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Article

The Revenge Narratives and Community of Memories in the Drama *A Hawk*

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Abstract

This article seeks to understand the multiple journeys of the main character, Wang Genjo, as a narratives of the return to home in the drama *A Hawk* and to examine the rhetorical strategy through which the ethics of memory that appears in this process are requested by the audience. In order to understand *A Hawk* as a multiple narratives, I present the relationship between the victim and the perpetrators in this narratives as a confrontation between memory and forgetting, and seek to explain the ethics of memory entailed by this relationship. What is particularly problematic about this drama is the method of revenge of the victim, Wang Genjo, who visits the perpetrators and does not repay the evil he received or show his wounds and project them onto the perpetrators, but instead directs his revenge toward himself to generate the energy to transform himself. Ultimately, this energy acts as a comprehensive force that connects the misaligned relationship between the perpetrator and victim. In this plural narratives, the problem of memory is important for Wang Genjo in exacting revenge. Considering that Wang Genjo's personal history drives the drama, memory becomes an important device for Wang Genjo to recall past events. Memory is an activity composing the past. This activity involves the past-present relationship, not just the past. Thus, the past in memory is inevitably reconstructed under the influence of the current personal and social situations one faces. In the process of remembering past events, the attitudes of the victim, Wang Genjo, and the perpetrators appear differently. Wang Genjo asks the perpetrators to remember the incident, which the perpetrators ask Wang Genjo to forget. The audience thereby gains sympathy with the historical events that inevitably create the boundaries between memory and forgetting, and looks forward to the artist's new method of epistemological transformation that allows them to cross these boundaries. This article concludes by noting that this method leads to the formation of a community of memories.

Keywords : Drama, *A Hawk*, revenge narratives, narratives of the return to home, memory ethics, memory community

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Introduction

This article aims to understand the main character Wang Genjo's journey of revenge in the drama *A Hawk* as a narratives of the return to home, and to examine what rhetorical strategies the ethics of memory requested in this process are embodied.

A Hawk is set in Manchuria after the Sino-Japanese War in the early 1900s. The main character, Wang Genjo, lost his family to five Japanese Kwantung Army members stationed in Manchuria in 1932 killed all the people in his small village and turned the village into a swamp. The lone survivor, he abandoned his real name, Wang Seogae, for Wang Genjo, and moved to Yokohama, Japan, where he lives alone running a store selling Chinese goods. In 1953, 21 years after leaving Manchuria, Wang Genjo meets one of the Kwandong Army soldiers by chance and decides to take his revenge, and then visits the houses of the rest of the soldiers one by one.

A Hawk clearly presents the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim in the context of historical events, and its narrative develops with an emphasis on the revenge of the victim Wang Genjo. The dictionary meaning of "revenge" is "an act of repaying the damage suffered by an individual or group that caused resentment." Aristotle explains revenge in the *Nicomachean Ethics* as a driving force to punish anger, and in this regard Seneca rewords Aristotle's definition as "the desire to repay the suffering of anger" (J.-S. Lee, 2015, p. 186).

Accordingly, welfare makes the victims of suffering from victims and perpetrators and perpetrators. A plurality of victims in the main chain of events requires an asymmetric relationship with the perpetrator. In this process, the strong anger of victims leads to the perpetrator. This act does not immediately correspond to the attack, but it is not the same as soon as a delay. However, a plurality of methods does not respond strongly to the perpetrator, unlike the general plurality of methods.

Wang Genjo visits the homes of the perpetrators one by one, and does not attack the perpetrators or show them his wounds and project

them onto him. He does not question the reasons for the crimes they committed or ask for an apology, but only the truth about what happened. He demands that they remember and testify about the incident. The relevance of revenge, memory, and testimony reflects the legacy of Auschwitz, which is still called in its approach to measurable destructiveness. According to Giorgio Agamben, the subject of testimony is a witness to the case, who in the case of Auschwitz was facing death. However, Wang Genjo demands that the perpetrator of the death be the subject of testimony, rather than he himself who witnessed the death. This is to experience the victim's pain as the perpetrator confesses and to tell the truth of the day they know.

Why, then, did he have to choose this revenge? To answer this question, this article examines Wang's visit to the perpetrators' houses to explore the relationship between the perpetrator and victims.

In Chapter 2, we focus on why the author uses the space of home as the background in embodying the ethics of memory requested in the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim. There is no place called a house that can give unique meaning, experience, and value to Wang Genjo, who lost both his family and his village to the Japanese army. The author wants to provide a specific center point for him to return to, after he has lost his base and had to wander. Therefore, the journey to the perpetrators' homes for revenge is presented as a process of visiting their homes to evoke the memories of the homes that were lost. In Chapters 3 and 4, we will explore how the author embodies the perpetrator's ethics about past history through the images of the perpetrators who refuse to remember the past and confess. In this imagery, particularly in the narrative composition of remembering and forgetting, the focus is on the dramatic rhetoric built to cross this boundary.

This article will analyze the stage structure, characterization, and character composition by examining the play *A Hawk* (written by Kim Do-young, directed by Lee Joon-woo, played from October 28 to November 8, 2020) at Namsan Arts Center on November 4, 2020, and the playbook based on it. Therefore, we will focus on the process of

forming a community of memories by examining how rhetorical strategies that require a new ethics of memory beyond revenge are embodied: “Communities should be constantly understood as traditional communities, narrative communities, value communities, and solidarity communities in a strong sense, so that they can develop effects that promote identity” (Rosa et al., 2017, p. 91).

Revenge Narratives and narratives of the return to home

The stage space of *A Hawk* undergoes many changes as the narrative progresses. The audience can easily understand the change in the stage because the stage follows Wang Genjo’s journey of revenge, as shown in the stage instruction: “Throughout the entire development process, the image of Wang Genjo moving toward the next house is that of someone who has to go through life with a vengeful spirit” (D.-Y. Kim, 2020, p. 30).

As Wang Genjo visits the houses of the perpetrators, the stage changes accordingly. In the playbook, the subtitles are as follows. Chapter 1. Operation name: Ichigo; Chapter 2. Operation name: Impal; Chapter 3. Operation name: Barbarossa; Chapter 4. Lily; and Chapter 5. Wang Seogae. The locations are indicated in the instructions. “Place: Japan, Inside Different Japanese Houses” (D.-Y. Kim, 2020, p. 30).

The sign that symbolizes the house is the stage space and a wooden box belonging to that space. As noted, the stage space changes four times to show the interiors of different Japanese houses. With each change of scene, only tables, chairs, and a few props are placed in the actual stage space. The space gains meaning by the actions and lines of the actors and auditory signs. For example, for the dramatic location of Chapter 1, Operation Name Ichigo, the audience knows that the place is a private library through conversations between the characters, books on the table, and the sounds of Japanese *enka* songs coming from the radio. The dramatic location of Operation Impal in Chapter 2 is embodied as a house by Impal standing in front of a full-length mirror trying to

tie a bow tie, a Western-style black tailcoat hanging next to it, and music playing from a radio. In addition, the fact that the music is about war suggests that the drama takes place not long after the end of World War II. The dramatic location of Operation Barbarossa in Chapter 3 is also embodied as a house through Hanako's costume, Hanako's cleaning gestures and her movements, and the assumption that Hanako's son's room is under the stage. The dramatic location of Operation Lily in Chapter 4 is a hospital room with a cot, Lily lying on the cot, and a small table. For Lily, who had long been living in her hospital room, this place has the meaning of home.

The old wooden box carried by Wang Genjo is also an important symbol representing the meaning of the house. Wang Genjo first appears on stage with this box containing Chinese goods. After meeting Ichigo by chance at a store, Wang Genjo delivers Chinese goods to his house once a month. He delivers the ordered items to him, and as he tries to leave, struggling to swallow his resentment at Ichigo's disrespect for the Chinese as a Japanese, Ichigo suddenly sees the wooden box and tells him that it is old. Hearing that, Wang Genjo begins to wonder why he had not asked about the wooden box during the past nine months and why he asked today.

In this scene, Wang Genjo's face expresses anger related to the meaning of the home, for 21 years before he made a wooden coffin to bury his dead daughter. However, he could not bury his young daughter in a coffin, so he brought the box to Yokohama without using it. This wooden box became his daughter's home after death. Additionally, if we understand Wang Genjo's journey in terms of the house as intended to find the perpetrators, the truth he wants them to reveal is where his wife is buried so that he might arrange a proper burial for her.

Wang Genjo cannot live at home with his wife and daughter, but must live alone in a shop in Yokohama. His situation, which does not involve a house, is expressed as an inclination of the stage that creates a height difference between the front and back that allows the characters to move up, down, left, and right with maximum mobility. However,

this difference is not so great as to distract attention from the movements of the characters. This stage has a symbolic meaning beyond its function. In Fischer-Lichte's words, the stage space is a "symbol for spatial symbols" (Fischer-Lichte, 1992, p. 56). The "slope" image does not produce any meaning as a symbol, but has self-reference as the image itself.

Because the slope does not present a horizontal or vertical image, it indicates a dramatic situation such as a certain instability or crack through the materiality of its instability. This stage symbol reveals that the lives of the perpetrators at home are not as stable as Wang Genjo's. For example, in Nakano's house, the relationship between Hanako and her son is embodied as cut off through the difference in depth between the underground and ground stages. However, although Hanako's house is a space without family ties, they live in the middle of the stage, that is, the house. This point emphasizes Wang Genjo's miserable situation through its contrast with Genjo's situation around the edge of the stage.

In the image of Wang Genjo walking along the left and right ends of the stage carrying a wooden box, the audience perceives his deep grief through the image of this slope and the image of anxiety combined with the actor's movements.

The Confrontation Between Remembering and Forgetting

Wang Genjo meets the perpetrators and asks them to remember what they had done in Manchuria 21 years before. The events of that day are embodied in auditory symbols, as shown in the instructions below.

We hear the cries of several horses from outside. It's the sound of a carriage arriving, and at the same time it's from the past 21 years ago. The sound of the horse gets louder and louder, and it's high enough to fill the room. Ichigo and Genjo. The two seem to be standing at the center of the horses. (28)

- The "cry of several horses" symbolizes the five Kwandong soldiers

and the events they perpetrated. The Kwandong Army killed a young girl, and when the villagers protested, a unit of their soldiers exterminated them from horseback. With the crying of the horses they rode embodied in the house of Ichigo, one of the soldiers, Wang Genjo began his revenge. In other words, this sound evokes the will to recall the memories that he had sought to forget, even changing his name to Wang Genjo, and functions as a force driving his revenge. “Sound broadens the sense of space” and thus helps to “express the spatial experience dramatically” (Lee & Koo, 1995, p. 30), emphasizing Wang Genjo’s miserable situation and evoking his impression on the audience.

• The sound of music on the radio in the other perpetrators’ homes has the opposite meaning to the sound of words. Among the perpetrators, Impal, Hanako, and Hanako’s sons, all except Lily listen to music. Fischer-Lichte explains that music is never used for special functions related to context as absolute music, but serves to produce other symbols. Therefore, the uncertainty of music allows it to function completely as a symbolized symbol (Fischer-Lichte, 1992, p. 123). Thus:

- ① A Japanese-style interior. Operation Ichigo sits at a table, drinks tea, and listens to music on the radio. Wang Genjo bows down, places the chest he brought on Ichigo’s table. Japanese *enka* still plays on the radio, and the music is calm, quiet and serene. (D.-Y. Kim, 2020, p. 7)
- ② Impal wears a Western black tailcoat. He turns on the radio on the table. The music is quite different from Ichigo’s. It’s like a magnificent, huge, fluctuating swamp. Impal moves his arms vigorously, as if conducting while listening to the radio. (33)
- ③ A cheerful and loud music sound comes from my son’s room. (60)

The meaning of musical sound in the above quotation can be inferred from the conversation between Hanako and Wang Genjo about her son.

Hanako: Do you know why he listens to that? It's because he doesn't want to listen to me. Do you know why I listen to it now? He's doing that because he thinks his mother is putting her hair down and apologizing. When I see the music turned off..

He's probably got his ears on the door by now. Why aren't you leaving? I'm sure you know by now that you weren't an uninvited guest. Do you understand me? Don't talk about it in front of a child who's spying with his ears up. (D.-Y. Kim, 2020, p. 65)

As can be seen from the quote above, Hanako's son listens to music because he does not want to listen to his mother. Hanako's son listening to music is similar to the perpetrators listening to the radio. For example, Ichigo immediately raises the radio volume after hearing Wang Genjo's words that the wooden box was 21 years old. When Wang Genjo visits the perpetrators and asks them for the truth of the day, they tell them to forget that day. They say to Wang Genjo, "Don't go backwards, go forward," "Look ahead, not in the past," "With personal matters," "Why is that so important?," "It can't be helped," "It can't be helped, can it?"

Wang Genjo forced Ichigo to write a confession and asked him to recall the past. Confession is the self-confession of one's sins or faults in front of others. Ricoeur delved into the "phenomenon of confessing to sin" and presented the concept of evil phenomenologically. According to this discussion, confession becomes a symbol that reveals the reality of an "evil" through "confession of sin." Since Wang Genjo showed Ichigo's confession to Impal, Hanako, and Lily, the meaning of the confession has expanded, and this confession is a symbol that reveals the evil performed by five Kwandong soldiers.

The problem with the evil they have done is that it is "evil based on reason." This evil was done in terms of their perceptions. The symbol that clearly shows this is Nakano's letter to Hanako. Hanako walks around

the table after Wang Genjo leaves, opens a drawer, takes out an old package of letters, and brings them to the table. She reads a letter slowly, scrambling through the letters.

Hanako: This is what has been reported previously. Murder of all because of a mass attack by hunters on the northeast plains of Manchuria. To prevent recurrence in the future, please approve the conquest of Manchurian hunters. The request for subjugation was approved, and the choice of method was free. This was our belief, our soulmates. No more hunters came to protest. Anything that stands in our way (short silence) can be killed. The Empire of Japan approved everything. Thus, Japan will win. I'm going back home. (D.-Y. Kim, 2020, p. 69)

As the quote suggests, the five Kwandong soldiers asked their superiors for permission to subjugate Manchurian hunters, which was approved. It is not clear from the letter alone who was the subject of subjugation. The relationship only confirms that the massacre was committed by someone and that someone else was subjected to it. Nevertheless, it is clear that the Japanese government and the five Kwandong soldiers divided the people into our side and the enemy's side, and targeted Manchurian hunters. The indiscriminate slaughter was carried out by the army under collective prejudice, resulting from the distinction between our group and other groups, the degradation of the other groups, and an authoritarian and uniform culture. The Japanese sword that Impal used to cut the backs of the necks of the Chinese prisoners symbolizes Japan's collective prejudice.

Wang Genjo experienced and recognized the "evil" resulting from collective prejudice. However, the perpetrators do not correctly acknowledge the consequences of their prejudices. For example, Impal perceives the act of evil as military spirit as symbolized in a medal. Therefore, the perpetrators say that they are not the subject of this evil, and that they are only one of the "war criminals." The perpetrators do not make any effort to clearly recognize or to reflect on the consequences of the

war waged by Japan. Still, they discriminate against the Chinese living in Japan, despise their culture, and exploit them.

All that is important to the perpetrators is to continue their lives in a reality devastated by defeat in war. Their act of forgetting the past is embodied in Hanako and Lily's bodies. Hanako, having finished reading the letter, says, "I become terribly cold, put the letters on the table in a drawer, and squeeze a letter in my hand" (D.-Y. Kim, 2020, p. 70). Hanako's eating of the letter itself is a symbolic symbol of her firm will to forget the memory of the day. Similarly, Lily lies on the bed in the hospital room with hemiplegia, and is in a position to do nothing. Wang Genjo rubs his senseless legs and asks him to tell him where he has buried his wife. After some time, Lily tells Wang Genjo that he gave his wife's body to the hound as food. Wang Genjo listens to him and shoots him in the leg with the gun he gave him. Lily says he is not sick, laughing loudly after being shot. Thus, the sins they have committed in the past as perpetrators do not hurt them at all. The memories have already been forgotten by the perpetrators, like Lily's senseless legs.

Their way of life, which seeks to maintain the "present life," serves to make the perpetrator forgetting the past a symbol. Ichigo, who teaches literature at a university, is "satisfied with this life created after the war" (D.-Y. Kim, 2020, p. 26). Impal was decorated as a war hero and currently serves in the Foreign Ministry. On the day Wang Genjo visited, Impal was putting on a bowtie and tailcoat, saying he had been invited to the Emperor's birthday. He said, "Denno Heyba Kanja-i! Denno Heyba Kanja-i!" (Long live His Majesty the Emperor), wishing as an imperial subject for Japan's victory. Third, Wang Genjo visited Nakano, but he had died long before. Wang Genjo asks his wife Hanako to show him a letter he sent her from Manchuria. Wang Genjo shows Ichigo's confession and tells her to let him know if there is anything in her husband's letter that mentions what he did in Manchuria. However, Hanako says that she is currently living in the ruins of war, and he does not ask her to pay for her husband's sins. The last visit is to Lily, who is half-bodied. His wife left him, and he endured such a miserable life that

it was difficult for him to continue living day by day. The perpetrators thus refuse to comment on the past and push Wang Genjo, who came to them, out of their space.

The Ethics of Memory and the Community of Memory

Wang Genjo constantly asks the perpetrators to recall the past, compelling them to remember the day for him, who suffered from their brutality. This leads this drama to the perspective of Wang Genjo, reminding the audience that the victim's role is important.

The duty to remember has an ethical character. We must understand memory at an ethical level:

However, the argument that memory has an ethical dimension sounds unusual at first glance. This is because the various aspects of remembering and forgetting are uncoordinated and therefore seem ethically neutral. However, memory is bound to take on the character of ethics because it is combined with internal states such as concern and interest. Naturally, it is an ethical attitude to worry about or ignore someone. Although the core of normative ethics is the distinction between right and wrong, it can be said to be an inner attitude of concern and interest. Concern is a very high level of ethical attitude. The ethics of memory are not only related to "what do we remember?" but also to "who has the duty to remember?" (Park, 2020, p. 215)

Wang Genjo's journey of revenge requires the perpetrators to remember their massacre of the Chinese. Thus, the duty of the perpetrator to remember plays a role in expanding the victim's own memory to an area of joint memory by allowing the perpetrator to remember it together with the victim. This process of hollowing out memory is the ethical dimension of memory.

A Hawk dramatically performs the task of embodying this memory

ethics as a community of memories in the last of the five chapters. Chapter 5 is titled “Wang Seogae,” Wang Genjo’s past name, unlike Chapters 1, 2, and 4, named after the operations and perpetrators. Therefore, the dramatic stage in Chapter 5 is presented as a vast meadow in Manchuria 21 years before. The important symbol in Chapter 5 is the crying of a hawk. The hawk’s cry first appeared on stage after Wang Genjo visited Nakano’s house.

An empty stage

Hanako leaves the stage.

Then, the son’s door opens a little and then closes again.

Wang Genjo walks again after the horses.

Then a hawk’s cry can be heard in the distance.

Wang Genjo stops and looks up into the sky. (70)

As can be seen from the quote above, after Hanako leaves the stage, she hears the sound of her son’s door opening slightly and then closing again, followed by a hawk’s cry filling the stage space. The fact that the tightly closed door opens and closes means that the past can be forgotten by the son of the post-war generation. However, the sound of the hawk changes its meaning again, as shown in Chapter 5.

The stage is empty and full like the vast meadows of Manchuria.

Wang Seogae is standing alone looking up at the sky.

He’s dressed like a catcher and has a long gun on his shoulder.

Then is heard the cry of a hawk

Wang Seogae turns around and looks at the sky along the direction of the hawk’s rotation.

At that moment, Wang Seogae smiles happily as if he were a hunter 21 years before. (89)

The symbol to note in the quote above is “the cry of a hawk.” If the sound of the horse embodies the tragedy that erased the small hunter village where he lived 21 years ago, the sound of the hawk’s cry embodies

the image of the hunter Wang Genjo happy before the tragedy.

The hawk's cry is a sign that asks Wang Genjo to find the final truth. The title of the drama is *A Hawk* and the English title is "A Hawk." As Lily said, the hawk returns to avenge the hunter; she comes to avenge Wang Genjo. Wang Genjo's revenge is not retribution, however, such as punishment of or retaliation against the perpetrators, but rather the demand that the perpetrators acknowledge their past. A hawk came to Wang Genjo to demand that he acknowledge his past.

Wang Genjo could not come forward when his hometown was destroyed, but secretly hid and watched the events. Wang Genjo did not experience that day as the victims did, remaining a bystander. However, he is remembered by a hawk who came to him. The fact that he remembers appears as a "smile." This smile goes beyond acknowledging the past to give meaning to the truth by restoring the memories of the past when Wang Seogae was the happiest. This method of giving meaning is similar to the method of remembering the hawk with a red cloth when it leaves the hawk's legs and returns, as he did when he trained the hawk. In other words, the red cloth is a sign that the hunter remembers the hawk, and at the same time, it is the hunter's wish to return to the hawk, symbolizing the promise the hunter makes with the hawk. Therefore, the future memory that Wang Genjo will realize as Wang Seogae is, in the words of Deleuze, "the ability to promise and the memory that functions in the future" (1962/2001, p. 238): "This memory is a memory toward the future in that it remembers to return to itself in the future" (Deleuze, 1962/2001, p. 238).

The memory he seeks is where his wife was buried, and the memories of determining to bring his wife and daughter to Manchuria. It is a promise to himself. Wang Genjo in the memory of making that promise is Wang Seogae, a hunter who always kept a hawk.

The symbol of the hawk is ultimately the journey of Wang Genjo's recovery as Wang Seogae, and it demands that he resolve the problem of his identity. In this process, one's presence always entails the need for the existence of others. Individuals, who are social beings, can only

form their identities in relationships with people. Ultimately, his revenge is to remember his past and even the community of hunting villages in his past. In other words, as Wang Genjo asks the perpetrators for their memory, the villagers in that memory can exist again. Memory is “not just a storage of past facts, but a continuing activity of the imagination that constitutes them” (Park, 2020, p. 215).

The memory of this promise is also a way for Wang Genjo to escape his sense of guilt, surviving alone of a group of hunters protesting the Japanese. Therefore, ultimately, Wang Genjo’s memory serves as a force to recall the “community of memory” by remembering the dead villagers as well as his own identity. Karatani Kojin claimed, “The mourning for the dead is not to think of the dead in particular, but to reestablish a community that has become unstable due to the absence of the person, and to forget and deport the person” (Kojin, 2000/2008, p. 123). According to this discussion, Wang Genjo’s method of memory serves as an opportunity to form a “community of memory” by strengthening community.

Conclusions

This article examined how Wang Genjo’s journey of revenge in the drama *A Hawk* is imagined as a community of memories. To this end, *A Hawk* was understood as a revenge narratives, and the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator in this narratives was viewed as a confrontation between remembering and forgetting. While explaining the ethics of memory requested in this relationship, we further examined how this ethics can be practiced by forming a community of memory.

To understand the strategy of the revenge narratives, this article focused on the methods of the revenge that the victim Wang Genjo pursued and on understanding the problem of memory that activated this revenge. Above all, this article started from the view that the activity of memory involves not only the past but also the past-present relationship, and is an imaginary activity that constructs the past toward the future. Based

on this, this article examined how rhetorical strategies that require the ethics of new memories were presented by analyzing the stage structure, character shape, and character composition of *A Hawk*.

This article attempted to reveal the rhetorical method of *A Hawk*, which dramatically resolves past problems that have not been resolved historically. In Chapter 4, as Wang Genjo's "duty to remember" required of the perpetrator was examined from an ethical level, we considered the points of interpretation that the author ultimately arranged to ask the audience for ethics as a community of memories.

As described above, this article shows that *A Hawk* takes the dramatic strategy of embracing Wang Genjo in the community by embodying an imagined community of memories that can comfort Wang Genjo as he suffers from the memory of terrible events.

In Chapter 2, the stage space was analyzed to confirm that Wang Genjo was currently in a precarious situation, as if unstable and cracked. Chapter 3 analyzed the dramatic reality in which the victim's pain persists from the past because the perpetrators' collective bias continues by grasping the composition of the characters of Wang Genjo and the perpetrators as a confrontation between remembering and forgetting the past. In Chapter 4, the "duty to remember" that Wang Genjo required of the perpetrators was examined from an ethical perspective as we considered the points of interpretation that the author ultimately arranged for the audience of ethics as a community of memories.

This article shows that *A Hawk* takes the dramatic strategy of embracing Wang Genjo into the community by embodying an imagined community of memories that can comfort him in his terrible memory of historical events.

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