INTRODUCTION

The Captive and the Fugitive

Memory is not only the physiological faculty of the human brain that records what we perceive with senses, but a vessel that contains our understanding of histories and cultures. With memory, we look to certain phases in the past, usually in an attempt to represent what might be called "truths"—the absolute, the unmovable, the "captive." But at the same time, memory is fluid, changeable, and "fugitive," easily transmuting into something beyond the scope of "what really happened" and "what we know." Note that, applied to memory, the terms captive and fugitive seem like transfers from a world of warfare or enslavement. That is, we think of "captive" and "fugitive" primarily in the realm of action, and only secondarily as terms to do with thoughts and memories. Captive memory comes *by analogy* from the human status of being captive: likewise, fugitive memory *by analogy* from the human activity of fleeing from or escaping capture. As a narrative of experience, memory might conform to linearity, logic, and coherence, but sometimes it can be hurled into a whirlpool of fragmentation and chaos, disrupting our perception of ourselves and of the external world. Memory is also profoundly affective. It has an extended connotation of nostalgia, a retrospection of a better, more innocent state that has ebbed into the past, evoking a mixture of relived joy, longing, and loss. But memory can generate fear, anger, repulsion, and even abjection, pointing to the dark passages in our past lives from which we have striven to divert our consciousness. Moreover, memory transgresses the boundary between the self and the other; it can be infectious, not confined to the individual and the private, and become a shapeless legacy that constructs the collective identity of a people or even a nation, or a collective trauma that haunts present and future generations. In literature and art, memory sometimes challenges anthropocentric frameworks: animals can play crucial roles in memory narrative, blurring the division between the human and the nonhuman.

Behind much twentieth- and twenty-first-century literature of memory lies the enduring influence of Proust. The very terms captive and fugitive are peculiarly associated with Proust's long novel about remembering back through time. That said, since Proust's death just over a century ago (1922) there have

been important handlings of memory relating to circumstances of trauma, disaster and momentous cultural change, very different in kind from the "lost" or "fugitive" time (*temps perdu*) that Proust set out meticulously to "re-capture" (*retrouver*). Many works of creative writing, of history, of philosophy and of criticism have tackled forms of memory (and "postmemory") that derive from slavery, from the Holocaust, from colonialism, or other events or periods of momentous cultural change. Mostly the memories in question are premised upon violence, either between differing societies, or differing classes, ethnic groups or races within a single society. Psychogeography—the legacy memories that cling to places and spaces—has frequently figured as a special case. This is because psychogeography is all about how the past goes on haunting the present in locations where important events occurred. That the past does haunt the present in such ways is usually because it has never been exorcised. For violent events in particular to be exorcised might mean their disappearing altogether from history and from its associated cultural memory. Marx and Nietzsche both, in their very different ways, thought that the nineteenth century was so over-burdened with dark and un-exorcised historical memory that it would be a good thing if a state of forgetting could cleanse culture of some of the worst from the past. Marx memorably and famously opined that "the tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living" (245-46). Nietzsche in his compelling text "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life"—incidentally a text on memory as well as history, and indeed on their interconnectedness—suggested in his opening that we envy cows because they have no memory, hence no historical sense: he had preceded this by admitting,

> I am here attempting to look afresh at something of which our time is rightly proud—its cultivation of history—as being injurious to it, a defect and deficiency in it; because I believe, indeed, that we are all suffering from a consuming fever of history and ought at least to recognize that we are suffering from it. (60)[1]

---

[1] "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life" is the second chapter of Nietzsche's *Untimely Meditations*.

However afflicted the nineteenth century was from an overload of history or cultural memory, according to these reckonings of Marx and Nietzsche, the present age of the twenty-first century possibly retains *too little* of either, or of their interconnectedness. (A book-length study would be not enough to give all the reasons why our times, unlike Nietzsche's account of his own, may lack sufficient "cultivation of history" for our needs and uses.) And yet, precisely in our own times there is far too much at stake for us to afford to forget the worst that humanity has been capable of. To forget history is to risk repeating all that is most terrible from it. We know this from acute political experience of events in the recent world. As a truth, it is deeply confirmed also from the teachings of such figures as Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno. Our task is more than ever to *re-capture* and then *keep captive* what occurred in the most momentous and terrible conjunctures of our history; to go on teaching it to successive generations (Adorno was adamant about the importance of education[2]); and to prevent any of that carefully re-assembled history from being forgotten or ever again allowed to *run fugitive*.

Here are some of the philosophical questions we face and tasks we should immerse ourselves in attempting. Foremost question: how should we mine the deeper past and interrelate our own with others' lives? By way of answer, Pierre Nora in a preface to the English language version of his *Realms of Memory* (1996) wrote of aims to think "in multiple voices . . . a history less interested in . . . 'what actually happened' than in its perpetual reuse and misuse . . . as the overall structure of the past within the present" (xxiv). We must consider a palimpsest of lives; what Marianne Hirsch and Ross Chambers think of as transmission of "postmemory" between generations. We need to ask persistently the question that Chambers poses: what does it mean to recollect ancestral experience? Chambers means by this the imprint of events that the living have not undergone, but that persist as a legacy of the joys or tribulations of our forbears. A sense of guilt inhibits the living, preventing them from grieving for their dead. In suggesting that this is so, Chambers and Hirsh had principally the Holocaust in mind. But their formulations are relevant to other

---

[2] Theodor W. Adorno emphasizes this in "Education after Auschwitz" (191-204), an essay collected in *Critical Models*.

legacies; whether slavery, the persecution of first nations' people by intruders, or (thinking more of our current times) of weaker by stronger nations.[3]

Lots of people alive today have *not* experienced the guilt or sufferings of forbears. Indeed, as Hirsch herself acknowledges, there are deadly risks in such postmemory; not just the threat but the certainty of being haunted by what's unresolved. What happens in other words when "you bump into a rememory that belongs to someone else," to quote Toni Morrison's exquisite definition of the conundrum from *Beloved* (36), voiced by her main character Sethe? Marianne Hirsch also stresses the importance of projection, identification and mourning - whatever factors of denial people may introject to stave off the pains or even terrors of such ancestral postmemory.

The articles collected in this special issue are the fruit of a collaboration between *The Wenshan Review of Literature and Culture* and the 2022 Taipei Tech International Literature Conference on fugitive and captive memory. They reflect and explore the multilayered nature of memory delineated above. The first article, Tran Thi Thuc's "Memory of War and Trauma in Bao Ninh's *The Sorrow of War* and Naoki Hyakuta's *The Eternal Zero*," addresses traumatic memories from the perspectives of Vietnamese and Japanese soldiers and focuses on the mental impact of war and the therapeutic power of literature. Tran first surveys the development of trauma theory, identifying the nature of war trauma as uncontrollable and repetitive, with reality-distorting hallucinations and nightmares as a result of the catastrophic events experienced by soldiers. Trauma narratives in literature testify to the persistent impact of past events on those soldiers who survive the war: they have not only participated in fierce combat but have become the witness of sufferings and deaths of their comrades, family, and other civilians. Action and perception are combined to precipitate traumatic memories that are irremovably imprinted upon their subsequent mental lives. Based on this understanding, Tran then examines Bao Ninh's 1991 novel *The Sorrow of War*, which centers on Kien, a soldier tasked to collect the bones of his fallen comrades after the war. Facing this postwar mission and recalling his experience in combat, Kien is haunted by his traumatic memories. Tran highlights the dehumanizing effect of war on surviving soldiers in such memories, blurring the boundaries between the

---

[3] An early use by Marianne Hirsch of the term "postmemory" comes in her elucidation of photographs from the graphic novel *Maus* by Art Spiegelman, in her volume *Family Frames*. Further thinking by her on "postmemory" comes in her volume *The Generation of Postmemory*. Ross Chambers' most important publication on the matter of being haunted by history is *Untimely Interventions*.

rational and the insane, the human and the animalistic, the living and the dead: "War has not only destroyed the human form but also annihilated humanity itself" (9-10). With the horrid memories of war, Kien and his fellow survivors are accustomed to being in company with corpses. Death, the ultimate alienation from life, uncannily becomes the familiar and the mundane for the living.

Tran then compares Ninh's Vietnamese perspective on war memory with the Japanese retrospect on *kamikaze* suicide near the end of World War II in Naoki Hyakuta's 2006 novel *The Eternal Zero*. Hyakuta's novel focuses on a young man's effort to construct an image of his grandfather Kyuzo Miyabe, a *kamikaze* pilot who dies in a suicide mission, by piecing together the memories of veterans who survive the war. Tran discusses how Hyakuta's narrative strategy of war memory poignantly reveals the distorted and agonized mentality of *kamikaze* pilots. Despite the absolute loyalty to the Japanese Empire, Miyabe still harbors an irresistible urge to reunite with his family. Tran notes that this natural longing for homecoming has been twisted into a complex of shame, constantly reminding him of his "selflessness" in staying alive and wishing to go home. For veterans in post-war Japan, their overdue happiness in peacetime is also disturbed by not only the horror of war itself, but the same feeling of guilt toward their fallen comrades, and a painful epiphany through reminiscing on the devaluation of their lives during the War. Hyakuta's novel thus constitutes a reflective critique of Japanese militarism, which can be engaged with current debate regarding the political and military status of Japan in the present time.

Later in the article, Tran further explores the therapeutic effect of writing in the process of healing war trauma, as represented in the two novels respectively. In *The Sorrow of War*, as Tran observes, Kien emancipates himself from the haunting horror of war by retelling and rewriting his memories of his fallen fellow soldiers and his lost loved one, because writing can reconnect himself to the world and "allow[s] the chain of signifiers to emerge" (qtd. in Tran 22). Thus, Kien can restore his life, formerly deprived by war of its meaning. On the other hand, in *The Eternal Zero*, healing is achieved through Miyabe's grandchildren's attempt to reconstruct a narrative for their grandfather's life by assembling the fragmentary memories of his surviving comrades. Tran insightfully observes that the therapeutic effect of writing is not only about personal healing, but "a bridge between the younger generation—

those fortunate enough to be born in times of peace—and the previous generation who endured war" (23). Writing the memory of war, as Tran concludes, "is not only a practice of remembering but also a practice of humanity, making them as human beings in the inhuman conditions of war" (26).

Apart from war, the conflict caused by racial identification is another sphere deeply impacted by memory, on both individual and collective levels. Nicholas Sumares's article "'The Black Boys Will Put Up Their Hopes': African American Affective Space, Memory, and Cultural Trauma in Colson Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys*" examines Whitehead's novel by focusing on the transformation of African Americans' affective subjectivity, especially in the case of the protagonists Elwood and Turner. Referring to Ron Eyerman's work, Sumares first establishes the central conception that "African American identity is formed through the shared cultural trauma and memory of slavery as merely an institution or experience" (31). He aptly identifies the insufficiency of social and anthropological methodologies to determine the experience of the black minority, because of the inherent rationality of these theories. Rather, Sumares proposes that an approach of affective subjectivity can more effectively explore how emotion, or affect, "encourages in the African Americans the creation of a subjectivity that gives them the power to mobilize" (32). Sumares then rightly situates Whitehead's 2019 novel in the context of the disillusioned postblack (or postracial) belief that culminated in Barack Obama's election in 2008, a false notion that America from that moment in history freed itself from white supremacy and racism.

With these theoretical and cultural-historical premises, Sumares looks into spatiality and temporality—the two key components of memory—constructed in *The Nickel Boys*, a fictional parallel of the scandal of the Dozier School in Florida, a reform school notorious for abuse, sexual violation, and even murder of countless children. Sumares analyzes how the "chronotope" of the Nickel Academy alludes to the American South in the 1960s, a space and time dominated by white supremacy, embodied by a society whose economy and culture were based upon discrimination against blacks. Such racial discrimination is empowered by "scientific racist discourse and democratic ideology" (qtd. in Sumares 42). Sumares convincingly argues that Whitehead's depiction of the Nickel Academy, including its structure, environment, and regulation, corresponds to the spatiotemporality of the American South. The

protagonists Elwood and Turner not only endure physical punishment, but also receive mental discipline and indoctrination in order that they internalize racist ideologies.

As Michel Foucault declares in *The History of Sexuality*, "wherever there is power, there is resistance" (95). Sumares delves into Whitehead's subtle representation of resistance by the two protagonists. Elwood, despite being confined in this dire institution, retains hope because of his exposure to the civil rights movement and his aspiration to become an activist. This conviction helps him maintain his agency while facing the Nickel staff's brutal enforcement of "the suppressive racist dogma of the American South" (Sumares 45). Turner, the other protagonist, reacts to such suppression in a drastically different manner. As Sumares notes, Whitehead constructs a far more complicated affective arc for this character, giving a ghost-like presence with a deep sense of nihilism regarding black people's predicament. Here Sumares provides a compelling reading of Turner, not as someone who accepts his fate because ignorant to any possibilities of change. He acquiesces in the status quo because of his acute empirical perception of it and his ability to think rationally based on his experience and memory. Thus, he can see through naïve optimism, recognizing that "things may progress superficially, but the absoluteness of human evil will always be constant" (47). But as Sumares also argues, Turner's firm pessimism based on rationality and empiricism can be affectively shaken, as depicted in the boxing match scene, where the black contender is threatened with losing intentionally. Despite knowing that the result is fixed, Turner's mind is swayed by the image of a black man resisting white onslaught. His affective subjectivity is thus awakened in this moment of what Sumares calls "emotional glitches": in it Turner can share Elwood's optimism of "putting up his hopes" (48).

In the final section of this paper, Sumares investigates the twist of identity exchange at the end of the novel. The adult Elwood who lives in solitude in New York is revealed to be Turner, as the real Elwood has been killed while they are escaping from the Nickel Academy. And Turner, initially wishing to honor Elwood's memory by leading a life he aspires to, "reconstitutes this hope [for universal racial equality] into something it's not: achieving the American Dream" (Sumares 53). Sumares observes that Turner has transformed his shared hope with Elwood into the material success of a middle-class existence. He excludes himself from any African American connections in order to bury the

traumatic memories of racial oppression that caused his friend's death and his own current inert state. Sumares's reading of the revelation indicates a very abject portion of our memory that suppresses our affective subjectivity, leading to concealment, pretension, and even distortion of identification. Towards the end, with the public exposure of the Nickel Academy's atrocities, Turner's suppressed affective subjectivity is liberated through candid confession of buried memories and open conversation about racial issues. As Sumares reemphasizes, real progress towards equality is made possible only by active engagement with "collective memory and shared trauma" (56).

Finally, Ping-Shi Kao's "Time and Timelessness in Judith Kerr's Child-Pet Relationship" approaches memory from a perspective not entirely centering on human experience. Focusing on Judith Kerr's picturebook series that features Mog the cat and its little owner Nicky, Kao interrogates how memory functions in the relationship between children and pets, and how narrative in Kerr's works alternates between linear and cyclical. Indeed, children's literature embodies a very nostalgic aspect of memory, the yearning for a simpler and more innocent state. For many in the present time, memories associated with domestic animals often occupy a prominent span in their childhood. It is also nearly inevitable that human growth is accompanied by the early passing of our pets, the loss of our most devoted nonhuman friends. Given the significance of pets in modern life, Kao is right to note that academic discussion on them has been marginalized, a gap that this article amends in timely fashion.

Kao first surveys the representation of animals in children's literature. She points out that since the eighteenth century, there has been a surging awareness of animal rights. Pet-keeping became a common practice during the Romantic period, when domestic animals symbolized "the preservation of innocence and gladness" and "Romantic purity and nostalgia for nature" (Kao 64). Drawing on Maria Nikolajeva's conception of time and timelessness in children's literature, Kao identifies two temporal routes: a linear one of maturation that leads to adulthood and a mythic one that is "reversible, cyclical, and everlasting" (65). Mythic time "constructs a perpetual paradise" in which death can be followed by resurrection. Kao suggests that memory functions crucially in this time frame for its affective nature, especially in the child-pet relationship, where each memory is embedded in a certain location of the home after the pet's passing. In children's literature such as Kerr's Mog picturebooks, this unique phenomenon foregrounds "a dynamic structure of temporality and

timelessness" (65) between children and pets, prompting a reading that acknowledges the subjectivity of nonhuman beings.

Kao explores the theme of growth, maturity, and detachment in a linear time frame in *Mog and the Baby*, a story that centers around the arrival of a neighbor's baby into Nicky's home. The baby disrupts the original harmony between Nicky and Mog, who are compelled to react to this drastic change. The ways they deal with such a change sometimes result in conflicting emotions and even temporary detachment. Another picturebook, *Mog's Kittens*, in which Mog becomes a mother, shows a similar effect of change. The bittersweet awkwardness is vividly illustrated by Kerr on both visual and textual levels. And as Kao proposes, the disruption caused by the arrival of either a human baby or kittens signals inevitable alteration while growing up. But it also facilitates the child's capability for emotional maturation and social engagement, with the pet playing a crucial role in the process. In *Goodbye Mog*, the life education provided by the pet culminates in its death, an event in relation to which "children expand their capacity to understand the meaning of death and to manage their feelings" (Kao 72). Again, the child-pet relationship's significance in the working of memory is highlighted, as "the cat modulates Nicky's ability to remember what is important, both individually and collectively, and to respond appropriately to similar events in the present and future" (73). On the other hand, the mythic timelessness empowered by memory is conveyed through Kerr's illustration of Mog's afterlife in the form of a spirit that "preserves the cat's presence in Nicky's daily life, symbolizing an ongoing connection beyond death and the memories she retains with the Thomas's family" (76). Each piece of reminiscence of Mog is embedded in a specific corner of their house, attesting to a concrete and affective existence of memory that transcends the boundaries between humans and animals, the living and the dead.

To conclude, the three articles collected in this special issue underline the importance of memory in major aspects of humanity and cultural life: war, national and racial identification, and the human-animal relationship. Their interpretations of diverse cultural texts shed light upon our understanding of memory, not merely as a cerebral function to remember past events, but as a spatial and temporal realm in which human subjectivity seeks to anchor itself in a certain point of history, or to escape into oblivion (which proves essentially

impossible, as the repressed memories are destined to reemerge). Memory is also a realm in which we shape our identities and relationships to the external world, including other humans and nonhuman beings. Captive or fugitive, individual or collective, memory remains a focal point in literary and cultural studies. This special issue of *The Wenshan Review* invites its readers to consider the role of memory in important spheres where it has not previously been adequately (if at all) addressed.

<div align="right">

Kang-Po Chen,
National Taipei University of Technology, Taiwan

Jonathan White,
University of Essex, UK

</div>

Works Cited

Adorno, Theodor W. *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords.* Columbia UP, 2005.

Cambers, Ross. *Untimely Interventions: Aids Writing, Testimonial, and the Rhetoric of Haunting.* U of Michigan P, 2004.

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. Translated by Robert Hurley, Vintage Books, 1990.

Hirsch, Marianne. *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory.* Harvard UP, 1997.

---. *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*. Columbia UP, 2012.

Marx, Karl. "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte." *The Karl Marx Library*, vol. 1, edited by Saul K. Padover, McGraw Hill, 1972, pp. 245-46.

Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. Chatto and Windus, 1987.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Untimely Meditations*. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale, edited by Daniel Breazeale, Cambridge UP, 1997.

Nora, Pierre. Preface. *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past*, *Volume 1: Conflicts and Divisions*, translated by Arthur Goldhammer, edited by Lawrence D. Kritzman, Columbia UP, 1996.