UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

The Geopolitics of Memory Production in China, Hong Kong, and Anglo-America: Reading Memoirs of the Chinese Cultural Revolution from 1980 to 2006

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

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by

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The dissertation of Chunhui Peng is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family members in Chengdu, Haikou and Dallas for their love and encouragement.

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VITA

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Geopolitics of Memory Production in China, Hong Kong, and Anglo-America: Reading Memoirs of the Chinese Cultural Revolution from 1980 to 2006

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Professor Yingjin Zhang, Chair

My dissertation embraces a comparative framework and is concerned with memories of the Cultural Revolution in mainland China, Hong Kong, and Anglo-America from 1980 to 2006 by victims, second-generation survivors, and party-denounced perpetrators. In terms of analytic methodology, my project stresses the discursive nature of memory and highlights the transnational creation of Cultural Revolution memory. It considers how the Cultural Revolution is remembered under the party's surveillance, how the official history is contested by sensitive figures in Hong Kong, and how overseas Chinese produce bestsellers and turn personal and family memory into a national history in the Diaspora. I challenge readers' fetish of

alternative narratives and criticize some reductive readings of these memory performances. The critical issues examined in my dissertation include text and context, memory and history, narrative and genre, subjectivity and signification, authorship and impunity, and power and desire. By examining various geocultural cases, I illuminate the challenges in remembering this political event and the urgency for historically and discursively analyzing memoirs of the Cultural Revolution.

Chapter One

Introduction

Since the late 1970s, the ten-year Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) has been written and rewritten in contemporary Chinese literature, Diaspora writings, transnational Chinese films, and intellectual debates. Previous scholarship in this field has been scarce, and critics have confined their genre choices to fiction, poetry, feature film, and contemporary painting, neglecting other equally important memory performances, such as memoir and autobiography. Such a genre bias is unsatisfactory for three reasons. First, as few former victims have the skills to write fiction, publish poetry or direct films, the above-mentioned critical practices leave out a large number of works. Second, when it comes to this particular subject matter, memoir and autobiography differ significantly from fiction in the ways they organize and convey traumatic experiences. For example, while fiction writers name perpetrators freely, few people are willing to do so in memoirs. Third, as a result of their increasing popularity, memoirs and autobiographies on the Cultural Revolution have contributed directly to the discursive construction of historical memory and have been repeatedly appropriated to formulate identities inside and outside China. To sum up, a study on genres such as memoir and autobiography will expand the research objects and bring new perspectives to the study on memory of the Cultural

Revolution.

My dissertation focuses on memories of the Cultural Revolution in autobiographies and memoirs and highlights their production, circulation, and appropriation across national boundaries. I will study narrative strategies in selected works to explore the interactions between text and context, memory and history, narrative and genre, subjectivity and signification, authorship and impunity, and power and desire.

A review of theoretical discussions of memory, history, the nation-state, and representation below will help me formulate my dissertation project. After the review, I will propose a place-specific framework for my exploration of Cultural Revolution memory.

Configurations of the Past: Identity Politics and the Nation-State

As remembering always involves producing a past to suit the needs of the present, critics are particularly wary of the nation-state's manipulation and appropriation of memory. In his 1959 article, "What Does Come to Terms with the Past Mean?" Theodore Adorno indicates a dangerous trend in postwar Germany to "come to terms with the past," in order to "turn the page [of Germany's past] and, if possible, wipe it from memory" (115). Underlying the strategy of repressing and reformulating the past is the fear that memory of the past atrocity "could harm Germany's reputation abroad" (117). The remedy Adorno proposes is to work against "a forgetfulness that too easily goes along with and justifies what is forgotten" (125).

Parallel to Germany's efforts to normalize the past, as Ana Douglas and

Vogler Thomas note in their research on the representation of traumatic events in different communities, trauma has been a powerful tool to negotiate privileges and has created, what they term, "trauma envy" (12). Other scholars also bring attention to the nation-state's frequent appropriation of trauma discourse in its construction of a national identity. In her epilogue to *Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space, and the Dialectics of Memory*, Lisa Yoneyama writes that Hiroshima serves as the "'symbolic capital' in Japan's political culture" and as a symbol of "counterhegemonic discourse" "appropriated by statist ideology in postwar years" (213). Elsewhere, Yoneyama argues that the nation-state provides the condition that "allows the victimization of one segment of a society to stand for the entire national collectivity" ("For Transformative" 337).

In *Le Temps de L'Histoire*, Philippe Aries offers a socio-historical study on the nation-state's management of memory, particularly how modern historiography universalizes the past within a single tradition. History, to Aries, originates from collective memory that frequently reflects the views of the dominant group. In contemporary historiography, the image of the nation-state dominates the discourse on community lives. During the transition from monarchy to the modern nation-state, historical writings went through significant transformations to accommodate these needs, which is achieved by marginalizing some smaller communities and downplaying their traditions.

In the cases above, the desire to create an acceptable national identity propels the nation-state to control remembering and forgetting. Recent research also

demonstrates how memory practices are linked to international politics and how national memories are formulated trans-nationally. This point is elaborated in the articles included in *Perilous Memories: The Asian-Pacific War(s)*. Seeing the massive production and reproduction of World War II memories with the narratives dominated overwhelmingly by the major warring powers, the contributing authors set out to address perilous memories that are marginalized, disappearing, and threatening present knowledge about the war. The dominant historical narrative this volume is intended to challenge is the simplified version of the war, narrated in light of the political rivalry developed between the U.S. and Japan. This narrative gradually gains its "centrality, volume, visibility, and audibility of more dominant stories" and marginalizes other voices by relegating other nations to the background of this warfare (4). However, as critics point out, those marginalized memories have the potential of forming critical remembering and destabilizing monolithic national narratives. Therefore, Yoneyama suggests that we attend to "contradictory and multiple elements that refuse subsumption into the existing categories and boundaries of nation-states or other exclusionary collectivities" (217).

History and Memory

History is viewed by some critics as a threat to memory, and the best-known critique on history's suppression of memory can be found in Michel Foucault's and Pierre Nora's writings, where they see history and memory as binary opposites. In a television interview, Foucault warns of the disappearance of popular memory and the invasion of official history. He uses the history of World War II as an example to

remind readers of how power operates through its production of knowledge about the past and how it reproduces its presence through mass media and popular culture. Foucault's definition of popular memory is narrower than most other people's, for he clearly excludes TV programs and film as media for popular memory. In his conception, TV programs and film are tainted by the propaganda of official history. Only popular memory in the form of folklore, spread from mouth to mouth and unmediated by official history, represents the pristine state of memory. From the nation-state's intervention in popular memory, Foucault sees the intent to control the past and the future: "Since memory is actually a very important factor in struggle …, if one controls people's memory, one controls their dynamism. And one also controls their experience, their knowledge of previous struggles" ("Film"124).

Nora echoes Foucault's critique in "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," where he claims that there are "sites of memory" (*lieux de mémoire*) but "real environments of memory" (*milieux de mémoire*) disappeared with the rise of industrial civilization (7). What Foucault sees as an ongoing battle between history and popular memory is already lost in Nora's perception. Nora sees in contemporary society the equation of memory with history and the eradication of real memory by dictatorial memory. Nora is nostalgic for the pre-industrial world before the nineteenth century when a memory is "entwined in the intimacy of a collective heritage the ephemeral film of current events" (sic) (8). The modern world sees the rise of dictatorial memory that does not have a past but reinvents the past to create a history of heroes and myth (8).

In his theoretical framework, Nora praises the role of collective memory and views it as a barrier against history until the rise of the industrialization. Maurice Halbwachs also sees collective memory as an important social force against institutionalized history. Unlike Nora, who regards peasant culture as the best example of collective memory, Halbwachs does not privilege one kind of collective memory over others. Halbwachs argues that individual memory is informed by collective memory and we can only remember within the framework of collective memory. If we see official history as a type of collective memory, Halbwachs' stance is contrary to that of Foucault's. Foucault argues that despite the control of hegemonic discourse, counter-memory survives and multiplies. Recent scholars such as Elizabeth Jelin and George Lipsitz synthesize both approaches but grant individual memory more freedom to manifest its presence.

Nora's pessimistic view of the conquest of memory is contested by Marita Sturken in *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*. Sturken challenges Nora's definition of history by arguing that history does not produce one single narrative and Nora's concept of memory is too nostalgic. Sturken dismisses the binary view of memory and history and regards them as "entangled" on the grounds that "there is so much traffic across the borders of cultural memory and history that in many cases it may be futile to maintain a distinction between them" (7).

Sturken acknowledges her indebtedness to Foucault's notion of "subjugated knowledge" but she also distinguishes her approach from Foucault's (6). She

develops the concept of "cultural memory" to refer to memory "shared outside the avenues of formal historical discourse yet is entangled with cultural products and imbued with cultural meanings" (3). Sturken maintains that cultural memory is at the same time echoing and disturbing official history. She grants popular culture considerable power to negotiate and transform history. From her research on American culture, she notices diverse ways cultural memory inscribes marginalized memories back into history and destabilizes nationalism and "Americanness." For example, the Vietnam Veteran Memorial and the AIDS quilt are conscious efforts to bring repressed memory to the surface and challenge national oblivion of war veterans and AIDS victims.

Sturken's argument is closely tied to her analyses of technologies of memory such as memorials, images, bodies, and objects. Nora views the rise of industrial technology as the cause of the collapse of real memory, and Foucault thinks media tools such as television programs invade the residue of popular memory shared by the working class. Sturken admits that technologies of memory are "implicated in the power dynamics of memory's production" (10). A case in point is how media coverage of the Gulf War constructs and obliterates memories. CNN's live report of the war has erased civilian bodies and presented the illusion of a bloodless war fought by artillery only. Sturken also notices how media images may replace personal memories. However, as Rodney King's case demonstrates, media has the revolutionary potential of restoring neglected voices and making them part of cultural memory and finally history.

Similarly, in *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Culture*, George Lipsitz argues that American popular culture—television, music, film and popular narrative—negotiates between dominant and marginal cultural forces and forges dialogues between them. Despite the fact that popular culture trivializes and commercializes culture, it nonetheless forms collective memory of the past and witnesses the crisis in historical thinking. Lipstiz is quite critical of the role popular TV programs play in American lives, but he also admits that, despite these programs' attempts to form a consistent narrative, they are embedded with ruptures and gaps and provide clues to defy social institutions they are supposed to serve. Lipsitz is positive about popular music and praises it for resisting dominant ideology and sustaining the presence of an alternative consciousness in American culture. Lipsitz's approach to popular culture is race-and-class based. This is probably why Lipsitz chooses the term "collective memory" instead of "cultural memory" to emphasize that culture is rooted in specific communities.

Limits of Representation

Nora's study on memory and history indicates that the purpose of historical writing is to create myth while Foucault reminds us that nationalism and heroism dominate official history. Hayden White further questions the authority history enjoys by examining its discursive strategies. White's *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* explores the limits of historical writings and proposes the principles of postmodern historical studies. The title itself declares the thesis of this book—the rhetorical nature of all writing including history. According to White,

history is pervaded with interpretations imposed by its narrative structure, its process of sorting out a chronicle of events and forming a logical relationship among them. History, therefore, cannot be viewed as a science of indisputable facts. Instead, it should be taken as an empirical discipline characterized by the fictive nature of its content.

Borrowing the concepts of langue and parole from narratology, White argues that contrasts exist in historical writings. That is to say, there can be multiple histories composed out of a given set of events depending on which narrative structure and which genre the author chooses. In this way, White argues for the contiguity between history and literature, as he claims that a historical text is a literary artifact. History, White concludes, has its root in imaginary art, not in science as most historians assume. Consequently, historical writings should not be held as mirror images of past events but sign systems that create causes, effects, and hierarchies of importance.

White's arguments have been challenged by many scholars. A notable instance is the critical exchanges between White and Amos Funkenstein, Martin Jay and Carlo Ginzburg at a conference organized by Saul Friedlander in 1990 to examine the difficulties of representing the Holocaust and the "Final Solution."[1] Worried by the normalization tendency in Germany and revisionist historiography in academia, Funkenstein, Jay and Ginzburg maintain historical narratives'

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[1] See Saul Friedlander, ed, *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the 'Final Solution'*, (Cambridge: Havard UP, 1992).

correspondence to reality and defend the historical veracity of Holocaust testimonies. In their articles, White's dismissal of truth claims in historical writings are criticized along with and even linked to revisionist historiography.

Nevertheless, some scholars echoed and even continued White's exploration of the discursive nature of historical writing. In her article "The Evidence of Experience," Joan Scott points out that experience comes to us through mediation: "Experience is at once always already an interpretation and is in need of interpretation. What counts as experience is neither self-evident nor straightforward; it is always contested, always therefore political" (387). Scott's argument is important for two reasons. First, it indicates the need for us to give up the false notion that experience exists before discursive intervention. Second, it alerts us to the relationship of power that manages remembering and forgetting and endows certain experiences with more importance and authority.

While White and Scott problematize the role of language in writing and deal a serious blow to historical positivism, it is Foucault who answers the question of how to write history after post-structuralism. In "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," Foucault discusses the task of genealogy and proposes the principles for writing history. Through studying the roots of the word "Ursprung," Foucault makes clear that the so-called essence and origin are fabrications. The objective of genealogy is not to look at roots or essence but to locate descent and emergence. He defines genealogy as "an analysis of descent, which is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the

process of history's destruction of the body" (148). Thus, he assigns genealogy the task of elucidating systems of control and means of subjugation. Foucault then suggests guiding historical writings with genealogy and giving up the search for the absolute. In Foucault's vision, history should "make visible all of those discontinuities that cross us" (154). Effective history should "introduce discontinuity into our very being" (154). In this way, Foucault shifts the focus of history from that of heroism to the knowledge of power and control.

My discussion of recent theoretical works on memory, history, the nation-state, and limits of representation serve to emphasize that, like history, memory is mediated, and both remembering and forgetting are discursively organized. Therefore, the mission of critical analysis of memory is to investigate how visibility is created and how knowledge is produced in memoirs and autobiographies on the Cultural Revolution.

Remembering the Cultural Revolution: Memory and Place

Methodologically speaking, I embrace a place-specific approach and organize chapters accordingly. Over the years, memories of the Cultural Revolution have flourished in China and abroad, and we can identify three major sites of memory production: mainland China, Hong Kong, and Anglo-America. Corresponding to the places where they were published and marketed, these memories, especially those in the forms of memoir and autobiography, have shown visible, though not entirely clear-cut, differences in authorship, style, and narration.

In mainland China, volumes of third-person Cultural Revolution stories have

been published alongside first-person narratives. Until recently these writings have been dominated by social elites, mostly intellectuals, artists, and party officials, who were persecuted during the Cultural Revolution and rehabilitated after Mao's death. Though they choose this topic on purpose, these authors usually focus on less traumatic aspects of their experiences and recount the horror, cruelty, and inhumanity they witnessed in vague, generalizing language without naming perpetrators or indicting them for their crimes.

In the Anglo-American context, aside from several documentaries providing a macro-history of "Mao's China," overseas mainland Chinese have published more than a dozen autobiographies based on the authors' Cultural Revolution experiences, including several international bestsellers such as Nien Cheng's *Life and Death in Shanghai* (1986) and Jung Chang's *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China* (1992). Unlike their mainland Chinese counterparts, overseas writers make testifying against political atrocities their avowed goal, detailing their personal and familial tribulations case by case. At least half of these authors, including Jung Chang, Xiaodi Zhu, Liang Heng, Niu-Niu, Rae Yang, Jaia Sun-Childers, and Ji-li Jiang, were school children during the Cultural Revolution and not directly involved in major political campaigns. As a result, they remember from a child's perspective while relying on their parents' memories as well as narratives from unspecified sources to portray the turmoil in the adult world. More than recording a family's journey, some of these authors self-consciously take up the task of writing a sociopolitical history of China that, without exception, concludes not with the end of the Cultural Revolution but

with these authors' emigration to Anglo-America and the beginning of their new lives in "another" world. Therefore, not only is the Cultural Revolution examined from a contemporary perspective but also is criticized against the Western discourse of democracy and feminism. Actually, with their extensive annotation on political events and ample use of exotic idioms, slang, and party slogans, these writings imply that the imagined audience is outside mainland China. In a word, Western discourse is adopted to dissect China for the sake of non-Chinese readers.

In Hong Kong, the Cultural Revolution is remembered and considered mostly through three channels—TV programs, popular magazines, and memoirs. On the 30th and 40th anniversaries of the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, a few local TV channels aired documentaries containing interviews with victims, old rebels, and dissidents. Local magazines such as *Open Magazine* (Kaifang), *The Trend Magazine* (Dongxiang), and *The Cheng Ming Monthly* (Zhengming), best known for their highly critical stance on the Chinese Communist Party, have consistently published the latest findings and personal accounts of the Cultural Revolution atrocities amid their attacks on the present socioeconomic situation in mainland China. Parallel to this trend, a dozen of memoirs composed by mainland Chinese citizens have been published, at least half of which are from government-declared perpetrators such as Chen Boda, Nie Yuanzi, Xu Jingxian, and Wang Li, and rebels leaders such as Chen Yi'nan, Gao Shuhua, and Shen Ruhuai. They approach the subject in a straightforward fashion and narrate their experiences without elaborating the social historical background, assuming that readers are sufficiently familiar with the subject

matter. In their writings, priority is given to major events they orchestrated and top officials they met on different occasions while family memories retreat to the background and ordinary people's fate is rarely mentioned. Their objective is to have the public know the Cultural Revolution from their perspectives rather than expressing repentance or recounting trauma.

Clearly, different groups—social elites, second-generation Cultural Revolution survivors, and former rebels—have published in different places and adopted varying writing strategies. In my dissertation, aside from analyzing writings and images in terms of trauma, memory, identity, and narrativity, I want to pursue the role of place and time in the formation of memories regarding the Cultural Revolution. In the transnational production of memory, place plays a significant role in shaping experiences and narratives. Questions like what kind of memory is acceptable or valuable and how should it be presented and to whom are tied to where it is presented. The questions I am interested in include the following: How has a particular kind of memory been appropriated or rejected in different narratives? What role does politics of exclusion play in such narratives? How does the conception of national and political identities change in different sites as a result of their respective memory productions? What kinds of discursive strategies have been used in representing national space and individual memory? How do these narratives contribute to an understanding of the power relationships in the transnational memory space?

I do not take the presence of the nation-state as a premise for my research on

memory—from its earliest days, memory of the Cultural Revolution has been produced and consumed in multiple settings. For example, the Chinese Cultural Revolution Database, involving scholars and researchers from all over the world, is published and serviced in Hong Kong. In online and formal publications, critics compare and contrast narratives from different sources. The surge of such publications in Hong Kong, mainland China, and Anglo-America has challenged a nation-bound conception of this field and forcefully reminded us of the transnational nature of the ongoing endeavors.

Within the place-specific framework that I use to divide chapters, I want to examine the impact of transnationalism on authors and readers. My questions include these: Why does or doesn't a given form of memory become transnational? How does transnational production affect the content and format of memory? How has such cross-border cooperation shaped communities? Given the relational nature of identity, represented by Edward Said's notion of identities as constituted through the interaction between self and other and obtained through mobility, how does emigration and Diaspora create new desires and formulate new identities? How do authors deal with the tension between the native land and the adopted country?

Rather than evaluating their truth values and locating an objective representation, this dissertation attempts to illuminate to what extent these memories have challenged, alienated, masked, reproduced, and perpetuated relations of power and control.

Chapter Organization

My dissertation takes an interdisciplinary approach and examines memories constructed in autobiographies and memoirs in order to determine how experiences are presented in a given place and how the place of publication has shaped personal memory. In terms of analytic methodology, my project stresses the discursive nature of memory and highlights the transnational creation of Cultural Revolution memory. It embraces a comparative framework and concerns itself with memories of the Cultural Revolution in mainland China, Anglo-America, and Hong Kong, analyzing suppression and accentuation of the trauma in relation to censorship, Diaspora, and the policy of "One Country, Two Systems." My project considers how the Cultural Revolution is remembered under the party's surveillance, how the official history is contested by sensitive figures in Hong Kong, and how overseas Chinese produce several bestsellers and enthrall Anglo-American audiences of both liberal and conservative bents in the aftermath of the Cold War through an East-West comparative framework.

In each geopolitical context, the relationship between memory, identity, politics, and power will be interrogated. The tension between personal memory and official history is the primary concern in my inquiry of mainland Chinese memory performances in Chapter Two. I first challenge the widely accepted views that personal memories of the Cultural Revolution are either a passive reflection of or heroic resistance against the official history and then question by what means and to what extent official history has fashioned personal memory. By reading selected texts

and performances, my project is intended to answer whether they re-inscribe or transgress the official history, whether trauma of the Cultural Revolution is sufficiently narrated and the official history critically contested.

In Chapter Three, I explore memory performances in the Anglo-American context and focus on the creation and reception of autobiographies written in English by several Chinese emigrants. To escape political pressures in China, these authors settled in Britain and the United States. In order to sustain the strongest opposition to political horror and redefine their lives, they identify with a triumphant Western ideology and use it to criticize China. In their writings, they usually create a spatial and temporal demarcation between China and the West and construct mainland China as the West's political and cultural Other. The section on Jung Chang's *Wild Swans* is concerned with the narration of family history and national history through a gendered perspective with the use of an East-West comparative framework. How are gender issues related to political traumas? In what ways are women's struggles central to the representation of a century of Chinese revolution? This part is also interested in Chang's use of personal memory and family memory to narrate a nation's history. Why does she historicize extensively in an autobiography? What discursive features make her book's appropriation by oppositional politics predictable?

The section on Gao Yuan's *Born Red: A Chronicle of the Cultural Revolution* (1987) ties the issue of his problematic genre choice to authorial presence, narrative voice, and ethical responsibilities in historical narratives and Western historians'

fetish of alternative narratives. Why does he choose to belong and not to belong to the genre of his choice? What kind of personal memory does such ambivalence generate? What narrative purpose does it serve? Is it possible to remember while being ethically neutral?

In Chapter Four, I turn to memory performance occurring in Hong Kong and/or transmitted elsewhere via Hong Kong. Hong Kong is involved with the production of Cultural Revolution memory in two ways. First, the Cultural Revolution has been repeatedly mentioned in Hong Kong's indigenous literary and cinematic imaginations. Second, given its unique connection to mainland China, Hong Kong has become a very important site for promoting research on the history and memory of the Cultural Revolution. Since the 1980s, it has hosted several conferences on this subject, providing a forum for mainland Chinese scholars to express their views. Moreover, Hong Kong is instrumental in having sensitive figures tell their stories. In the 1990s, after Nie Yuanzi and Xu Jingxian were released from prison on charges related to the Cultural Revolution, Hong Kong publishers secretly established contacts with them, encouraged them to write and finally published their memoirs. These books were soon smuggled back to mainland China, sold on the black market, and recently uploaded to the Internet.

This chapter is interested in the memoirs written by the so-called sensitive figures and focuses on two authors—Chen Yinan and Nie Yuanzi—to study the narrative politics of books in this category. Like other sensitive figures, Chen's and Nie's claims to provide uncensored histories in the face of the cultural amnesia are

frequently transformed into a performance of innocence and a discourse of impunity. How is identity emplotted? How do Chen and Nie disidentify and invalidate official representations? What role does Hong Kong play in these memory performances? What sort of history and memory are constructed in this geopolitical space? Thematically speaking, this chapter is tied to my explorations of how Zhang Hanzhi and Gao Yuan defend their pasts and rewrite their images in Chapter Two and Chapter Three. My study will continue these investigations and use theories of signification and authorship to illuminate the condition of Cultural Revolution memory in Hong Kong.

Conclusion

My research will draw on semiotics, psychoanalysis, theories of memory, cold war studies, and authorship to study the politics of memories of the Cultural Revolution and analyze relationships among power, desire, history, and memory. By examining various geocultural cases, I illuminate perils in remembering this political event and the urgency for sustaining a critical remembering of the Cultural Revolution. Through my dissertation, I endeavor to underscore dynamic interactions between mainland China, Hong Kong, and Anglo-America in transnational cultural production.

In conclusion, my dissertation seeks to contribute to our understanding of contemporary China by (1) forging a dialogue between memory studies and Chinese studies, (2) expanding analysis of the Cultural Revolution to nonfiction writings, (3) exploring the geopolitical implications of memory production in the Chinese-

speaking regions and in Anglo-America, and (4) examining the appropriation of Cultural Revolution memory in local, national, and transnational politics. Designed this way, my dissertation should be of interest to scholars working in Chinese literature, film, history, society and politics as well as transnational cultural studies.

Chapter Two

Myths and Imagined Communities:

Remembering the Cultural Revolution in Mainland China

Introduction

On this map of multilingual and cross-cultural production of the Cultural Revolution, mainland China forms a relatively enclosed field of interpretation because of its ban on foreign publications dealing with this topic. In this chapter, I look at the production of the Cultural Revolution memory within mainland China to find out how this historical event has been recalled and narrated in this particular geographical and political context. Rather than verifying the chosen texts' historical accuracy, I will look at how these memories come into being in the first place and how they are socially, politically, and ideologically constituted. Through addressing these questions, I want to explore predicaments in historical and literary representations of the Cultural Revolution and contribute to a critical reading of its contemporary narratives. In this section, I will clarify a few terms used in this chapter and specify the established critical models challenged in my analysis before I formulate my critical approach to memories of the Cultural Revolution in selected

texts.

Memories of the Cultural Revolution, as my analysis demonstrates, are produced both on the official and individual levels. Given the fact that in China the media is controlled by the party and every publication is subjected to rigorous censorship, to apply terms such as social memory, cultural memory or collective memory to describe memories that circulate in cultural products is not only inaccurate but also misleading. Social memory, cultural memory, and collective memory require a public forum for the confluence of individual memories before any collective, social, or cultural versions can be negotiated and created. But when mass media is manipulated to perpetuate official history and unregistered private publications are illegal, where can people articulate their positions except mumbling some complaints to trusted friends? What happened in the summer of 2006 on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the start of the Cultural Revolution is most telling about the lack of public spaces for Cultural Revolution memories in mainland China. Throughout the year, there were no public events, no public debates and only one known academic conference remembering the Cultural Revolution.[2] Newspapers

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[2] In the preface to *The Cultural Revolution: Historical Truth and Collective Memories* (Wenhua da gemin: lishi zhenxiang he jiti jiyi, 2006), Song Yongyi reveals that in 2006 the Chinese Communist party not only forbade any commemorating and research events but also tried to prevent scholars from attending international conferences related to the fortieth anniversary of the Cultural Revolution. The only known academic conference held within mainland China was organized by Hao Jian, Cui Weiping, Ding Dong and Xu Youyu. The conference publication is titled "In Memory of the Cultural Revolution: Minutes of the Symposium on the Cultural Revolution" (Wenge sishinian ji—2006 Beijing wenhua da gemin yantaohui jilu, 2006).

and academic journals made no mention of the anniversary either.[3] In fact, during the past forty years, mainland Chinese media rarely offered critical spaces for readers and researchers to reflect on the Cultural Revolution.[4] In this sense, the public space for Cultural Revolution memories is unavailable to most people and consequently official history takes up the vacancy left by collective memory and social memory to modulate public utterances about the Cultural Revolution.

When it comes to the relationship between official history and individual memory, there are two models that we frequently come across in various contexts: official history, imposed by the government, constitutes personal memory; or individual memory, facing relentless intrusion of official history, stubbornly resists the latter. The first model views official history as existing above personal memory and imposing its hegemonic control over the latter. Such a vertical transition of power and control brings to mind the tension between collective memory and personal memory Halbwachs discusses in *On Collective Memory*. Halbwachs' argument that nothing that does not fit into the framework of collective memory can

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[3] I used the "the fortieth anniversary of the Cultural Revolution" (*wenge sishi nian* or *wenge sishi zhounian*) as key words to search in the China Academic Journal Full Text Database and the China Core Newspapers Full Text Database and found no matches. These two databases can be accessed at www.cnki.net [accessed May, 2009].

[4] According to Xu, in 1996, several journals and magazines published special issues to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the Cultural Revolution. However, the special issue of *East* magazine (Dongfang zazhi) was ordered to replace all of the Cultural Revolution related articles before it was printed. A few months later, *East* was forced to stop operating. See Xu Youyu, "Cultural Revolution Studies Come Home" (Wenge yanjiu huidao Zhongguo), *Open Magazine* (Kaifang zaizhi) (5)1996: 48-49.

survive has been challenged by scholars such as Elizabeth Jelin, George Lipsitz and Marita Sturken, who emphasize dynamic interactions between the two and consider the exchange as two-way traffic. Returning to the Chinese context and its narratives on the Cultural Revolution, I raise the following questions: To what degree has official history determined the content and style of personal memory? By what explicit or subtle means does official history shape personal memories? The other model equates personal memory with rebellious memory and regards the former as the fated opponent of the official counterpart. Such indiscriminate reference to personal memory simplifies the multiplicity of this issue as well as the different subject positions individuals take in relation to the Cultural Revolution. How do different groups remember differently? How have personal memories reacted to the intrusion of the official history?

This chapter challenges both models and explores the negotiation between official history and personal memory with the use of discursive analysis of texts and contexts. Theoretically speaking, my investigation is built on current scholarship on memory, particularly the notion that remembering is, above all, a discursive practice involving selection, evaluation, and ample use of rhetoric tools and narrative techniques. F. C. Bartlett, a pioneer of memory studies, puts the argument this way, no matter what genre it resorts to, remembering is "a form of constructive activity" aiming at "not the retrieval of stored information" but "the putting together of a claim about the past state of affairs by means of a framework of shared cultural understanding" (qtd. in Middleton and Edwards 46). To reveal the way memory is

constructed, it is therefore necessary to subject writings to a discursive analysis to find out what is the implicit "shared cultural understanding" at work and what has been silenced. Besides, discourse is the place where the past and the present negotiate with each other, and the political and the ideological assume guises. A discursive reading will lead us to gaps and discontinuities and illuminate the politics of memory concealed in each text.

For this chapter, I select two party documents and three cases of personal memories to discuss how the Cultural Revolution is remembered in the official history and published personal narratives, and how they interact with each other. I will distinguish versions of personal memories, explore the stakes, desires and fears underlying them, and examine the pair of official history and personal memory beyond the resistant model. In the first part, I pay close attention to two official resolutions published in 1978 and 1981, respectively. The second part focuses on three bestsellers on Cultural Revolution experiences by Yang Jiang, Zhang Hanzhi, and Gu Zhun to explore their writing strategies as well as readers' expectations and receptions. With Yang's book, I am interested in how Yang, a scholar best known for her transcendent writing style, recalls her three-year stay at the School of Cadres. Zhang Hanzhi's book is chosen with an interest in the role of the media in the production of memory. The last section focuses on the so-called "Gu Zhun phenomenon" (*Guzhun xianxiang*) to determine how leading intellectuals appropriate traumas of the Cultural Revolution and how they position themselves against the past.

Part One

The Official History: Generalization and Selective Remembering

The Cultural Revolution launched by Chairman Mao in May 1966 was officially ended in 1976. The following four years met with tremendous narrative dilemma as debates about Mao's role in history and legacies of the Cultural Revolution intensified across the nation.[5] Part of the dilemma has to do with the dramatic changes in the social order. The ten-year period of political unrest witnessed the conviction of numerous individuals, with the unnatural death of two of Mao's heirs, Liu Shaoqi and Lin Biao, embodying the intensity of the power struggles. But all of a sudden, the death of Mao fundamentally changed the social order—the despicable and the noble, the loyal and the treacherous exchanged places as the imprisonment of Mao's closest aide, his wife Jiang Qing, and the release of Mao's many prisoners exemplified. The Cultural Revolution dealt a fatal blow to the society and disrupted the meaningful link between the individual and his/her community. Anne F. Thurston describes the Cultural Revolution as an "'extreme situation,' characterized by a profound sense of loss" (qtd. in Pye 605). In the most radical form, the confusion led to serious doubts about the party's rule and the merits of Chinese culture and generated contention over many issues. Halbwachs warns in his study of memory that the obsession with the past has a devastating potential of disintegrating

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[5] During this period, anonymous big-character posters (*dazi bao*) appeared in public places and some of these writings severely criticized the party's leadership. The party itself was divided over whether or not it should stick to Mao's teachings. See Susan Ogden, *China's Unresolved Issues: Politics, Development and Culture* (Englewood: Prentice, 1989) 60-72.

society: "the cult of the past, far from binding the hearts of people to society, in fact, detaches them" (51). The party sensed the imminent danger and made the systematic reevaluation of Mao and the Cultural Revolution one of its top priorities once it restructured the leadership.

I will analyze two party documents to examine the official history of the Cultural Revolution and discuss its impacts on personal memory. The first is a mobilization speech titled "Emancipate the Mind, Seek Truth from Facts and Unite as One in Looking to the Future" (*Jiefang sixiang, shishi qiushi, tuanjie yizhi xiangqian kan*) delivered on Dec 13, 1978 when Deng Xiaoping formally became the party head. In this speech, Deng asks for a more creative interpretation of Marxism to get the nation ready for the economic reform he was promoting. This speech marks the moment of a power transition as well as a switch of party policies and has been a must-read text in high school and college political education classes. This text is also important for its brief but nonetheless revealing statements on the legacy of the Cultural Revolution and the party's approach to its lingering problems. In the third part of this speech, Deng not only summarizes the damage of the Cultural Revolution and states the party's will to right the wrongs of the Cultural Revolution but also urges people to forgive former perpetrators who have repented their crimes. Deng speaks implicitly from his well-known victim status and renders his advocacy of forgiveness irresistible.[6] Simplistic and reductive as they are, these lines, delivered

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[6] After Mao purged Deng Xiaoping in 1967, Deng's entire family was persecuted. His brother Deng Shumin committed suicide, and his son Deng Pufang, who was

by the head of the state at this important venue, are tantamount to the party's declaration that legal prosecutions against perpetrators will not be considered and former victims have to choose between forgiving and forgetting. What is problematic is not only that Deng trespassed into the field of jurisprudence and made legal decisions but also that he universalized people's experiences, rejected victims' pleas, and deprived them of the right to seek justice.

This speech also makes unprecedented acknowledgement of Mao's mistakes during the Cultural Revolution without specifying them or criticizing Mao. In this part, Deng is overtly identified with Mao at the expense of minimizing Mao's damage to the nation and uses a theory of human fallibility to account for Mao's mistakes. Deng emphasizes Mao's contributions to the Chinese revolution and praises Mao's ideas as the party's "precious spiritual riches" (*jingshen caifu*) (160), thus signaling how Mao should be portrayed and remembered in public.

At the end of the speech, Deng suggests a closure with very evasive rhetoric: "As for the shortcomings that appeared during the course of the 'Cultural Revolution' and the mistakes that were made then, at an appropriate time they should be summed up and lessons should be drawn from them—that is essential for achieving unity of understanding throughout the Party" (160-61). The responsibility for interrogating history is displaced to an unforeseeable future and to the hands of an unnamed agent. He further justifies the closure with a sense of finality of the

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attending Peking University before the Cultural Revolution, was permanently handicapped when he tried to escape imprisonment.

tragedy: “The ‘Cultural Revolution’ has become a stage in the course of China's socialist development, hence we must evaluate it. However, there is no need to do so hastily” (161). Clearly, to use the concepts developed by Tzvetan Todorov, what Deng endeavors is not “an exemplary memory,” serving the goal of nevermore by examining the atrocities and preventing their reoccurrence, but “a literary memory,” underscoring how unique the event is and assuring that it is unrepeatable (qtd. in Jelin 18). In this writing, the promise of nevermore is achieved not through interrogating the causes of the tragedy but through forgetting the past and gazing into the future. As an effective trope, the future holds out all the promises that are unthinkable at the present, but a ticket to the future entails dissociation of the past in the first place. To sum up, Deng persuades the nation to manage the trauma through repression, burying it in the unconscious or displacing it through dissociation.

Deng’s proposal for “looking to the future” was strengthened by other performances. A notable step was taken in Feburary 1980 at the Fifth Plenary Session of the Eleventh CCP Congress, where antirevolution charges against Liu Shaoqi and the April 5th Movement were finally dropped. Subsequently, Liu Shaoqi was honored with a memorial service on May 17, 1980. As a polticial ritual, the posthumorous rehabilitation of Liu exemplifies the party’s will to correct past mistakes and restore social justice. At the symbolic level, this official service extends consolation to unnamed victims, sublimating anger, pain, loss, and desperation with a dignified sense of honor.

As the rehabiliation policy reached ordianry people, a new problem emerged.

By the mid-1980s, most victims had been reinstated to their prior positions with earlier anti-revolutionary charges dropped, but during this process the party rarely prosecuted former perpetrators. In fact, only the Gang of Four and a few of their cohorts were publically named as perpetrators. This approach is unsatifactiory because psychologically speaking, the sense of victimization will not be alleviated and the sense of security will not be restored until perpetrators have been named, hunted down, and subjected to propoer investigations and trials. To resolve the lacunae in the historical configuration, blame naturally fell on the Gang of Four and Lin Biao.

The trial of the Gang of Four from November 20, 1980 to January 23, 1981, during which the Gang of Four were convicted of "organizing and leading a counter-revolutionary clique," was a spectaular event in modern Chinese history. The denfense attorneys for the four suspects were novelties at that time, and their presence confirmed the legality of the trial as much to the Chinese people as to the interanational community. More than venting the people's anger against the Gang of Four and celebrating a victory of the innocent over the wicked, the conviction eased the guilt-complex afflicting the party as well as the self-denial accompanying it.

From 1980 to 1984, a series of documents were published to confirm Mao's contributions and blame the Gang of Four. The most important piece is "Resolutions on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party since the Founding of the People's Republic of China" (Guanyu jianguo yilai dangde ruogan lishi wenti de jueyi) delivered at the Sixth Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee on June 27,

1981. Since then, this 34,000-Chinese-character resolution has served as an official version of the party history, from its founding days to the late 1970s. This text reviews important events and turning points in different periods and summarizes achievements and lessons drawn from that history. The section on the ten year Cultural Revolution is followed by a chapter on the Deng regime, a summary of Mao's contribution, and a call for united efforts to build a strong socialist state. Since its first appearance, this document has been the canonic text on the Cultural Revolution history, and quoted in party pamphlets, history books, and journalistic writings. The chapter on the Cultural Revolution traces the course of the ten-year period, criticizes its theoretical basiss, dismisses its propaganda claims, names major perpetrators responsible for the persecutions, and makes unprecedented acknowledgements of Mao's mistakes, the party's follies, and the damage caused by the Cultural Revolution. As a party's resolution on its own history and a complusory text in political classes, this document is virtually the most widely read autobiographical work in China. But unlike ordinary autobiographies, this one lays down the official guidelines for any public discussions of the Cultural Revolution. I will discuss its narrative structure and its impact on the content of personal memories below.

This official resolution creates a fixed narrative of cause and effect, right and wrong, evil and noble, perpetrators and collaborators and thus silences any narratives with different categorizations and judgments. To be more specific, this official representation of the Cultural Revolution prioritizes political struggles surrounding

Mao and generalizes ordinary people's victimization by refraining from any statistical reference or individualized case studies. Thus, this narrative fixes political persecutions against ordinary people as abstract concepts and renders the scale and extent of the Cultural Revolution unfathomable.

The way this party document discusses Mao's responsibility and place in history is also worth mentioning. The chapter on Mao's mistakes is preceded by a lengthy review of the party's past achievements and Chairman Mao's contributions, reaffirming their leading roles in China, and consequently relegating the ten-year unrest to an insignificant place in the party's glorious history. Historians such as Jurgen Domes reveal that this text went through extensive revisions before a compromise was finally reached among all sides. According to Domes, the document offers a far more generous appraisal of Mao's contributions than the party had initially planned because of pressures from some military leaders who, driven by personal attachment to Mao or a sense of collective identity, had refused to repudiate Mao. Dome also indicates that the final version tones down its critique of Mao by replacing the word "crime" with "mistake" and limiting Mao's so-called mistakes from the post-1957 period to the ten-year Cultural Revolution only (181). These negotiations determine how people interpret the causes of the Cultural Revolution and how they should narrate their experiences. On the other hand, by minimizing Mao's responsibility, this resolution protects the party's reputation and bypasses the guilt buried in the unconscious.

The official resolution on the Cultural Revolution sticks to what Chris Berry

terms the Communist Party's "structuralist view" of history—the binary opposition of the past and the present (78). In official news as well as in state-censored history books, the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution is positioned vis-à-vis the social stability during Deng's rule. Stories of the new leadership's heroic resistance against the Gang of Four and Lin Biao are stressed, to set the Deng's regime apart from Mao's autocracy and relieve Deng and his allies of any moral responsibility for the crimes under Mao's reign. More than addressing historical issues, this resolution justifies the new government's authority and highlights its rescuing image, lending it symbolic capital in domestic and international politics. The essentialized view expressed in these writings makes logical preparation for the assertion that the Cultural Revolution was an accident contained in the past so that revisiting the scene for a thorough investigation would be superfluous. In this way, it successfully managed evolving social tensions and achieved the goal of "looking to the future."

As a result of China's centralized media policies, this resolution was soon omnipresent in textbooks and mass media. The repetitive enactment of the official history creates a sense of continuity of such ideas and limits the way that ordinary people can think about the Cultural Revolution in private. Furthermore, as a guideline for the public performance of personal memory, it determines how one can talk about party history and Mao's status and how one should organize remembering and forgetting. Commenting on the necessity of multiple histories, Peter Novik states: "To understand something historically is to be aware of its complexity, to have sufficient detachment to see it from multiple perspectives, to accept the ambiguities,

including moral ambiguities" (qtd. in Wertschs 19). The way that the official history confidently historicizes the Cultural Revolution and locates one single causal link among a bundle of complicated events impoverishes our understanding and reifies arguments surrounding them.

The Deng regime's effort to pin down the history of the Cultural Revolution in a singular, one-dimensional and flat representation, supported by a seemingly coherent structuralist interpretation, betrays what Ana Douglas calls the "forestalling attempt" of governments to monitor and truncate popular memories before "they are recorded in individual memories and unofficial records" (16). The double measures of intensive propaganda on party resolutions and strict censorship of dissenting voices limit public performances of personal memories and render individual sufferings "nontransferable properties" (Jelin 45).

But many questions remain: Can this universalizing strategy really ease past animosity, convert former perpetrators, and lead people in united efforts for what Deng envisioned as the "Four Modernizations"? How does the official history contribute to the construction of selves for former perpetrators and victims alike? What happens when repressed memories resurface? Where are counter-memories and how do they strike back?

In the following part, I will bring texts into contexts and read personal memory against the official history to look for moments of resistance, compromise and compliance. Besides, it is necessary to keep in mind the possible gap between memory presented in public and that remembered in private, resulting from political,

ethical and psychological constraints related to remembering this traumatic political event. With this differentiation in mind, I will focus on memoirs circulating in public spaces and explore their deviations from their private counterparts.

Part Two

Remembering the Cultural Revolution: Three Case Studies

Foucault demonstrates that history is always in process, constantly tested and challenged by other narratives. Such an argument naturally leads to the conclusion that despite the official history's dominance in public forums, it is nevertheless contested by personal memories of the Cultural Revolution and has been undergoing transformations throughout the years. In this part, I will focus on memoirs and diaries dealing with traumatic experiences during the Cultural Revolution to find out how personal memories negotiate with the official history and defy its authority in order to establish alternative interpretations of the Cultural Revolution.

In the earlier 1980s, few personal voices sought public attention, and a general inertia characterized public performances of personal memories. What is unusual is that during those years the Cultural Revolution was the very issue that people took pains to evade and at the same time eagerly sought out, depending on the contexts in which this topic was raised. In high school history classes, teachers tacitly jumped from the socialist reforms in the 1950s to post-1978 economic reforms, discouraging any curious interest in the Cultural Revolution. In the media, the "holocaust (*haojie*)" as some people term it, was strategically brought up as the

backdrop of the economic prosperity and political stability under Deng's rule, with life during the two periods compared and contrasted.

After the late 1980s, fiction and memoirs set in the Cultural Revolution frequently became bestsellers, promoting these writers to be national spokespersons of Cultural Revolution experience. The enthusiasm betrays more often a sense of shared victimization than any serious interest in the Cultural Revolution itself. Among a limited number of memoirs, biographies, and autobiographies of the Cultural Revolution, there are some noticeable features. First of all, writing about the Cultural Revolution has become the privilege of social elites, such as party officials, movie stars, and leading intellectuals, who benefit from their easy access to the publishing industry to confide their experiences to the public. However, most of their writings show neither breadth nor depth in their explorations of the trauma. When writings on a historical event are limited to the experiences of certain social strata, their representation can never be comprehensive enough to capture the trauma in all its facets.

Furthermore, writers who feel compelled to share their stories shun the mission of interrogating the disaster and instead reduce the complicated ten-year history to predictable narrative patterns, similar plots, and clichéd wording. Through their opaque writing styles, they transform their experiences into myths and withhold considerable information from readers. What is most disturbing is that no one seems to mind the superficiality of the present representations of the Cultural Revolution. Meanwhile, very few notoriously persecuted victims or their families are willing to

talk about their nightmares. In light of theories of trauma, the silence of victims becomes understandable and even predictable. Then how do we understand other related trends—the elite's eagerness to narrate the Cultural Revolution when they actually have little to say and the public's indifference to the silence when there are so many unexplored issues? What lies behind the elites' compulsion to talk and to publish? How to explain their readers' enthusiastic but uncritical reception? What are the reasons that keep them writing while evading the most crucial components that a subject like this demands? If retrieving the past is not the purpose of their writings, then what goals do they try to achieve? Why do these writers become members of an imagined community, sharing similar outlooks, mentalities, and even stylistic strategies?

This part addresses the above questions by examining three books: Yang Jiang's *Six Chapters from the School of Cadres* (Ganxiao liuji, 1981), Zhang Hanzhi's *My Life through the Turbulent Years: Recalling My Father, Chairman Mao and Guanhua* (Fengyu qing: yi fuqin, yi zhuxi, yi Guanhua, 1994), and Gu Zhun's *Selected Works of Gu Zhun* (Gunzhun wencun, 2002). These three books, especially the first two, are arguably the most influential first person narratives of the Cultural Revolution and have shaped the younger generations' understanding of the past. Yang's and Zhang's memoirs do not claim to rewrite history but the ways they situate their writings against the official history are quite revealing about the challenges authors face. The publication of Gu Zhun's posthumous book is the result of a group of established scholars' joint efforts to remember Gu and to inscribe in public spaces

the sufferings of intellectuals' during rounds of political campaigns. What is most noteworthy is not only the reverence that people pay to Gu Zhun but also the way that they try to retrieve Gu Zhun's life during the Cultural Revolution through his autobiographical writings, diaries, and even his confessional letters.

By studying these three texts, I intend to show the relationship between personal memory and official history, text and context, published memory and private memory. The questions that fascinate me are: How effective are these writings in challenging or complementing the official history and restoring the plight of individuals to the center of memories? How successful have they moved beyond the causal relations registered by official history and located the perpetrating mechanism? How do they conceptualize the official history and what are their strategies? Have these writings illuminated the roles of perpetrators and brought poetic justice to victims?

Finally this part is also interested in the impacts these books have on the general public's repressed traumatic memory. George Lipsitz makes a very insightful observation on the closure of public spaces: "They [neo-conservatives] laud history while fearing historical inquiry—because that inquiry might lead to critical reappropriation of the past by aggrieved groups" (27). Do these writings threaten Deng's agenda of "looking ahead?" Have these books given rise to a surge of traumatic discourses?

Yang Jiang: Transcendence as a Myth

Yang Jiang's *Six Chapters from the School of Cadres* enjoys a large

readership and is among the most popular Cultural Revolution memoirs. Yang Jiang is known as the wife of the renowned literary scholar and accomplished novelist Qian Zhongshu, and Yang herself is a successful novelist, playwright, and translator of "distinguished and unusual achievement" (Gunn 243).

Yang's memoir provides a chronological account of her family's life between 1969 and 1972, when intellectuals from the Institute of Philosophy and Social Science of the Chinese Academy of Science (Zhongguo kexue yuan zhexue shehui kexue xuebu) were sent to poverty-stricken villages in He'nan province, living the lives of peasants for what was purported to be a thorough moral reform. As a memoir, Yang's portrayal of how intellectuals dug wells, grew vegetables, and suffered from hunger and malnutrition illuminates the absurd logic of the Cultural Revolution and hints at the extent of its social damage. Moreover, with its narrative focus on the intelligentsia, the book looks beyond the binary rivalry between the Gang of Four and reformers such as Deng Xiaoping and restores the trauma of intellectuals to public attention. For these reasons, many people praise Yang for her courage.

The book has long been commended for its mild, comic tone, particularly the author's "transcendence" of the tragedies occurring around her. Critic Zhang Xiaodong, for example, mentions the reader's "amazement at the calm and transcendence shown in Yang's narration" (75). Yang's transcendence should be understood from two perspectives. First, her transcendence is achieved through her comic and occasionally sarcastic interpretations of class struggles and her absolute indifference to the political turmoil. Second, Yang distances herself from the official

history by endorsing neither its structuralist view nor its blame on the Gang of Four. In the causal narration of her life at the School of Cadres, she avoids the binary model provided by the official history.

In this section, I will bring text into context and examine this transcendent outlook within the book and in Yang's other writings. Even though her textual triumph over the official history is laudable, it raises doubts about the psychological agent behind such a narrative perspective. Indeed, what contributes to this transcendent view? Is it fashioned by the indifference to things in the past or by repression, confusion, or a sense of void？ These questions are worth pursuing because this book, in a paradoxical way, both challenges and confirms the official history. While rejecting the official history, it also fails to record trauma and name perpetrators and thus complies with the party's forgetting and forgiving policy. Besides, the way that she refuses to relate the origin of the School of Cadres creates various narrative blanks, mystifies the historical background, and underscores the impenetrable nature of the Cultural Revolution. The gaps left in her narration also provide the official history with a ready opportunity to fill in and justify its existence.

To look at the psychological mechanism that generates the transcendent outlook, I will return to the text for a close reading. The plots of this book are not dramatic, and the tone is not as aggrieved as people expect of a Cultural Revolution memoir. Sometimes this effect is achieved at the expense of trivializing her experiences in Xi County and here I will provide a summary of the plots to prove my point. Among the six chapters, the first is about preparatory work for the school,

including a very long paragraph on a simple meal and detailed narration on packing the luggage for their relocations. While the second chapter on digging a well allows a more sympathetic reading of the intellectuals' fate at the school of cadres, it is not clear why Yang recalls episodes such as serving meals and purchasing wine at a local store. Chapter Three is titled "Idle Time at the School of Cadres" (Xuepu jixian), in which the first half is devoted to the building of a temporary toilet to get fertilizer for the crops they grow and the second part is about local peasants stealing their baby carrots. This chapter ends with a very complicated sketch of how Yang and Qian, living at two neighboring cadre schools, visit each other. The narration is briefly interrupted by an intellectual's suicide, but Yang soon moves on with her stories without informing readers of the cause of his death. The Fourth Chapter is the most unexpected one in the whole book as it has a dog as its protagonist and details its disgusting dietary habits. The last part is titled "Adventure" (Maoxian jixin), but actually it is a dramatization of Yang's night-time journey from Qian's dorm back to her own. In this part, her dread of walking alone in the threatening environment is vividly portrayed, but it sounds superficial and narcissistic, particularly when the author spares no effort to recapture the apprehension of an uneventful journey twenty years later.

Compared to other Cultural Revolution writings, this book is rather odd in its narrative focus on the material aspects of her life. As one of the most favored tropes of her book, eating is mentioned in almost every chapter, but this plotline rarely provides a glimpse of the economic depression haunting the whole country. The

chapter about a dog's maturation, its lively temperament and adorable affection for Qian Zhongshu challenges an allegorical reading. While it might be an aspect of the Cultural Revolution life that people tend to neglect, it is perplexing why these trivial stories of leisure time are all that Yang wants to remember of her life in the School of Cadres.

Qian Zhongshu, however, produces an almost opposite account of the School of Cadres, which makes Yang's trivialization of her experiences all the more unusual. In a short preface to this book, Qian remembers the School of Cadres as the place where a campaign against "members of the May 16th Faction" was launched and where they lived in a "campaign-like environment" for two years (1). He goes on to say that the idleness and labor mentioned in the book are only insignificant episodes (*dianzhui*) of this political movement. Obviously, Yang Jiang and Qian Zhongshu want to discuss different aspects of Xi County life, and Qian wants to highlight what is marginalized in Yang's account. Incidentally, Gu Zhun also stayed in the School of Cadres in Xi County during the time that Yang was there. What Gu Zhun records in his diaries conveys a tragic story of famine, poverty, physical torture, and grinding desperation. People might suggest a more ideological reading of Yang's book by attributing her silence to censorship. But her recent autobiography *We Three* (Women sa, 2003) equally bypasses political tensions in Xi County, although other authors have already written about their traumatic experiences at the School of Cadres and this subject is no longer on the party's censorship blacklist.

Here I want to provide a psychological interpretation of Yang's obsession

with the insignificant and her reluctance to remember the trauma: Yang's displacement of political pressures with plots of eating and petting reveals the extent of repression at work in her book. Her writing, I believe, records the process by which she conducted her own psychotherapy during her stay at the school, focusing on less painful subjects to divert her attention from the stressful and the traumatic. Written in the aftermath of the traumatic experience, her book continues the never-finished therapeutic dissociation by reaffirming what she believes to be Xi County life. With this understanding of her psychological makeup, the unusual plots are easier to understand. The evening adventure is a displacement of real horrors while the repetitive depiction of meals implies the command of the pleasure principle that relegates painful memories to the unconscious. The so-called transcendence is at the same time traumatized repression of political tensions on Yang's part and an unfortunate misreading of her book on the readers' part. In this sense, Yang Jiang's transcendence is more imaginary than real, and readers' misinterpretation of Yang's repression as transcendence is partly because of the generalized official history and partly because of their own reluctance to confront the cruelties of the Cultural Revolution.

In the introduction, Qian Zhongshu states that Yang should add one more chapter to her book to document the follies and timidity during the Cultural Revolution and to confess her current regrets (1). It is not known why Yang rejected this proposal, but Yang's reluctance to reflect on this national tragedy is shared by many authors. Yang's silence over her personal trauma is also quite typical, as

scholars often notice obstinate attempts to forget in writings by former victims. Ban Wang, for example, likens victims of the Cultural Revolution to Walter Benjamin's "angel of history" who faces what "defies human comprehension", feels "paralyzed with bewilderment and terror," and is "unable to see anything meaningful and intelligible and only stares at the piling up of the wreckage…" (96-97).

Aside from the party's surveillance, Yang's silence is attributable to the narrative framework created by the official history, namely the structuralist view of history and the cause and effect narratives. Halbwach's argument on the threats collective memory poses to personal memory can be borrowed here to explain the pressures personal memory faces, "we can remember only on condition of retrieving the position of past events that interest us from the frameworks of collective memory…. Forgetting is explained by the disappearance of these frameworks or part of them" (172). The official history has erased the framework supporting traumatic memory and thus created the narrative difficulties experienced by victims such as Yang. Here I want to suggest that the party might have foreseen such repressive writings when it composed the official history.

Nevertheless, Yang's repressed memory should not be taken as a silent consent to the official history: Silence, as critics point out, can also be a site of resistance. While Dori Laub holds that "The will-to-silence is the will to bury the dead witness inside oneself" (58), Giorgio Agamben regards mentally disintegrated Muselmen as the evidence of Nazi crimes. From their traumatized bodies, Agamben finds testimonies absent in verbal accounts. Viewed in the same light, the refusal to

remember the Cultural Revolution trauma also conveys a significant aspect of the disaster—the psychological injuries that it had inflicted on victims and the impossibility to narrate in face of the hegemony of the official history. Where language fails to reach, bodies serve as a site of communication. From silence, victims speak to us, and from gaps in her narration, readers sense the magnitude of pain in the author.

Like a typical Cultural Revolution narrative, Yang's book shuns the names of her perpetuators by either resorting to a past passive tense or a neutral but meaningful pronoun "them." Tonglin Lu notes the tendency to "elude the crucial aspect of individual participants' agency" (541) in Cultural Revolution narratives and urges more revealing tales to be told. Why does Yang Jiang, a renowned scholar known for her moral integrity and academic independence, choose silence? Is this silence productive—does it free her from the nightmares of the past and gear her towards peace? Does forgetting mean forgiving and reconciliation?

Answers to such questions have to be sought in the context of her writings: Yang's private life. Yang's book itself reveals that she is haunted by her memories and cannot move on without revisiting the troubled past. I will further debate this point by referring to a recent incident to bring memory performances in private into my query. In 2000, Yang Jiang published an essay in the popular newspaper *Nanfang Weekend* (Nanfang zhoumo), detailing her quarrels with her former neighbors, the couple Lin Fei and Xiao Feng from May 1969 to December 1972. In this article, Yang recalls how the Lins take advantage of her son-in-law Wang Deyi's alleged

connection with the "May 16th faction" and his subsequent suicide in 1970, to intimidate the Qian family, particularly their daughter Qian Yuan. The drama is set during the Cultural Revolution, and its turns and twists are imprinted with the political tension of that time. According to Yang's narration, after Qian and Yang return from the School of Cadres in 1972, the long time grudge finally escalates to a quarrel between Qian Yuan and Xiao Feng, ending with Xiao slapping Qian Yuan's face. Yang is then pushed and shoved by the Lin couple; and as self-defense, Yang bites Xiao's finger while Qian Zhongshu beats Lin with a plank and fractures Lin's arm. This article surprised many readers because they hardly expected that Yang, a writer reputed for transcendent writings, would write on such an unusual subject. It is intriguing that Yang makes public such dated fights while she restrains herself from looking into her son-in-law's suicide in the face of anti-revolution charges.

Yang's angry indictment indicates the impossibility of containing the disruptive force of the past through forgetting and dissociation. Her newspaper article also confesses her struggle over the embarrassing memory of the fist fight and her hesitation at seeking publicity, which thereby reveals Yang's divided self, between the so-called transcendent oblivion in the public space and lingering shame and pain in the private.

Readers' responses to this article prove that Yang's worry is not groundless and writing about trauma in public is not always therapeutic. Because of the fame enjoyed by Yang Jiang and Qian Zhongshu, this article created a stir and attracted public attention to the much neglected issue of personal integrity during the worst

moments of the Cultural Revolution. Yang Jiang's accusation was challenged by ordinary readers who had closely read Lin Fei's essays, published years ago, about his difficult and sometimes desperate situation during that time. They thus question Yang's blaming of the Lin couple's sense of superiority in the incident (Lu Ren 21). Xiao Feng clears up their dubious political background by stating that they were Cultural Revolution victims as well and were not in the position of bullying others. Most readers were so confused by the arguments and counterarguments that they gave up any moral judgments and retreated to neutrality. However, readers such as Lu Ren ridiculed Yang and Qian for losing the dignity of the intelligentsia and not playing morally exemplary roles before the young couple Lin and Xiao (21).

Yang's frustration is shared by many other victims because their accused perpetrators never fail to come up with elaborate narratives to defend their innocence. In the worst case, Nie Yuanzi, the head of the Peking University Cultural Revolution Committee between 1967 and 1968 and the arch villain in many Peking University teachers' memoirs, refutes the renowned Sanskrit scholar Ji Xianlin's attack on her in his memoir *Cowshed Essays* (Niupeng riji, 1998) and denies having persecuted Ji or any other professors. Nie's evidence is her conflicts with Jiang Qing and her arrest under Jiang's order in 1968. Nie insists that every one is guilty, and she further challenges Ji's moral integrity during the Cultural Revolution. These episodes exemplify the difficulties in narrating trauma of the Cultural Revolution, which makes conventional moral categories ineffective or simplistic when people grapple with Cultural Revolution experience. Ban Wang sees the devastating damage of

trauma and makes the following comment, “Trauma is not simply a blow to the individual body and psyche, but rather a wholesale shattering of the symbols, affective linkages, and language that sustain the bonds of the individual with community” (95). From devastated social signification systems, victims find no hope of reprisal and back off to silence. To break silence and to speak from trauma, it is crucial to resolve the crisis in representation in the first place.

Yang Jiang and Qian Zhongshu are also identified as the origin of other Cultural Revolution-related scandals, the most famous of which is Qian’s open criticism, during a welcome banquet at Stanford University in 1979, of the philosopher Feng Youlan’s betrayal of some scholars during the Cultural Revolution (Kong 222). When asked by journalists, Yang Jiang neither verified the story nor denied it altogether. With all the seeming indifference to perpetrators in her writings, the couple have buried resentments in their private memories and incorporated them in more indirect expressions. Controversies like these demonstrate that vengeance cannot be contained through suppression since anger tends to seek alternative expressions.

Martha Minow points out the necessity of condemning abuses and warns against dangers in failing to do so (71). The way that the party handles the abuses and killings during the Cultural Revolution is neither trial nor reparation but suppression of memory. Back in the late 1970s, there were, of course, considerable difficulties for a new regime without a sound legal system and sufficient social resources to prosecute crimes so widespread in scope, but this policy is fatally flawed and its

damage is still growing. Between state indifference and personal silence, rumors find fertile ground. In today's China, nothing can be more destructive than an allegation of a person's complicity with perpetrators. Sensational stories of social elites' dubious personal histories usually become top news in newspapers, which often gather arguments from all sides and leave the issues for readers to decide. Unfortunately, in most cases, witness testimonies contradict each other, and the public does not getting anywhere closer to either truth or reconciliation.[7]

Zhang Hanzhi: the Myth of an "Aristocratic Lady"

In 1994, Zhang Hanzhi published her first book *My Life during the Turbulent Years: Recalling My Father, Chairman Mao and Guanhua* to remember her father Zhang Shizhao, a one-time KMT Education and Justice Minister, her "student" Chairman Mao, and her late diplomat-husband Qiao Guanhua.[8] This book focuses on her childhood in a prestigious polygamous politician's home, her intimate discussions with Chairman Mao in the 1960s, and her second marriage to the Foreign Minster Qiao Guanhua, 22 years her senior, during the crucial years of China's entry into the UN and China's resumed diplomatic relationship with the West. The chapters on her father are very refreshing in that they reshape the KMT Education

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[7] Another case in point is Yu Jie's article "Yu Qiuyu: Why Do You Not Repent?" (Yu Qiuyu: Ni weihe bu chanhui?), included in his book *The Wings that Want to Fly* (Xiangfei de chibang), where he criticizes Yu Qiuyu's involvement with a writing group based in Shanghai and monitored by Zhang Chunqiao during the Cultural Revolution.

[8] Zhang Shizhao served as the Education Minister from November 24, 1924 to July 28, 1925, and as Justice Minister from April 14, 1925 to December 31, 1925.

Minister, best known for his suppression of student movements in 1925, as a patriotic and pro-communist scholar. The trust and respect that Chairman Mao and Premier Zhou showed to her father till the latter's death further reconfirm her father's political progressiveness. These episodes very effectively repudiate the image of a cold-blooded conservative bureaucrat as portrayed in Lu Xun's famous essay "On Fairplay" (Lun feier polai yinggai huanxing), written upon Zhang Shizhao's cracking down of student demonstrations. More interesting are the legendary tales of Zhang Hanzhi's close contact with Chairman Mao as his English teacher, and Mao's shaping influence on her career and her marriages.

A large portion of the book is devoted to Qiao Guanhua. Zhang remembers their passionate love, the anguished days of Qiao's downfall in 1976, and her inconsolable sorrow after Qiao's death in 1983. In this part, Zhang conceals some noticeable gaps by inserting a moving digression of bits and pieces of their love stories before and after the political disaster. Toward the end of the book, Qiao's expulsion from the Foreign Ministry is obscurely mentioned without stating the official verdict and the evidence cited by the party.

Zhang Hanzhi's stories are seriously challenged by the memoir of Qiao's former subordinate, diplomat Zhang Ying, who completely reverses Zhang Hanzhi's narration of her marriage with Qiao and the couple's career accomplishments. The most fatal attack comes in Zhang Ying's testimony that Qiao Guanhua and Zhang Hanzhi were affiliated with Jiang Qing and they betrayed Premier Zhou. Zhang Ying's book articulates what Zhang Hanzhi silences and offers a detailed description

of the Qiao couple's involvement with Jiang Qing as well as their former colleagues' denunciations of them after the end of the Cultural Revolution. Zhang Ying also remembers how the Qiao couple persuaded her and her husband to renounce Premier Zhou and serve Jiang Qing instead. Zhang Hanzhi never responded to Zhang Ying's accusations of her and her husband in her later publications or television interviews.

I cite this confrontation not to verify historical details but to discuss what the conflicting statements illuminate about the condition of personal memory of the Cultural Revolution in mainland China: More than anything else, Zhang Ying's book reveals the structuring principles underlying Zhang Hanzhi's memoir. Zhang Hanzhi's book, particularly the lengthy remembering of her husband's loyalty to Premier Zhou and Zhou's confiding trust in them, can be read as her self-justification against accusations such as those from Zhang Ying. It has become all too obvious that Zhang Hanzhi writes to defend her past and relates her stories with the imagined accusers in mind, so as to resist the party's indictments of their affiliation with the Gang of Four and appeal to readers' sympathy in anticipation of poetic justice.

Paul Antze points out that one's identity and experience of "being someone particular" has "a tacit narrative structure" (6). A comparative reading of both memoirs, particularly how they contradict and complement each other's narratives, reveals the "tacit narrative structure" for controversial figures like Zhang Hanzhi. To cleanse her moral stain and reclaim her membership to the community of the innocent, Zhang Hanzhi has to provide a narrative to demonstrate her political correctness. Aside from stories of Premier Zhou, Zhang Hanzhi also recalls one

episode to hint at Qiao's amiable relationship with Deng Xiaoping. Zhang's writing avoids the ousted former party leaders such as the Gang of Four and Hua Guofeng and clings to the politically correct leaders such as Chen Yi, Zhou Enlai, and Deng Xiaoping. The adeptness with which Zhang Hanzhi pulls stories together and creates centers and backgrounds proves that she has practiced her self-defense for a long time. With her intuitive knowledge of Chinese politics, she creates a memoir compatible with the official history to regain what was denied to her: status and privilege.

Interestingly, online articles raise evidence to prove otherwise, namely how Zhang Hanzhi and Qiao Guanhua collaborated with Jiang Qing and resisted Deng Xiaoping's reform in the Foreign Ministry before Deng was purged for the second time in 1975. I will leave it to historians to verify these narratives, but it goes without saying that the official history has become the contending site from which Zhang Hanzhi and her critics find resources to debate her role in the Cultural Revolution.

The seemingly coherent narrative of their "political correctness" Zhang Hanzhi creates in her book unveils what L. Passerini terms "the ideological dilemmas of the past and present socio-economic and political circumstances" (qtd. in Middleton and Edwards 3). The official history posits a sharp contrast between the innocent and the evil, precludes a grey zone between the two, and does not allow for a nuanced understanding of the Cultural Revolution, particularly the role of the Gang of Four and their collaborators. By no means can Zhang Hanzhi admit her association with Jiang Qing and other controversial figures while pleading for her

innocence and eliciting readers' sympathy. She has to follow the narrative pattern provided by the official history, identify herself as an innocent survivor, and speak from this subject position.

Zhang Hanzhi writes again and again with gratitude about how Qiao Guanhua's kinfolk in his hometown, Yancheng in Jiangsu Province, adored him and how she found consolation in this. Such sentiments can also be found in Zong Pu's remembering of her father Feng Youlan, who has been the target of censure for his ready submission to the party's radical politics during the Cultural Revolution. To Zong Pu and Zhang Hanzhi, writing is catharsis, a process remedying their hurt egos. Moreover, memoir is the medium through which they can rewrite their past and mount their self-defense so as to be readmitted to the community of Cultural Revolution victims.

Dominated by competing themes, Zhang Ying's and Zhang Hanzhi's memoirs seize upon varying plots and resort to different strategies of narration, ending up with polarized representations of Qiao Guanhua. The irreconcilable difference between the two books demonstrates the flexibility of memory and the discursive nature of autobiographical writings. The two books also present two different readings of the Foreign Ministry community: The righteous indignation that Qiao's colleagues showed to Qiao in Zhang Ying's book becomes betrayal and opportunism in Zhang Hanzhi's writing. For all the prescriptive nature of the official history, it still leaves room for reconstructing one's experiences, rewriting official verdicts and presenting alternative narratives through persuasion.

Zhang Ying's and Zhang Hanzhi's competing narratives are tested by their audiences, which serves as interesting source material for the study of the public space of personal memories at the turn of the twenty-first century. When it comes to autobiography, readers favor books with more dramatic life experiences and fewer professional details. Zhang Ying's book, because of the narrower focus on the Foreign Ministry, was hardly known to the public while Zhang Hanzhi's memoir reaped huge market profits. Zhang Hanzhi subsequently published a few more books, more or less repeating each other. With the rise of talk show programs, Zhang Hanzhi has become a high profile guest interviewed in numerous TV programs. Zhang Hangzhi's elegant statute, crucial participation in history, unconventional love affair, and unusual perseverance against life's odds has the optimum makings for a favored media commodity. Because of the obsession with eventful figures, Zhang Hanzhi's narratives won out, completely eclipsed Zhang Ying's, and shaped other people's narratives about her and her husband. Even though the older generations still have a vague memory of Zhang Hanzhi's alleged collaboration with the Gang of Four, most young people are uninformed of the party's criticism of Qiao and her and their expulsion from the Foreign Ministry. In an age when the media scrambles for entertainment materials, historical complexity becomes a burden. Hence, Zhang Hanzhi's life stories are truncated and condensed in the title reserved for her, the last "aristocratic lady" (*modai minyuan*) (Cheng 250), which implies an upper-class lineage, first-class upbringing, and personal elegance. For a complex figure like Zhang Hanzhi, whose life spans the last years of KMT, Mao's reign, and the post-

1978 reform, the media industry selects only the most dramatic parts and refuses to deal with historical responsibility and moral ambiguities. Moreover, because of the veiled representation of the Cultural Revolution in the Chinese media, the younger generations feel incapable of dealing with the complexities of history and thus capitulate to whatever is presented to them. In this sense, a considerable degree of mutual complicity constitutes the amnesia of the Cultural Revolution tragedy.

Remembering Gu Zhun: the Myth of a Torch-bearing God

Gu Zhun, an old party member who was in charge of economic issues in Shanghai in the early 1950s but was expelled from the party in the late 1960s, is known for his insightful writings and his tragic early death in December 1974 at the age of 59. In the late 1990s, he was brought to public attention when well-respected scholars such as Wu Jinlian, Sun Yefang and Li Shenzhi collected Gu's writings in a four-volume anthology *Selected Works of Gu Zhun* to commemorate Gu as "the best representative of Chinese intellectuals" (Wu 9).

The most notable feature of this anthology is its unprecedented use of Gu's confessional letters and diaries composed before and during the Cultural Revolution. Written between 1968 and 1969, the confession letters record "mistakes" and "crimes" he committed at each stage of his life and express Gu's self-criticism of and remorse over "his moral degradation". While these writings call attention to the political pressures Gu was subjected to, they provide no understanding of Gu's tragedy since he narrates his life around his growing guilt and criticizes his friends and colleagues with equal vehemence as he does to himself.

The diaries, collected in a separate volume, cover three periods: October 1959 to January 1960, October 1969 to September 1971 and October 1972 to October 1974. In this volume, there are two sets of diaries between 1969 and 1971. Aside from some short diary entries summarizing his daily life from November 1969 to September 1970, Gu also wrote weekly journals under the title of the "Rebirth Dairy" (Xinsheng riji), where he discusses international politics, economic situations and his moral reform. Critic Li Shenzhi thinks that the short diary entries are more personal and the journals are actually drafts for Gu's confessional writings. The content of Gu's journals supports this interpretation as the whole diary is replete with political gestures and ideological slogans, such as repenting his nonexistent crimes, cursing the Soviet and the U.S enemies, and pledging to continue class struggles. Clearly, the "Rebirth Diary" is more likely a chunk of compulsory writings explicitly or implicitly requested by his political supervisors to check the progress of Gu's moral reform.

Gu's shorter diary entries are not very informative either. The years in Xi County (1969-1972) are parallel to the escalation of class struggles and the worsening of his political situation. Consequently, his self-censorship becomes more evident in these diaries than in his earlier writings, with some diary entries reduced to one sentence or even two words. The ordeal of hard labor, food shortage and disease are revealed in sketchy lines, while political pressures and his family turmoil are briefly hinted but mostly suppressed in his writings. The diary of his last days in Beijing from 1972 to 1974 is virtually a catalogue of books he read. In this way, his

diaries during the political turmoil prove to be insufficient in approximating the anguish that he was condemned to.

To fill the blanks in the diaries, Gu's younger brother Chen Mingzhi as well as his friends who lived through similar distress and accompanied Gu during his last days, contributed several articles to this volume, which very touchingly detail the poverty, illness, alienation and despair that Gu himself was not able to recount. But the whole anthology still leaves too many unbridgeable blanks in Gu's life, particularly those about the purges that he went through.

As a performative act, this anthology testifies to the terrors of the Cultural Revolution, but a short biography, in the form of a publisher's note inserted in each of the four volumes, precisely fails in this objective because of its indiscriminate use of language. The structuring principle of this biography is in line with that of a typical official obituary, with the first part summarizing his life as an old party member, a successful accountant, an economist and a thinker, and the second part mapping his major party titles plus charges leveled against him. For instance, Gu's life after 1965 is reduced to a series of labor reforms, "Between 1965 and 1969, he worked in Zhoukoudian (Beijing), Dahanji and the Economic Institute to reform through labor. Between 1969 and 1972, he was sent down (*xiafang)* to Xi County, Henan province. In 1972, he returned to Beijing. In 1974, Gu Zhun died of disease in Beijing at the age of fifty nine."

The most intriguing aspect of this narrative is its choice of words and sentence patterns, which exemplifies the perils in representing traumas. The

repetitive use of the passive tense in this narrative disguises the agents of persecution, conveniently saves the trouble of naming Gu's perpetrators, and perpetuates the amnesia of Gu's tragic life. The worst sort of mistakes in this respect can be found where Gu Zhun serves as the grammatical subject in lines such as "Between 1965-1969, he worked in Zhoukoudian of Beijing, Dahanji and the Economic Institute to reform through labor" and "In 1972, he returned to Beijing." The naming of Gu Zhun as the causal subject transforms the nature of such acts from passive to active, from hopeless subjection to voluntary choice. Despite the fact that the anthology is launched in commemoration of Gu Zhun's legacy, the biographical introduction is written from the point of view of the party, obscures his tragic life, and renders Gu Zhun as another faceless Cultural Revolution victim. More than failing to convey Gu's harrowing fate, it mystifies the Cultural Revolution by duplicating the official propaganda and reproducing its clichés.

Another problem I want to bring to attention is the repetitive use of the Cultural Revolution phrases such as "transform" (*gaizao*) and "send down" (*xiafang*) in this short autobiography as well as in other Cultural Revolution narratives included in this book. The quotation marks that people added to the terms after 1976 contribute an ironical touch, but they do not render the brutal implications of these words readily available. In its contemporary usage, g*aizao* is usually associated with prisoners transforming themselves behind the bars. During the Cultural Revolution, Mao called on the entire society to participate in *gaizao*, and in some settings the word is interchangeable with other words such as "study" (*xuexi*) and "improve"

(*tigao*). Thus, using *gaizao* in this context can potentially lead to misinterpretations of Gu's experiences and undermines the tragedy the editors intend to highlight. Similarly, in today's usage, *xiafang* refers to losing some social and economic privilege and working in the countryside as a way to test one's credibility before a significant promotion is granted. But during the Cultural Revolution, *xiafang* usually means being sentenced as an enemy of the people and deprived of basic rights. The thoughtless use of words such as *gaizao* and *xiafang* significantly neutralizes what Gu Zhun was sentenced to: hunger, poverty, terror, abuse, betrayal and alienation and makes the tragedy of his wife's suicide and his children's ten-year rejection of him incomprehensible. The Cultural Revolution rhetoric of *gaizao* and *xiafang* is a strategic lie about what happened to those second-class citizens. Using these words in a context such as this conceals the cruelties of the political struggles and perpetuates the suppression of sufferings.

The way that these two words are borrowed from the official narratives without much critical thinking reflects how entrenched the official discourse is and how difficult it can be to think outside the official history. Commenting on the constraints of collective memory, James Wertsch observes, "narrative tendencies associated with collective memory shape even the most assiduously analytic and critical efforts to write history" (20). In this case, the official history penetrates people's most intimate personal memories and shapes what is purported to be the most rebellious and defiant memory performance.

In rescuing Gu Zhun from oblivion, Gu's admirers compiled this short

biography only to see their writing contaminated by the official Cultural Revolution discourse. Yomi Braester sees the disjuncture between language and experience in post-traumatic China and makes the following comment: "Language has been abused for so long that writing not only misrepresents his [an author's] experience but also perpetuates the trauma" (153). The case discussed above indicates that remembering the past is more than writing a testimony; it involves renovating the language, creating new rhetoric tools, and reinscribing traumatic experiences naturalized by previous narratives.

What is missing in this piece of writing is not only a more critical use of language but also a proper understanding of the target audience. *Gaizao* and *xiafang* require an imaginative capacity to understand their particular implications during the Cultural Revolution, for which the younger generations are ill-prepared: When they come across these two words in narratives set in the Cultural Revolution, how can they instantly associate them with cruelties and absurdities that they have never heard of?

It is interesting to note that, unlike the field of the Holocaust Studies, where people lament over the impossibility of retrieving the trauma of the murdered, in China, to my knowledge, no one has uttered any regret for our limited knowledge of Gu's last years, and no one has pressed for finding his perpetrators. What circulates in today's journal articles is pretty much captured in the publisher's note of the anthology, particularly in the short paragraph after the biographical account. In this paragraph, the writer stresses Gu's persistent academic pursuits, his pioneering

research on market economy and democracy, and above all, his resolute will to preserve his intellectual independence in the face of political surveillance. The following paragraph is representative of most people's take on Gu Zhun. In his preface to Gu's diaries, Wu Jinlian, after reviewing Gu's path-breaking research on the socialist economy, passionately commends Gu's lofty pursuit, "Obviously, only those who have profound love for the people can, like burning candles, risk their lives to bring this world more light, and this is what Gu Zhun did" (2). In one of the most impressive review articles on Gu Zhun, Li Shenzhi synthesizes Gu's image with a line from Rabindranath Tagore's poem, portraying Gu as one tearing out his ribs to provide light for others (21). This metaphor is repeatedly quoted by other scholars and has become the trademark of Gu. For instance, Gu's biographer Gao Jianguo titles the book as "Tearing Ribs to Light a Fire." In the late 1990s, such praises of Gu were reproduced in numerous publications, sometimes by writers with little knowledge of Gu's writings. Upon the ninetieth anniversary of Gu's birthday in 2005, review articles on Gu increasingly focus on remembering his honesty and devotion, and many articles talk about how China is badly in need of the "Gu Zhun spirit" (*guzhun jingshen*).

The disproportionate interest between what happened to Gu and what Gu achieved holds a key to decipher the so-called "Gu Zhun phenomenon." All the attention is less about remembering a victim of the Cultural Revolution than paying tribune to a model intellectual, who, in the most tragic manner, fulfilled the mission of intellectuals prescribed by traditional Chinese culture.

The titles bestowed on Gu Zhun, such as the "real intellectual," the "backbone of China," the "conscience of the society," are reminiscent of some other scholars who are no less famous than Gu Zhun: Chen Yingque, Liang Shuming and Qian Zhongshu. The shared attributes of the narratives on these cultural masters reveal a steady interest in academic independence and personal integrity in academic circles.

It is illuminating to note that each of the three masters, Qian Zhongshu, Chen Yingque or Gu Zhun, was an idol for some time and then was replaced by another, not unlike trends in fashion. The constant change of idols implies the innate need to create new incentives in this model studying campaign, but the progression from Qian to Gu is not random. It is true that Qian and Chen are second to none in terms of academic accomplishment but neither Qian nor Chen challenged authority straightforwardly. And in the case of Qian, he is frequently faulted by his critics for serving on a translation committee that rendered Mao's complete works into English. Therefore, they resemble but they are not the personifications of the ideal model intellectual, as their silence during the Cultural Revolution verges on a certain degree of helpless concession to the authority. However, Gu combines both academic excellence and personal honesty, as Gu's admirers claimed Gu dissected the totalitarian regime in his research and defied its rule to its face up to his last days. Gu epitomizes what this circle has desperately anticipated in its prolonged search for a representative model for other intellectuals.

The idolized image of Gu extends his halo to a group identity of the

intelligentsia and calls attention to the sacrifice that this community has made for the country—a community downplayed in the generalized official history, questioned by self-censure, and forgotten in today's commercialization. Thus, researching Gu's life and his writings is like holding a memorial service to remember the intellectuals' sacrifice during the Cultural Revolution and to rehabilitate this community, in order to alleviate a sense of victimization that is not properly addressed by the party.

By extension, Gu's much lauded insight on politics and economy relives the myth of a philosopher king, a myth that falls into oblivion in today's rapid economic development. The voluminous articles that elaborate on Gu's contribution to today's economic reform hint at the intellectuals' guiding role in social development. What is professed in Li Shenzhi's torch-bearing metaphor is the May Fourth enlightenment dream that intellectuals, like members of an imagined community bonded together by the self-appointed task of saving the country, lead people in the pursuit of a utopia. Remembering Gu and his sacrifices also sings the praises of the best contributions that this community has achieved academically and morally. In any event, the past, symbolized by Gu's life, is only a trope in the reconstruction of the community of intellectuals. Trauma, in this case, is appropriated by leading intellectuals to serve their mobilizing calls.

Conclusion

F.C. Bartlett once points out that people remember past events "for all sorts of reasons" and the "concern for accurate and dispassionate accuracy is rather rare" (qtd. in Middelton and Edwards 23). In my sampling of three best known cases, none

of them confronts the past squarely: Yang Jiang's writing is embedded with signs of repression; Zhang Hanzhi's book is dominated by rhetoric of self-defense; remembering Gu Zhun reaffirms the contributions of intellectuals. The traumatic past, to Yang Jiang, is the place that she cannot revisit; and to Zhang Hanzhi and Gu's admirers, to revisit the past is to return to the present and promote their ideal images.

It should be admitted that even though these authors did not intend to testify against the official history or produce a counter-memory, each of these cases, in its own way, throws light on the cruelty, absurdity and treachery of Cultural Revolution politics. Without exception, these writings both reinscribe and transgress the official history. Yang's silence over traumatic memories demonstrates the magnitude of pain and the impossibility to narrate these experiences in the face of the party's control. When Zhang Hanzhi attests to her innocence, she takes the official history as the implicit guideline for her arguments, but she, nonetheless, achieves a measure of poetic justice among her readers. The strategies adopted in remembering Gu distracts readers' attention from Gu's dreadful fate and focuses instead on the intellectuals' role in contemporary China. To varying degrees, these people's remembering of the past has the official history as its interpretive framework. In these writings, trauma of the Cultural Revolution is not sufficiently narrated, and the official history is not critically contested.

I write this chapter with concern over the cultural amnesia in China. The contention between Zhang Hanzhi and Zhang Ying indicates that the amnesia encouraged by the party and endorsed by the public has rendered the younger generation ignorant of Cultural Revolution history and uncritical of revisionist writings. What I want to call attention to is how memories of the Cultural Revolution have been transformed by power and desires, and how memoirs have become significant components of Cultural Revolution history.

My research is by no means comprehensive in scope as each case represents only one facet of the whole field. It is possible and likely that there are other less well-known memoirs which have remembered the past more critically. My sampling is limited to non-fictional writings in mainland China, but the problems I discuss in this chapter are not confined to this genre nor to the Chinese context. With this chapter, I look at dominant tropes in narratives, the preference of the readership and the mentalities lying beneath the surface. By examining three cases, I try to illuminate challenges in remembering this political event and the urgency for a critical remembering of the Cultural Revolution.

In the following chapter, I will turn to memoirs written by emigrant authors in Europe and America and study their narrative tactics in the Diaspora. How is the Cultural Revolution remembered and narrated? How do these writers challenge the official history?

Chapter Three

Of Memory and History:

Writing the Cultural Revolution in the Diaspora

Introduction

In this chapter, I will turn to memoirs and autobiographies published in Anglo-America and discuss the production of memory in this geopolitical setting. First-hand accounts of the Chinese Cultural Revolution were made available by foreign visitors to China as early as 1969. After waves of Chinese went abroad since the late 1970s, more than two dozen memoirs have appeared in markets worldwide. With the exception of Nien Cheng's *Life and Death in Shanghai* and Wu Ningkun's *A Single Tear* (1993), which address the dreadful fates of two Western-educated elite professionals, most of these books were written by those who survived the Cultural Revolution as young adults. The most successful memoirs/autobiographies written by overseas Chinese include Nien Chen's *Life and Death in Shanghai* and Jung Chang's *Wild Swans*. *Life and Death in Shanghai* was featured on the cover of *Time* magazine's June 8, 1987 issue and has received rave reviews from leading newspapers and magazines. *Wild Swans* is an international bestseller and a recipient of several prestigious book awards. Other books, such as Liang Heng and Judith

Shapiro's *Son of Revolution* (1983), Gao Yuan's *Born Red*, Rae Yang's *Spider Eaters: A Memoir* (1997), and Nanchu's *Red Sorrow: A Memoir* (2001), are less known to general readers but have made frequent appearances on undergraduate and graduate reading lists. Ji-li Jiang's *Red Scarf Girl* (1997) was named by Publishers Weekly as one of the best books for children in 1997 and won the American Library Association's best book for young adults' award in 1998.[9]

This chapter examines the narrative strategies in some of these books and challenges what I believe to be a much simplified, naïve reception of them in the West. Academic and nonacademic reviews of these narratives frequently rush to the same conclusion that these writings and images vividly testify against horrors and effectively restore history. I would like to argue that such an interpretation simplifies the narrative politics and homogenizes this very diverse area of writing. I want to individualize these texts, question their different narrative politics, relate their discursive tactics to the place of production and practice a critical reading strategy.

I want, first of all, to pursue the role of place and time in the formation of memory and experience. If mainland Chinese memory has to bear the weight of censorship, what possibilities have the alternative writing spaces overseas offered? How do overseas authors challenge the official history? How has the Diaspora affected their narrative strategies? How has memory of the Cultural Revolution been

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[9] For more information, see the official webpage for this book at Harpers Collins: http://www.harpercollins.com/books/9780064462082/Red_Scarf_Girl/index.aspx. For the Publishers Weekly award, See Publisher Weekly's official website: http://www.publishersweekly.com/article/CA165167.html?q=Red+Scarf+Girl.

appropriated in Anglo-America? How do these narratives contribute to an understanding of the power relationship in a transnational memory space? This chapter ties the issues of literary genre to authorial presence, politics of inclusion and exclusion, problems of historical representation, and ethical responsibilities in historical narratives. It questions the use of personal memory to write or teach a national history and a national culture. What kinds of discursive strategies have been used in representing national space and individual memory?

This chapter is also concerned with the narration of gender relations in a third world country by emigrant authors with the use of an East-West comparative framework. How are cultural identity and cultural difference framed? How is gender deployed as a comparative category? Finally, given the fact that a static image of China has been appropriated time and again by both liberal and conservative forces in the U. S., I want to relate these bestsellers to the Cold War mentality. How does American politics appropriate these writings in its own propaganda?

Towards these goals, I have chosen to focus on two important English books on the Cultural Revolution as my primary objects of analysis. I start with *Wild Swans* and challenge its favorable reception in the West as a compelling historical text narrated by an authentic female voice. I then move to *Born Red* in the second part, exploring issues of revisionist historiography through my analysis of the book's genre choice.

Part One

Writing Women, Writing the Nation

—On Jung Chang's *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China*

First released in 1991 by the London based publisher Flamingo, Jung Chang's *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China* achieved a spectacular success with worldwide critical acclaims, rocketing sales numbers and two prestigious book awards: the 1992 NCR Book Award and the 1994 British Book of the Year Award.[10] Seventeen years after its first publication, it has sold 2 million copies, which establishes it as the most talked about non-fiction by a native Chinese.[11]

This chapter discusses this book from three pairs of concepts: gender and history, memory and history, Diaspora and memory. First, it considers the book's use of family memory to construct a national history. The book situates its narration of the lives of three women—Chang's grandmother, a concubine to a warlord; her mother, a communist soldier married to a high-ranking party official; Chang herself, a writer living in Britain—within major events in modern Chinese history: the Warlord Era (the 1920s and 1930s), the anti-Japanese war (1937-1945), the civil war

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[10] While the official website of British Book Award states that Chang won the British Book of the Year Award in 1994, the webpage for *Wild Swans* at HarperCollins says the award was issued in 1993. See the following links: http://www.harpercollins.co.uk/Content/Title/Default.aspx?id=28424 and http://www.britishbookawards.co.uk/pnbb_previouswinners.asp.

[11] HarperCollins puts the sales number at 2 million, but Barnes and Noble claims that *Wild Swans* "has been translated into 30 languages and sold over 10 million copies." See the following link: http://search.barnesandnoble.com/Wild-Swans/Jung-Chang/e/9780743246989.

(1945-1949), the Socialist revolution (the 1950s), Mao's Cultural Revolution (1967-1976) and post-Mao reform (1976-1978). For this merit, it is often listed as an assigned reading for classes on modern Chinese history and modern Chinese women. Above anything else, its portrayal of the Cultural Revolution, which takes up nearly half of the total space, has been cited in numerous lectures and publications as an unprecedented discussion on unresolved issues such as the movement's origin, evolution, ramification and socioeconomic impacts.

The problem is that the practice of using family memory to compose a national history frequently comes under attack from historians, who have traditionally regarded autobiography as a lower form of writing and treated its historical narration with much caution.[12] Literary scholars echo such criticism by repeatedly bringing our attention to the fact that autobiography and memoir are invested in the construction of an ideal subjectivity and are hereby tainted with biases. No other critics have explored the troubled relationship between memory and history as thoroughly as Pierre Nora did. In his essay "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," Nora sees memory and history as binary opposites when he defines "real memory" as being "social and unviolated, exemplified in but also retained as the secret of so-called primitive or archaic societies" (8), and history as "belonging to everyone and to no one, whence its claim to universal authority" (9), and as "the way forgetful modern societies organize the past" (8). Then he proclaims

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[12] For a book length study on autobiography and history, see Jeremy D. Popkin, *History, Historians, and Autobiography* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 2005).

that with the rise of industrial revolution comes the "conquest and eradication of memory by history" (8). Now memory is "nothing more in fact than sifted and sorted historical traces" (8).

Nora's pessimistic view of the destruction of memory is dismissed by Marita Sturken, who regards memory and history as "entangled" on the grounds that "there is so much traffic across the borders of cultural memory and history that in many cases it may be futile to maintain a distinction between them" (7). Sturken maintains that cultural memory echoes and disturbs official history and grants popular culture considerable power to negotiate and transform history. James E. Young notes that memory of the Holocaust is frequently tainted by historical writings as well as other forms of narratives, leading to a process of the "rewriting of the Holocaust." This part engages with these critical debates and tests them in Chang's book: How do memory and history work for and work against each other in her writing? Is memory destroyed/contaminated by history? Why does Chang mix the two genres? How does Chang reconcile the genre inconguity suggested by historians and literary scholars?

Second, this part questions the role of gender in the book's formulation of family history and national history. On both the thematic and the structural levels, gender has a prominent place in Chang's book. This ambitious narrative scheme of writing about everything Chinese—from social conflicts, economic operations, and political movements, popular mentalities to gender relationships in Han and Manchu households, before and after the communist takeover—is achieved by centralizing three women's lives and then contextualizing their experiences in important

historical moments. Therefore, my inquiry will incorporate gender issues to investigate the effects they have on the transformation from memory to history. In this part, I want to pursue these questions: How are Chinese women and Chinese culture defined and constructed by Chang's writing? What historical and personal moments are chosen to narrate the national culture and gender relations? In what ways are memories of three women central to the representation of China's century of revolution? How does she integrate gender into a trauma discourse?

Finally, this part continues the dissertation's investigation of the relationship between memory and place by questioning the impact of Diaspora on remembering the Cultural Revolution. How do emigration and Diaspora create a different reference framework and generate critical reflections of traumatic experiences in the home country? How do these narratives contribute to an understanding of how, in the West, knowledge about China is produced?

In short, this chapter focuses on Chang's Cultural Revolution memory and analyzes its representation in a Diaspora setting, from a gendered perspective, to a nonnative audience. This part will examine the overall structure of the book first and then focus on the tension between memory and history in the narration of the Cultural Revolution, before it relates gender, memory and history to Diasporic subjectivity.

Gender and Historical Violence

In this book about three women, the linkage between gender, memory and history that Chang intends to build is forged by tracing the implications of home in

different geographical and historical contexts. As an intersection of multiple discourses and dynamisms, the site of socialization and the place where power disciplines and multiplies the discourse of control, home provides a valuable way to understand the larger world beyond it. Home, on the other hand, holds the memory of the past and makes her critique of modern Chinese history possible.

In this book, home is viewed through the Western discourse of feminism and democracy as a place of patriarchal control and totalitarian surveillance. Throughout this book, patriarchy and political oppression are emphasized as the two most important markers of these women's lives. At times, such representations can be rigid, one-sided and simple-minded.

For Chang's grandmother Yufang, home is the site where patriarchy firmly establishes its authority as Yufang's father, Mr. Yang, assumes absolute control of the household, and her mother, Mrs. Yang, a submissive woman, personifies traditional feminine virtues and self-consciously serves as patriarchy's accomplice. Home is also the very setting where parallel sexual transactions take place, when Yang forces Yufang to marry the middle-aged General Xue as a concubine, which in turn provides Yang with the money to buy two concubines for himself. The marriage to Xue imprisons Yufang in a sexual contract which requires sexual submission in exchange for monthly allowances. Chang repeatedly refers to the imposing appearance of walls and gates in Xue's households to allegorize confinement and surveillance of Yufang's body as well as the oppressive nature of traditional family relationships. The death of General Xue in 1933 allows Yufang to redefine her life,

but she is dependent on men to provide for her and has no better choice than marrying another man, even though this time she marries for love.

In this part, Chang readily repeats familiar clichés circulated in Western media and accentuates women's sufferings to match the Orientalist imagination. An obvious example is her narrative interest in concubinage and foot binding. The book begins with a bizarre tale of her grandmother's arranged child marriage to a polygamous old man, "At the age of fifteen my grandmother became the concubine of a warlord general, the police chief of a tenuous national government of China" (1). In the following paragraphs, the narrative immediately switches its focal point to the city and the Yang family and does not circle back to the marriage until a few pages later. It seems that whether or not, from a structural point of view, the paragraph on the arranged marriage belongs there is irrelevant. Her grandmother's exotic body belongs to nowhere other than the first paragraph of the book, with prominent placement of book ads as a trope of drama and tension in the hope that this strategy will launch the book to a bestseller list. Another important event in her grandmother's life is foot binding, which is illustrated on two pages to display an Orientalist spectacle of cruelty, backwardness, and perversion. But all the while Chang does not forget to wield the powerful Western feminism to criticize the misogyny underlying this mutilating practice. Similarly, in other places she mimics males' erotic gaze at her grandma's body but nevertheless uses feminism as a convenient tool to criticize traditional Chinese culture for its oppression of women.

Chang's obsession over her grandmother's oppression is accompanied by a tendency to offer a one-sided view of her life. While detailing her grandmother's sexual life, she does not mention her school education until it is necessitated by the plot to introduce her old classmate. Chang equates tradition with oppression and renders her grandmother a prisoner of the private sphere, a victim of patriarchy without agency, and a plain, one-dimensional woman of limited scope. In a book whose pronounced goal is to narrate history, the author does not historicize women's conditions in the 1920s and 1930s or ever mention the achievements of women's liberation movements at that time. Such a one-sided view of history betrays how certain themes dominate her narrative and how treating her memoir as a reading on Chinese history can be very problematic.

The way she presents Chinese culture and Chinese women frequently verges on generalization, disregard of cultural diversity, and repetition of cultural stereotypes. Some of her most misleading interpretations of Chinese culture are as follows: old China's legal system was capricious (28); love was a taboo (29); marriage was a transaction (36); women were submissive (84), etc.[13] In her narration

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[13] For a nuanced understanding of women's lives in old China, see Susan Mann and Yu-Yin Cheng, eds, *Under Confucian Eyes: Writings on Gender in Chinese History* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2001); Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1994). *Under* includes documents from the middle-period and late imperial China that registers women's voices in their spiritual, religious, literary pursuits in their varied roles as female deities, saints, mothers, matriarchs, educators, and poets. In *Teachers*, Ko's subjects are elite women—woman tutors who emerged as a new professional group, and mothers who taught classic literature to their children—in the most culturally advanced region of Jiangnan in the seventeenth-century China. Ko's study

of her grandmother's life, she not only uses life in a provincial town to generalize cultural habits in Republican China but also treats the so-called Chinese culture as a uniform entity without any contradictions.

Chang's observations on her grandmother's life and by extension, the general condition of Chinese women could be summarized as a combination of the May Fourth generation's critique of Chinese tradition, communist propaganda against feudalism, and Western feminism's characterization of third world women as victims of patriarchy. Here, the narrative resembles more a discursive construction of Chinese women rather than an account written from lived memory of a grandma who had a material existence. Memory is hereby replaced by established knowledge of Chinese women, and writing becomes a copy of stereotypes.

Home has different psychological and ideological implications for Yufang's daughter, who was born into General Xue's house in 1931 and adopted by her stepfather and renamed Dehong, a.k.a. wild swan. Dehong's early childhood coincides with the decline of patriarchal influence, while women reclaim femininity from patriarchal distortion. Home provides support for her to pursue education and independence. As Japan expands its invasion of China beyond Manchuria to inland provinces, home suddenly acquires a larger meaning: the nation. Dehong identifies with the nationalist cause led by the communist party and actively seeks party

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reveals that these women were able to transcend the traditional confinements and form intellectual communities. Through her research, Ko dismisses the stereotype that Chinese women were victims and demonstrates the point that tradition was open to change.

membership. Her service to the salvation movement provides a sense of purpose for her life, which is undreamed of in grandma Yufang's youth. On the flip side, Dehong has to accept what Chang explicitly calls a "new patriarch" (170), the party, as the source of authority who demands her unfailing submission to its never-ending intrusion into her private life. She is not able to marry her fiancé Yu Wang/Shouyu Chang, a trusted communist official, until the party thoroughly checks her dating history, family background, social connections and past service and gives them its consent.

On the husband's side, Shouyu accepts the party's discipline without any grudge and follows the party's teaching by making everything personal political. On their way from Tianjin to Nanjing, Shouyu, now a direct supervisor of Dehong, tests what seems to be Dehong's dubious loyalty to the revolution by forcing her to walk the whole journey of 700 miles in forty days, which unknowingly costs them their first child. Later, after they are posted to Sichuan, Shouyu first serves as head of the Yibin County government and then deputy head of Public Affairs Department at Sichuan Province while Dehong is in charge of education for the East district of Sichuan's capital city, Chengdu. Shouyu forces Dehong to work on dangerous tasks during her second pregnancy and declines special care for her when she has a high-risk delivery on the ground that she not only should not receive special treatment but also should get rid of her bourgeois life style and contribute her equal share to the revolution. The double agencies of patriarchy—her husband and the party—diminish her feminine specificity and use gender equality as an excuse to incorporate her into

the master discourse of nation building. The socialist revolution, as these episodes indicate, is as much male-centred and sexist as the feudal tradition it criticizes.

Political scientist Kaz Ross faults Chang's critique of her father as "a poor understanding of politics, power and policy" (1). Instead of debating whether this is an issue of uncontextualized misjudgment, I want to bring readers attention to what is highlighted and, more importantly, what is silenced by the narrative strand. Chang's representation of gender relations under Communism sustains the theme of "oppressed Chinese women" that she establishes in the previous part of the book. Given her mother's active role and responsibilities and especially after considering women's writings from that decade, it is obvious that Chang is biased towards the failings of the party's policy on women without acknowledging the progress it nonetheless achieved. As the term gender is mobilized for the purpose of shaping her mother as another victim of patriarchy, Chang creates as much visibility as omission of women's struggles.

In the 1950s and 1960s, rounds of political movements steadily suppress femininity, erode family space, physically and psychologically alienate husband from wife, parents from their kids, and reduce home to a nominal existence. During this time, Dehong's misery is compounded by political purges—she is repeatedly detained for scathing political investigations, but she hushes her grievance in the hope that her personal sacrifice will contribute to the battle against social injustice and transform China into a socialist utopia. In 1966, after Chairman Mao launches the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution," the country falls into the hands of rebels

as high officials, intellectuals and citizens of suspicious backgrounds become primary targets of widespread persecutions. Dehong and Shouyu, now denounced as "capitalist roaders," are detained on and off for investigations, which results in Shouyu's mental breakdown. Both Dehong and Shouyu are released in 1968, but as part of Mao's policy to re-educate intellectuals and civil servants, they are dispatched to cadre schools for reform through labour. The story reaches its tragic climax when grandma Yufang dies in solitude, and Shouyu, in his desent to madness, hits Dehong and permanently damages her left ear. The family stories show the monstrous force of revolution, whose obsession over power and control destroys the last strain of idealism among its loyal followers. The national and family tragedies render Dehong's more than two decades' sacrifice pointless. If revolutionary propaganda stipulates women's subjugation and suffering and entices men like Shouyu to treat their wives as tools for revolution, the debacle of revolutionary myth suddenly restores humanity and destabilizes established hierarchy between men and women, revolution and its subjects. Bitterly disappointed by Mao's revolution, Shouyu offers his wife a formal apology and tells his son, "If I'd die like this, don't believe in the Communist Party" (591). Chang uses the party's violations of an individual's rights as symptoms of a totalitarian regime, and her parents' suffering and disillusionment as allegories of the trauma and loss this nation has gone through in a century-long revolution. Thus, gender relations in this context serve as much an index of social and political reality as a thread stitching fragments of history together for a genealogical understanding of the treacherous nature of history.

The third part of the book is about author Jung Chang, whose teenage dream is to support world revolution and meet Chairman Mao. Jung grows up at a time when under socialist teachings, traditional values have been challenged but puritanical rules encourage males and females to assume the same attire and mannerisms. The foremost challenge Chang faces is not patriarchal control of her body but totalitarian surveillance of her mind. Maoist ideology targets children for brainwashing and alienates them from their parents, as official propaganda instructs, "Mother is close, father is close, but neither is as close as Chairman Mao" (339). Chang intuitively resists collectivity and precociously notices the contradiction between propaganda and reality. At the age of sixteen, Chang writes a poem voicing her disillusionment, which marks a resolute break from the party's patriarchal control. While the party reduces home to a political and ideological battleground, encouraging family members to spy on each other, she and her siblings prioritize their loyalty to their family and bring comfort to their persecuted parents. As the book shows, it is her resistance to the party's manipulation that sustains her humanity, sanity, compassion and honesty. With the help of her mother's connections, Chang attends a college in 1973 and is subsequently selected to study in Britain, where she obtains a PhD degree in Linguistics in 1982. In the introduction to the 2003 edition of this book, Jung writes enthusiastically of the freedom she enjoys in her new home "Britain" and associates fear and shame with the thought of China. She mentions feeling angry that "some outsiders did not regard us [Chinese] as the same kind of humans as themselves" (14). For men and women of three generations, from Yufang,

Dehong, Shouyu, to Chang, home is as much a psychological space as a geographical choice with ideological consequences.

Chang's book restores women's lives to the center of historical narration, brings continuity in three women's struggles, and challenges the male-dominated official history. But to what extent and in which context is Chang's book a counter-memory? The life stories of grandmother and mother are selectively remembered to show the illusional success of women's liberation movements, the undefeatable patriarchal tradition, and the oppressive nature of the socialist regime. In the following section, I will focus on Chang's representation of the Cultural Revolution to explore her politics of writing the personal and the political.

Autobiographical Performance and Writing History

In the previous section, I discussed how this book is structured around the implications of home, using gender issues to forge the link between the personal and the political, memory and history. In this section, I will focus on the tension between memory and history specifically.

So far more than a dozen memoirs testifying to the trauma of the Cultural Revolution from children's or teenagers' perspectives have been published in the West, but none of these books have claimed as much critical attention as Chang's.[14]

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[14] Books written from this perspective include *Born Red*, *Red Scarf Girl*, *Son of the Revolution*, *Spider Eaters*, Lo Fulang's *Morning Breeze: A True Story of China's Cultural Revolution* (1989), Wen Chihua's *The Red Mirror: Children of China's Cultural Revolution* (1994), Niu-Niu's *No tears for Mao: Growing up in the Cultural Revolution*, Jiang Yarong and David Ashley's *Mao's Children in New*

One feature marking Chang's book from the rest is the space it devotes to historical narration, which occasionally takes up half of a chapter. While other books restrict textual details to local events and personal experiences and use them to unravel what a section of a society goes through, Chang's book is narrrated from a macro-level of national history as well as from a micro-level of personal and family memories, using personal presence as justification for her extensive historical emplotment. Chang's genre transgression raises questions about the practice of using memory to write history, especially a national history spanning more than fifty years. In the field of Holocaust studies, there have been debates concerning the historical value of testimony or literary memory. When historians pointed out inaccuracies in a survivor's Holocaust testimony, Dori Laub claims that this testimony records psychological struggles of surviving the concentration camps and therefore should not be taken as a source for positivist knowledge. Ana Douglass and Thomas A. Vogler discuss how difficult it is to distinguish between what one experiences and what one is informed or imagined of the past. The rationale behind this statement is that with traumatic events "the memory trace was compromised from the beginning" and "their capacity for observation was paralyzed by suffering the incomprehension" (34).

It shall be noted that Chang opts for a temporally, geographically and thematically expansive narrative scope. In many cases, neither Chang nor her family

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China: Voices from the Red Guard Generation (2000), and Shen Fan's *Gang of One: Memoirs of a Red Guard* (2004).

were present at the events she eloquently recounts. Why does Chang take such a bold step, using her family's limited experiences to represent a nation's quest? How does Chang reconcile the genre inconguity? In this section, I will start with a critique of Chang's appropriation of the genres of biography, autobiography and history and situate Chang's ambitious scheme of writing national history and family memory in the fields of historiography and memory studies.

The first issue is the renarration she employs when it comes to her family members' memories. As a fourteen-year-old Red Guard trying all she can to keep herself out of violence, Chang's firsthand experience of the Cultural Revolution is too limited to paint a kaleidoscopic picture of the Cultural Revolution, as she wished. To complement the gaps in her narration, she has to constantly rely on her parents' memories to bring out defining moments in the early stage of the cataclysm. As if she has been questioned about the accuracy of her renarration, Chang mentioned in the foreword to the 2004 edition of *Wild Swans* that she wrote from the monologues that her mother recorded on tape during her visit to Britain in 1988. But this detail does not guarantee the accuracy of renarration, particularly when it comes to her father's life as well as her grandmother's, which are related to her by her mother. Aside from the notorious difficulty of relaying stories from person to person, media to media, renarrated second-generation memory can be reprogrammed to suit different narrative purposes, contexts and epistemological conclusions that the initial speaker may or may not agree with. Renarrated memory is, at best, adapted memory, which can be twisted by the renarrator while borrowing the original narrator's

experiential authority. For this reason, readers should not take renarrated memory for granted.

The autobiographical account of violence and chaos at school and on the street powerfully testifies against the terror that Maoist propaganda gives rise to. In this part, the narration shuttles back and forth between the vision of the frightened, confused experiencing "I" and that of the all-knowing, moralizing narrating "I." The narrating "I" brings a confident moral certainty to the narrative, part of which is justified by the narrative construction of an impecabble experiencing "I." Given the alliance between the experiencing "I" and the narrating "I," it is likely that when the moralizing "I" passes judgements on others, it also constrains the experiencing "I" from recalling certain memories.

Throughout her narrative negotiations, Chang betrays what James Olney considers "a profound human impulse"—the desire to "become both separate and complete"—with respect to the world she represents (qtd in Anderson 4). She renders her experiences representative of young people's lives but at the same time she depicts herself as a unique woman endowed with unusual insight and courage. "I" is shown as one of the few who consciously keeps a critical distance from the revoltuion and disapproves of it from the beginning. Thus, "I" is both inside and outside the revolution, which qualifies "I" as an ideal spokeperson for the trauma to the Western audience. "I," compassionately looks after distressed parents and shields them from abuse and threats while pursuing learning with zeal. Thus, an alternatve subjectivity of courage, independence, grace, love and passion is asserted

against violence, betrayal, vulgarity and cruelty. The book presents the journey of a self-made woman, the birth of a wild swan, and the construction of a desired subjectivity. Her book demonstrates the power of narrative, which transforms her autobiographical memory into an individualistic performance of humanity against the dominance of patriarchy and dictatorship.

The memory is also a triumphant tale of how "I" and my family, despite overwhelming odds, survive with dignity and integrity. A large part of family memories concerns the risks her parents take to protest Mao's policies and protect their subordinates from persecution. Here comes the question: Can an autobiography as heavily invested in identity politics as Chang's be taken as a historical narrative? I will return to this question later.

Chang's historicization is even more problematic and calls for critical reading strategies to illuminate the process that conceals the incommesurablity between memory and historicization. Chang's narration of broad history, events beyond her family's immediate experienences, is delivered by an omniscient genderless narrator, covering topics ranging from Mao's motives, strategies, and caculations to power struggles at the top level, factional conflicts at the local level, evolution of Mao's policies and the socioeconomic impacts they have on China. Each of the above-mentioned issues awaits archival research, witness testimonies and book length studies to clarify the twists and turns of their complex developments. The limited space in her book prompts her to piece together information from newspaper reports

and rumors and reduce issues that are still under critical debate to simple cause and effect narratives with no unanswerable questions.

To support her historicization, she boldly states numbers, without any qualification, in areas such as population increase during the Cultural Revolution, death tolls in famine and factional fighting, number of youths sent down to countryside, etc. Because of the government's control over sensitive documents from the Cultural Revolution period, it requires both patience and tedious efforts to investigate province by province before national figures can be reached.[15] So far some estimations are available but they, by no means, should be used freely without even a proper footnote. Instead of illuminating the Cultural Revolution, Chang's writing simply adds more mysteries to it.[16]

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[15] For example, scholars have not reached a consensus over the death toll of the political purges during the Cultural Revolution. Andrew G. Walder and Yang Su used annals from 1520 counties to estimate the impact of the Cultural Revolution and suggested the death toll might be between 750,000 and 1.5 million. See Andrew G. Walder and Yang Su, "The Cultural Revolution in the Countryside: Scope, Timing and Human Impact," *The China Quarterly* 173 (2003): 74-99.

[16] For example, in her book, Chang states that during the "Clean Up the Class Ranks" campaign, because of the Inner Mongolia People's Party affair (*neirendang shijian*), "some ten percent of the adult Mongolian population were subjected to torture or physical maltreatment; at least twenty thousand died" (496). Chang does not reveal where the statistics come from or inform readers that this subject is still under investigation. David Sneath believes that "anything between 10,000 to 100, 000 people were killed. The vast majority of these people was Mongolian" (420). Macao-based sociologist Cheng Xijie in his article cites three research results, in which the death toll varies from 12,222 to 50,000 (745). None of the researches I came across has the number of Mongolians who died or were injured during this purge. See David Sneath, "The Impact of the Cultural Revolution in China on the Mongolians of Inner Mongolia," *Modern Asian Studies* 28.2 (1994): 409-30. Cheng Xijie, "Reviewing the Cultural Revolution in Inner Mongolia after Forty Years" (Sishi yu nian huishou, zaikan neimeng wenge), *The Cultural Revolution: Historical*

Zhang's narration of specific events is conducted in a careless way, without providing witness testimonies nor proper citation. Instead of citing from the party's original speech, she gives an allegorical reading of the Barefoot Doctor campaign as a result of a propaganda to "generate hatred against the pre-Cultural Revolution Party system, and against intellectuals (this category included doctors and nurses)" (568). "Mao found the idea of peaceful progress suffocating…he needed action—violent action…There had been no political campaingns …since 1959" (350). Some of her comments are so farfetched that they occasionally resemble willful misinterpretations driven by personal politics. Chang explains the escalation of violence during the early days of the Cultural Revolution as follows, "He [Mao] encouraged the Red Guards to pick on a wider range of victims in order to increase the terror" (377). Chang has a wild interpretation of Mao's often vague rhetoric and makes the violence a direct outcome of Mao's will. It is true that history is not free of interpretation and there is no such thing as a singular history, but Chang has engaged in fictionalizing to suggest one single history.

The book echoes the mythic archetype of heroes battling dark forces with a story of noble idealists faithfully pursuing a dream larger then themselves for the sake of the whole nation only to see it destroyed by insurmountable evil. The heroes are without doubt her parents, Shouyu and Dehong. The villain who misguides the populace and manipulates their will to accomondate his own power lust is, of course,

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Truth and Collective Memories (Wenhua da geming: lishi zhenxiang he jiti jiyi), ed. Song Yongyi (Hong Kong: Tianyuan, 2006) 742-59.

Mao. The book frequently delves into Mao's psychological intent and provides bold claims, "Mao wanted the Red Guard to be his shock troops" (375); "Mao understood the latent violence of the young" (376). Sometimes Mao is shown to be a narcissitic despot, "There was even a tinge of self-pity as he portrayed himself as the tragic hero taking on a migty enemy—the huge party machine"(365).Thus, Chang portrays Mao as a resourceful strategist who manipulates the nation or as the biggest villian who engineers chaos out of personal vengeance. In order to create a macrohistory with a lucid and straightforward explanation to a non-native audience, Chang reduces complex ten-year history to a play acted out of Mao's script without any discordance, gaps, blanks or disjuncture.

Chang's historicization is limited to the power struggle around Mao and hardly touches upon that at the local level. This highly selective approach limits readers' knowledge of how the power struggle is mobilized at the local level, particularly how it involves the whole country in endless mad witch hunts and turns victims into perpetrators, and vice versa. Considering her father's position in the provincial government, Chang could have provided important source materials for that part of history. But Chang avoids doing so and gives her father a limited presence in the latter part of the book. Just as the way Chang treats herself and her other family members in this book, Chang's father is said to be a defenseless victim so that in Chang's framework, he is automatically excluded from the persecution mechanism and is represented as a subject of the regime without any agency. Chang's self-labeled victimhood has been attacked by a few mainland Chinese

readers. Mainland Chinese reception of Chang's book more often than not raises the same question: How could she consider her father, the deputy head of Public Affairs in Sichuan province in charge of propaganda, a Cultural Revolution victim without ever apologizing for wrongs her father might have willingly or unwillingly done to his subordinates, and for radical policies he might have mistakenly endorsed during his tenure in that position?[17] In these readers' views, testifying against the horror is premised on the need to apply the same high standards on the autobiographer herself. Chang, however, turns her back on such pleas by giving her parents free passes, but she nonetheless achieves commercial success in the West with a tale of a family nightmare at the hands of an evil regime. Chang's skillful manipulation of narrative angles is as much a sales trick to echo popular imaginations as a tactic to protect her family reputation and indulge herself in narcissistic self-pity.

Rather than sticking to the personal and the local, Chang weaves historians' writings, popular stories, familiar rumors, and her own speculations into a history. Kaz Ross notes that this book is "full of historical inaccuracies and exhibits a surprising lack of insight into Chinese revolutionary politics" (2) and concludes that "*Wild Swans* announced the establishment of a new genre: 'faction' – history told by

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[17] A few online writings criticize Chang Shouyu for supporting the Governor Li Jinquan's policies during the Great Leap Forward, which resulted in a deadly famine between 1958 and 1961. This accusation has not yet been verified by any source, but it is true that Sichuan was one of the hardest hit provinces in the famine. For more details, see Jowett A. John, "The Demographic Responses to Famine: The Case of China 1958-61," *GeoJournal* 23.2 (1991): 135-146; James Kai-sing Kung and Justin Yifu Lin, "The Causes of China's Great Leap Famine, 1959–1961," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 52 (2003):51–73.

fictional narrative means" (2). I will leave the book's historical inaccuracy to social historians and focus on developing critical reading strategies. The question I am concerned about is: Why history? Namely, why is historical narration so indispensable to her book and how to account for the impulse to (re)write history? Before answering these questions, I want to briefly review the book's reception in China and elsewhere in the hope of illuminating this matter from a comparative perspective. Chang's book is banned in mainland China, but as early as the 1990s, her book circulated in black markets and was later uploaded to the Internet for free download. By no means is *Wild Swans* a hit in mainland China, and its reception has been a mixed one. Most criticism is based on a common-sense approach: Judging from the fact that Chang and her siblings were able to attend universities before the end of the Cultural Revolution, she is viewed as a part of the power establishment and is in no position to speak for victims.[18] In a word, the book is generally regarded as neither an important publication on the Cultural Revolution nor a counter-memory to the official history. As a forgotten book in mainland China, *Wild Swans* is susceptible to what Elizabeth Jelin describes as the danger of "institutional oblivion

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[18] The college entrance examination was suspended in 1966 and was not restored until 1977 by Deng Xiaoping. Between 1970 and 1976, some universities accepted limited numbers of new students, based on family background and political performance. The selection was very arbitrary; most often the admission was awarded to those who had established close connections with the selection committees at their workplaces. Jung Chang attended college as early as 1973, and in *Wild Swans* she admits that her mother played a very important role in securing hers as well as her siblings' admissions.

and void" and becomes "literal memories of nontransferable property, which cannot be shared" (45).

A case of such "institutional oblivion" is Rae Yang's *Spider Eaters*, which very well could have pursued Chang's narrative strategies since Yang was also born with Manchu lineage, had a VIP great grandfather and a strong-willed grandmother, grew up with privileges, struggled with gender inequality, lived through political stigmatization of her parents and finally studied in the West and settled there. Thematically speaking, the book is an intimate account of her family and her life without any ambition to reflect on either women's fate or historical tragedy. Two types of autobiography can be derived from Yang's and Chang's books: autobiography as self-expression versus autobiography as cultural reflection/historical narrative. Yang's book has a very limited readership and is little known outside academia. However, Chang's book was warmly received, remained on the bestseller list for 63 weeks in Britain, became institutionalized in humanities and social sciences, and has been quoted in subjects as diverse as book selling, business, and sports in China, gender studies, socialist sex and Marxism.[19] This book

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[19] Morna H. Conway, "Bookselling in the People's Republic of China," *BioScience* 44.3 (1994): 178-180; Ian Rae, rev. of *Business Strategies: A Survey of Foreign Business Activity in the PRC*, by Nigel Campbell and Peter Adlington, *The China Quarterly* 120 (1989): 867; Stathis N. Kalyvas, "The Ontology of "Political Violence": Action and Identity in Civil Wars," *Perspectives on Politics* 1.3 (2003): 475-94; Pitman B. Potter, "Riding the Tiger: Legitimacy and Legal Culture in Post-Mao China," *The China Quarterly* 138 (1994): 325-58; Emily Honig, "Socialist Sex: The Cultural Revolution Revisited," *Modern China*, 29.2 (2003): 143-75; James Riordan and Dong Jinxia, "Chinese Women and Sport: Success, Sexuality and Suspicion," *The China Quarterly* 145(1996): 130-52; Debra B. Bergoffen, "Marriage,

is, first and foremost, welcomed as an in-depth study on the communist regime and a significant counter-memory against the Communist Party's official history.[20] Thus, a nation's trauma is borrowed as another nation's catharsis, which following Eastern European states' official abandonment of Marxism and Socialism, offers a timely closure to worries over the communist threat. Book reviews enthusiastically inform readers of Chang's emigration to Britain, hinting at the free world's rescue and protection of Chang against the imagined reenactment of historical violence. Chang's book is widely cited in popular as well as academic writings on China and has been absorbed into mainstream Western memory of communist China.

Though not directly related to *Wild Swans*, the following anecdote will illustrate nonacademic writings' impact on mainstream politics. The story is about none other than Chang's latest book, a controversial biography *Mao: The Unknown Story* (2005), coauthored with her husband, Jon Halliday. Because of *Wild Swans*' spectacular success, *Mao* instantly became a bestseller upon its release and eventually one of President George W. Bush's bedside readings. During a meeting with German chancellor Angela Merkel, Bush "glowingly" refers to it when Merkel

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Autonomy, and the Feminine Protest," *Hypatia* 14.4 (1999):19-35; Kalpana Misra, rev. of *Chinese Marxism in the Post-Mao Era*, by Bill Brugger and David Kelly *The China Quarterly*, 132 (1992):1205-07.

[20] For example, in her reiview of *Wild Swans*, Anne F. Thurston comments that "The story stands as another damning indictment of the communist system" (1207). See Anne F. Thurston, rev. of *Wild Swans*, by Jung Chang, *The China Quarterly* 132 (1992): 1207-08.

conjured up memories of her life under communism.[21] On hearing this, Chang's reaction was, "it's not surprising that he [George W. Bush] should want to know from what roots this regime has grown."[22] This clearly demonstrates how memory on the one hand is constantly in danger of being incorporated into national politics and on the other hand consciously invites such attention. It is with the knowledge of how, in J.L. Austin's observation, "words do things," and how memory/history influences present day social political realities, that a critical awareness of narratives such as *Wild Swans* and *Mao* becomes urgent.

To return to the question I raised previously, about Chang's impulse to historicize, despite the fact that she is neither a historian by training nor a witness to the decision- making, I will here attempt a psychological reading of her motives. The inferiority complex of lack and inappropriateness she describes after her arrival in Britain triggers what Freud describes as "melancholy," "a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-reviling" (244). Through a historical narration of the depth of the tragedy, Chang casts blame on Mao, rather than on ordinary Chinese such as herself or party officials, including her parents. Through an account of the power of her personality, she emerges as a heroic, self-made woman, transforming the inferiority complex into a sense of pride and dignity. Such a textual performance would be incomplete without

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[21] Elisabeth Bumiller, "Sometimes a Book is Indeed Just a Book. But When?," *New York Times* 23 Jan. 2006. Available at http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/23/politics/23letter.html.
[22] Ibid.

the participation of an audience, whose sympathetic and enthusiastic responses put the testimony in a never-ending process.Therefore, Chang's narration is geopolitically dominated by identity politics as well as a subconscious need to please her readers and meet their "fields of expectations." In this sense, the discursive features of this book make its appropriation by oppositional politics both predictable and inevitable.

Chang's memory is, first of all, premeditated by the Western discourse of feminism and democracy and then shaped by the temptation to historicize a nation's troubled search for progress. In order to formulate a coherent history of "temporal continuity," Chang allows history to dominate and replace memory, using familiar notions of oppressed Chinese women to dictate her writing on her mother and grandmother, and the well-known image of Mao the dictator to replace nuanced historical investigation of the Cultural Revolution. Thus, stories of three women's lives give way to a narrative about the nation state within an implicit comparative framework juxtaposing a repressed China and Chinese women with their enlightened Western counterparts. She patches together a causal narrative that is straightforward, dramatic, engaging, and ready to be subsumed to a geopolitics that has its roots in Cold War ideology.

Time, Place, and Diaspora

Chang's book has everything from the exotic, old and senile China, concubinage, foot binding, patriarchy, and oppressed women, to dictator Mao, Red Guards, rebels and political persecution. Such self-exotization is expressed by using

history and gender as compartive frameworks, rendering historical trauma the proof of China's alterity and deficiencies. Her scrutiny of three women's struggles suggests a static notion of history, a sense that the elapse of time has done very little to forge social changes and reform Chinese society. Her writing of 50 years of Chinese history is marked by nightmarish strands of warfare and political purges. Memory of the catalytic Cultural Revolution echoes that of the Anti-rightist campaign in the 1950s and the Tiananmen massacre she brings up at the end of the book. Thus, Chinese history is represented as one trapped in unbreakable cycles of violence and dictatorship. Three generations of struggle is diminished by the innate deficiency of Chinese culture and monstrous political institutions. The real wild swan, Chang herself, takes wing only after she emigrates to the West. Living in the West, as she shows, proves to be the once and for all solution for the misfortunes in her life—Chang claims that she finds political freedom, gender and class equality, security and a sense of fulfilment in her new home, Britain.[23] Chang's book could be summarized as a contest between time and place, China and the West—the passage of time proves to be incapable to bring changes in the real sense, but passing to another space delivers her from hell to heaven.

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[23] In the preface to the 2003 edition of *Wild Swans*, Chang write, "Europe seemed to be extraordinarily equal, and could not care less about one's background….In spite of its tradition of class differences, people in Britain have dignity, and the underprivileged are not abused or downtrodden, as they were under Mao. And the fairness of the society, and the weight the nation places on this concept, is something today's China still cannot begin to match" (12).

Taking a look at overseas Chinese literature, we notice that neither Chang's coupling of gender and history nor her sense of static Chinese history is unique. Sansan Kwan summarizes the trend this way, "The past decade or so in American publishing has witnessed a lucrative interest in the memoirs of Chinese women…recounting their harrowing tales of terror at the hands of brutal communist officials, friendship-betraying Red Guards, monstrous fathers/husbands/brothers/sons" (110). In memoirs on the Cultural Revolution, authors usually create a spatial and temporal demarcation between China and the West and construct China as the West's political and cultural Other. Their subscription to the present regimes of power is accompanied by excluding discussions of patriarchy and imperialism in the West. Writers such as Ha Jin and Jung Chang openly distance themselves from China and repeatedly reenact the image of a senile, corrupt China in their writings. Chang, for example, incorporates the duo images of the Orientalized suffering woman and the Western-educated individualist/feminist in herself, mobilizing western feminism and democracy to criticize the evils of the feudal/communist China.

Such Occidentalism and self-Orientalization have their distant roots in Chinese intellectual history and regain their voices after historical traumas such as the Cultural Revolution and the 1989 Tiananmen massacre.[24] Edward Said's

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[24] Occidentalism has been defined differently in different contexts. In *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of Its Enemies*, Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit equate Occidentalism with the worst derogatory or hostile conceptions of the Western civilization, including those created by fascists, Maoists, Hindu nationalists, Khmer

reflection on subjectivity in the Diaspora excellently explains such a mentality, "Exiles feel, therefore, an urgent need to reconstitute their broken lives, usually by choosing to see themselves as part of triumphant ideology or a restored people" (360). It is not incidental that almost every overseas Chinese author ends his/her memoir by referring to his/her emigrating to the West, which symbolically closes off the historical trauma at a safe distance.

Rey Chow in her book *Writing Diaspora* suggests that considering the fact that China kept its territorial and linguistic integrity against colonial forces, "imperialism as ideological domination" in China, "the Chinese relation to the imperialist West, until the communists officially propagandized 'anti-imperialism,' is seldom purely 'oppositional' ideologically" (8). To flee oppression and testify against state-sponsored violence, Chang wholeheartedly embraces an alternative ideology and has her memory constituted by its discourses, failing to promote a plurality of vision and a better way to scrutinize the past. Chang's book as well as

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Rouge and Islamist Jihadists. Buruma and Margalit maintain that their book represents an effort to show the flip side of Edward Said's Orientalism. In *Occidentalism: Images of the West*, edited by James G. Carrier, the word "Occidentalism" refers to scholarly knowledge of the West, both positive and negative and most often a mixture of the two. My argument about Chang's practice of Occidentalism is contextualized in Chen Xiaomei's research on this topic in her herbook *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China*, where Chen describes Occidentalism as a glorified picture of the West in post-Mao writings in order to resist political suppression and precipitate social reform. Chen Xiaomei's book explores post-Mao China but she points out that the Occidentalist discourse can be traced back to the late 19th century in numerous political flyers, newspaper articles and modernist writings where Occidentalism goes hand in hand with self-Orientalization.

other authors' memoirs reveals the power relationships in the transnational memory space and the Chinese Diaspora.

Chang's writing leaves the questions of how to remember state-sponsored violence, how to remember political trauma constructively and pursue an alternative mode of political subjectivity in the Diaspora unanswered. In the following part, I will discuss Gao Yuan's memoir *Born Red*, which is characterized by a much narrower timeframe and much less interpretation and historicization but whose narrative intent is no less problematic.

Part Two

Genre Matters

--On Gao Yuan's *Born Red: A Chronicle of the Cultural Revolution*

Gao Yuan's *Born Red: A Chronicle of the Cultural Revolution* is one of the earliest English publications to use first-person narrative recounting the Cultural Revolution entirely from a Red Guard's perspective. By restricting the narrative timeframe from 1966 to 1969, the book traces the rise and fall of the Red Guard movement in a county high school where the narrator studied until he joined the army in 1969.[25]

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[25] The author situates the stories in Hebei province but disguises the names of the counties and state capital in the belief that "all, innocent or guilty, were caught up in a movement beyond anyone's ability to control" (xxxi). One critic claims that this story happened in Shaanxi province. The reference to Muslims and Jews in the book, however, seems to indicate that the story occurred in Henan province, which is known for a small population of Jewish ancestry.

As the book title "Born Red" suggests, the author was born into a revolutionary's family with the father being a guerrilla leader turned county head in Hebei province. In 1966, when the Cultural Revolution was started, "I" was a fourteen-year-old high school student attending Yizhen Number One Middle School. At the initial stage of the movement, "I" passively watches teachers persecuted and houses of alleged capitalist roaders ransacked with implicit disapproval, but "I" nonetheless follows the mainstream, denouncing teachers and smashing the Four Olds (*sijiu*) as everyone else does.[26] After touring several provinces, including Beijing, in the name of revolution, the narrator gradually gives up his neutrality and becomes a devoted member of what he believes to be a "righteous" (192) Red Guard group called Red Rebels, while some of his classmates form a rival group East-Is-Red Corps.[27] During this time, Gao's father is questioned and placed under house arrest but soon rehabilitated by Red Guards. The antagonism between Red Rebels and East-Is-Red Corps reaches an all-new level when they get involved with a parallel antagonism brewing between two armies stationed nearby. Bitter arguments and chaotic scuffles soon give way to warfare as Gao himself becomes increasingly involved in his Red Guard group's battling for power. After Gao's faction occupies an army hospital and loots a military armory, conflicts claim several lives, with two

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[26] Four Olds refer to old customs, old culture, old habits, and old ideas.
[27] "I" first founds a small Red Guard group called "Skirmishers" (193), which is later merged with East-Is-Red Commune led by Gao's classmate Leiting (197). Later on there is a "grand merger" as Lu Xun Commune, East-Is-Red Commune and other smaller Red Guard groups form Red Rebels, electing Mengzhe as its commander (213).

of Gao's comrades beaten to death by their enemies and an old classmate from the opposition side committing suicide moments before being captured. In the process of experimenting with gunpowder, two Red Rebels are killed. Before Gao and his classmates can crush their enemies, the central government denounces factional fighting across the country, indirectly supporting Gao's enemy, East-Is-the-Red Corps.[28] Red Rebels lose power and are brutally beaten by their enemies. Seeing that Red Rebels are defeated and disbanded, Gao finds an exit from the revolution by joining the army. The book concludes as Gao says goodbye to his family and leaves for the army.

As critics have already pointed out, this book-length narration on the author's Red Guard years "stands out for the immediacy of its portrait of the Red Guards" (Hersahtter 830) and provides "an insight to the internal dynamics of the cataclysm which is duplicated nowhere else" (Ansley 496). Moreover, it examines the psychological makeup of Red Guards and provides unique insight into the evolution of the Red Guard movement at the county level. Compared to Gordon A. Bennett and Ronald N. Montaperto's *Red Guard: The Political Biography of Dai Hsiao-ai*, which is known for its penetrating details of the Red Guard movement, Gao's book is more accessible, entertaining, and easy to read, for a general outlook of the early years of the Cultural Revolution.

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[28] In Gao's account, Chen Boda (1904-1989), who headed the Cultural Revolution Leading Group, supported the 93rd army, whose branch in Yizhen sided with East-Is-Red Corps.

One significant feature that distinguishes this book from other books recalling life during the Cultural Revolution, such as *Wild Swans*, *Life and Death in Shanghai*, *Son of the Revolution*, *Spider Eaters*, *Red Sorrow*, etc., is that as critic Lucian W. Pye notes, the book is "almost devoid of interpretation" (292). Gao bypasses the conventional practice of offering an in-depth analysis or direct criticism of the mentalities and maneuvers that gave rise to the Cultural Revolution. Throughout the book, Gao sticks to the perspective of the experiencing "I" and bars the interference of the present view. Pye also says that such a lack of interpretation "spares us the standard Chinese moralizing," by which he means the official verdict blaming Mao and the Gang of Four (292). Indeed, unlike Chang, Gao never portrays Mao and other leaders negatively or denounces the Cultural Revolution explicitly. Pye's comment touches upon a very important issue in historical writings: whether explanation and interpretation are appropriate and whether ethical responsibility has its place in historical narration.

I want to challenge the view that Gao's book is "devoid of interpretation" and to engage with the debate concerning the place of interpretation in historical writings and ethic responsibilities of writers. In this sense, this part continues the investigation in the previous one from a different perspective: If Chang's memoir, marked by over-interpretation, makes itself a ready target of Cold War ideology, has Gao's book eradicated ideological contents and avoided patronizing oppositional politics? I will start with a critical look at Gao's ambivalent genre choice and then examine narrative voices and authorial presence/absence in selected parts of the book

to decide if the book provides an interpretation-free version of history. What narrative intent does this book serve? How does the form as well as its narrative influence readers' reception? Finally, I will turn to the issue of ethics in historical writing: Does ethics have a place in history? Is it possible to remember without making ethical judgments?

Genre: To Belong and Not to Belong

Critics in the field of memory studies have long noticed that when people testify against the past, in order to create a sense of authenticity, they tend to strip their narratives, be they written or oral, of literary rhetoric to avoid the undesirable label of fiction.[29] The same concern might have triggered Gao to choose the seemingly more objective genre of "chronicle," which is made quite clear in the book's subtitle. But most book reviews instead refer to the book as a memoir, and William A. Joseph mixes the use of chronicle and memoir in the foreword he wrote for the book.[30] As two distinct genres, chronicle and memoir result in different historiographies with memoir being more self-preoccupied and family-oriented as

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[29] For more analysis read Lisa Yoneyama, *Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space, and the Dialectics of Memory* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1999); James E. Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and Consequence of Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1988).

[30] *American Historical Review* refers to it as a memoir while *Choice* review names it an "autobiographical account." These book reviews are available at the official website of Stanford University Press: http://www.sup.org/book.cgi?id=2653; Grail Hershatter also considers Gao's book a memoir. See Grail Hershatter, "Review of *Born Red: A Chronicle of the Cultural Revolution*, by Gao Yuan, and *Life and Death in Shanghai*, by Nien Cheng," *American Historical Review* 94.3 (1989): 830-31.

books such as *Wild Swans*, *Spider Eaters*, *Thirty Years in a Red House*, and *Red Sorrow* demonstrate.

Comparatively, chronicle is a rare choice among authors of first person narratives. Before we turn to *Born Red*'s dubious genre status, it is necessary to review the defining features of chronicle. *The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines chronicle as follows: "A record of historical events, arranged in order of time, usu. without any judgment as to their causes, effects, nature, etc" (236). Hayden White in his book *Tropics of History: Essays in Cultural Criticism* considers the "pure form of chronicle" as a "series of stories recorded in the order in which the events originally occurred," and the "ordering of the events" "provided a kind of explanation of why they occurred when and where they did" (93). Both White and *The Oxford Dictionary* exclude writings in story form with cause and effect narration from the genre of chronicle. Similarly, "Biannianshi," the Chinese counterpart of chronicle, refers to a type of historical writing that notes down major events according to a chronological order so as to "show connections among historical events from the same period" (Xia 106). I fully acknowledge that genre rules are porous as Ralph Cohen in "History and Genre" reminds us, "Genres are open categories. Each member alters the genre by adding, contradicting, or changing constituents, especially those of members most closely related to it" (204). With this notion in mind, I will not fault Gao for violation of genre rules outlined by White and *The Oxford Dictionary* but instead will look at obvious transgressions in his book.

One reason that Gao's use of the word chronicle is problematic is that the content of the book is not commensurate with what the subtitle—"chronicle of the Cultural Revolution" —promises. On the one hand, the narration is not only geographically limited as it is confined to the county high school and its vicinity but also temporally arbitrary as it ends abruptly in 1969. In many historians' views, the Cultural Revolution did not come to an end in 1969 but took another direction. I do not intend to engage with the ongoing debate concerning the periodization of the Socialist period and the ensuing question of when the Cultural Revolution ended.[31] With all the temporal undecidability, there is no denying that the subtitle is general, vague and misleading, and a narrower and more specific subtitle would better serve the purpose.

Secondly, the frequent intrusion of self-congratulating, irrelevant autobiographical details in the storytelling raises questions about its claimed genre status. Even though narration of family life provides a more personal and intimate picture of that period, Gao's repeated reference to people's compliments on his father's personal integrity does not fit in with the general theme of the book. In this part, the visibility and invisibility of family life are crafted along gender lines: Gao's mother and sisters are allowed minimum presence to ensure narrative continuum while his father, grandfather, brother and himself enjoy regular presence for the purpose of creating patrilineal solidarity and pride. But on the whole,

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[31] Anita Chan, "Dispelling Misconceptions About the Red Guard Movement: The Necessity to Re-Examine Cultural Revolution Factionalism and Periodization," *The*

autobiographical accounts are limited, scattered and restrained, compared to other first-person Cultural Revolution narratives, especially *Wild Swans*, as I discussed in the previous part.

In this sense, the book positions itself between a chronicle of major political events at his school and a memoir of family life, struggling to balance the conflicting desires for experiential representativity and narrative self-fashioning at the same time. Viewed through Jacques Derrida's genre theory, Gao's straddling of both genres is a norm characterizing many writings, as Derrida argues: "A text would not *belong* to any genre. Every text participates in one or several genres… yet such participation never amounts to belonging" (230). If a genre label cannot contain a particular writing practice, why does the author claim the genre? In Gao's case, why does he label his book a chronicle without committing to it? What kind of historiography has the ambivalence generated? What motivates the wish to belong but at the same time not to belong? What is at stake in his manipulation of genres? In what aspects is Gao's narrative strategy different from Chang's? How has such a genre choice affected the audience's reception of the book? In the following section, I will conduct a narratological analysis to locate the place where a genre transgression occurs and examine what purpose it serves.

Narrative Voice and Interpretation in Historical Writings

Journal of Contemporary China, 1.1 (1992): 61-85.

In the preface to his book, Gao professes that with his writing, he intends to "recapture an experience that shaped the lives of millions of young Chinese like myself" (Preface xxxi). Ambiguous as it is, this very line nevertheless reveals that the memory in discussion is thought to be representative of the collective experience, a shared past. The verb "recapture" indicates the mimetic intent of documenting the past as it was while disclaiming the author's agency, in formulating the story, as if memory automatically transcribes itself into writing. The word "experience," rather than more emotion-loaded words such as "trauma," "nightmare," and "chaos," marks an early attempt of steering clear of interpretation. On the other hand, this very word "experience" leaves out any discussions about historical agency as if history just happens that way and Red Guards get involved without a reason. Such ambition for "representativity" and "not interpreting" already forecast the genre dilemma: "I" has to be present in the book so as to create the sense of realism but "I" has to be inaccessible in the narration so that the story will not cease to be representative of Red Guards' experiences in general.

For the sake of critical analysis, I will divide the book into two parts: students persecuting teachers; students fighting against each other. Given the fact that it is not possible to tell memoir from chronicle in a clear-cut fashion, my analysis will closely examine narrative voices to see where transgression is engineered and where genre rule is upheld. In the end, such an approach will illuminate the memories the author intends to convey and the politics that he subscribes to.

In the first half of the book, students voluntarily participate in Mao's revolution, denouncing the Three Family Village, examining hidden messages in newspapers and magazines, criticizing and persecuting their teachers, smashing Four Olds and touring Beijing and other parts of the country.[32] At this time, "I" is sometimes an onlooker and sometimes a passive participant of the revolution. "I" joins others to criticize and guard house-arrested teachers, but "I" is not shown to lead any violent acts inflicting pain on these teachers. In narratological terms, "I" is an object and receiver of revolutionary mobilization and a helper of violence and destruction, very rarely an opponent of the revolution.[33] Except for these autobiographical moments of his family life, the first person "I" frequently disappears into the collective "we," becoming a passive unit of the collectivity. "I" is taken as one among many actors of the event that the narrative intends to represent.

At times, the disappearance and reemergence of "I" create gaps and blanks in the narration. For example, it takes readers by surprise when "I" is given the important task of announcing the expulsion of teacher Lin Shen from the party since half of the class seems to be more enthusiastically involved than he is. The cause and effect connection is not prepared anywhere in the narrative. At other times, "I" is

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[32] Between October 1961 and July 1964, senior party officials Deng Tuo, Wu Han and Liao Mosha, published "Notes from Three-Family Village" (Sanjiacun zhaji) in *Frontline* (Qianxian) to criticize party policies. In May and June of 1966, these authors were severely criticized by leading party newspapers and were subsequently named the "three family village black inn" (*sanjiacun heidian*). For more discussion on this case, see Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, vol 3 (New York: Columbia UP, 1997) 249-58.

present in the activity but invisible in the narration. In the chapter titled "Smash the Four Olds," the class heads to the streets to accomplish one after another revolutionary deed. Throughout the chapter, the singular "I" never shows up in the narration until the last moment when an architecture symbolizing patriarchal authority is torn down and "I" is said to be covered with dust. "I" is represented as an object to emphasize his passivity, his being outside of the action. As much as his actions are invisible, the psychological state of "I" is also inaccessible. At tragic moments such as teachers' suicides, "I" is said to be shocked but any other emotions are blocked from readers' view. Hereby, "I" becomes a visual point to see the action and a prop to prove the author's presence inside those events but not a narrative object to be scrutinized, as a memoir would. Is the author's resistance to self-representation a compliance with genre rules or a protective mechanism to shield "I" from readers' inquiries?

After pages of narration on revolution in the name of the group, "I" resurfaces and is shown to be a compassionate Red Guard, protecting teacher Wen from harm and helping classmate Yuling to clear her ransacked home. A narrative pattern can be found in the writing: It is "he" or "they" who initiate violence, and it is "we" who, following the party's call, participate in the revolution. But it is "I" who shows compassion and offers consolation to the persecuted. The insertion of such autobiographical details implies the innate anxiety the author feels in face of

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[33] For a definition of narratological terms, read Susana Onega and José Angel Garcia Landa, eds, *Narratology: An Introduction* (London: Longman, 1996).

imaginary readers' doubts over his moral stance. In a word, the self-fashioning autobiographical segments allow the author to claim "insider" status while at the same time maintaining some superiority over ordinary Red Guards. The "belonging" to genre law and evasion of genre law indicate that neither is a must and both are motivated by narrative politics.

A remarkable feature of the narrative angle used in this part is that the narrator focuses on action rather than on consequence, exterior motion rather than interior emotion. As a result, the narrative perspective stays more with students than with persecuted teachers and underreports the pain, frenzy, suffering, and cruelty. It recaptures the experience of the Red Guards, not those perished and harmed, by managing not to see and not to remember the tragedy. Out of such selective remembering emerges an illusion of history that is packed with breathtaking events while the causalities are concealed from readers' knowledge.

In the second part, the story takes a turn when Red Guard groups are formed and violence is turned inward against fellow classmates. As the class disintegrates into warring factions, the collective "we" becomes less seen and the individual "I" enjoys more visibility. "I" finally comes out of its hiding as an "object" and "receiver" in narratological terms, turning the book into a first-person adventure story of action, violence, and bloodshed. The whole narrative of "I," embracing the role of a factional leader, passionately designing military strategies, and adamantly sticking to his guns in the face of an uncertain future, refers back to the familiar story of the coming-of-age of a communist.

The focalization on "I" allows access to the motives and reasoning of me and my friends, but the visibility is given to friends and not to the enemies to justify their actions as "revolutionary, progressive and nonviolent" (78). In this process, experience is redefined as that of our "good" Red Guards, leaving out the life and death struggle of ordinary citizens or political prisoners caught in the crossfires. Once again, memory has been managed not to remember certain experiences and certain groups. The implicit message resulting from such a controlled narrative angle is that we good Red Guards battle those evil Red Guards, which is exactly the argument leading to widespread bloodshed in many parts of China during that time.[34]

The book ends with Gao's departure for the army. The epilogue following it reverts to the chronicle-styled non-sentimental tone, summarizing political changes in China in the 1970s before it turns to a visit to his old friends in 1984. Gao recounts the rise and fall of his former classmates and teachers without any emotion, showing no sympathy, sentiment, critique or regret. If the law of genre, as Derrida claims, is porous and as Gao's practice indicates, is dispensable, such sudden conformity to the rules of chronicle only betrays the will to escape sentiments and

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[34] For more accounts of factional conflict, see the following books: Chen Yinan, *A Rebel Worker's Life during the Cultural Revolution* (Qingchun wuhen) (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2006); Lu Li'an, *Outcry from a Red Guard Imprisoned during the Cultural Revolution* (Yangtian changxiao: yige dan jian shiyi nian de Hongweibing yuzhong yutianlu), ed. Wang Shaoguang (Hong Kong: Chinese U of Hong Kong P, 2005). For academic studies on this topic, see the following studies: Xu Youyu, *Rebellion of All Hues* (Xingxing sese de zaofan) (Hong Kong: Chinese U of Hong Kong P, 1999); Stanley Rosen, *Red Guard Factionalism and the Cultural Revolution in Guangzhou* (Boulder: Westview, 1982); Andrew Walder,

causal interpretations for unspecified reasons. Gao also mentions punishment meted out to his former enemies with veiled satisfaction, as if revenge is finally obtained.

Towards the end of the epilogue, Gao engages in interpretation, as he suddenly begins to comment on the past in relation to its historical significance. Such an unexpected twist occurs after Gao glowingly juxtaposes his arch enemy East-Is-Red Corp leader Fanpu's humiliating disappointment in life with Gao's former commander Mengzhe's enormous success with his enterprise. Gao compares Mengzhe's enterprise vis-à-vis the Red Rebels headquarters and sees today's glory as a continuation of yesterday's achievement as if the belated success avenges the regretful defeat in the past. These lines clearly reveal the fact that the narrating "I" shows no noticeable narrative distance from the experiencing "I," and apparently does not feel embarrassed by his past. Thus the present "I" collapses into the experiencing "I" to glorify Gao's hero and superego Mengzhe, which in return draws a complimentary note to Gao's own life. Mengzhe attributes the doom of Red Rebels to the political situation "he has no control over" (362) with the air of a defeated hero, yielding the impression that his Red Guard years remind him of an unaccomplished mission only. Gao uses indirect speech to capture Meng's disturbing comparison of the new economic reform to the old revolution, which deserves a long quote:

> Mengzhe saw the economic reforms as a continuation of our nation's efforts to find the most suitable road into the future. He said the reforms, like the Cultural Revolution, represented a struggle to reshape people's thinking, to shake off outmoded ideas and move into

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"Beijing Red Guard Factionalism: Social Interpretations Reconsidered," *Journal of Asian Studies* 61.2 (2002): 437-71.

> the modern age. Although this new revolution lacked the fury of the Cultural Revolution, it touched people's souls far more deeply and would have greater effects on the development of the society. (362)

This mentality is striking and shocking not only in the nostalgic look it casts on the violent history and the bold unapologetic tone it adopts to link the past with the present but also in the way Mengzhe unmistakably refers to the Cultural Revolution as a liberating social movement "shaking off outmoded ideas," and "moving into the modern age" (362). Mengzhe first intentionally distorts his memory of the Cultural Revolution as a bloodless enlightenment "touching people's souls" and then strikes a false metaphor between the present and the past to glorify the past as a revolution. Mengzhe affirms with confidence that, in this new revolution, he will not be defeated, given his increasing importance to his enterprise and the local economy. Thus with a forced false historical continuity, from which Mengzhe, namely Gao's superego, emerges as the ultimate triumphant hero, the book comes to an end.

The ending, I would suggest, provides hints about how we should reread this book and start the whole reading experience all over again. With the newly acquired perspective, it is clear that the three years of the Cultural Revolution is the time that "we" Red Guards lead a glorious revolution to change the society, before the revolution is brought to an end in 1969. The revolution aims at changing the society in fundamental ways and challenging people's conventional ideas. The violence, bloodshed and occasional absurdities pale in comparison to the idealism promoted in this great movement. Therefore, memory should concentrate on the actions, battles, and maneuvers rather than the few persecuted individuals while the narrative voice

should match the excitement of the movement rather than getting emotional over the loss. For such a narrative objective, chronicle and autobiography are mixed in the writing to serve different agendas. In the first part, the movement is led by classmates who do not necessarily share the noble view, and "we" have not yet fully embraced the revolution. Chronicle serves the narrative needs by focusing on the events, not individuals, since the hero, in the real sense, has not been born. Occasional autobiographical details link this part to the next one for the purpose of narrative continuity. In the second part, "we" formally enter the stage by launching a revolution of our own. This instantly reduces the perspective presented in the first part of the book and turns it into a nostalgic look at the "revolution" fought among schoolmates. Autobiographical voices communicate the trajectory "we" take to pursue revolution and the perseverance we demonstrate for such a revolutionary ideal. The episodes shape "us" as heroes of the movement, heirs of revolution, but unfortunately, the Red Guard movement is ended by the government. Even though the official Cultural Revolution goes on for a few more years, the true spirit of it dies the moment idealists like "us" are defeated. For this reason, the book ends in 1969. The mixed use of the genres—chronicle and memoir—coordinates with the knowledge the book intends to convey and the ideological message it tries to communicate. It also controls the type of knowledge readers have access to, without being aware of authorial intervention. Naturally, the official ideology with its outright critique of the Cultural Revolution and the role of Red Guards has no place

in this memory. In fact, the book is designed to use the collective memory of the "born red" to defy the official history dominating China since the 1970s.

Roland Barthes comments that it is in relation to other texts within a genre that we make sense of certain events within a text.[35] Here I want to draw attention to other books writings on Cultural Revolution experiences to support my argument that Gao's book also challenges the collective memories of those who regard the Cultural Revolution as a historical disaster and the Red Guard movement as nothing short of absurdity and horror. Memoirs following this tradition include *Red Guard: The Political Biography of Dai Hsiao-ai*, *Son of Revolution, Life and Death in Shanghai*, *Red Sorrow*, and *Spider Eaters*. These memoirs resemble each other in the genre the authors pick and the criticism they level against the Red Guard movement. I want to use Nanchu's book *Red Sorrow* to question what collective memory Gao's chronicle/memoir writes against and what kind of knowledge he produces.

Written from a Red Guard's perspective, Nanchu's book extends beyond the radical Red Guard movement and includes her life as a sent-down youth in a remote Northern town. It recounts the excitement she experiences when the Cultural Revolution first starts, the violence she participates in, the idealism that motivates her to settle in a remote Northern town, the disillusion that follows the decline of the Red Guard movement, and the desperation that drives her to the verge of suicide. The book's temporal span from pre-1966 to the 1980s is typical among writers

working on the same theme. Here I want to combine the issue of genre with the temporal scheme in both books. Gao's narrative is interrupted in 1969 and resumed in 1984. What effects has he achieved? How to explain the artificial removal of the events between 1969 and 1976?

These questions can be best answered through a comparative reading of both books. By tracing the personal history of her dramatic transformation from a fanatic, violent Red Guard into a bitterly disillusioned youth trapped in a Northern village, painfully reviewing the atrocities she and her Red Guard friends committed, Nanchu's writing reflects how the Cultural Revolution turns the young into violent political tools and then helpless victims. Nanchu's reflection provides her book with a dimension that Gao Yuan's is incapable of or even vehemently rejects.

Fictionalization, Ethics and Historical Writing

Pye's term "devoid of interpretation" can also be understood as a lack of moral judgment in the narration. In Gao's narration, the sense of right or wrong, villainous or virtuous, in most cases, can only be derived through narrative details, not from authorial comments. Gao's style represents a narratological choice that purposefully restrains judgments and limits authors' intervention in what is purported to be a "chronicle."

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[35] See Roland Barthes, "Theory of the Text," *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young, trans. Ian McLeod (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981) 31-47.

Historians have been debating if ethics has a place in historical writings and if it is possible to leave it out. Gao's book presents an interesting case for debating this issue. In the preface to the book, Gao confesses that he invents new names for his high school, schoolmates, and the counties mentioned in the book to keep them anonymous "in the recognition that all, innocent or guilty, were caught up in a movement beyond anyone's ability to control" (xxxi).

On the surface, he keeps ethical judgment of right and wrong out of the discussion; but on a deeper level, such an approach actually hinders reparation of wrongdoing by indiscriminately granting amnesty to perpetrators. In his hurried cover-up for his comrades, Gao betrays how much his identity as a former Red Guard dominates the outlook of this book. The issue Gao and his enthusiastic reviewers take for granted is the agency of forgiveness: Who has the right to forgive? Under what circumstances is forgiveness meaningful? Julia Kristeva has a very interesting debate with Jacques Derrida over the condition of forgiving. Derrida argues that to offer genuine forgiving, we need to forgive the "unforgivable" unconditionally.[36] Kristeva, however, insists that forgiveness is premised on the subject's willingness to change (282).

Despite their differing views on the precondition for forgiveness, both Derrida and Kristeva agree that forgiveness comes from victims only. As an unenthusiastic participant in persecution of teachers and then a very involved Red

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[36] See Jacque Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, trans: Mark Dooley and Michael Hughes, (New York: Routledge, 2001).

Rebel, Gao is in no position to speak for victims and write off the guilt casually. Kristeva reminds us that forgiveness is not an "erasure" but "a recognition of the suffering, the crime, and the possibility of beginning again" (282). Not only does Gao refrain from criticizing his classmates, he also prevents his readers from doing so by fictionalizing names and underreporting crimes and injuries. Under the euphemism of forgiveness lies the self-serving agenda of repressing memory and erasing crimes.

Interestingly, Gao shuffles the responsibility to the ambiguous notion of "a movement beyond anyone's ability to control" (xxxi). The neutral word "movement" is vague enough to mean anything while the non-referential "anyone" seems to include everyone, perpetrators from local level to the top level, as the captives of the so-called "movement." Then what is this captivating, totalitarian thing to which everyone has to surrender his/her subjectivity and rationality? The nearest match would be Louis Althusser's notion of ideology. Althusser defines ideology as a "'representation' of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real condition of existence" (109). Ideology "interpolates" individuals as a "(free) subject in order that he shall submit freely to the commandments of the Subject, i.e. in order that he shall (freely) accept his subjection" (123). With the ideology theory in mind, it becomes clear why a large part of the narration shows a lack of agency and motive. As Red Guards are deprived of the ability to rationalize their actions, they are naturally victims of the ideology, as much as the persecuted teachers are. Gao exaggerates ideology's domination over individual wills to such an extent that his

and other Red Guards' violent past can be justified and they can thus get away with any moral responsibility. Unfortunately, his writing itself often challenges such a view.

Gao's book raises serious questions about the purpose of historical writing. For a book which details violence and persecution but refuses to apologize or even sympathize, where does its value lie? Should historians care about facts only? Should historical writings, for the sake of recording past events, leave out reparation? Which is more important: justice or the so-called facts? Here comes another question: Who has the right to write history?

When Pye lauds the book for being "devoid of interpretation," by which he means not duplicating the official critique of the Gang of Four and Mao, he misses a crucial part of the picture. While Pye's concern over the dominance of official ideology in popular memory is understandable, we should note that with such a blind fetish of alterity and alternative voice, he fails to catch sight of another trap. It is true that Gao, by rejecting the official ruling, allows readers to look at the Cultural Revolution in a different way, but from the above analysis, we can conclude that what Gao achieves is to recuperate the old argument of the righteousness of Red Guard warfare. In a word, this "devoid of interpretation" thereby resurrects an old line of thought which was official between 1966 and 1969 and generated serious social unrest. While Pye's intent is as simple as looking for alternative narratives, he unknowingly lends support to Gao's revisionist historiography and priviledges distortion of historical memory and erasure of the historical trauma.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I study two memoirs, one by a female author living in Britain and the other by a male author living in the U.S., to discuss memory performances in the Anglo-American memory space. Thematically and stylistically, these two books are the opposites: Chang's is a mega-history, characterized by excessive historicization and interpretation while Gao's is much shorter in temporal frame, characterized by seemingly little interpretation. In the first part of this chapter, I bring critical debates from memory studies, historiography and Diaspora studies to bear on Chang's narration of family history and national history. In my analysis of Gao's book in the second part, I forge a dialogue between narratology, genre studies, and historiography to explore how genre choices are manipulated to conceal authorial control over narrative voices and ideological content.

This chapter as a whole challenges these books' reception in the West as sources of historical knowledge, particularly the way how these two books are read as either an indictment of the communist regime or a counter-narrative to the official history. Readers' fetish for alterity, including in academia, often precludes analysis of authorial intent and narrative gaps. These books, first and foremost, are pre-mediated by existing writing conventions and by the authors' identity politics. Nevertheless, it would be simplistic to say that Diaspora memoirists and autobiographers are trapped in such an arrangement without choices. My readings indicate that authors can manipulate the rules of the game to their own advantages.

In the previous chapter, I conclude that mainland Chinese writers fail to challenge the official history and thus unwittingly create myths of the Cultural Revolution. My analysis in this chapter demonstrates that overseas writers create myths as well, and academia helps to circulate these myths. In the following chapter, I will discuss memoirs written in mainland China but published in Hong Kong. What kind of memory is produced? What kind of knowledge is privileged in this geopolitical space?

Chapter Four

Signification, Subjectivity, and Authorship:

Memoirs Published in Hong Kong

Introduction

The division between Hong Kong and mainland China is at once historical, political, cultural, and ideological, but it has never stopped intellectual and ideological exchanges between the two sides. Throughout the years, Hong Kong has published volumes of books and sponsored various research projects and conferences, and has indisputably established itself as an important center of Cultural Revolution research. In this chapter, I study memoirs written by former Red Guards, rebels, and the party-denounced perpetrators for the purpose of examining the historical knowledge produced in these writings. In this section, I will provide a general overview of Hong Kong's contributions to the maintenance of the Cultural Revolution related documents, artifacts, and memory.[37] After that, I will formulate my approaches to the memoirs by those sensitive figures.

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[37] The following content is based on my archival research at major university libraries in Hong Kong.

When the Cultural Revolution started in 1966, some researchers instantly sensed its weight and started to collect relevant materials. The Hong Kong Union Research Institute (Youlian yanjiu suo) heralded these efforts and published an edited a volume of party documents clipped from mainland Chinese publications as early as 1968, a collection of articles selected from the *People's Daily* (Renmin ribao) and the *Red Flag* magazine (Hongqi) in 1969, a bibliography of Red Guard newspapers in 1970, and several monographs studying economy, higher education, and party officials.[38] At the same time, the Asia Research Centre published two general studies on the Cultural Revolution: *The Great Cultural Revolution in China* (1967) and *The Great Power Struggle in China* (1969). The Universities Service Centre printed a *Bibliography of Books on the Cultural Revolution Published in Hong Kong* (1973).[39]

In the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution, more research was conducted, including several books on the Gang of Four, a manuscript on Mao, an anthology of party documents, and a critical study on the Chinese economy in the late 1970s and the 1980s. From the 1980s up to the present, Hong Kong's mass media has made valuable contributions by keeping memories of the Cultural Revolution alive. Essays

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[38] The research materials of Union Research Institute are now stored at the Hong Kong Baptist University's Contemporary China Research Centre. For more information on the Union Research Institute and its catalogue, see the following link: http://www.hkbu.edu.hk/library/sca/ccrc.html.

[39] According to its official website, the Universities Service Centre was founded in 1963 by Western sinologists to help scholars collect research materials on China. This center joined the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1988. For more information, see http://www.usc.cuhk.edu.hk/.

on the Cultural Revolution make their frequent appearance in publications such as: *Ming Pao Monthly* (Mingbao yuekan), *Asia Weekly* (Yazhou zhoukan), *Hong Kong Literature Monthly* (Chengshi wenyi), *Open Magazine* (Kaifang), *The Trend Magazine* (Dongxiang), *The Cheng Ming Monthly* (Zhengming), *The Ninetieth* (Jiushi niandai yuekan), and *Twenty-first Century* (Ershiyi shiji).[40] In 1996, Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB) aired "The Cultural Revolution: Thirty Years Later" (Wenge sanshi nian). In 2006, Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) produced "Forty Years after the Cultural Revolution" (Jingzhong changming—wenge sishi nian) for its famous documentary series *Hong Kong Connection* (Kengqiang ji) while Asia Television Limited (ATV) aired two documentaries "Forty Years after the Cultural Revolution: The New Left" (Wenge sishi nian: xin zuopai) and "Forty Years after the Cultural Revolution: Forever Young" (Wenge sishi nian: qingchun changzhu) in the *News Magazine* (Shishi zhuiji) series.[41]

Similarly, academic interest on this topic has been abiding, as demonstrated in several special issues dedicated to this subject.[42] The Chinese University of Hong Kong is also involved in an ongoing project of building an electronic database for the Cultural Revolution, which can be accessed online and through CD-ROM.[43]

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[40] *The Ninetieth* stopped publication in 1998.
[41] English titles of all three documentaries are unavailable. The translations are my own.
[42] The 2nd issue, Autumn, 1996 of *China Studies* (Zhongguo yanjiu), the spring, 2000 (Volume 16) issue of *Hong Kong Journal of Social Sciences* (Xianggang shehui kexuebao), and the Fall (Volume 5, No 2), 2005 issue of *The China Review*.
[43] The database is named "The Chinese Cultural Revolution Database, 2006," and its chief editor is Song Yongyi. For more information, see

Local authors also write about the Cultural Revolution, and the most notable example is Li Bihua. The Cultural Revolution serves as the historical background in three of Li's most popular novels: *Farewell My Concubine* (Bawang bieji) (1985), *Green Snake* (Qingshe) (1986), and *Golden Lotus* (Pan Jinlian zhi qianshi jinsheng) (1989). *Farewell My Concubine* traces half a century dedicating friendship between two leading Peking opera artists which survived many personal and national tragedies only to be destroyed by the Cultural Revolution. In this story, the revolutionary masses force them to go through a series of persecution rituals, which gradually destroy their humanity. The violence and humiliation they are subjected to generate tension between them, and under the coercion of Red Guards, they lash out with the most vicious attacks against each other. In this story, the Cultural Revolution is represented as a time when the unconscious dethrones the conscious and seizes control in a shameless manner.

More thorough exploration of the Cultural Revolution and its gender politics can be found in *Golden Lotus*, which deals with the reincarnation of a character from traditional Chinese literature named Pan Jinlian as a persecuted ballet star in socialist China and then as a disorientated wealthy housewife in capitalist Hong Kong.[44] In this novel, the Cultural Revolution is characterized as a carnival of villains, a

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http://www.chineseupress.com/promotion/cultural-revolution-cd-new2006/e_revolution.htm.

[44] Pan Jinlian as a literary character appears in two traditional Chinese novels: *Golden_Vase Plum* (Jin ping mei) and *Water Margin* (Shuihu). Li's reincarnation tale is based on the depiction of Jinlian in *Water Margin* as an adulterous woman who cuckolds her husband Wu Da and then kills him to marry her lover.

nonstop hysteric performance of physical and verbal violence. In *Green Snake*, the protagonists, two serpent ladies, find the Cultural Revolution so repulsive that they hibernate through the decade. In these three novels, Li consistently represents the Cultural Revolution as a disaster of humanity and a nightmare for the noble and the innocent. Li's repetitive reference to the Cultural Revolution in her fiction demonstrates both her familiarity and her obsession with this subject.

Entering the millennium, books regarding the Cultural Revolution—including memoirs, novels, art histories, and social histories—increased at a phenomenal rate, most of which were written by mainland Chinese but published in Hong Kong. These publications have made an impact in popular reception of and academic research on the Cultural Revolution and thereby have become a significant component of transnational memory. Below I will assess this trend by examining the outlook of the authors and the role of Hong Kong in the formation of these memories and then formulate the analytical structure of this chapter.

The authors who wrote in mainland China and published in Hong Kong include scholars such as Li Rui, Yu Guangyuan, Wang Shaoguang, Wang Youqin, and Xu Youyu, social elites such as Ma Jisen and Lu Hong, former Red Guards and rebel leaders such as Chen Huanren, Chen Yinan, Gao Shuhua, Song Bolin, Yang Xiguang, Lu Li'an and Liu Guokai, party-denounced perpetrators such as Wang Li, Chen Boda, Nie Yuanzi, Xu Jingxian, and Wu Faxian. For these authors, the "One Country, Two Systems" policy timely opens a backdoor for them to bypass the

mainland China's censorship system and share their narratives with readers.[45] One interesting illustration of the "Two Systems" reality in the field of book publication is the fate of Wei Junyi's *Reflections on Trauma* (Sitong lu, 1998), whose Hong Kong version is much longer and more incisive than its mainland Chinese edition.[46] This "One Country, Two Editions" phenomenon persuasively illustrates the strength of the Hong Kong venue: Compared to their mainland Chinese counterparts, Hong Kong publishers allow and even encourage writers to go beyond trauma and confront critical issues accompanying it. As a result, sensitive figures such as former Red Guards, rebels, and party-denounced perpetrators constitute a very significant force among those publishing in Hong Kong. Compared to the Euro-American venue, authors do not need to face the language barrier and thus can directly address readers and challenge the official history.[47] In addition, flexible publishing policies in Hong Kong allow new publishers to emerge overnight and amateurish researchers not

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[45] In some cases, authors contacted Hong Kong publishers after the mainland Chinese publication bureau rejected their publication applications. For example, Chen Huanren confesses that he was not allowed to publish his memoir in mainland China. Ironically, Chen himself was in charge of publication affairs in Sichuan province in the 1990s.

[46] Much like what Chen Huanren went through, Wei Junyi, the former chief editor of the prestigious People's Literature Publishing House (Renmin wenxue chubanshe) had to wait for almost a decade to find a publisher for her book. Wei sent her book to publishers as early as 1989, but it was not until 1998, with the help of her friends, that Beijing October Literary Press (Beijing shiyue wenyi chubanshe) published the book, with part of her writings withheld from that edition. In September 2000, Hong Kong based *Cosmos Books* (Tiandi tushu chubanshe) expanded the original mainland Chinese version and issued a traditional Chinese edition. See Yang Tuan, "How was *Reflection on Truman* (Sitong lu) Written and Published," *Contemporary* (Dangdai) 2 (2001):192-98.

[47] Chen Boda can read Russian.

affiliated with any institutions (such as Liu Guokai, Yu Luowen, and Zheng Guanglu) to state their cases. Over the years, these authors have formed a community and became involved in each other's projects. Liu Guokai prefaced Gao Shuhua's book. Song Yongyi, who initiated the multimedia database maintained by the Chinese University of Hong Kong, edited the book *Mass Killings during the Cultural Revolution* (Wenge da tusha, 2002*),* to which Yu Luowen and Zheng Yi are contributing authors. Song also organized a conference titled "The Cultural Revolution: Historical Truth and Collective Memories" in New York in May 2006 and edited two conference volumes under the same title.

Hong Kong's role in the formation of these memories can be described as one of absent presence since Hong Kong itself is nearly irrelevant to the content of the books. Unlike overseas writers discussed in Chapter Three, viewing their past from their Diaspora experiences in their host countries, most of the authors who wrote in mainland China but published in Hong Kong either have not stayed in Hong Kong for a prolonged period of time or have never been to Hong Kong. In fact, Hong Kong is barely mentioned in their writings and rarely serves as the alterity of mainland China. Nevertheless, Hong Kong participates in this memory performance as the interested publisher, the potential market, the imagined audience, and the important link to the rest of the transnational memory space.

Hong Kong's involvement in this memory performance is not entirely altruistic. For one thing, censored books are one of its tourist attractions and sources of revenue, and the wording of some book titles—secret history (*mishi*) and secret

news (*miwen*)—clearly signifies the commercialization of these writings. For another, interest in Cultural Revolution-related books is a political demonstration of Hong Kong's unique position within the PRC and an assertion of Hong Kong's independence under the "One Country, Two System" policy as a capitalist, democratic society that enjoys the freedom of speech and publication.

If the strategy of writing in mainland China and publishing in Hong Kong makes the best out of the two-systems policy, the tactics for the book trade from Hong Kong to mainland China endeavors to bypass the worst part of that policy: the control over media and the ban on dissenting voices. These books, once published, are smuggled to mainland China, pirated by mainland Chinese book dealers, and sold at bus stations, rail stations, and restaurants in secrecy. During my interviews with some Hong Kong publishers, they indicate that some authors care about neither profit nor copyright as long as they get their stories across to their readers.[48] In this special case, piracy, which is traditionally believed to violate authors' copyrights, actually helps to spread their testimonies and amplify their voices.

My research in this chapter focuses on the memoirs written by selected mainland Chinese authors but published in Hong Kong. I am particularly interested in what happens when geopolitics is entangled with authors' desires for creating ideal selves. What sort of history and memory is constructed in uncensored memoirs? How has the geopolitics in this memory space generated new modes of perception?

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[48] The publishers I interviewed in May 2007 through phone calls are as follows: Tianyuan, Shidai guoji, Kaifang, and Mingjing.

Does the memory boom in Hong Kong combat amnesia or simply add to it, given its overwhelming preference for a particular group and their de-traumatized memory? This chapter in many ways continues my previous inquiries into writing and myth, memory and history, ideal subjectivity and autobiographical writing. As these Hong Kong published memoirs share themes such as rewriting history and pleading for impunity with Gao Yuan's and Zhang Hanzhi's books, this chapter shares the concerns of previous chapters and examines how this memory space has transformed these performances.

Part One

Subjectivity, Signification, and Subjection

On Chen Yinan's *A Rebel Worker's Life during the Cultural Revolution*

Recently a revisionist historiography has gained considerable momentum, which is evident in the publication of several critical studies and first person narratives glorifying rebels and Red Guards and citing negative representations inside and outside China as examples of a cultural amnesia. This part focuses on Chen Yinan's *A Rebel Worker's Life during the Cultural Revolution* (Qinchun wuhen: yige zaofan pai gongren de shinian wenge, 2006) and studies its revisionist narrative. To this end, I treat the discrepancies between this book and other writings, namely rebels as monsters versus rebels as idealist heroes, and the discrepancies within Chen's book itself, namely rebels fighting for equality versus rebels fighting for power and privilege, as what Fredric Jameson terms "symptoms" of "another

order of phenomenon" (26). I will sift through bits and pieces of information scattered in his book and offer "diagnostic revelation of terms or nodal points implicit in the ideological system which have, however, remained unrealized in the surface of the text" (48). Below I will first contextualize this issue to illustrate the gaps and contradictions among different representations of Red Guards and rebels and then examine issues such as signification, subjectivity, and subjection in Chen's revisionist writing to uncover the hidden narrative embedded in this memoir. Chen's book is thematically related to *Born Red* discussed in Chapter Three, and this chapter continues the inquiry to work out a reading strategy for books in this category.

Red Guards and Rebels: Heroes or Monsters?

It is clear that there is no one single collective memory of Red Guards and rebels as a result of the complex makeup of these groups as well as people's varied experiences during the Cultural Revolution. The older generation, especially those who were targeted during that time, regard Red Guards and rebels as brute monsters manipulated by authorities to ransack citizens' properties and incriminate innocent people. In *Life and Death in Shanghai*, Red Guards and rebels are shallow, rustic, anti-culture, and bullying maniacs victimizing highly educated social elites and engineering social unrest. Likewise, in Ji Xianlin's *Cowshed Essays* (Niupeng zaji, 1998), they are faceless monsters delivering endless terrors to the innocent.

The Red Guard generation's recollection of the past is more diverse and complicated. The experiencing "I" in *Wild Swans*, finds the Red Guards' violent acts hideous and keeps a distance from them from the very inception of the Cultural

Revolution. Rae Yang and Nanchu, authors of *Spider Eaters* and *Red Sorrows* respectively, were once Mao's loyal Red Guards and followed others' examples to bully "class enemies." But before long, their experiences with the revolution, especially their lives in the countryside, disillusioned them and resulted in their rejection of Mao's revolution. In this vein, Red Guards are represented as credulous youngsters manipulated and then renounced by Mao's revolution and are therefore victimizers turned victims. Such a perspective can also be found in many mainland Chinese publications, and a notable example is Lao Gui's *Blood Red Sunset: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution* (Xuese huanghun, 1987).

Yet all the while in mainland China as well as elsewhere, there has been an opposing trend, romanticizing Red Guards and rebels as idealistic heroes. In mainland China, such censored sentiments translate into narratives portraying sent-down youths as disinterested idealists. Recently, online blogging allows more old Red Guards to savor their past with nostalgia and extol their experiences. Critic Xu Youyu, a onetime Red Guard himself, criticizes novelists such as Liang Xiaosheng, Zhang Chengzhi, and Li Ping for explicitly or implicitly refusing to have Red Guard characters in their books repent. Xu and other critics repeatedly remind readers that rebels were not human rights fighters and in reality their actions were anti-constitution and anti-democracy.[49]

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[49] Xu Youyu, "Where is the Pillar of Morality?" (Rende daoyi zhichengdian zai nali) *Nanfang Weekend* (Nanfang zhoumo) 7 July 2007.

One major source of such romanticizing writings comes from Hong Kong, where its flexible publication policies allowed for a boom in memoirs by former Red Guards and rebels and over the years, and gave rise to a new genre of featuring their rebellions. While books such as Lu Li'an's *Outcry from a Red Guard Imprisoned during the Cultural Revolution* (Yangtian changxiao, 2005) and Chen Huanren's *Diary of a Red Guard* (Hongweibin riji, 2006) ridicule themselves as well as the Cultural Revolution, Gao Jianhua's *Cultural Revolution in Inner Mongolia—Oral History of a Rebel Leader* (Neimengu wenge fenglei, 2007) and Chen Yi'nan's *A Rebel Worker's Life during the Cultural Revolution* defend rebels to different degrees and call attention to what they claim is a disappointing cultural and historical misrepresentation of rebels. Gao portrays himself and his comrades as anti-bureaucracy heroes, and Chen consciously or unconsciously glorifies rebels for their devotion to the revolution. Both authors offer very limited critiques of their past as well as the rebelling movement. As critics have already pointed out elsewhere, this mentality is typical among the Red Guards and rebels: they protest the injustice done to them, but they are unwilling to acknowledge their own wrongdoings or apologize to their victims. This chapter examines how this mentality is signified and justified via the claim to combat amnesia and tell the truth.

Because Gao became a bureaucrat of the power establishment at the provincial level as early as June 1967 and did not lose his status until 1977, Chen, a rebel worker struggling to ride with the revolution at the grassroots level, is a more suitable spokesperson for rebels' experiences. Therefore, Chen's book, with its

repeated claims to idealism and heroism, serves as a more appropriate choice for us to tackle the rebel mentality.

Before analyzing Chen's account of his experiences, I want to turn to two prefaces that set the tone for the book. Chen's book is graced with a preface from novelist Han Shaogong, who uses that space to recount his uncanny view of the Cultural Revolution. Han considers the rebel movement of Chen and his comrades to be part of the "nongovernmental movements to liberate thinking among the common people" (*minjian sixiang jiefang yundong*) that climaxed in the April Fifth Movement (vi).[50] Han further argues that Mao's calls such as "continuation of revolution" (*jixu geming*), "rebellion is righteousness" (*zaofan youli*) and "mobilization of the multitude of people to disclose our shady underside" (*fadong guangda qunzhong lai jielu women de hei'an mian*) "made it possible for the majority of citizens to enjoy a high level of freedom to form associations, freedom of speech, nationwide linkages (*chuanlian*), and grassroots democracy (*jiceng mingzhu*)*"* (vii). Han asserts that "the radicalness of such democracy is enough to make the people in the West feel backward by comparison" *(minzhu de jijin chengdu zuyi rang xifang renshi wangchen moji)* (vii). In his own preface, Chen does not respond to Han's astounding claims but instead emphasizes the uniqueness of the rebel movement: Mao mobilized rebels, but he also suppressed them several times during the Cultural Revolution; rebels defied local authorities but endorsed Mao

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[50] For the full text of Han's article in English, please see Han Shaogong, "Why Did the Cultural Revolution End?" *Boundary* 2 35.2 (2008): 93-106.

unfailingly; they unseated and disabled local governments but were praised by Mao and other top officials. Chen points out that such complexity and multiplicity of the rebel movement resulted in biased representations. For this reason, he cautions readers that their knowledge of the rebels is partial (*pianmian xing*) and inadequate (*juxianxing, xiang dangran*) (xvi). In this fashion, he introduces the purpose of his writing and the contribution he is trying to make: to write about the Cultural Revolution from "a different perspective" (xvi). In the preface, Chen withholds any straightforward comment on the rebel movement in general and his own experience in particular. But in the book, Chen argues that he rebelled out of "a spiritual pursuit" *(jingshen zhuiqiu)* (115). However, there are unbridgeable gaps between this claim and his own confessions of scrambling for power, taking part in armed struggles, and even cooperating with the authorities to persecute the innocent.

I acknowledge the fact that neither Red Guards nor rebels were a homogenous identity without variations and contradictions and therefore we should not apply fixed group attributes to those associated with these groups. I am also aware of recent critical works on what some people term the "demonization of rebels" in mainland Chinese writings by blaming rebels for the wrongdoing committed by other power players, such as work team (*gongzuo zu*), workers' propaganda team (*gongxuandui*), and military propaganda team (*junxuandui*).[51] The goal of this part is neither to study the history of the rebel movement nor to debate in

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[51] See Zhou Lunzuo, *The Historical Truth about Rebels during the Cultural Revolution* (Wenge zaofan pai zhenxiang) (Hong Kong: Tianyuan, 2006).

ethical terms its role during the Cultural Revolution but rather to examine the contrastive images of rebels in the above-mentioned books. I want to examine Chen's claims of idealism and heroism with the following questions in mind: How to reconcile the discrepancy of memories among different groups? How are rebellion, heroism, idealism, power, and justice signified in Chen's book? Why does Chen insist on such a claim despite many obvious gaps in his book? What does the book reveal about power and signification?

The Birth of a Hero: Participating in the Signification Process

In this section, I want to explore how rebellion is signified and how Chen's self-perception of being a hero is created by signification. Chen's initial reaction to the Cultural Revolution, especially the campaign against the "Three Family Village," like that of many others, was one of surprise, distance, hesitation and even fear. Then starting from the August of 1966, Chen noticed that the official propaganda drastically changed the way revolution was signified as the *People's Daily* and Mao repeatedly encouraged people to join the revolution. One very important aspect of Mao's calls to action is that he handed power to ordinary people and allowed them to defy the authorities and organize "revolutionary" actions. While the party propaganda gradually eased Chen's doubt and persuaded him to embrace the

revolution, the authority Red Guards in his hometown, Changsha, commanded made him envious (*xianmu de yaosi*).[52]

Chen confessed that he was confused by debates on the Changsha streets and was not sure which faction represented the revolution until a Red Guard from Beijing made the following comments with jargon from newspapers, "No matter who you are, no matter which level of the party authority you represent, we will check whether your words and actions comply with Maoism, and the Party Central's (*zhongyang*) and Mao's guidelines, and then we will decide whether to trust you or oust you" (21). This statement claimed for the rebels the right to define right and wrong, the autonomy from local authorities and the intimate connection to Mao. On the other hand, it also prescribed the rules for subordination as it considered rebels as Mao's defenders and measured rebels' choices against Maoist thoughts. Chen commented that this Red Guard's speech "represented the political beliefs of the radicals, from the Red Guard movement to other later rebellion movements" (21).

When rebel groups emerged in Changsha, Chen applied for membership at the Headquarters of the International Red Guard Workers (Guoji hongweijun gongren zongbu), where a college student provided a mission statement similar to that from the Beijing Red Guard, "To rebel is to challenge anything and anyone who does not comply with Chairman Mao's thoughts. No matter who he is, how senior he is, how powerful he is, as long as he is against Chairman Mao's instructions, we will

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[52] Chen regretted that if he continued his education, instead of working, he would have been a Red Guard and could have dressed in a uniform, worn an armband and

fight against him" (40). Hearing the college student's words, Chen instantly answered that he wanted to be a rebel as well.[53] Chen claims that he joined the revolution and became the first rebel in his factory out of sympathy for colleagues and college students whose revolutionary actions were suppressed by their authorities, "The moment I thought of fellow worker Yang Jinhe and others who were wronged by the authorities, I became thrilled. The idea of 'Seeing injustice when passing by, pulling out a sword to fight' (*lujianbuping badao xiangzhu*) overwhelmed me: I wanted to be the first one [to unseat those in power]" (40).[54] This episode marks a moment of repression where Chen downplayed his wish for joining the ranks of the powerful and the privileged and represented Mao's authorized rebellion as a spontaneous, chivalric and righteous fight against injustice. The feelings of being "thrilled" and "overwhelmed" remind us that repression is not only ulterior, demonstrated in his writing, but also interior, conducted within Chen's mind, where Chen's wish to be a hero converged with the propaganda's glorification of rebellion and he projected himself as a chivalric justice fighter.

After putting on an armband of the rebel group, Chen returned to his factory, relayed the college students' words and asserted his plan to confront the party secretary of the factory. In no time, a dozen or so young workers applied for membership from him because "wearing the armband was the fad that young people

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traveled around the country for free (21).

[53] Later on, Chen transferred his membership to another rebel group, Wind and Thunder of the Xiang River (Xiangjiang fenglei).

[54] Translations of Chen's memoir, except the preface by Han Shaogong, are mine.

pursued" (41). Chen's co-workers admired him and elected him as the head of their rebel branch. The propaganda formulated Chen's life choices, shaped his subjectivity and changed people's perception of Chen's relevance to the surroundings. It could be said that both the revolutionary ideal and the sense of authority were derived from propaganda and constituted by signification. Chen became this powerful, authoritative activist because he was now part of what propaganda hailed as a "progressive," "glorious" rebel movement, because he was now, in Judith Butler's words, the result of "a signifying process" (29). However, for Chen, power and authority acquired more visibility than the other part of the signification: subjugation. In fact, Chen and his comrades neither show any intention to defend Maoism nor study his teachings to plan their operations. Their determination to defeat the party secretary of their factory reflects more practical calculations than devotion to Mao. This part marks another point of repression, where the exhilaration of revolution overshadows its request of subjugation, and personal interests precede uplifting revolutionary ideals. From the party's signification of revolution to Chen's signification of it, considerable shift and elision have already taken place. Considering the tacit contract between Mao and his followers, where loyalty was exchanged for what seemed to be unbridled power, Chen's idealism claim is problematic.[55] Considering the elision in the way Chen and his comrades signified

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[55] A more dramatic case of the seductive force of propaganda can be found in Lu Li'an's memoir. Lu's memoir shows that his family education nourished his independent and rational judgment and made him see through some of the absurd lies swirling in party propaganda. Despite the fact that he was not enthusiastic about Mao

their revolution, their claim to idealism does not even match its definition in Maoist propaganda.

Revolution in Action: Manifestation of Power and Transformation of Revolutionary Subjectivity

In the previous section, I indicate that power and subordination are two aspects of Mao's calls to action, but rebels tended to highlight the side of power and idealism in their own significations. In the following section, I will sift through Chen's narrative of his rebellions to look for proofs of the gap between Mao's propaganda and the rebels' rebellion performances, which will serve as a reference point to assess the claim to idealism. My questions are as follows: How did they perform with power handed out by Mao? How do they signify themselves in the revolution? I will select a few fragments from the book to depict the trajectory of the revolutionary subjectivity personified by Chen.

To begin with, I need to return to the very lines spoken by the Red Guard from Beijing, which became "the key [Chen] used to distinguish between right and wrong" (21) as well as the statement from the college student delivered at the Headquarters of International Red Guard Workers, which informed Chen's first rebellion operation. These two statements, or rather copies of the official propaganda, were unspecific as to what comprised an insult to Mao's teachings and how to fight

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and the Cultural Revolution, he was drawn into the debates anyway and became a nationwide sensation because of his sharp critiques of the authorities. Lu paid a huge price for what he believed to be truth and justice and spent eleven years in jail.

against it. Speeches Chen heard elsewhere were equally blurry about what Mao expected them to do in the revolution. In other words, the propaganda served mainly to stir up revolutionary passions rather than communicating clear, logically coherent ideas or conveying a clear, executable agenda of action. As a result, the vague propaganda allowed for free interpretation and innovative performances and contributed to the volatile nature of the rebels' operation plans. On the other hand, the signification of revolution shaped the rebels' subjectivities and experiences as an effusion of energy and passion.

The initial display of power was conducted in a way that combined personal revenge with Mao's agenda to defeat "capitalist-roaders" (*zouzi pai*). In this scenario, power was displayed symbolically: seizing their supervisors' offices, confiscating stamps, sealing cabinets, and burning dossiers. Chen recalls with amazement that with a piece of paper, a symbol of power, they blocked the entry to offices and immobilized another symbol of power, official stamps. The power of forbiddance came as much from those pieces of paper as from the rebels, who had already transformed into the symbols and tools of power. Chen was both amazed by and contented with the swift transformation of his status in his factory from an apprentice to a striking figure (*yinren zhumu de renwu*) among 3,000 employees, commanding a lot of support and resources (*yihu baiying*) (46). Soon, the power they obtained took concrete forms as Chen and others became paid professional rebels and enjoyed many privileges in the factory. Seeing this, Chen concluded, "What has happened

confirmed the famous line from Lenin and Engels, 'Revolution is the most powerful/authoritative (*quanwei de*) thing in the world'" (48).

After their first attempt at revolution, Chen and his comrades were at a loss about what to do next. They got into numerous heated debates and fight with conservatives until the rivalry brought the attention of the local authorities. The way both factions cited Mao to embolden themselves and justify their acts calls both parties' righteousness into question and illuminates the problem within the propaganda: It allowed people not to say what they mean and thus conceal their real motives under some political slogans. In the end, an order from the Central Cultural Revolution Committee destroyed the political future of the conservatives and delivered much-anticipated support to the rebelling groups, the way that a master would protect his protégés. This last move changed the nature of the warfare from one between civilians to one between civilians and government-backed civilians and makes Han's claim of fighting for democracy groundless.

Following the victory over the conservatives, Chen recalls that he and others felt dull and bored (64, 66), not knowing what to do next until antagonism brewed within the rebel camp. Chen joined the Army of Young Guards (Qingnian jinweijun), a rebel group known for its inclination for armed struggles, and robbed a military school with his comrades to equip them with guns. Soon the battle of words turned into a battle of guns and tanks as Chen's faction battled first with The Headquarters for Changsha College Students (Gaosi) and then its former ally The Coalition of Changsha Rebel Workers (Gonglian). In each case, Chen cited conflicting interests

and the greed for power rather than ideological differences as the reasons for contention. Chen considered the armed struggles thrilling (*you yisi, you yunwei*) and entertaining (*youqu*), which renders their revolution like a juvenile adventure with killing and death (202).

In one year's time, the rebels' power expanded from the power to unseat local officials to the power to destroy fellow rebels, from the power to take control of their factory's offices to the power to use military armory to kill. They took the liberty to interpret and expand the content and concepts of power and multiplied their territory of control. Chen's rebel group had acquired so much influence that the provincial army had to ask for help to guard its entrance gate and keep intruders out of its operation zone. Afterwards, Chen was in charge of a prison that the rebels took under control until they left that place out of boredom. In Chen's account, the complaint of boredom preceded most of his new adventures with power.

In several places, Chen confesses the excitement, the intoxication of the golden touch of power. Throughout the narration, Chen constantly relates the thrill of revolution to the authority he enjoyed among his fellow workers and the capacity he acquired to subvert the order and challenge institutions such as the municipal government and the provincial military. In one place, he explicitly reveals the excitement (*kangfen*) (119) and compares the revolution to a carnival of the subverted order and the suspension of taboos. Obviously, revolution signified many different things for him and his friends, and as revolution went on, the list kept

growing. Thus far, Chen and his comrades had appropriated the signification and used the revolution to live out their fantasies.

The Treacherous Nature of Power: **The Struggle to Stay inside the Signification**

In this section, I will discuss the other side of the power mechanism: subjugation, namely how rebels were tamed time and again by their master. Rebels were summoned to be subjects by revolutionary propaganda, and yet it never fixated their subjectivities as the way it wanted them to be. While borrowing Mao's authority in whatever they pursued, they constantly exceeded the limitations of power to inject their own wills and suit their own interests. They challenged the Cultural Revolutionary Leading Group's rulings several times and acquired much power and influence in a very short time, which naturally jeopardized their status in the power structure. It turned out that not only were revolutionary subjectivities in a process of becoming but also the revolution itself constantly changed its course. As a result, Chen and his comrades, who were persuaded to rebel, were again and again suppressed by none other than their revolutionary mentors—Mao and the Cultural Revolution Leading Group.

I will provide a summary of how, in this mutual manipulation of each other's political ambitions, Mao indulged, tested, punished, and disciplined his rebel followers to suit his political calculations. On February 4, 1967, the Cultural Revolution Leading Group pronounced Chen's faction—Wind and Thunder of the Xiang River—a counter-revolutionary organization and ordered the provincial military to detain its leading members. But on August 10th, the central government

criticized the Cultural Revolution Leading Group's approach, revoked the latter's earlier decision and restored the rebel group's status. Similarly, Chen's faction participated in armed struggles, which was, according to him, encouraged by Mao's wife Jiang Qing. But again, the Cultural Revolution Leading Group changed its mind and called a halt to this. The shifting policies reflect the party's uncertainty and discord over the role of the rebels as well as the general direction of the Cultural Revolution. In late 1968, eighteen-year-old Chen was promoted to the vice chair of his factory's revolutionary committee. Yet after the CCP's Ninth Congress (*jiuda*) in April 1969, rebels were stripped of power nationwide and placed under investigation. In 1970, the "One Strike, Three Anti's" campaign *(yida sanfan yundong)* further inquired into rebel activities, especially their involvement in armed struggles. During this period, local authorities sent Chen to "study class" *(xuexi ban)* and executed some unlucky rebels. After surviving the One Strike, Three Antis campaign, Chen, in 1971, became a primary target of his company's "Against the May 16th Elements" campaign *(qingcha wu yi liu fenzi yundong)* and barely escaped a jail term. After living through such humiliations, Chen and some other rebels were determined to change their fate and seized the opportunity of the "Criticize Lin Biao and Confucius" campaign *(pilin pikong yundong)* to reemerge from ignominy to power. Chen's factory appointed him vice chair of the revolutionary committee one more time and even approved his party membership. In these episodes, there are layers of repressions: Despite the revolution's frequent disavowal of rebels, Chen would not criticize the revolution itself nor withdraw his support from it. Chen and his

comrades repressed the reality that the Cultural Revolution had diverted from its initial course and Mao had hereby abandoned them. Furthermore, after witnessing purges of rebels, Chen still sought opportunities to serve the Cultural Revolution.

Throughout his rollercoaster ride with the Cultural Revolution, whenever Chen was placed under investigation, he always made a comeback to the rebel movement. In February 1967, when the provincial army outlawed Chen's faction and arrested several of his colleagues, Chen felt horrified and temporarily suspended his rebel actions. But before long, the excitement of the revolution drew him back to the rebel movement, bonded him with other rebels, and propelled him to seek out the tentacles of the revolution. It is in this sense that Mao's revolution framed his performance: It is as if there was no way to escape the centripetal power of revolution, he could not but go back to it. To become part of the power establishment, Chen and his friends chose to do whatever pleased the authorities and went so far as to actively participate in "Rectifying the Class Ranks" campaign (*qingli jieji duiwu yundong*), which Chen admits was a shameful page in the history of Hunan's rebel movement (355). Each and every time, Chen's comeback was driven by the fear of being bullied by his opponents, and the desire to be a hero. Clearly power created the need to be part of the revolution, to partake in the power, and to be endowed with its authority and privileges. Like consumer culture creating false needs to trap customers, political power had fostered Chen's dependence on sharing in power. Mao's revolution had firmly taken control of Chen, destroyed his sense of right and wrong, and tempted him to court its favor by all means. Judith

Butler's observation on the psychic of power can be viewed as a prophesy for Chen, "In each case, power that at first appears as external, pressed upon the subject, pressing the subject into subordination, assumes a psychic form that constitutes the subject's self-identity" (3). Butler emphasizes that psychological transformation takes place not through power's coercion but by creating the very dependence on a discourse that creates our agency. In Chen's case, participating in the revolution means subjection: Power cultivated Chen's addiction to agency, starved him through the continuous delay of its gratifications, and generated more willing compliance.

In subsequent political campaigns, Chen cooperated with the authorities to persecute more people. In a word, in order to protect their share of power, Chen and other rebels chose to consent to authority and thus gave up their own voices, not to mention the pursuit of justice and idealism. Eventually, all they did was to make sure they were in charge. They had lost what it meant to be rebels in the first place: to challenge authority.

However, the symbolic power had its origin in a mortal and once Mao passed away, the signification process crumbled. While they negotiated their share of power through different means, their master Mao passed away, making all their calculations meaningless and their downfall foreseeable. After the Gang of Four were put behind bars, Chen and his rebel friends were subjected to investigations and even jail time.

Throughout Chen's dangerous liaison with the revolution, he and his rebel comrades never truly challenged its witch-hunting politics nor attempted to end the social chaos. Instead, they appropriated the official propaganda, embellished

themselves as justice fighters and revolutionaries, and fought ruthlessly for power and status. The fact that today Chen touts his own "idealist pursuits" during the Cultural Revolution and defends armed struggles demonstrates how deeply entrenched the influence of Maoism has been and how serious the addiction to power has become.

This chapter treats the symptoms of the addiction to heroism and idealism not as a victory of Maoism but rather as the power of one's desires. The idealism is a discursive construction tailor-made to accommodate Chen's (un)conscious desires so as to foster his servitude to power. The revolutionary propaganda awakened the wish to be a hero in Chen's conscious mind and lured him to join the signifying process and tirelessly serve its politics. While Chen savored the image of hero and the notion of idealism, he was consumed by the revolution, spending ten years chasing a phantom. To be sure, Chen's enemy was none other than his very own desire to be a hero.

Up to today, Chen still tosses around the idea that he remained in the revolution against mounting odds for an ideal, for "spiritual pursuits." Claims such as these hang there like empty signifiers pointing at nothing concrete or identifiable, only to reveal how language is manipulated to dress up banal reality and shut out the unpleasant. When we talk about selective remembering here, it is not only about how Chen's claims of idealism and heroism leave out the violence and persecution they perpetrated, but also about how they took agency out of context and chose not to acknowledge their subjugation to the power. Ironically, despite both Chen's and

Han's claims to fight social amnesia, this book only recuperates the misrepresentation of the rebels and perpetuates the amnesia of their violent past. To sum up, the symptoms of repression in Chen's book betray the very condition of being a rebel of Mao's revolution: S/he thinks through its ideology and simply cannot afford to see her/his subjugation.

Part Two

Authorship, Impunity and Memory

On *A Memoir by Nie Yuanzi—One of the Five Most Famous Leaders of Red Guards during the Great Cultural Revolution*

During the past several years, memoirs from controversial figures such as Wang Li, Wu Faxian, Nie Yuanzi and Chen Boda have attracted a lot of critical attention and prompted readers to rethink these authors' guilty verdicts and by extension, the official representation of the perpetrators. In this part, I will focus on Nie Yuanzi's memoir *A Memoir by Nie Yuanzi—One of the Five Most Famous Leaders of Red Guards during the Great Cultural Revolution* (Wenge "wuda lingxiu"—Nie Yuanzi huiyi lu, 2005) and discuss her challenge of the official history and her assertion of innocence by examining how the very notion of authorship shifts throughout the narrative. By notion of authorship, I mean the author's relationship to the readers, the author's authority over interpretation and the author's ethical responsibilities. My analysis refers to, but is not confined in, Foucault's and Roland Barthes' theories on the author. To this end, I will contextualize Nie's book in the

first section, theorize "the author" in the second section and explores Nie's challenge of the official history in the third and fourth sections.

Contextualization

Holocaust scholar Christopher Brown comments that after the Second World War, perpetrators from Hitler's Nazi regime found no cause to never forget but "hoped to forget and be forgotten as quickly and totally as possible" (28). Indeed, in the field of Holocaust studies, testimonies mostly come from victims' sides while few perpetrators would publish their memoirs and seek public attention. Nowadays, when people talk about a particular personal, collective or cultural memory, it rarely refers to that of the perpetrators.

However, recently publishers and some Cultural Revolution scholars have been touting memoirs by controversial figures such as Wang Li, Chen Boda, Nie Yuanzi, Wu Faxian and Xu Jingxian, who, for different lengths of time, served in powerful positions during the Cultural Revolution and were regarded as important power players at the national or local levels.[56] By referring to them as a group, I do not surrender my judgment to either the official history or the revisionist

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[56] Wang Li (1922-1996) was a member of the Cultural Revolution Leading Group and was purged in 1967. Wang was imprisoned between 1967 and 1982. In 1983, he was expelled from the Chinese Communist party. Chen Boda (1904-1989) was Mao's secretary and an important interpreter of Mao's thoughts. Chen chaired the Cultural Revolution Leading Group and was elected to the Politburo's Standing Committee in 1969 until he was purged in the early 1970s. Chen was sentenced to eighteen years in prison in 1980 but was released for medical reasons in 1981. Xu Jingxian (1933-2007) led the rebellion movement in Shanghai during the Cultural

historiography, implying that these people are equally guilty or not. Like other parts of this dissertation, my inquiry here is concerned with each book's writing strategies rather than its truth values. Admittedly, whether or not they are perpetrators, as the official history claims, is still debatable, and the publication of their memoirs will continue to fuel such debates. But there is no denying that a new genre featuring first person accounts of the power struggles at the top and combining personal memory with self-defense has come into being.

To be sure, there are some noticeable resemblances among these memoirs, which set them apart from the books published elsewhere. Unlike the books mentioned in Chapter 2, where the official history is vaguely referred to and insufficiently contested, the memoirs in question here explicitly engage with the official history, protest the latter's stigmatization of their reputations and hint at some shocking revelations readers will find in their memoirs. In other words, these authors are writing to launch an assault on the official history. Their upfront criticism of the official history calls into mind *Wild Swans*, which also makes rewriting history its professed goal. But the authors discussed in this section show no ambition of writing a national history or addressing a wide spectrum of issues, as Chang does in her book. The target audiences in these Hong Kong-published memoirs are mainland Chinese readers, in addition to a number of sinologists, while the goal of their writings is to defend themselves. In their writings, priority is given to major events

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Revolution and served as the mayor and later the party secretary. He was arrested in 1976 and sentenced to eighteen years in prison.

they orchestrated and top officials they met on different occasions, while ordinary people's fate is rarely mentioned. For example, critic Wang Youqin criticized Xu Jingxian for neither mentioning mass killings during the Cultural Revolution nor apologizing for the victims in his memoir.[57]

Though these authors are frequently singled out as a special group, they see themselves as being no different from other Cultural Revolution victims, if not for their much extended period of suppression.[58] Interestingly, the word "victim" in their usage encompasses people at both ends of the power structure: those who wielded power to mobilize or even facilitate Mao's revolution and those who were relentlessly persecuted by Mao's politics. In fact, these authors view themselves as the victims of both the Mao regime and the Deng regime, or of party politics, as some of them claim on different occasions. Based upon such a conviction of their innocence, they pour out anger over the "injustices" of their trials and plead for understanding, sympathy, and respect.

There are several critical issues at stake here: How is identity embodied, reshaped and negated? How do they contain the undesirable selves? How do authors

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[57] In her article "Don't Forget the Nature of the Cultural Revolution" (Buyao wangji wenge de benzhi), published in the June, 2006 issue of the *Open Magazine*, Wang Youqin argues that people are forgetting the persecutions that occurred during the Cultural Revolution and criticizes people like Xu for withholding such information. The article can be accessed from the Internet at the magazine's official website: http://www.open.com.hk/2006_6p40.htm.

[58] Wang Li, Chen Boda and Nie Yuanzi were purged and imprisoned during the Cultural Revolution. After Mao's death, Chen and Nie were convicted and sentenced to prison. Wang was released in 1982, but he was never exonerated by the party and is still regarded as an important engineer of the Cultural Revolution.

construct a discourse of innocence and enact a performance of impunity? In what sense do these writings challenge the notions of justice and truth? What is the framework of knowledge they refer to?

To answer these questions, this part will focus on Nie's memoir and study her performance of impunity by examining the way she positions the author in her arguments. The role of the author is singled out for analysis because these sensitive figures' guilty verdicts were largely based on speeches or articles they authored during the Cultural Revolution, and naturally their post-Cultural Revolution self-defenses disclaim responsibility for those writings. For them, in the past the claim of authorship was manipulated to persecute them, and now to cleanse their names, they have no other choice but to return to those texts to dispute the allegations. For such an inquiry, there is no better choice than Nie's memoir. It is no exaggeration that her whole life drama revolves around a few sensitive documents she authored or coauthored during the Cultural Revolution. Not only was she a co-author of the first Big Character Poster of the Cultural Revolution, which attracted Mao's attention and won her nationwide fame. After Mao's death, in 1983 Nie was sentenced to seventeen years in prison for crimes such as supervising a writing project stigmatizing General Zhu De, falsifying an investigative report implicating Peng Zhen, An Ziwen, Bo Yibo and others as traitors and spies, and having her subordinates send Jiang Qing and Chen Boda a brief alleging Deng Xiaoping's connection to counter-revolutionary activities at Peking University. Before analyzing Nie's book, I will first provide a brief review of theories related to "the author."

Theorizing the Author

The author in traditional literary interpretation, as Barthes points out, is considered the center of a literary work, the validation of literary interpretations. In "the Death of the Author" (1968), Barthes argues for the removal of the author from the interpretive process since "linguistically, the author is never more than the instance writing, just as *I* is nothing other than the instance saying *I*: language knows a 'subject,' not a 'person'" (145). The objective of Barthes' theory is to unleash the restrictions on interpretation and allow for a proliferation of meanings. Barthes announces "the death of the author" and "the birth of the reader" to have the "multiplicity" of the text "focused" on the reader (148).

In "What is an Author?" (1969), Foucault implicitly challenges Barthes as he "reexamine[s] the empty space left by the author's disappearance" (233). Foucault argues that an author's name has functional values, "A name can group together a number of texts and thus differentiate them from others" and hereby "the function of an author is to characterize the existence, circulation, and operation of certain discourses within a society" (235). Foucault's author is not a part of the interpretation process, and thus he agrees with Barthes in the latter's dismissal of the conventional author-centered critical approach.

In his memoir *History from the Site: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution* (Xianchang lishi: wenhua da geming jishi, 1993), Wang Li, the former party propagandist and chief interpreter of Mao's ideas, illustrates the functions of the author, which serves as a good starting point to discuss these authors' conceptions of

this critical issue. One remarkable feature of Wang's book is its mixed use of the first person "I" (*wo*) and "Wang Li" throughout the work to distinguish the representations of "I" in autobiographical accounts from those in historical, cultural and biographical representations and in other people's testimonies. Though Wang does not strictly follow this strategy and occasionally mixes the uses of both "I" and "Wang Li" in his autobiographical accounts, the distinction between "I" and "Wang Li" very nicely demonstrates the variations of, or even distortions of, the self in different settings and media. In addition, the official depiction of Wang Li is, to a certain degree, indistinguishable from that of Chen Boda and other so-called perpetrators. The fact that the one signified is referenced by more than one signifier reveals the troubled state of the official history.

By contrasting the crimes blamed on "Wang Li" with self-defense in autobiographical accounts, Wang's book points out how official and popular representations alienate "I" from the experiences claimed on his behalf and how other people's memories of Wang Li bear no resemblance to the actual person. As a result, the signifier "Wang Li" refers to a fictionalized account of a political figure entangled in party feuds and sacrificed as a scapegoat. Worse than that, because of the guilty verdict and the censorship system, the author loses the ownership of his personal identity and is not allowed to utter any objections to the misrepresentations. Therefore, writing first-person accounts is a crucial step to disidentify the misrepresentations and reclaim the self. In Wang's book, "I" is also used to represent the transformed present self, to replace the image of the ultra-left Wang Li portrayed

by the media. Even though this strategy does not effectively overwrite the official version of Wang Li, it nonetheless challenges the latter by inserting into the public's vision a different Wang Li, one unimaginable to most people. Paradoxically, while all of these sensitive figures' memoirs are premised on such a belief in the unstable relationship between the signifier and the signified, in order to challenge the official history, the authors still pledge to tell the truth and write objectively.

Memoir, History and Author

Nie makes it a point that writing as a performative act itself is as important as the content of the writing, as she exclaims in the first line of her preface: "Finally I can speak!" (*Wo zhongyu keyi shuohua le*) (13). Nie angrily protests that since 1968, the party has deprived her of the right to state opinions, which resulted in her conviction and allowed popular culture to caricature her as a villain. Therefore, to write is, above anything else, to challenge the forbiddance to speak and confront her stigmatization. From there, Nie refers to the "rumor" of her death at the age of 73, initiated by a famous biographer with the last name of Ye and perpetrated by the media.[59] Nie furiously retorts, "Now, eighty-three-year-old Nie Yuanzi wants to tell readers: thank heaven and earth, I am still alive and my mind is even more alive (*ren haizai, xin gen wei si*)" (13). Nie's anger is understandable considering that the

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[59] On his blog, writer Ye Yonglie claimed that in a article published on a certain magazine, Nie specifically named him as the one who spread the death rumor. Ye angrily protested that he never wrote such an article. See http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_470bc6dd010000s8.html~type=v5_one&label=rela_prevarticle.

unsympathetic tone of the rumor implicitly celebrates the victory of the official history over Nie, ruling out any possibility to dispute her conviction. Through her writing, Nie dispels the rumor and announces her return to public life, her unfailing resistance to the closure imposed by the official history, and her resolution to cleanse her name. Nie reveals that when she was first investigated in 1968, she made the wish to remain healthy while awaiting the day that the right to speak would be given back to her. Thus she introduces the purpose of her writing: to use her memoir to refute (*tuifan*) allegations leveled against her and apologize to those victimized during the Cultural Revolution because of her mistakes (13). Wang Ruoshui, who provides a preface for the book, also supports Nie's right to defend herself and asks readers to attend to her testimony to "make fair and comprehensive judgments" (3). So far, the right to bear witness has been defended as a victim's right against the tyrannical distortion and repression of the official history.

Toward the second half of the preface, Nie argues for her right to testify from a different perspective, which sets the tone of the preface from that point on. Nie insists that her experience is part of history and therefore it is her responsibility to write her history. To prove her point, she invokes the importance of writing the truth: "History shall be based on facts. Let's think about history carefully. During the dozens of years before and after the 1942 Yan'an Rectification Movement (*Yan'an zhengfeng yundong*), our party and people have been through profound miseries as a result of telling lies and believing in lies" (14). It should be noted that other controversial figures also rely on the urgency to preserve history in defending their

right to bear witness. In an article by dramatist Sha Yexin, Xu Jingxian reveals that as a key member of the Shanghai clique, he feels the need to let people know that part of Shanghai history. Xu seems to indicate the imperative to write overrides anything else, including ethical implications of authorship or the victims' requests for reparation or repentance. Chen Xiaonong, who edited his father Chen Boda's writings and conducted extensive research to clear his father's name, considers writing itself an ethical choice as he argues that suppressing memory in the face of myths produced by the official history is against his "conscience" (xiii). Chen Xiaonong argues that his father's political misfortune mirrors a mysterious aspect of political struggles at the top and consequently serves as an important way to understand party history.

Nie pushes the notion of historical responsibility even further by highlighting the importance of personal memories for the present and the future (15). Nie urges the party to open its archives, allow democratic rule and freedom of speech, so that those who experienced the Cultural Revolution can tell the truth and let the younger generations draw lessons (15). Behind the argument that if they do not write, history will be lost, is what Pierre Bourdieu might have called the "symbolic capital" of those who once served in Mao's revolution, even though their roles during the Cultural Revolution were still very controversial, to say the least. This very symbolic capital is derived from the belief that only they understand Mao's revolution and can therefore unravel its mysteries. Thus, Nie transforms Wang Li's emphasis on the authenticity of autobiographical writings into an argument for these authors'

authority in rewriting history. Such claims of authority and authenticity fundamentally change the dynamic between readers and authors from one of hearing confessions to one of awaiting enlightenment, while leaving these authors' problematic past out of context.

Despite the stress on her unique role as a witness, Nie tries to efface her authorial presence in her memoir as she maintains that she has nothing to gain from her book and will let history write itself. Nie says, whether or not she can distance herself from Jiang Qing, Lin Biao, Kang Sheng, and others will neither bring her back to prison nor improve her current situation (14). Her wish is to have her memoir "bring readers closer to history," "help them reflect history," return history to its "original state" (14) and "let history tell the future" (15).

It is needless to mention that the claim of representing history in its original state is problematic. Besides, Nie's statement represents herself as a transparent agent between history and readers, a medium through which history addresses readers on its own. In this way, Nie dismisses the relevance of herself, particularly her background and experiences, to her testimony and thus brings to mind Roland Barthes' theory of "the death of the author." A comparative reading of Barthes' and Nie's takes on the role of the author in interpretation will elucidate how and why the status of the author is relevant to Nie's overall plan to rewrite history and defend her past. Barthes and Nie have some notable disagreements over the purpose of teasing out the author from the text, despite their shared rejection of viewing a literary work as the voice of an author and bringing an author's tastes and experiences into the

reading process. First, Barthes' author writes within what he terms "language," namely literary conventions and cultural traditions created by preceding generations of authors, while Nie reassures her readers in the preface that she will break the convention of telling lies and reveal the undisclosed truth. Second, Barthes announces "the death of the author" to welcome "the birth of the reader" while Nie emphasizes the irrelevance of the author in order to create passivity and silence in the reader. Nie argues that her writing is not only about personal experiences but also about national history (14) and hopes that readers will read her memory but see history (*touguo wode huiyi, fansi lishi*) (15). What she tries to convince readers is this: Since it is not her but history that speaks in the book, readers should not bring the phantoms of her past into their readings and doubt the accuracy of the narrative. Nie emphasizes the irrelevance of authorial biography to achieve what Barthes is against: "to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing" (147). Barthes' death of the author grants the reader the freedom to bring different interpretations to the text but Nie wants to control her readers' interpretations and silence their doubts over the book's truth value. In this sense, Nie's notion is closer to the traditional theory of the mimetic tradition than to Barthes'.

Following her version of the "death of the author," who is reincarnated as a voice of history itself, Nie criticizes the prohibition on studying the Cultural Revolution as well as the attempt to cover up or falsify history, which has resulted in the younger generation's ignorance of the nation's turbulent past (14). Nie then

pleads for democracy (*xianzheng minzhu*), freedom of speech, and freedom of publication to allow people like her to tell the truth and have future generations draw profound lessons (15). Thus far, Nie has transformed herself from a defendant of her past to a guardian of history who will enlighten ignorant readers on the past. Therefore, it is her responsibility to write history and it is that of her readers' to reflect on the past, rather than disputing/cross-examining her statements. Nie's argument is a bold version of what other authors have pleaded in their books because they, too, dread readers' reluctance to take their testimonies seriously on account of their pasts. Many make pledges to state the facts, avoid exaggerations and write about personal experiences only. The inevitable question for us to ponder is this: Can a work that makes self-defense its ultimate goal have its author suspended?

To sum up, in the preface, Nie dismisses the rumors of her death, protests social injustices, and declares her wish to fight stigmatization through this book; but she also tries to persuade readers to view her as a transparent medium and treat the book as if history were writing itself. In the following section, I will discuss the text of the book to examine how Nie enacts a performance of impunity and will return to her arguments about the irrelevance of the author as well as Barthes' theory of "the death of the author."

Performance of Impunity

Despite her promise to serve as the transparent medium between history and readers, Nie, in the first few chapters of her book, indulges in autobiographical details, which are not relevant to her plan to challenge lies in the official history and

"return history to its original state" (14). Below, I will analyze the strategies in these chapters to study the extent of authorial intervention, laying the groundwork for an examination of Nie's presentation of her involvement with the Cultural Revolution.

Critic Jerome Bruner rightly points out that autobiography "involves not only the construction of self," "but also a construction of one's culture", mainly through writing about those whom the author is in alliance with (35). For an autobiography/memoir aiming at defending oneself and invalidating the official history, such a quest for personal culture becomes more pointed. To undo the familiar image of an ill-educated, cold-blooded, opportunistic, vicious, and ambitious cadre, a member in the cohort of Jiang Qing and Kang Sheng in the judgment of the official history and popular culture, Nie creates a respectable family culture by writing extensively about how her entire family believed in the Chinese revolution, how her sisters and brothers were young party members, how she was therefore led to revolution as a kid. It also carefully shows that after joining the party, she was surrounded by loyal party members, was tested time again by various difficulties and became a model soldier and a well-respected cadre. Nie mentions her critiques of the Rectification Movement and the People's Commune (*renmin gongshe*), indicating that she was not a radical as people tend to believe. Thus she reinserts herself back into history as an individual rather than as part of either Jiang Qing's or Kang Sheng's clique and presents her life at that time as one of dedication, idealism and discipline, preparing for her argument that she was never an ambitious opportunist as popular culture has it. On the other hand, such details show her

essential humanity and normative personhood so much so that Nie's book sounds like any other memoir written by party officials, creating in readers' minds a feeling of déjà vu.

Actually, books by Xu Jingxian, Chen Boda and Wu Faxian exhibit a similar understanding of the effects and affects of identities. For example, they all understand that in autobiographical writings, identity should be performed ethically and culturally. They indulge in details of their family education, their interests in reading and writing, and their ethical codes. Readers' feelings of déjà vu on the one hand liken representation to imitation and on the other raise questions about selective remembering. In the end, déjà vu demonstrates that writing is neither, as Nie claims, an autonomous process dictated by history itself nor, as Barthes argues, irrelevant to an author's life, tastes or orientations.

While authors such as Jung Chang highlight their uniqueness, Nie carefully balances between uniqueness and representativity, individuality and essential humanity. Nie minimizes her specificity by repeatedly emphasizing that as a woman, mother, party member and cadre, she is no different from others of her generation. For example, when responding to criticism of her two failed marriages, Nie emphasizes that she was not an "iron woman" caring little about love or marriage but instead she was in need of a husband's support and wanted a "normal" family life

(103).[60] Nie blames political pressures for the end of her second marriage, obliquely dismissing the allegations that she sold out her second husband for political gain.

When the narration shifts from pre-Cultural Revolutionary years to the climax of her life between 1966 and 1968, Nie seems to be quite ambivalent about how to represent herself. At times she seems to change under the influence of Maoist radical thoughts. At other times, she insists that she never changed and her tragedy was the result of the political climate. As a result, the narrative voice sometimes defends her choices and sometimes offers slight apologies on behalf of her old self. Nie admits that tipping off to Kang Sheng about An Ziwen's and his female friend Deng Juexian's suspicious activities was a result of her Cold War mentality, but later she would raise it as an example of her adherence to party policies and her naivety (*danchun*) (106). Nie apologizes for traveling to Shanghai to persecute Chang Xiping, but she would not admit her fault in bringing the so-called "mistakes" of the Peking University administration to the attention of Mao and the whole nation, turning Lu Ping and Peng Peiyun into the earliest targets of the Cultural Revolution and later subjecting them to numerous persecution meetings. Such contradictory impulses indicate her ambivalence regarding how much impunity she needs to pursue and how much complicity she would like to admit.

To prove her innocence, Nie needs to provide counter evidence to invalidate the official verdict that she was the coauthor of several devastating reports/Big

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[60] Nie Yuanzi claims that during the Cultural Revolution, those who hated her made a big case out of her divorce and viciously attacked her (103).

Character Posters. In the face of allegations that Chen Boda created the slogan "Sweep away all ox ghosts and snake demons" (*Hengsao yiqie niugui shesheng*) and instigated social unrest, Chen Xiaonong conducted extensive archival research, citing official history, newspaper articles, memoirs and historical research to prove that the line was created long before his father's first public use and had by then been quoted by other officials, including Premier Zhou. With similar strategies, Chen Xiaonong proved that the official representations of his father's other activities were inaccurate as well. Nie, however, employs a different set of strategies, which can best be described as a combination of the death of the author, the silence of the author, and the helplessness of the author. Here I shall use some textual details to illustrate how a discourse on author and agency is mobilized to defend her innocence.

Nie situates her writing of the first Big Character Poster in the nation in a chain of political campaigns that targeted her and her enemies in turn. In 1964, a work team (*gongzuo zu*) headed by Zhang Panshi was sent to Peking University. For what she claims to be a disinterested concern over the university's work morale and its "deep-rooted problems" (83), Nie complained to Zhang about the university president Lu Ping's bureaucratic management style and his factional tendencies (*zongpai zhuyi zuofeng*). This ignited a university-wide critique of Lu until 1965, when Beijing mayor Peng Zhen stepped in and protected Lu from further attacks. Aside from emphasizing the goodwill underlying her acts, Nie argues that it was Zhang who upgraded her critique to an issue of class war, "surnamed capitalist or socialist" (*xingzi xingshe*) (83-84) while she secretly doubted and even loathed the

work team's harsh treatment of Lu. In 1966, because of Nie's report to Kang Sheng, An Ziwen and Deng Juexian were investigated and then denounced as British spies. Again, Nie depicts herself as being "helplessly" involved in the spy case (*xianru mafan*) and claims that her worry over An's violation of cadre rules was appropriated by Kang Sheng to suit his political agendas (94). In both cases, Nie's self-defense is at the same time a curious validation and betrayal of Barthes' author theory. On the one hand, she makes the author "alive": She persuades readers to read her actions against her biographical details, such as her status at Peking University and her longtime loyal service to the party, and bring her good intentions into the interpretation. But on the other hand, she reminds readers that the author is "dead" and the actions were socially and ideologically constructed by the political environment. Besides, the subsequent persecutions of Lu Ping, An Ziwen and Deng Juexian resulted from the unfortunate misinterpretations of her reports by others, and she had no control over the interpretations. Therefore, in either case she, the author, should not be held responsible for the misfortunes these victims lived through. Thus, with the use of a rhetoric combining both the author-centered interpretation and the reader-centered interpretation, Nie successfully renounced her responsibilities.

Nie uses similar strategies to defend her other controversial activities. In late May 1966, the party issued a "May 16 circular" (*wu yiliu tongzhi*), criticizing Beijing mayor Peng Zhen for obstructing the Cultural Revolution and reminding people to be alert to revisionists within the party. A few days later, on May 25th, Nie and her colleagues at the Department of Philosophy wrote a Big Character Poster calling Lu

Ping, Song Shuo and Peng Peiyun "anti-party," "anti-Mao" revisionists (120) and accusing them of "destroying the Cultural Revolution" (121). For a long time, people have suspected the role Kang Sheng played in Nie's various rebellious activities, and rumors of Kang dictating this poster and having Nie publicize it have been rampant. Nie admits that before they composed the poster, she and Yang Keming went to see Kang's wife Cao Yi'ou and asked her opinion of their plan. She insists that Kang neither prompted this poster nor knew its content. Therefore, she and her colleagues were the real authors, the Big Character Poster was a well-intended critique of the university leaders, and their action should not be considered part of Kang's political scheme. In this sense, they were merely naïve political activists rather than cruel collaborators of the persecution mechanism.

But Nie then denies her authorship of the poster by comparing it to the May 16 Circular. She argues that their action was to answer Mao's call and what they wrote does not exceed the content of the party's document: "Our Big Character Poster follows the fundamental principles of the central government's May 16 Circular and is a creative application (*huoxue huoyong*) of this document….Our Big Character Poster is completely within the limits of the May 16 Circular defined by Mao. We did not add any of our own inventions to it" (122-23). She admits that this Big Character Poster met Mao's expectation to promote the Cultural Revolution at the local level and was responsible for the escalation of the Cultural Revolution (123). She goes on to say, "But the direction of the Big Character Poster should not be blamed on us completely (*buneng wanquan you women lai chengdan*), since it

was based on the May 16 Circular" (123). Despite the fact that their poster made concrete accusations against specific targets that the party document did not name, Nie represents the authoring as imitation and the poster as a copy of Mao's speech. That is to say, when they wrote the poster, their consciousness was informed and dictated by the propaganda. The author of the poster in Nie's reasoning is ultimately Mao, and in that case, she should not be held responsible for writing the poster. In this part, Nie first claims to be the author to the first Big Character Poster during the Cultural Revolution and then denies it as she alternately defines "author" as the one who initiates the writing act and those who contributes the core concepts of the writing.

However, on June 2, 1966, *People's Daily* (Renmin ribao), the party's mouth piece, published Nie's Big Character poster, along with a commentary titled "Hail a First Big Character Poster from Peking University" (Huanhu beida de yizhang dazibao).[61] This article unmistakably names Nie and her colleagues as authors and commends their efforts. It then denounces the Three Villages' backstage boss Deng Tuo before it attacks its stronghold in Peking University represented by Song Shuo, Lu Ping and Peng Peiyun, echoing the poster's criticism of Song, Lu and Peng as being anti-party revisionists. Clearly, to this commentator, Nie's Big Character Poster had original findings and should not be viewed as a copy of the original party document. At the end of the article, the commentator persuades students and teachers

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[61] This article is available at the electronic database of *People's Daily*: http://prl5.sdsc.edu/WEB/index2.html.

at Peking University to follow Nie, "Those who cannot see the situation clearly will improve their awareness rapidly and join the ranks of struggle soon afterwards." The article visualizes the future this way, "The general teachers' and students' revolutionary fight against the representative figures of the capitalists will succeed without doubt. And a promising, socialist, new Beida [Peking University] will show up in the nation's capital Beijing very soon."

The *People's Daily* commentary brought wide support to Nie's camp and led to appalling persecutions of the innocent. At Peking University, more leaders as well as professors were attacked and denounced while Nie was promoted from the vice party secretary of the Department of Philosophy at Peking University to head the university's Cultural Revolution Committee. Soon Peking University became a model for the whole country as persecutions rapidly spread throughout the country. In the memoir, Nie alleges that the *People's Daily*'s commentary appropriated their poster to suit Mao's plans and refers to the borrowing as "raising the issue to a higher level" (*shanggang shangxian*) (130) and "using the opportunity to make one's point" (*jieti fahui*) (131). In this case, readers—the party and the propaganda machine— not only misinterpreted her poster but also appropriated its content to instigate social unrest. Clearly, Nie once again redefines the author, writing and copying.

In spite of the anger she feels now, Nie admits that back then she was exhilarated over getting approval from the top. On August 1st, Nie was invited to meet Mao in person, and on August 5th, Mao wrote his first and only Big Character Poster titled "Bombard the Headquarters: My First Big Character Poster" (Paoda

siling bu—wo de diyizhang dazi bao), which again praises Nie and her colleagues and asks people to reread the poster and the *People's Daily* article. As a result, Nie commanded numerous followers and overwhelming power at Peking University and was soon promoted to be the vice chair of the Beijing Cultural Revolutionary Committee. During the peak of her career, she interacted with Mao's allies—Jiang Qing, Kang Sheng, Chen Boda, Xie Fuzhi and Wang Li—closely and met Mao several times. She also claims that she received orders from Mao and Premier Zhou privately.

Nie is upfront about the crimes listed in the official verdict, but she is vague and selective in her representation of her activities within the Peking University campus after she was promoted, particularly her role in the persecution of teachers and students. Nevertheless, she details how she protected Lu Ping, Mao's daughters-in-law, and Premier Zhou to strengthen her image as a conscientious cadre who disagreed with Mao's Cultural Revolution in private and resolutely resisted persecutions and torture as much as she could. These episodes, in a reverse fashion, prove that the author is indeed irrelevant to the text s/he authored. For the numerous persecutions during this period and bloody armed struggles involving factions supporting and opposing her at Peking University, she either claims her absence/ignorance or blames others: the work team, the workers' propaganda team, the military propaganda team, the rival student organization Jingangshan, Jiang Qing, Kang Sheng and Xie Fuzhi. Throughout her narration, she disclaims her influence, agency, initiative, and autonomy. In 1967, Nie led her followers to overthrow the

administrative offices at the Ministry of Higher Education. Now she argues that they "had to follow Mao's call" (195) and insists that theirs were "empty actions without making any big mistakes" (197).

A pattern can be found in her narrative: For what Judith Butler calls the "double processes of becoming a subject" (2), Nie emphasizes how she was subjected to power and minimizes the other half: how she was an agent of power and responsible for the tragic purges of many people. It should be pointed out that Nie has been named by Ji Xianlin, Zhou Yiliang, Fan liqin and Yang Xun as their primary perpetrator, but Nie denies her or her aides' involvements and maintains that she was not able to "control students' overzealous mood" (165). Nie's book has been faulted by Peking University graduates for representing herself as the one who stopped the armed struggle at Peking University and fought against Xie Fuzhi, Wang Li, Guan Feng, and Qi Benyu. In his memoir *Diary of a Red Guard*, Chen Huanren, a former member of the pro-Nie New Beida Commune (Xin beida gongshe), remembers how Nie hosted denunciation meetings of Wang Qingshu (34,48), Lu Ping and Peng Peiyun (95), gathered information to persecute Pan Zinian and Wu Chuanqi, and followed Kang Sheng and Chen Boda closely. Such counterarguments have not yet been verified and this chapter has no intention to dig into this matter. Instead I want to emphasize how authorial intention plays a significant role in shaping the narratives and arguments.

In Nie's book, in order to invalidate the official and popular representations of her, Nie embraces a number of discourses and creates a self-defense full of

ruptures and contradictions. Some of the most obvious contradictions are as follows: her book as a self-defense of her past versus her book as disinterested historical testimony, the author as the defendant versus the author as the transparent medium between history and readers, the author-centered interpretation versus the reader-centered interpretation, and the author being socially constructed versus the author being independent minded.

Reading her book against the theories summarized at the beginning of this part will further elucidate how she manipulates different theoretical positions to achieve her narrative intent. Like Wang Li, Nie points out the distortion in the official history and grants her own autobiographical writing authenticity and authority. But at the same time, she emphasizes that the author and the writing are socially constructed, highlights the difference between what the author says and what the actual person believes, and distances the author from the actual person. At times, she disclaims responsibility for her texts written during the Cultural Revolution, but at other times, she forces one single interpretation of her texts.

Other books by sensitive figures employ, to different degrees, similar devices to argue for their innocence. In the end, these books dispute their guilty verdicts and blame the state for the crimes individuals committed. My study of Nie's contradictory self-defense does not intend to prove she was guilty but rather to reveal how she enacts a performance of innocence and how Barthes' "the death of the author" and Foucualt's "the author function" can be manipulated in a context like this one. With the question of whether or not Nie is guilty left hanging, I have to ask

these questions: Where have all the perpetrators gone? Shall the nation-state take the blame for individuals in a state-sponsored trauma such as the Cultural Revolution? Shouldn't the author, who signed her/his name on a piece of writing, bear some ethical responsibility?

Conclusion

Ironically, even though local media time and again remind people of the vices of the Cultural Revolution and the indigenous writer Li Bihua represents the Cultural Revolution as the utmost horror, Hong Kong is the site where a revisionist historiography thrives. As books discussed in this chapter demonstrate, this revisionist historiography extols Red Guards as idealist heroes and represents the so-called perpetrators as scapegoats. My analysis of Chen's memoir reveals that the claim of idealism is symptomatic of his imprisonment in the Maoist ideology, his infatuation with the power and his inability to own up to his subjugation. My reading of Nie's memoir unravels her manipulation of an author's authority and responsibility to create a discourse of impunity. As a whole, this chapter is intended to highlight how amnesia is used as an excuse for a revisionist historiography and how these writings serve the authors' desires of creating ideal selves.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

In this conclusion, I will return to the place-specific approach defined in Chapter One and provide some remarks on the place of memory, limits of representation, transnational memory performance, and the official history. With principal characters such as Chairman Mao, the Gang of Four, Lin Biao, rebels, Red Guards, and ordinary people, witnesses of the Cultural Revolution as well as the Chinese Communist Party have created different versions of history. The controversies over Cultural Revolution memory and history vividly prove Hayden White's argument that history is not only about events but also about the "possible sets of relationships" of these events (94). My dissertation links the creation of "possible sets of relationships" to the place of memory, namely the psychological, political, and ideological spaces where authors grasp their experiences with the uses of given epistemological frameworks.

I structure my analyses of selected texts according to the geopolitical spaces where these memory performances take places. As my dissertation demonstrates, each of the three places of memory—mainland China, Anglo-America, and Hong Kong—privileges certain knowledge of the Cultural Revolution and allows some social groups to enjoy more visibility than others. In mainland China, social elites turn away from traumatic memories and fail to resist the hegemony of the official history. In Anglo-America, second generation Cultural Revolution survivors use personal experiences to testify

against the repressive communist regime and consciously or unconsciously let the oppositional politics appropriate their trauma narratives. In Hong Kong, politically controversial figures create a revisionist historiography, challenging negative representations of Red Guards and rebels and rewriting these two groups as scapegoats of the power struggles at the top.

But it is important not to essentialize the differences among these places of memory and obscure the multiplicity of each site. As my dissertation demonstrates, several themes and arguments are shared across these memory places, even though authors have unequal access to audience and media. For example, Nie Yuanzi's discourse of innocence brings to mind Zhang Hanzhi's very obscure self-defense, and they resort to similar strategies to silence their critics. Gao Yuan's implicit glorification of Red Guards and the Cultural Revolution is echoed by authors publishing in Hong Kong, including Gao Jianhua and Chen Yinnan. But Zhang, writing in mainland China, cannot criticize the official history and the Deng regime directly; Gao Yuan, writing in the United States, has to switch genres back and forth to conceal his real narrative intent and his revisionist historiography. Thus, the phrase "transnational memory performance" refers not only to texts produced across the world in several languages but also to continuous dialogues and constant exchanges of ideas among these spaces.

My study of how each space identifies itself against others reveals that the power relationship in the transnational memory spaces is multilayered. Authors publishing in Hong Kong and Anglo-America openly challenge the Chinese Communist Party's suppression of traumatic memory and control of alternative narratives. While the official history insists that the Cultural Revolution was an unfortunate incident contained in the

past, Jung Chang sees the tragedy as a key to understand a chain of political traumas under the party's rule. In Hong Kong, Chen and Nie challenge the official history's criticism of rebels and Red Guards and warn readers of distortions and biases in previous narratives about the Cultural Revolution. In the preface to his book, Chen also criticizes Westerners' negative impressions of rebels as antisocial hooligans (*pizi wulai de shehui pohuaixing liliang*) or beneficiaries of the Cultural Revolution (*wenge shinian de shouyi zhe*) and attributes such "misconceptions" to Westerns' distance to the Cultural Revolution (xvi). In this way, Chen uses the memory space provided by Hong Kong to intervene in the memory production of the Cultural Revolution in both mainland China and Anglo-America. Such negotiations between different memory spaces will continue, and it is likely that other places of memory will become important players in this contest.

In the end, the official history is partly responsible for the fetish of alternative narratives in Anglo-America and the popularity of revisionist historiography in mainland China and Hong Kong. It is precisely the one single history enforced by the censorship system that drives readers to obtain knowledge from other sources and turns the writing and reading of these dissenting narratives into an act of political resistance. However, as new technologies have fundamentally changed the way people write and read, new ways of testifying have emerged and will allow more people to gain access to witnesses' accounts and cross-examine their content.

I have chosen to write this dissertation out of an urgent concern over the widespread uncritical receptions of memoirs on the Cultural Revolution, and I want to point out the complicity of the publishing industry and, to a lesser extent, the academic world in spreading and perpetuating simplistic and reductive readings of these narratives.

At the end of her memoir, Nie Yuanzi maintains that "truth (*zhenli*) will not be destroyed [as] the public will learn the historical truth (*lishi zhenxiang*) eventually" and that "time will test everything" (496). However, can we trust the future with any conviction? Will future authors working on the Cultural Revolution lead us any closer to the historical truth? And who will ever be in an unchallenged position to sanctify that truth? Questions like these demand that we must be vigilant in our response to the memory production of the Cultural Revolution—and, for that matter, any significant historical event—and pay close attention to its geopolitical and ideological ramifications.

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