record what happened, but also to establish a discursive entity by which historical experience is comprehensible. In Chinese literature, historiographical works have always been important either for their political and ethical significance or for their literary motivation.

The four Taiwan stories this paper discusses — Ch'en Ying-chen's "Chao Nan-tung," Lan Po-chou's "Song of the Canopy Carriage" [Huangmach'e chih ko], Yang Chao's "Gloomy Soul" [An Hun], and Chang Ta-ch'un's "The General's Cenotaph" [Chiangchün pei] — all deal with historical experience, through which history is regarded as either a positive axiological, epistemological yardstick or symptoms of the nullity of human time. Different methods to dispose language, structure and characters represent not only different attitudes *toward* history, but different gestures *of* history, albeit the historical settings — the Japanese Invasion of China, the February 28th Incident, etc. — are the same.

The distinction between "Chao Nan-tung"/"Song of the Canopy Carriage" and "Gloomy Soul"/"The General's Cenotaph" is apparent: history in the former is teleological, since the heroes are insistent on their idealistic historical undertaking, whereas in the latter, it is alienated or caricatured as an absurd and awkward situation of man.

Historical Subjectivity vs. Genealogical Psychosis

The plot of "Chao Nan-tung" oscillates between the past and the present. For Ch'en Ying-chen, the recollection of the past is the way to reassume the value of history and to remedy the decadence of the modern time. Lying in bed in the hospital and facing impending death, Chao Ch'ing-yün, the real center of the story (not Chao Nan-tung, obviously) characterized as a dying person who has experienced the great events of the past, is bestowed with great historical significance. Deeply influenced by Hegelian philosophy and Marxism, Ch'en Ying-chen believes in the pivotal function of subject in the progress of history. The value of subject lies in its struggle with the object and the development of history is the dialectical development through the struggle between subject and object. In Marxism, the major form of the dialectical development of history—i.e., the subject-object movement—is class struggle: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles" (Marx 13). Proletariat, for Marx, is the historical subject committed to change the social system by fighting against the bourgeois world. As historical subjects, Ch'en Ying-chen's heroes, though not proletarian insurgents, are evidently revolutionaries. Thus the purposive subjectivity fails to exist eventually: it turns out to be an instrument of the objective demand. It is in this sense that Adorno, the Marxist theoretician who advocates the autonomous subjectivity, denounces direct partisanship and propaganda. For him, any self-conscious loyalty to any political intention is politically reactionary because it eliminates the autonomy of subject by surrendering the individual to the collective, on the one hand, and represents the extreme subjective idealism by regarding literature as the carrier of the authorial idea, on the other.

In his introduction to the collection of Ch'en Ying-chen's short stories, Lucien Miller properly points out that "there is more than a bit of the romantic in Ch'en Ying-chen" (Ch'en 1986, 6). To redeem the positive value of history through reminiscence is a romantic lament for the decline of modern humanity. At the same time, Ch'en idealizes the life in the past when people struggled for an ideal future. The suffered life in jail is not described as dehumanized torture, but rather sublimated due to its sacrificial spirit for a teleological belief. The astonishing similarities between the mainland "revolutionary" novel *Hong Yan* [Red Crag] and the first chapter of "Chao Nan-tung" signifies a common political tendency: to praise the historical subjectivity for its devotion to an idealistic and ideological purpose.

Ch'en Ying-chen does attempt to characterize the Marxist doctrine in his fiction. The suffering for the ideal is axiologically positive, whereas the decadent, sensual manner of living is represented negatively. Modern life is superficial for its lack of suffering and struggle. Chao Nan-tung, who indulges in sensual pleasure, is criticized because of the absence of the subjective power to participate in history. He does not live for historical "depth." Just like his girlfriend Mo Wei depicts, "his sight is frank and desiring, coming straight to the point, [...he is] bold, selfish, tender and vulgar" (Ch'en 1988, 70). In other words, Chao Nan-tung's life has no historical meaning, he only exists on the very surface of human nature. Chao Erh-p'ing, on the other hand, lives a business life, where unlawful acts prevail and the positive historical value is totally lost. The younger generation is considered unable to become historical subject, because there is no longer a historical object to fight against. To a great extent, this is the situation that Ch'en Ying-chen bewails. Since Ch'en Ying-chen's history is based on the idealistic concept of dialectical history—whether from Hegel or from Marx—he has no doubt about the progress of human history. In the very end, When Yeh Ch'un-mei called Chao Nan-tung "Little Pa-lo," the nickname his mother called him in jail, it seems that he was called back to his childhood when his parents and their generation were struggling and suffering for the ideal future. This didactic purport accomplishes the totality of the whole story: an attempt to refill the individualistic but desubjectified life with active and idealistic subjectivity recalled from the past.

Lan Po-chou's "Song of the Canopy Carriage," on the other hand, seems to eliminate authorial control over the narrative and to evade romanticism by imitating journalistic style. It attempts to fabricate an atmosphere of a symposium where various narrators discuss a consecutive story about a character. However, the pseudo-objectivity of the story is evident: unlike in Kurosawa's film *Rashomon*, which establishes discursive conflicts among different addressers, it emits the same kind of tone, in which the affirmative discourse monopolizes the understanding of historical events. Although the mixture of great historical events and personal events (both with exact dates) certainly strengthens the objective facade of the narrative, the whole piece is apparently naive because of its monotonous, mechanical discursive system. However, if one considers its prosaic language as only a manifestation of its immaturity for the crude data it represents, he will miss the point. Documentary genre is not necessarily primitive if the subjective, ideological elements are truly removed. In fact, "Song of the Canopy Carriage" is far

from being an objective documentary. Under the guise of objectivity, the subjective message can be easily seized through its narrative mode. In the first paragraph, the phrase "political sufferers" (Lan 131) (rather than "prisoners") has clearly the addresser's (if not authorial) tendency. The author's tendency can also be found in the titles of chapters such as "Simple Emotions for the Homeland" (Lan 138). Seen from this point of view, Lan Po-chou has not escaped from the ideologized subjectivity which, on the contrary, becomes even more evident: love of country, party advocacy, or the like. This story is no more than a biography of a revolutionary whose historical characteristic is idealized and romanticized.

In both "Chao Nan-tung" and "Song of the Canopy Carriage," subjects appear as collective agents in contention with their objective worlds. It is truly idealistic and romantic, in that the subject in these works is sublimated as the real historical power rather than being frustrated by history. Adorno alleges, "Traumatized by art, the subject is able to experience itself properly, dissolving its features and waking up to the narrowness of its self-posed standpoint. Trauma is the true happiness the subject can find in art works" (Adorno 380). The subjectivity in "Chao Nan-tung" and "Song of the Canopy Carriage" is invalid also because its weakness within collectivity affirms its own disintegration. Furthermore, the end point or *telos* of history upon which the meaning of subject is clearly contingent is demystified today. Subject can no longer achieve the ultimate goal of history by pursuing the dialectic theory of historical development. The modern world goes opposite to the direction hoped for by Enlightenment, which regards human history as a progressive process from naivete to subjective self-consciousness. Fighting against the traditional historical philosophy since Enlightenment, Foucault alleges: "What is being bewailed with such vehemence is not the disappearance of history, but the elipse of that form of history that was secretly, but entirely, related to the synthetic activity of the subject" (Foucault 1972a, 14). The "mode of subjectivation" does not have the historical function any more because it is included under the teleological category. "For Foucault, the assumption that there is such a universal and rational subject of knowledge is a metaphysical one—a matter of belief" (O'Farrell 123). Thus he announces the "end of subject," because subject is considered a progressive agent in the rational, continuous history that he rejects. For Foucault, genealogy, opposed to traditional historical method which "finds its support outside of time and pretends to base its judgements on an apocalyptic objectivity" (Foucault 1977, 152), is the "real history"

[wirkliche Historie]; it attempts to reveal "the secret that they [things] have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms" (Foucault 1977, 142). For the genealogical history, the past is discontinuous, non-evolutionary and desubjectified. The fact that subject becomes disintegrated is, in Lacan's theory, because it is only a discursive function determined by the linguistic system. Thus subject is by no means autonomous, it is not itself in a positive sense. "Lacan characterized man as a standardized, mass-produced repetition of extant models, and the modern world as a world in which individuality, autonomy and freedom have disappeared. [...] Lacan rejected all philosophies—romantic, idealist, existentialist, or Marxist—which sought to preserve for man some vestige of his 'humanity' or which held out to him some vision of a golden age in the future or in the past" (Bannet, 23).

As Lacan puts it with a line of Rimbaud, "Je est un autre [I is another]" (Lacan 1978, 16), man is always outside himself. If modern man loses his substantial subjectivity forever, the only possibility for him is to become mad. "The man of our days only finds his truth in the enigma of the madman" (Foucault 1972b, 548). To be mad means to splinter the reason of subject. It is in this sense that both "Gloomy Soul" and "The Gneral's Cenotaph" deal with psychosis: Yen Chin-shu's schizophrenia and Wu Chen-tung's paranoia. In modern society, Deleuze and Guattari assert in their remarkable book *Anti-Oedipus*, paranoia and schizophrenia are poles of desire revealed in their most extreme, and hence most transparent, form: the intensified despotism represents the paranoiac, fascisizing tendency of desire to assemble entities in molar aggregates and to impose on them a centralized, unified organization, whereas the collage of fragmentary ruins represents the schizophrenic, revolutionary tendency of desire to form molecular, nonsystematic associations of heterogeneous elements:

They [modern societies] vacillate between two poles: the paranoiac despotic sign, the sign-signifier of the despot that they try to revive as a unit of code; and the sign-figure of the schizo as a unit of decoded flux, a schiz, a point-sign or flow-break. (Deleuze & Guattari 260)

Therefore, for Deleuze and Guattari, history is informed by a general tendency, albeit a contingent one, toward a concomitant intensification of schizophrenic revolution and paranoiac reaction in social movement.

The central symbol of "The General's Cenotaph" is the cenotaph, on which the history of the general (Wu Chen-tung) is inscribed, summed up, and fixed. The cenotaph, appearing as an authoritative writing of history, certainly symbolizes a historical power. Hence, it can be inferred that Wu Chen-tung's paranoia sets up an invisible cenotaph (in resistance to the real one) which can "ignore the existence of time" and "penetrate through time to visit the past and the future" [Chang 1988, 11]. On this cenotaph of consciousness, there is neither past nor future; the whole history is the present existence in which he experiences what is happening, what was happening and what will be happening simultaneously. Paranoia, in this sense, is a desperate, lunatic way of catching historical power. Wu Chen-tung's keeping mute in daily life means that he despairs of the historical power which, as he knows, will eventually belong to the younger generation. The attempt to totalize the history in fantasy makes him capable of establishing his own historical "cenotaph." This fantasy no longer serves the idealistic anticipation of the future, but suppresses historical progress in a demented way. Accordingly, Wu Chen-tung can never be a representative of the historical subject; on the contrary, his historical function is essentially questioned. As a character loaded with historical burdens, he finds himself not a subjective, independent agent propelling history forward, but a ludicrous, decrepit person unable to reach the historical truth. (Even his son is only interested in his physical situation, not his history.) Experiencing neither real human time nor real human history, he is a desubjectified role who totalizes the empty historical time in his derangement.

Yen Chin-shu, the hero of "Gloomy Soul," on the other hand, is represented as a schizophrenic role. Unlike Wu Chen-tung, who actively, intentionally shifts his consciousness (even to visit his own funeral by curiosity), Yen Chin-shu is unable to control his thinking. He is nearly compelled to be aware of the chaotic, catastrophic history. That is why he is frightened by hearing his own voice talking about the disastrous historical event without actually speaking: "Later, somebody's voice threatened him. A coarse male voice said, 'No. It was not like this. They were all dead.'... And then he realizes it was he himself who spoke out. The weird thing is that he knows he himself was speaking but had no feeling that he was speaking." (Yang 2692) His memory "was pulled out by a miraculous power," which is explained as an "extraordinary, mysterious instinct" (Yang 2681). The subject here is a passively ruined and shattered one, because the only consciousness Yen Chin-shu has is the foresight of death, the unalterable

human destiny ordained by the spiritual ancestors. Yen Chin-shu secluded himself from other people (as his father did) for two years in order to endure the human world in which what he can see is only the exhibition of various deaths. Historical debris makes him lose his subjective power to accomplish any "great cause," for which he strived when he was young and defended in front of the reporter before he was inspired with the hereditary supernatural power.

That the Foucauldian genealogical historicity exists in "Gloomy Soul" and "The General's Cenotaph" is based on the fact that continuous, rational history gives way to discontinuous, aleatory history. In "Gloomy Soul," Yen Chin-shu's father evaded imprisonment just because the cameraman neglected to have him taken in the picture. Historical contingency plays a key role here to eliminate the fabricated divinity and logicity of human history. Thus the function of the historical subject is ironized. In "The General's Cenotaph," it is both morally heroic and historically absurd for Wu Chen-tung to rescue an opium dealer, who later became his father-in-law, from fire. By the same token, the deaths of the comrades of Yen Chin-shu's and his father's in "Gloomy Soul" are no longer depicted as sublime tragedies as in "Chao Nan-tung" and "Song of the Canopy Carriage." Those casual, ridiculous, odd deaths indicate the meaninglessness of history. "Through their supernatural power that can predict deaths and their varieties (to be slain in an air raid, to be killed on the way under escort, to lose one's life in a traffic accident, to slip into the abyss, to die on an unacquainted woman's bed, to die of incurable cancer, [...])," Chou Ying-hsiung concludes, "we can have a whole recognition of history and understand that the mere revolutionary zeal does not necessarily lead to a good result" (Chou 101).¹ Since the deaths in "Gloomy Soul" are ahistorical because of their lack of any historical value, the traditional concept of history is reversed: human history is no longer an evolutionary social totality which man can fight for and establish his subjectivity. Man is doomed to experience history only as a chaos of slaughters, suicides, accidents, calamities.

In fact, all the four stories deal with events of death. In "Chao Nan-tung", Sung Jung-hsüan and Hsü Hsü Yüeh-yün died as heroines dedicating their lives to an ideal future. On the other hand, Chao Ch'ing-yün dies in the age of decline when death is not a corporeal, but a spiritual fact. However, his death is still meaningful because his precious memory of the past has recalled the lost historical subject to the decadent reality. Chung Hao-tung's death in "Song of the Canopy Carriage," no less tragic than Sung

Jung-hsüan and Hsü Yüeh-yün's, is also endowed with a romantic halo. At the end of "Song of the Canopy Carriage", a sentimental cry is selected from Chung Li-ho's diary: "Ah! Ah! Ho-ming [i.e., Hao-tung], where are you?" The whole story ends with a maudlin atmosphere correspondent to the idealistic characteristic of its narrative.

The conceptions of death in "Chao Nan-tung" and "Song of the Canopy Carriage" are similar to each other for their common belief in a selfless devotion to the ideal as a way leading to the establishment of historical subjectivity. It is not death itself that they praise; death is sublimated by the enthusiasm of faith.²

"A new understanding of history is much needed today," an existentialist historical philosopher suggests. "If history is to have meaning, it cannot be self-contained. Since it fails also to gain real meaning from a process teleology, the only possibility is that of an eschatological perspective" (Slaatte 178). We may regard this "eschatological perspective" as the ontology of death, since it rejects the surplus meaning of death for rational history. Death can ever be a corporeal evaporation and a spiritual sublimation at the same time. It is the very reality of being that everyone will encounter. In Heidegger, the conception of death becomes a chance to transform the absurdity of "thrownness" into the self-consciousness. Dasein, the central term for Heidegger, refers to the self-conscious existence of the individual: "In death, Dasein has not been fulfilled nor has it simply disappeared; it has not become finished nor is it wholly at one's disposal as something ready-to-hand. On the contrary, just as Dasein is already its 'not-yet,' and is its 'not-yet' constantly as long as it is, it is already its end too. The ending which we have in view when we speak of death does not signify Dasein's Being-at-end, but a *Being-towards-the-end* of this entity" (Heidegger 289). Obviously, Heidegger still insists on the subjective individuality in which the experience of death serves the autonomy of self-consciousness. Just as Derrida points out in his well-known "The Ends of Man," "we can see that Dasein, though *not* man, is nevertheless *nothing other* than man" (Derrida 127). Derrida argues,

It remains that the thinking of Being, the thinking of the truth of Being, in the name of which Heidegger de-limits humanism and metaphysics, remains as thinking *of* man. Man and the name of man are not displaced in the question of Being such as it is put to metaphysics. Even less do they disappear. On the contrary,

at issue is a kind of reevaluation or revolarization of the essence and dignity of man. What is threatened in the extension of metaphysics and technology — and we know the essential necessity that leads Heidegger to associate them one to another — is the essence of man, which here would have to be thought before and beyond its metaphysical determinations. (Derrida 128)

Unlike Heidegger, therefore, Derrida rejects the humanist metaphysics that interrogates the “truth of Being” and proposes a “radical trembling” that comes “from the outside,” which refers to a “linguistic’ relationship,” “or ethnological, economic, political, military, relationships, etc” (Derrida 134-5). In other words, the peril of the concept of man exists in his disseminated situation in the real world.

A genuine representation of the eschatological perspective is found in “Gloomy Soul,” in which the Heideggerian concept “being-unto-death” is invalid: for Yen Chin-shu and his father, death is not a murky conception that can be expected, but a visible fact occurring around them. The distance between “being” and “death” is erased. Real manifestation of numerous deaths disintegrates the meditating, autonomous, even though desperate, subject as Dasein. The Yans are schizophrenic because they cannot concentrate their own consciousness on the rational process of history. The vivid, permeating deaths interrupt the abstract, organic view of human history. Hence the only reality that can be experienced is the reality of death, which does not mean metaphysical contemplation, but the sensible, immediate ruin of subjective history.

The eschatological perspective for Wu Chen-tung, in “The General’s Cenotaph,” is an ironical one. Wu Chen-tung does not regard death as a brilliant summary of his historical past, neither does he exist in a self-conscious anxiety of death. Death interests him as a cultural phenomenon referring to something unrelated to his physical doom. Actually, in the text, his death is never mentioned directly. What denotes his death is his funeral and the celebration of his “posthumous birthday” he visited. Hence death itself becomes trivial, negligible; it turns out to be the source of hackneyed formalities in which nothing is truly significant. His son, Wu Wei-yang, when giving the speech, read emotionally what was written by somebody else and he did not believe. Death, as an ingredient of the general’s paranoia, does not sum up historical equivocalities to an affirmative conclusion but brings history more fragmentary, ridiculous characteristic instead.

In "Gloomy Soul" and "The General's Cenotaph," death is "being-in-the-present," not "being-towards-the-end" in the Heideggerian category. Thus the whole concept of historical time is redefined. History, displaying itself in time, was considered a context of events drawing through past, present, and future. From this point of view, time itself was historical; it was the form in which history should make progress. In Hegelian-Marxian philosophy, "historical time does nothing but reflect the essence of the social totality of which it is the existence" (Althusser 39). This consequent, and basically teleological understanding of relationship of time and history is now futile along with the decline of the experiencing subject. If the historical subject is itself irrational, the experience of history can never be temporally rational. Both "The General's Cenotaph" and "Gloomy Soul," as ahistorical fictions, disarray the progressive, rational development of history and represent time in a genealogical, psychotic way.

In these two stories, past, present, and future are not linear in chronological sequence. But in fact, the narrative structure of "Chao Nan-tung" also disobeys the normal temporal order. Nonetheless, the flashbacks in "Chao Nan-tung" simply indicate the juxtaposition of the weakening reality and the valuable recollection. The degeneration does not signify the necessary retrogression of history; on the contrary, it appears to be recified by the optimal possibility that preserves its truth in the historical memory. Ch'en Ying-chen is far from pessimistic; he insists on his teleological view of history through his narrative form.

For Deleuze and Guattari, the synchronicity of historical representations is based on the non-subjective, depthless human nature, which they call "desire-machine":

In desire-machine everything functions at the same time, but amid hiatuses and ruptures, breakdowns and failures, stalling and short circuits, distances and fragmentations, within a sum that never succeed in bringing its various parts together so as to form a whole. (Deleuze & Guattari 42)

This kind of psychotic experience of historical time distinguishes "The General's Cenotaph" and "Gloomy Soul" from "Chao Nan-tung." The disorder of historical time is the result of the loss of self-conscious subjectivity rather than of the missionary will to rescue the present by conjuring up the past. Wu Chen-tung, in this sense, denies historical time as a form of

development. For him, the absolute synchronicity of history, as a paranoid totality, is self-contradictory. It is self-contradictory because there is no epistemological subject that is historically autonomous and self-sufficient. When he led his old steward "back" to the historical event in the Shanghai of 1932 and let him see fifty Japanese burning out a towel factory,

the general told the old steward promptly: "Actually I wasn't in Shanghai at that time. I came after the war of resistance." But he was unable to explain how he could lead the old steward "back" since the night fire here occurred at the spatiotemporal point where he had never been. "General! You said before that it was to take revenge on you that the Japanese burned out the the factory! Hadn't you knocked off a stinking Japanese monk?" The general denied it immediately lest it associate the stinking monk with the bachelor Wei-yang. He severely retorted: "Bullshit!" And at the same time, the general saw the young, macho self rush into the fire and rescue the third Chinese.... (Chang 1988, 16)

Undoubtedly, Wu Chen-tung's totalized history does not have any truth value. Basically, the chaos of temporal system comes from the chaos of the historical consciousness. Hence the unified subjectivity is irretrievably dissolved into irrational crumbles under the paranoid operation.

Similarly, in "Gloomy Soul," historical time is condensed into the very moment of death. Eschatological images, immediately allegorized in consciousness, abolish the temporal function as progress. In a schizophrenic world, the disorder of time is correspondent to the ruin of historical experience. Certainly, it is the disastrous historical experience—concealed in the legendary myth of the ancestors—that causes schizophrenia. Since there is no difference between myth and modern history, historical time is actually erased: human history is permanently the present, constant structure composed by war, slaughter, and death.

The non-evolutionary history, the history of repetitive disasters, constitutes the ahistorical property of "Gloomy Soul." As a Hungarian scholar says, in postmodern fiction, "[t]here is no progress, only repetition. Accordingly, narrative is not teleological, but circular. [...R]epetition makes dialectical development impossible" (Szegedy-Maszák 47). In "Gloomy Soul," the most evident fact of repetition is the repetition of generations. Not only does the familial schizophrenic power function from generation to

generation, but the basic characteristics of different generations are the same. When Yen Chin-shu is old, he "feels an inseparable intimacy with his father" (Yang 2685). To a large extent, Yen Chin-shu and his father are the same character. Because Yen Chin-shu is characterized as a copy of his father: both are about to die; both participated in patriotic political events that caused disasters; both locked themselves up and refused to see their sons and daughters; both are forced to foresee various deaths of their kith and kin.... The circularity of history alludes the end of historical time, in which the only experience one can achieve is that of death.

The relationship between generations is also a crucial issue in "Chao Nan-tung" and "The General's Cenotaph." Although both stories deal with the conflict, instead of the similarity, between generations, their tendencies are completely different. In fact, neither of them refers to the Oedipus complex positively. In "Chao Nan-tung," there is a discontent with the absence of an Oedipus complex which implies that the sons can never replace the father's position. Freud repeatedly argues that a son's identification with a strong father is necessary for the successful dissolution of the Oedipus complex. Without this identification the son would be doomed to acting out versions of the oedipal triangle in his adult life. In this sense, Chao Er-p'ing and Chao Nan-tung are represented as historically weak and immature. Chao Nan-tung, who lost his mother in childhood, resorts to sensual pleasure as a compensation for maternal love. However, Ch'en Ying-chen's acute observation of social reality does not remain as grim and objective as its criticality requires, but slips into the romantic or even sentimental lament for the loss of historical value.

Unlike "Chao Nan-tung," which affirms the positive value of the old generation, "The General's Cenotaph" is definitely anti-axiological: neither father nor son is regarded as historically significant. The disappearance of the Oedipal mode means nothing but the son's indifference of the import of the father's position. When Wu Chen-tung is leading Wu Wei-yang, his son, to participate in his historical experience, Wu Wei-yang repeatedly emphasizes with a little sarcasm: "That was your history, father." In the conflict between father and son, the father's moral will to "standardize" the son is clearly satirized. Nevertheless, neither does this conflict incline toward the son's psychological will of patricide. Patricide, in which the son supersedes the father, is also a moment when the son becomes the father. As Freud affirms, "I shall be where he was [Wo es war, soll ich werden]" (in Davis 863). The Oedipus mode, therefore, sets up a familial (as well as a social)

norm that forbids desire from being a chaotic flux. To use Deleuze and Guattari's words,

There is no more an individual Oedipus than there is an individual fantasy. Oedipus is a means of integration into the group, in both the adaptive form of its own reproduction that makes it pass from one generation to the next, and in its unadapted neurotic stases that block desire at prearranged impasses. [...] Oedipus depends on this sort of nationalistic, religious, racist sentiment, and not the reverse [...] (Deleuze & Guattari 103-4)

"Anti-Oedipus" is thus based on the irreconcilable *différence* of historical order. Wu Wei-yang's unconcern with his father's generation dissolves Wu Chen-tung's paranoid, despotic desire of totalizing history. History, in "The General's Cenotaph," is represented as a form of rupture that deprives both generations of historical subjectivity.

Metahistory and Metafiction

Neither "Gloomy Soul" nor "The General's Cenotaph" relates complete, organized historical events or vivid, trustworthy historical facts. They seem more interested in exploring the possibility of new narrative modes, in which history is not displayed to be recognized or moralized, but it is shattered, twisted, questioned, distrusted. The only important aspect in these works is the concept of history, or, metahistory. As Fredric Jameson suggests, "the historian should reformulate her vocation — not any longer produce some vivid representation of history 'as it really happened,' but rather to produce the concept of history" (Jameson 180). In his remarkable book, *Metahistory*, Hayden White says,

1) there can be no "proper history" which is not at the same time "philosophy of history"; 2) the possible modes of historiography are the same as the possible modes of speculative philosophy of history; [...] (White xi-xii)

Metafiction, therefore, tends to be a manifestation of metahistory. It is the "estrangement" of historiographic narrative in "Gloomy Soul" and "The General's Cenotaph" that strengthens their metahistorical characteristics. Fictionality, intentionally concealed in traditional fiction, marks metafiction, in which narrative *form* becomes the crucial factor. In both

stories, it is neither historical facts nor political, ethical, religious or emotional truth that they intend to convey. It is the *form* of history that they attempt to mime. Hence, metahistory does not refer to political, ethical, religious or emotional significances extracted from history, but indicates the basic historical frame in which history operates. The mimicry of history is, in a sense, the negation of history, whereas fiction contains its determinant critique of the form of history. Metafiction, according to its non-reflective, non-axiological characteristic, becomes a narrative form of metahistory. Metafiction does not seek for objective truth or didactic effects; it is merely a parody of historical form.

This is also called "postmodern 'historiographic metafiction'—novels that are intensively self-reflexive but that also both re-introduce historical context into metafiction and problematize the entire question of historical knowledge" (Hutcheon 54). "Gloomy Soul" and "The General's Cenotaph," accordingly, by delineating the historical form with different methods, reveal its self-contradiction and ultimate absurdity. In "Gloomy Soul," the historical form is composed in the discourses of death, whereas in "The General's Cenotaph," it is undermined by the death of discourses. In other words, the metafictionality of "Gloomy Soul" derives from its metahistorical narrative of human experience, whereas the metahistoricity of "The General's Cenotaph" derives from its metafictional characteristic of dealing with the narrative self-conflict.

The metahistorical narrative, in "Gloomy Soul," is a parodistic "family romance." Instead of fabricating the "generation gap" or conflicts between father and son, it sets up a historical mode of repetition where all the generations are subjected to the same destiny. The repetition cannot be averted because of the predetermined decree of fate by the ancestors. Here, Yang Chao uses a mythological legend to interpret the schizophrenic supernatural power. Mythologies as human unconsciousness, according to Lévi-Strauss, are meta-structures of the scientific knowledge of reality. In his *Structural Anthropology*, Lévi-Strauss concludes that the mental structures of primitive people who create mythologies are as advanced a form of thought as that of the modern scientists. And, more importantly, as Lévi-Strauss alleges, there is obviously much duplication and repetition in the unfolding of any myth. Mythological knowledge thus becomes the basic, repetitive form of "Gloomy Soul." In this sense, not only the legend in the story, but the whole story is composed as a myth.

Slaughter, as the main theme of the legend in "Gloomy Soul," structures

the whole story as its variations. Metahistory in "Gloomy Soul" is based on this myth, in which killing is the only form that maintains history. Suicides, accidents, etc., even more eccentric or more trivial variations of death, sum up the very form of history along with killing. The density of disasters and the tolerance of human perception constitute the basic narrative tension of metahistory in this story. The circularity of history is realized in the circularity of the narrative tension. The pre-imposed power of seeing death, inherited in familial memory, metaphorizes the inexorable doom of human history. Hence historical inevitability is not simply mortality but the prevalence of absurd death. The metahistory existing in "Gloomy Soul" is the knowledge of absurd death and its unalterability. Filled with repetitive demonstrations of this knowledge embodied in its unrepresentative, meta-fictional narrative, "Gloomy Soul" establishes a metahistory of disasters.

If "Gloomy Soul" attempts to establish a knowledge of disastrous metahistory through its narrative form, then "The General's Cenotaph" intends to decompose knowledge of history by shaking the discursive fundament of history. In so doing, naturally, the ahistorical knowledge is referred to. While "Gloomy Soul" infers the nullity of history by revealing the permeation of the absurdity of death throughout historical experience, "The General's Cenotaph" terminates history by questioning the historical discourse, upon which the history proper is based. If historical discourse is indeterminate, alterable, the whole construction of history would topple. In "The General's Cenotaph," the resultless conflict of historical powers contained in historical discourses signifies the indetermination of historical truth. When he visits his own funeral and sees somebody is going to introduce the reporter to Wu Wei-yang to collect historical materials, Wu Chen-tung becomes angry: "What the hell does he know!" (Chang 1988, 14) However, history is always written by later generations, even if the older generation is not satisfactory. This is the origin of the conflict, and this is also why Wu Chen-tung is absolutely insistent on his own paranoiac totalization of the fragmentary history. Nevertheless, ironically, he has to tolerate the history written by the younger generation. Even though he is mute to anybody else about the history so as to preserve it securely, he is unable to change the historical discourse after his death, however he is irritated. He could, at most, kick down some wreaths in his funeral, but he could not, in the celebration of his "posthumous birthday", prevent his son from misreading "sorrow" [*ai*] as "feeble" [*shuai*] in the memorial address. Neither could he change the words on the cenotaph, which he finally dashed

into pieces with his own head. Thus the whole story constructs a conflict between the historical discourses of the father and of the son. Such an insolvable conflict implies the multivocality of history grounded on different language systems.

Man, for Lacan, is a machine predetermined, linguistically programmed. He alleges, "the law of mankind is the law of language" (Lacan 1966, 150). Since the Lacanian concept of language is a symbolic order, human existence can only be stated in terms of the present language system. To use his phrase, "words create things" (in Bannet 111). By the same token, I would like to argue that human history is dominated by language. History could not be history if not related or thought with language. Without language, history would be only a pure past; it is only through language that history enters memory. Hence history exists, and only exists, in language, which embodies shapes and gestures of history. It is language that creates our historical experience. And it is also language systems, which derive their ideological power from each other, that damage the truth of history.

For Gadamer, historical unity is not a fact about history, but the product of a retrospective narrative detailing the way in which events are interrelated. Historical significance is itself historically situated; it depends upon the perspective from which the events in question are seen. Since history tends to be as internally unified as a text, not only the significance of events, but events themselves, might change with the change in historical perspective. For a historian, Gadamer argues, "interpretation is probably in a sense recreation" (Gadamer 107).

Therefore, in historiographic metafiction, we cannot find "a subject confident of his/her ability to know the past with any certainty. This is not a transcending of history, but a problematized inscribing of subjectivity into history" (Hutcheon 66). Based on this, "[h]istoriographic metafiction [...] keeps distinct its formal autorepresentation from its historical context, and in so doing problematizes the very possibility of historical knowledge, because there is no reconciliation, no dialectic here—just unresolved contradiction" (Hutcheon 55). This contradiction stems from the objective chaos of historical discourses. Since subject is judged to be determined by linguistic system, it is not the master of historical discourse, but, on the contrary, the momentary function of it. Chang Ta-ch'un never believes the truth of history. He alleges in his recent novel *Ta shuo huang chia* [*Great Liars*],

People are in fact forgetful. All of us are transformed by news... We cannot remember seriously. After losing of the memory of the past, we can only fabricate all impressions, feeling and interpretations. (Chang 1989, 4)

That is the reason that Wu Chen-tung frequently "modifies his interpretations of history, fabricates some new memories, and alters some old memories" (Chang 1988, 16). The distrust of the authenticity of historical discourse is the main theme throughout "The General's Cenotaph." If the historical factuality is essentially based on the present text, then there are no true facts at all, but only facts as discourse.

After he hears his son Wu Wei-yang, at the celebration of his "posthumous birthday", mentions his wake [*shou ling*] for his wife without eating anything, he himself becomes suspicious. He has to ask his old steward,

"Come on, tell me, did I wake for her?"

The old steward hesitatingly answers, "It, it seemed you didn't!"

"But I still remember—"

"You really did if you say that, all right?"

The general merely says "uh-huh", and asks again, "Now tell me, did I eat?"

The old steward is struck dumb for a second and props up his audiphone: "What? What did you say?"

"I said, did I eat?"

"You did!" says the steward, "You ate everything I cooked! And drank wine to get rid of cold."

"Well, that was weird!" says the general, "Didn't I wake without eating?"

The key word in this passage is what the steward says: "You really did if you say that." The steward does not insist on what he thinks the fact is. Neither does he care what history actually is. For him, history has no authenticity: the only trace of history remains in the historical discourse.

According to Gadamer, any historical writing includes the author's prejudice stemming from his predetermined cultural situation. Gadamer never goes too far. His concept of "fusion of horizons" does not reject historical facts as a part of the recognition of history. More radical opinions fight against objective truth of historical facts. Carl Becker, an American

historian, said at the beginning of this century, "the facts of history do not exist for any historian until he has created them" (Becker 525). Hayden White also asserts,

to construct a verbal model of the historical process, or some part of it, which, by virtue of its status as a linguistic artifact, can be broken down into the levels of lexicon, grammar, syntax and semantic. If I proceed in this way, I am permitted to assert that different historians stress different aspects of the same historical historical field, the same set or sequence of events, because they actually see different objects in that field. (White 274)

Since historical factuality is only a function of the historical discourse, we can infer that there is no historical discourse that contains, in a traditional sense, historical truth. In Barthes's words, "historical discourse is essentially a product of ideology, or rather of imagination" (in Doctorow 24). In his introduction to Chang Ta-ch'un's *Ssu-hsi yu kuo* [Ssu-hsi's Anxiety about the Country] (the book including "The General's Cenotaph"), Chan Hung-chih uses "language is domination" and "truth is falsity" to conclude the characteristic of Chang's fiction.

Calvino maintains that "the whole struggle of literature is in fact an effort to escape from the confines of language" (Calvino 77). Chang Ta-ch'un's strategy, in "The General's Cenotaph," is to undermine the ideological monopoly of historical discourses by manifesting its inconstancy, its rupture, its indetermination. As metafiction, "The General's Cenotaph" narrates a self-negated story. Its narrative form implies the metahistory which, grounded on various historical discourses, contains neither truth nor factuality.

In his *Pagan Rudiments* [*Rudiments païens*], Jean-François Lyotard considers the "manner of speaking" [*façon de parler*] the crucial issue of truth. Like Foucault, who attempts to alter the structure of knowledge that calibrates the human world as power, Lyotard intends to reveal the power of language by eliminating what he calls "grand narratives" [*grands récits*]: "We no longer have recourse to the grand narratives — we can resort neither to the dialectic of Spirit nor even to the emancipation of humanity as a validation for postmodern scientific discourse" postmodernity gives legitimacy to knowledge only by means of disintegrated, indeterminate, paradoxical, paralogical narratives.

As metafiction, "Gloomy Soul" and "The General's Cenotaph" establish narratives that suggest the termination of teleological discourses. They reject ideological tendencies that always require a narrative of totalization. Hence the ultimate historical truth becomes illusory: the only truth, in the experience of eschatological history and the ruin of discursive historiography, is the truth of illusion. In "Gloomy Soul," the diealistic teleology is reversed to ceaseless exhibitions of disastrous reality in the schizophrenic experience. Metahistory, for Yang Chao, exists in the narrative of anomalous deaths; the only vision of history (both in the past and in the future) becomes a succession of dying moments. On the other hand, "The General's Cenotaph" destroys the "grand narratives" by disclosing the fissure of historical discourses. In its self-contradictory, self-ironicized narrative, the validity of the ultimate historical truth pursued by the paranoiac desire of totalization is undermined. Thus, in fact, the metahistory is, in these two stories, a history of absolute absurdity: whether as a strangling, everlasting perception of aberrant deceases or as ludicrous, arbitrary, contradictory fragments of historical discourses.

Notes

1. In regard to the abundance of eschatological phenomena, only the mainland poet Ou-yang Chiang-ho's lyrical work "Hsüan kuan" [The Suspended Coffins] could be the equivalent of "Gloomy Soul": "Not dying from the death of knotting cords, the death of drowning babies, the death of incest, the death of nonsensical splits of diagrams, the death of black-yellow blood thousands of years ago. All these deaths exist along with the living, delimit the land to reside perpetually, just like the red inflammation in bone-joints, and also like the veins of fishy smell that cannot be exorcized from the sap of blood. You, survivor, what can you succeed to but death?" (Ou-yang 1989, 229)
2. The romantic sublimation of death can also be found in one of Ch'en Ying-chen's earlier stories, "Chiang chün tsu" [A Race of Generals]. At the end of the story, "he" and "she" commit suicide together to "escape" from the dirt of the world. As "she" claim right before death, "Let it be the next life. Then we'll both be pure as babes!" (Ch'en 1986, 81)

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