

hi Nina, I think the story reflects my impression on certain perspectives on your works, where the question of how human store their memories or where the “real” space for human’s memories for the next generation gets more urgent, it’s probably also related to the question of whether there is immortality for the material world, anyway, the short story is just a way to explore how it could be narrated, I also tried to understand this through the writing, and hope this could be an interesting reflection to share with you.

On Apr 23, 2015, at 5:07 PM, Hu Fang wrote:

<her by HF Cn.docx

It was early spring when I came to this city. A cold, north wind was still blowing in the sky, giving the whole place a chilly and grey tone. I may have violated our agreement by coming here – yes, I had promised her I wouldn't find out about her past.

Like any other city that has entered a "Better Tomorrow," there was nothing about the city that attracted my attention — until I wandered around the central plaza and started to realize that something was strange. I did not know what it was at first, but as I walked, it became more and more obvious: there was nothing that could be called a monument here. When I thought about it, I found that I could not see any form of monument anywhere in the city.

This is where she grew up : a city that has no monument, that is weightless in memory. It is as light as the way she walks. Couldn't this lightness explain why she attracted me?

Later on, in a museum I saw the few remaining monuments. They were sculptures of rock or copper, formally similar to sculptures that we know so well. The sculptural figures had shiny eyes and were staring straight ahead – the future that they were staring into was the present moment. "These heroes shed their blood to defend our city and our peace." The female docent's introduction was touching. She made me believe that the memory of this city had not been lost, that it was only being stored in a hidden place. Memory did not disappear; it is simply in an unknown place.

I was fortunate. In the museum, not only did I see these sculptures from the past, but I also found out the reasons behind their disappearance: not long ago, a kind of rare metal was discovered in this city. This material is crucial for the global electronic manufacturing industry. The discovery changed how the city stored its public memories. All its history is now stored in the city's memory stick. And this memory stick is unlimitedly increasing its capacity.

You will surely be amazed by how the city's destiny has twisted and turned : now, memories of the whole world are all stored in memory sticks made with the rare metal found underground here. But what really mattered to me was this: her voice, transmitted to me through fibre-optics, had a kind of fascinating heroic quality, something I never had resonance with before but which was now dominating our relationship so strongly. I feel that I needed it, from my mind to my body.

And then, as I wandered in this city that had no joy, no longer any heroic stories, and not even any more details about itself, the memory in my head somehow became more vivid than ever. I began to understand why fibre-optics appeared in my mind when I first saw her blue coloured blood vessels underneath her nearly transparent, porcelain-like skin. I understood why, when I couldn't resist to ask her about her past, how she would gently move away her face. I understood why I trembled like I was electrified when I heard her say: "growing up in that city, I have been learning about separation from one another since I was young." In some senses, we are all media of very low data transfer rates. We long for something like flash memory, but when we try to accelerate we only move further away from one another. We can never reach each other, like all the memory space of this planet silently expands and splits into countless new universes, isolated from each other. Strangely, I've started to blindly believe that since we can never reach each other, we will thus never lose one another.

(Hu Fang, translated from Chinese to English by Anthony Yung)