overdetermination. A will to remember must be present initially.”\textsuperscript{59} It is precisely this will to remember that tells \textit{lieux de mémoire} from \textit{lieux d’histoire}. In Wang Jingwei’s case, the material and discursive space of his poems offers a nexus point where China’s collective historical and cultural memory, the author’s individual memory, and the reader’s memory of him and of the war collide and converse with each other. Symbolically, with “Wang Zhaoming” the man increasingly fading behind the veils of history, his poetry has subsequently turned into his transubstantiation, through which he lives an after-life.

\textbf{Chapter Outline}

This book is divided into two parts. Part One, “A Life,” is a biography of Wang Jingwei. By investigating Wang’s words and deeds, it recontextualizes some of the most pivotal events in modern Chinese history in which he played a crucial albeit often forgotten role. Arguably, he was one of the last, if not the very last, modern Chinese politician standing in continuity of the meritocratic, moralistic, and literary “literatus” tradition.

Chapter One, “The Revolutionary,” begins with Wang’s rise from an orphan and child prodigy to a brilliant polemist and nationalist. His attempt to assassinate the prince regent made him an icon of the revolution. After the success of the 1911 Revolution, however, he decided to abandon politics and recommit to studying. The next decade saw him traversing the oceans between China and France, torn between the pressing needs of the Revolution and his long-term

\textsuperscript{59} Nora, “General Introduction: Between Memory and History,” 14.
goal of becoming an educator. He finally re-devoted himself to domestic politics after the First World War.

Chapter Two, “The Statesman,” paints a picture of Wang emerging from the shadows of Sun Yat-sen to become China’s foremost civil servant. In these two long decades, the Nationalist Party fought a variety of domestic and international enemies. Wang’s career reflected the mobile power constellations and ideological alliances of the age. The period ended with the fall of Nanjing in December 1937 to the pressing Imperial Japanese Army. This chapter also examines Wang’s neo-Confucian persuasions and his self-proclaimed disposition for the private pleasure of reclusion.

Chapter Three, “The ‘Traitor’,” examines Wang’s path to collaboration. Convinced that a protracted war was mutually destructive for China and for Japan, Wang was enticed by the Konoe Cabinet’s statement to seek a peaceful solution, ultimately establishing a client regime in Nanjing. The ideologies and policies of this regime, as well as his poetry through the period, will be examined. This chapter also explores the circle of poets in Nanjing. Their chosen genre of literary communication was classical-style poetry, a genre that facilitated their construction of literary persona as well as the cultural legitimacy of their regime.

Part Two, “The Shadows,” investigates the exegetical ambiguity of existence that poetic words cast behind, through three thematic studies on the lyrical subject and on the temporal and spatial dimensions of memory construction. Poetry is revealed to be a dynamic mnemonic realm constantly created and recreated, binding the poets, their literary precursors, and their contemporary and future readers in a common worldly space.

Chapter Four, “The Lyric Subject as a Mnemonic Atlas: Reading ‘Night Onboard’,” closely reads a poem that Wang wrote in 1939 on his way to build a collaborationist regime in
Japanese-occupied China. The intensive patriotic pathos in the poem has caused an exegetical crisis among historians. In this chapter, I propose reading Wang’s poetry as a special kind of mnemonic text with historiographical functions, in order to transcend classical exegetical criteria such as “authenticity” or “revelation.” Under closer examination, “Night Onboard” is a composite text that contains multiple forms of memories, each with its own purpose. The text resists a singular reading, but is revealed to be a mnemonic atlas, a rich and ambivalent open space of creative cacophony. By creating a diachronic community with literary precursors and readers, it assumes the historiographical function to write the fourth dimension of history: the imaginative and the creative—or simply, “the poetic.”

Chapter Five, “Temporal Memory: The Iconography of an Assassin and Problems of Legitimacy,” explores a curious cycle of poems exchanged around a painting on the motif of Jing Ke’s 荊軻 (d. 227 BCE) assassination of the King of Qin, all by chief collaborators and openly published in early 1942. I investigate the function of Wang’s iconography as an assassin in constructing the legitimacy of the RNG. The image of Jing Ke had transformed through history before morphing into a Republican and national hero in the twentieth century, eventually standing for resisting Japan (Qin). These poems thus raise intriguing questions, especially considering their Japanese readership. I argue that, while cultural memory can be evoked as a legitimizing discourse to serve actual political needs, its malleability gives it versatility. Wang’s iconography as assassin was a floating symbol that assumed varying meanings in different contexts, justifying simultaneously resistance and collaboration.

Chapter Six, “Spatial Memory: The Impossibility of Remembering the Past at Nanjing,” examines the memory of Nanjing, an ancient capital having experienced repeated cycles of prosperity and conquest. Stephen Owen has explored how its poetic history has transposed the
actual reality of the city, turning it into, in Nora’s term, a “site of memory.” Here, however, I examine the close interaction between poems about Nanjing and contemporary historical events during the Republican period. Instead of being generic variations on the theme “meditating on the past,” such poems well chronicled to reflect actual horrors and glory. Curiously, however, few such poems were ever written after the 1937 Massacre. I argue that it was perhaps because the narrative of an impersonal force of history, the “rise and fall,” risked reducing the immediate and unique historical event to a déjà vu. In this sense (and to paraphrase Adorno), “meditating on the past” after the Rape of Nanjing was barbaric. The weight of memory at Nanjing was particularly reflected in the sound and silence of classical-style poems by RNG poets. For a regime struggling with its own legitimacy, “meditating on the past” would suggest that it, too, would suffer from the fate of conquest. The poets’ reactions to the burden of literary tradition ranged from self-defense to wistful denial, but most commonly a pregnant aphasia. The ways in which Wang and his followers treated this topic therefore become a case study on the complex of cultural memory, political legitimacy, and literary representation in occupied China.

In the Epilogue, “Poetry against Oblivion,” I explore the censorship of memory on Wang Jingwei, primarily in contemporary Mainland China. I examine monuments, museums, textbooks, and films to analyze the mechanism of punitive forgetting, driven by ideological and market forces alike. At the same time, the fragmented memory created by censorship may come back to haunt through unexpected channels. In the end, I explore the possibility of reconciling obligations toward the justice of memory and the truth of history, as well as of the happiness of forgetting.

60 Owen, “Place.”