

Picturing the Nanjing Massacre

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Despite being one of the most symbolically potent and painful events in twentieth-century Chinese history, the Nanjing Massacre has inspired relatively few artistic works in a narrow or traditional sense—by which I mean novels, poems, plays, songs, feature films, paintings, and so on.¹ Instead, a historical and historiographical mode of representation has dominated Chinese representations of the Nanjing Massacre, even within the context of remembrance and commemoration. That mode of representation is a continuation of the earliest, contemporaneous news reporting on the massacre: it is the mode of proving the massacre. Encompassing both verbal and visual representations, the mode of proof assumes an unproblematic referentiality. The horizon of this assumption is that the historical facts of the Nanjing Massacre speak for themselves, or to put it in terms of Barthes's reality effect, they speak themselves. The mode of proof is supported within China by its modern tradition of rationality, scientism, and historical materialism. But it takes as an implied

¹ Compare this to the hundreds, maybe thousands, of feature films, television series, plays, operas, novels, and stories that take place during the Anti-Japanese War (1937-45) but do not mention the Nanjing Massacre. Among the more recent Nanjing Massacre works are the novels *The Fall of Nanjing* (Zhou Erfu, 1987), *War and Man* (Wang Huo, 1993), and *Love in 1937* (Ye Zhaoyan, 1996), and the feature films *Bloody Evidence of the Massacre* (Luo Guanqun, 1987), *Black Sun: The Nanjing Massacre* (Mu Dunpei, 1995) and *Don't Cry, Nanking* (also called *The Nanjing Massacre*) (Wu Ziniu, 1995).

audience the ignorant and the disbelieving (and not incidentally, the speakers and readers of another language entirely), namely the small but vocal number of revisionists and deniers in Japan. However, this mode of representation is not strictly necessary in epistemological or ethical terms. Rather, proving the Nanjing Massacre is an aesthetic convention. Moreover, it is in the particular interplay of evidentiary images and texts that we find an aesthetics of remembering the Nanjing Massacre in Chinese.

I. History of History?

First, a brief overview of the Nanjing Massacre (which is rarely called “the Rape of Nanking” in Chinese):

The nineteenth century saw various foreign (i.e., Western) political, economic, and military encroachments into China, such as the Opium Wars, the subsequent establishment of foreign-administered concessions or territories within key treaty ports such as Shanghai, and the suppression of the Boxer Rebellion in 1900. These external threats to China were matched by internal crises including the Taiping Rebellion, which wrested almost a third of China’s territory away from the government in the mid-nineteenth century, and the various failed reform movements around the turn of the century. The imperial rule of the Qing Dynasty in China finally succumbed to the Revolution of 1911, which despite its aim of establishing a republican government, was followed by several decades of internal struggles that left China unable to defend against foreign invasion. Meanwhile, beginning with the Meiji Restoration in 1868, Japan embarked on a course of modernization that brought it into competition with Western colonial powers and also made it increasingly belligerent toward its neighbors in East Asia. Japan demonstrated its new powers with victories in wars against China (1894-95) and Russia (1904-05) and with the annexation of Korea (1910). Then under the rhetoric of regionalism and cooperative defense against the common enemy of the West,

Japan launched “the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere”. In 1931 Japan engineered the secession of Manchuria—the part of China closest to Japan—and established a puppet government there. Finally, in the summer of 1937 Japan invaded China outright, the two major events at that stage being the Marco Polo Bridge Incident just outside of Beijing in July and the full-scale assault on Shanghai in August. Japan also invaded and occupied much of southeast Asia in what it saw as a war of liberation that it sometimes called the Greater East Asian War. In China, however, World War II—which from this perspective began in 1937—is officially known instead as the Anti-Japanese War.






























After weeks of bloody fighting in and around Shanghai in the fall of 1937, Japanese forces conquered that crucial city on the eastern coast and then proceeded to march westward toward the Republic of China’s (ROC) capital, Nanjing. The Japanese army surrounded the city and overran its badly-organized defenses almost immediately, breaching the city walls on December 13. For whatever reasons—psychological, military, etc.—Japanese troops had already been engaging in extraordinary acts of cruelty and violence during the march to Nanjing, and when they entered the capital, they burned, looted, raped, maimed, and killed en masse. The most common capsule summary of the Nanjing Massacre consists of three figures: 6 weeks, 20,000 women raped, 300,000 dead. By the spring of 1938, the violence had subsided and the occupation forces set to work establishing a puppet collaborationist Chinese government. The city remained under Japanese military control until the end of World War II.

After Japan’s unconditional surrender marked the end of the war, some of its leading military officers were tried and convicted at the widely publicized International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE). Also known as the Tokyo war crimes trials, the IMTFE lasted from May 1946 until November 1948. It was administered by the Allied nations, with judges from Australia, Canada, China, France, Great Britain, India, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the Philippines, the US, and the USSR. Around the same time China held another set of war crimes trials in its restored capital of Nanjing. Over one thousand people were

tried during the two years of the Nanjing trials, which were conducted by the Ministry of Defense.² The end of the war, however, also allowed the full-scale renewal of internal conflicts that had arisen with the founding of the Chinese Communist Party in Shanghai in 1921 but that had been dampened by the Japanese invasion. By the time of the Nanjing war crimes trials, the party in control of the ROC government, the Kuomintang (KMT or Guomindang [GMD], also known as the Nationalists) was losing this renewed civil war to the Communists. The Nationalists, led by Chiang Kai-shek, fled to Taiwan in 1949, reestablishing its capital in Taipei and leaving mainland China in the hands of the Communists. The latter, led by Mao Zedong, founded the People's Republic of China (PRC) on October 1, 1949.

As an episode of utter defeat the Nanjing Massacre was hardly appropriate for patriotic historiography in either the PRC or the ROC (in Taiwan after 1949). This factor was especially apparent in the PRC. During the Korean War, the Nanjing Massacre was occasionally invoked as an emblematic reminder of the dangers of both Japanese strength and American imperialism, since the United States was supporting both Japan and South Korea, as it had supported the ROC. But soon thereafter the project of rebuilding China according to a utopian socialist master narrative outweighed the usefulness of the Nanjing Massacre as a patriotic rallying point. Meanwhile, Japan also expended little effort to remember the Nanjing Massacre.

Because of its status as a defeated aggressor nation, Japan is often compared to Germany with respect to the question of postwar history and memory. Such comparisons are useful in clarifying the situations of both countries, but often through difference rather than similarity—the most visible difference being that the government of Japan has remained quite ambivalent about how it faces its wartime past, unlike the far more orthodox recognition of guilt and responsibility that Germany has expressed in both official and

² Liu Huishu                             , *A New Study of the Nanjing Massacre*, 1998, pp. 222ff.

unofficial registers. Japan's ambivalence itself has a complex history, and there are many published analyses about this. One of the most significant reasons for that ambivalence is the deflection of the issues of guilt, responsibility, punishment, and reparations in the years immediately following the end of the war. That deflection is traceable to U.S. policy during the occupation and reconstruction of Japan (1945-52) and the emergence of the Cold War. This came in spite of the U.S.'s role in leading the IMTFE. The long-term effect of the Tokyo trials was to punish a small number of military and civilian officials while allowing the Emperor himself as well as low-level officials, soldiers, and civilians at large—not to mention large scale structures such as institutions, legal codes, and ideology—to avoid scrutiny or self-scrutiny. The IMTFE was also easily interpretable as an instance of one-sided victor's justice. To this day, therefore, there are a small number of Japanese in all walks of life who deny, downplay, or misrepresent the IMTFE as well as the whole issue of Japan's role in the war.

Among the particular flashpoints of the continuing memory troubles in this area are the Nanjing Massacre and the fate of the so-called comfort women. Less known internationally are issues such as forced labor and the treatment of both civilians and PoWs in occupied territories, especially in southeast Asia, as well as Japanese army units that researched and carried out biological warfare. Each of these flashpoints presents particular questions and conditions. Although I am most familiar with the Nanjing Massacre, I have come to believe recently that the comfort women is in fact a more complex and provocative issue. That is mainly because, far more than the Nanjing Massacre, the comfort women issue involves people in different parts of Asia and at different times, the gendering of wartime experiences, claims that are difficult to classify and evaluate in both psychological and legal terms (even in the present), and the relations among state, military, and civilian realms.

The reason I began to study the Nanjing Massacre a few years ago as a problem of culture and memory, rather than those other cases like the comfort women, is simply that it

was the most visible issue. (This may be changing; the comfort women have become quite well-known via court cases, documentary films, and human rights activities.) And that itself is worth reflecting upon. For what the burgeoning literature on postwar memories of the Asia/Pacific war makes amply clear is that the formation of those memories is always informed by contemporary circumstances, down to the very possibility or necessity of remembering anything at all. So the question is just why the Nanjing Massacre is such a powerful image.

Debates about Japanese postwar history and memory generally take guilt, responsibility, punishment, and reparations as their horizons of reference. So the legacy of the Asia/Pacific war rests mostly on the shoulders of Japan. To be sure, some recent analyses of the Nanjing Massacre and other particular cases from the Asia/Pacific war call for a dialogic or heteroglossic approach. For example, remembering the Nanjing Massacre can be seen as a kind of therapeutic project that involves international and cross-cultural negotiation.³ Moreover, the internationalization of the Nanjing Massacre as an object of memory is a result not just of historical circumstances at the time, such as the presence of foreigners who worked to protect, rescue, and save many Chinese. It is also the result of present-day circumstances in the global circulation of ideas and discourses including those of human rights and of memory itself. One of those circumstances is the stratification or overlapping-without-identity of different mnemonic registers which are visible in terms of the different kinds of texts that they produce. But when we arrive at questions of cultural criticism and especially textual analysis—of literature, film, journalism, textbooks, and the social texts of courtroom proceedings, ideology, group behavior, and public opinion—most commentators still focus primarily on Japan. Some of the more common items for such study include textbooks, comic books, journalistic writings, memoirs and biographies, statements by government officials, and polemical essays and pamphlets.

³ Yang Daqing has proposed this approach in many articles published over the last half-dozen years.

More generally, in fact, cultural analysis of the Nanjing Massacre has been relatively scarce. In disciplinary terms this is clear from the affiliations of scholars who actually study the Nanjing Massacre: the majority of work is done by historians, political scientists, and scholars of international law. (And this is not to mention the various non-scholars, quasi-scholars, and pseudo-scholars involved in Nanjing Massacre discussions.) Although an increasing number of commentators have turned their attention to the question of memory as a cultural object, the difference (if any) between memory and history is often left underexamined. Some excellent histories of the history of the Nanjing Massacre have appeared in several languages, but they rarely attempt to explain why a history of the ways in which the event has been narrated and represented in textbooks and journalism should be thought of as a matter of memory rather than of history. Simply to treat memory as a second-order history, a history of history/historiography, is not enough—for it may be said that historians have always engaged with previous versions of the past, and without necessarily having to invoke the term memory to do so. That is why a discursive approach to memory itself is useful.

Perhaps it is not necessary to enumerate all the different ways of conceptualizing the difference between history and memory in the present context (a whole conference about memory), but by the same token perhaps it is necessary at least to specify a few of my underlying positions. First there is the problem of resistance. Memory is often considered to be the site of popular resistance to official narratives of the past, which in turn are designated as history. But clearly the state acts in the name of memory as well. And the state is neither monolithic nor homogeneous. Second is the problem of referentiality. On the one hand, memory is always memory of something. But on the other hand, this all too quickly binds us to the task of evaluating referential accuracy; in other words, it pulls us back to questions of historical accuracy that thereby overlook much of what goes on in the work of memory. Instead we should analyze memory as text, but always keeping in mind that texts are really intertexts, which is to say that texts and contexts cannot be separated from

each other. Third is the problem of memory's own historicity. The crucial moment for any object of memory arrives on the order of half a century afterwards, when firsthand eyewitnesses become old and pass away. Memory becomes worked and reworked intensely during this period as the anxiety of forgetfulness sets in and is held off in some way through mediated representations. And more generally speaking, all memories are shaped by historical factors including the very conventions and tropes of remembering that are available at the time of the act of remembering. These three points together suggest that in speaking of a social or collective (or *collected*, in James Young's turn of phrase) or public memory, it is important to recognize the participation in transmitting and "having" such memory by those who did not have firsthand experience of the object of memory. And this in turn suggests that what is at stake is simply the social life of representations.

There is, therefore, an area that has been relatively understudied. That is precisely the cultural production of the Nanjing Massacre as memory in China itself. While most acknowledge that the general principle that memory is informed by contemporary circumstances applies to China as well, few have examined that cultural production in detail. One common claim, which is not hard to accept, is that the increasing visibility of the Nanjing Massacre outside of Asia is intimately connected with the increasing international presence of post-Mao China overall. By extension the contemporary Nanjing Massacre revival in China, which began in the wake of the 1980 textbook controversy in Japan, has been intimately connected with the adaptation of Chinese nationalism to late- and post-Cold War international relations. This is confirmed by the fact that textbook controversies and censorship had occurred repeatedly in Japan before 1980, but they had never before been the occasion for such an outpouring of official and unofficial protest in China. What is often overlooked is the crucial role that Japan as an ideological image has played in the formation of Chinese national identity. More importantly, that role itself has a history.

For most, however, the core issue of the Nanjing Massacre—and of the various other examples I mentioned before—remains the problem of guilt, responsibility,

punishment, and reparations. All of these add up to a kind of juridical-economic discourse; if not “an eye for an eye”, then certainly *something* is to be exchanged between a creditor and a debtor. To put it abstractly, it is the history of such a discourse, and its theoretical implications for cultural representations, that interests me. And, as I shall try to show via a particular case history, the notion of such credits and debts is fused with the ideological work that the image of Japan has done in the modern Chinese social imaginary.

II. Photographic Memories, Photographic Justice

“The memory was as unforgettable as the photographs in the booklet.”

(from Xu Zhigeng, “Bloody Evidence”)

By far the most famous of the cases handled at the Nanjing war crimes trials was that of the Japanese general Tani Hisao. He had been commander of the sixth division of the Japanese army, one of the main units involved in the attack on Nanjing and the subsequent sack. Tani Hisao was arrested in Japan in February 1946 and sent to stand trial in Nanjing later that year. As in many war crimes trials, the fate of the accused in this one was never really in doubt, and indeed Tani Hisao was convicted and executed in Nanjing in the spring of 1947. It is therefore important to consider the trial’s functions other than its narrowly juridical one. They include the trial’s cathartic function vis-à-vis Nanjing survivors especially, as well as its historiographical function as an opportunity for the Chinese government to present publicly an official narrative of the Nanjing Massacre. Both of these depend on the notion of justice served by the trial itself. In turn, the particular kind of justice involved has informed, as a kind of master narrative, how the Nanjing Massacre has been remembered half a century later.

The prosecution at the trial presented a whole array of evidence, including survivors’ and third country witnesses’ testimony before the court, contemporary written accounts of

the massacre, unearthed skulls of victims, burial statistics, Japanese newsreels and amateur film footage shot by the American missionary John Magee. Most importantly, the evidence also included an item that was labeled Exhibit Number One: a homemade, pocket-sized booklet of sixteen black-and-white photographs. Where did this singular object come from, and what did it look like? In January 1938, in the midst of the sack of Nanjing, Japanese soldiers brought their film to a civilian Chinese photo studio to be developed. Upon developing the film the sixteen-year-old Chinese technician Luo Jin was confronted with chilling scenes of the sack, primarily of Japanese killing Chinese and of raped women. Luo Jin secretly printed extra copies of some of the photographs, collecting over thirty in all. Eventually, Luo Jin selected sixteen of the photographs and mounted them in a homemade cardboard booklet with a hand-drawn cover: a red bleeding heart, a bloodstained dagger, the Chinese character for “shame” [*chi*], and a question mark. Thus the Japanese images were appropriated, recontextualized, and remade into a book, a text—and one with a specifically Chinese author.⁴ Later during the Japanese occupation of Nanjing, Luo Jin lost the booklet, but it was found and kept hidden by another Chinese man, Wu Xuan. It was Wu Xuan who submitted the booklet to the court for use in Tani Hisao’s trial in 1946.

By far the most common kind of scene in the booklet is that of beheading. Fully six of the sixteen photographs depict beheadings, including the first *five in a row* as they appear in the booklet. Ever since the first Sino-Japanese War of 1894 there had been a sort of minor genre of images of Japanese soldiers in action against Chinese soldiers and civilians, first in woodblock prints, and then later in photographs and films. Many of those images involved beheadings. And it should also be noted that within China itself execution by beheading was routinely performed in criminal cases, and it was done publicly with an eye toward deterrence. There too it was meant to be frightening, scopophilic, and memorable. One of those Japanese images occupies a crucial position in the history of modern Chinese

⁴ After making the booklet, Luo Jin destroyed the remaining secret photographs.

literature. In 1905 Lu Xun, who was to become the single most important modern Chinese writer, was a twenty-year old medical student in Japan. At the time Japan was at war with Russia, but the war itself was fought in Manchuria, on Chinese soil. One day, a supplemental classroom experience changed Lu Xun's life—and that of modern China. As he recounts in the Preface to his first collection of short stories, *A Call to Arms* (a.k.a. *Cheering from the Sidelines*) [*Nahan*] (1923), it was the moment when he decided to abandon medicine for literature:

I don't know what progress has been made in the method of teaching microbiology nowadays, but back then slides were used to familiarize us with the forms of the various microorganisms. Occasionally, when one section of the course outline had been completed and there was still some time before the class period was over, the instructor would show slides of scenery or current events. The Russo-Japanese War was being fought at the time and, understandably, a good number of slides were devoted to the military situation. And so it was that I often had to become part of the fun as my classmates clapped and cheered. At the time, I hadn't seen any of my fellow Chinese in a long time, but one day some of them showed up in a slide. One, with his hands tied behind him, was in the middle of the picture; the others were gathered around him. Physically, they were as strong and healthy as anyone could ask, but their expressions revealed all too clearly that *spiritually* they were calloused and numb. According to the caption [or explanation], the Chinese whose hands were bound had been spying on the Japanese military for the Russians. He was about to be decapitated as a "public example." The other Chinese gathered around him had come to enjoy the spectacle.

Before that academic year was out I had already returned to Tokyo [i.e., he quit medical school], for after this experience I felt that the practice of medicine was nothing urgent to begin with, since no matter *how* healthy or strong the bodies of a

weak-spirited citizenry might be, they'd still be fit for nothing better than to serve as victims or onlookers at such ridiculous spectacles. There was no need to fret about how many of them might die of illness. The most important thing to be done was to transform their *spirits*, and of course the best way to effect a spiritual transformation—or so I thought at the time—would be through literature and art.⁵

Thus a scene of beheading became the most enduring emblem of how modern Chinese literature's "obsession with China"⁶ has resulted from the traveling of images, which is to say the contingent and creative "misreading" of texts by Chinese readers and authors. In fact, there are striking similarities between Lu Xun's parable of the slide and the true story of Luo Jin's booklet. In both cases, for example, Japanese photographic images outrage a single Chinese man whose response is then the inauguration of a master narrative; one of those master narratives informs official modernism, while the other informs the official discourse about an historical event. Moreover, both of those master narratives are forms of memory-work. For Lu Xun begins the Preface in which the parable of the slide appears as follows:

As a young man I had my share of dreams too. Later on I forgot most of them but saw nothing in the least regrettable about that. To be sure, reminiscence can afford us pleasure, but it can occasionally make us lonely, too, and keep the threads of our spirits attached to still other periods of loneliness that have long since gone by. In that case, what point can there possibly be in reminiscing? The trouble is that I have not been able to forget everything, and the part I haven't been able to forget is the source of this volume, *A Call to Arms*.⁷

⁵ Lu Xun, *Diary of a Madman and Other Stories*, trans. William A. Lyell, Honolulu: U of Hawaii P, 1990, pp. 23-4.


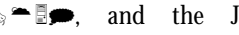
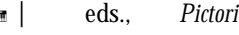

⁶ C. T. Hsia's seminal phrase describing modern Chinese fiction.

⁷ Lyell, p. 21, translation modified.

However, there are also three crucial differences between Lu Xun's case and Luo Jin's. The first difference is that Lu Xun's parable of the slide effaces the photographic image in question entirely. The exact image that Lu Xun saw has never been positively identified, and no actual slide has ever been found.⁸ Despite this the parable remains both intelligible and powerful; in fact, Lu Xun's parable gains power to the very extent that it substitutes literary narration for the photographic image. That substitution, moreover, occurs in the register of historical narrative—that is, both in Lu Xun's own text as a narrative of a historical event as well as the suppression of the visual foundations of the parable in writings on Chinese literary history.⁹ The status of history as textual is crucial to Luo Jin's booklet too; it too must be explained, described, and narrated. But in contrast with Lu Xun's slide, Luo Jin's booklet ultimately derives its authority from the fact of its material existence—its presence. Furthermore that materiality paradoxically takes mechanical reproducibility as its prerequisite, for only under the principle of mechanical reproducibility was it possible for Luo Jin to make his secret prints. Yet what makes the booklet so uniquely significant is still the origin of its contents, the knowledge of where the photographs came from as much as the knowledge of what they show. So the photographs in the booklet are to this day specifically described again and again as originating with the Japanese themselves. In fact, the back cover of the booklet bears the inscription “Photographs of Atrocities That the Japanese Army Took Themselves”, though it is not clear when that inscription was made, or by whom.¹⁰ Likewise, the court's written verdict at the time refers to Exhibit Number One as “massacre photographs that they took

⁸ Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Voices from the Iron House*, Bloomington: U of Indiana P, 1987, p. 18.

⁹ Yomi Braester, *Writing Terror: Crises of Historical Testimony in Twentieth-Century Chinese Literature and Film*, Ph.D. diss, Yale U, 1997, ch. 1; and Rey Chow, *Primitive Passions*, Columbia UP, 1995, ch. 1.

¹⁰ Central Archives , the China Second Historical Archives , and the Jilin Provincial Academy of Social Sciences , eds., *Pictorial Evidence of the Nanjing Massacre* , 1995, p. 128. What is clear is that Luo Jin's recent retellings of the booklet's birth never mention this inscription. I suspect that it was added later, by someone else. According to the curator at the archives, the inscription was added by officers of the military tribunal in 1946 or 1947.

themselves”.¹¹ And nearly every reference to the photographs in newspaper coverage of Tani Hisao’s trial adds that they were taken by the Japanese themselves.

The second difference between Lu Xun’s slide image and Luo Jin’s photographs is that they imply different audiences. This difference is visualized within the images themselves. Eyewitness accounts from the Nanjing Massacre as well as information from other contexts (other wars, written accounts, etc.) confirms that beheadings were particularly *photogenic* acts. That is, they were staged spectacles, occasions for Japanese soldiers to show off their swordsmanship, to terrify the enemy, and so on. They were performed with the awareness of being watched; indeed, they were performed precisely *in order to be watched*. So the six beheading photographs in the booklet differ from the other ten in that they include whole crowds of spectators in the background. While there were probably Chinese prisoners present, waiting to be beheaded, there appear to be none within the photographs; the visually embedded audience is Japanese only. This confirms the origin of all the booklet photographs as photographs taken by Japanese, and as photographs of events staged for Japanese eyes. In one pair of the beheading photographs, at least *five* Japanese soldiers appear to be holding cameras.

That Luo Jin’s initial act of appropriation of the photographs foreshadows Tani Hisao’s trial as a drama of revenge is fairly obvious, for that is the reason why the photographs were so effective as Exhibit Number One. But what is less obvious is how the booklet itself as a text then anticipates the photographs’ round trip, from anonymous Japanese soldiers through Luo Jin and Wu Xuan, to Tani Hisao’s trial. In fact, the only actual word in the booklet—“shame”—is usually understood as addressing a Chinese “readership”. It refers to the Nanjing Massacre as one example of China’s modern national

¹¹ China Second Historical Archives and Nanjing Municipal Archives eds., *Archival Documents Relating to the Horrible Massacre Committed by the Japanese Troops in Nanjing in December 1937*, 1997, p. 823.

shame, as in the slogan “Do Not Forget (Our) National Shame” [*wu wang guo chi*].¹² But the scene of reading at Tani Hisao’s trial—the accused was forced to “read” [*yue* or *yuelan*] the text¹³—suggests that all along there was a latent reading as well: the booklet is about Japan’s shameful wartime behavior. (Also note that the verb *yue* can take either written texts or things and scenery as its object: hence the act it names slides between reading written texts and viewing visual images like photographs.) So either the implied Chinese audience must find itself compelled to look at the photographs and hence to feel that national shame, or it must be present to witness the latent Japanese audience finding itself compelled to look at the photographs and hence to feel a *Japanese* national shame. In fact, the two possibilities complement each other, making the booklet’s cover design the script for a play-within-a-play that allows the Chinese audience at once to feel its own shame and to disavow it as the other’s shame. In this way the booklet’s legend links “shame” with a *Chinese* scopophilia, too. And it is this latter disavowal that makes Luo Jin’s (and by extension, the Nanjing court’s) act of parasitic spectatorship the basis for a triumphant narrative of appropriation rather than the merely shameful one that Lu Xun adumbrates.

This suggests one reason why even today, over half a century later, Luo Jin’s booklet is central to Chinese lore surrounding the Nanjing Massacre and its aftermath. Like most of the other high-ranking Japanese tried for war crimes in Tokyo, Nanjing, and elsewhere, Tani Hisao insisted to the very end that he was innocent. His sometimes desperate and convoluted statements during the trial naturally infuriated Chinese observers; in other words, he did not speak what was required of him. The absence of a confession or guilty plea in

¹² The notion of national shame often serves as the official gloss on China’s modern history. For example, see Zhuang Jianping 庄建平 ed., *A Dictionary of National Shame* 国家耻辱辞典 (1840-1949), 上海辞书出版社, 1992; and Zhou Shan 周善 and Zhang Chunbo 张春波 eds., *An Illustrated Record of China’s One Hundred Years of National Shame* 中国百年国家耻辱图史, 上海辞书出版社, 1998.

¹³ See the reports in the February 7, 1947 editions of the following newspapers: *新蜀报* (5165), p. 3; *新蜀报*, p. 4; *新蜀报* (6184), p.2; *新蜀报* 5404, p. 1; *新蜀报* (13965), p. 2; *新蜀报* (13965), p. 2.

this and many other trials of Japanese war criminals has proven to be a thorny issue for both historiography and legal studies, not to mention an entry point for Nanjing Massacre deniers. Since the photographs in the booklet are objective traces of Japanese intentionality, that is, since they are “Photographs of Atrocities That the Japanese Army Took Themselves”, they function as a kind of alternative confession: again, not only did the Japanese commit such acts, but they did so self-consciously, while photographing and being photographed. This quasi-confession, however, remains incomplete without a layer of regret or apology, so it is this layer that the booklet’s inscription of “shame” ventriloquizes. Thus Tani Hisao’s trial enacted a drama of revenge that consists of turning the perpetrator’s desires—to see and be seen—against himself; it is a kind of “poetic justice”. Or, in the age of mechanical reproduction, this amounts to what we might call not “poetic justice” but “photographic justice”.

The third difference is that whereas Lu Xun consciously recounts his parable in the name of literature, Luo Jin was not a writer nor did he conceive of his booklet-making as a literary act. Indeed, until recently almost no one has consciously thought of the history of the booklet as a *story*. Nevertheless, the narrative of photographic justice is indeed a literary one. Moreover it operates, one might say, not just on paper but in real life. For just a few years after the trial of Tani Hisao, the Nationalist government of Chiang Kai-shek retreated to Taiwan. Among the things left behind in 1949 were the court records and the booklet of photographs. The booklet then lay in obscurity for several decades in the China Second Historical Archives in Nanjing. The way in which the booklet was rediscovered and its story retold demonstrates how the booklet and its photographs have gone from historical documentation and judicial evidence to potent mnemonic tokens in the social imaginary.

It is perhaps a truism that news media are never merely objective and descriptive; they are never merely factual or proof-oriented. They also “at once document, manipulate, and constitute” reception as an expression of the collective imagination of their reading

publics.¹⁴ In Chinese the paraliterary genre of reportage [*baogao wenxue*, literally “report literature”] is a crucial site for negotiating these three functions on a textual level because it represents real people and events via novelistic or fictional techniques. Reportage was developed in the 1930s by writers and journalists who sought to write articles that were longer, more detailed, and more memorable than regular news reports. Thus reportage writers consciously began using “literary” techniques to express their raw facts. These techniques stress novelistic or fictional aspects of narration, such as well-wrought plots, foregrounded characters, imagined dialogue and inner thoughts and emotions. Still, for most Chinese readers and writers the first priority of reportage is to be historically accurate, and the second is to have some real political or social agenda. This discards as merely tertiary, insignificant, or “unconscious” the fictional side’s function of making the story readable, provocative, and memorable. The literariness of reportage, that is, obliges the writer to make the material attractive to its readers; it must stir their imaginations and move their hearts. The question of just what counts as attractiveness, and how reportage texts articulate it is a question of rhetoric and aesthetics—but not surprisingly these remain relatively unexplored in Chinese literary criticism.

On the fiftieth anniversary of the Nanjing Massacre in 1987, the journalist and reportage writer Xu Zhigeng published the first reportage book about the event, simply entitled *The Nanjing Massacre*. The book was an immediate success; according to Xu, it sold 150,000 copies in the first month.¹⁵ It has since been reprinted several times by several publishers in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan; and it has been translated into both Japanese and English. While doing research for the book at the China Second Historical Archives in

¹⁴ Miriam Hansen, *Babel & Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film*, Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1991, p. 253. Hansen here is actually describing the public/publicity discourse surrounding the movie star Valentino and its relationship to his reception. Newspapers are only one aspect of that discourse, which extends across various media, forms, and genres. Also nb. Benedict Anderson on the formal significance of newspapers in instituting their publics within a spatio-temporal continuum, a “homogeneous, empty time” (Walter Benjamin) and space.

¹⁵ Much of the following information comes from my interview with Xu Zhigeng at the Forever restaurant in Nanjing on July 23, 2000.

1986, he had come across Luo Jin's booklet of photographs. At the time, this and several other topics—mostly concerning the afterlives of the Nanjing Massacre rather than the events of 1937-8 themselves—did not seem to fit into the book Xu was writing. So it was not until several years later that he wrote four short followup pieces. One of them, “Bloody Evidence”, was about the booklet. It was published in the influential Shanghai newspaper *Wen Hui Bao* on December 11, 1991 (two days before the anniversary of the fall of Nanjing), on a weekly page devoted to reportage. At this point the original owner of the booklet—Luo Jin—had never been positively identified, so “Bloody Evidence” focuses on the booklet's second owner, Wu Xuan—the man who had submitted it to the court in 1946. But the article led to yet another coincidence in the story of the booklet, this time the chance rediscovery of Luo Jin himself: a friend mailed the *Wen Hui Bao* article to Luo Jin, who was then living in Fujian Province, where he was once again running none other than a photo shop. Luo Jin reportedly was both surprised that the booklet still existed and upset that Wu Xuan had gotten both fame and credit for it.¹⁶ Eventually, a television station in Nanjing brought the two men together, and Luo Jin was formally acknowledged as the booklet's original owner. The perfect narrative circle that the story had drawn immediately made it a strikingly memorable tale, one that newspapers and television alike publicized with great enthusiasm.

As a work of reportage, “Bloody Evidence” contains some details which are not quite true. The balancing act between truth and fiction performed by the article may appear to be unnecessarily daring given the recurring charges that have come from Japanese revisionists, to the effect that the Nanjing Massacre is a postwar fabrication, or at least a wild exaggeration, on the part of the Chinese. For example, the text presents a series of five descriptions of photographs in the booklet.¹⁷ At least the first three of those photographs

¹⁶ Duan Yueping, personal interview at the Memorial Hall, July 18, 2000.

¹⁷ Xu Zhigeng, “Bloody Evidence” in *The Nanjing Massacre*, 1997, pp. 316-17.

are easily recognizable from the descriptions; they have been featured in many illustrated texts on the Nanjing Massacre.¹⁸ The other two are less readily identifiable, but they certainly belong to actual categories of photographs associated with the massacre, namely those of live burials and raped women. So the *Wen Hui Bao* published four photographs along with “Bloody Evidence”: besides a recent portrait of Wu Xuan, two of the photographs are the first and third described in the text, and the fourth photograph shown is by implication the fourth one described, that of the live burial.

The problem is that *none* of the five photographs described in the text, nor any of the three companion photographs displayed in the *Wen Hui Bao*, are actually in the booklet of sixteen. Still, at least the first three in the text are real photographs which really do depict scenes from the Nanjing Massacre or at least scenes *similar* to those known to have existed at the time, based on other photographs and materials such as oral and written accounts. So while these five photographs are not truly in the booklet, they do convey the horror of the Nanjing Massacre. In other words, the verbal or discursive testimony that the photographs engender may be “performative” in the simple negative sense that it cannot be fully understood in terms of its truth or falsehood. As the recent controversy over the accuracy of Rigoberta Menchú’s *testimonio* suggests, what matters may be not so much whether such-and-such an event really happened but that under actual conditions at that time and place, *someone* in the community that Rigoberta claims to represent witnessed or *could have* witnessed such an event. Such utterances may be collective voicings that convey and manifest—or better yet, document, manipulate, and constitute—the experiences of a community as such.

In “Bloody Evidence”, the dramatic role played by the sixteen photographs climaxes on April 26, 1947, the day of Tani Hisao’s execution. On that day Tani Hisao was paraded

¹⁸ The first two are of beheadings: a posed scene beforehand, and a result (a Japanese soldier holding a sword and a severed head). The third photograph described is similar to the sixth photograph in the actual booklet: this one is a posed shot of two soldiers with two bound prisoners.

historians—confirm the social function of reportage as I described it above. That is, they merely write off this example of reportage [*baogao wenxue*] as being more literature than report, more *wenxue* than *baogao*. Xu Zhigeng's work, they admit, is quite popular and accessible to nonexperts—but as a historiographical work it is not worth serious factual or textual scrutiny.

For the history of the booklet is already full of miraculous twists and turns and chance events such that it hardly seems necessary to add a fictional detail further emphasizing the wondrousness of that history. There is perhaps no better term for the latter property than the Chinese term *qi*, which connotes the uncanny, strangeness (in the sense of “estrangement” or *ostraniè*), marvels, miracles, cleverness, and so on. It also carries a specifically aesthetic connotation to the extent that such uncanniness, etc. is appreciated in an aesthetic register—witness the literary tradition of the *chuanqi* tale. So a simple appeal to Xu Zhigeng's knowledge, research, intention, style, or responsibility as an individual artist, the sole author of “Bloody Evidence”, fails to offer a satisfactory explanation for the poetic license that this work of reportage seems to take with historical truth. Nor is it enough simply to close the matter by admitting that Wu Xuan, who told Xu of the truck photographs, may have misremembered the scene—for that would only reduce the analysis of memory to fact-checking. Perhaps the addition of the truck photographs *is* necessary, but not for purely aesthetic reasons, which is really to say that aesthetics is never pure. Rather, it is precisely in an aesthetic register that the detail in question brings to a proper narrative closure the logic of photographic justice: Chinese readers witness Wu Xuan witnessing the spectacle of Tani Hisao being carried to his just doom by The Photographs of Atrocities That the Japanese Army Took Themselves. Viewed in this light, it does not matter whether or not there really were such photographs on the truck in 1947, for if the detail is true, it merely shows that someone *already* felt at the time the necessity to include the photographs in the final act of the drama. Either way, this aesthetic closure is therefore a real operation by, of, and for the imagined community.

But there is another explanation for how Luo Jin was rediscovered. The *Wen Hui Bao* published another article entitled “Bloody Evidence” on July 7, 1995, another significant date for commemorations, July 7 being the date of the Marco Polo Bridge incident (1937), and 1995 being the fiftieth anniversary of the victory over Japan.²¹ This later “Bloody Evidence” was clearly intended to be a distant followup to Xu Zhigeng’s in that the later article recalls the story of the booklet of sixteen photographs, but with emphasis on Luo Jin rather than Wu Xuan. In fact, the later “Bloody Evidence” uncannily repeats Xu Zhigeng’s earlier article in the same newspaper by displaying four photographs: one of Luo Jin, and three of images commonly associated with the Nanjing Massacre but not from the booklet itself. The 1995 article claims that Luo Jin in fact heard of the booklet’s rediscovery from an acquaintance who visited him personally in the summer of 1990, over a year before Xu Zhigeng’s “Bloody Evidence” was published. Furthermore, the acquaintance had read an article in a Nanjing newspaper mentioning the booklet and its original owner, a certain Luo Jin. That article is probably one that appeared in the Nanjing tabloid *Weekend* in December 1987.²² It is significant not so much because it was published around the time that Xu Zhigeng’s book *The Nanjing Massacre* was released, but rather because of another event timed to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the massacre that month. That event was the release of the first Chinese-language feature film about the Nanjing Massacre, *Bloody Evidence of the Massacre* [Tu cheng xue zheng] (dir. Luo Guanqun). The article in *Weekend* was a small item introducing the “true” story behind the film. Regardless of which newspaper article was truly responsible for the rediscovery of Luo Jin, one thing is certain: newspapers and their “soft” news articles documenting, manipulating, and constituting public memory were indeed crucial to the continuing narration of the Nanjing Massacre as photographic justice in the area of literature and the arts.

²¹ Zhang Shengsheng 张圣生 and Lin Chunzhong 林丛中, “Bloody Evidence” 血腥证据, *Wen Hui Bao* 文汇报 17420 (July 7, 1995), p. 7.

²² Xiaohui 晓晖 and Lingzi 玲子, “Brought to Light by *Bloody Evidence of the Massacre*” 血腥证据照亮了《南京大屠杀》, *Weekend* 313 (December 26, 1987), p. 1.

The scriptwriter of *Bloody Evidence of the Massacre*, Xie Guangning, had discovered the booklet at the China Second Historical Archives in the mid-1980s while researching a previous film script—and he had done so independently of Xu Zhigeng. In the second half of *Bloody Evidence of the Massacre*, the Chinese proprietor of a photo shop in Nanjing who had been ordered to develop film by a Japanese soldier passes along the resulting prints to a Chinese doctor. The latter then passes them to the daughter of an American doctor who has managed to procure a spot on the last ship out of Nanjing. The moment of this plot line's emergence from the general chaos and horror of the first half of the film is precisely the moment when the four characters are discussing how to prove the massacre to the outside world. The film ends with the photo shop owner dead, the Chinese doctor trapped in a burning belltower (à la *The Phantom of the Opera*), and the American woman unwrapping the bundle of photographs just as the ship sets sail. As with the photographs in both of the *Wen Hui Bao* articles entitled “Bloody Evidence”, none of the five photographs that we see in the American woman's hands is in Luo Jin's booklet of sixteen. However, all of them are commonly seen in the numerous collections of Nanjing Massacre photographs published in the last decade. According to the director Luo Guanqun, the photographs in the film were chosen simply for their on screen legibility.²³ Thus in both media, reportage and film, what matters is not which actual photographic images are involved but rather the symbolic value of photographs as a certain kind of sign: indexical, self-evident, real, reproducible. This shifts the moment of beholding the photographs from an epistemological one to an aesthetic one, from knowing to seeing and feeling.

From this I would like to draw a few conclusions. From the moment the Nanjing Massacre began, proving its existence was crucial—witness the reports and photographs circulated in periodicals in China, Japan, and other countries at the time, as well as John Magee's film footage. To this day, proving it is still the main mode of representing the

²³ Luo Guanqun, personal interview at his home in Nanjing on July 29, 2000.

massacre in Chinese. But of all people, Chinese people are the least in need of such proof—for they more than anyone else believe that the Nanjing Massacre really did happen. So proof as an epistemological act is not strictly necessary in Chinese. Instead, the endurance of the logic of photographic justice suggests that we understand proof as an aesthetic gesture, one that, furthermore, works on three levels. First, it interpellates a particular audience as *Chinese* at the same time that it also alludes to a Japanese other, those who do not know or do not believe in the Nanjing Massacre. Second, it is an aesthetic in the particular sense of linking a sensory experience with an affective one, namely shame (a specular response, as I have argued above), outrage, and so on. Third, by considering proof as an aesthetic gesture we can begin to see how what matters in public memory is not so much factual or historical accuracy as it is the operations of the social imaginary. And it is on this point that memory is indeed a matter of culture.