Introduction
Materiality, Imagination and the Memorable

Katherine Swancutt

Storytelling is a craft, and often a vocational art, that enlivens memories, gives them material form, and transmits them across generations. There are perhaps endless mediums in which a story can take shape, from artistic disciplines such as painting, film and literature to novels, life writing and tales infused with the larger-than-life qualities of legends or myth-histories. What each form of storytelling has in common, though, is the penchant for opening up spaces of (re)imagining – in highly memorable ways – lived experiences, historical events, popular legends, works of fiction or fantasy, and even excursions beyond any particular memory. Echoing the motif of this book series, the contributors to this volume set out to show how storytelling unfolds as a 'material mediation' that draws persons and things into memorable relationships. To this end, the contributors offer an interdisciplinary conversation on the material contours, sensuous qualities and imaginative ways of conceptualizing memories in and of China.

It is likely that every memorable story is shaped by what Webb Keane, drawing upon Nancy D. Munn's (1986) use of Peircean semiotics, dubs the 'factor of co-presence or what we might call *bundling*' (2003: 414; see also 2005: 194). As Keane explains, any sensuous quality, such as the redness of an apple or, I would add, the memorable features of stories 'must be embodied in something in particular' (2003: 414). Keane further suggests this material something is in turn 'actually, and often contingently (rather than by logical necessity), bound up with other qualities – [such that] redness in an apple comes along with spherical shape, light weight, and so forth' (ibid.). He concludes that the bundling together of sensuous and material qualities

gives rise to the '"biography" of things' so famously observed by Igor Kopytoff (1986) and Arjun Appadurai (1986) in the latter's seminal volume on the 'social life of things' (ibid.). Now, anything memorable could be said to have material and sensuous qualities, as well as a biography, and stories are no exception. Each contributor to this volume therefore traces the social life of one or more memorable stories, understood in a broad sense to include the tales conveyed through painting, filmmaking, memoirs, novels, life-writing, the reunions of record-keepers, and storytelling legends among China's ethnic minorities. The contributors focus upon stories that have been crafted chiefly within, but also beyond, the People's Republic of China. They suggest that persons who can relate to memorable stories, works of labour or works of art engage with them in ways that stretch their own imaginations backwards and forwards in time. Ultimately, the contributors show that persons reflect upon their lives through the stories they hear, see, read or perceive in other ways, which they sometimes reanimate through their own memorable retellings of them.

Telling memorable stories, though, is not easy. This is probably one key reason why stories are often analysed as 'narratives' in ways that set them apart from their material, and sometimes even imaginative, qualities (cf. Geertz 1973; Tedlock 1999; Schneider 1987: 809, see also 819; MacDonald and Harvey 2012: 135; Herrmann and DiFate 2014: 4). Since the postmodern movement of the late 1960s, the extant literature on storytelling across the arts, humanities and social sciences has focused predominantly upon narratives (Maggio 2014: 98–100). Much like sharing a joke, the telling of a story is still commonly explained away as a pastime that requires being steeped in the sense that one 'had been there' and experienced its events first-hand, at least if the story is to be understood in full (Carty and Musharbash 2008). Of course, any study of storytelling requires some discussion of the relevant narratives, how they came to be produced, and what it might have felt like to have lived through them. Yet as Kirin Narayan suggests of storytelling in India, 'there's always a reason' why a story exceeds its narrative content (1989: 22). Perhaps the reason is that storytellers routinely go beyond familiar life experiences by inviting their audiences, viewers and readers to reflect imaginatively upon the memorably fantastical or strange qualities of a given tale that impart it with a distinctive social life of its own. Thus, as Keith Basso (1996) proposed in his now classic study of the Western Apache, stories do more than re-present narratives; they set in motion conversations that artfully weave the memorable and the fantastically strange into lasting repertoires of 'wisdom' that reveal exemplary social values, teach persons to think for themselves, launch complex social critiques, and reflect what matters most in life.

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Going Beyond Memory

How does a storyteller craft a tale that goes beyond memory? And what does *not* count as memory in any given story, work of labour or work of art? Each chapter in the present volume addresses these two questions and invites the reader to consider what, besides memories, underpins the social lives of stories. Like other works of labour and works of art, stories are composed of imaginative invention, the exercise of fantasy, and notably the effort to exceed both personal memory (often called 'individual' memory) and social memory, which is frequently conceptualized as a kind of 'public', 'collective' or 'communicative' memory of the present moment that both shapes and is shaped by the 'cultural' memories and identities traced to myth-historical time. It is worth lingering here on the distinctions between these various kinds of memory to discuss their import for this volume before pressing ahead with what lies beyond them.

Since Maurice Halbwachs' (1980 and 1992) landmark studies on collective memory, which date to shortly before the mid-twentieth century, the study of memory has been entangled with materiality. It was Halbwachs who proposed that personal memories are shaped by the wider community, nation and (typically built) environments that persons inhabit. In a similar vein, Pierre Nora (1996, 1997, 1998) has suggested, in his influential trilogy on French *lieux de mémoire*, or places of memory, that the collective memory and identity of a nation arise through symbiotic relationships between human experience, architecture and material items. Striking out on a somewhat different path, Jan Assmann has proposed that Halbwachs' 'collective memory' be parsed into two concepts: 'communicative' memory, which unfolds in 'social time' and has as its focus the 'social self, [or] person as carrier of social roles', and 'cultural' memory that takes place in 'historical, mythical, [or] cultural time' and is the provenance of 'cultural identity' (2008: 109). According to Assmann, the value of this particular distinction is that it preserves Halbwachs' choice to separate collective memory 'from the realm of traditions, transmissions, and transferences' that make up 'cultural memory', while still recognizing that the social time of communicative memory and the myth-historical time of cultural memory are both important, albeit 'different modi memorandi, [or] ways of remembering' (2008: 110). These varied ways of conceptualizing memory are valuable unto themselves, if for no other reason than that they call attention to the multiple relationships between memory-making and sociocultural life. But since each of these analyses are built predominantly upon Euro-American conceptualizations and social thought, they do not always provide an apt foundation for drawing cross-cultural comparisons to vast cultural regions such as China, which

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have their own rich and extensive histories as well as particular ways of remembering or forgetting. Perhaps the one exception here is Assmann, who frequently brings Egyptian and Vedic conceptualizations of memory into dialogue with Euro-American ones, to provide a more expansive, cross-cultural, and cross-historical study of what constitutes memories and the memorable (cf. Assmann 2006).

Building upon Assmann, Marc Andre Matten has observed in a recent volume on memory-making in modern China that Halbwachs (and one could say this of Nora too) emphasizes the ways in which '*mémoire* is transformed into *histoire*' (2014: 9). But as Matten notes, Halbwachs argues that memory becomes history without acknowledging how 'cultural memory itself consists of objectified culture, which includes texts, rituals, images, buildings, and monuments, whose main function is to bring to mind fateful events the collective has experienced in the past' (ibid.). According to Matten, there is an important connection to be made between cultural memory on the one hand, which is founded upon historical, mythical and cultural time, and, on the other hand, items that evoke cultural memory through their material and sensorial qualities. Intriguingly, the connections that Matten (2014) draws between cultural memory and its material manifestations resonate with Keane's (2003) suggestion that bundling together the sensuous and material qualities of things imparts them with memorable social lives. Yet it is possible to take the analysis further. This is because storytellers and those who create works of labour or works of art bundle together the sensorial, material and indeed conceptual qualities of tales in ways that reveal 'things … *are concepts* as much as they appear to us as "material" or "physical" entities' (Henare, Holbraad and Wastell 2007: 13).

Throughout this book, the contributors suggest that storytellers recount typically memorable experiences by calling attention to their conceptual, material and sensorial qualities. Storytellers may describe dramatic bodily states, whether of material privation or luxury, in ways that are meant to evoke the imaginative empathy of a readership (see the chapters in this volume by Yejun Zou, Wei Luan and Anna Reading). Alternatively, storytellers may focus upon the kinds of items that Matten (2014: 9) calls 'objectified culture', such as texts or images, which are memorable precisely because they have unique conceptual, material and sensorial features, as Benoît Vermander and Chris Berry suggest in their chapters for this volume. Moreover, certain storytellers set out to make their tales memorable by evoking the historical, mythical and cultural time of a particular social group. Many of the contributors to this volume thus show that storytellers and their audiences, viewers or readers may envisage 'the group' as a whole civilization, like that of China. Or the group may be conceptualized at a more particular level, for example as a specific lineage within an ethnic minority of China,

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such as the Nuosu, who are the subjects of the chapter in this volume by Katherine Swancutt and Jiarimuji. Beyond this, the group may be a collective of persons with a shared history that only gradually comes into focus, such as the descendants of the Chinese officials in the Chinese Maritime Customs Service (CMCS) of Shanghai, who feature in the chapter by Chih-yun Chang in this volume. Seen in this light, the conceptual, sensorial and material qualities of any tale may provoke in audiences, viewers or readers what I have elsewhere called the 'imaginative-cum-bodily experience of ideasthesia', which compels persons to sense concepts or perceive meanings associated with a particular social, historical, mythic and cultural identity (Swancutt 2016: 97; see also 102 and 105–13).

The contributors to this volume, then, start their analyses from the study of memory-making and of the memorable. They offer discussions of personal and social (or public) memory that align closely with Stephan Feuchtwang's (2011) use of these terms in his study of state violence and remembering in China, Taiwan and Germany. To get a sense of how Feuchtwang envisages the relationships between personal and social memories that are often learned and transmitted through stories, consider the following passage:

> Memory proper is a capacity of human cognition and feeling. It is individual. But it is possible to understand individual human memory in more social terms, as the relation between learned habits (semantic memory) of telling stories, episodic (or autobiographical) memory, and public narratives. But this does not cover the fullness of the dynamic interaction between personal recall and various modes of transmission covered by the term 'social' or 'public' memory. (Feuchtwang 2011: 13)

Note that while Feuchtwang distinguishes here between the types of memory (i.e. individual and social/public) that give rise to certain kinds of narratives or stories, he is careful to point out the conceptual limitations to these categories. He suggests that any typology of memories is in fact exceeded by the multiple ways in which specific memories mutually shape each other (Feuchtwang 2011: 13–14). To Feuchtwang, only personal memory can be consistently defined, in this case as an individual's retained thoughts, cognition and feelings about specific experiences. In contrast, social or public memory is subject to the recursive relationship between memory and learning. Thus, he suggests in this next passage that the recalling and transmitting of memories unfolds in tandem with the ways in which persons learn how to tell a story:

> On the one hand recalling something experienced, recalling it to oneself or for interpersonal transmission, can produce not just an interpretation but also possibly an alternative or more conflicted sense of what is transmitted much more sim-

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ply in public memory. On the other hand recalling even personal experiences is strongly affected by what is learned through the transmission of public memory. We all learn habits of how to tell a story, in various registers and genres. So there is a dynamic between the experiences and the ways of sharing experiences that are learned in the process of remembering. (Feuchtwang 2011: 13–14)

Here, Feuchtwang highlights the multiplicity of ways in which social (or public) memory and storytelling are recalled, interpreted and transmitted – sometimes even in the form of conflicted memories. His emphasis on the feedback loop between learning how to remember experiences and how to recount them is reminiscent of an earlier suggestion by the visual anthropologist and ethnographic filmmaker, David MacDougall, that 'social memory is thus "social" in an active sense: negotiated, provisional, and indicative of relationships' (1994: 268). Feuchtwang (2011) and MacDougall (1994) each evoke an important observation shared by one anonymous reviewer of this volume: that the unity of social memory is never to be taken for granted, as it is ultimately an assertion, a hope, a possibility and a well-specified appeal to a given collective. It follows that any social memory is asserted by the persons who learn it, remember it and transmit it to a particular collective through storytelling. Indeed, as Vermander (this volume) suggests, 'transmission is storytelling'.

Appealing to Social Memory

Now, the contributors to this volume show that there is always some uncertainty around the professed unity of social memory. But they also propose that stories, works of labour and works of art may transmit lasting and, in some cases, mythopoetic visions about a particular social collective in and of China. They suggest that storytellers, broadly defined, go beyond recounting the experiences with which other persons may identify. As they show, some storytellers set out to artfully entangle their audiences, viewers or readers in the imaginative, fascinating and memorably strange.

There are numerous ways in which evocations of the strange – particularly where it is equated with the ethnic other – may contribute to the assertion of social memory. Luan's marvellous chapter (this volume) on Mo Yan's Nobel Prize winning novel *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*, which is a work memorably embellished with the author's fantasies about the strange and the ethnic other in China, shows that what is memorable need not be formed exclusively of memories. As Luan shows, Mo Yan recounts the hunger and other privations of mid-twentieth-century China that led, in his imaginative reflections on them, to such fantastical events as the transformation of persons who are half-Chinese into the bird fairies of Daoism.

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According to Luan, Mo Yan works to instil in his readership empathy and imaginative identification with his memorably strange characters as a way of asserting a unified social memory of China's contemporary past. She suggests that Mo Yan's version of social memory is grounded in a distinctive understanding of what the so-called Chinese body (sometimes entangled conceptually, materially and sensorially with the strangely other) happens to be. Complex works of literature, such as Mo Yan's novel, give rise to the question of how storytellers come to ensure that the memorably strange not only emerges as something to which audiences, viewers or readers can relate, but ultimately becomes incorporated into social, public and even cultural memory.

One important way in which storytellers may entangle their audiences, viewers or readers within the strange is through what Michael Taussig calls 'mimesis', or the 'ability to mime, and mime well, [which] in other words, is the capacity to Other' (1994: 206). Mimesis in Taussig's terms is a famously 'two-layered notion' that bundles together 'on the one hand a copying or imitation and, on the other, a palpable, sensuous connection between the very body of the perceiver and the perceived' (ibid.). As a process, mimesis demands that persons establish a relationship with others (who are typically ethnic others) and identify with them through mimicry. Taussig's study is renowned for its historically reconstructive analysis of how the Kuna of Panama improvised a new method of curing by carving wooden figurines that resemble Europeans (1993: 2–8). He suggests that the Kuna harnessed the powers of Europeans by reproducing their bodily, sensuous and material forms in wooden magic sticks, which were dressed in ways that mimicked European clothing styles and, in some cases, were carved in ways that revealed the European penchant for horseback riding too (ibid.). Yet Taussig also considers how storytellers and their audiences mimic, and thereby mutually re-experience, a tale as it is recounted (1993: 40). Drawing upon Walter Benjamin, he suggests that storytellers and audiences use mimetic empathy as a way of imagining themselves to be engaged in memorable experiences of the strange and other (ibid.). Consider his discussion here of how storytellers and audiences come to hold two perspectives at once, that of their own selves and that of the mimicked other:

> the storyteller embodied that situation of stasis and movement in which the far-away was brought to the here-and-now, archetypically that place where the returned traveller finally rejoined those who stayed at home. It was from this encounter that the story gathered its existence and power, just as it is in this encounter that we discern the splitting of the self, of being self and Other, as achieved by sentience taking one out of oneself – to become something else as well. (Taussig 1993: 40–41)

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Taussig's point is this: storytellers induce mimetic empathy in their audiences in ways that appeal to a unified social memory. They set out to recount memorable tales of the self, the strange and the other to which audiences can relate. Storytellers who elicit mimetic, empathetic and imaginative responses from their audiences, viewers or readers collapse the distance, so to speak, between them. People thus come to identify something as a story, a work of labour or work of art through mimetic empathy. Although Taussig makes this point with respect to face-to-face storytelling, the contributors to this volume suggest that audiences, viewers or readers also empathize mimetically with the characters or plots of films, novels and other works of labour or works of art (more on this below).

Right now, though, I need to make an important caveat, which is that not all works are memorable, embellished with the strange, or accessible through mimicry or imaginative empathy. The distinction commonly drawn between the recounting of experience and historiography, which resonates with the distinction between the memorable and actual experience, should help to make this point clear. Storytellers are commonly understood to recount experiences by drawing freely upon a combination of personal and public memories, historical events, legends, myth-histories, imagination, fantasy, the memorable, strange and other. By contrast, historiography typically refers to the writing of histories, the study of the writing of histories, or the study of written histories, which are based upon actual experiences – some of them memorable, some of them not. Historiography is therefore often envisioned as a single-authored endeavour that is not embellished with the strange and other. Yet, as Berry (this volume) suggests in his penetrating chapter on Jia Zhanke's *24 City*, a film about a former factory, self-sacrifice and the changing values in Chinese society, viewers are invited to envision a plurality of memories and histories about the Third Front. As Berry shows, Jia Zhanke offers an alternative and more democratic vision of historiography in *24 City*, which, like *The Records of the Grand Historian* compiled by Sima Qian between 100 and 90 BCE, encompasses a multiplicity of voices and perspectives. Plural visions of historiography, such as these, allow conflicted memories to emerge – in a manner reminiscent of the oppositional histories championed by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Elie Wiesel (Connerton 1989: 15).

Given this, stories, works of art or works of labour (including some historiographies) transmit a suite of conflicted memories, counter-memories or contested memories. Vermander's enthralling chapter in this volume on the conflicted memories inscribed into paintings is a case in point. As he shows, works of art by the Chinese painter Li Jinyuan reveal tensions between, on the one hand, the strange and memorable novelties introduced to China by the Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci and, on the other hand, the nostalgia for Chi-

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na's past or the indecision concerning its culture and destiny. This propensity of stories, works of labour or works of art to generate conflicted memories as well as imaginative, empathetic and highly memorable entanglements with the strange is a theme that cuts across much of this volume. It brings me now to some further reflections on the social lives of these works.

The Social Lives of Stories, Works of Labour and Works of Art

The term 'social life', as one anonymous reviewer of this volume observed, implies that one can see or otherwise perceive what it is, with whom it is shared, or to what it is other or strange. I want to broaden the discussion now to show how the social lives of stories, works of labour or works of art come into focus, not only through the face-to-face recounting of experience, but also in film, literature, museum exhibitions and other mediums that are experienced at a distance from the persons who produced them.

MacDougall suggests that films of memory 'do not of course record memory itself, but its referents, its secondary representations (in speech, for example) and its correlatives' (1994: 261). He raises the filmmaker's question of how any viewer might engage with referents to specific memories of which they have no first-hand experience, and for which they cannot directly query the filmmaker. According to MacDougall, filmmakers are well aware of this problem and set out to address it through a good deal of 'trial and guesswork', as no films 'communicate an unequivocal message' and viewers may interpret films in their own ways, which are 'open to continual rereading' (1994: 261). Yet he also points out that many filmmakers use techniques, which, by all appearances, are meant to induce mimetic, imaginative and empathetic responses in viewers (MacDougall 1994: 264–66). For example, filmmakers may edit images of surviving objects, photographs and newsreels so that they appear alongside their interviewees, evoking in viewers the sense of directly having witnessed memories of the past. Each such filmic image may be presented '*as if this were memory itself* … [and] quite illegitimately as the memories of the speakers' who were interviewed (MacDougall 1994: 261, emphasis in the original). Nonetheless, filmic images become memorable touchstones that shape how viewers think about the past, even as they feed into the processes by which viewers recall and transmit experiences into public memory (ibid.).

Revealingly, filmmakers sometimes use images like these to critique the notion of a unified social memory, thereby encouraging viewers to recognize the conflicted, contested or counternarratives to the experiences being recounted (see Berry, this volume). Other works of labour or works of art, such as painting, literature and life-writing, may unleash similarly imaginative, empathetic and yet conflicted responses from readers or viewers. The con-

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tributors to this volume thus show that works containing images in the form of paintings, film, written text, official records or oral narratives may lead to conflicted memories, some of which acquire social lives that move far beyond the settings in which they were created to acquire an international presence.

Certain stories, works of labour or works of art are perhaps especially likely to generate cross-cultural dialogues between storytellers, their audiences, viewers or readers, who, as Justin Izzo (2015) suggests, become imaginatively engaged in projects of 'rewriting and writing over' one another's memories as though they were a 'narrative palimpsest'. Vermander's chapter on the 'memory palace' of Li Jinyuan is an evocative example of this dynamic, where the writing and painting of older memories onto newer ones leads to richly rewarding and yet also conflicted ways of re-envisioning them. Conflicted or contested memories are often traced to questions about the moral, and emotive, fabric of public and cultural memory as persons usually want to remember stories that present 'exemplars' of social conduct (Humphrey 1997, Højer and Bandak 2015), while anything less than exemplary or model behaviour is more easily forgotten. Before turning to discuss the arrangement of this volume, then, I want to offer some brief remarks on the way in which stories, works of labour and works of art have shaped experiences of remembering and forgetting in China.

Remembering and Forgetting

In all kinds of settings, from everyday exchanges to memorials held for the dead, the recounting of experience encourages persons to remember some things and forget others (Vitebsky 1993, 2008, 2012, 2017; Mueggler 2001, 2014, 2017). Strategies of remembering have routinely shaped China's past, which is rooted in its imperial and, in modern times, national historical narratives. China is famous for its long history of meticulous record-keeping and its grand projects of memory-making. One chief purpose behind its record-keeping was to establish the geographic bounds of everything that fell under the emperor's mandate of heaven, including the peoples at the 'Sino-Other' borderlands, who were often envisioned as 'barbarians' to be encompassed within the Middle Kingdom (see, for example, Gros 2004, Mullaney 2004 and Wang 2012). These records offer a selective public memory of China as a civilization that has folded the strange and other into the imperial project and, more recently, into the projects of the party-state. Nevertheless, as Berry (this volume) suggests, the records compiled by Sima Qian offer a far more plural historiography than is often recognized outside of China, or at least in Euro-American social history. Beyond this, myriad grassroots-level stories of particular persons, regions, social and ethnic

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groups circulate in China, some of which have entered the official historical narratives and others not.

Since its early days, the party-state has co-opted and even embellished the tales of contemporary persons, some real and others fictitious. A case in point is Lei Feng (雷锋), a soldier in the People's Liberation Army, who, under Mao Zedong in the 1960s, was hailed as a heroic and legendary exemplar of modesty and selflessness to be emulated by the masses, but whose storybook memory (like that of many others) has alternately faded and been revived with the changing political times (cf. Chao 1999: 509–11). The effort to remember against the grain of political, ideological and aesthetically induced forgetting remains an important feature of Chinese storytelling traditions. Ka-ming Wu has shown, for example, that while the musical dramas of the Northern Shaanxi storytelling tradition were reworked in the early 1940s to bring party propaganda and cultural enrichment to rural villages, since the 1980s local storytellers have returned their craft to its original purpose as part of the religious observances at temple festivals – which, crucially, remain quite some distance removed from the eyes of the party-state (2011: 103–107). Storytelling in China is thus an enduring craft that sometimes gives voice to memories that conflict with or run counter to the official historiography.

Like apt storytellers, the contributors to this volume explore unofficial and grassroots-level stories in and of modern China that are meant to launch projects of remembering and creatively connect with the world beyond it. They show how Chinese projects of remembering, and of forgetting, are routinely crafted into tales of personal and social value that draw upon elements of Chinese philosophy, modern history, imagination, fantasy, biography or legends. Each of the stories recounted in this volume revolves around a unique leitmotif that points beyond itself – to the ultimate truth of the Dao (Vermander), to the plurality of historiography (Berry), to the tensions and complexities of socialism (Zou), to the artistic memory field of Chinese body-expression (Luan), to efforts at coming to terms with statelessness (Reading), to reconstructions of biography (Chang), and to myth-histories that keep feuds alive (Swancutt and Jiarimuji). To this end, the contributors mobilize an interdisciplinary conversation that binds together the volume's three interrelated themes, to which I now turn.

Part I: Curating Memories through Art and Film

Part I of this volume is devoted to the theme of curating memories through art and film. It follows the contemporary storytelling projects of the painter, Li Jinyuan (Vermander's chapter), and the filmmaker, Jia Zhangke (Berry's

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chapter). Both Vermander and Berry reflect upon how artists-as-storytellers bring their works into conversation with the current moment, their previous works and the artistry of others. Their chapters show that stories, works of labour and works of art produce storehouses of memory filled with personal, social, cultural and historical reflections.

Vermander proposes in his chapter that Chinese artists, such as Li Jinyuan, add 'layers' or 'traces' of the memories that they create throughout their lives to a 'memory palace' much like the one described by Jonathan D. Spence in *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*. The artist's memory palace is filled with memories and meanings to be drawn upon when producing a composition, diary or other work. Going a step further, Vermander suggests that the artist's memory palace becomes filled with memories of specific artistic compositions that he or she has either observed or produced. Not unlike the artworks or everyday items that act as the 'containers' (Küchler 1988, Strathern 1996, Morton 2007) of memories elsewhere in the world, the Chinese artist's memory palace is a storehouse of memories, experiences and meanings that are always 'ready to hand' for the production of new compositions, in the Heideggerian sense of the term that Rane Willerslev adopts in his ethnographic study of Siberian hunters, for whom any 'knowable object is a *tool*' (2004: 401; emphasis in the original).

Because storehouses of memory have material qualities, they also direct memory-making along specific lines, making it both tangible and accessible. As Vermander shows, Li Jinyuan crafts a storehouse of memory in dialogue with his painting mentors, his art students (including Vermander), and even Ricci himself. Thus, in a memorable train journey that Li Jinyuan undertook, he followed Ricci's own travels in reverse by visiting his hometown of Macerata, as well as Rome and Macau, before returning to China. Throughout this journey, Li Jinyuan created memories that he added to his 'creation diary', which became a new storehouse filled with his sketches, paintings and often poetically inspired reflections on the art of layering colours and stories within a memory palace. The creation diary reveals that Li Jinyuan's artistic *œuvre* is composed of layers and traces of personal, social and cultural memories from within and beyond China – all of which uncover Ricci's own eye for detail. Yet Li Jinyuan's creation diary does more than evoke resonances between the Roman plains of Ricci's hometown and the plains of Northern China. It records, among other things, an earlier moment in Li Jinyuan's life when he was incorporated into the spiritual lineage of his painting mentor, who presented him with a calligraphic work, as an aide-mémoire of his entrance into the master's artistic school. Vermander discusses his own memorable entry into this spiritual lineage, as the person who, by all appearances, Li Jinyuan has tasked with disseminating his storehouse of memories internationally.

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Surely one key reason for producing a storehouse of memory is to ensure that personal experiences enter the annals of social and cultural memory. But there is also the question of how memories reflect particular histories, even as they defy the conventions of a genre. Berry proposes in his chapter that film can be an especially poignant repository of memories, particularly in works such as Jia Zhangke's *24 City*, which set out to include what he calls the 'various incommensurable elements' of documentary and scripted scenes. As Berry suggests, memories that unfold as a combination of unprocessed and scripted stories invite audiences to reflect upon how personal and social histories are crafted into storytelling, and vice-versa. Moreover, viewers of *24 City* are encouraged to empathetically identify with its protagonists in ways that evoke public memories – for example, of the transition to China's market economy – which are not only emotionally moving, but also underscore the uniqueness of each person's own memorable experiences.

Berry shows that Jia Zhanke's audiences reacted differently to the decision to have famous actors in *24 City* play the role of ordinary persons alongside the non-actors who held more purely documentary roles. Some viewers found the resonances between the actors and their previous acting personas to be a moving artistic intervention that evoked uniquely personal memories and experiences in China's social history. According to Berry, Jia Zhangke wanted to achieve precisely this effect. His casting choices for *24 City* not only highlight the complex layering of personal, social and cultural memories onto history, but encourage audiences to cast a critical eye onto any collective nostalgia for a previous era. This critical eye is further honed by the many other artistic interventions that Jia Zhangke paired with the acting – such as poetry, montage, music and tableau-style long takes – that encourage audiences to reflect upon the changes taking place around them and empathetically identify with the past. Thus, Berry suggests in his chapter that Jia Zhangke's casting choices and his artistic interventions effectively 'blur the line between the historical or documentary and the fictional', such that *24 City* 'challenges the modern idea of historiography as a unified discourse written in a single voice' while offering in its place 'a new, more democratic and plural form of historiography that resists closure and unification'.

Part II: Framing Memories through Literature and the Body

In Part II of this volume, the focus shifts back in time to literary works from China's twentieth-century history, which frame personal memories and social memories through bodily experience. The chapters by Zou, Luan and Reading emphasize the ways in which bodily memories make literature evocative and palpable. Each of these contributors shows that an author re-

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counts bodily experiences to encourage readers to empathize imaginatively, if not mimetically, with his or her own vision of specific moments in history.

Zou offers in her chapter an illuminating comparison of the visions of socialist realism held by the East German novelist, Christa Wolf, and the Chinese novelist, Ding Ling. She shows that socialist realism is meant to connect readers to specific events on a material, sensorial, corporeal and conceptual level. According to Zou, both the East German and Chinese literary approaches invite readers to reflect upon how family ties and social relations are built in the wake of socialism, through relatable experiences such as illness, domestic warmth, social castigation, physical labour, being part of an ethnic group, or joining the local community to watch an opera performance. However, Zou also suggests that the tensions within the East German and Chinese versions of socialist realism require readers to go beyond absorbing their works in a fixed or prescribed way. Socialist realist authors and readers alike are prompted to envisage, negotiate and reinterpret their personal and social memories through imaginative empathy with the characters and plots of literature. To show this, Zou draws upon numerous poignant literary devices, including the novelist Ding Ling's choice to invite her readership to empathetically identify with the persons who, during China's land reforms, exposed those subtly exploitative landlords with whom they had built up relationships across the generations through a shared 'kinship and bioethnic inheritance'. Just as the land reforms turned seemingly close kin relations on their head, so Ding Ling invites her readers to imaginatively re-envision this period – and the public memories to which it gave rise – as strange and other. Zou therefore concludes that socialist realism unfolds as 'a form of storytelling narrative' that encourages persons to update their storehouse of memories as though it were a palimpsest on which they can perform 'the active process of rewriting the past, present and future of socialism'. Notably, Zou suggests that active memory-making involves the bodily effort not to forget something.

This emphasis upon remembering, rather than forgetting, is pivotal to what Luan calls 'Chinese body-expression' in her chapter on Chinese concerns with self-image, and in particular, with the struggle to come to terms with one's own corporeal features. Through her evocative analysis of what she refers to as the 'artistic memory field' of the novelist Mo Yan, Luan proposes that readers are invited to probe arduous moments in the history of modern China through the prism of their own bodies. As she shows, there is a self-reflexive current to Mo Yan's work, which, however, does not boil down to evaluating personal experiences, memories or recent historical events in light of a single aesthetic standard. Luan suggests instead that Mo Yan's characters inhabit a cosmos of fluctuating Daoist forms that evoke bodily change and yet are shaped simultaneously by Confucian sensibilities

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about the importance of survival, relations to family, and connections to one's motherland. The artistic memory field of Mo Yan is filled with multiple and sometimes competing conceptualizations of the body, personal reflections on corporeality and the rather conflicted mode of Chinese body-expression that is inscribed onto each of his characters. Although Mo Yan's artistic memory field is rich, it is not forgiving. Thus, Luan suggests that Mo Yan's novel is designed to show readers they have no other option than to conform to the ideals of Chinese body-expression, which are unforgettably imprinted upon them – particularly in cases where the person's appearance seems to belie an origin in some form of the strange and other, such as a Sino-Western parentage.

Bodily struggles are central to Reading's chapter too, where memories of colonialism and belonging in the Jewish community of Shanghai are mediated not only through a life-writing narrative on growing up 'stateless', but through palpable recollections of food that fold delicious childhood memories back into the lived experience of a Jewish woman who emigrated from China to the USA. Drawing upon Liliane Willens' memoir, Reading shows that many Jewish refugees who arrived in China between the 1920s and 1940s settled in comfortably among other members of the refugee community, assisted by their Chinese caretakers and cooks, who helped them to manage Shanghai's competing materialities of cleanliness, contamination and flavour. Reading thus draws attention to the colonialist sensibilities of Jewish refugees and their children, for whom the contrast between palatable non-Chinese foods and the supposedly unclean local fare underscored their international status. She shows that for Willens, who lived her childhood in Shanghai, memories of being stateless are peppered with a longing for the forbidden fragrances and flavours of certain Chinese foods. These gustatory memories are offset by recollections of the raw experience of hunger during wartime privation.

Reading observes that memories of food are not just sensorially evoked in the bodies of specific persons; they are recorded in other material forms, such as letters, diaries, novels, newspapers, films, museum exhibitions and even comic books. Thus, she points to Willens' choice to document the bodily memories that connected her most evocatively to her own past upon her return to Shanghai, years after having emigrated to the USA. Relishing the opportunity to bite once again into her favourite Chinese fried breads, Willens reconnects through their aroma to her childhood, and in a moment of synaesthesia is even transported to memories of the voice of her former Chinese nanny, her 'old Amah', who secretly bought her these forbidden snacks. At the same time, Willens is struck by the wealthier and seemingly cleaner appearance that street side snacks and vendors have acquired in Shanghai since her youth. According to Reading, this concatenation of

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bodily memories reveals Willens' own transformation from being stateless in the once purportedly unclean and impoverished, but now leading metropolis of Shanghai, to finding herself in a 'no longer stateless position as an American citizen'. What Reading, then, reveals are the ways in which Willens recalls, recounts and 'metabolizes' these memories for herself and her readership across time and space.

Part III: Propagating Memories through Storytelling

Contemporary stories of China, and their role in propagating memories across generations, are the focus of Part III of this volume. Here, the chapters show that recounted experiences may acquire an unexpected material presence that folds them into social and even cultural memory. While the chapter by Chang reveals how social and cultural memories are formed through historical research and celebratory reunions of former colleagues and friends, Swancutt and Jiarimuji show in their chapter how social and cultural memories of myth-historical proportions are crafted in dramatic storytelling sessions. In these lively settings, storytellers draw their audiences into a collective effort to ensure that memories are transformed into lasting, if not legendary, matters to be recounted by future generations. To this end, storytellers offer themselves up as exemplars, inviting audiences to remember them across time.

Chang shows in his chapter how he joined forces with the descendants of the Chinese staff in the Chinese Maritime Customs Service (CMCS) of Shanghai to uncover their social memory and a newfound cultural identity among them. As a historian, Chang had set out to reconstruct their parents' biographies, histories and networks. But during his research he found out, through several strokes of serendipity, that his own position in the CMCS network was pivotal to retracing their stories. Memories of the CMCS network emerge in the chapter as its members call upon Chang to assist in reviving their close connections to a 'British-influenced lifestyle'. He recounts to the reader how his research unfolded through revelation after revelation, which transported the descendants of the CMCS staff forwards and backwards in time as they reconnected with childhood friends and uncovered their shared connections within and beyond China. As Chang suggests, members of the network set out to relive their memories not only by revisiting the old textbooks and novels of their childhood, but by holding occasional reunions and even the book launch of a CMCS descendant. Through his role in documenting the history of the CMCS network, Chang reveals the storehouse of memories that it has built in order to perpetuate the biographies, kinship relations, status, educational and professional aspirations, and elite institutional memory of its members. On another level, he

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shows that the cultural memory and identity of the CMCS – which modern Chinese historians had taken to be their subject matter for decades – has recently been adopted by the actual descendants of the CMCS. This discovery is traced to three key sources: the reflections that the Chinese children of the CMCS staff have made upon their own biographies and memories; the tight circle that they have established among themselves; and their involvement in Chang's historical research, which gave them the chance to observe the historian's take on their social and cultural memories. The chapter throws unique historiographic light onto a rich tradition in-the-making, into which Chang masterfully guides the reader.

Swancutt and Jiarimuji's chapter also features a cross-generational recounting of events, which, however, unfolded among the Nuosu, a Tibeto-Burman group of southwest China. In their chapter, they discuss a tale that Jiarimuji, recognized as a legendary Nuosu storyteller, shared with Swancutt, who later observed it being recounted amid a good deal of joking, gesture and mimicry by the person who had actually experienced it. As Swancutt and Jiarimuji show, Nuosu storytellers share comic experiences of feuding in their clan and lineage-based society during moments of peace and conflict. Especially comic stories often take on the status of legends in their social memory and myth-history. Nuosu who share tales of lineage warfare set out to highlight their own humorous actions and rites, threats and mediations, and calculations of strategy, some of which are beyond words. In particular, they regale audiences with memorable scenes and sayings that can be readily mimicked and re-enacted by their lineage mates. Memorable actions and gestures gain a material presence not only through the storyteller's body, but in the vocabulary of movement that Nuosu audiences transmit when mimicking, and later, re-enacting them. All of this takes on a particular poignancy when Nuosu prepare for battle against a rival lineage. In these moments, storytellers invite young men to inscribe the iconic imagery of their tales upon their own bodies, to mimic it on the battlefield, and to thereby uphold their lineage's reputation in deeds of bravery that are meant to be memorable for all time. Here, the tales that Nuosu share are revealed to be storytelling matters of epic proportions that have entered their myth-histories and cultural memories. According to Swancutt and Jiarimuji, when both storytellers and their stories are memorable enough that other Nuosu choose to mimic and transmit them to future generations, they become the stuff of legends.

Concluding Reflections on Crafting Chinese Memories

What the contributors to this book offer is a new approach to memory-making that goes beyond the study of memories strictly speaking. They show that imagination, fantasy, mimicry, the strange, other and plural vi-

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sions of historiography underpin the memories recounted through stories, works of labour and works of art in China. Understanding storytelling, and indeed memory-making, in this way requires shifting the focus of analysis away from a predominant focus upon narrative. It involves showing that storytellers, their audiences, viewers and readers come to imaginatively identify with the material, sensual and conceptual qualities of a tale.

Throughout this book, the contributors suggest that storytellers engage imaginatively with the world around them. They show that stories, works of labour or works of art are composed of layers and traces of memorable experience drawn from everyday life and banked within personal storehouses of memory. Beyond this, they propose that storytellers in and of China often share their own conflicted memories with audiences, readers or viewers, who may in turn both identify with and contest them. Conflicted or contested memories such as these are traceable to the fact that, in the process of storytelling, certain things will be remembered, and others forgotten. Some memories may always remain private, whereas others are recounted with the intention of having them join social or public memory. Thus, as the contributors suggest, conflicted memories arise from the tensions between what persons consider to be memorable and what they feel should be the trajectory of their own identities, histories, and social or public memory.

It is because storytellers frequently set out to shape identity and history that they so often appeal to the notion of a unified social memory or incorporate certain memories into myth-history. But as each of the contributors suggests, the unity of social memory – particularly in contemporary China – can only ever be an assertion, a hope, a possibility, and a well-specified appeal to a given collective. Social memory is all too easily contested, particularly when a plurality of memories and histories surface through stories, works of art and works of labour.

Of course, if stories are underpinned by a plurality of memories and histories, then identifying with them is not always a straightforward or easy task. The contributors to this volume thus suggest that storytelling requires of its audiences some degree of mimicry, imaginative empathy or identification with the memorable, strange and other. This is the case whether storytellers recount a tale face-to-face or through another medium, such as film or literature, that bridges the distance between themselves and their audience. To enable their audiences to identify with the memorable and strange, then, storytellers embellish their tales with a unique suite of material, sensual and conceptual qualities. For, as every good storyteller knows, the social life and longevity of any given work depends upon its memorability.

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