1989 Tiananmen Square: A Proto-History

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It is a commonly held belief that Chinese history is ancient, and, in fact, is one of the longest histories of any present-day nation. What exactly does this mean? One aspect of Chinese history that could explain this phenomenon is that two thousand years ago, China was still China. It has an unbroken, magnificent history spanning several millennia. This could be due to China’s rich literary history or that many invaders adopted Chinese culture and political structure. Regardless of the reason for China’s incredible cultural staying power, the fact that China’s history can be deemed as ‘long’ or ‘longer’ demonstrates the importance of history when discussing China and that history itself is not dependent on time alone, but is also a philosophical imposition. In other words, history is constructed, it is an analytical interpretation that creates and defines personal, political, cultural, and intellectual significance. In this regard, China’s history is epic.

It is interesting to note, however, that such a grandiose history excludes particular events. While studying abroad in China in 2010, I wanted to write a history of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, but found myself unable to do so. In China today, there is no official record of the events, not even an official recognition that they took place. The subject is forbidden. If any archive exists, it is not available to scholars or the public. How does one write a history of something that is forbidden and for which there is no archive? This paper is an attempt to do just that, to seek a historical discourse from the knowledge fragments and memories that linger in the face of suppression.

Sparked in part by the fall of other communist regimes around the world and the death of noted party official Hu Yaobang in April 1989, over one hundred thousand people, mostly students, gathered in Tiananmen Square initially to mourn. They then later advocated for political reforms to accompany the rapid economic change and growth that China was already experiencing. The protestors grew in number over time until the night of June 3rd and morning
of June 4th when the army violently ended the protests. This ‘Tiananmen Massacre,” or “June 4th Incident” as it is called, is an event of recent history that significantly impacted China and elsewhere in the world. The subject is extremely controversial and has become one of the most politicized and taboo topics of modern Chinese history.

This thesis seeks to analyze how the Tiananmen Square incident of June 4th, 1989, while not acknowledged as part of official history, is a part of China’s history. I will explore the historiographical processes that have and continue to shape the history of this event because the incident has had tremendous impact in its own right and is an ideal case for assessing the history and historiography of modern China.

How does a historian go about producing historical knowledge and discourse? For any historical analysis, sources, empirical evidence, are fundamental. Outside of mainland China, primary sources regarding Tiananmen are comparatively limited; moreover, the topic is mired in political bias and controversy. Within China, public dialogue regarding the June 4th incident is generally forbidden. However, discussion does take place. It is possible that the incident’s forbidden quality has the potential to produce even more varied, rich, and lively historical understandings. For example, it is expressed in different genres, including poetry, memoirs, and essays, which circulate in a quasi-underground manner via a variety of media, such as video clips, e-mail and other online forums, personal networks, and, in some cases, (subtly) in published form. A dialogue of converging forces, opinions, and interpretations then, does exist in China. This thesis contends that this discourse represents a collective memory under construction and an emergent, if scattered and elusive, archive.
The specific details of what composes the current history of the June 4th incident will be identified and discussed in the following sections, but in general, memory is a key component. Memory is a natural aspect of human life; and, even in the complete absence of historical discourse, major social events are always remembered by the people involved and by the people affected. There is a difference between ‘individual memory’—memoirs, interviews, and feelings of particular individuals as they perceived and have processed the event over time—and ‘collective memory’. The latter is a broader cultural construction, which may include emotionally contained interpretations, or emotional reactions, or simply memories, which exist between and among different individuals, families, and people who all share something in common with the event.1 Such a history may or may not be analytical, but it is nevertheless relevant. Through the memoirs of individuals and the nonacademic works of individuals and communities, a sort of ‘peoples’ archive’ is emerging. This archive is intrinsically dynamic; as memory changes and discourse expands, so too will the history continue to change and develop. It is a living history, as much alive as the people who currently define and create it.

If there is insufficient evidence and historiography for a comprehensive analytic historical interpretation of Tiananmen, there is instead a proto-history that resides in the fragmented archive of the people. The main goal of this thesis is to write a proto-history of the June 4th, 1989 Tiananmen Square incident and analyze the current discourse as such. I seek to put the Tiananmen Square incident in context, introduce some of the sources that circulate in China today, and attempt to make sense of what sort of ‘history’ exists. Such a history is necessarily incomplete, unofficial, highly controversial and politicized. It exists mercurially in consciousness, memory, and expression. Many characteristics of the existing discourse could be

defined as extra-historical. By ‘extra’ I mean to suggest that they stretch outside the traditional disciplines of academia and tap into other elements of human perspective and expression, such as the arts. The potential of the extra-historical is thus limitless, and this paper specifically addresses poetry and memoir. Being both fragmentated and forbidden, the history of the Tiananmen Square incident of 1989 is both proto and extra historical; it is a living, dynamic subject that is based in history but that both extends beyond traditional history and looms over present day China.

**Historiography**

History is not written in a vacuum. It is subject to the inconsistent and ever changing interpretations and motivations of the people who write and make history. This section of the paper seeks to define the context under which the history surrounding the June 4th incident was created outside of China as well as to identify the various converging and often contradicting dynamics to which it is subject. The June 4th incident is a highly controversial and emotionally charged event that happened recently—only a little over twenty years ago. Thus, it is still in living memory. It is existentially close to many of the people who write its history.

The histories of Tiananmen, both those that are written outside of China and that which is forbidden in China, exemplify the problem of nationalist history. Prasenjit Duara, in his book *Rescuing History from the Nation*, argues that “historical consciousness in modern society has been overwhelmingly framed by the nation-state,” or that, in essence, history belongs to the nation. Duara argues that the nation needs its own history to define and legitimize itself. ‘The nation’ is an intrinsic aspect of history; the nation uses history as a tool to explain its own past,

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justify its present, and lay claim to its future. In a broader context, Duara also comments that there are “bifurcated histories”, or conflicting narratives of history that tend to “appropriate or conceal complex historical realities incompatible with [their] own view of the world.” In other words, within the nation-state, different social groups develop their own histories, which often conflict with other perspectives and sometimes omit that which contradicts their own point of view. Furthermore, Anthony D. Smith, in his essay “Nationalism and the Historians”, claims that nationalism is a historical movement par excellence. It frames the world with a historicist character and perceives it as a “product of interplay of various communities” that each have their own history and origins. Nationalism effectively divides the world, and history itself, into different nations.

Thus, history and historiographical construction take on a specific context when discussing Tiananmen Square (for which nationalism is inescapably relevant). Benedict Anderson describes in his book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* that the nation-state is an imaged community, a product of various macro forces, history being one of them. I would argue that these forces work mutually with groups of people to create a nationalistic will and identity. As a result, nationalism is a very active force. It can change, create, and destroy stuff of reality and the abstract. Lord Acton highlighted that idealistic nationalism, carried to its conclusion, leads to absolutism. The point is that nation-states and their actors have both the will and ability to control history in as absolute a manner as is fit for their purposes. Duara argues that history is contingent, but that via nationalism “historical actors

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3 Duara, 5.
4 Duara, 4-6.
6 Smith, 175-197.
appropriate dispersed meanings and pasts as their own”\(^8\), or, in other words, that they depict history as teleological and productive in terms of serving the nation-state.

This process is evident in the course of modern Chinese history, especially with 1989 Tiananmen. Duara mentions that history is a means or vehicle through which non-nations are converted into nations. The early 20\(^{th}\) century Chinese scholar-reformer, Liang Qichao, certainly believed this and wrote Chinese history with a linear narrative so as to exhort the Chinese people to build a modern nation. Only certain writers, specifically the noted intellectual Lu Xun, questioned this narrative form\(^9\) (and, it could be argued that even though he questioned such a narrative, he was ultimately bound by it and simply created a different sort of nationalist narrative). Interestingly enough, it is also writers and other artists and individuals who question and challenge the nonexistent narrative of the June 4\(^{th}\) movement’s history.

Another aspect of the modern historiographical process outlined by Duara is a “unified episteme marked by an epistemological break with a past consciousness” which, he suggests, makes the study of a “cohesive collective subject of history” possible.\(^10\) This raises the question of what happens in the case of the June 4\(^{th}\) incident for which no ‘unified episteme’ can possibly exist because there is no uniform discourse whatsoever. In terms of the ‘bifurcated histories’ that contain different perspectives that each leave something out, what of a historical void where no history is allowed? It is in this context and this dialectic that the history and historiography of the June 4\(^{th}\) incident exist. Not all voices pertain to official (or even academic) discourse, and as will be shown, many voices lack historical analysis or are the voices of dissidents and the repressed.

\(^8\) Duara, 16.
\(^9\) Duara, 27-45.
\(^10\) Duara, 55-56.
To reiterate, historical discussions of China (at least those found in secondary sources) are bound by nationalist discourse and often fall under the context of the ‘Chinese’ versus ‘Other’ dichotomy. Specifically, the sources discussed in this paper are divided into two groups: those outside of mainland China and those inside mainland China, all of which are relevant in writing Tiananmen’s history. Those outside of China consist of documentary collections that are banned in the mainland, the most well-known of which is Andrew Nathan’s *The Tiananmen Papers*, which contains leaked government documents relevant to the incident. Most of the secondary sources are works of political science or political commentary. Also, news and other mass media, while not based on rigorous historical research, do create historical narratives that influence how events are understood. I will briefly discuss both the Chinese and American media sources surrounding the June 4th incident.

Within mainland China, no secondary sources exist. The primary sources discussed in this paper fall into two categories: texts created by individual memory and those that are products of collective memory. While in China in 2010, I collected several sources that Chinese students had managed to find, collect, and distribute. These sources are mostly videos, essays, online articles, and memoirs. I will discuss two proto-histories, one based on works of art, specifically the published poem by famous poet, Ouyang Jianghe, that projects the incident into a national consciousness. The other includes works of individual creation, such as an essay written by a scholar that was circulated to friends on one of the anniversaries of the event.

This paper seeks to explore these sources and to reconcile them with the goal of gaining a greater understanding of the history and historiography surrounding the June 4th incident. Such history, despite the many obstacles working against it, is still quite rich and complex. Its significance and potential power is still yet to be revealed. But, as Michel de Certeau to claimed:
“the repressed past will return to haunt the present.” At this point, the question arises as to what sort of event is so controversial and untouchable as to require such effort for some to suppress it and others to discuss it, which I address in the following section.

The Story of Tiananmen-Facts and Narratives

On October 1st, 1949, Mao Zedong ended decades of war and established the People’s Republic of China. This establishment of a new, communist country was an experiment in many ways. Throughout the PRC’s young history, its leaders and people attempted various ideological and economic revolutionary endeavors. As is the course of history, the success and/or failures of these events influenced successive events. During the Great Leap Forward from 1958-1961, Mao sought to economically surpass the other countries in the world with a ‘great leap.’ The plan, however, was more ideological than pragmatic and resulted in what was arguably the worst famine in Chinese history. After losing some political power due to the Great Leap Forward’s failures, as well as an ideological split with the Soviet Union, Mao started the Cultural Revolution in 1966. It lasted until his death in 1976 and aimed to cement socialism in China and eliminate all remaining elements of bourgeoisie capitalism. In this process, many institutions, cultural/historical artifacts, and people’s lives were destroyed.

Afterwards, Chinese society took a different turn under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping. Deng and other reform minded elites started the Open Up and Reform Movement in 1978 to transform China’s economy from a state controlled, stagnant one into a capitalist market economy with large emphasis on growth. Most Chinese intellectuals responded positively to the

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1. Duara, 50.
reforms. However, economic change rarely happens on its own and the China of the 1980s witnessed many demands for political reforms as well. There were protests in 1986 for such reforms, and Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang was forced to resign as a result. Zhao Ziyang became the new General Secretary and many people came to respect Hu Yaobang. According to Zhao Dingxing’s *The Power of Tiananmen*, by 1988 the corruption and inflation that came with the market economy reforms had become a “threat to normal life.” Dissatisfaction reached its climax in 1989.

Most people attribute the catalyst of the protests to the death of Hu Yaobang on April 15\textsuperscript{th}. The next day, Hu’s family as well as people from all walks of society demanded his political rehabilitation. On the 17\textsuperscript{th}, students marched to Tiananmen Square, the Gate of Heavenly Peace, in the center of Beijing to lay wreaths in honor of Hu. April 22\textsuperscript{nd} saw Hu’s funeral, about fifty thousand students marched to Tiananmen and demanded to meet with Premier Li Peng. On the 26\textsuperscript{th}, an editorial published in the *People’s Daily* labeled the protest movement as a “planned conspiracy” and “turmoil.” The following day, over one hundred thousand students marched to Tiananmen Square to protest the accusations of the editorial; the State Council eventually expressed willingness to hold a dialogue with the students.

Over time, the protestors developed and grew to incorporate not just students but people of all ages and from all strata of society. People from all across China came to Beijing to participate. The protestors honored the historic May 4\textsuperscript{th} Movement of 1919 that also gave rise to a great deal of political and ideological change. While student demands were never explicitly

\begin{itemize}
\item[14] Zhao, xxiii-xxvi.
\item[15] Ibid.
\end{itemize}
clear and unified, they generally included: the implementation of political democracy, media freedom, freedom of speech and association, and establishment of the rule of law.\textsuperscript{16} Starting on May 13\textsuperscript{th}, several hundred students engaged in a hunger strike; the number quickly grew into the thousands. On May 17\textsuperscript{th}, over a million people marched to demonstrate their own support for the students and concern for the hunger strikers. As dialogues continued to fail to end the protests, Li Peng declared martial law on May 19\textsuperscript{th}. For a while, however, people in Beijing prevented martial law troops from reaching Tiananmen Square. Despite this, military (violent) suppression began on June 3\textsuperscript{rd} and by June 4\textsuperscript{th}, the remaining four thousand students in the Square fled after being surrounded.\textsuperscript{17}

The official figure as to how many people died during the events is unclear and highly controversial. In fact, most other details regarding the incident, beyond the bare chronology of events from Hu’s death to the army’s suppression of the students, its historical roots and impact on Chinese society and politics are highly controversial. As a result, most works that discuss and explore the event in any detail do so without great emphasis on historical analysis. These works certainly contribute to the historical discussion and it is the goal of this section to present the different types of approaches utilized. These works are not in and of themselves ‘sources’, primary or secondary, and generally cater more to a political or economic discourse than a historical one. For such works, the ‘history’ of the June 4\textsuperscript{th} incident is utilized as a context, a discourse to give their argument a sense of time and significance. These works generally, however, lack extensive historical inquiry of the incident itself and thus do not ponder its own context.

\textsuperscript{16} Wang Hui, \textit{China’s New Order}, 56.
\textsuperscript{17} Zhao, xxiii-xxvi.
Most of these narratives are usually not available in mainland China. I found them while conducting research in the United States, mostly via the recommendations of scholars who are knowledgeable in the matter. I could not possibly read everything there was about the June 4th incident, therefore it was my goal to incorporate a representative sample of works that covered different journalistic and academic perspectives. The most prominent of these is perhaps Wang Hui’s *China’s New Order* (2003) and “Contemporary Chinese Thought and the Question of Modernity” (1998). Other works include Zhao Dingxin’s (a sociologist at the University of Chicago) *The Power of Tiananmen* (2001), a work that utilizes Tiananmen as a case study to discuss and analyze state and society power relations and relies on political science, psychology, and linguistics to make its argument\(^1\), Philip J. Cunningham’s *Tiananmen Moon* (2009), a journalist’s reflection on and nostalgic appreciation of his own experience in Beijing and Tiananmen Square that offers a very vivid perspective and often describes sensual experiences in the manner of a novel\(^2\), and Yi Mu’s (also a journalist) *Crisis at Tiananmen* (1989), a work whose goal is to present the events of the June 4th incident to the people of the United States from a Chinese perspective and openly that admits that historical veracity and analysis are not its key objectives\(^3\).

Wang Hui is a prominent Chinese intellectual living in mainland China and his two works mentioned above discuss in great detail the June 4th incident and its impact. The author of the book’s introduction, Theodore Hunter, mentions that the book was not published in China but is circulated there. He also mentions that Wang’s main goal in the work is to push for social and

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\(^1\) Zhao, 331-357.  
\(^3\) Yi Mu, *Crisis at Tiananmen Reform and Reality in Modern China* (San Francisco: China Books & Periodicals, Inc., 1989).
economic justice in China today.\textsuperscript{21} It is evident from Wang’s writings that his goal is to understand contemporary Chinese thought, how to critique it, how it works, and the forces involved. He claims that discussions on such a topic, as well as the historical events they produce (specifically the June 4\textsuperscript{th} incident) are too complex to be explained via the traditional methods of blaming Chinese tradition and/or socialism. They are also too complex to be simply based on modernization theory. Wang specifically argues that contemporary movements are non-unitary, that their literary, philosophical, political, (and thus historical), aspects are all differentiated. Wang focuses on using the June 4\textsuperscript{th} incident and its surrounding history to make claims and arguments related to China in the greater contexts of global capitalism, globalization, and economic neo-liberalism. He puts particular emphasis on words such as ‘transition’, and ‘development’ to explain contradictions.\textsuperscript{22} It is a work mainly of economic theory and not of historical analysis that uses the June 4\textsuperscript{th} incident as a frame of reference and an example/manifestation of converging intellectual and economic forces.

There are, however, many aspects of Wang’s work that have a great deal of historical relevance and do contribute to the growing proto-history of the June 4\textsuperscript{th} Incident, particularly the various forces that Wang discusses as having contributed to the June 4\textsuperscript{th} Incident. One such example is the unstable economic conditions: Wang analyzes in detail the various economic developments brought about by the Open Up and Reform Movement and the many paradoxes and problems to which they successively gave rise in Chinese society. Property reform and adjustment of economic structure inspired people to ask what other sorts of economic reforms should follow. Government contracts also became a focal point for corruption and complaint, especially in 1988. Wang brings up the interesting and relevant points: that intellectuals

\textsuperscript{21} Hunter in \textit{China’s New Order}, 6.
\textsuperscript{22} Wang, 63-84.
involved in the movement could not clearly articulate demands and ultimately lacked the efficacy to bring about concrete change and also that media producers enjoyed an unusual amount of freedom of press during the movement (but definitely not after).\textsuperscript{23}

Wang also has the tendency to focus on the June 4\textsuperscript{th} incident based on its after-effects. For instance, he asserts the June 4\textsuperscript{th} Incident changed many of China’s intellectuals. Being “unable to make a broad and comprehensive analysis of the internal contradictions of contemporary Chinese society”, \textsuperscript{24} many intellectual groups split off into different directions and many became experts, scholars, and professionals. According to Wang, many young intellectuals were inspired to rethink modern Chinese history and the concept of modernity in general (he is not more specific than saying ‘intellectuals’).\textsuperscript{25} His arguments as such are quite well developed and thus reveal a historical gap: how did things come to be this way? Wang raises some poignant questions that are historical in nature, and thus contribute to the history, but also leaves them unanswered.

What sources did these authors use? For some works, source lists are not extensive. For example, Cunningham’s work is more of a memoir and thus does not place much emphasis on sources with the exception of the author’s own memory.\textsuperscript{26} Yi’s book is the product of visual research: photos, signs, and poster slogans.\textsuperscript{27} Other works heavily relied on source material. Their sources and process of accumulation and research reveal details relating to their own arguments as well as what sort of sources exist in terms of researching the history of the June 4\textsuperscript{th} incident.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 43-63.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 84.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 78-84
\textsuperscript{26} Cunningham, 287.
\textsuperscript{27} Yi, ix-3.
The sources Wang relied on consisted of documents produced by the student movement, the deliberation of intellectuals (mainly after the event), and the decision making processes of government elites. Each narrative discussed above, despite a lack of specific historical analysis, does shed historical light on the history of the June 4th Incident. Wang states that his own goal was to: “reconstruct and comprehend the historical horizon of the issues facing China” and that the June 4th Incident brought about a “massive psychological shock to Chinese society.” Cunningham mentions that contemporary China is “profoundly haunted” by the events of Tiananmen. It is clear also from the mere existence of these works that historical research must be done on the June 4th Incident. It was significant to the extent that it still lingers and looms over present day China. The existence of these works also reveals the June 4th incident’s extra-historical qualities. Each of these works is fundamentally based on a historic event, the June 4th Incident, but instead of being a historical analysis, each work branches off into some other academic and/or artistic field. Due to Tiananmen being a forbidden and controversial subject, these narratives are innately fragmented. They are a piece of Tiananmen’s proto-history.

Existing Archives: Documentary Collections

Though banned in China, there are in fact many collections of primary documents regarding the June 4th incident that contain a wealth of political and historical information. Within the context of the forbidden, fragmented history of the June 4th incident, these collections

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28 Wang, 200-2.
29 Ibid., 45.
30 Ibid., 79.
31 Cunningham, 287.
comprise a very important piece, at least for those who have access to them. At the same time, these sources have their own problems, including questions as to their origin and veracity.

One of the most well-known, thoroughly compiled, and controversial documentary collections is Andrew Nathan’s and Perry Link’s *The Tiananmen Papers* (2001). It is a collection of documents from the Chinese Communist Party itself, a record of intelligence, protocol, speeches, discussions and decisions made at the highest level during the 1989 Student Protests and the June 4th incident. Included in this record are high level Party decisions, accounts of the situation in Beijing and around the country, and international responses mainly via foreign news reports. Also included are reports and information from Xinhua News Agency, the transportation, agricultural, industrial, and telecommunications bureaus from all demographic echelon (cities, counties, provinces). Most documents have been removed from the public domain in China. One cannot, for example, go to the library today and consult government documents or news reports.

Like many other sources, the records are arranged chronologically, starting with pre-movement motivations in 1986 and ending with the Fourth Plenum of the Thirteenth Central Committee and, which met on June 24th, 1989 and post crackdown reflections. It is an extensive collection, undoubtedly very valuable to the pursuit of historical research regarding the June 4th incident. However, as both a primary and secondary source (it includes narratives and summaries written by Nathan and other scholars), it is by no means comprehensive, nor does it claim to be. It almost entirely comprises official, government documents. It too is a piece of a proto-history.
The work’s presumed intent and existence are both controversial and potentially historically problematic. For example, the preface is written by the compiler of the papers himself who goes by the pseudonym Zhang Liang. He comments that he hopes that the work will “make a fundamental contribution to building a democratic government in China.”\textsuperscript{32} Being a member of the Party at the time of \textit{The Tiananmen Paper’s} publishing and presumably during the 1989 protests, Zhang Liang describes the event as encompassing all professional sectors of every major city in China. He goes on to claim that: “the failure of the June Fourth Movement was inevitable.”\textsuperscript{33} Nathan later describes how the government sources indicate that democracy is not inevitable. While Zhang’s and Nathan’s intentions and claims are significant, they are historically problematic and serve more as pieces of this history rather than an analysis of it.

Also, Nathan, as well as other historians, political scientists, and other scholars who focus on China, consider it to be one of the “most secretive political systems in the world.”\textsuperscript{34} As such, it is incredibly difficult to even gain access to historical documents in general, let alone those of recent, still highly sensitive issues. Nathan also mentions that the trickling of secret and forbidden documents is a Chinese political tradition and that this work is in accordance with that tradition.\textsuperscript{35} \textit{The Tiananmen Papers} is thus unique, in both its breadth, proximity to the highest power echelons in China, and use of materials. According to Nathan, there exists “no other such intimate account of top-level politics from any period in Chinese history.”\textsuperscript{36} This claim would suggest that \textit{The Tiananmen Papers}, an illegal work in China, contains more source material on the intimate workings of Chinese rulers than any other sourcebook about any other period in

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid., xi.
\item Andrew Nathan, \textit{The Tiananmen Papers}, xv.
\item Ibid.
\item Ibid., svi.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
China’s long history. Making this claim is a controversial act in and of itself, regardless of how reasonable or accurate it is.

Nathan discusses his efforts in proving the validity of these works. At the end of *The Tiananmen Papers*, journalist Orville Schell further discusses the problem of documents that are ‘leaked’ (purposefully) from China, arguing that many supposed ‘leaked’ sources are in fact forgeries and that scholars should treat all ‘leaked’ sources with careful discretion.\(^{37}\) This makes historical study more complicated and multi-faceted, as fake documents are historically valid in their own right. However, Nathan believes in the truth of the documents, and several known facts can cross-validate their existence. So, in the case that they are all actual documents produced with sincere intent by the Chinese Communist Party (and respective bureaucracies) in 1989, they offer a treasure trove of historical information. The work overall reveals a great deal about the decision making process within the Chinese Communist Party elites, and indicates a number of factual details (for example, what happened when).

Additionally, the book includes some sources that did not originate within the top echelons of the Chinese government. Such sources are either media or other non-government related institutions/incidents that quickly developed primary political significance. For example, it contains documents related to Ding Zilin, a mother whose child died during the crackdown and who started a movement to demand a political accounting. As real as the sources may be, the history they produce is far from objective. It is a collection of ‘leaked’ documents that raises questions as to why the documents present were chosen, what was left out, and their effect on both politics and history. In Nathan’s own words, it is “unprecedented in the drama of the story

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\(^{37}\) Orville Schell in *The Tiananmen Papers*, 459-75.
it tells, the fullness of the record it reveals, and the potential explosiveness of its contents."\textsuperscript{38} The\ Tiananmen Papers\ is very comprehensive as a work of political history. At this point, however, the June 4\textsuperscript{th} incident is so much more than just political, and Tiananmen Papers provides only a piece of the puzzle.

As a historical source, Tiananmen Papers is unique. Nathan explains that it would be “impossible to reconstruct by any conceivable research effort."\textsuperscript{39} The June 4\textsuperscript{th} incident’s forbidden quality serves to enrich its own history in this case. Only a forbidden subject would compel a government official to feel “duty to the Chinese people and to history to publish a complete and faithful record.”\textsuperscript{40} This comment raises the questions: for whom is this archive intended? And has it reached its intended audience? In order to get the book published, Nathan had to create an abridged, English copy (the original Chinese copy will be discussed in the ‘People’s Archive’ section). The process of history continues; the ‘complete and faithful record’ of the June 4\textsuperscript{th} incident is in its proto stages.

Other than The Tiananmen Papers, there are other documentary collections that focus on the June 4\textsuperscript{th} Incident, many of them Nathan utilized when compiling his own work. Orville Schell’s Mandate of Heaven gives a more personal account and frames China and Tiananmen Square as a forbidden, almost enchanted realm (a part of the ‘other’ dialectic). He describes his experience entering “one of the most elusive and impenetrable countries in the world."\textsuperscript{41} It discusses the historical and political significance of Tiananmen Square, the Gate of Heavenly Peace, as a symbol and beacon.

\textsuperscript{38} Nathan, xv.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., xx.
\textsuperscript{40} Zhang, xiii.
Michel Oskenberg’s *Beijing Spring, 1989 Confrontation and Conflict* is another documentary collection, published one year after the incident, that serves as an initial attempt to document the incident. The work is concerned with forces that led to the movement, justifications that allowed it to persist, and the reasons for ultimately crushing it. In its pursuit, it attempts to present “highly divergent perspectives” and the first two essays presented are one written by student leader and another written by Chen Xitong, the 1989 mayor of Beijing.

One note that the above sources have in common is that the June 4th incident and its history still loom over present day China. Zhang claims that despite China’s growth and changes, “those who wish to serve the country must still reflect deeply on the lessons it offers.” Regardless of whether people directly engage in the issue or not, Zhang also states that the incident looms in the subconscious of individuals: “June Fourth weights on the spirits of every Chinese patriot, and almost every Chinese knows that official reevaluation is just a matter of time.”

Each of these sources and documentary collections contain a great deal of historical material and hence are part of the archive necessary for writing history. An official political history may not exist, and academic discourse on the subject may be severely limited, but the history develops anyway, finding its way into myriad different intellectual fields.

**Creating a Pseudo-Reality: The Media and Tiananmen**

The fact that the media is biased is well-known. However, when studying the history of Tiananmen, it forms a very important piece of the developing history. The media is a historical

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43 Zhang, xii.
44 Ibid.
actor; it creates perspective and, in the case of the 1989 Student Movements, fuels the tensions and significance. Also, considering that freedom of the press was a major concern of the protestors during the movement, the media plays a special role. As Zhou He mentions in his book, *Mass Media and Tiananmen Square*, media sources are “not a list of facts about the objective reality ‘out there’ but are a product that comes out from the assembly line of news production.”

Zhou also claims that “without the active involvement of the Chinese national news media and their international news media, the conflict could never have reached such a magnitude and cast such an extensive impact on the Chinese people and on people around the world.”

Given this and the highly controversial (and thus appealing) natures of the Student Movement and June 4th Incident, media is a fundamental aspect in creating Tiananmen’s proto-history.

Though mechanisms and forces behind the incident are complex and elusive, it is clear that the media played an influential part in developing the conflict and the ‘reality’ surrounding it. Many of these perspectives linger on today and are a part of the existing, incomplete history. For example, Yi, in his *Crisis at Tiananmen*, describes the context of June 4th as a storm, and quotes Deng Xiaoping saying: “the storm was bound to happen sooner or later. As determined by international and domestic climate, it was bound to happen and was independent of man’s will.”

This ‘storm’ perspective was made possible in part due to the media’s portrayal.

The conflict and the news had a reciprocal relationship. The event fueled the media and vice versa. According to Zhou, Chinese media companies “both covered and covered up” the

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46 Ibid., 1.
47 Yi, 1.
48 Zhou, 2.
movement, in each way creating a perspective. In Shanghai, all portable radios were sold out because people scrambled to listen to the story.\textsuperscript{49} The media even effectively created its own narrative of the event. It had the power to dictate the story and create a perspective based on the incident’s moral value via either supporting or challenging the existing status quo. Since discourse involving the June 4\textsuperscript{th} incident is limited, the media and its perspectives remain one of the primary sources of the event. From a historical perspective, this kind of source is problematic in terms of objectivity, but is significant in terms of history’s record.

Most of Zhou’s work involved media and interview sources. In addition to stating that it was incredibly difficult to gain access to sources in China, he identifies two major flaws with the media approach: a lack of primary information and the tendency to be biased for fear of reprisal and/or consequences.\textsuperscript{50} There are some other potentially problematic claims and techniques that Zhou does not mention. For instance, he claims that the 1989 Student Protests were the “first revolt in 40 years since the founding of the People’s Republic in 1949.”\textsuperscript{51} This is not true. It may have been the largest, but it was not the only one. He also mathematically configured the reliability of certain assertions based on consensus among different sources and people. Consensus does demonstrate a common perspective, but it does not equate historical legitimacy. Regardless of these potential problems, Zhou’s work definitely sets the stage for further research. The media’s active role in the movement frames in large part how the existing, fragmented history can be perceived and discussed.

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 133.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 27.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 8.
Outside of China, the discourse about Tiananmen is informed by the controversial nature of the event and limited by the sheer lack of source materials. Despite this, academic and media discourses do exist, and these extra-historical sources form a part of Tiananmen’s proto-history.
Part Two: Creating an Archive

The first part of this paper focused on historical discourse and historiography, which generally takes place outside of mainland China. Within China, discourse about Tiananmen must take place and circulate underground. Despite the limitations, this situation presents a unique historiographical opportunity: a more controlled and active witnessing of the process of history and the significance and impact that discourse (or lack thereof) has on the society and the development of the June 4th incident into a collective historical consciousness. Though the event has passed, its history is still very much in the making.

Being forbidden, the development of a June 4th historical consciousness is a chaotic process. The discourse is inherently fragmented because only bits and pieces of the history can be addressed at any given moment. Over time, however, several pieces accrete into different underground, and oftentimes personally collected, archives. These archives are unique and share two major characteristics. One, they are incomplete; lacking access to (presumably at least some) banned sources as well as forums for discourse, source materials and discussions are intrinsically limited. Two, they extend beyond the realm of sources conventionally used as historical evidence in academic history. Being compelled to address this historical event without any official or free means of doing so, people and groups express themselves in other academic fields and realms of discourse (for instance in secret, through memory, or through art). A plant that cannot grow vertically will instead grow horizontally, just as the history of the June 4th Incident is developing.

How then does the history grow? Parts two and three explore three major means through which proto and extra-historical discourses grow and develop. These different means are the
product of my own attempts at learning about the history of the June 4th incident while in Beijing. Not being able to go find sources at the library, or examine documents in an archive, I, as others, turn to alternative sources. For example, just as government documents ‘leak’ their way out of China, so too do various banned sources find their way in. People then pass on these sources on a person by person basis to their friends, family, students, co-workers, and so on. The sources build into a grassroots, people’s archive. This section looks at what is contained in one such archive and analyzes the sort of historical discourse they could cultivate. Later, this paper looks specifically at two different historical constructions: a poem by noted poet, Ouyang Jianghe, which addresses the incident in history and memory, and the poet’s own view of the role of art in historical consciousness, and the work of an individual scholar involved with the event who produced his own history through memoir. The following sections explore what sort of historical consciousness these memoires and/or histories create.

Before considering the sources, it is first necessary to specify some theoretical aspects of the relationship between history and memory, as memory is a major factor in each of the following source groupings. First, for definition’s sake, ‘history’, or some form of historical consciousness, in addition to being a subject, refers to a dynamic attained by combining analysis and reflections of various sources and, for those who were directly involved in the incident, experiences. ‘History’ is translating an abstract, universal past with a concrete, individually perceived and remembered past into a narrative or collection of works that people can understand and grasp. Just as people order their own personal memories in a way that allows them to readily think back on them and express them, history too is a collective, universal means of doing so. To quote Kariann Akemi Yokota in *The Politics of Remembering*, “history is not merely that
which has happened in the past; it is also what people think has happened.” Construction of a historical narrative gives meaning to the past and helps people comprehend themselves and other entities of social belonging (e.g. their communities, the nation). In the construction of history, nostalgia often competes with fact. However, if these distinctions are known, then ‘slippages’, amendments, and omissions are just as important as the facts.53

The last section, ‘Individual Memory and History’, will discuss the specificities of individual memory and how individuals use them to write histories. This next section, ‘A People’s Archive’, is focused on how a collective memory becomes a history. According to Paul Ricoeur in Memory, History, Forgetting, history and memory are separated by their aims and by the means through which they are organized and recorded. Memory is fluid while history seeks truth and should thus be constant. As a result, history has a larger scope, and exists in a different time continuum than memory (history cannot be felt).54 Despite these distinctions, history and memory are innately bound: “history can expand, complete, correct, even refute the testimony of memory regarding the past; it cannot abolish it… memory remains the guardian of the ultimate dialectic constitutive of the pastness of the past.”55 As history is dependent on the past, and memory legitimates the past, history too depends on some collective memory (it can be said that all human historical events have been remembered by someone). The role of history then is to “expand collective memory beyond any collective memory.”56 According to Ricoeur, if the historical consciousness is not there, memory becomes ahistorical (forgotten) or suprahistorical

53 Ibid., 127-37.
54 Ricoeur, Memory, History, Forgetting, 497-8.
55 Ibid., 498.
56 Ibid., 500.
(placed into the “eternity-dispensing powers of art and religion”57). The following sources will demonstrate that the history surrounding the June 4th incident is a mix of the ‘suprahistorical’ and the historical (it would be impossible to confirm the ‘ahistorical’).

Finally, forgiveness and coping are important dynamics when addressing the June 4th incident. Ricoeur claims that institutions exist for collective accusation but not for collective forgiveness; forgiveness “constitutes the horizon common to memory, history, and forgetting.”58 In other words, an event as tumultuous as that of the June 4th incident requires a collective history in the sense that it requires collective reflection. Historical discourse serves as a necessary form of catharsis and/or justice; the event has passed away and now exists as memory and history. The following will discuss in detail the specificities of the making of such historical discourse.

A People’s Archive

While attempting to research the June 4th incident in Beijing, I often turned to my fellow (Chinese) students for help. I encountered a collection of sources that, despite being forbidden, circulate and accumulate on a person by person basis. These materials, though generally easily available outside of China, are the main primary sources and ‘historical evidence’ within China and are thus fundamental for history. People, especially the young intellectual crowd, interested in the history of the event can presumably ask their parents, professors, and other elders about it. Otherwise, collections such as these are both the historical and historiographical sources, historical in that they are the main source of evidence and historiographical in that they are the

57 Ibid., 292.
58 Ibid., 457.
quintessential example of a proto-history, a series of fragments that can demonstrate how the
historical narrative and consciousness surrounding Tiananmen develop.

I rely on the following sources as they are solely what I was able to find. While searching for information and research material, friends and other academics passed along the following sources. Their compilation and order are both informal; the collection itself is amorphous. I imagine that collections like these are numerous and readily available to people interested in pursuing the history of Tiananmen. I was only in Beijing for sixth months and yet still managed to encounter these “underground” sources; I can only imagine what sort of collections more in depth and intensive research endeavors have managed to accumulate. As discussed above, Wang, Zhou, Nathan, and others relied on a similar research strategy when writing their books.

The collection includes all sorts of materials that are presently banned in China. I received these sources in a rather ad hoc state (they were not organized very meticulously). At the outset, the very existence of these collections offers a different perspective than the official government one (or, in the case of Tiananmen, any perspective at all). For the most part, the sources reinforce each other, and so they work together to build historical consciousness. They also serve as the literal opposite of the official, government view by the simple fact that they break the silence on the subject. For the sake of organization, I will discuss the sources I collected in the following clusters: government voices, assorted media, documentaries, information about leaders of the movement (students, intellectuals, etc.), personal accounts of the event, and documentary collections.
Several of the sources present the ‘official word’ as well as written clips that offer the official opinion and position of the government regarding the protests and the June 4th crackdown. Since then, even these government-produced documents have disappeared from public view. Also in this category are the individual voices of government officials that may not have official sanction.

One of the most significant sources is a video clip of a speech made by Deng Xiaoping on June 9th, 1989 in which he briefly discusses the event and the subsequent military force used to end it. He starts off by describing the events as inevitable, both as a product of international forces and China’s own domestic atmosphere. He does not get any more specific than this. In the second part of the clip, he justifies the government’s crackdown, describing the movement as an unequivocally clear attack on communism and the Chinese Communist Party. Lastly, he looks to the future, saying that the Open up and Reform Movement that started ten years earlier was not a failure, that the last ten years (the 80s) were crucial in China’s development and that in this regard, China only needed a little more energy (jinr). In the clip, Deng appears old but is quite resolute and commanding; it gives an initial impression of the political atmosphere in China immediately after the crackdown.

Also included in this cluster is a hefty amount of information related to former General Secretary Zhao Ziyang, who was forced to resign in June of 1989. The collection includes information both from Zhao’s perspective and those of other people talking about Zhao. Also included is the work *Zhao Ziyang: Captive Conversations*, an interview/memoir of Zhao Ziyang.

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59 Video clip, “Deng Xiaoping Critiques the ’89 Student Movement” (dengxiaopingpingbajiuxuechao), June 9th, 1989, Producer Unknown, Author’s Collection.
60 Examples of such sources include blog posts and narratives of unknown origin; I have been unable to find their original source. All are Author’s Collection.
published in Hong Kong that was conducted while Zhao was under house arrest for fifteen years after the June 4th incident.\(^{61}\) The overall collection offers a great deal of divergent and diverse perspectives. Zhao’s memoirs and other information about Zhao are particularly useful as Zhao serves as a sort of wild card a player in both sides of the history. He perhaps can be viewed as a symbol of political reform, its limits, and its failure in 1989. Both the Deng clip and the information about Zhao contribute to a historical consciousness in that they both present official voices. Neither Deng nor Zhao are in power today, but they were both very influential figures in Chinese politics and their testimonies add government perspective.

In contrast to voices from political officials, the collection also includes assorted media photographs and articles. Chief among them are Time Magazine covers: May 29th, 1989’s titled “China in Turmoil” paired with a picture of a concerned, shouting student in a crowd on front,\(^{62}\) June 12th, 1989’s “Revolt Against Communism-China, Poland, USSR” with the iconic picture of tank man,\(^{63}\) and June 29th, 1989’s titled “Massacre in Beijing” with a picture of what looks like a bloody body surrounded by a shocked group of people.\(^{64}\)

Paired with the latter two covers are mastheads and other articles contained in the magazines. Jesse Birnbaum and Howard G. Chua’s “Despair and Death in a Beijing Square” in the June 12th issue describes a student movement and government that both resisted being too radical and a scene in which violence seemed impossible until the bloody Sunday morning of June 4th. They then completely shift gears and describe a violent, gory account of destruction and death. It is a sensationalized account; it describes conflicts in the government, soldiers

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\(^{61}\) Zhao Ziyang and Zong Fengming, ed., *Zhao Ziyang: Captive Conversations* (zhaoziyangruanjizhongdetanhua) (Hong Kong: Open, 2007), Author’s Collection.

\(^{62}\) “China in Turmoil”, *Time Magazine Cover*, May 29th, 1989, Author’s Collection.

\(^{63}\) “Revolt Against Communism- China, Poland, USSR, *Time Magazine Cover*, June 12th, 1989, Author’s Collection

\(^{64}\) “Massacre in Beijing”, *Time Magazine Cover*, June 29th, 1989, Author’s Collection.
attacking students, students attacking soldiers, and soldiers attacking other soldiers. Towards the end, it quotes a random observer stating “it will be impossible to turn back the clock.”65 The June 19th article “China’s Dark Hours” compares Tiananmen Square to Woodstock and quotes an unidentified youth saying: “China is dead.”66 Another June 19th article by Howard G. Chua-Eoan focuses on China’s aftermath and future. The government, he claims, was attempting to scare away foreigners still in the city (especially reporters) and describes the overall aftermath with a sense of anguish and anger.67

Other than Time Magazine articles, the collection includes postings from an online blog that is a part of the Hong Kong newspaper “Wenhuibao” also found on the media website “Boxun”, both based outside of mainland China, that offers a forty-eight hour timeline of the June 4th incident. The blog is titled and includes quotes from the well-known folk song “Bloodstained Glory” (xuerandefengcai) and is divided into paragraphs, each with its own very sensational title such as ‘Writing the Bloody History’, ‘Signal Flares Burst in the Dawn’, and ‘How many Vengeful Ghosts?’ among others.68 Similar to the Time Magazine articles, this blog emphasizes blood, chaos, and tragedy. They provide a startling different perspective than that which Deng Xiaoping offers.

The fact that this collection includes Western and Hong Kong media sources indicates how any perspectives regarding the incident are at least somewhat valuable. Even very sensationalized, biased pictures and articles make up a part of this historical archive. How

individuals in China interpret such sources, whether as legitimate accounts or merely foreign media in the case of the *Time Magazine* articles, is difficult to say. It is important to note, however, that such sources are still included in the archive and thus make up a part of historical consciousness. At the very least, these sources offer a reason as to why the government has prohibited the topic of June 4\textsuperscript{th}; they portray the incident as a bloody, chaotic tragedy, one which could potentially tarnish the government’s image.

Assorted documentaries also make up a part of this collection, the longest and most extensive of which is the Chinese language version of Richard Gordon’s and Carma Hinton’s documentary film, “The Gate of Heavenly Peace.” The collection also includes full Chinese and English transcripts of the documentary. Having been funded by various American organizations, the documentary comprises interviews with students and professors involved in the movement, historical photographs and video clips (of 1989, and also of other major events in Chinese history), and interviews with some former government officials. In terms of historical context, the documentary is structured to set a dramatic stage for the incident and to compare/contrast the incident with other major events in Chinese history.\textsuperscript{69}

The documentary gives the June 4\textsuperscript{th} incident an epic stage and opens with scenes of the night of June 3\textsuperscript{rd} showing fires, the sound of gunshots, masses of people running, and people carrying a body. The first interviewee describes himself as feeling ‘numb.’ It consistently emphasizes the event’s lingering power and significance and discusses the major monuments in Tiananmen Square, their history, and relevance in the protests. Interviewee and former

government official, Ge Yang, says that there was a common saying going around that everything was in the Square, that people couldn’t even find a fish in Beijing.\(^{70}\)

This epic stage displayed in the documentary is supported by historical contrasts as well. A fireworks display in the Square that happened in the mid-80s celebrating the success of the Open Up and Reform Movement is contrasted to the fires and gunshots of June 3rd to blatantly demonstrate a sort of crushed dream. For the most part, the documentary adheres to a chronological, narrative structure, emphasizing particularly striking and/or ironic turns of events, such as student leaders Wang Dan and Chai Ling starting the hunger strike with Chai Ling shouting “see the true face of the government and the people.”\(^{71}\) Chai Ling later stated that since the government leaders continued to ignore them, they should set themselves on fire. It is interesting that the documentary chose to include this, as no one actually set themself on fire. The film focuses a great deal on the (ironic) invasion of Beijing by the People’s Liberation Army and the following chaos of people fleeing the Square as students and the people of Beijing both resisted the incoming troops.\(^{72}\) Ge Yang mentions in her interview that when she was young she and her comrades also protested and fought injustice.\(^{73}\) Zhao Ziyang’s central role and successive disappearance from view after he is dismissed is also an important turning point. The documentary ends on a tragic note with an interview of Ding Zilin, whose son died during the crackdown.

An impending sense of doom is prevalent throughout the documentary. The film makers obviously knew that the protests failed and used it as a theme throughout the documentary. For

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\(^{70}\) Ge Yang in “The Gate of Heavenly Peace”

\(^{71}\) Chai Ling in “The Gate of Heavenly Peace”

\(^{72}\) “The Gate of Heavenly Peace”

\(^{73}\) Ge Yang in “The Gate of Heavenly Peace”
example, Chai Ling makes some particularly morbid quotes in the film, such as a feeling that China is dying and her shouting to students that “we are prepared to face death for the sake of true life. The oath written by our lives will brighten the skies of our country.”  

She later says to a journalist that she views the failure of the event as inevitable, that it must end in blood. She is almost angry at her brethren, yelling at China, at them, that they are not worth this struggle!  

Wang Dan comments that he heard many students were writing their wills in the Square. Both Chai Ling and Wang Dan give the impression that the students were prepared for, and almost even welcomed, death, with its status of martyrdom. Wang Dan describes the students’ vote to end the protests on the 20th of May and how those in favor of ending them had many rational arguments in their favor, but could not match the emotional force of those who wished to continue.

Even the older intellectuals featured in the film, writer Dai Qing and Nobel laureate Liu Xiaobo, discuss the incident in the context of its eventual failure. Liu states that it was “difficult to know who oneself was” because it was so easy to get caught up in the storms of protest. He mentions that despite the irrational demands of the students, he and other intellectuals continued to support them.

“The Gate of Heavenly Peace” also explores the complexity of the aftermath of the crackdown. Students described their stories after they dispersed, Hao Dongfang discussed his experience being interrogated: when soldiers accused the protests of being a well-organized attempted coup, he retorted by saying that if they were that organized the Chinese Communist

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74 Chai Ling, in “The Gate of Heavenly Peace”  
75 Ibid.  
76 Wang Dan in “The Gate of Heavenly Peace”  
77 Liu Xiaobo in “The Gate of Heavenly Peace”
Party would have already been gone.” Zhao Hongliang told how he went among farmers in the countryside who told him not to worry because they could hide him just as they hid people from the Japanese back during World War II. Even the narrator states: “almost as soon as the struggle over Tiananmen Square ended, the struggle over the story of what had happened there began.” Many of the interviewees then offered their own reflective accounts. That struggle over the story, over the history, continues today underground in part via archives such as this collection.

Aside from “The Gate of Heavenly Peace”, the collection contains one other documentary (I am not sure of its title), which is about Jiang Zemin (who replaced Zhao Ziyang after he was dismissed), made by the news company Epoch Times, a private New York based company with a Chinese language department (called dajiyuan). The documentary, which is also in Chinese, opens talking about Nostradamus and his prediction of an ‘evil king’ and comparing Jiang to this prediction. Both documentaries offer vivid portrayals of the June 4th incident and the people involved. The later piece is perhaps more direct in condemning Jiang Zemin, but “The Gate of Heavenly Peace” also leaves the viewer with the impression that the government committed a crime. These sources are strikingly different than that offered by Deng Xiaoping in his discussion. In terms of developing a historical consciousness, the documentaries are obviously outspoken compared to the supposed silence imposed by the subject’s forbidden nature.

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78 Hao Dongfang in “The Gate of Heavenly Peace”
79 Zhao Hongliang in “The Gate of Heavenly Peace”
80 Deborah Amos in “The Gate of Heavenly Peace” Deborah Amos is the narrator
81 Director Unknown, Title Unknown (Epoch Times, New York). Author’s Collection.
It is clear from the various sources that all of Beijing, if not all of China, was drawn into the events of 1989 one way or another. Another important archival piece of the historical puzzle is a group of lists, blogs, and articles about the student leaders and intellectuals who drove the movement and the students, intellectuals, and other people who successively became the loudest in voicing the event’s history. One example is a list of names, the exact purpose of which is unclear, but it is implied that each of the individuals on the list played an important role in the 1989 movement; otherwise this document would not be included in the archive. Further, many of the names appear in other sources, such as Ding Zilin, Dai Qing, Chai Ling, Wuer Kaixi, Liu Xiaobo, Ge Yang (all of whom were in “The Gate of Heavenly Peace”… there are fifteen names in total.\(^82\)

The fact that this list is included in the archive raises a number of questions. It is just a single page with a list of fifteen names, and does not say who these people were, what they did, or even where they are now. Why is it included? This page is more than a historical source; it is a preserver of the incident, proof that it happened. The names on the list are starting points for further research, a treasure map of a certain kind that leads in the direction of history and a more comprehensive historical consciousness.

Another part of this cluster are two articles, one focused on student leader Wang Youcai and another on Hang Dongfang, a worker and unionist who was also instrumental in developing the movement and establishing the Beijing Worker’s Autonomous Federation (Beijinggongrenzizhilianhehui). The Wang Youcai article is actually a Wikipedia page (Wikipedia articles related to June 4\(^{th}\) are censored in China)\(^83\) and the Hang Dongfang article is

\(^{82}\)“List of the Outspoken” (mingdananchuchangshunxu), Publisher Unknown, Author’s Collection.
\(^{83}\)“Wang Youcai” Wikipedia, Author’s Collection.
from a similar online encyclopedia. As a history student, I have been told a number of times that Wikipedia is not a sufficient source. When nothing else is available, however, articles like these are more than welcome. Their existence, like the list, is evidence that these people acquired a historical and human presence, that they had names and lives just as much as the person reading these sources. Hang Dongfang’s article is also evidence that the movement went beyond students and involved people from other parts of society. Speaking in terms of historical consciousness, these articles, despite their questionable integrity as sources, expand the breadth of perspective and more intimately demonstrate what sort of people led the movement.

The last piece of information regarding key people is a blog posting about Ge Yang, a former party official who was exiled after the incident. It is unclear as to where this blog is from and who exactly wrote it, but it describes a discussion with the elderly Ge Yang. The author mentions that she cannot express herself very well. He asks her if she would want to go back to China. She responds slowly, one word at a time: “Want to… go back… and see.” The author expresses his sadness at seeing this woman in this state, someone black listed for giving her life for her country. He claims: “History, is sometimes just this heavy.” This source, like the others in this section, humanizes the people involved. It connects them to memory, and to a historical consciousness that cannot be suppressed.

Additionally, this archive includes some personal accounts of the incident. One of them, the blog written for Boxun by Quan Wenwan, has already been discussed. The other important account is a letter written by the well-known doctor Jiang Yanyong. He is perhaps most famous

84 “Hang Dongfang”, Unknown Publisher. Author’s Collection. I assume it is from a similar online encyclopedia as the format and content is very similar to the Wang Youcai article.
85 Ge Yang in “Ge Yang’s Cherished Dream” (geyangdexinyuan), Unknown Publisher. Author’s Collection. The document provides a broken, I can only presume that this meeting with Ge Yang actually happened.
86 Unknown in “Ge Yang’s Cherished Dream”
for publicizing a cover up of the SARS epidemic in China, but he is included in this archive because in February of 2004 he wrote a letter to Premier Wen Jiabao and the National People’s Congress regarding the 1989 protests and the June 4th incident in which he urges reconsideration of the policy of silence. As Jiang explains, after the crackdown, government officials labeled the event ‘turmoil’ and the ’89 storm. Jiang urges his leaders to review the student’s perspective and argues that it was a patriotic, not an antigovernment, student movement.

The bulk of the long letter describes in detail Jiang’s own experiences of the evening. On the night of June 3rd, he was working as a surgeon in Beijing and remembers being horrified at operating on and trying to save the many bloody bodies that poured into the hospital. He specifically recalls certain patients: a student in his twenties who was dead on arrival and whose fiancé and mother came to the hospital to beg Jiang to save his life (though he was unable to do anything), patients who died in his arms (both young and old), and a wounded soldier who lived and discussed with Jiang the tarnished image of the People’s Liberation Army.

He talks about the shock of the event and the political sensitivity that arose. He describes how one of his coworkers thought that the crackdown was a mistake and that one of the generals must have gone bonkers. The situation was unclear as the soldiers who actually ended the protests on June 3rd and 4th were different than those brought in to establish martial law; they instead were soldiers brought in from elsewhere who presumably had no feelings for the Beijing people.

87 Jiang Yanyong, "Dr. Jiang Yanyong June 4th Letter" (jiangyanyongyishengweiliusishangdeshu), Unknown Publisher, Author’s Collection.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
Jiang claims that the students were reacting against a corrupt government (he was sure to reference only the past leadership of 1989) and urges the Party to correct its mistakes and reconsider this history as it had done with the Cultural Revolution. He ends the letter stating that he was aware of the consequences in its writing, but felt compelled to write it anyway.\textsuperscript{90} This emotional, powerful letter is multifaceted in what it historically offers. On the one hand, it is a memoir that reduces the political complexities and controversies of the event into a tragedy of bodies. On the other hand, it was written with a specific intention to vindicate June 4\textsuperscript{th}’s history, to break the silence and redeem those involved. Furthermore, the letter is very sincere and impacting; it adds a very human element to historical consciousness.

Finally, the archive contains an extensive documentary collection. Andrew Nathan mentioned that the Chinese (original) version of The Tiananmen Papers is in fact more extensive than the English one. A complete copy, clumped together in a word document, is a part of this archive and is titled ‘\textsuperscript{天安门真相 Tiananmenzhenxiang}’ (The Truth of Tiananmen). Zhang Liang, the compiler, would probably be happy to know that this work is being circulated. Nathan states that he was entrusted by Zhang Liang and “other reformists [in the party] to get them out into the public”\textsuperscript{91} and to “challenge the official story that Tiananmen was a legitimate suppression of a violent antigovernment riot.” \textsuperscript{92}

Both Nathan and Zhang are concerned about the future prospects of China; Nathan claims on the compiler’s behalf that the party is the only institution capable of bringing about progressive change in China; Zhang hopes that the work’s publication will ultimately break the

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{91} Andrew Nathan, The Tiananmen Papers, xviii.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid.
‘paralysis’ of the more pro-reform minded members of the party, government, and public domain.⁹³ The Tiananmen Paper’s presence in this ‘people’s archive’ indicates that the work is indeed circulating within China. Furthermore, Nathan explains that both he and Zhang have in common a “loyalty to the truth of history.”⁹⁴ It has been ten years since The Tiananmen Papers was published, what sort of influence has it had on politics and history? Its inclusion in this archive certainly suggests that people in China do have access to it and that it contributes to building a historical consciousness.

This ‘people’s archive’ exemplifies 1989 Tiananmen’s current state as a proto-history. It demonstrates how historical analysis and consciousness can develop in the context of being forbidden and underground. None of these sources were ever explicitly ‘published’ in China (though maybe outside of it) but they did manage to spill into China, spread among the people (at least among students and intellectuals), and create an actual archive that is kept by an assortment of people who are elusive and sporadic enough that they can only fall under the category of ‘the people.’

How does this proto-history work? These sources, in their context, create a picture that various individuals may interpret in different ways. An archive like this shows the sort of source material to which people have access: who they see and what voices they hear. It is important to note that some of these sources are textual while others are visual or cinematic. Jiang’s written account of bloody bodies pouring into his hospital and Chai Ling’s break down and confession of the protest’s inevitable downfall captured on film are both highly emotional and compelling first-hand accounts.

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⁹³ Ibid., xxviii.
⁹⁴ Ibid., xix.
People who work with such an archive must reconcile many different and oftentimes contradictory themes and include the idea of China being ‘dead’, China’s future, historical truth, and the clashing perspective of the government’s justifications, the media’s sensationalism, and others. Objectivity is always a primary concern of historians and, in a situation like this ‘people’s archive’ where the validity of documents cannot be easily verified, critical thinking is put to the test. These documents leaked into China somehow for a reason—what reason? And why did other sources not make it into this archive? For example, despite the many images contained in this archive, the iconic ‘tank man’, who is ubiquitous in Western coverage, is not featured. ‘Tank man’ is perhaps one of the most symbolic representations of June 4th outside of China, what then is its internal counterpart?

The existence of a ‘people’s archive’ illuminates how an event like Tiananmen Square enters historical discourse and is transformed from a tragic, controversial event into a piece of history, albeit incomplete, but an ever-growing, proto-history. Video clips offer an official perspective, media photos and articles provide a strikingly different account than the officially sanctioned one, documentaries allow the viewer to witness some aspect of the event, descriptions of the people involved and individual accounts add a personal, human element, and documentary collections deliver the hard evidence. Together, these various sources develop into a rich and fascinating historical consciousness and discourse.
Part Three: Proto-Histories

Below are two different accounts of the 1989 Tiananmen protest as a historical incident; each is representative of a different sector of society and a certain kind of historical discourse. The following are also examples of the convergence between individual and collective memory. Each one is the work of an individual, the product of their own memories and reflections so as to recreate and/or remember the event in one way or another. These individual works, however, have an audience and are representative of ways in which people can consciously address and work with the incident.

An Artistic Definition: A Poet’s View of History

The extra-historical discourse of Tiananmen is composed of works of art and other subtle writings that indirectly address the incident. Because they do not explicitly discuss the June 4th incident, they are often published and widely available. These works contribute not only to the history of Tiananmen, but also to its mythos; they form the foundation of this incident’s transcendent, extra-historical qualities. They indicate the extent to which the event lingers in the lives and minds of the people and looms over China. This section seeks to demonstrate how a poem can be both history and historiography; in the latter sense, it forces people to grapple with their own historical understanding of a particular incident.

One primary example of this is the work of the Misty Poets (Menglongshiren). Rejecting the deeply oppressive limitations of the Cultural Revolution, the Misty Poets started using ‘misty’ or obscure language in poetry to discuss and express topics that were otherwise forbidden in the late 1970s. However, their works continued after the end of the Cultural Revolution in the same spirit. One poet in particular, Ouyang Jianghe (欧阳江河), wrote a poem titled “Crossing the
Square at Nightfall"⁹⁵, that subtly but powerfully speaks about the June 4th incident. The poem itself never mentions June 4th, nor does it use the name ‘Tiananmen’, but its meaning and influence could be understood as a means of expression regarding the incident. In addition to reading the poem, I interviewed the poet himself in the hopes that he would shed some light on how the subject of the June 4th incident is addressed by China’s diverse array of audiences.

Ouyang had a great deal to say about his poem’s place in the history of Tiananmen Square. In addition to discussing his poem at length, Ouyang also mentioned other means by which people in China look at the history of the June 4th incident.⁹⁶ As an artist, Ouyang does not claim to be a historian, but rather, in more grandiose terms, a historical vanguard. For culture’s sake, he believes it is his job to ensure that people preserve and reflect on some sort of history.

“Crossing the Square at Nightfall” uses abstract language and universal themes to discuss various topics that all discuss the nature of a ‘square.’ Again, Ouyang does not mention the name Tiananmen or any date whatsoever, but Tiananmen’s place as the political, cultural, and historical center of China make it the quintessential square. A great deal has happened in Tiananmen, and the events of 1989 add to its immense history. Ouyang’s poem ponders the current place and existence of this square not so much as a physical entity but as something with which people must interact. It is about the life of a Square, and, indirectly, about Tiananmen in particular. The first lines of the poem are as follows:

\[
\text{I do not know where a square of past ages}
\text{begins, or where it ends.}
\text{Some people take an hour to cross the square,}
\text{some a lifetime—}⁹⁷
\]

⁹⁵ The Poem can be read in Appendix A in both English and Chinese
This ‘square’ is a nexus in life; it is something that everyone has to cross and that everyone must encounter in some form or another. Furthermore, Ouyang makes abstract the physical distance of a square and combines it with peoples’ perceptions of space and time. What does it mean to ‘cross a square’ and how long does this process take? Ouyang explained to me that the title’s and poem’s repetitive use of the word ‘square’ is supposed to not only remind the reader of the physical square that has history and constant flow of people but also is supposed to create a similar mental entity, a ‘square’ in one’s head (a beacon and forum with symbolic significance), that, like the actual square, is a nexus of intellectual and emotional traffic and information. Ouyang uses technology and other imagery associated with more modern technology like cars, elevators, prosthetic hair, to portray passage through the square.

Throughout the poem, Ouyang describes the square as its own entity that exists in different existential facets. There is a consistent reference to a sort of abstract accumulation that takes place in this square. Ouyang uses the word ‘stone’ to depict much of what the square accumulates that is not seen: people, generations, and history. The combination of this accumulation has its own agency and life force to which Ouyang refers as a ‘stone giant’ This giant is the result of all that has found its way into the square: peoples’ lives and emotional energy, politics, violence, death, hope, dynamism, and history. In a way, this ‘giant’ is a sort of historical actor and consciousness.

The poem illustrates that this ‘giant’, or this particular historical consciousness, exists universally as does the physical square (to which anyone can go) but also within each individual who has some sort of association with the square and everything it represents. Within people,

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98 Ouyang, Interview by Author.
99 Ouyang, “The Poetry of...”
discussing and processing the square and its history involves a great deal of complex thoughts and emotions. Ouyang uses a very strong and dense material, stone, as a representation:

   A square of daydreams that has vanished, no more exists,  
   stops in the morning as if there has been a night of heavy snow.  
   A pure and mysterious thaw  
   Shimmers in turn in eyes and conscience,  
   a part grows into a thing called tears,  
   a part grows hard inside a thing called stone.\textsuperscript{100}

The events of 1989 were filled with a great deal of excitement and energy, so much so that it defined and changed many peoples’ lives. Where did it all go? According the poem, the energy of 1989 is now a part of the accumulated ‘stone’ that has come to be the foundation of the square. Attempting to break or break through this ‘stone’ and exhume this complicated history, either for analysis’ or redemption’s sake, requires both struggle and perseverance:

   The universal fear of house arrest  
   brought people off their perches to gather in the square  
   changed the lonely moments of a lifetime into a fervent holiday.  
   And the depths of their dwellings, in the silent eye-catching ceremony of love and death,  
   a square of shadows empty without a sign of life is treasured,  
   like a tightly sealed room for penitence it is only a secret of the heart.  
   Must one pass through the darkness of the heart before crossing the square?  
   Now in the dark the two blackest worlds combine as one,  
   the hard stone head is split open,  
   in the dark keen swords flash.\textsuperscript{101}

The history of Tiananmen in 1989 is so convoluted and difficult to work with for these reasons. For the same reasons, the history is irresistible. Tiananmen holds too significant a place in the lives of people today to remain as cold, forgotten stone:

   Just as a trampled square must fall on the head of the trampler,  
   those people who crossed the square on that bright morning,  
   sooner or later their black leather shoes will fall on sharp swords,  
   as heavily as the lid of a coffin must fall on the coffin.\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid.\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.\textsuperscript{102} Ibid.
In many ways, Ouyang’s poem demonstrates the relationship between people and history. With 1989 Tiananmen, this history is certainly not a traditional historical analysis, but it does illustrate how people perceive, work with, and remember an incident of the past. History is very much the product of people, and this poem links people in the name of an accumulated history, that of a square:

\[
A \text{ place where nobody falls is not a square.} \\
A \text{ place where nobody stands also is not.} \\
\text{Was I standing? How much longer must I stand?} \\
\text{All in all those who fell and me are the same,} \\
\text{we were never immortal.}^{103}
\]

“Crossing the Square at Nightfall”, despite its abstract language and the fact that it never mentions 1989 or Tiananmen, serves as a powerful and profound means of historical discourse. It is not direct and thus does not violate the forbidden rule, but it does allow people to analyze and work with an otherwise unspeakable subject. The subject finds its way into works of art and daily conversation. Intellectuals not only must inevitably face the actual significance of the June 4th incident, they must also satisfy their own curiosity and need for expression. According to Ouyang, in the chaos of modern life and politics and from the black hole of history, historians and individuals take advantage of controversial, highly influential, and in this case forbidden incidents in history to extract a perspective of the world.\(^{104}\) Historically looking at an event like the Tiananmen Square incident serves so much more than a simple chronology of what transpired.

In this regard, a poet, Ouyang Jianghe in this case, serves as a historian. Since I had the fortune to interview Ouyang, he was able to elaborate on this idea. My discussion with Ouyang revealed that a poem can act as a tool with which individuals and society in general can not only

\[^{103}\text{Ibid.}\]
\[^{104}\text{Ouyang, Interview by Author.}\]
address a forbidden topic like the June 4th incident, but also conceptualize history and translate something as obscure and distant as the past, even a forbidden one, into something they can not only understand, but can also express, discuss, and incorporate into greater schema, such as history in general or the meaning and definition of their lives.\textsuperscript{105}

In other words, people conceive of the ‘incident’ in a multitude of ways that impact the overall collective memory of it. This is evident simply by looking at the variety of sources discussed above, in which non-historical, divergent perspectives come together and begin to build a historical discourse. Artistic mediums can also establish the foundation of a historical consciousness.

This type of historical consciousness has its advantages and disadvantages.

According to Ouyang, there are countless groups or gatherings of intellectuals and people who focus on different aspects of the June 4th incident’s history.\textsuperscript{106} The result is a diverse and dynamic history. According to Ouyang, the majority of Chinese believe that the incident itself was a grave mistake, but details as to how and why it happened and how tragic it was vary. Despite the obvious pervasiveness of the subject, these differing opinions and interpretations only occasionally and generally randomly encounter one another. They are random in the sense that they encounter one another underground, and it would be impossible or at least incredibly difficult to track and concretely define how they spread. Some interpretations focus on the direct impression the incident had on individuals and the country as a whole; some utilize the incident as a case study for different historiographical theories. Others, like Ouyang himself, turn the incident into an artistic medium and address the controversy through literary expression.\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.
On disadvantage is that, via these means, the history of the June 4th incident cannot yet directly touch the nation-state; despite taking place in contemporary China. Being bound by said nation, the history of the incident exists outside the context of ‘nation.’ Ironically, the nation always remains in the foreground as Tiananmen’s history itself is the product of mourning Hu Youbang, the censoring power that looms over all, and the need to reconcile one’s nation’s own history.

Even the ‘conceptualization’ of history via literary expressions is complex and multifaceted. Ouyang describes how artistic works, such as his poem, develop more prominent, collective perspectives. The incident happened recently enough to still be quite fresh in many minds and hearts in China today. Thus, artistic expression has great potency; it allows people to subtly look back on an event and process whatever thoughts and feelings they need to process.

People address the incident not by critically analyzing evidence, but, according to Ouyang, rather by pondering, thinking back over, reflecting, and emotionally processing the incident.108 Students in China today who are curious about the incident can engage it most directly via works of poetry, philosophy, and other distorted (not explicitly analytical) accounts of history.109 According to Ouyang, although there are certain primary and secondary sources for the most part, however, most students and scholars of history must become comfortable with the fact that they will not be working with objective historical arguments. One can assume then that ‘accuracy’ is a luxury in existing historical discourse. According to Ouyang, what is thus important is learning how to accept such a history as a part of one’s identity and one’s nation.110

Furthermore, as history building via artistic means is accomplished on an individual basis by a growing number of individuals, it becomes a collective process. Ouyang stated that “we are

108 Ibid.
109 Ibid.
110 Ibid.
only the ghosts of the rhetoric and expressions of a crowd.”\textsuperscript{111} All history, as having passed, is an abstraction, and taboo subjects like the June 4\textsuperscript{th} incident are even more muddled. It is the task of students and historians in China today to trek through the quagmire, and on the way the task of fact-finding is overshadowed by the incident’s influence on one’s overall perspective of life and death, and history and the present. As Ouyang stated: “history is alive, and so too is the ghost [of the rhetoric].”\textsuperscript{112} Ouyang has an interesting philosophical take on the process of history making that, at least in the case of the June 4\textsuperscript{th} incident, is incredibly relevant, even if the end result is only a piece of a proto-history.

To facilitate and foster this tradition of history rooted in poetry, Ouyang describes an impending sense of responsibility and an inherent, exceedingly prevalent necessity to address the topic of the June 4\textsuperscript{th} ‘massacre’ because it is so controversial and forbidden; such necessity and responsibility are mutually engaged and are deeply connected to the culture of modern China. Works of art are needed to create a common, historical ground.

One of the primary aspects of this intrinsic responsibility is creating, promoting, and maintaining a historical consciousness. In an intensely fast-paced competitive society like China, it is all too easy to ignore history, especially controversial history that in the eyes of the government has the potential to impede growth and stability. However, disregarding history has potentially dangerous consequences. History is more than just the passing of time. Time passes and events happen, but there are definitive turning points and incidents that drastically change and shape the future. According to, Ouyang an incident like the June 4\textsuperscript{th} ‘massacre’ will still be important in one hundred years, and probably even one thousand years from now; as time

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid.
continues to pass, the incident becomes more and more historically important.\textsuperscript{113} In other words, it is, and always will be, a part of the collective history of China. As time passes, the 1989 Tiananmen Square Protests will continue to have a larger legacy, and thus its history, how people address it as an event of the past, will also continue to be increasingly important.

All historians wield a certain power in the knowledge they research, present, and debate because history, being the product of a wide variety of voices, commands a vast impact over people today. This impact is twofold: on the one hand, the way people think about and view history directly affects their perception of themselves and the current state of things. On the other hand, drastic historical events change things, whether people welcome it or not. The June 4\textsuperscript{th} incident is one such event. It forced its way into peoples’ lives, and thus, as Ouyang describes, into their imaginations as well.\textsuperscript{114} The subject is unavoidable as much as the aftershock and significance of the event itself is also inescapable. Irrespective of how controversial, censored, or unpleasant the topic might be, it must, on some level, be remembered and somehow processed into one’s consciousness. This necessity is not unique to historians but applies to all people.

So why then are artistic mediums appropriate? It is natural that in a country of over 1.3 billion people in which the number of educated and inquisitive individuals continues to rise, that a significant historical event like that of the June 4\textsuperscript{th} incident simply cannot be overlooked. It is forbidden not just because it was a tragedy, but also because it has no acceptable political definition. With poems like “Crossing the Square at Nightfall”, it can at least begin to have a historical one.

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.
Finally, poetry as history can be problematic because it incorporates several a-historical elements, such as myth, and transcendence. A controlled history also signifies that it is particularly difficult to be objective since information, perspective, dialogue are limited. For instance, much of written history is not written to understand the past/present so much as to define the present. This, in a way, betrays the integrity of history as the study of the past. According to Ouyang, history, even in narrative form, claims to be more than just a story, it claims to be indivisibly attached to reality and ‘the truth’. As a result, historical discourse creates a dichotomy between the factual narrative and the ‘myth’, or nonfactual narrative. The exact border between the two is unclear; it is impossible to distinguish and isolate that which is true and that which is myth. Therefore, the historical narratives surrounding the Tiananmen Square incident are not ‘history’ so much as stories about history. They draw on perceived history for inspiration and pertain to perceived history, but there is always some distance between the two.

It is the historian’s job to be like a photographer capturing a majestic landscape; the landscape is too big (and three dimensional) to be encompassed with one shot. Therefore, the photographer utilizes zoom and other tools to focus in on what is most important or what most exemplifies the whole. The lens they use, however, determines the final picture (e.g., official, personal, revisionist, etc.). Evaluating the history of the June 4th incident is in part like trying to take a picture with the lens cap on or with an out of focus lens. It is impossible to see clearly through that lens; only the periphery can be viewed. The perceived image, whatever it is, is not definite. As a consequence, interpretations of these blurred images have become one of the main

\[115\text{Ibid.}\]
forms of discourse and, when discussing an event of the past, these interpretations are extra-historical because they attempt to work with history but cannot do so directly.

In the words of the poet Ouyang, generating such a history is like being “questioned under torture.” It is difficult to focus on anything other than the pain, but the floating questions must be answered. According to Ouyang, this is all a part of the natural process of creating a historical discourse about a taboo subject, something with which China and the Chinese have a great deal of experience, at least collectively and historically speaking. The history is in the background, and instead of directly addressing historical questions, individuals and historians both must go through other, extra-historical means, in some cases their own artistic expression to develop a proto-history.

This sort of history, as Ouyang mentions, has a pulse. This pulse’s relationship, even with its limits as a forbidden topic, grows and changes. Because the limit is theoretically so restrictive in that the history should not be discussed or explored at all, it quickly overflows beyond its prescribed limits. In Ouyang’s words, it “transcends and bursts forth.” This history spilled into, almost instantaneously, literature, poetry, media, and, at will, can be a recurrent theme in politics and the daily life of countless individuals. This quality is an active historical aspect of the June 4th incident. The event itself, but also its history, continues to reverberate.

Chaotic, fragmented historical discourse cannot be reversed. As such, expanding the narrative in China today is as much a historical exercise as it is an act of regret and forgiveness in the sense that Ricoeur mentions. Factual information and authentic documents are no more or less important than making sense of the incident. History, in this case, is as much an act of

116 Ibid.
117 Ibid.
118 Ibid.
catharsis as it is an academic endeavor; the extent of each is obviously dependent on each individual.

As Ouyang appropriately stated, “The history surrounds us.”\(^{119}\) The history of 1989 Tiananmen is varied, complex and extra-historical. Ouyang’s testimony is evidence that the history, by being fragmented and forbidden, becomes ‘extra-historical’ in that it is intensely dynamic and has spilled into and deeply imbedded itself into several institutions, aspects, and lives in China today.

Poetry is not the only means by which people in China today can explore and develop the history of the 1989 Student Protests and the June 4\(^{th}\) incident. Prose too has this power as will be explored in the next section.

**Individual Memory and History**

In the case of a forbidden but profoundly significant event like that of Tiananmen, individuals sometimes write their own histories. Since no public discourse exists, these people remember, discuss, and create their own history on a personal basis. One such example is that of Qin Wuming.\(^{120}\) Qin experienced the event and, on each anniversary of the June 4\(^{th}\) Incident, gets together with friends, colleagues, and/or former students in honor of the incident. In 2010, people were too busy or otherwise engaged and could not meet up. Consequently, he circulated an essay. This essay was never published; it was more spilled out and passed along to friends and other similar minded ‘historians’ who continue to feel the need to intellectually grapple with

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\(^{119}\) Ibid.

\(^{120}\) This name, 秦无名, is a pseudonym to protect the author’s identity.
the June 4th Incident. The essay is both memoir and history; it is the author’s own history. I imagine he is not the only individual to discuss and write out his own history.

This text is both proto and extra-historical. Qin approaches the June 4th incident with a certain historical analysis but also engages with philosophy and psychology. His writing style and focus change throughout the essay. Part of it is a narrative description of events while other parts are personal reactions and reflections. The perspective also fluctuates; sometimes he presents information in an impassive manner while at other times he depicts events as being intensely impacting. It is oftentimes unclear as to his own place in his account, for instance whether or not he was an observer or participant in a particular incident.

Also, while it is unclear as to the details of Qin’s life and background, it is obvious from the narrative that he is an intellectual. He mentions his students and makes references to a number of classical Chinese texts. Philosophically, ‘history’ is often framed in a different context in China than in Western discourse. Being a Chinese intellectual, it is reasonable to assume that Qin is aware of this different conceptualization of history. In this context, as described by distinguished modern Chinese philosophers Feng Youlan, Mou Zongsan, Liang Shuming and others, history is rooted in philosophy. Thus, it is the purpose of ‘history’ to represent the legacy, triumphs and failures of humanity; history serves as an artificial tool, product, and even weapon.121

Feng Youlan describes history as a particular kind of ‘contemplation’ or ‘chensi’. ‘Chen’ means ‘submerge’ or ‘immerse’, and ‘si’ means thinking or thought process.122 Mou Zongsan

claims that as a philosophical contemplation, history transcends science.\textsuperscript{123} Or, in other words, that history can go beyond the realm of logical analysis. According to these philosophers, history “preserves the reality of modern lifestyle.”\textsuperscript{124} Thus, history must be understood in order to grasp the present. As a scholar, Qin is most likely familiar with this philosophy if not with the philosophers and their specific works themselves. This philosophy manifests in Qin’s reflection and sets a particular context for his thinking.

Overall, Qin refers to the Student Movement of 1989 as the “Patriotic Democracy Movement” (aiguominzhuyundong), to the student protestors as “young people”, and to himself and his colleagues as adults or as “so-called intellectuals.”\textsuperscript{125} He consistently reiterates both his support for the students and the general attitude of the movement as being patriotic. For example, he recalls an instance in which the protests were utilized as anti-CCP fodder in Taiwan and how upset that made the vast majority of those involved.

Furthermore, the author addresses the Student Movement and June 4\textsuperscript{th} Incident as forbidden histories that must not be erased or deleted. He thus feels compelled to write, in order to preserve and memorialize it. There is so much to say that he “does not know where to start.”\textsuperscript{126} The essay follows a loose narrative structure. It is titled: “A Recollection of 1989 (First Draft)” and is further divided into the subsections: “Late Spring to Early Summer”, “The Beijing Intellectual World Supports the Student Marches”, “A Bowl of Beef Noodles on the Early Morning of the Twentieth”, “The Mood of Late May”, “The Night of June 3\textsuperscript{rd}”. 

\textsuperscript{123} Mou Zongsan, Julie L. Wei, trans. Nineteen Lectures on Chinese Philosophy and its Implications (Publisher Unknown, 1983).
\textsuperscript{124} Tang Junyi,…”The Manifesto…”
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid.
“Censorship”, and “Drinking Ruins the Occasion.”127 The titles of these sections indicate a narrative of Tiananmen in a way that infuses a chronicle of the events with personal experience and affect.

Qin gives a brief background of the events leading up to the protest. He specifically mentions the growing economic problems and the growing gap between the cities and the countryside. 1989 represented a climax; at the beginning of March he and 32 other people signed a petition for reform that was then circulated. The petition was easy to articulate and the resulting content was quite clear, as compared to a petition he would later write in 2003 that apparently was very difficult to word. Later, on April 15th, the death of Hu Yaobang “gave rise to a great wave.”128 Students took to the streets, and journalists followed; the author remarks how he was quite pleased that most journalists supported the students. Afterwards, in early May, several students from universities in Beijing met with students from Taiwan’s Dan Jiang University during a conference in honor of the historic May 4th Movement. The purpose of the conference was to discuss concepts of traditional and modern in a contemporary Chinese context, but discussions naturally devolved to focus instead on the growing student protests.

The author consistently expresses his sympathy for the movement, but it is clear he also felt obliged to join on more than one occasion. He recalls a night of April 27th when he was watching the marches with his neighbor and he suddenly saw some of his classmates/colleagues in one of the marches and immediately joined in without thinking or saying anything. Towards the middle of May, the protests intensified. The hunger strike began, and he vividly remembers meeting intellectuals not just from Beijing, but from all over China. He and others marched from

127 Ibid.
128 Ibid.
Tiananmen Square to Fuxingmen and then to Jianguomen\textsuperscript{129}, all the while chanting and singing: “a step, a slogan.”\textsuperscript{130} There was a positive energy throughout the movement. He specifically labeled one of his chapters in honor of one particular night in which an elderly lady fed many of the students a bowl of beef noodles and did not charge them anything. Qin described the experience as “witnessing humanity.”\textsuperscript{131}

The climate started to change, however. By the 19\textsuperscript{th} of May, the weather became increasingly hot and muggy; many people considered returning to their respective campuses. After the establishment of martial law, the students were reinvigorated to continue as the people of Beijing prevented martial law officers from going near Tiananmen Square. On the night of June 3\textsuperscript{rd}, chaos ensued. Soldiers pushed their way towards the Square and the author himself spent the night running around making sure as many people were as safe as possible. He remembers being exhausted that night, and witnessing a nonviolent confrontation among students and soldiers between the History Museum and the Great Hall of the People. There were rumors floating around that people had already been killed; he says that at the time he dared not believe them: “[the victims] would have a name, a school and a department, and a place of death, at that time I heard it but dared not believe.”\textsuperscript{132} Tanks drove up and down Changan Road (ironically, ‘changan’ means eternal peace); he recalls seeing a student running towards him covered in blood and hearing another student encourage him: “we do not have/use violent force to express our opinions, we would [reluctantly] rather be hit and not retaliate”;\textsuperscript{133} due to their obvious lack of weapons, they used their own bodies as shields and roadblocks.

\textsuperscript{129} Both Fuxingmen and Jianguomen are famous landmarks in Beijing.
\textsuperscript{130} Qin
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid.
The event, the entire event, from the initial protests to the violent, chaotic ending, swept people up like a storm. The author recalls signing another petition at the beginning of April that, in retrospect, was not the most prudent decision. However, he describes that they all signed it anyway. He did not mention the details of any petitions he signed; but rather emphasized the great social impetus to sign them. According to his account, especially by May, the atmosphere of the movement further developed; it was no longer possible to “quietly go about one’s life at home.”\textsuperscript{134} It got to the point that “circumstance was stronger than people.”\textsuperscript{135} The energy of the movement took over until it crashed. According to the author, the momentum of the 1989 Student Movement, the atmosphere of it all, is all but gone today.

Overall, the essay portrays the changing climate of the student movement. It started off as an idealistic and righteous movement with tendencies towards unrealistic expectations until it ended violently. The author’s writing style even expresses this significant change; it starts well organized into neat paragraphs. It then devolves into blocks of double spaced text and then into large chunks of single-spaced rambling. The author incessantly indicates his sympathy for the movement, but his initial support deteriorates into disbelief. He identifies and describes something he calls ‘political wisdom’, but the agents who poses this wisdom change as the discourse carries on. At first, the students are in the right and the government and its representations are slow to react. Later on, the students, though still claiming the moral high ground, are depicted as imprudent. This deep change and contradiction also contribute to the history’s complexity.

\textsuperscript{134} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid.
The first half of the essay depicts a great deal more optimism and blatant support of the students. For example, there are many anecdotes of the author voicing or otherwise demonstrating his support. On the night of April 22nd, at Xinhuamen (near Tiananmen), the author remembers a group of officers, particularly their fat commander, yelling at a group of students. He then chided them, asking on what grounds, on what authority, did they act? He criticizes their lack of political wisdom and reflects that the most entertaining aspect of it all was that the officers thought they could so easily suppress that group of students (and likewise that the government thought it could so easily suppress the masses).136

As the movement grew, it progressively became its own catalyst. According to the author, he and others signed a number of retrospectively unrealistic petitions: “it was [all] in accordance with the will and power of the people, of course we should sign…”137 Also, the Movement garnered extensive support from all aspects of society—from intellectuals, the middle class, and all kinds of businesses, and even army and police cadets. This happened because the movement was based in the “heart and popular will of the people.”138 It was the government that had problems. On May 18th when Zhao Ziyang and Wen Jiabao (the future premier) went to the Square for dialogues, the general attitude and individual thoughts of the author were: “How could they come so late?”139 Students had already been on hunger strike for a week! Zhao looked exhausted, the Movement was flourishing… One student stepped forward and told Zhao and Wen that the protestors were not opposing the CCP and listed reasons as to why China could not plunge into class struggle as it had in the past. According to the author, this student spoke so candidly and honestly, like he was giving a class, that the author himself was very impressed. In

136 Ibid.
137 Ibid.
138 Ibid.
139 Ibid.
retrospect, he compares this student to the man who stood so resolutely in front of the tank, an image made famous as the photo of it spread throughout the world. Both he claims, are equally “brave, fearless, full of wisdom, intuitive knowledge, a sense of responsibility; each took a step forward.”

Overall, the nights of April and May, of marching with friends, students, and brethren, were some of the most fantastic of the author’s life. The author describes one night of marching as “a perfect night, truly unforgettable! I witnessed the raw energy of the Chinese people.” Another instance, on May 16th, according to the author, at least a million people filled Changan Street in front of the Square. Despite the large number of protestors, there was “very little disturbance of the peace… there were even no instances of petty theft.” All was well.

This optimistic note fades in the second half of the paper. The author starts to emphasize pragmatism and point out the unrealistic expectations of the protestors. He mentions that “we must also engage in introspection.” In late May, he apparently started paying closer attention to political rhetoric, as politics is “not a child’s game.” Also by late May, the number of protestors dropped, and only students remained in the Square. The author ponders as to whether people intuitively expected the coming crackdown; he comments that people who lived through the Cultural Revolution (when he was a child) did not have optimistic attitudes when it came to the government, or politics in general for that matter. Politics is just a game; he reflected how
the people in China of May 1989 witnessed more freedom than any other epoch in living memory and that one cannot “accomplish the whole task in one stroke.”\textsuperscript{145}

With politics, one “cannot rely on virtuous conduct”;\textsuperscript{146} the students would have to face reality sooner or later. He continued to support the students, but he could not help but feeling that noise and chaos became the power of the Square. Despite his own internal contradictions, he continued to support the students “out of principle.”\textsuperscript{147} He, and some fellow older intellectuals decided to set an example and attempt to persuade students to leave the Square. This conviction produced its own results.

When visiting the Square to attempt to persuade the students to return to their respective campuses, the author began to feel powerless. He gazed at: “all these young kids, who essentially know nothing about the world, so many of them…”\textsuperscript{148} Ultimately, he did not persuade them, and left feeling disappointed. On his way out, the student sentinel who handled the initial contact and witnessed the communication said to him: “Mr, [Qin], I have already lost all hope, us Chinese have always been like a sheet of lose sand and unable to uniformly cooperate…”\textsuperscript{149} Why then did they all continue to occupy the Square? This remark left the author speechless, and he later witnessed this young student being arrested. He gave up trying to convince them to stop, believing that he had “not the wisdom, bravery, or patience”\textsuperscript{150} to continue. He lost all sense of agency and transformed from an actor to an observer.

\textsuperscript{145} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid.
As a scholar, he later reflected on the event with the philosophies of others. Both Marx and Mao described struggle after struggle; but the author felt his energy was all spent. He would spend entire days thinking and reading. He reread Sun Zi’s (author of *Art of War*) “Strategies of the Warring States” and eventually came to use two old Chinese idioms to describe the situation: “The official is still in doubt, the soldiers already have crossed the river” (doom approaches as the people pointlessly deliberate) and “For the scholar who rebels, three years is not enough” (if intellectuals take a stand but do so indecisively, they can never succeed and accomplish their goals).\(^{151}\) Both then and now, the author describes his relation to the June 4\(^{th}\) Incident as “out of sorts” and “in bad spirits.”\(^{152}\) Ten, twenty years later makes no difference. He describes the day of the 1989 Student Movement as being “the most stimulating, happy, and certainly the most chaotic and indecisive of days.”\(^{153}\) His own relation to this history of the event remains disconnected.

After the night of June 3\(^{rd}\), the military took over the city, and the author is asked by his parents to accompany them for a while (outside of Beijing). The author is quite convinced they requested this for his own security. He remained with his parents until later in July that year he received a letter from work demanding he come back if he wished to keep his job. People from the government would occasionally question him and some of his colleagues, or in the words of the author, would “play a game of cat and mouse” with them.\(^{154}\) Towards the very end of the essay, he discusses how one should approach the topic from a historical perspective. He asks: “In the face of such repressive political censorship, how should we respond?” His writing this essay is perhaps on way, a start. He also states that when looking at the event, people should “seek

\(^{151}\) Ibid. These are well-known Chinese sayings.
\(^{152}\) Ibid.
\(^{153}\) Ibid.
\(^{154}\) Ibid.
truth from facts.”\textsuperscript{155} The last couple lines of the essay involve an anecdote of drinking to the extent of drunkenness in remembrance of the event he makes this final statement: “I am weak, my willpower is not as steadfast. I come from the crowd. I come from culture. I am open to criticism.”\textsuperscript{156}

It becomes clear at this point that Qin is building a sort of historical consciousness. Included in this essay are events drawn from memory, analysis drawn from experience and reflection, and even suggestions on how to think historically about the event (as, he said, people should “seek truth from facts”). These memories and reflections may not utilize a traditional historical approach, but nonetheless combine to create a historical discourse. Furthermore, this essay is an exemplary piece of historical writing because of its intellectual and emotional analysis and also its historical timing; this essay was written over twenty years after the incident. Qin’s rhetorical style in part pulls the reader back to 1989 but also includes a great deal of reflection that could have only been produced after contemplation over time.

Also in the spirit of preserving the history, Qin feels compelled to ‘confess’ to the illegality of the movement. Righteous as it may have been, it did violate the law by starting a massive protest and defying the government. This is an interesting comment to make after everything else that is included in this memoire. Why does it matter if it was legal or not at the time? Many other people believe that history will one day redeem the incident. Either way, this comment exemplifies the incompleteness of the history; the discourse is not yet finished.

With these and other ideas in the essay, Qin paints a powerful picture of 1989 Tiananmen that is historically relevant. Clearly, there was a fervor that swept up individuals and compelled

\textsuperscript{155} Ibid. This is a famous quote by Mao.
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid.
them to react to the protests in some way or another. This fervor dissipated after the movement ended. Qin mentioned how signing protests was an exhilarating experience in the Spring of '89 but that signing a petition in 2003 took much more consideration and effort. Also, Qin’s anecdotes, from the elderly lady giving them beef noodles to the brave student who stood up to Zhao and Wen to the hopeless, tragic figure of the student sentinel reveal much about how people, as human beings, acted during the protests. This is one of the most striking and significant features of history: it connects people across lines of time and space asks probing questions about humanity and what it means to be human. Qin’s anecdotes present different individuals in extreme situations with the resulting effect that said anecdotes strip away the controversy, politics, and chaos associated with 1989 Tiananmen and shed light on something much more basic and fundamental: the people involved, their motivations, thoughts, actions, and experiences.

Lastly, it is important to reiterate that this essay is unpublished and is not intended for a large and/or influential audience. In this regard and based on the tone and style of the essay, it is apparent that Qin is quite sincere in his writing. This essay harbors no sinister intentions of condemning some individuals or institutions nor does it have blatant, direct political goals. Why does the essay end with a confession on behalf of the author, a confession both of illegality and of the need to address this history? Such confession further demonstrates that this letter is just a personal, historical account of a significant event of the past, something the author chose and felt compelled to do. This essay is evidence that history is necessary; that memory alone is not enough to live with and analyze the past.
Significance of a Proto-History

Within China’s longstanding and generally celebrated history, the June 4th incident remains to be a blatant missing link in the chain. It is suffocated by politics, marred in controversy, and made extreme by tragedy. Official and academic discourse is limited, limited to the extent that all that currently exists is a vibrant, living proto-history that draws on extra-historical means.

This essay is my own proto-history, the product of my own curiosity, research, and analysis. I have come to the conclusion that 1989 Tiananmen’s history is, among other things, a profound experience and a collaborative effort. For me, the process of building this proto-history involved the accumulation, articulation, and general collaboration of multiple different kinds of sources. Furthermore, history by nature is collective; and to achieve a more vibrant, comprehensive, and objective history of Tiananmen, collaboration with other ideas and thinkers is and always will be necessary.

Collecting and forming this proto-history was very much an experience for me. Obviously, the actual events of June 4th were intense for those involved, but so too is the process of remembering, reflecting back, and developing a historical consciousness. Jiang Yanyong’s letter, Chai Ling’s testimony, Qin’s essay, and others reveal meaningful emotional experiences. Wang Hui’s book, Ouyang Jianghe’s poem and ideas, Zhao Ziyang’s interview in Zhao Ziyang: Captive Conversations, Qin’s essay, and others describe and include significant intellectual experiences. These ‘experiences’ linger still and are deeply rooted in individual consciousness. Pondering this incident and its history has forced me, and presumably the scholars and individuals I discussed, to rethink even the most fundamental and basic concepts of history,
history’s relationship to the present and future, memory, and the past. As Tiananmen is only a proto-history, this process is far from complete. Its significance and consequences are potentially limitless.

On the other hand, would it be easier to ignore the events of Tiananmen in 1989? Why is this historical void a problem? Historical and historiographical perspectives are fundamental in defining any concept or identity that seeks to claim anything beyond temporality. In many ways, historical perspective dictates how people see and perceive the present world. According to Ouyang, understanding such history is necessary in order to both grasp and appreciate one’s country, one’s reality, and one’s freedom. Likewise, historiographical perspective defines the potential of any perspective; it answers the questions of what people can ‘see’ and what people could possibly comprehend in regards to defining a historical perspective. Thus, the history of 1989 Tiananmen presents as much opportunity as obstacle: it could liberate the self and the nation from oppressive politics as well as establish a more harmonious relationship with the past.

Duara discusses history’s agency in this regard. When attempting to work with bifurcated and/or converging histories (as that of Tiananmen certainly is), there are three steps, which together produce not an absolute truth but a kind of historical truth, one that has an advantage of being removed in both space and time from the incident it discusses. As such, working with history in this sense can be empowering. In Duara’s words, it allows one to “get within the fissures of history… and eliminates the problem involving the ‘other’ in the name of cultural authenticity” and potentially frees the historian/individual from contexts and historical forces of which he or she may not even be aware.

157 Ouyang, Interview by Author.
158 Duara, Rescuing History...
The June 4th incident, as a tragedy and forbidden subject, still looms over present day China and haunts its renowned history. In place of open discourse, Tiananmen’s history is filled with martyrs and controversy. I hope that as historical discourse regarding Tiananmen continues to grow and develop so too will China, and all nations and peoples affected by history, be able to overcome the problems and hurdles of the past. In this regard, a collective history has the potential to be a collective catharsis. If one is poisoned, he/she should draw blood to purge their bodies and save their life. Addressing Tiananmen and building up its history could potentially be painful, but would ultimately benefit and enrich the already magnificent history of China.

History is a cooperative endeavor; people make it together just as they write it together. I have no doubt that working together to illuminate a history naturally inspires cooperation in both the present and future. The June 4th incident made a significant impact on the world. It is in many ways tragic that the development of historical understanding regarding the incident is so hindered and limited. On the other hand, Tiananmen is a unique focal point. As the cultural and political center of China, whose characters in Chinese literally mean the ‘country in the middle’, and at the same time as one of the most difficult subjects in Chinese history, 1989 Tiananmen Square has vast potential in regards to cultural, intellectual, and historical development, both for China and the world.
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Appendix A

Crossing the Square at Nightfall by Ouyang Jianghe

I do not know where a square of past ages begins, or where it ends. Some people take an hour to cross the square, some a lifetime -- In the morning it's children, in the evening people in the dusk of life. I don't know how much farther you must walk in the twilight before you can stop your steps?

In the twilight how long must you survey before you can close your eyes? when a fast moving auto opens its blinding lights in the rearview mirror I saw the flash of the faces of those who once crossed the square on a bright morning. In the evening in buses they leave.

A place that no one leaves is not a square, a place where no one falls is also not. The departed come home again, but the fallen are forever fallen. A thing called stone quickly piles up, towers up, unlike the growth of bones needing a hundred years time. Also not so soft as a bone. Every square has a head built up out of stone making the empty-handed people feel the measure of life. To look up and think with a huge head of stone, not a simple matter for anyone. The weight of stone lightens the responsibility, the love and the sacrifice on people's shoulders.

Perhaps people will cross the square on a bright morning, open arms and tenderly embrace in winds from every side. But when the night falls, hands grow heavy, the only body emitting light is the stone in the head. The only keen sword that stabs at the head quietly drops to the ground.
Darkness and cold are rising.
Surrounding the square tall structures put on the latest fashion of china and glass.
All grows small. The world of stones
lightly floats up in the world reflected in the glass,
like an oppressive notion scrawled in children's workbooks
that at anytime can be ripped out and kneaded into a ball.

Cars speed past, pouring the speed
of running water into a huge system of concrete that possesses muscles and bones of iron,
in the shape of the horns bestowed on silence.
The square of past ages vanishes from the rearview mirror.

Disappears forever --
a square covered by acne in its green spring, in its first love.
A square that has never appeared in the accounts and notices of death.
A square that bares its chest, rolls up its sleeves, tightens its belt
that wears patches and energetically scrubs with both hands.

A square that through young blood runs outside its body,
that licks with its tongue, strikes stone with its brow, and covers itself with flags.

A square of daydreams that has vanished, no more exists,
stops in the morning as if there has been a night of heavy snow.
A pure and mysterious thaw
shimmers in turn in eyes and conscience,
a part grows into a thing called tears,
a part grows hard inside a thing called stone.

The world of stone collapses.
A world of soft tissue climbs up to the high spot.
The entire process like spring water leaving minerals through a draw pipe
going distilled into an airtight, beautifully packaged space
Riding an express elevator I rise in the umbrella stem of a rainy day.
When I return to the ground, I look up and see a circular restaurant
opened like an umbrella revolving in the city's sky.
This is a cap grown out of wizardry,
its size does not agree
with the head of the giant piled up out of stone

The arms that once supported the square are let down.
Today the giant relies on the support of a short sword.
Will it stab something? For example, a fragile revolution
that was once stirred up on paper, posted to walls?

There has never been a power
that could glue together for long two different worlds.
In the end a repeatedly posted head will be ripped away.
A repeatedly whitewashed wall
has a half occupied by a girl of mixed blood baring her thighs.
The other half is enticing ads for the installation of prosthetics and the regeneration of hair.

A pram quietly parks on the evening square,
silent, not related to this world soon to go mad.
I guess the distance between the pram and the setting sun
to be farther than a hundred years.
This is an almost limitless yardstick, sufficient to measure
the length of the confined era that passed over the square

The universal fear of house arrest
brought people off their perches to gather in the square
changed the lonely moments of a lifetime into a fervent holiday.
And in the depths of their dwellings, in the silent eye-catching ceremony of love and death,
a square of shadows empty without a sign of life is treasured,
like a tightly sealed room for penitence it is only a secret of the heart.

Must one pass through the darkness of the heart before crossing the square?
Now in the dark the two blackest worlds combine as one,
the hard stone head is split open,
in the dark keen swords flash.
If I could use the mysterious black night chopped in half
to explain a bright morning trampled to the ground by both feet –
if I could follow the flight of stairs swept by the dawn light
and climb up onto the shoulders of the giant standing high on the summit of nothingness,
not to rise, but to fall --
if the epigraph engraved in gold is not to be a eulogy,
but to be rubbed out, forgotten, trampled --

Just as a trampled square must fall on the head of the trampler,
those people who crossed the square on that bright morning,
sooner or later their black leather shoes will fall on sharp swords,
as heavily as the lid of a coffin must fall on the coffin.
As long as it is not me lying inside, and also not
the people walking on the blade of the sword.

I never thought so many people could cross the square
on that bright morning, dodging loneliness and immortality.
They are the survivors of an era of black confinement.
I never imagined they would leave or fall in the evening.

A place where nobody falls is not a square.
A place where nobody stands also is not.
Was I standing? How much longer must I stand?
All in all those who fell and me are the same,
we were never immortal.
有的人用一生——

早晨是孩子，傍晚已是垂暮之人

我不知道还要在夕光中走出多远

才能停住脚步？

还要在夕光中眺望多久才能

闭上眼睛？

当高速行驶的汽车打开刺目的车灯

那些曾在一个明媚早晨穿过广场的人

我从汽车的后视镜看见过他们一闪即逝

的面孔

傍晚他们乘车离去

一个无人离去的地方不是广场

一个无人倒下的地方也不是

离去的重新归来

倒下的却永远倒下了

一种叫做石头的东西
迅速地堆积、屹立

不像骨头的生长需要一百年的时间

也不像骨头那么软弱

每个广场都有一个用石头垒起来的脑袋，使两手空空的人们感到生存的份量。以巨大的石头脑袋去思考和仰望对任何人都不是一件轻松的事

石头的重量

减轻了人们肩上的责任、爱情和牺牲

或许人们会在一个明媚的早晨穿过广场张开手臂在四面来风中柔情地拥抱

但当黑夜降临

双手就变得沉重

唯一的发光体是脑袋里的石头

唯一刺向石头的利剑悄然坠地
黑暗和寒冷在上升

广场周围的高层建筑穿上了瓷和玻璃的时装

一切变得矮小了。石头的世界

在玻璃反射出来的世界中轻轻浮起

象是涂在孩子们作业本上的

一个随时会被撕下来揉成一团的阴沉念头

汽车疾驶而过，把流水的速度

倾泻到有着钢铁筋骨的庞大混凝土制度中

赋予寂静以喇叭的形状

一个过去年代的广场从汽车的后视镜消失了

永远消失了——

一个青春期的、初恋的、布满粉刺的广场

一个从未在帐单和死亡通知书上出现的广场

一个露出胸膛、挽起衣袖、扎紧腰带

一个双手使劲搓洗的带补丁的广场
一个通过年轻的血液流到身体之外

用舌头去舔，用前额去下磕，用旗帜去覆盖

的广场

空想的、消失的、不复存在的广场

象下了一夜的大雪在早晨停住

一种纯洁而神秘的融化

在良心和眼睛里交替闪耀

一部分成为叫做泪水的东西

另一部分在叫做石头的东西里变得坚硬起来

石头的世界崩溃了

一个软组织的世界爬到高处

整个过程就象泉水从吸管离开矿物

进入密封的、蒸馏过的、有着精美包装的空间

我乘坐高速电梯在雨天的伞柄里上升

回到地面时，我看到雨伞一样张开的
一座圆形餐厅在城市上空旋转

象一顶从魔法变出来的帽子

它的尺寸并不适合

用石头垒起来的巨人的脑袋

那些曾托起广场的手臂放了下来

如今巨人仅靠一柄短剑来支撑

它会不会刺破什么呢？比如，一场曾经有过的

从纸上掀起、在墙上张贴的脆弱革命？

从来没有一种力量

能把两个不同的世界长久地粘在一起

一个反复张贴的脑袋最终将被撕去

反复粉刷的墙壁

被露出大腿的混血女郎占据了一半

另一半是头发再生、假肢安装之类的诱人广告

一辆婴儿车静静地停在傍晚的广场上
静静地，和这个快要发疯的世界没有关系

我猜婴儿和落日之间的距离有一百年之遥

这是近乎无限的尺度，足以测量

穿过广场所要经历的一个幽闭时代有多么漫长

对幽闭的普遍恐惧，使人们从各自的栖居

云集广场，把一生中的孤独时刻变成热烈的节日

但在栖居深处，在爱与死的默默的注目礼中

一个空无人迹的影子广场被珍藏着

象紧闭的忏悔室只属于内心的秘密

是否穿越广场之前必须穿越内心的黑暗

现在黑暗中最黑的两个世界合为一体

坚硬的石头脑袋被劈开

利剑在黑暗中闪闪发光

如果我能用被劈成两半的神秘黑夜

去解释一个双脚踏在大地上的明媚早晨——
如果我能沿着洒满晨曦的台阶

去登上虚无之巅的巨人的肩膀

不是为了升起，而是为了陨落——

如果黄金镌刻的铭文不是为了被传颂

而是为了被抹去、被遗忘、被践踏——

正如一个被践踏的广场迟早要落到践踏者头上

那些曾在一个明媚早晨穿过广场的人

他们的黑色皮鞋也迟早要落到利剑之上

象必将落下的棺盖落到棺材上那么沉重

躺在里面的不是我，也不是

行走在剑刃上的人

我没想到这么多人会在一个明媚的早晨

穿过广场，避开孤独和永生

他们是幽闭时代的幸存者

我没想到他们会在傍晚时离去或倒下
一个无人倒下的地方不是广场

一个无人站立的地方也不是

我曾是站着的吗？还要站立多久？

毕竟我和那些倒下去的人一样

从来不是一个永生者