

Written as a Witness:  
Memoirs Concerning China's Cultural Revolution

by

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study is focused on memoirs concerning China's Cultural Revolution written by Chinese that have appeared within and outside of China in the past two decades. It outlines an analytical framework for comparing and contrasting the memoirs. By analyzing what the authors tell the readers in their memoirs for the common events, I seek to build up an understanding regarding the similarities and differences between the two groups of memoirs. As witnesses, the authors use their memoirs to feed the readers with a real sense of history, but there is no reason for us to believe that every author is completely truthful. While it is understandable that Mainland China authors have left a lot unsaid in their memoirs because they live in an environment characterized by many limitations, it is necessary that readers should also question the veracity of memoirs written and published in the West.

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## **Chapter 1 Introduction**

This thesis is principally concerned with the memoirs about China's Cultural Revolution (CR). Written in the past two decades by Chinese authors who experienced the CR as witnesses and survivors, the memoirs fall into two categories: (i) those that have been published within China and, (ii) those that have been published outside of China. These books have a large readership, and occupy an important place in the publications concerning the CR. Some of them are widely viewed as authoritative books on contemporary Chinese history. The fact that the memoirs all deal with the CR enables an analysis and comparison of the authors' views as well as the themes running through their works. Thus far, very few studies have been undertaken on modern Chinese memoirs. Therefore, it is believed that this thesis makes initial contributions to this field.<sup>1</sup> In this introductory chapter, I set out three essential elements that constitute my thesis, namely, the Cultural Revolution, the selected memoirs and the methodologies used for analysis. The purpose is to set the stage for detailed analysis in subsequent chapters.

### **The Cultural Revolution**

In contemporary Chinese history, the CR had a disastrous impact on Chinese society.<sup>2</sup> It is safe to say that no one can truly understand today's China without adequate knowledge about the CR. The term "Cultural Revolution" (*wenhua geming*) was first used

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<sup>1</sup> There exist some articles that are concerned with Chinese memoirs, for example, Gao Mobo's *Memoirs and Interpretation of the CR...* (*Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, Vol. 27, No. 1 / Jan. – Mar. 1995) and Kong Shuyu's *Wild Swans or Spider Eaters? The Problematics of Memoirs* (Manuscript, 1998). Of the six theses that have been identified to deal with memoirs or autobiography, only one focuses on Chinese memoir, namely, *Liu Chi and his "The Record of One Returned to Obscurity"* which recorded an account of the fall of the Jin Dynasty (1115-1234); however, it is not a modern Chinese memoir.

<sup>2</sup> Zang Xiaowei, *Children of the Cultural Revolution* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2000), p. 2.

by Chinese reformers as early as in the May Fourth Movement (May 4, 1919) of the early years of the Republic of China. But since the middle of 1966, the term CR has been used to refer exclusively to the movement of the so-called “Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution” (*wuchan jieji wenhua da geming*) that was launched and directed by Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Lasting for ten years from 1966 to 1976, this political mass movement affected practically everybody within China, and deeply wounded a large number of Chinese people, both physically and psychologically. It was a time of humiliation, beatings, killings, and suicides, and those who died may have numbered up to half a million.<sup>3</sup> It is now generally regarded as “the lost decade,” resulting in an enormous human and cultural disaster in China’s modern development.<sup>4</sup>

A number of interpretations have been advanced regarding the origin of the CR.<sup>5</sup> The simplest of these views it as a power struggle between Mao Zedong and his critics

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<sup>3</sup> John K. Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution 1800-1985*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1986). p. 320; see also Harry Harding, The Chinese State in Crisis, in *Cambridge History of China*, vol. 15, pp. 213-4, “The total number of deaths attributable the CR is not known with certainty... Attributes to a well-informed Chinese the estimate that four hundred thousand people died during the CR.”

<sup>4</sup> See Anita Chan, *Children of Mao: Personality Development and Political Activism in the Red Guard Generation* (Macmillan Press, 1985); Lowell Dittmer and Chen Ruoxi, *Ethic and Rhetoric of the Chinese Cultural Revolution* (Berkeley, California: University of California, 1981); Adrian Hsia, *The Chinese Cultural Revolution* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1972); Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990); Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank (General editors), *The Cambridge History of China: The People’s Republic, Part 2: Revolutions Within the Chinese Revolution 1966-1982* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Yan Jiaqi and Gao Gao, *Turbulent Decade—A History of the Cultural Revolution*, translated and edited by D. W. Y. Kwok, (University of Hawaii Press, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, Volume 1, Contradictions Among the People 1956-1957* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974); and *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, Volume 2, The Great Leap Forward 1958-1960* (London: Oxford University Press, 1983); John E. Schrecker, *The Chinese Revolution in Historical Perspective* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1991); Lowell Dittmer, *Liu Shaoqi and the Chinese Cultural Revolution: The politics of Mass Criticism* (Berkeley: University of California, 1974).

that dated back to the Great Leap Forward<sup>6</sup> and the collapse of the collective leadership at the Lushan Conference.<sup>7</sup> As the Great Leap Forward began to fail, Mao Zedong privately assumed some of the blame, but this acknowledgment was never made public. In 1959 Mao stepped down as head of state, and Liu Shaoqi took over the reins of government and the management of day-to-day affairs.<sup>8</sup>

A second line of interpretation accepts the reality of the ideological differences between Mao Zedong and his opponents.<sup>9</sup> Mao's aim, clearly, was twofold: to change the structure of power in society, and to carry out an irreversible transformation in the patterns of thought and behaviors of the Chinese people.<sup>10</sup> However, Mao's intention to turn the country into a strong, modernized nation proved to be overly ambitious. The situation went out of control and China slipped into chaos, resulting in widespread break down on cultural, political and economic fronts.<sup>11</sup> Mao and his followers consciously set out to

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<sup>6</sup> Great Leap Forward: Liu Shaoqi announced the Great Leap program on behalf of Mao in his address to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Session of the 8<sup>th</sup> CCP Central Committee in May 1958. The term was used to describe the development of production in the years 1956, 1957 and 1958 in the form of a leap forward. It was on the basis of the Great Leap Forward that the 1958 campaign for smelting steel in indigenous furnaces was launched in order to attain the target of 10.7 million tons of steel output for the year. This ambitious target represented a significant jump from that of 8 million to 8.6 million tons which was fixed at an enlarged meeting of the CCP Central Committee's Political Bureau, held at Beidaihe from August 17-30, 1958. See Lowell Dittmer, *Liu Shaoqi and the Chinese Cultural Revolution: The politics of Mass Criticism*, p. 39.

<sup>7</sup> On July 14, 1959, Peng Dehuai sent a letter to Mao Zedong, expressing his sincere views on the 'Left' errors made since 1958 and the experience and lessons to be learned from them. On July 23, Mao criticized it as 'bourgeois vacillation' and a question of 'Right opportunism'. On August 16, 1959, Mao concluded, 'The struggle at Lushan is a class struggle, a continuation of the life-and-death struggle between the two antagonistic classes, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, in the course of the past ten years' socialist revolution. See Party History Research Centre of the Chinese Committee of the CCP (compiled), *History of the Chinese Communist Party — A Chronology of Events (1919-1990)*, (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1991), p. 280.

<sup>8</sup> Schrecker, 1991, p. 179.

<sup>9</sup> See J.A.G. Roberts, *Modern China: an Illustrated History*, (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 1998), pp. 245-8; Zang Xiaowei, pp. 1-2; June M. Grasso, *Modernization and Revolution in China* (New York: An East Gate Book, 1997), p. 211.

<sup>10</sup> Stuart R. Schram, *Authority, Participation, and Cultural Change in China*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 85.

<sup>11</sup> See Jonathan D. Spence, *The Gate of Heavenly Peace: The Chinese and Their Revolution 1895-1980* (New York: Penguin Books, 1981), p. 392.

destroy the existing bourgeois culture, destroying it so utterly that it was not supposed to be alive again – thus paving the way for an ‘entirely new proletarian culture’ that would serve as a guiding light for the entire population.<sup>12</sup>

No matter which line of interpretation is adopted, never before in human history nor in any other country have people had such a fearful and ridiculous, weird and tragic experience as the Chinese people during the CR. No one in China was spared, many narrowly escaped death, and virtually everyone was pushed to the extremes of endurance.<sup>13</sup> The most obvious effects were the disruption and humiliation it brought to millions of people. It also directly caused about half a million deaths. Chinese officials have maintained that about one hundred million people (or more than one-tenth of the country’s population at the time) suffered in some way.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Memoirs**

It is over three decades since the beginning of the CR, and an enormous number of CR- related articles have been published in the West as well as in China. In spite of the fact that the tragedy of the CR occurred inside China, the repercussions are worldwide because the CR has become a subject of interest among scholars in many countries.<sup>15</sup> Countless literary pieces in the forms of novels, memoirs, poems and essays have appeared around China to expose the evils of the CR. Almost all the authors of these

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<sup>12</sup> Adrian Hsia, p. 13.

<sup>13</sup> See Ba Jin, *Suixiang lu* (Random Thoughtsss), (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 1984), p. xvi.

<sup>14</sup> Roberts, p. 256; Zang Xiaowei, p. 2; Grasso, p. 226.

<sup>15</sup> See footnote 3, 4 and 5.

works claim to have been victims,<sup>16</sup> and many of them appear to want to get something back for what they lost in the CR. China's intellectuals have been more successful than others in promoting their case thanks to publications of this kind. Meanwhile, after China adopted a "Reform and Opening Up" policy in the late 1970s,<sup>17</sup> many Chinese have left the country, and some of the survivors of the CR have written memoirs in English about the same theme — the CR.

Virtually all the memoirs indicate that the authors were involved in a life-or-death struggle to survive that tragic period. One of the key features of the memoirs is the portrayal of oneself as a victim. The memoirs chosen for analysis are seen as falling into two groups, namely, MCPE (memoirs written by Chinese and published in English in the West) and MCPC (memoirs written by Chinese and published in Chinese). The dates of publication range between the early 1980s and the late 1990s.<sup>18</sup> There are thirteen memoirs in the first group—those published in the West, and eight memoirs in the second group—the ones published in China. The major subject of the research is the writings by authors who were in their youth at the time, because they were the members of Red

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<sup>16</sup> See Ba Jin, *Suixiang lu*; Yang Jiang, *Ganxiao liuji*, (A Cadre School Life: Six Chapters), (Hong Kong: Wide Angle), Issue 103, April 1981; Liu Xinwu, *The Class Teacher*, (Beijing: People's Literature, 11. 1979) pp. 16-29; Lu Xinghua, *Wounded* (Shanghai), (*Wenhui Bao*, August 11, 1978). The last-mentioned was the first story of its kind published and led the "literature of the wounded" movement in Mainland China. It is a sad story of a zealous female youth who fails to achieve reconciliation with her dying mother, a cadre unjustly disgraced during the CR.

<sup>17</sup> "Reform and Opening" policy refers to the changes in the economic management system set in motion at the Third Plenary of the 11<sup>th</sup> Central Committee of the CCP in December 1978. The "Reforms" are the policy changes which have introduced decentralization and moves towards more reliance on market forces. "Opening Up" is the policy changes aimed at increasing the integration of the Chinese economy into the international economy. See Kiichiro Fukasaku, *China's Long March to an Open Economy* (Paris: OECD, 1994), p. 24.

<sup>18</sup> There are two books published in the early 1970s, Gordon Bennett and Ronald Montaperto, *Red Guard—The Political Biography of Dai Hsiao-Ai* (New York: Doubleday Company, 1971); Ling Ken, *The Revenge of Heaven—Journal of a Young Chinese* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1972).

Guards generation, or lost generation; they experienced the entire period of the CR, and they were both victims and victimizers.<sup>19</sup>

### **Research Problem and Methodologies**

It must be borne in mind that this thesis is not a study on what the CR was about, but on the memoirs concerning the CR. My research problem is twofold. First, being a literary form, memoirs are not equivalent to historical records. In a memoir writing there is always potential for authors' interpretation.<sup>20</sup> The question is how to read a memoir. Second, given the identification of the CR related memoirs and the classification of them into two distinct groups according to the publishers, it is of academic interest to compare and contrast the memoirs. Therefore, the problem is: What are the factors that make these forms different? Must they be read differently? The proposition that I advance is that although the authors were all witnesses and survivors of the CR during the period, the works written differ substantially because the memoirs were written and published in two different cultural and geographical environments and two different political climates. The difference in readership is the cause for divergence in the presentation of the memoirs.

To achieve my objective, I begin with a presentation of the prevailing Western theory of autobiography and memoir. I proceed to show that a memoir is not necessarily a recording of historical truth, although as witnesses, authors may use memoirs or

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<sup>19</sup> The lost generation refers to the Red Guards generation, they were either students or youth during the ten years of the CR.

<sup>20</sup> Gore Vidal, *Palimpsest: A Memoir* (New York: Random House, 1995), Vidal begins his memoir with "A Tissue of Lies? Could there be a more persuasively apt title for a memoir? Particularly if the rememberer of his past is referring not so much to his own lies but to those of others, and, if I may immodestly boast, I have gone mano a mano with some of the truly great liars of our time." In page 6, he says, "Starts with life; makes a text; then a re-vision-literary, in a memoir, there are many rubbings-out and puttings-in..."

autobiographies to try to give their readers a real sense of history. With this in mind, by examining selected memoirs written by Chinese authors on the CR, my thesis is not only to address the problems of the memoirs, but also to recognize and understand that memoir is not a historical record.

Second, I outline an analytical framework for comparing and contrasting the memoirs. By analyzing what the authors tell their readers in the memoirs I seek to build an understanding about the similarities and differences between them. In the analysis I will show the interactions between different positions and voices. For the same events, I present different authors' descriptions and interpretations to explain why the memoirs differ for readers in the West and in China. Given a lack of openness and systematic recording in China about what really happened during the CR, we cannot know whether authors were motivated to be perfectly honest in telling their stories. It is understandable that Mainland China authors have left a lot unsaid in their memoirs because they have lived in an environment characterized by many restrictions and limitations. Readers should also question the veracity of the memoirs written and published in the West.

Hence, my thesis is organized as follows. In Chapter 2, a historical overview of the CR is provided, with a chronology of major events to familiarize the reader with the general context. It is necessary to understand what the CR was about and what happened during the CR, in studying any of the selected memoirs. Furthermore, most of the memoirs focus on these major events. In Chapter 3, theories concerning the Western autobiography and memoir are described. Some theoretical aspects concerning traditional Chinese memoirs are also introduced in this chapter.

In Chapter 4, the memoirs identified for classification are presented, namely, those that have appeared within and outside of China in the past two decades. In Chapter 5, a brief introduction and analysis of selected memoirs is provided, with a profile of the authors. In Chapter 6, I outline an analytical framework for comparing and contrasting the memoirs from literary and historical perspectives. In analyzing the memoirs, while I seek to identify some patterns that characterize the memoirs chosen for in-depth analysis, emphasis is placed on comparing and contrasting their setting, plot, and themes. The final chapter contains a synthetic model of the memoirs. In addition, I discuss the effect of political pressure and the degree of freedom of speech that the authors of the two groups faced. My thesis ends with a conclusion and some observations on the direction of future research.

## **Chapter 2 The Context of the Cultural Revolution**

In this chapter, I introduce, very briefly, a history of the CR. Instead of being viewed as a single event, the CR should be seen as a phase in the continuing revolution of the CCP.<sup>21</sup> The summary begins with the prehistory of the CR, from 1949 onwards when the People's Republic of China (PRC) was established. One thing is clear: the CCP seldom took a long break from struggles against people with different ideologies, launching one political movement after another.<sup>22</sup>

### **2.1 Prehistory of the Cultural Revolution (1949-1966)**

When Mao Zedong proclaimed the founding of the People's Republic of China, he received active support from a vast majority of Chinese citizens. For building 'a new society', the new government launched a Three-anti Campaign<sup>23</sup> which was immediately followed by a Five-anti Campaign<sup>24</sup> to consolidate CCP's power and to solve the problems of poverty and poor management.<sup>25</sup>

Of the many social groups that were targeted the intellectuals suffered the most. Soon after the Three-anti Campaign and Five-anti Campaign, the intellectuals became targets of dictatorship of proletariat. According to many scholars, the CR had its roots in

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<sup>21</sup> Adrian Hsia, p. 17.

<sup>22</sup> Liu Binyan, *Liu Binyan de zizhuan* (Autobiography of Liu Binyan), (Taiwan: Times Cultural Press, 1990), p. 142.

<sup>23</sup> The Campaign launched in 1951 was anti-corruption, anti-waste, and anti-bureaucratism.

<sup>24</sup> The Campaign launched in 1952 was anti-bribery, anti-tax evasion, anti-fraud, anti-theft of state assets, and anti-leakage of state economic secrets.

<sup>25</sup> See Schrecker, pp. 166-83.

the early days of the PRC, mainly due to the political education by the CCP.<sup>26</sup> The educational policy that the CCP adopted in the 1950s was designed to eradicate the distinction between mental and physical work, so as to force the intellectuals to acquire a working class outlook, while enabling the workers to acquire a capacity for intellectual thought. The CCP implemented this policy by means of political education. In other words, the education process and every aspect of social life were politicized.<sup>27</sup> The “Thought Reform” targeting China’s leading intellectuals in 1950<sup>28</sup> led to the campaign to “Let a hundred flowers bloom” (May 1957) and the Anti-rightist Campaign (June 1957).<sup>29</sup> This period was surely crucial for the intellectuals, because virtually every political movement turned out to be a deadly weapon hitting the Chinese intellectuals hard.

The 1950s ended with a failure of the Great Leap Forward. This failure occurred due to Mao’s false science and false promises.<sup>30</sup> Other factors that contributed to the failure include the withdrawal of Soviet assistance due to political disputes between the

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<sup>26</sup> See Anne Thurston, *Enemies of the People: The Ordeal of the Intellectuals in China's Great Cultural Revolution* (Harvard University Press, 1987), see also Adrian Hsia, Anita Chan.

<sup>27</sup> See Adrian Hsia, p. 60.

<sup>28</sup> See Adrian Hsia, p. 39, ‘After 1949 the state assumed control of all schools together with their teaching staffs. At that time there were approximately two hundred universities in China; 41 per cent of these were still privately owned, as were 56 per cent of secondary schools. The first thing that had to be done was re-educate the teachers, and in 1950 some 200,000 ‘bourgeois’ intellectuals were given political education.’

<sup>29</sup> Anti-rightist Campaign begins, striking first at those who had taken Mao’s “Hundred Flowers” remark literally; the movement to root out the “White Flags” follows. This political campaign was targeted against intellectuals who had criticized the Communist Party. During this campaign, one-half million or more people were labeled “rightists”, resulting in jail terms or lengthy periods of manual labor in the countryside. The “Rightist” label made its bearer unemployable, effectively ending many careers.

<sup>30</sup> Jasper Becker, *Hungry Ghosts: Mao's Secret Famine* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), p. 59, “Mao said the Chinese could get there [the final stage of Communism] in a year or two. He promised that within a year food production would double or treble.” p. 61, “Naturally enough, peasants all over China began to ask when they would get to Communism and were told soon, very soon. Such fantastic optimism was based on Mao’s fundamental ignorance of modern science.”

two countries. The failure of the Great Leap Forward led to widespread economic crises. As a result, the Chinese people fell into starvation for “three bad years”.<sup>31</sup>

Hardly had the nation recovered from the famine when “Learn from Lei Feng”<sup>32</sup> and the Socialist Education Campaign<sup>33</sup> were launched by the CCP and Mao Zedong. One of the major purposes was to train the people to become mindless, unquestioning and obedient.<sup>34</sup> As a prelude to the CR, on Nov. 10, 1965 *Wen-Hui Bao* of Shanghai published an article by Yao Wen Yuan criticizing the historical drama “*Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*.”<sup>35</sup> The CR was launched by the publication of *The May 16 Circular’s* in *People’s Daily* on May 17, 1966.

The representatives of the capitalist class who have infiltrated our Party, our government, our armed forces, and various cultural groups are actually a batch of counterrevolutionary revisionists. When the time is right, they will try to seize power, turning the dictatorship of the proletariat into one of the capitalist class. Some of these people have already been exposed by us, some have not, and some are still in our trust being groomed as our

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<sup>31</sup> According to Jasper Becker, p. 267, China has never officially acknowledged that the famine took place, nor published an estimate of the death toll. Most scholars in the West are reluctant to estimate a total number of “unnatural deaths” in Mao’s China, however, the evidence shows that he was in some way responsible for at least 40 million deaths and perhaps 80 million or more, most of them in the famine following the Great Leap Forward. See also, Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, p. 583, as China’s investment in industry rose to an amazing 43.4 percent of the national income in 1959, grain exports to the Soviet Union were also increased to pay for heavy machinery. The average amount of grain available to each person in China’s countryside, which had been 205 kg in 1957, ... dropped to 156 kg in 1961. The result was famine on a gigantic scale, a famine that allegedly claimed 20 million lives or more between 1959 and 1962. See also, Lester R. Brown, *Who will Feed China?* (New York: Norton & Company, 1995), p. 38, “official records now show that 30 million Chinese starved to death during 1959-61.”

<sup>32</sup> Mao Zedong issued the call: ‘Learn from Lei Feng!’ in March 1963 after the PLA soldier’s death of an accident. Thereafter, Lei Feng (1940-1962) was upheld as a model for emulation by the entire Chinese people.

<sup>33</sup> According to the Political Bureau of the CCP Central Committee that convened a national working conference on December 15-18, 1964, “the socialist education movement in both the cities and rural areas should be called in short the ‘four clear-ups’ and their contents were defined as clear-ups in the political, ideological, organizational and economic fields.” See *History of the Chinese Communist Party — A Chronology of Events (1919-1990)*, p. 314. See also, Shrecker suggests that the ‘four clear-ups’ was the first sign of the CR, p. 181.

<sup>34</sup> Jasper Becker, p. 281, “Lei Feng, his dearest wish was to be a rustless cog in the great machinery of socialism and his most heroic attribute was a mindless, unquestioning obedience.”

<sup>35</sup> The article labeled the drama, written by Wu Han, Vice Mayor of Beijing, as a big “anti-Party poisonous weed”.

successors. They are Khrushchev types and they are sleeping right next to us. All levels of Party cadres must be especially aware of this point.<sup>36</sup>

The CR was the outcome and the culmination of all previous political movements. The Chinese people, especially youth, accepted the revolutionary rhetoric of the CCP without any hesitation. This is because, by the time the CR broke out, the stage had long been set. The Chinese youth had their heroes to emulate: Chairman Mao's good soldier Lei Feng, who endlessly performed good deeds and recorded them in his diary, and many others, including Liu Wenxue who sacrificed his life as he protected a collective vegetable plot from a wicked landlord.<sup>37</sup>

In her study of the Red Guard generation, Anita Chan observes that, up until the outbreak of the CR, the political education system in China was such that the students learned by rote instead of by thinking. They obeyed their teachers absolutely, because the teachers represented the Party. They had become extremely self-conscious of every action they took, out of an anxiety to please the leadership of the Communist Youth League and to avoid being criticized for being "backward" or "nonconformist."<sup>38</sup> One of Chan's informants recalled: "it comes with birth; the moment you were born you should be loyal to the Party. Why should you think about it, right? Like you were born with hair, and you never ask yourself why do I have hair...I'm telling you now that I didn't think much about loyalty to the Party, though at the same time I was naturally faithful."<sup>39</sup> Students were aware that a good political record would be helpful in securing admission to post-

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<sup>36</sup> See Harry Harding, "The Chinese State in Crisis", in *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 15, p. 133. Original from "Central Committee Notification of the Chinese Communist Party" May 16, 1966, People's Daily, May 17, 1966.

<sup>37</sup> Richard King, in Liu Sola, *Chaos and All That* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), p. 131.

<sup>38</sup> Anita Chan, p. 65.

<sup>39</sup> Anita Chan, p. 110.

secondary education. Year after year, since millions of students (both primary and secondary) were unable to continue their education due to limited employment opportunities, many teenage graduates had much difficulty in finding a proper job. Leaving school meant losing hope, so remaining in school was the only choice.<sup>40</sup> To earn the chance for staying in school the students never stopped competing. For politically ambitious activists, a different lesson to be learned was this: “attack first, not merely to be safe but to climb the ladder of political success.”<sup>41</sup> Therefore, when the CR arrived the students had accumulated much experience about political movements. The education of China’s youth in the years prior to the CR helped to pave the way for the human tragedy that followed.

## **2.2 Five stages of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976)**

The CR officially began in early 1966 and ended with the death of Mao Zedong in 1976. Opinions differ as to how the CR should be categorized in terms of stages. For instance, Roberts has divided the active phase, from 1966-1969, into four periods.<sup>42</sup> In this thesis, I choose to divide the CR into five stages with events clearly demarcating historic periods and distinct features.

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<sup>40</sup> Adrian Hsia states, “1957 was a particularly bad year for Chinese education. Both the junior and senior secondary schools, and the universities, were overcrowded, and it is claimed that some 4 million primary school pupils, 800,000 junior secondary school pupils, and 90,000 senior secondary school students were unable to continue their education.” P. 50.

<sup>41</sup> Anne Thurston, p. 71.

<sup>42</sup> J. A. G. Roberts, p. 251, “The CR officially began in early 1966 and ended with the death of Mao Zedong in 1976. Its active phase, from 1966 to 1969, may be divided into four periods: until August 1966, a period of maneuvering; from the Eleventh Plenum until the end of the year, a period of confrontation; from January 1967 until mid-1968, seizures of power; and from mid-1968 until the Ninth Party Congress in April 1969, the reconstruction of the political system.”

### 2.2.1 Big-character Poster and Formation of the Red Guards

On June 2, 1966, a commentary appeared in the *People's Daily*, titled "A great revolution that touches the people to their very souls." It hailed the 'big-character poster' put up by Nie Yuanzi and six others of the Philosophy Department of Beijing University on May 25 as the first Marxist-Leninist poster in the whole country. The poster was reproduced in full in major newspapers across the country. It proclaimed that the Great Proletarian CR was a struggle between the antagonistic world outlook of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, which invariably resulted in one vanquishing the other. This revolution, the editorial declared, was a serious struggle to shatter all schemes for the ideological restoration of capitalism. Specifically, the revolution was supposed to accomplish the following: (1) to dig out the ideological roots of revisionism, (2) to strengthen the dictatorship of the proletariat, and (3) to defend Mao Zedong's thought.

From that point on, big-character posters became prevalent across the country.

Responding to this big-character poster [by Nie Yuanzi, et al.], the students of Beijing schools and universities, successively formed organizations as the Red Guards, their oath was:

We are the guards of red power. Chairman Mao of the Party Central Committee is our mountain of support. Liberation of all mankind is our righteous responsibility; Mao Zedong Thought is the highest guiding principle for all our actions. We swear to protect the Party Central Committee and to protect our great leader Chairman Mao. We resolutely will shed our last drop of blood!

The Red Guards, beginning as an autonomous group of middle-school students who had organized to achieve collective strength, now stepped onto the Chinese political stage.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Yan Jiaqi and Gao Gao, pp. 57-62.

On August 18, 1966 The *New China News Agency* defined “Red Guards as revolutionary mass organizations set up in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution by the college and middle school students of the Capital [Beijing].”<sup>44</sup>

In Beijing, from August 19 onwards, the Red Guards started an unprecedented movement to “Destroy the Four Olds” (old thought, old culture, old customs, and old practices), which spread rapidly throughout the country.

This “political duty” went to their heads, and they went on to do as they wished, backed by orders from high. Some of them even organized “reformatories through labor” and private courts within schools to beat or even kill innocent people.<sup>45</sup>

From the country’s President Liu Shaoqi to ordinary residents, hardly anybody was not involved, as either victimizer or victim. According to a government source, within two months, that is, in August and September of 1966, as many as 1,772 innocent people were beaten to death by the Red Guards in Beijing alone, and 33,695 homes were raided in the same city.<sup>46</sup> From the CCP Central Committee to provincial governments and city halls as many as two-thirds to three-quarters of the leaders were persecuted.<sup>47</sup> Wang Youqin observes: “...among the interviewees everybody says that they cannot name a single school that did not witness the beating of teachers. In other words, events such as beating teachers happened in every school in China.”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Asia Research Centre, *The Great Cultural Revolution in China*, Compiled and edited by the Asia Research Centre (Hong Kong), (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle CO., 1968), pp. 437-42.

<sup>45</sup> Yan Jiaqi and Gao Gao, pp. 81-2.

<sup>46</sup> *Beijing Daily*, December 20, 1980.

<sup>47</sup> Zheng Yi, *Jiang Zemin Chuanqi*, (Tales of Jiang Zemin), (Hong Kong: Mingchuang Press, 1992), p. 70.

<sup>48</sup> Wang Youqin, “1966, Revolution of the Students Beating Teachers” (*Huaxia wenzhai* or *HXWZ*, February 10, 1996).

### 2.2.2 Great Liaison of the Red Guards—High Tide of Mao Worship

According to the *New China News Agency*, on August 18, 1966 Mao Zedong reviewed the Red Guards in Tiananmen Square at a mass rally to celebrate the CR.

“Chairman Mao Zedong, our great leader, great supreme commander and great helmsman, joined one million revolutionary people from Beijing and other parts of the country in the magnificent Tiananmen Square in Beijing, the centre of the proletarian revolution and capital of our great motherland.” That day, Tiananmen Square was covered by the sea of red flags, amidst the shouting “Long live Chairman Mao!” by the Red Guards.<sup>49</sup>

Beijing became the revolutionary-networking centre overnight, and was flooded with the Red Guards from every corner of China. Being “the guests of Chairman Mao”, they came to catch a glimpse of the Supreme Leader. Astonishing as it may seem now, free meals and free transportation were offered and free accommodations were available wherever they went. This was known as the Great Liaison of the Red Guards and it marked the highest tide of Mao’s personality cult.<sup>50</sup>

### 2.2.3 Youth Going to the Countryside

The destruction of “the four olds”, the Great Liaison and the power seizure resulted in, among other things, the collapse of China’s education system.<sup>51</sup> However, the handling of a huge number of students came to be a formidable task. On December 22, 1968, the *People’s Daily* ran the following advice from Mao:

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<sup>49</sup> Asia Research Centre, pp. 437-42.

<sup>50</sup> After the August 18 audience for the Red Guards, many other receptions were staged, on August 31, September 15, October 10 and 18, and November 3, 10, 11, 25, and 26. The total number of the Red Guards who attended the receptions mounted to over thirteen million. See Wang Yaozhong and Guo Shaotang (eds) *Shenzhou sishinian — zen biancheng zheyang de guojia* (Our Nation’s Forth Years — How Could China Turn into Such a Country), (Hong Kong: Bai Xing Cultural Enterprise LTD, 1990), p. 279.

<sup>51</sup> The peak of the radical program was the “January power seizure” by the Shanghai worker rebel team on January 9, 1967.

There is a need for the educated youth to go to the countryside to receive reeducation from the poor and lower middle peasants. We must persuade the urban cadres and others to send their offspring who are junior and senior second-school and university graduates to the countryside. Let's have a mobilization. Comrades of the various levels ought to welcome them.<sup>52</sup>

Mao Zedong's decision resulted in driving the Red Guards out of the cities. Having been "the guests of Chairman Mao" only two years earlier, they now turned into youth requiring re-education. Former Red Guards joined their victims in jail and on prison farms.<sup>53</sup> Between 1968 and 1978, a total of 17 million educated youth went up to the mountains and down to the villages.<sup>54</sup>

When the students went to the countryside from cities, they endured serious sufferings and many even lost the right to live a normal life. Female youths were treated much worse than the male. In his book, *High Tide—The Youth History*, Liu Xiaomeng identifies the problems that educated youth faced as follows:

1. The youth management system was confusing and it failed badly. The old management system was destroyed and no new one was put in place;
2. The funds (allocated for educated youth) disappeared, because the money was squandered and stolen by local officials;
3. The life of the educated youth was very difficult in that many of them could barely survive by themselves;
4. Youths were persecuted. Apart from poor living conditions and hard physical labor, their safety was a grave issue. Female youths were in greater danger than males;
5. Abnormal death was a big problem: the death rate among educated youth reached 0.3% due to accidents, fighting, suicides and homicide;

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<sup>52</sup> See *A Glossary of Political Terms of the People's Republic of China*, compiled by Kwok-Sing Li, translated by Mary Lok, (Hong Kong: The Chinese University press, 1995), pp. 396-7.

<sup>53</sup> John E. Schrecker, p. 183.

<sup>54</sup> Martin King Whyte, "Urban Life in the People's Republic", in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 15, p. 723.

6. The system of Class origin was a widespread concern, as family background decided the fate of the individual;<sup>55</sup> and
7. Nepotism was rampant. Joining the army was possible from within an inner circle, officials' children were able to go to factories and colleges, and the "back-door" was wide open for a long time.<sup>56</sup>

It is, therefore, natural that recalling the suffering and bitter life that the youth endured in the countryside became the mainstream theme in the youth literature (*zhiqing wenxue*) by those youth writers after the late 1970s.<sup>57</sup>

#### 2.2.4 Return to City—(WPS-student) and the End of the CR

After being sent to the countryside, some youths managed to go back to cities by a variety of ways, for instance, joining the People's Liberation Army (PLA), becoming a worker-peasant-soldier (WPS) student or being hired as a worker in a factory. As a new term, the WPS-student emerged and became an important concept associated with the CR. The phenomenon of WPS-students was in existence for quite a few years, and the opportunity was mostly available to officials' children because they were able to leave the countryside and factories to enroll as college students through the "back-door" (nepotism).

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<sup>55</sup> Mao designated "five bad categories" in his speech of 30 January 1962 to a central work conference, "Those whom the people's democratic dictatorship should repress," he declared, : are landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionary elements, bad elements and anti-Communist rightists... These classes and bad people comprised about four or five percent of the population. These are the people we must compel to reform." Cited in Stuart R. Schram, "Mao Zedong's Thought from 1949 to 1976", in (*Cambridge History of China, vol. 15*), p. 74. From that point on, the children of the "five bad categories" were the *hei wu lei* and the children of the workers, peasants, cadres, army men and revolutionary martyrs were *hong wu lei* (or "five red categories").

<sup>56</sup> Liu Xiaomeng. *Dacao—zhongguo zhiqing shi* (High Tide—The Youth History), (Beijing: China Science and Social Press, 1998), pp. 275-54.

<sup>57</sup> Deng Xian, *Zhongguo zhiqing meng* (The Dream of the Urban Youth in China), (Beijing: Renmin wenxue Press, 1993); Ye Xin, *Cuotuo sui yue* (*The Wasted Years*), (Beijing: Chinese Youth Press, 1981); Zhu Lin, *Xin hua* (Heart Blossoms), (Changsha: Hunan People's Press, 1983) and *Wuye de Langcang jiang*, (*The Sobbing Lancang River*), (Taipei: Zhiyan Press, 1990); some works translated into English, for example, Link, Perry, ed. *Stubborn Weeds: Popular and Controversial Literature after the Cultural Revolution*, (Bloomington: Indiana university Press, 1983); Richard King, ed., *There and Back Again: The Chinese "Urban Youth" Generation* (Renditions, No. 50, Autumn 1998).

The last stage was the end and failure of the CR. Less than one month after Mao Zedong's death (September 9, 1976), on October 6, 1976, the Communist Party, which was at that time controlled by Chairman Hua Guofeng and Marshal Ye Jianying, arrested the Gang of Four, consisting of Mao's widow, Jiang Qing, former factory worker Wang Hongwen, and radical theorists Yao Wenyuan and Zhang Chunqiao. These four people were officially blamed for starting and directing the CR and convicted in a highly publicized trial in 1980-81. Mao's death and the fall of the Gang of Four marked the end of the CR.

### **Chapter 3 The Nature of Memoir Writing: A Theoretical Overview**

This chapter presents a review of relevant literature on memoir writing. The purpose is to provide a theoretical foundation for the thesis and to reflect on some Western scholars' thinking regarding Westerners' memoirs as well as on traditional Chinese memoirs. Since the relation between autobiography and fiction has been perceived as being a complex, rich, and mutually beneficial one in the West,<sup>58</sup> it is of importance to begin the chapter with an overview of the Western thinking regarding memoirs.

#### **3.1 Western Tradition of Memoir**

William Zinsser states: "Memoir is the art of inventing the truth."<sup>59</sup> 'Memoir' customarily refers to a combination of personal history and the history of events. A memoir may be a family essay written in a fictional way, or it can be a description of the narrator's actions and thoughts as well as emotions. Although the roots of the memoir lie in the realm of personal essay, modern literary memoirs also have many of the characteristics of fiction. Moving both backward and forward in time, re-creating dialogue, switching back and forth between scene and summary, and controlling the pace and tension of the story, the memoirist keeps her reader engaged by employing the many skills of a storyteller. So, broadly speaking, a memoir can be viewed as a hybrid form with elements of both fiction and essay, in which the author speaks out her mind, and recounts changes, plus turning points in her life, perhaps in a conversational manner. The modern

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<sup>58</sup> Wu Pei-yi, *The Confucian's Progress: Autobiographical Writings in Traditional China* (Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 165.

<sup>59</sup> William Zinsser, *On Writing Well* (Harper Perennial, 1998), p. 137.

literary memoir is frequently a very ‘shaped’ book, a narrative which focuses on one particular event or crisis.<sup>60</sup>

Although the term “autobiography” is often used interchangeably with memoir,<sup>61</sup> there are differences between memoir and autobiography. Certainly some memoirs may be book-length and, therefore, may contain as much material as many autobiographies do. Nevertheless, a memoir is different from an autobiography, and the difference has to do with the choice of subject matter.

The designation of a work as “autobiography” implies that the writer attempts to capture all the essential elements of that life. A writer’s autobiography, for example, is not expected to deal merely with the author’s growth and career as a writer but rather with the facts and emotions connected to family life, education, relationships, sexuality, travels, and inner struggles of all kinds. An autobiography is sometimes limited by dates, but not by theme.<sup>62</sup>

Memoir, on the other hand, is not required to replicate a person’s entire life. In fact, one of the important skills of memoir writing is the selection of the theme or themes that will bind the work together. Although few authors write more than one autobiography, it is common that many have composed several memoirs.

Another major difference between memoir and autobiography is expounded by Gore Vidal in his memoir *Palimpsest*. “A memoir is how somebody remembers one’s own life,” he observes, “while an autobiography is history, requiring research, dates, facts

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<sup>60</sup> Jane Taylor McDonnell, *Living to Tell the Tale: A Guide to Writing Memoir* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), p. 104.

<sup>61</sup> Robert Folkenflik (ed.), *The Culture of Autobiography: Constructions of Self-Representation* (Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 5.

<sup>62</sup> Judith Barrington, *Writing the Memoir—From Truth to Art* (Portland, Oregon: The Eighth Mountain Press, 1997), p. 22.

double-checked.”<sup>63</sup> Although most memoirs do require research, the verifiable facts are not generally as important as they are in autobiography. Personal essays, journals and diaries, autobiographical writing, and especially what is now called “fictive autobiography”, as well as the memoir and creative nonfiction in all forms, are making a comeback.<sup>64</sup> However, in spite of their differences in names and themes, memoir and autobiography are alike in being personal narrative written by the subject about the author himself or herself in a literary form.

### 3.2 A Historical Overview

The known history of autobiography is believed to have begun around 3000 BC in Egypt and is created by the Egyptians. The furnishings for a rich man’s tomb included statues and pictures of himself and a first person account of his life carved on tablets and walls. Egyptian autobiographies underwent many changes. Ahuri, daughter of an Egyptian pharaoh, was allegedly the first person to have introduced the forms of fiction into her autobiography, because she told her story in the first person as if she were already dead and recalling her life.<sup>65</sup>

In the West, Saint Augustine,<sup>66</sup> with his *Confessions*, written about 399 AD, established the dominant type of autobiographical writing. Unlike the Egyptian approach, the Christian form of the confession was an admission of sin in the hope of being saved. It was Benvenuto Cellini (1500-1571), who first shaped a non-religious autobiography as a

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<sup>63</sup> Gore Vidal, p. 5.

<sup>64</sup> Jane Taylor McDonnell, p. 11.

<sup>65</sup> Tristine Rainer, *Your Life as a Story—Discovering the “New Autobiography” and Writing Memoir as Literature* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarche /Putnam, 1997), p. 21.

<sup>66</sup> Saint Augustine, (Latin name Aurelius Augustinus, 354-430). Cited in Tristine Rainer, pp. 22-3.

work of art for its own sake and as a reflection of self, rather than as an instrument to convert the reader. Cellini's masterpiece did not establish a tradition of autobiographic writing in his time, but it definitely influenced memoirs of subsequent centuries.<sup>67</sup> In 1781, Jean-Jacques Rousseau produced a new model for the male life history. His *Confessions* tell the story of a secular hero creating himself. He keeps to the Augustinian inner story of the hero's emotional life and conflicts, but just like Cellini, his account is without St. Augustine's sense of sin and the trajectory of his life is described as moving not towards God but towards worldly fame and success.

As a philosophical autobiography, Rousseau's *Confessions* is certainly the one most often studied in relation to the development of autobiography.<sup>68</sup> Beginning in 1766, it first seems to contradict the author's famous philosophy: "that human nature is inherently good; and that it is the inequities and abuses of society that corrupt humankind. Rousseau's intent in writing was peculiarly modern. He had no intention of keeping any secrets, not even the most private incidents of his life. Without any desire to convert the reader, he simply wanted to enable the outside world 'to behold a man as he really was in his inmost self.'"<sup>69</sup> But "Rousseau in the act of writing is still troubled, frightened, suspicious and vindictive."<sup>70</sup> "With Rousseau, autobiography for the first time draws freely on the resources of imaginative literature and, in so doing, begins to realize its full potential as a new literary form."<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Benvenuto Cellini (1500-1571), *The Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini*. Cited in Tristine Rainter, p. 23-4.

<sup>68</sup> William C. Spengemann, *The Forms of Autobiography: Episodes in the History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), p. 223.

<sup>69</sup> Tristine Rainter, p. 24.

<sup>70</sup> Jerome Hamilton Buckley, *The Turning Key: Autobiography and the Subjective Impulse Since 1800* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 35.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.* p. 37.

In recent decades a form known as ‘New Autobiography’ has appeared. Strictly speaking, it is neither autobiography nor novel, but a combination of both. Paul Eakin observes that twentieth-century autobiographers no longer believe that autobiography can offer a faithful and unmediated reconstruction of a historically verifiable past.<sup>72</sup> Instead, it expresses the play of the autobiographical act itself, in which the materials of the past are shaped by memory and imagination to serve the needs of present consciousness. Autobiography in our time is increasingly understood as both an art of memory and an art of the imagination; indeed, memory and imagination become so intimately complementary in the autobiographical act that it is usually impossible for autobiographers and their readers to distinguish between them in practice.<sup>73</sup>

### **3.3 Recent Developments**

Since the 1950s literary critics have displayed great interest in determining whether autobiography and memoir formed a genre in their own right, or were just a defective form of fiction. Fresh understanding has enhanced the importance of autobiography. First, the use of linguistic or rhetorical models for literature displaces poetry from its privileged position and makes “nonfiction” as viable a form of literature (or discourse) as poetry, drama, or the novel. Second, and opposed to this development, the emphasis on “reality,” especially reality presented in a seemingly direct form, has led to strong interest in the reading of autobiography.<sup>74</sup> However, the following problems have been recognized. First, “many scholars found it too subjective, too self-serving, to be

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<sup>72</sup> Paul Eakin, p. 5.

<sup>73</sup> Paul Eakin, p. 5.

<sup>74</sup> Robert Folkenflik, p. 11.

a trustworthy source of information.” Some book-reviewers agreed with the scholars that most autobiography is too personal to be of much value, either as literature or as a source of information.”<sup>75</sup> Second, “autobiographies present a better picture of the author at the time of writing than at the times written about.”<sup>76</sup> A consensus has been reached that “all literature is essentially autobiographical, fiction and poetry are less personal, more “objective” or “universal”, than autobiography per se.”<sup>77</sup>

Both men and women write autobiographies. The American scholar Carolyn Heilbrun believes that 1973 marked a turning point for modern women’s autobiography: in her *Plant Dreaming Deep*, published in 1968, May Sarton provides an extraordinary and beautiful account of her adventure in buying a house and living alone.<sup>78</sup> However, Heilbrun argues, Sarton was dismayed as she came to realize that none of the anger, passionate struggle, or despair of her life was revealed in the book. She had not intentionally concealed her pain; as a matter of fact, she had written in the old genre of female autobiography, which tends to find beauty even in pain and to transform rage into spiritual acceptance. Later, Sarton realized that, in ignoring her rage and pain, she had unintentionally been less than honest. Changing times helped bring her to this recognition. In her next book, *Journal of a Solitude*, she deliberately set out to recount the pain of the

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<sup>75</sup> William C. Spengemann, p. 190.

<sup>76</sup> William C. Spengemann, p. 192.

<sup>77</sup> William C. Spengemann, p. 212.

<sup>78</sup> May Sarton, *Plant Dreaming Deep* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1968), p. 15, “I had lived my way into all this house is and holds for me for eight years before I brought ‘the ancestor’ home... But now, as I lifted the frame and set Duvet de la Tour in his place, it was on a note of triumph, as if a piece of music where many themes have been woven together was just coming to a satisfying close.” pp. 60-1, “People often ask me if I am not afraid, and I can honestly say that I have almost never been ... When I sit down at the deal table, there are flowers; there is a bottle of wine, and the table has been carefully set as if by a good servant. There is a book open to read, the equivalent for the solitary of civilized conversation. Everything has been prepared as if for a guest, and I am the guest of the house.” p. 161, “How could I ever be lonely here?”

years covered by *Plant Dreaming Deep*.<sup>79</sup> Thus, Heilbrun believes that ‘the publication of *Journal of A Solitude* in 1973 may be regarded as the watershed in women’s autobiography.’<sup>80</sup>

For women, writing about their own lives is often fraught with difficulty in avoiding presentation of typical womanly attitudes.<sup>81</sup> “These women accept full blame for any failures in their lives, but shrink from claiming that they either sought the responsibilities they ultimately bore or were in any way ambitious.”<sup>82</sup> After all, telling the truth requires courage. Many women had no models on which to form their lives. They also had trouble in offering themselves as models because many of them failed to tell the truth about their lives.<sup>83</sup> “And in all of them the pain of the lives is, like the successes, muted, as though the women were certain of nothing but the necessity of denying both accomplishment and suffering.”<sup>84</sup>

Contemporary readers are keenly interested in personal stories, so memoirs are appearing in ever greater numbers. “But laying bare the soul with absolute frankness is

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<sup>79</sup> May Sarton, *Journal of a Solitude* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1973), p. 12, “*Plant Dreaming Deep* has brought me many friends of the work (and also, harder to respond to, people who think they have found in me an intimate friend). But I have begun to realize that, without my own intention, that book gives a false view. The anguish of my life here—its rages—is hardly mentioned. Now I hope to break through into the rough rocky depths, to the matrix itself. There is violence there and anger never resolved. I live alone, perhaps for no good reason, for the reason that I am an impossible creature, set apart by a temperament I have never learned to use as it could be used, thrown off by a word, a glance, a rainy day, or one drink too many. My need to be alone is balanced against my fear of what will happen when suddenly I enter the huge empty silence if I cannot find support there. I go up to Heaven and down to hell in an hour, and keep alive only by imposing upon myself inexorable routines.”

<sup>80</sup> Carolyn G. Heilbrun, *Writing A Woman's Life* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988), pp. 12-13. Heilbrun explains that, “I call it the watershed not because honest autobiographies had not been written before that day but because Sarton deliberately retold the record of her anger.”

<sup>81</sup> Carolyn G. Heilbrun, p. 22, “Women writing of their own lives have found it no easier to detach themselves from the bonds of womanly attitudes.”

<sup>82</sup> Carolyn G. Heilbrun, p. 23.

<sup>83</sup> Carolyn G. Heilbrun, p. 25.

<sup>84</sup> Carolyn G. Heilbrun, p. 23.

still an act of courage for women and for men too, though for somewhat different reasons.”<sup>85</sup> To write honestly about one’s life requires that the writer works at and enhances her artistic skills so that the memoir can effectively communicate the deep layers of truth that are rarely part of conventional social discourse. It also requires that one knows how to deal with many of the ethical questions that arise when people speak about questions like “Can I really tell the story or will it hurt my mother?”<sup>86</sup>

Stephen Spender points out that self-revelation of inner life is perhaps a dirty business, is regarded by most people as so dangerous that it cannot be revealed openly and directly in their autobiography.<sup>87</sup> Judith Barrington also observes, “as soon as I started to write about my own life, I understood that to speak honestly about family and community is to step way out of line, to risk accusations of betrayal, and to shoulder the burden of being the one who blows the whistle on the myths that families and communities create to protect themselves from painful truths. This threat was like a great shadow lurking at the corner of my vision, as it is for anyone who approaches this task, even before the writing leads them into sticky territory.”<sup>88</sup> Indeed, writing about family secrets is one of the most difficult dilemmas any author is likely to face, and almost all families have secrets they wish to keep hidden.<sup>89</sup>

People often struggle to define the boundary between memoir and autobiography, but they rarely ask about the difference between memoir and fiction, perhaps because it seems obvious that one is true and the other fabricated. Rainer says, “it was one thing to

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<sup>85</sup> Judith Barrington, p. 11.

<sup>86</sup> Judith Barrington, p. 12.

<sup>87</sup> Stephen Spender, “Confessions and Autobiography”, in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, James Olney, ed. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 115-22.

<sup>88</sup> Judith Barrington, p. 12.

<sup>89</sup> Jane Taylor McDonnell, p. 148.

write about one's life and call it fiction; it was another to incorporate the imagination into writing about one's life and call it autobiography, and it took more courage."<sup>90</sup> However, not everything in a memoir is true. Imagine who can remember the exact dialogue that took place many years ago? So one is permitted to make up dialogues in a memoir. It has been pointed out that "the understanding that biographies are fictions, constructions by the biographer of the story she or he had to tell, has become clear."<sup>91</sup>

Invariably, in a memoir, the author must stand behind her story by declaring to the world: this indeed happened and this is true. In essence, the primary difference between memoir and fiction is that a memoir author dares to say, "this story is true" while a fiction writer must state, "this is imaginary."

It is, perhaps, safe to say that telling the truth, and only the truth, is a real challenge for writers of autobiographies and memoirs alike. McDonnell recalls that, once in a class, her teacher responded as follows to a student who complained that he simply could not remember an experience he needed to write about: "Well, just make it up," the teacher said. "Then see if it is true."<sup>92</sup>

Like fiction writers, memoirists have an ultimate goal, that is, to expose their story to as many readers as possible. One way to keep readers turning the page is to place the family in the context of history. Jim Armour says, "Family histories help us understand what our own life has been about and what we have contributed. It helps our readers know us better."<sup>93</sup> Employing novelists' techniques may be effective as well. According to Kirk

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<sup>90</sup> Tristine Rainer, p. 30.

<sup>91</sup> Carolyn G. Heilbrun, p. 28.

<sup>92</sup> Jane Taylor McDonnell, p. 45.

<sup>93</sup> Kirk Polking, pp. 169-70.

Polking, he suggests that when writing a memoir one should use the fiction techniques as well as understand what the readers want to read first.<sup>94</sup> In other words, to suit some readers, not only are the writing skills important, it is equally important for the writer to imagine and make up a story as if to recall the actual story.

Given some of the problems that persist in autobiography writing, John Sturrock poses a tough question: “should we feel bad when we theorize about autobiography?” His answer is,

We should sense in ourselves a discomfort that is specific to theorizing about autobiography, a discomfort brought on by responding with the hardheadedness of the analyst to a kind of writing that, more than any other, is intended to work on our sympathies. But this sense of discomfort is not a reason for giving up the theoretic study of autobiography; quite the reverse, it is a feeling around which we might one day make a successful theory of autobiography to turn.<sup>95</sup>

Clearly, there are some problems that still remain in the theory of autobiography. In arguing that autobiography and memoir are not telling the whole truth, I am going to examine the memoirs written by Chinese authors concerning the CR. I seek to show below that the memoirs fail to present, truthfully, what happened in spite of the fact that some of the accounts have found their way into Chinese history textbooks adopted by many universities in the West.

### **3.4 Traditional Chinese Memoir**

Memoir is not unique to the West. The earliest record related to biography and autobiography in China may be traced to *Shiji (Historical Records)* by the Grand

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<sup>94</sup> Kirk Polking, pp. 175-6.

<sup>95</sup> Robert Folkenflik, p. 21.

Historiographer Sima Qian (145 – 86 B.C.). *Shiji* is certainly the most famous Chinese historical work, and one which established a formal pattern for later histories. Sima Qian's objective was, as he stated himself, to place on record the achievements of great men.<sup>96</sup> With a deep understanding of the complexities of history-writing he did not contend himself with a mere narrative history. He divided his work into five sections: (1) the basic annals, (2) the chronological tables which assembled and set out the important political events of the periods concerned, (3) the treatises, the purpose of which was to deal with the history of important matters in the eyes of the government, such as the calendar, the waterways, state religious practices, and so on, (4) the section known as the Hereditary Houses, which mainly deals with the history of the feudal states that existed before China's unification by Shi Huangdi of the Qin Dynasty; and (5) a final section, which was largely a collection of biographies of famous men (i.e., *lie zhuan*).<sup>97</sup> Refusing to view himself as heir to a distinctive history writing tradition, Sima Qian included an autobiographical note in the final chapter and shed light on how he came to write the *Historical Records*.<sup>98</sup>

Little is known about Sima Qian's early life, but records seem to indicate that as a young boy, he studied the writings of ancient Chinese scholars from his father Sima Tan, and found great inspiration in the teachings of Confucius. He even traveled to Confucius' hometown, where he was moved to see his carriage and other personal belongings. As an official Sima Tan had spent years compiling documents relating both to the Han court and

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<sup>96</sup> Sima Qian, *Shiji*, (Historical Records), a new translation by Raymond Dawson, (Oxford University Press, 1994), p. xv.

<sup>97</sup> Sima Qian, p. xvii.

<sup>98</sup> Sima Qian, p. xvi.

to previous dynasties. When Sima Tan was close to death, he requested his son Sima Qian to continue the history he had begun, saying, “I fear that the historical materials will be neglected and lost. You must remember and think of this.” Aware that Chinese tradition required children to carry on the honor of their family, Sima Qian promised to fulfill his duty to his father, as well as his obligation to the state. In 107 B.C., at the age of 38, he became China’s Grand Historian.<sup>99</sup> Subsequent historians, especially those who were commissioned to compile the so-called dynastic, or standard, histories have followed the style and format of this massive work.<sup>100</sup> Sima Qian’s style is the easy narrative of a storyteller, and he enlivened the one hundred thirty chapters of his records with dialogue and description. He not only used official documents, but also gathered information from sources in private libraries and from interviews with scholars and elders.

Although Sima Qian used original documents and texts in his research, he seems also to have included some elements that we would now regard as fiction. For example, the story of “Chen Sheng will be King”.<sup>101</sup> However, “First-person narratives such as travel literature, eyewitness accounts of campaigns or missions, or autobiographical fiction did not exist in ancient China.”<sup>102</sup> It was not until the late thirteenth century that autobiography began to move to a modern direction.<sup>103</sup> It was becoming susceptible to the allures of imaginative literature. Such a development was in keeping with some of the characteristics of the late Ming (1368-1644) intellectual climate.<sup>104</sup> For example, the famous traveler Xu Xiake (1566-1641) represents the most “objective” strain of travel

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<sup>99</sup> See Maria Brightman, “Sima Qian the Great Historian” (*Calliope*, Oct. 98, Vol. 9 Issue 2), pp. 6-8.

<sup>100</sup> Wu Pei-yi, p. 4 .

<sup>101</sup> See Maria Brightman, p. 6. See also, Sima Qian, pp. 141-2. (Footnote 97).

<sup>102</sup> Wu Pei-yi, p. 12.

<sup>103</sup> Wu Pei-yi, p. 13.

<sup>104</sup> Wu Pei-yi, p. 165.

writing by his *youji* (i.e., travel notes). His voluminous travel diaries give a wealth of accurate detail. In sharp contrast, he makes little mention of his personal life.<sup>105</sup> In the early 1800, one memoir stands out in terms of significant influence inside and outside of China: Shen Fu's *Six Records of a Floating Life* (*fu sheng liuji*).<sup>106</sup>

In his account, Shen Fu tells his readers his own life, his happy but unfortunate marriage, the death of his wife Yun and his enforced separation from his two children, and his struggles as private secretary to a magistrate. Shen Fu wrote his memoir around the year 1809, and the book was discovered by Yang Yinchuan during the Daoguang reign period (1821-1851). Unfortunately, it was an incomplete book because only four chapters were preserved instead of a total of six chapters. In 1870, Yang asked the *Shanghai Shenbao* to print the book. The book gained widespread recognition and popularity when it was republished in 1923 thanks to Yu Pingbo's brilliant editing.<sup>107</sup>

The published book came at a very propitious time, for the Chinese reading public had then just acquired a taste for the autobiographical form through translations of Western works as well as a new appreciation of some types of traditional sensibilities rediscovered in the aftermath of the May Fourth movement. Shen Fu's long lost work rapidly became the most widely read as well as most frequently translated Chinese autobiography. It was even made into a film—a distinction shared by no other pre-modern Chinese autobiography. This book is definitely an important link between traditional and

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<sup>105</sup> Leo Ou-fan Lee, "The Solitary Traveler: Images of the Self in Modern Chinese Literature", in *Expressions of Self in Chinese Literature*, edited by Robert E. Hegel and Richard C. Hessney, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 283.

<sup>106</sup> Shen Fu, *Fu sheng liuji* (*Six Records of a Floating Life*), translated by Leonard Pratt, (New York: Penguin Books, 1983).

<sup>107</sup> *Zhongguo wenxue dacidian* (*Dictionary of Chinese Literature*), Tianjin: Tianjin People's Press, 1991, p. 5108.

modern Chinese autobiography and touchstone for the universality of the genre.<sup>108</sup> However, “*Six Records of a Floating Life*, like most Chinese autobiographical writings, shows an ironical discrepancy between the narrator’s expressed intention and his performance.”<sup>109</sup> For example, “Shen Fu’s description of his project, reveals his belief in the transparent constancy of personal mark ‘I,’ which is supposed to be able to transcend the spatio-temporal process of differentiation and the historicity of the subject. But the ‘I,’ as part of the discourse, is embedded in the latter’s temporality, and the ‘real facts’ and ‘real sentiments’ are all issued from, and pivot around, the moment of enunciation.”<sup>110</sup>

To a Western reader, Jonathan Hall observes that, “Shen Fu’s work is strikingly heterogeneous in its amalgamation of discourses and in the apparent indirection of the narrative that is a concomitant of such heterogeneity. From this point of view its generic classification as ‘autobiography’ rather than ‘novel’ is unimportant. What is important is the negotiation of contradictions, a concern shared by novels and autobiographies alike.”<sup>111</sup> The story that he tells is one where every disaster to his blissful marriage can be traced to unjustified paternal anger, but where the narrator never says so. The relationship between the narrator and his tale thus remains undecidable. This is not an intellectual game, but rather the condition for the powerful emotional effects of the narrative.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Wu Pei-yi, p. 236.

<sup>109</sup> Chang Han-liang, “The Anonymous Autobiographer: Roland Barthes/Shen Fu”, in *The Chinese Text: Studies in Comparative Literature*, Ying-hsiung Chou (ed.), (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1986), p. 63.

<sup>110</sup> Chang Han-liang, p. 63.

<sup>111</sup> Jonathan Hall, “Heroic Repression: Narrative and Aesthetics in Shen Fu’s *Six Records of a Floating Life*”, *Comparative Criticism* 9, 1987, pp. 158-9.

<sup>112</sup> Jonathan Hall, p. 160.

Owen points out that, although a story may be told from a memory, a memory is not a story; a memory may be the occasion for such brooding and reflection, but a memory is not thought in the ordinary sense. In his book, Shen Fu makes stories out of memories, taking broken stones out of his past and shaping them into a miniature mountain where readers may dwell for a long time. Shen Fu tells the story of his and his wife Yun's life as it should have been, but he tells it as if that were how their life really was. It is memoir, a work of art that tries to hide its traces as a work of art.<sup>113</sup>

Like Western memoirs, Chinese traditional memoir and autobiography are not free of problems. Perhaps the biggest problem is the lack of defining structures. "Students of Chinese autobiography, however, are not blessed with anything even remotely comparable. They have nothing to draw upon when grappling with problems of definition, selection, or evaluation. Their temptation, then, is to lean heavily on current theories of autobiography that have been formulated without having taken into consideration anything Chinese."<sup>114</sup> However, memoir and autobiography are now seen as a problematic hybrid in the West as well as in China. This literary form may be likened to a seesaw. One seat on each end is loaded with history characterized by verisimilitude, chronology and truthfulness, and the other with imaginative literature, i.e., fiction, myth and so forth. The author decides how well this seesaw balances. It is to the authors and their memoirs concerning the CR that I turn in the remaining chapters.

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<sup>113</sup> Stephen Owen, *Remembrances: The Experience of the Past in Classical Chinese Literature* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 103.

<sup>114</sup> Wu Pei-yi, p. ix.

## **Chapter 4 A Selection of the Memoirs**

In this chapter I present two lists of the memoirs that have appeared in the West and in China in the past two decades. For the sake of easy referencing, the two groups are denoted as Memoirs written by Chinese and Published in English in the West, or MCPE, and Memoirs written by Chinese and Published in Chinese, or MCPC, respectively.

### **4.1 Memoirs Published in English**

After the death of Mao and the end of the CR, gradually China began to pursue a “Reform and Opening Up” policy. As a result, a significant number of Chinese left the country for study in the West through a variety of channels, such as going abroad for studies with official funding support (*gongfei liuxue*), visiting scholar arrangement (*fangwen xuezhe*) and privately funded studies overseas (*zifei liuxue*). Some of the people who survived the CR as victims have written memoirs. Two of the authors, namely, Yue Daiyun and Lo Fulang, are not emigrants Chinese, since after finishing their research projects in the capacity of visiting scholars they returned to China.<sup>115</sup> The others are all currently residing in the West.

13 popular memoirs listed on the next page were published in the West; of these, 10 were written by female writers (see Table 1).<sup>116</sup> One of the other three memoirs, *Son of the Revolution*, was jointly authored by Liang Heng and his former wife Judith Shapiro.

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<sup>115</sup> Yue Daiyun is currently a professor of comparative literature at Beijing University. Lo’s present residence and occupation are unknown.

<sup>116</sup> The scope of my study is focused on the CR focused memoirs published in the West as of the end of 1998. Those memoirs that are marginally concerned with the CR or published after 1998 are excluded from analysis because of space limitation or unavailability of information.

**Table 1: Thirteen Memoirs Published in English**

Author	Title	Year	Publisher
Liang Heng*and Judith Shapiro	<i>Son of the Revolution</i>	1983	New York: Vintage
Yue Daiyun	<i>To the Storm: The Odyssey of a Revolutionary Chinese Woman</i>	1985	Berkeley: University of California Press
Cheng Nien	<i>Life and Death in Shanghai</i>	1986	London: Grafton Books
Gao Yuan*	<i>Born Red: A Chronicle of the Cultural Revolution</i>	1987	Stanford University Press
Lo Fulang	<i>Morning Breeze: A True Story of China's Cultural Revolution</i>	1989	San Francisco: China Books and Periodicals
Chang Jung	<i>Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China</i>	1991	Simon & Schuster
Zhai Zhenhua	<i>Red Flower of China</i>	1992	Soho Press
Zhang Zhimei	<i>Fox Spirit: A Woman in Maoist China</i>	1992	Véhicule Press
Min Anchee	<i>Red Azalea</i>	1994	Pantheon Books
Jiang Jili	<i>Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution</i>	1997	Harper Collins Publishers
Yang Rae	<i>Spider Eaters: A Memoir</i>	1997	Berkeley: University of California Press
Ye Tingxing	<i>A Leaf in the Bitter Wind: A Memoir</i>	1997	Doubleday
Zhu Xiaodi*	<i>Thirty Years in a Red House: A Memoir of Childhood and Youth in Communist China</i>	1998	University of Massachusetts Press

\* Male authors.

Among the authors, Cheng Nien, Zhang Zhimei and Yue Daiyun may be viewed as belonging to an older generation than the others. In terms of writing style Cheng Nien and Zhang Zhimei also differ from the others in that their stories begin from the CR and roll back in time to recall their childhood and personal and family history. Another major difference is that both older women were unambiguous victims of the CR because their houses were ransacked by the Red Guards, and they lost virtually everything. Cheng Nien was deprived of freedom and was thrown into prison for seven years, suffering various hardships and illnesses. Saddest of all, she lost her only daughter Mei Ping, a young and beautiful actress of the Shanghai Film Studio, who committed suicide under extreme political pressure and persecution. Cheng Nien's ability to stand the sadness and survive was truly a miracle. Her memoir is a convincing account that tells a story about the life and death of struggles during the CR. Zhang Zhimei also lost her freedom and was badly

beaten by her students. A divorced female teacher of English, she had some foreign friends. Since she was from a banker's family, Zhang became a target of denunciation at her school and received inhumane treatment.<sup>117</sup> Yue Daiyun seems to have benefited a great deal from her English-speaking collaborator, Carolyn Wakeman, in writing her book. As a teacher at Beijing University, her account tells many details about Nie Yuanzi and the big-character-poster (see p. 12).

The other authors all belong to the 'lost generation'. When the CR broke out, they were between 8 and 16 years of age, attending either middle school or elementary school and were either Red Guards or Little Red Guards (i.e., elementary school students). Those who were Red Guards involved themselves in many events like home ransacking and the Great Liaison and were received by Mao. They went to the countryside to become so-called "re-educated youth". Some of them subsequently became worker-peasant-soldier (WPS) college students. After the CR, all of them left China for the West, principally the United States, Canada and Britain. The first of them left China in 1978, and the most recent one in 1987. The memoirs being examined in this thesis were published between 1983 and 1998.

Most of the memoirs begin from the birth of the narrators, and share the following

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<sup>117</sup> Zhang Zhimei, p. 161, "When I was first detained, I thought: 'Why me?' But I looked around and saw that my fellow victims were not just the people of my parents' generation, who had been the regular and, perhaps, inevitable targets of previous political campaigns. With the CR, the scope of attack had broadened, and my own generation was now also under the gun. The brutality, it seemed, was to be repeated from generation to generation. With this realization, I accepted my fate as inescapable, and my attitude shifted to: 'Why not me?'"

common features.<sup>118</sup> First, all of the accounts describe the narrators' experiences regarding the CR. As survivors and witnesses of the CR, all recall the main events vividly from the CR's outbreak to the fall of the Gang of Four and, in some cases, to the time they left China for the West.

Second, although the memoirs describe the madness of many people during the CR and their tremendous sufferings, most of the narrators declare that they themselves were innocent, and their family members were also innocent. Typically, they claim to be victims and portray others as oppressors.<sup>119</sup>

Third, it is generally rare that the narrators are critical of their parents. Yang Rae is, perhaps, the only exception. It is interesting to note that most of the young narrators praise their fathers more than their mothers, although, generally speaking, mothers made greater efforts and sacrifices than did fathers in caring for their children. The reason for the narrators to eulogize their fathers may have something to do with the fact that their fathers enjoyed higher official positions and social status than their mothers. Eulogizing his or her parents, especially the father, is one of the typical features, for instance, in the case of Zhu Xiaodi, Chang Jung, Zhai Zhenhua, Liang Heng, Gao Yuan, and Jiang Jili. As far as Liang Heng was concerned, his father pushed his mother out the door at the time when she most needed them—when she was condemned as a rightist. They divorced and

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<sup>118</sup> Chang Jung's account is an exception because it is a description that spans across three generations: her grandmother, mother and herself, although the CR remains a main focus of her book. Her story begins with her grandparents, and even her grandmother's parents. Chang's approach seems rather successful because it helps Western readers better understand an entirely different culture. Yang Rae first tells her readers that she was residing at that time in the USA before beginning to recall her experience of the CR and her family story in China.

<sup>119</sup> Zhai Zhenhua led other Red Guards in beating innocent people to death (pp. 97-101); however, she claims that she herself was a victim.

their three children were all assigned to the father's custody, no matter how much she begged her husband to let her take along even one of their children. Worse still, his father did not even let any of the children see her any more. As a result, the children had to visit their mother without their father's knowledge. Nevertheless, Liang Heng in his account never found any fault with his father.

Gao Yuan and his brother both joined the army thanks to his father's influence due to his high position—the head of a county. This was significant, especially when most of the students were forced to stay in the countryside. In Gao's account his father was not only a loving father but also an upright CCP official and a good leader of the county. People were really envious or jealous of those who did not need to go to the countryside and could join the army instead during the CR. In her memoir, Zhai Zhenhua complained many times at the fact that she was not the child of a PLA leader, although her father was a high official in Beijing. Had he been in the military, she would have joined the army instead of going down to the countryside in Yan'an.

Chang Jung tells the readers that her mother was physically abused during the CR, [the abuse] “did not come from people working under her, but mainly from ex-convicts who were working in street workshops in her Eastern District—robbers, rapists, drug smugglers, and pimps” (p. 328). We could not know whether Chang changed the story in order to make her mother's image look good to the effect that her mother was on friendly terms with people within her work unit, and only criminals hated her and hit her. But it is known to everybody that people were beaten by the Red Guards, or colleagues, or even friends, or someone who was close to them. Since beating people was considered a revolutionary act, only the revolutionaries were qualified to join this kind of acts.

Zhu Xiaodi surpasses everybody else in the act of praising his father. He goes so far as to paint his father as handsome as the late Premier Zhou Enlai, who was known for his charisma.<sup>120</sup> Zhu describes his father as being as good a public speaker as an excellent spokesman for the former Foreign Minister Chen Yi,<sup>121</sup> and as exceptional an educator as Fu Lei.<sup>122</sup> Furthermore, Zhu's father was said to be able to speak fluent English. All in all, in Zhu's account his father was perfect in every respect. However, Zhu's memoir revealed that when his father was sent to Suzhou he refused to transfer his household residence status (*hu kou*) with him and still kept it in Nanjing.<sup>123</sup> It makes one wonder whether Zhu really understands his father's generation when he presents the stories about the officials and intellectuals of his father's generation. According to the review by Richard King, "the author's loyal and honest reporting of his father's career and his own life also unconsciously reveals the flaw that was to contribute to the downfall of so many of the establishment of intellectuals in the mid-1960s: their lack of self-awareness."<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> According to Zhu Xiaodi, p. 6, his father was "energetic, articulate, and extremely patriotic. He was also handsome and elegant, liked by old and young, men and women, and looked very much like Zhou Enlai. All my life, I have heard how much my father looked like Zhou. In fact, in the early 1980s, a filmmaker came to our home to see if my father would star in a movie featuring Zhou."

<sup>121</sup> Zhu Xiaodi, p. 29, "My father had a reputation of being an excellent speaker. He often delivered speeches at schools, colleges, factories, hospitals, and other places. Many university professors came to know him by first listening to one of his speeches and then becoming friends with him. Among the prominent Chinese Communists, former Foreign Minister Chen Yi was known as an excellent public speaker. When he gave speeches in Nanjing after the Communist takeover, the hall would always be crowded. A decade later, many people said that my father was the best local speaker since Chen."

<sup>122</sup> Zhu Xiaodi, p. 35. "In his letters to his pianist son, Fu Lei wrote page-long comments appreciating Mao's philosophical ideas and wishing his son would benefit from these ideas as well. My father did the same with my sister, too, although not in letters but through talks."

[Fu Lei (1908-1966), was best known as the translator of novels by Honoré de Balzac and Romain Rolland].

<sup>123</sup> The system of the household residence was a most serious system in China. This system was the root cause in that so many youth had to go to the countryside. One was tied to where one's ID required him/her to stay, and the system still persists. Nanjing city is larger than Suzhou in size, and its official status has also been higher than Suzhou. What his father did was illegal according to China's rules at that time.

<sup>124</sup> Richard King, "Review of Zhu Xiaodi's Memoir", *China Review International*, vol. 7, No. 1, Spring 2000, pp. 282-4.

Fourth, some of the authors blithely accepted the benefits from privilege by himself/herself but were shocked when they found themselves in a position of the unprivileged. In other words, they were jealous of those who got more benefits than they did.<sup>125</sup>

Fifth, the narrators with the Red Guards background seldom express regret in their memoirs. The only exception is found in Yang Rae's *Spider Eaters*, which discloses a deep regret and a sense of guilt. The author tells her readers that in spite of the fact that she is currently living in the USA, she still can not forget what happened in the ten mad years; she fears that nightmares will likely accompany her for the rest of her life. Similar to Yang, Zhai Zhenhua also presents in her account what she did during the CR, including raiding homes, criticizing and beating innocent people, and even getting involved in killing people. However, Zhai never admits to guilt. Instead, she complains that all the evils she did were the fault of the Gang of Four, insisting that she was too young to do otherwise at that time.

Sixth, the bitter life of the countryside was described as a common theme by the narrators, who differed from one another in personal experience. It appears that Yang was the only one of the memoir-writers who volunteered to go to the countryside. Ye Tingxing and Yang stayed for five and six years, respectively, longer than all the others. And, the WPS student experience was also a common subject being described in the memoirs.

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<sup>125</sup> Zhu was shocked when a woman got a better chance than he did since her father-in-law's position was higher than Zhu's father's. Zhai always complained about those people who joined the army instead of going to the countryside. Chang Jung was very proud of her becoming a WPS student as well as going abroad through the 'back door'.

Finally, the last feature common to all the narrators is that they have all left China in search of a new life in the West (except Yue and Lo).

#### 4.2 Memoirs Published in Chinese

The other group of memoirs consists of those written in Chinese by Mainland China authors who were also victimized during the CR. Some of these memoirs have been translated into English and published in the West. The memoirs all focus on the CR. They describe the main events vividly, including personal experience and family stories. Most of the stories begin with the outbreak of the CR and the authors invariably claim that they were victims during or even before the CR.<sup>126</sup>

**Table 2: Eight Memoirs Published in Chinese**

Author	Title	Year	Publisher
Ba Jin	Suixiang lu (Vol. 1) (Random Thoughts)	1980	Beijing: Renmin chubanshe
Yu Luojin	Yige dongtian de tonghua (A Chinese Winter's Tale)	1984	Hong Kong: Joint Publishing Co.
Yang Jiang	Ganxiao liuji  (A Cadre School Life: Six Chapters)	1980	<i>Dangdai</i> Issue 3, 1980: 59-107
		1986	Hong Kong: Renditions Paperbacks
		1981	Hong Kong: <i>Wide Angle</i> , Issue 103, April 1981.
Feng Jicai	Yibai ge ren de shinian (Ten Years of Madness)	1982	Hong Kong: Joint Publishing Co.
		1987	Hong Kong: Xianjiang Press
		1996	China Books
Ma Bo	Xuese huanghun (Blood-Red Sunset—A Memoir of the Chinese Cultural Revolution)	1987	Beijing: Workers Publishing House
		1995	New York: Penguin Books
Liang Xiaosheng	Yige hongweibing de zibai (Confessions of a Red Guard)	1988	Sichuan Literature Press
Chen Xuezhao	Surviving the Storm: The Odyssey of a Revolutionary Chinese Woman	1990	New York: M. E. Sharpe
Liu Binyan	Liu Binyan de zizhuan (Autobiography of Liu Binyan)	1990	Taiwan: Times Cultural Press

Compared to the authors of the MCPE, these authors are generally older, and mostly male. They are professional writers and have published many works. One of the

<sup>126</sup> Chen Xuezhao (1906- ) and Liu Binyan (1925- ) were both denounced as Rightists in 1957.

key differences between the two groups is the diverse styles employed and also the shorter book length than that of the MCPE. Generally, the works in the category of the MCPC focus on a short period or deal with a limited number of events during the CR, or as a collection of short memoirs. Some even do not have a detailed content and a chronology, nor do they attempt to explain the CR to their readers.

Born in 1905, Ba Jin is the oldest of the authors in the group. His *Random Thoughts* is a collection of short articles, which include some well known articles such as “In Loving Memory of Xiao Shan” and “We Must Never Forget.” In the general introduction of this book, the author tells his readers the following,

I want to write a small book, one that I will call *Random Thoughts*. In it I will record feelings, ideas and reactions just as they occur to me (p. xiii).  
...never before in the history of man nor in any other country have people had such a fearful and ridiculous, weird and tragic experience as we during the CR. No one in China was spared, many narrowly escaped death, and everyone was pushed to the extremes of endurance. We have a right as well as a responsibility to write down what happened to us. Such a record is not merely for our own sake, but for the benefit of others as well as for future generations. It is imperative that nothing like it ever happens again. I will keep on writing *Random Thoughtss*. I have made a start by analyzing and criticizing myself. Writing is a journey of discovery; it makes me dig deeper and deeper into my soul (p. xvi).

Yet the further I delve into myself the more difficult and painful it becomes. It is not easy for me to write, but I am determined to persevere, to dig deeper, and I am confident that my efforts will not be in vain. Some time ago this book was criticized for “lacking literary value.” I am not going to attempt to defend myself here, let me just say that I began with the most important thing that any writer can possess: an artistic conscience (p. xvii).

‘Forget, forget everything!’ shout as loud as you will. No one can forget those harrowing years (p. 175).

Born in 1911, Yang Jiang pursued her studies of literature in England and France. In 1949 she was awarded the post of professor of foreign literature at Qinghua University

in Beijing; in 1953 she was transferred to the literary section of the Academy of Social Sciences. As a translator and critic, she authored many short stories, essays, memoirs and translation pieces. *Don Quixote* by the Spanish writer Miguel Cervantes (1547-1616) was translated by Yang Jiang and was published by the People's Literature Publisher in 1978. *Ganxiao liuji (A Cadre School Life: Six Chapters)* is, perhaps, the first articulate account of life in a cadre school.<sup>127</sup> It appears that the style of this book is inspired by Shen Fu's *Six Chapters on a Floating Life*. The book has reappeared in several editions since it was first published in Hong Kong. Yang Jiang "records her two years life in the cadre school lucidly, attempting neither to praise nor condemn, with no desire to theorize or declaim. Instead of detailing the words and deeds of others, she simply chronicles the lives of herself and her husband."<sup>128</sup> Yang's account "pervades one with a sense of sorrow and loss; we lament as she does but do not feel dejected, we sense her indignation at being wronged but find in this no hate or reproach. Every word is eloquent in its sincerity and truthfulness."<sup>129</sup>

Feng Jikai's *Ten Years of Madness* is a collection of oral short memoirs, with the narrators all being victims during the CR and grass-root-level persons. Feng (1942- ) made it clear at the beginning of the book that his job was merely that of a recorder and every narrator was the main character. In so doing, Feng enables readers to communicate with the narrator directly. Every story that appears in the collection differs from others in terms of coverage, but the stories fall into several categories, such as the life of the educated

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<sup>127</sup> The reform camps were established for intellectuals throughout China from 1970 following Mao's "May 7 Directive" of 1966.

<sup>128</sup> Yang Jiang, Introduction by Geremie Barmé, p. 8.

<sup>129</sup> Min Ze, "After Reading *A Cadre School Life: Six Chapters*", Beijing: *Dushu* (Reading), September 1981, p. 11.

youth, the sufferings of the city dwellers, the miseries of senior citizens, and so on. Before he started writing the book, the author received more than 4,000 letters from people who offered their stories. Feng interviewed several hundred of them. According to the author, the book is meant to be a description of the real life of the average Chinese and a reflection of the wishes and sentiments of the ordinary people.

Liu Binyan's autobiography begins with his birth. Born in 1925 in North China, he joined the Communist Party before 1949. As a professional journalist, Liu was criticized by the CCP in 1957 as a "rightist". His political life was at the lowest point during the CR, but eventually he was rehabilitated after the end of the CR. After disappearing from China's publication media for twenty-one years, Liu's name made a come-back in 1979 when *Ren yao zhijian* (People or Monsters?) aroused great interest among the readers.<sup>130</sup> However, in the early 1980s, he was criticized for the third time for his "Bourgeois Liberalism", and was expelled from the CCP. His autobiography was written in Chinese and was published in Taiwan. It appears that Liu was under less political pressure than the others when he wrote his book. He lamented that there was only one good year (1956) in the PRC's history, but that, the next year's anti-rightist movement had pushed the Chinese intellectuals into a bitter sea (p. 76). Regarding the number of victims of the anti-rightist movement, Liu Binyan points out in his book, "the official reported that there were half a million people in total. Actually they were over one million victims"(p. 114). He challenges Mao's policy, arguing that it was against the interests of the people to launch

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<sup>130</sup> Liu Binyan, *Ren yao zhijian* (People or Monsters?), *Renmin wenxue*, 1979, No. 9. This story describes a 49-year-old woman, Wang Shouxin, managed to organize a huge crime network and secured support from virtually every level of the local CCP. See Liu Binyan, *People or Monsters? And other Stories and Reportage from China after Mao*, Perry Link, (ed.), translated by James V. Feinerman with Perry Link, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983).

one political movement after another with only very short intervals in between. (p. 142). To understand the CR, Liu questions, “Lin Biao and the Gang of Four were the counter-revolutionaries, but Mao Zedong who had personally launched and led the CR, was not a counter-revolutionary. The ten-year disaster makers were the leaders of the Central Committee of the CCP; it was also the leaders of the Central Committee of the CCP who ended the CR. Most of the officials were in power during the three periods: before the CR, during the CR and after the CR” (p. 197).

Chen Xuezhao was born in 1906, and she became “a favorite author in the 1920s and 1930s of young Chinese students like herself.”<sup>131</sup> She spent eight years from 1927-1935 in France studying literature. *Surviving the Storm: A Memoir* was written by Chen Xuezhao in 1980 in Hangzhou, China, and published in New York in 1990. Hers is a “memoir of the travails of her life in post-1949 China—from the land reform, through the anti-rightist movement, to the CR—in a spare, relatively graded voice, not the florid lyric voice of the young vagabond of Shanghai and Paris that she once was. Among the many memoirs being published by Chinese intellectuals these days, this one by Chen, although naturally intent on setting straight her own story and talking about her famous friends, is rare in that it does not attempt to mobilize our sympathies around her suffering as a rightist. The result is moving because of the author’s very straightforwardness, her frank self-doubt, and her unflagging courage.”<sup>132</sup> “To many of us,” Kinkley says, “Chen Xuezhao’s memoir will read like a tale of slow death, at times even self-willed death, of

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<sup>131</sup> Chen Xuezhao, *Surviving the Storm: A Memoir*, translated by Ti Hua and Caroline Greene, (New York: An East Gate Book, 1990), p. vii, Introduction by Jeffrey C. Kinkley.

<sup>132</sup> Chen Xuezhao, in front flap, by editor Jeffrey C. Kinkley.

an artist.”<sup>133</sup> This account might well be disappointing to some readers because it does not denounce the Maoist CCP regime in an explicit manner. However, the book makes an effort to arouse readers’ sympathy for the author’s suffering.<sup>134</sup> Gao Mobo points out that “above all she seems to have left a lot unsaid because she wrote the book in Mainland China.”<sup>135</sup>

There are only three younger authors in the MCPC group. They are Liang Xiaosheng, Ma Bo and Yu Luojin, aged around 17 to 20 in 1966. Except for Yu Luojin, who just started working as a new worker before the CR, Ma and Liang were high school students and became Red Guards during the CR. All three were involved in many events and went to the countryside for many years. Ma and Yu were jailed and Liang became a WPS student.

As with the MCPE group, all three memoirs by the younger authors in the list (Table 2) represent the authors’ experience of the CR, but the first difference is that they only deal with one major theme in each of the three accounts (for details see Chapter 5). The second difference is that they portray their parents as nothing but ordinary human beings, just like everybody else in China. Actually, some of them spare no efforts in exposing the dark side of their parents. As an intensely personal account, Yu Luojin’s book is one of the first post-CR texts to deal with the experience of a young woman during the CR. Her family was persecuted in the early years of the CR. Her adored elder brother, Yu Luohe, was arrested and subsequently executed for his opposition to the CCP’s

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<sup>133</sup> Chen Xuezhao, p. xxvi.

<sup>134</sup> Chen Xuezhao, on p. 128, after the CR, in 1978 and 1979, Chen still used the typically CR language, for example, “Since I had discovered my many weaknesses through study, I resolved to refine my comprehension of the works of Marx, Lenin, and Mao.”

<sup>135</sup> Gao Mobo, p. 55.

practice of condemning people on the basis of the class designation of their parents and grandparents (*chu shen lun*). This book was incomplete and was revised many times by the publishers. Many of the sections were omitted by the editors because of their excessive revelation of the wrongdoing of the CCP and the narrator's reflections on society; also gone are the more violent details of the narrator's first sexual encounter and description of the sensual joys of her adulterous liaison.<sup>136</sup>

Ma Bo's *Blood-red Sunset* deals with his entire miserable life of eight years in the countryside from 1968 to 1976. As a professional writer, Liang Xiaosheng has published many short stories and medium-length novels in China, focusing mainly on youth-related themes. The memoir by Liang that has been included in this thesis deals with the theme of Red Guards. It covers only the first two years of the CR. It is worthwhile noting that Yu Luojin, Ma Bo and Liu Binyan have also left China and now reside in the West.

\* Please note that two of the memoirs mentioned in this chapter, namely, *Autobiography of Liu Binyan* and *Confessions of a Red Guard* by Liang Xiaosheng, were published in Chinese only; English translations of quotations are my own.

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<sup>136</sup> Richard King, "Review Article: Scandalous Books by a Scandalous Woman", *Modern Chinese Literature*, Vol. 3 No. 1 & 2, (Spring/Fall 1987), p. 153.

## **Chapter 5 Selected Memoirs: Characterization and Analysis**

In providing an analytical framework for the purpose of examining the memoirs, I select three works from each of the two groups to undertake specific analysis. The six writers are Chang Jung, Yang Rae and Zhai Zhenhua for the first group and Liang Xiaosheng, Ma Bo and Yu Luojin for the second group. All belong to “the lost generation”, have similar backgrounds, and were involved in the whole process of the CR from the very beginning to the end. In other words, they had personal experience of every single movement of the five stages of the CR as outlined in Chapter 2. This feature makes it possible to compare the authors’ viewpoints and the themes running through their memoirs. The structure of this chapter is as follows. First, I present and compare some biographical information that is provided by the authors (see Table 3). Second, I introduce and summarize each of the selected memoirs from three aspects: the writer, the work, and the reader.

### **5.1 Biographical Information on the Selected Memoirs’ Authors**

The three memoirs chosen from the MCPE group are written by Chang Jung, Yang Rae and Zhai Zhenhua, respectively. I focus on these three because the backgrounds of the three women are remarkably similar. Specifically, (1) they all live in the West currently and two of them are married to Westerners (the other unknown); (2) In 1966 they were 14, 15 and 16 years of age, or 15 on average, and they all were junior high school students; (3) As Red Guards, all were involved in the Great Liaison and had the opportunity of seeing Mao in person. Furthermore, all of them went to the countryside to receive the so-called

re-education from peasants; (4) Two of them became WPS students; (5) After the CR was over, they all left China for the West and have chosen to live overseas ever since.

The three memoirs under the category of MCPC are written by two male writers, and one female, namely, Liang Xiaosheng, Ma Bo and Yu Luojin. Similar to the three women in the MCPE group, the two male authors were high school students and became Red Guards at the beginnings of the CR. Graduating from a vocational school, Yu Luojin became a new worker and was never a Red Guard. All of them were involved in many of the events of the CR, and went to the countryside; two of them were jailed; and one of the three became a WPS student. This similarity in background will serve as the basis for comparing the authors' views and the themes running through their memoirs. The biographical information on the six writers is provided in tables below.

**Table 3: Profile of Selected Memoir Writers**

<b>Biographical Information on the Chinese Authors (MCPE)</b>					
<b>Name</b>	<b>Date of Birth</b>	<b>Birth Place*</b>	<b>Family Background</b>	<b>Age in 1966</b>	<b>Red Guard Status</b>
Chang Jung	Mar. 25, 1952	Yibin, Sichuan	Revolutionary cadre	14	Yes
Yang Rae	Dec. 1, 1950	Beijing	Revolutionary cadre and intellectual	16	Yes
Zhai Zhenhua	Feb. 16, 1951	Shandong (moved to Beijing in 1960)	Revolutionary cadre	15	Yes

<b>Biographical Information on the Chinese Authors (MCPC)</b>					
<b>Name</b>	<b>Date of Birth</b>	<b>Birth Place*</b>	<b>Family Background</b>	<b>Age in 1966</b>	<b>Red Guard Status</b>
Liang Xiaosheng	Sep. 22, 1949	Harbin	Worker	17	Yes
Ma Bo	Aug. 22, 1947	Hebei (moved to Beijing at age of 4)	Intellectual	19	Yes
Yu Luojin	1946	Beijing	capitalist	20	No

\* In addition to place of birth, other relevant information is provided to further indicate the author's profile.

Table 3: Profile of Selected Memoir Writers (continued)

<b>Biographical Information on the Chinese Authors (MCPE)</b>						
<b>Name</b>	<b>Great Liaison Involved</b>	<b>Ransacking</b>	<b>Ransacked</b>	<b>Resorting to violence</b>	<b>Period spent in the countryside</b>	<b>Countryside settled in</b>
Chang	Yes	Yes	No	No	1969-early 1972	Ningnan, and Deyang, Sichuan
Yang	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	summer of 1968-1973	Great Northern Wilderness, Heilongjiang
Zhai	Yes	Yes	No	No	1969-1971	Yan'an, Shaanxi

<b>Biographical Information on the Chinese Authors (MCPC)</b>						
<b>Name</b>	<b>Great Liaison</b>	<b>Ransacking</b>	<b>Ransacked</b>	<b>Resorting to violence</b>	<b>Period spent in the countryside</b>	<b>Countryside settled in</b>
Liang	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	1968-1974	Great Northern Wilderness, Heilongjiang
Ma	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	1968-1976	Inner Mongolia
Yu	No	No	Yes	No	1970-1976	Great Northern Wilderness, Heilongjiang

Table 3: Profile of Selected Memoir Writers (continued)

<b>Biographical Information on the Chinese Authors (MCPE)</b>					
<b>Name</b>	<b>WPS-student</b>	<b>University attended</b>	<b>Specialization</b>	<b>Year leaving China &amp; destination</b>	<b>Marriage status (at time of writing)</b>
Chang	Yes, 1973	Sichuan University	English	1978, Britain	Married
Yang	No	Graduate School of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences	Chinese Literature	1981, USA	Divorced
Zhai	Yes, 1972	Zhongshan University	Engineering	1980, Canada	Divorced and remarried

<b>Biographical Information on the Chinese Authors (MCPC)</b>					
<b>Name</b>	<b>WPS-Student</b>	<b>University attended</b>	<b>Specialization</b>	<b>Year leaving China &amp; Destination</b>	<b>Marriage Status</b>
Liang	Yes, 1974	Shanghai Fudan University	Chinese literature	Not applicable	Married
Ma	No	Beijing University	Chinese literature	1989	Married
Yu	No	No	Nil	1985	Divorced and remarried

Table 3: Profile of Selected Memoir Writers (continued)

<b>Biographical Information on the Chinese Authors (MCPE)</b>					
<b>Name</b>	<b>Partner</b>	<b>Memoir's Title</b>	<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Year published</b>	<b>Current residence</b>
Chang	Jon Halliday (English)	<i>Wild Swans - Three Daughters of China</i>	New York: Simon & Schuster	1991	London, UK
Yang	Unknown	<i>Spider Eaters: A Memoir</i>	University of California Press	1997	Dickinson College, USA
Zhai	Charles B. Daniels (Canadian)	<i>Red Flower of China</i>	New York: Soho Press	1992	Vancouver, Canada

<b>Biographical Information on the Chinese Authors (MCPC)</b>					
<b>Name</b>	<b>Partner</b>	<b>Memoir's Title</b>	<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Year Published</b>	<b>Current Residence</b>
Liang	Chinese	<i>Confessions of a Red Guard</i>	Sichuan Literature Press; Hong Kong: Yiyuan Press	1988	China
Ma	Chinese	<i>Blood-Red Sunset—A Memoir of the Chinese Cultural Revolution</i>	Beijing: Workers Publishing House; New York: Penguin Books	1987	China
Yu	Chinese	<i>A Chinese Winter's Tale</i>	Beijing: Dangdai, 2, 1980, pp: 59-107	1980	France

## 5.2 Self-Portraits of the Memoirs' Writers

As noted by Howarth, an autobiography may be likened to a self-portrait, which is concerned with at least three elements: *the writer, the work, and the reader*. Instead of standing alone individually, all three are required to form an integrated chain of relationships that progress from motive, to method, and to meaning.<sup>137</sup> To interpret, Howarth means to say that the author produces a self-portrait in a literary form on the basis of his or her personal life. Brenner and several other scholars go further by stating that, as a personal life story, a memoir aims to restore the interdependence of individual and collective subjectivity. Although the act of a memoir's writing implies that the author and the narrator are the same individual person, there is a split between the author and the narrator in mental space.<sup>138</sup> Therefore, for the memoirs regarding the CR, it is a real challenge to lay bare the personal experience as it was occurring while putting the narrator into the full mentality of the writer himself/herself.

Sharing a rather similar background (see the foregoing section), the six writers that have been selected present their stories with marked differences in respect of standpoints and positions. As witnesses of the CR, the authors differ in their perspectives. Those residing in the West wrote their memoirs specifically for Western readers, whereas the authors living in China certainly targeted their writings to Chinese readers. Notwithstanding the common features (see Chapter 4) insofar as the characters are

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<sup>137</sup> See William L. Howarth, "Some Principles of Autobiography", in James Olney (ed.), *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 84-5.

<sup>138</sup> Rachel Feldhay Brenner, *Writing as Resistance: Four Women Confronting the Holocaust* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University press, 1997), pp. 119-120; see also, Chapter 3 of this thesis.

concerned, the techniques and the themes of the six memoirs are unique in many other respects.

Broadly speaking, one of the primary themes of the three books in the MCPE category is to deal with the Red Guard Movement in a very detailed manner. When covering the first stage of the CR, the narration dwells on the big-character posters, the formation of the Red Guards, destroying the four olds, struggle meetings, home raiding, Red Terror, factional battles and so on. When it comes to the second stage of the CR, focus is placed on the Great Liaison of the Red Guards and the reception by Mao Zedong. If the early years of the CR constitute the first major theme of the MCPE memoirs, the second major theme is concerned with the events of the third and fourth stages of the CR. Specifically, the “Rustication Movement”, in which the youth being sent to the countryside experienced hard physical labor and a bitter life, is a pre-dominant theme, and this ‘Rustication Movement’ provoked the act of returning to the city (before the end of the CR) by means of becoming a worker, a soldier, or a college student. The third and also the last major theme is the process of the authors’ leaving China for the West in search of a new life.

By comparison, the three books of the MCPC category are much narrower in scope because each of them only deals with one single theme. Specifically, Liang Xiaosheng limits this book to his two years of a Red Guard’s life, which ended as he left his hometown for a military farm.<sup>139</sup> Ma Bo’s book covers a longer period but it focuses on

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<sup>139</sup> Other volumes of writing by Liang Xiaosheng cover different periods would not include in this study since they are novels.

his eight years' life in a military farm in Inner Mongolia.<sup>140</sup> Yu Luojin's book deals with the CR's theme in a manner that is significantly different from Liang's or Ma's. She focuses on her personal life, for example, her love affair and marriage.<sup>141</sup> To understand the way the memoirs differ from one another in presenting the experiences at the time they were occurring, I introduce each of the six works briefly and examine them from the following three aspects: the writer, the work and the reader. Then I proceed to textual analysis by comparing two major themes running through the memoirs.

**Table 4: Three Elements of the Memoirs**

Memoir	Writer (Characters)	Work*	Reader
		Historical period	
<i>Wild Swans</i>	Writer's grandmother, mother and herself	1870-1978	Western
<i>Spider Eaters</i>	Writer herself	1950-1980	Western
<i>Red Flower of China</i>	Writer herself	1950-1980	Western
<i>Confessions of A Red Guard</i>	Writer himself	1966-1968	Chinese
<i>Blood Red Sunset</i>	Writer himself	1968-1976	Chinese
<i>A Chinese Winter's Tale</i>	Writer's brother and herself	1966-1974	Chinese

Notes: \* For detailed analysis and comparison on the works see Chapter 6.

### 5.2.1 *Wild Swans* — A Popular Account

*Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China* (hereinafter referred to as *Wild Swans*) by Chang Jung was published in 1991. In a very formal style Chang manages her writing with detailed contents, a standard family tree, a map of China and a professionally prepared chronology which covers the period from 1870 to 1978. As a vivid storyteller,

<sup>140</sup> Ma Bo also wrote another memoir, *Xue yu Tie* (Blood and Iron), (Beijing: China Social and Science Press, 1998). It tells the story from his birth (1947) to the CR (right before he went to the military farm).

<sup>141</sup> In addition to this memoir, Yu Loujin has published many other writings, for example, *Yiqie weile ai*, (All for Love), *Zhongguo zhi chun* 35, May 1896; *Chuntian de tonghua*, (Spring Tale), (Hong Kong: Yuanfang chubanshe, 1983).

Chang tells a miserable story of three generations of women (the author, her mother, and her grandmother) in modern China, beginning from the birth of Chang's grandmother, until 1978 when Chang left China for Britain.

The woman of the first generation, the author's grandmother, lived a tragic life, which started at the time of the last Chinese Emperor. This historical context had the powerful effect of grabbing readers' attention. The marriage of the author's grandmother not only fell in the category of old China's arranged marriages but it was also extraordinary. As a concubine, she was married to a head of the police of a warlord government and her husband was 33 years older than she—a 15-year-old girl at that time. Predictably, she was mistreated and forced to flee her husband's family. She never returned, and 11 years later she found herself being married to a man who was 39 years older than she. As a result of this marriage, the old man became indifferent to his son's suicide. During the CR Chang's grandmother became a victim and died in 1969.

The second "daughter of China" was the author's mother. 1949 was the year when the Chinese Communists won the civil war over the nationalists, marking the beginning of a new era. Thereafter, China began to be isolated from the West, and the country did not open its door to the outside world until 30 years later. Therefore, the inside of China was like a puzzle of immense interest to Westerners. Against such a background, Chang painted her mother as a dynamic woman leader. No wonder that readers would take interest in such a character. Also, she was the daughter of the memoir's first character who had already been introduced to the reader.

The third woman of the book is the writer herself. Born into a CCP official's family of Yibin, Sichuan in February 1952, Chang Jung turned into a Red Guard during

the CR and she was involved in many events of the CR. She was a re-educated youth in the countryside, a worker in a factory, a WPS student at Sichuan University and was sent to UK for studies with official funding support in 1978. It is worthwhile noting that she was one of the first batch of young people being sent abroad after China re-opened its door to the rest of the world. Unlike many other accounts, Chang's story is a heroic one in some ways with a happy ending by her marriage to an English historian in London.

Anne Thurston declared that, "*Wild Swans*, quite simply, is the best book of its genre since 1949."<sup>142</sup> Since its publication in 1991 in the UK, Chang's book immediately hit the best seller list, and it is said to have sold more than 6 million copies.<sup>143</sup> To the *Time* magazine reviewer, Chua-Eoan it appears that Chang tells her stories by making visible, intimate and immediate the pain and horror that are cloaked in the silence of China's recent history. Chua-Eoan states that the great effects have been achieved even if the author simply tells stories and anecdotes, in a straightforward chronological order, with little contrivance, providing real-life fables as open-ended answers to the puzzles of 20th century China.<sup>144</sup> Admittedly, Chang's book represents some powerful testimonies to the tragic forces that have molded the lives of so many Chinese people.<sup>145</sup>

Chang's Western approach employed in the book may have received strong influence from her historian husband. On page 3, the author reveals to readers something about the process of her writing:

Jon Halliday has helped me create *Wild Swans*. Of his many contributions, polishing my English was only the most obvious. Through our daily discussions, he forced me into greater clarification of both stories and my

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<sup>142</sup> Anne Thurston, "Review of *Wild Swans*", *China Quarterly* 132, Dec. 1992, pp. 1207-8.

<sup>143</sup> *Asiaweek*, 06/28/96.

<sup>144</sup> See H. Chua-Eoan, "The Art of Memoir", *Time*, 10/28/91, Vol. 138, Issue 17, p. C7.

<sup>145</sup> Evans, H, "Hot-house History", *TSL*, 3/13/92, Issue 4641, p.32.

thoughts, and helped me search the English language for the exact expressions.

Thurston argues, “What makes this book so special is Jung Chang’s impeccable focus on detail and the unwavering integrity with which the story is told. She stares truth in the face and tells her tale without judgement or moralizing, self-pity or hate.”<sup>146</sup>

Clearly, Chang’s stories suit the taste of Westerners, but ethnic Chinese readers may have a different opinion.<sup>147</sup> “However, one can easily be captivated by the book’s stories and vividness without realizing that Chang is also interpreting history. She is interpreting history within a framework of discourse that is entirely different from what existed at the time when the events took place. Her interpretation of the CR, for instance, is the same as that of present Chinese authorities.”<sup>148</sup> This is an important reason why her account conflicts with that of many others. First, she denounces the CR, but as one of the Red Guards, she could get away and escape from the madness easily. Second, as one of the youths in the countryside, she could get away from the hard physical work without much difficulty and even get free food to survive. Third, she was very proud of her resemblance to a wild swan to the effect that, unlike most of her contemporaries, she could easily get privileges through the back-door (nepotism). The case against Chang Jung has been made by Gao and Kong. However, when we read Chang Jung’s stories, it is necessary to ask whether her case was unique or representative. If her case was a very special one, how could she represent and interpret the history of the entire CR and modern China? If her case was a typical one why did her stories conflict with that of many others?

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<sup>146</sup> Anne Thurston, “Review of Wild Swans”, p. 1207.

<sup>147</sup> Kong Shuyu, “Isn’t it more realistic to assume that Chang has altered her story to suit the wishes of hindsight and of today’s Western readers, and her memory has changed past events to make her behaviour seem more decisive and less shameful?”

<sup>148</sup> Gao Mobo, p. 53.

Below I quote a few of the author's words, bearing in mind Zinsser's suggestion, "quote a few of one's gaudy and unusual sentences and let the reader see how quirky they are."<sup>149</sup>

Right at the outbreak of the CR, when most students were involved in writing big-character-poster, Chang was an onlooker. "I was frightened of the wall posters' overwhelming black ink on giant white sheets of paper, and the outlandish and violent language,... I began to play truant and stay at home" (p. 279).<sup>150</sup> In the "destroy four olds", she turned and walked away (p. 291). When the students were beating their teacher, "A couple of classmates nudged me to go to the front and join in the hitting. I ignored them. I sneaked out of the room"(p. 294). Does this sound truthful? Did her schoolmate—a seventeen-year-old girl who had attempted suicide (p. 296) get away? No one could. The memory is still fresh among the Chinese people that "In a class struggle, either you die or I do"; if you weren't beating others then you were beaten.<sup>151</sup> Evidently, Chang tried hard to distance herself from her contemporaries, in every single historical event of the CR. In

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<sup>149</sup> William Zinsser, *On Writing Well* (Harper Perennial, 1998), p. 197.

<sup>150</sup> Dittmer and Chen undertook some interesting research on the language development during the CR, and they found that military terms seemed to be a common usage in China, dating back to the times of the Great Leap Forward or even further back to the Yan'an days. The use of military terms was intensified whenever a new political campaign was launched. The CR certainly culminated in the use of military terms. Military designations were applied to all work units. For example, *shede yishengua, gan ba huangdi la xiamu* (He who is not afraid of death by a thousand cuts dares to unhorse the emperor); *shisi xuezhuan daodi!* (Swear to fight to the last drop of our blood!). Few Chinese people would be unfamiliar with this kind of terms, so it is hard to imagine that Chang would be frightened by this kind of language during the CR. See Lowell Dittmer and Chen Ruoxi, *Ethic and Rhetoric of the Chinese Cultural Revolution* (Berkeley, California: University of California, 1981), pp. 29-30.

<sup>151</sup> In comparison, Zhang Zhimei provides an account as follows, "I felt wounded as my students raised their fists and shouted slogans against me. They were the same students with whom I had spent long hours, taking pains to correct their every mispronunciation. But they all had their own reason to join it. For my favorite students, who tended to be the most attentive in class, it was a chance to dissociate themselves from me and avoid being accused of carrying favor with a bourgeois teacher. For the ones who were not hard working and had received poor marks, it was an opportunity to get their own back "(p. 143). "Of course for them, beating me black and blue was also a fine display of revolutionary discipline" (p. 161).

her memoir, Chang portrays herself as that rarest of people: someone who never did anything wrong.

Chang succeeded in winning many Western readers' sympathy. In offering suggestions for Christmas reading in 1995, Anita Pampusch wrote, "I have selected three volumes which I liked best. Their styles and topics are widely different, yet each book (one by a Chinese woman, two by Americans) is a commentary on women's experience and suggests that reflection upon that experience can illuminate our understandings of the inner life, prayer, and ultimately, God. Perhaps the most fascinating was *Wild Swans* by Chang Jung."<sup>152</sup>

With her Western readers in mind, Chang tells her story quite differently from most of other memoirists. Many youths who were forced to go to the countryside were persecuted, more than three thousand cases in Sichuan alone, and well over twenty thousand cases in the whole country. According to one source, the unnatural death rate for youth was over 0.3%.<sup>153</sup> However, Chang's story of the two years of her stay in the countryside turned out to be completely different; from her account, the reader learns that, when everyone else suffered badly, and female youth all the worse, Chang could manage to escape from hard physical work and get paid for staying idle (p. 385).

Although Chang's book has been extremely popular in the West and is often held as a model in the genre of memoirs regarding the CR, I have decided to exclude it from detailed comparative analysis in the following chapter, because hers is so radically different from others in the two categories of memoirs. As the author describes her

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<sup>152</sup> Anita M. Pampusch, "Critics' Choices for Christmas", *Commonweal*, 12/1/95, Vol. 122 Issue 21, p. 26.

<sup>153</sup> Liu Xiaomeng, p. 320.

experiences during the CR, she refused to recognize the role of mass psychology and peer influence. The mass psychology and peer influence were very important elements of the CR. Chang only highlights her own personal psychology. Her own psychology is more like a western-style individual psychology, as opposed to the mass psychology of the CR. Chang was not only inventing the truth but also reinventing herself, changing herself from a teenage Red Guard to an adult in the West. She cleverly puts herself in the shoes of her Western readers, showing them that she herself had nothing to do with the madness and was instead a sober onlooker.

### 5.2.2 *Spider Eaters* — Confessions

*Spider Eaters: A memoir* by Yang Rae was published in 1997 by the University of California Press. Unlike the memoir by Chang Jung, Yang's account does not appear to have a formal style, it does not present itself as history or biography. It even lacks the typical chronological approach which is common in historical memoirs. Admitting that "*Spider Eaters* is not an easy book to read", Gilbert was, nonetheless, impressed with "Yang's marvelous ability to write in the voice of a young girl without writing childishly, to recapture the almost sexual frenzy of the chaste CR, to make the reader believe (with the narrator) the unbelievable; No political novel I have ever read has made me so clearly understand the seductive nature of the political as this woman's honest indictment of her girl's life in China."<sup>154</sup>

MacDougall observes that Yang Rae's book reads like an account of the past written by someone still obsessed.<sup>155</sup> When Yang was a child in the 1950s, her parents

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<sup>154</sup> Kate Gilbert, "Children of the Revolution", *Women's Review of Books*, May 98, Vol. 15 Issue 8, pp. 1-3.

<sup>155</sup> Colina MacDougall, "Book Review: Far East", *Asian Affairs*, Oct 97, Vol. 28, Issue 3, pp. 405-6.

were diplomats, attached to the Chinese Embassy in Berne. She followed her parents there and was looked after almost entirely by a nanny "Aunty." As a Red Guard and perpetrator of brutalities, Yang Rae tells horrendous tales of the CR. Most interesting are the thought-processes of the teenagers like her who one day were obedient pupils in school and the next vicious, fanatical tyrants bludgeoning others to death. These children were brought up to believe that Mao Zedong was a god, and when he called for revolution, they gladly obliged.<sup>156</sup>

Similar to any narrator who makes a confession, Yang presents her memoir as if to say: here is what a young woman experienced in the ten-year period and what she feels today. In another aspect she differs from many other narrators. She likens herself to a *Spider Eater*,<sup>157</sup> declaring herself to be not only a victim but also an outlaw. Being a daughter of privilege, Yang Rae became a spider eater at the age of fifteen, when she enthusiastically joined the Red Guards in Beijing. By seventeen, she volunteered to work on a pig farm and thus began to live at the bottom of the Chinese society. With stunning honesty and lively, sly humor, Yang incorporates legends, folklore, and local customs of China to evoke the political and moral crises that the revolution brought upon her over three decades, from 1950 to 1980.

Following the plots that the narrator develops, the reader can feel the pulse of the Red Guards and hear the vibration of the youths' hearts. The characters are described so

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<sup>156</sup> Same as Anita Chan's study.

<sup>157</sup> Yang Rae starts her memoir by quoting Lu Xun's (1881-1936) article, "Many historic lessons were obtained through tremendous sacrifice. Such as eating food—if something is poisonous, we all seem to know it. It is common sense. But in the past many people must have eaten this food and died so that now we know better. Therefore I think the first person who ate crabs was admirable. If not a hero, who would dare eat such creatures? Since someone ate crabs, others must have eaten spiders as well. However, they were not tasty. So afterwards people stopped eating them. These people also deserve our heartfelt gratitude."

vividly that one can even visualize the tears and blood. The memoir has succeeded in revealing what happened to the “lost” generation of *Spider Eaters*. After all, these are the masses who were subjected to socialist political education that influenced human relations in China, as well as all values of life. Yang expresses the often-overlooked psychological nuances and, with admirable candor, charts her own path as both a victim and victimizer, and describes painful lessons learned by spider eaters.

First and foremost, *Spider Eaters* is a political memoir. Yang Rae's aim seems to show how the passions of the political realm and the specific incidents of Chinese history have shaped her life.<sup>158</sup> Among the authors of the MCPE category only Yang Rae volunteered to go to a military farm in the Great Northern Wilderness of Heilongjiang, as did the two male writers in the other group, Ma Bo and Liang Xiaosheng. In the next chapter, I seek to compare Yang's book with Ma Bo's *Blood Red Sunset*.

### 5.2.3 *Red Flower of China* —Victim or Criminal?

*Red Flower of China*, written by Zhai Zhenhua, was published in 1993 by Soho Press. Born in February 1951, the narrator was almost the same age as the People's Republic of China. Like everyone else of her contemporaries, the author grew up under the influence of an educational system characterized by socialist and politically motivated doctrines. During the CR, she felt great excitement in participating in political movements, like the “big-character-poster”, “destroying four olds”, “Red Terror”, “home ransacking” and “Great Liaison.” She tells her readers in the memoir that she even beat innocent people and was involved in killing people. “Although she was an ardent participant in the

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<sup>158</sup> Kate Gilbert, “Children of the Revolution”, *Women's Review of Books*, May 98, Vol. 15 Issue 8, pp. 1-3.

movement's campaigns, she eventually found herself in disfavor and sent to a labor camp in Yan'an. She ended up being disappointed, cynical, and in despair. As both a participant and a victim, she portrays her struggles to derive some meaning from her experience in this book."<sup>159</sup>

As a daughter of devoted Communist Party members, Zhai was a student leader when Chairman Mao exhorted the Chinese to start the CR in 1966. At the age of 15, she was elected by her classmates to become a Red Guard. It was a short step from denunciations of her teachers to home raids on so-called Party enemies, whom she mercilessly beat with her belt buckle. Currently residing in Canada, Zhai does not justify her young revolutionary years but examines past motivations unshrinkingly. "There is an evil, barbaric side in every person... After a few beatings, I no longer needed to rehearse the rationale behind them. My heart hardened and I became used to the blood. I waved my belt like an automaton and whipped with an empty mind. Once I was out of their homes, I wiped off the buckle of my belt and fastened it outside my army jacket again as if nothing had happened. The CR had transformed me into a devil" (Zhai, p. 97). Within a year, Mao purged the Red Guards and Zhai changed from a leader of the revolution to its target overnight. She was denounced and made painfully aware of her own excesses and the capriciousness of the revolution (Zhai, p. 120).

However, Zhai complains that, during the entire mad period, she was a victim and whatever she did it was not her fault. She refused then and now to take any personal responsibility for what she had done. "Despite telling myself that I was only fifteen years old at the time, that I had been pulled into these excesses unwittingly, that it was not my

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<sup>159</sup> *Peace Research Abstracts Journal*, Jun 97, Vol. 34 Issue 3, p. 364.

fault, and that I should not have to take responsibility” (Zhai, p. 124). Since the most important information that flows out of her memoir is the account about the Red Guards, I choose this memoir as a specific case for comparison in the next chapter with Liang Xiaosheng’s *Confessions of a Red Guard*.

#### **5.2.4 *Confessions of a Red Guard* — Another Novel?**

Liang Xiaosheng is a well-known novelist in China. He wrote *Confessions of a Red Guard* [Yige hongweibing de zibai] in 1987; it was published by Sichuan Literature Press in 1988. However, I have read two editions of the book, one was published by the Hong Kong based Yiyuan Press in 1992 and the other by Shaanxi People’s Press in 1993, and both editions appeared in Chinese. In the 1992 Hong Kong edition, Liang tells the reader in his preface the following: “This book is about a high school student Red Guard’s monologue. That Red Guard is me. All the stories described in this book are the experience of myself in physical and psychological aspects. People and things are real and are not invented” (p. 1). However, one year later, when the same book was published in a revised edition in Shaanxi, Liang tells his readers a different story: “The main character of the book is me. I am a son of the working class. I belong to ‘five red categories’ and was a Red Guard... In the end, I want to say, please do not guess anyone and anything that might relate to me from this book, because it is a novel only” (p.1).

Written in Chinese and published in China, this book neither contains a table of contents nor a chronology. It is even without a story of the author’s childhood. Much of the book is focused on the early stages of the CR, namely, right from the outbreak of the CR in the summer of 1966 till the time the narrator went to the countryside in June 1968. The same age as that of the People’s Republic, Liang was born in a worker family in

Harbin, Heilongjiang Province. In 1966, he was a 17-year-old junior high school student. After joining the Red Guard movement, he volunteered to go to a military farm; six years later, he became a WPS student at Fudan University, Shanghai. Currently, as a professional writer who has authored several novels, volumes of short stories, memoirs, essays and film scripts, Liang lives in Beijing.

Among the multitude of post-CR publications, Liang Xiaosheng's book is of special significance because it makes up for the lack of works whose themes deal exclusively with the Red Guard Movement (Liang, preface, 1993). Because the Red Guard theme faded from Chinese fiction after 1984,<sup>160</sup> *Confessions of a Red Guard* appears to be exceedingly valuable in studying the lost generation of the Red Guards from a historical and educational perspective. The author hints that the Red Guard movement was not a distinct phenomenon but a logical outcome of the political education under the 17 years of the CCP's rule (1949-1966).

Liang began his writing career prior to 1976. His earlier works about the youth in the countryside were characterized by heroism and idealism; and, *Jinye you baofengxue* (The Snowstorm Is Coming Tonight), (Qing Chun, 1983, no. 3) and *Zheshi yipian shenqi de tudi* (A Land of Wonder and Mystery), (Bei Fang Literature, 1982, no. 8) are cases in point. Gradually, Liang changed the tone in his youthful works. "What I was allowed to write was nothing more than about learning the virtues of Lei Feng and other propaganda essays."<sup>161</sup> He admitted that some of his writings were sincere and some were not because he faced many limitations. Otherwise, it would be impossible to get published. As a

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<sup>160</sup> Leung Laifong, *Morning Sun: Interviews with Chinese Writers of the Lost Generation* (M. E. Sharpe, 1994), Introduction, p. xxxvi.

<sup>161</sup> Leung Laifong, p. 117.

professional youth writer Liang has published many novels in China. Although the fiction related to his youth experience is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is an interesting question to examine whether Liang wrote this book to try to tell something true or just to create another novel.

### 5.2.5 *Blood Red Sunset* — An Ironic Hero

*Blood Red Sunset: A Memoir of the Chinese Cultural Revolution* (Xuese huanghun) by Ma Bo (pen name being Lao Gui, or ‘old ghost’) was first published in Beijing by the Workers Publishing House in 1987. Its English version was translated by Howard Goldblatt and published in New York by Penguin Books in 1995. According to the author, he began working on this book in 1975 when he was on a military farm in Inner Mongolia living a ghost’s life as a ‘criminal’, and he completed it in 1978, two years after he returned to Beijing as a student at Beijing University. His book could not be published until 1987 since no publisher dared to publish it; otherwise, Ma Bo might have been a pioneer of the “literature of the wounded.”<sup>162</sup>

Ma Bo was born in 1947 into an intellectual’s family. His mother was Yang Mo (1914-1998), a famous writer, best known for her novel *The Song of Youth* (qingchun zhi ge), (Beijing: Writers Publishing House, 1958), and his father was a former president of the Beijing Normal University. When the CR broke out, Ma Bo was a senior high-school student in Beijing. He became a Red Guard, got involved in writing big-character posters and home raiding, took advantage of the Great Liaison to travel from Beijing to many other parts of the country, and even went abroad to Vietnam.<sup>163</sup> In the summer of 1968,

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<sup>162</sup> See Leung Laifong, pp. 80-7.

<sup>163</sup> See Ma Bo’s second memoir, *Xue yu tie* (Blood and Iron), (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 1998).

he volunteered to go to the countryside and did not return to city until 1976, a few months before the end of the CR.

Similar to Liang Xiaosheng's work, Ma Bo's book is without a formal style. By contrast to Liang who ends his book by stating: "there was a Red Guard who went to the countryside thoughtlessly" (p. 348), Ma Bo felt excited when he went to the countryside to be a revolutionary. His memoir records the eight years in his youth life he spent on a military farm. With his idealistic beliefs and a petition written in his own blood, Ma Bo joined the youth in Inner Mongolia in 1968. His friend suggested, "we would ransack the home of every herdowner family in our company," and this was indeed what they did (p. 14). Ma came to Inner Mongolia with the belief that "friendships born in the heat of battle are the true ones, [and] friendship, forged in a bloody struggle, will last forever" (p. 55). But, only one year later, his life was turned upside down, because his best friends and comrades betrayed him and even persecuted him (pp. 129-130). His revolutionary fervor was snuffed out and as a counter-revolutionary he was beaten and jailed. Being isolated in the mountains for years he had to live as a criminal and a ghost.

Ma's memoir may be viewed as falling within the category of political literature, because it "draws its fire from the author's convictions and the result is a moving account of the CR from one who was both a victimizer and a victim. His memoir adopts a remarkably even approach to his experience, shunning rhetoric for realism. That this story's facts speak so clearly is perhaps the most damning indictment of China's ideological convictions."<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> "Honest Recollection", *World Press Review*, March 1996, Vol. 43, Issue 3, p. 43.

As both a revolutionary Red Guard and a counter-revolutionary, Ma Bo's heroic dream was smashed. From the eight years of miserable life in Inner Mongolia, he drew the following lesson: "never trust anyone" (p. 276), because one's best friend could become one's worst enemy. Politics is dirty and the human nature is, according to the author, nothing but ugly. Ma Bo's book is chosen for detailed comparative analysis in Chapter 6.

### 5.2.6 *A Chinese Winter's Tale* — A Literary Piece of Truth

*A Chinese Winter's Tale* (Yige dongtian de tonghua) by Yu Luojin was first drafted in 1974. After considerable cuts by the journal's editors, it was eventually published in *Dangdai*,<sup>165</sup> in 1980. The full text, which was translated in its entirety by Rachel May and Zhu Zhiyu, was published in Hong Kong in English in 1986.

The author declares that the motive of her writing this book is to honour her elder brother Yu Luo (1942-1970). Yu Luojin tells the reader that this writing is neither fiction, nor autobiography, nor reportage, but a literature of truth.<sup>166</sup> Yu was born in 1946. By the time the CR broke out, she was a newly recruited skilled worker in Beijing. Since her parents were both denounced as Rightists in 1957, none of the family members could avoid persecution before and during the CR. It was Yu Luo's essay "On Class Background" that challenged the authority within the darkest period of the CR.<sup>167</sup> "Even in prison, handcuffed and chains, Yu Luo did not abandon his optimism... He had only to write a *Scrit* [self-criticism] to save his neck, but he refused, sustained by an idealism

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<sup>165</sup> *Dangdai*, No. 3, 1980, pp: 59-107. (The different texts are noted in the full versions).

<sup>166</sup> See Introduction by John Minford, in Yu Luojin, *A Chinese Winter's Tale*, (Hong Kong: *Renditions*, 1986), pp. vii-xix.

<sup>167</sup> During the CR, CCP's authority divided the Chinese people to different class designations by their family background. There were Five Black Categories based on of their parents and grandparents. See also, footnote 56.

which he now used as a weapon against authority.”<sup>168</sup> After three years of Labor Reform the author herself was sent to a poor village in Hebei to receive re-education in early 1970. She did not have enough food to survive during her stay in the countryside. With help from her family she managed to transfer to the Great Northern Wilderness by marrying another Beijing youth in late 1970. Four years later they divorced, and only after the CR had come to an end was she able to return to Beijing.

As with the accounts by Ma Bo and Liang Xiaosheng, this book deals exclusively with the CR. It has no chronology, and it is without any explanation about the CR. What the author tells is her personal story and some of her family story, not only about her sufferings during the CR but also her inner psychological states, especially about her marriage and her romantic love story, which runs counter to the practices of the time. Michael S. Duke regards this book as neo-romantic fiction in the post-Mao era, because it demonstrates a “concept of literature and art as a powerful form of self-expression, exposition of the value of love, and a renewed interest in external nature and natural imagery for the expression of human thoughts and emotions.”<sup>169</sup> The style of the book is also rather special. Richard King observes “It was presented as a novel, and it reads like one, though it is explicitly autobiographical.”<sup>170</sup> In her account, Yu Luojin tells of her bitter experience concerning the loss of her brother’s diaries and her own, her camp life and her marriage in the countryside. There are a number of inner-dialogues, the author questions the unfair world and uses her imagination extensively to indicate her emotions.

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<sup>168</sup> See Biographical Note in Yu Luojin, pp. 209-10.

<sup>169</sup> Michael S. Duke, *Blooming and Contending: Chinese Literature in the Post-Mao Era* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), p. 186.

<sup>170</sup> Richard King, “Scandalous by a Scandalous Woman”, *Modern Chinese literature*, Spring/Fall 1987, Vol. 3, No. 1 &2, p. 147.

One of the key features of the book is the author's frequent conversations with her executed elder brother's spirit, believing that "Night was falling once again, but no matter how long the night, day would dawn. And another spring would come" (end of her book, p. 162).

As a fresh, rebellious, independent intellectual female, Yu Luojin demonstrated her willpower to fight for happiness and search for an ideal lover. Since no love stories were allowed to appear during the CR, Yu Luojin had to demand her own individual search for love and dignity. In the early stage of the post-Mao era, stories with love themes were viewed more as "an ideological treatise than a literary work."<sup>171</sup>

In those days, love stories were simplified because love could only be defined as the hand-joining of two people who wanted to build socialism,<sup>172</sup> and people were led to believe that "moral and political rectitude were rewarded with happiness in marriage. By the early 1980s, many stories question this premise."<sup>173</sup> Yu Luojin's story was clearly extraordinary. She adopted "many of the criteria of European Romanticism transmitted to and transformed in China,"<sup>174</sup> having read western romanticism and completely internalized it. According to Richard King, "*A Winter's Tale's* first crime may well have been the presumptuousness of its title, borrowed from Heinrich Heine's 1844 poem cycle *Deutschland. Ein Wintermärchen*."<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Kam Louie, "Love Stories: The Meaning of Love and Marriage in China", in Jeffrey C. Kinkley (ed.), *After Mao: Chinese Literature and Society, 1978-1981* (Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 65.

<sup>172</sup> Kam Louie, 1985, p. 69. "In 1978, then, love was seen in very simple terms. Because of this, it was almost possible to define love: It was when two people who wanted to build socialism decided to marry."

<sup>173</sup> Kam Louie, p. 77.

<sup>174</sup> Michael S. Duke, 1985, p. 183.

<sup>175</sup> Richard King, p. 149.

Upon its release, the book immediately caught the public eye. One of the reasons is due to the author's impulsive personality and tempestuous personal life. As an uninhibited defender of the rights of women, she denounced the immorality of loveless marriages arguing that divorce should be made easier. She took this stand in a country where, despite claims to the contrary, women are still oppressed by a deeply structured feudal approach to marital relationships. Because of this she won quite a number of followers and, at the same time, made many enemies. She was attacked by the Party authorities as a 'fallen woman', and as a 'handmaiden of the bourgeoisie.'<sup>176</sup> After her first marriage breakup Yu Luojin had two other marriages during the late 1970s and the early 1980s. She left China for Germany in 1985.

On the basis of analyzing and examining the above six accounts, I choose four works as two pairs to compare and contrast in two major themes of the CR, namely, the Red Guards Movement and the Rustication Movement.

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<sup>176</sup> See Introduction by John Minford, in Yu Luojin, *A Chinese Winter's Tale* (Hong Kong: Renditions, 1986), pp. vii-xix.

## **Chapter 6 Framework for Comparative Analysis of the Memoirs**

An important premise about the genre of memoir is that memoirs are not equivalent to historical records, and, based on the western theory of memoir writing, authors have some latitudes to deviate from telling the truth. The two groups of memoirs share some similarities and also have differences, and there are important reasons for that. In this chapter, I compare the authors' viewpoints and themes regarding the main events of the CR, that is, the Red Guard Movement and the Rustication Movement, from the selected memoirs. I propose that, despite similar background and experience, the authors differ because of the difference in readership that their memoirs target. Also, I point out some of the problems of the memoirs in light of the theories of memoir writing presented above.

What makes comparison possible? According to Culler, comparative literature has liberated itself from the study of sources and influence and acceded to a broader regime of intertextual studies where, in principle, anything can be compared with anything else. The intertextual nature of meaning—the fact that meaning lies in the differences between one text and another—makes literary study essentially, fundamentally comparative.<sup>177</sup> In other words, to analyze and compare texts actually is to ask what those texts mean.<sup>178</sup>

To find the exact meaning of the memoirs, in this chapter, drawing upon several sources, I intend to introduce three analytical levels for the purpose of outlining a framework for comparing and contrasting. The first level is descriptive. At this level, the

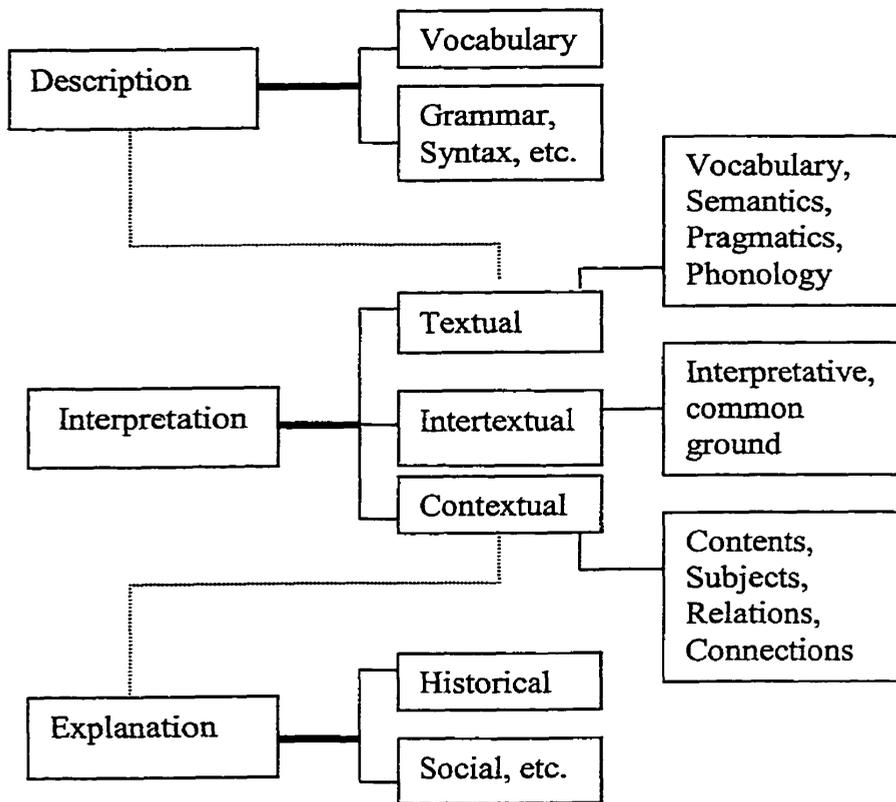
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<sup>177</sup> Jonathan Culler, "Comparability", *World Literature Today* (Spring 95, Vol. 69 Issue 2), pp. 268-270.

<sup>178</sup> See David Rosenwasser and Jill Stephen, *Writing Analytically*, (Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1995), pp. 1-2.

reader is able to find what has happened by reading a memoir. The descriptions of contents, events, processes and characters are presented by the author by means of narrative approaches, which are concerned with vocabulary, grammar, and syntax. The second level is concerned with interpretation, that is, the meaning and nature of what happened, including, the various relationships involved. This level involves the dimension that is concerned with three aspects, namely, textual, intertextual, and contextual. Actually, interpretation may be viewed as a double-faced creature, one being drawn by the author and the other by the reader. The third level is concerned with explanation – why did something happen, i.e., the reasons, implications, historical, social context, and so on. How to choose the subjects and demonstrate the themes and how to interpret and explain the subjects depends entirely on the author's standpoint and his or her level of understanding and observation. Also, the purpose of the author's writing has a great bearing on the effectiveness for the Western reader or for the Chinese reader. The various relations of the analytical framework described above may be depicted in the following diagram.

**Figure 1: Analytical Framework for Literature Comparison**<sup>179</sup>



Notes: Solid lines indicate major relationships whereas dotted lines suggest minor relationships.

<sup>179</sup> Based on Neil Renwick and Cao Qing, "China's Political Discourse Towards the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Victimhood, Identity and Political Power", *East Asian: An International Quarterly*, Winter 99, Vol. 17, Issue 4, pp. 111-144; Michael J. Toolan, *Narrative: A Critical Linguistic Introduction*, (London: Routledge, 1988); Catherine Emmott, *Narrative Comprehension: A Discourse Perspective* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1997), et al.

## 6.1 Riding the Political Roller Coaster: The Tragedy of the Red Guards

*In a way we always tell in order also not to tell.*<sup>180</sup>

To judge an autobiography is to understand: "How close is a narration to the truth?" Roth points out that, by reading an autobiography, people would like to know: is the author hiding his or her motives, presenting his or her actions and thoughts to lay bare the essential nature of conditions or trying to hide something, telling in order not to tell?<sup>181</sup> In this and the next sections, I attempt to explore how the narration of the memoirs leads to historical truth through textual analysis.

The Red Guards subject is principally concerned with the first two stages of the CR, i.e., the big-character poster and the formation of the Red Guards; and the Great Liaison. Most of the memoirs in the MCPE category have detailed descriptions in this respect and some with detailed day-to-day accounts. Several authors focus on Red Guards stories but Zhai Zhenhua's story is, by far, the most revealing among all the memoirs. Liang Xiaosheng's *Confessions of a Red Guard* is the only book that is predominantly concerned with the Red Guards subject in the MCPC category. In this section, I seek to spell out the major differences and similarities in the two memoirs using the approach outlined above. The primary purpose is to analyze several important dimensions from a literary perspective.

Descriptively, the two memoirs share similar features regarding the Red Guard Movement. To begin with, they both describe the authors (who are also characters in the narrative) experiences regarding the Red Guards. As former Red Guards themselves they

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<sup>180</sup> Phillip Roth, *The Facts: A Novelist's Autobiography* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Ciroux, 1988), p. 164.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.* p. 164.

recall the main events vividly, from the formation of the Red Guards to the Rustication Movement. Next, the memoirs describe the excesses committed by the Red Guards, such as home raiding, denunciations, beatings and even killings. What interests me in particular is to uncover and analyze the differences within similarities between the texts.

The initial stage of the CR was characterized by the use of big-character posters as a weapon in attacking people. Students wrote big-character posters to attack somebody whom they disliked, and in a school environment, teachers were the first line of attack by the students.<sup>182</sup> In her story, Zhai acknowledged that the radical change appeared to make a great deal of sense to her (p. 65). She led her fellow classmates in attacking her teacher-in-charge Yuying. “I proposed to several students that we write a big-character poster about Yuying. They all supported the idea and gave me the job of drafting it” (p. 63). “The title I picked was ‘*See on What side Zhang Yuying Stands?*’ and this title hinted that she might very well be associated with the school revisionists” (p. 64). In an honest tone, Zhai tells what she was doing. Although the teacher was not that “bad”, she explained the reasons for singling out Yuying as follows,

Who should we attack? We knew no school officials, only the few teachers who taught us; and the only one we could claim we knew well was our teacher-in-charge, Yuying (p. 63).

Obviously, Zhai’s reasons were groundless. How could one pick someone to be a target simply because this person is familiar and readily available? No wonder so many innocents were victimized during the CR.

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<sup>182</sup> Almost every author tells that the teachers were attacked by their students, for example, Zhang Zhimei, p. 143, p. 161; Chang Jung, p. 294; Yang Rae, pp. 115-7; Dai Hsiao-Ai, p. 42, et al.

However, one has to give Zhai credit for her honesty, because she seemed to have recognized her wrongdoing.

To be honest, Yuying wasn't a bad teacher. She didn't treat us as "enemies," as Chairman Mao had accused many teachers of doing. Indeed, she was never harsh to us. She wasn't capitalist either. She didn't curl her hair like other fashionable young women, and her dress was always simple and plain. I never saw her wear leather shoes or wool pants. On each trip to work in the countryside she worked harder than any of us. She wanted as much as we did to be progressive. Poor Yuying — we just had no choice (p.63).

Why "no choice"? This sounds like an unjustified excuse. To attack Yuying was the students' spontaneous action, how could they have no choice? Zhai's message can be interpreted in that the Red Guards committed brutal deeds to enjoy their teachers' painful suffering. "The students' hatred against their teachers seemed to flourish overnight, and all this hate derived simply from a call by Chairman Mao. Overthrowing the teachers was seen as an act of protecting Chairman Mao, even though Chairman Mao was not in any sense threatened by these teachers."<sup>183</sup>

While Zhai only devotes a portion (approximately 30%) of her book to the Red Guards Movement, Liang's memoir is entirely on this subject. Again, the big-character poster event may be a good reference point. Revealing his leadership role, Liang tells his reader, "I wrote down the first sentence, and others followed as quickly as possible" (p. 28). "Students started to expose and criticize teachers by means of big-character posters and teachers also exposed each other using big-character posters" (p. 45).

At first glance, the two memoirs look somewhat similar. For instance, both the authors describe their characters in the first person, "I", the narrator is a character, and

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<sup>183</sup> Lin Jing, *The Red Guards' Path to Violence: Political, Educational, and Psychological Factors* (New York: Praeger, 1991), p. 23.

both recall that they were the first person to put up a big-character poster. However, a closer examination at the levels of interpretation and description will reveal a significant difference between the two: Zhai's poster was clearly aimed at attacking her teacher personally, whereas Liang's poster was targeting the so-called 'Three Family Village' which included Wu Han, Deng Tuo and Liao Mosha.<sup>184</sup> Zhai's target was a close acquaintance who was deliberately made a victim, whereas Liang's target was merely a distant public 'enemy', whose fate would not be directly impacted by the poster by Liang and his schoolmates, because every school did the same thing.<sup>185</sup> Although Liang also tells his reader that the students started to expose and criticize teachers in his school, he gives no clue as to whether he participated. When Zhai states that her teacher was completely innocent, Liang offers some explanation as to why some people became targets of denunciations. For example, one teacher always used perfume, and another teacher frequently went dancing, and so on. In short, the big-character poster was used as a weapon to attack people during the initial stage of the CR with or without any good reason.

The authors attempt to interpret not only external events, but also themselves, by telling their pasts and history. Freeman once observed that interpreting what exists outside ourselves is difficult enough. Somehow, self-interpretation seems more difficult.<sup>186</sup> In reading a memoir, the reader will want to resolve two questions. First, it is necessary to

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<sup>184</sup> Notes from "Three Family Village" was the title of a column published in *Qian Xian* (Front) in 1961-1964 by three writers: Wu Han (1909-1969), Deng Tuo (1912-1966) and Liao Mosha (1907-1990); it was criticized as an "anti-Party's big poisonous weed" in the early stage of the CR.

<sup>185</sup> Dai Xiao-Ai, p. 34, "our school was about to begin participation in the CR by launching a movement to repudiate Wu Han and Three-Family Village." p. 37, "At first, big-character posters were fun. However we knew nothing about them, we just copied phrases and accusations from newspaper and shouted slogans."

<sup>186</sup> See Mark Freeman, *Rewriting the Self: History, Memory, Narrative* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 5-6.

understand the author, and second, to understand the author's feeling about the events. This understanding is achieved with the aid of interpretation. However, the readers want to understand what the author's meaning is, since "there is no fixed formula for understanding, no key that might be employed to unlock the meaning of texts",<sup>187</sup> readers' understanding is invariably at a level which is different from that of the authors'. Zhai, whose memoir is a representative account in the MCPE category, has given some explanations about her action and her thoughts at a very personal level. In contrast, Liang's explanations seem to be more general.

Authors differ from one another in terms of emphasis, even if the subject matter is very similar. Regarding detailed descriptions, the two authors revealed their experience from different perspectives. The Red Guards subject is a good example. To become a Red Guard, one had to meet the following requirements: (1) being faithful to and holding great love for Chairman Mao and the Party, (2) being politically progressive, (3) being active in the CR, and (4) coming from a politically correct family background (Zhai, p. 74). In her memoir, Zhai told her reader that only three students (including Zhai herself) in her class were qualified and hence elected by the students (p. 76). During the election meeting, Zhai made a sentimental speech, vowing that she would do her best (p. 76).

If Zhai's description of the requirements for becoming Red Guards is comprehensive, her account about joining the Red Guards organization appears to be much simplified. In comparison, Liang provides a more elaborate account. One of the most important features of his book is the initiation ceremony for the Red Guards'

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<sup>187</sup> Mark Freeman, p. 141.

organization. Liang's story on the formation of Red Guards seems more emotional than many others'. According to Liang, having a politically reliable family background was the most important requirement for becoming a Red Guard in his school.

Raise the National Flag. Sing the song of "East is Red".

Under the attention of the whole student body, each student of the Five Red Category stepped onto the podium to accept the red armband with both hands...

[When my turn came] I walked onto the podium nervously. As I stretched out my hands to accept the red armband, I suddenly froze when I heard in my mind an accusing holler...

When the authority realized that I was paralyzed on stage, he affixed the red armband onto my arm for me.

'Look! How excited he is, he must want to swear allegiance to Chairman Mao! But he is too excited to utter a sound. Red Guard—this is the highest honor of our Five Red Category!' ...

I am really excited. I turn around with unsettled nerves and I shout from trembling lips, 'Long live Chairman Mao! Long, long live Chairman Mao!' Everybody else's shouts ran together into a single loud roaring of my cry... That setting, that enthusiasm, perhaps not even a promotion ceremony for the military could have accomplished such an emotional outburst (pp. 100-2).

The ceremony described by Liang seems like a show or a play. Liang's dramatic narration might have been influenced by his novel writing skills, which are the result of his early training in political writing. It seems that the character that Liang described could be himself yet isn't specific enough to his entirely personal. Liang could slip into the mold of his character, yet it is also available for others without harm. The general description of the fictional character could suit anybody, and not exclusively Liang.

Before the waves of the big-character posters died down, the "destroy four olds" and "Red Terror" started, in which many of the writers were involved, some even getting involved in killing people. Zhai's story provides some indications.

After a few beatings, I no longer needed to rehearse the rationale behind them. My heart hardened and I became used to the blood. I waved my belt

like an automaton and whipped off the buckle of my belt and fastened it outside my army jacket again as if nothing had happened (p. 97).

The above paragraph exposes the cruelty and ruthlessness of the Red Guards during the CR. "I was not the most bloodthirsty person in the world; however, I was a Red Guard leader" (p. 96). Zhai had no regrets at all, saying "I shouldn't feel sorry for them. In class struggle, either you die or I do" (p. 96). This description may be a truthful revelation of the narrator's experience and genuine feelings, but readers cannot help feeling revulsion about her showing no remorse for what she did even now. From Zhai's interpretation, the reader could be led to believe that, from this time onwards, the narrator turned more and more merciless, especially after she was elected to become a leader of the Red Guards. Worse still, she was involved in killing innocent people.

So off I went, fifteen years old, to lead a group of girls, thirteen to seventeen years, to invade the home of a former countryside landlord [Xiuying].

"You don't want to talk with us? All the better, save me some saliva. Beat her!" I ordered my soldiers...

The next morning, Xiaoli, a Red Guard asked me, "Did you raid Xiuying's home yesterday?"

"Yes, I was in charge."

"She's dead," Xiaoli said casually.

"Dead?" I repeated.

She nodded several times and went on her way.

My heart jumped. Dead?

The headquarters never did talk to me about Xiuying.

The revolution had to succeed, and I had to continue to do my part. When I was assigned new tasks, I tried to be as brave as before (pp. 97-8).

What was she doing here? Zhai led the Red Guards in beating and killing an innocent woman. Unlike Chang Jung, who claims "I did nothing wrong," Zhai honestly recorded the evil and madness she participated in during the CR. However, Zhai's book never hit the bestseller lists; in fact, it was not very popular. Nevertheless, the book

occupies a unique place in the MCPE category. After all, Zhai was the sole author who admitted to and recorded the beating and killing of people.<sup>188</sup>

The Red Terror resulted in thousands of people being killed in Beijing alone. “From September 1-27, 1966, in the thirteen communes of Daxing County in the outskirts of Beijing, 325 so-called ‘criminals’ and their relatives were killed; the oldest was eighty years old and the youngest merely thirty-eight days. Twenty-two families were entirely exterminated” (Zhai, p. 96). There are also some stories about the Red Guards beating and killing people in Liang’s account. However, they are completely different from Zhai’s. According to Liang, the Red Terror received some support from his town residents although people were also worried (Liang, p. 187). Liang explained that the people who were beaten by the Red Guards were the school drop-outs (*liu mang a fei*). Only one of them, a teenage girl (*liu mang*), was killed by a bad Red Guard in his school, and this bad Red Guard was immediately expelled by his Red Guards organization, and was subsequently sentenced to death (Liang, p. 197).

By comparing the two texts, one may argue that Zhai’s account was mainly at the personal level whereas Liang’s was of a more sociological level. This difference is discernable from the context structure of the descriptions and interpretations. In the Great Liaison period, the Red Guards were received by Mao Zedong. Being different from most others, as one of the Red Guard leaders, Zhai was given the honor of sitting at the spectators quarter and, therefore, she enjoyed a better view of Mao on August 18, 1966.

I was standing in the second row, fairly close to the entrance, so I saw them clearly. Naturally my eyes were on Chairman Mao. Much had been written in the newspapers about Chairman Mao’s great health and his “ruddy-colored face,” so when I actually saw him in person I was a little

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<sup>188</sup> Yang Rae was also involved in beating and killing innocent people but she was a follower only.

disappointed. He looked older than I had imagined and more than half his hair was white. His face showed the marks of old age and did not glow either, as it was supposed to. His movements were sluggish. He was a senile old man (p. 84).

In comparison, Liang tells a rather different story,

A hubbub filled the square, which was nothing but a sea of people. Everybody was melted in the noise and excitement. "Long live! Long, long live!" roared in the sky. Perhaps I was too far away, or the rostrum of Tiananmen was too high, I could only view half of Chairman Mao's image. He looked smaller than I thought. Millions Red Guards are going crazy, ten thousand voices become one sentence: "Long live Chairman Mao!" (Liang, pp. 270-1).

The above two paragraphs provide a basis for useful comparisons. Recalling the three dimensions in Figure 1, in terms of context, the stories happened in a fairly similar environment. However, depending on the physical location one occupied, the impression one formed could be markedly different. Since Zhai was much closer to where Mao stood, she was able to see more clearly. Therefore, Zhai's account was more vivid in describing her impression of Mao than Liang's. Since Liang was standing too far away in the crowd, he was mainly able to talk about the mob. Further, the difference was also reflected in the choice of words. While Zhai was very much personal because she used "I" more frequently, Liang was more concerned with the activities in the throng. Clearly, in his description Liang did not dare to say that Mao Zedong was a small human being in image instead of a god, he found an excuse: "Perhaps I was too far away, or the rostrum of Tiananmen was too high." In contrast, Zhai was more straightforward in expressing her viewpoint on Mao himself being a senile man. Liang's public-level description and interpretation reflect his cautiousness, which Chinese authors tend to employ in political literature.

The Chinese people were told to believe that the love felt for Chairman Mao by the peoples of the world was “deeper than the four great oceans.” Mao-statues were erected in all towns and villages visited by Mao; and people also gathered in front of these statues, which were upwards of 10 meters in height, to sing songs in honor of their great leader and to wish him eternal life. Between 1966 and 1968, 740 million volumes of “Mao quotations” and 150 million sets of Mao’s selected works were printed. Prior to the CR it took 13 presses, working full time, to print Mao’s publications, in 1967 it took 171, and 300 in 1968. In 1969 a single press in Beijing produced no less than 1.6 million pictures of Mao. This massive glorification of Mao Zedong calls to mind an old Chinese proverb: In the whole of history there was no one like Him, and after Him there will be no one who can vie with Him.<sup>189</sup>

What are the major differences between Zhai and Liang? First, Zhai attempts to recall her feelings and events at the time of the CR. Liang seems to want to reflect on and analyze his actions and sentiments of his teenage days, through the viewpoint of his latest maturity at the time of writing his past. Second, Zhai focuses on her own experiences of the CR at a very personal level, while Liang’s story could be anyone’s.

From the above comparisons, one may see clearly that there is a significant difference and sharp contrast between the authors residing in the West and those living in China. Authors in the West tend to have little fear and therefore dare to say whatever they want, but authors in China are faced with considerable pressure and limitations, and they only choose and select to write the things that are unlikely to harm themselves. They tell stories in an open but innocuous way. However, with regard to the youth in the

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<sup>189</sup> Adrian Hsia, pp. 233-4.

countryside, there seem to be fewer differences; the suffering and hard physical labor described are more similar. This aspect is dealt with in the next section.

## **6.2 Going up the Mountain, down to the Village, and Returning to the City: A Circular Life of Struggle**

Recalling that the remaining two stages of the CR comprise the Rustication Movement and the returning-to-city campaign. Ma Bo's book *Blood Red Sunset* and Yang Rae's *Spider Eaters* have been chosen for comparison in this section. Again, the analytical structure outlined at the beginning of this chapter is applied.

Yang Rae concludes that it was dangerous to join political movements because "if riding a roller coaster is scary, such a political game in China is ten times worse. For on a roller coaster at least I knew which way I am heading and chances are I'll get off it safe and sound. In a political struggle, there's no such guarantee" (p. 194). As mentioned earlier, after riding a political roller coaster, the Red Guards were sent to the countryside to receive reeducation from the poor peasants, as consequence of the CR. Some Red Guards, for example, Yang, Liang and Ma, volunteered to go to the countryside even before Mao's Supreme Directive was released. The other authors followed their schools' arrangements in settling down in the countryside. Ma Bo's book begins with a very exciting story, because he expected to play a large role as a revolutionary in the countryside.

In 1968 a raging tide of youth, a raging tide of hot blood, a raging tide of innocence surged toward the countryside, the mountains, and the vast wilderness. Not an eastward crusade, yet history was about to be written; not a mass migration, yet tens of thousands of households would taste the bitter fruit of parting; not a battlefield incursion, yet a volunteer army, solemn and purposeful, was on the March (p. 1).

One of the explanations for Ma Bo's request to join the Rustication Movement was peer influence. "When the Rustication Movement began, almost all the best students in my school left for the countryside. I felt that if I stayed in city, I would feel like a deserter; and I would lose face. Therefore, I quickly joined in."<sup>190</sup> By the time Ma found himself in Inner Mongolia, Yang had been laboring at a farm of the Great Northern Wilderness for around three months. Leaving Beijing for the countryside Yang tells the readers that, in spite of the fact that insomnia tormented her severely, the countryside "was a mysterious and exciting place" (p. 159). Yang felt the same way as Ma did, "[in Beijing,] I'm wasting my time here. I should leave. The sooner the better" (Yang, p. 159).

In terms of structure, the two memoirs share some similarities. Obviously, they both cover the hard physical labor, which characterized China's rural life during those days, and still does today. However, there are indeed some major differences. First, while Ma Bo's book is exclusively focused on his life in the countryside, Yang only devoted about 40% of her book to her life in the countryside. Second, the authors laid emphasis on different topics. Ma Bo's story highlights political persecution. Specifically, because he was denounced as a criminal and a counter-revolutionary, he was sent up the Stone Mountain to be consigned to "a prison without walls." Although life in the countryside was very difficult for everybody else, it was especially hard for Ma because physical labor became a form of conspicuous punishment.

Certainly, in the CR related memoirs, there is no shortage of recording the youth's experience in the countryside. Yang recalls her experience in a farm as follows,

During the summer in the Great Northern Wilderness, the day was very long. Daybreak was at three o'clock. Lunch at eleven. Sunset was after

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<sup>190</sup> Leung Laifong, *Morning Sun*, Introduction, p. xxiii.

eight. During the wheat harvest, we got up at five o'clock each day, seven days a week. An hour later we were already working in the fields. Lunch break was short. To save time they often carried the food out and we ate at the end of the field. After lunch, we continued to work till shortly before sunset (p. 175).

Only those who were strong, mentally and physically, could survive it. Yet I was not so healthy...I must reform myself into a new being. Just to think and feel like a peasant—that's not enough. I want to be a real peasant. So I went to work, as fast as I could (pp. 176-7).

Yang's interpretation is that only those strong, both mentally and physically, could survive that tough period. It is easy to understand that physical strength and good health are required to do well in the countryside. Strong willpower was also necessary for young people to exist in a strange environment (long hours of physical work plus pressure from non-stop political struggles). Perhaps Yang was a pioneer because she was following every instruction of the CCP. Yang's heroic spirit made her work hard, and she volunteered to work in a pig farm to challenge herself with the hardest and dirtiest work in her village (p. 195). As a result of her efforts, Yang was appointed the head of the pig farm (p. 217). It was not until the September 13th Incident<sup>191</sup> that she started to question the nature of the CR (p. 217). "How stupid I was to dive into this quagmire and be so proud of what I did! Idealism, ignorance, and vanity. These cost me dearly! Next time I should look before I jump. But in my case, will there be a next time?" (p. 223). However, her tone changed to one of remorse and hopelessness. Yang's story shows how the passions of the political realm and the specific incidents of Chinese history have shaped the lives of the youth.

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<sup>191</sup> Lin Biao died in a plane crash in Mongolia on September 13, 1971.

Actually, both memoirs dwell upon the harsh conditions in the countryside, from the perspective of the youth. In sharp contrast to the great enthusiasm with which the youth first arrived in the countryside, many people felt lonely and homesick shortly afterwards. A sense of helplessness is a common feature found in both memoirs.

Ma Bo stayed in the countryside for eight years, and naturally, had his share of a miserable, gloomy, difficult and lonely life. "From 1968 to 1976, eight long years, I endured unrelenting criticism and suffered miserably" (p. 370). "Me, I had to crawl every inch of the way, squeezing between the cracks amid boulders like a crippled dog" (p. 364). One of his major assignments was to build a stone wall, and the following description reveals the author's feeling in a touching way.

The wall stretched as far as the eye could see. My youth was buried forever in the stones of that wall, some even stained with my blood. I ran my hand over them. Because of those stones we went hungry, we froze, we sweated, and we bled; we carried them on our backs, up against our bellies, and on our shoulders. We wore out a pair of shoes and a pair of leather pants every winter. The skin on our hands, on our backs, on our arms, even on our bellies was rubbed raw. Those stones exacted a terrible human toll (p. 368).

However, Yang concludes her countryside life,

Five years had passed. The girl who had dreamed of being a hero was no more. A young woman who had her name was running away from a battle that had become meaningless to her. The dream died. She felt empty inside. From seventeen to twenty-two, these were the best years in my life. Tons of sweat. Buckets of tears. I felt cheated. I was angry. Yet in the meantime, I also felt guilty as if I was a deserter (pp. 259-60).

It is not difficult to imagine that, after the youth went to the countryside, the only goal was to seek for a return to their home cities. In the face of difficult life in the countryside, the majority of the youth began to question the usefulness of Mao's policy. In the meantime, people felt more and more strongly about the question of returning to where they came from. However, since the *back-door* phenomenon became increasingly rampant

in China in the late 1960s and the early 70s, most youth had trouble returning to their home cities. It seemed that escaping from the countryside was only possible if one could join the army, get a job in a factory or become a college student. However, these opportunities were exceptionally limited, and those who could access the *back-door* were the people with powerful family backgrounds or connections. Like everybody else, Ma and Yang experienced hardship in the battle for returning to their hometown.

As was the case with the majority of the youth, neither Ma nor Yang was able to become a WPS student, although both managed to complete formal university education after the CR. By the end of 1975, everyone stopped working. Leaving was all that the youth cared about. The exciting, tense, fulfilling days in corps units were gone forever (Ma, 352). In 1976, with his family's help, Ma Bo finally said good-bye to Inner Mongolia to become a worker in a factory in Shanxi (Ma, 355). Similarly, with her family's help, Yang Rae left the Great Northern Wilderness but through a completely different avenue. Since Ma Bo's mother was a famous writer, after her rehabilitation she got a chance to use her influence in helping her son out. But, sadly, Yang Rae's mother was only able to send telegrams one after another, starting with: "Mother badly ill, return quickly," "Mother critically ill, return quickly," and ending with "Mother died. Return quickly" (pp. 258-9).

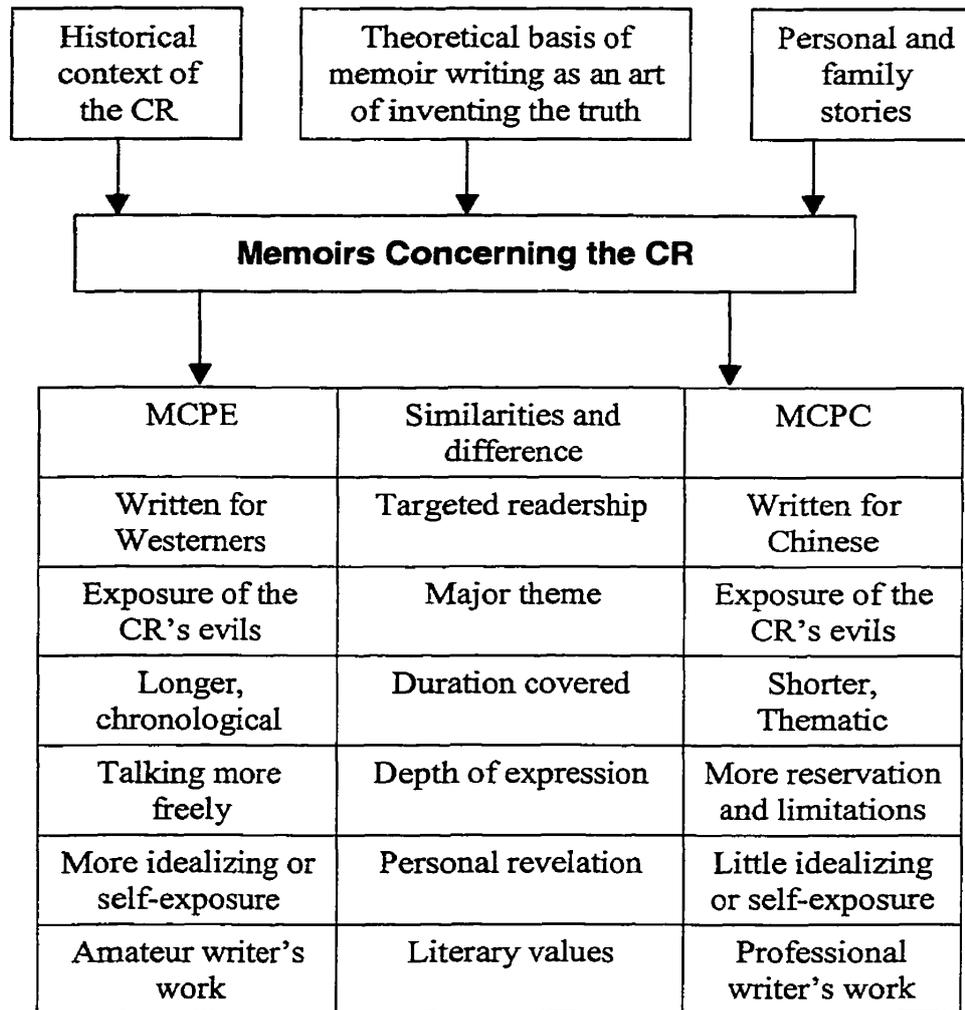
Yang's description is of the simple kind, but it is convincing. No reader can help withholding his or her tears when reading the simply worded telegrams. The author achieved the same effect that Ma Bo obtained through extensive descriptions. The message interpreted from both Ma and Yang is clear: the Chinese youth, actually millions of them, lived a life of blood and tears under the Red Sun—an unsympathetic Sun. The terrible effect of Mao's policy is clearly exposed extremely evidently. The memoirs have

succeeded in revealing the experiences of the Red Guards generation, the group of individuals as victims and victimizers, through various principles of life such as loyalty, worshiping, sense of virtues and evils.

## Chapter 7 Discussion and Conclusion

To summarize the foregoing chapters, for example, historical context and theoretical basis of the memoirs and the principal dimensions associated with the memoirs, a synthetic model is provided in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: A Synthetic Model of Memoirs Concerning the CR**



As is indicated in the above diagram, the memoirs concerning the CR depend on three sources. Specifically, the various events that took place during the decade provided the historical context from which the memoirs emerged. However, recalling from Chapter

3, memoir is not equivalent to historical documentation; instead, it is an art of inventing the truth. Essentially, personal stories and family accounts constitute the core of the memoirs.

As shown in Figure 2, the lower part indicates the two categories in separate columns and six aspects are listed for an easy comparison of the similarities and differences. Firstly, the two groups differ from one another due to different targeted readership. Secondly, both categories deal with the CR as the major theme and both succeed in exposing the evils of the CR. Thirdly, in terms of the duration covered, the memoirs under the MCPE group tend to be longer with chronologically arranged narration, whereas the MCPC memoirs are likely to be shorter in the duration covered and the themes are more focused. One reason for such a difference is that, since the MCPE memoirs were meant for Western readers who are assumed to have scant understanding about China's CR, providing a fuller account of the historical context in a chronological manner facilitates comprehension. But for Chinese readers, this is unnecessary and, therefore, it is possible for authors to focus on certain themes. Fourthly, concerning the depth of expression, authors of the MCPE memoirs invariably talked more freely whereas the MCPC memoirs seem to have more reservations because the authors had to face greater limitations. Fifthly, when it comes to personal revelation, the authors of the MCPE group went to greater length to idealize themselves and their family members; in contrast, the MCPC authors were rather cautious in exposing themselves.

Last but not least, it may be argued that there is a lack of literary value in both groups of the memoirs for the following reasons. First, in the MCPE group, after all, English was the second language to the authors. Therefore, no one should expect them to have the

same level of proficiency in English as in Chinese. Second, most of them were amateur writers. In the MCPC group, although most of the writers were professional and had no language problem, it is still rather difficult to assign high values to any of them. For example, in his works, Ba Jin was quite straightforward with his readers that “Some time ago this book was criticized for ‘lacking literary value’. I am not going to attempt to defend myself here, let me just say that I began with the most important thing that any writer can possess: an artistic conscience” (Ba Jin, xvii). For many years since 1949, especially during the CR, writers were required, first and foremost, to meet the prevailing political criteria in their works. In such political climate, it was perhaps too difficult for writings of high literary values to emerge and get published.

It is worthwhile to discuss the major similarities and differences of the two categories of the memoirs in the next section.

## **7.1 Discussion on Similarities and Differences**

### **7.1.1 Commonalties and Contributions of the Memoirs**

The two groups of memoirs share some common features. The most obvious one is the exposure of the evils of the CR. In spite of different viewpoints on many things, the authors all denounced the CR as a disaster for the nation and its people.

To expose the evils of the CR, a major contribution that the two groups of memoirs have made is the revelation of why and how brave young people became fervent political activists and Red Guards in the CR, and why they did so many evils, and why they divided and battled each other in the name of defending Mao. Zhai, Yang, Liang and Ma all use their accounts to tell their readers how they threw themselves wholeheartedly into the upheaval. If they disagreed on many things, they all agreed that the youth received more influence from their schools than from their families.<sup>192</sup> The importance of the education system under the CCP is that Party educators were bent merely on encouraging highly moralistic and disciplined behavior that was in keeping with the teaching of Mao.<sup>193</sup>

Another contribution is that from different perspectives the memoirs interpret the failure of the Red Guards Movement and the Rustication Movement. Many accounts show that the Red Guards from the young fighters of the CR became the youth who needed re-education from the poor peasants. However, the youth failed to turn themselves into socialist peasants and they received little useful education from the peasants. Even on state-owned farms the youth worked under military leadership, with one of the youths

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<sup>192</sup> In her book, Anita Chan draws the same conclusion. For instance, on page 1, “the authoritarian beliefs and emotional needs that these young people held in common were not so much a product of their parents’ influence but rather a product of their political socialization at school.”

<sup>193</sup> Anita Chan, p. 1.

questioning, “I wonder how many other countries have seen their riches squandered by the incompetence of the people in charge?” (Ma, 167). This was as much a question for the local management as one for the country’s top authorities. The majority of the youth returned to their hometowns from the countryside before the CR came to an end. It is truly commendable that the memoirs successfully exposed the failure of the CR. While the accomplishments of the memoirs should be fully recognized, their weaknesses should not be ignored.

Some scholars criticize the lack of truth in memoirs written by Westerners (see Chapter 3). However, the memoirs concerning the CR also suffer from this problem. “Surely Chinese tell the truth as often as we, and lie as often.”<sup>194</sup> It may be said that none of the memoirs tells the whole truth due to a host of objective and subjective reasons. Both groups fall short of being truthful for different reasons. Different readership is obviously an important factor, but several other elements are worth discussing. Below, the influence of China’s politicizing of literature and art and the lack of freedom of speech are discussed.

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<sup>194</sup> David Hall and Roger Ames, *Thinking from the Han: Self, Truth, and Transcendence in Chinese and Western Culture* (State University of New York Press, 1998), p. 103.

### 7.1.2 MCPC: Expressions with More Reservation

To study contemporary Chinese literature and art, one must be familiar with Mao Zedong's speech delivered at the Yan'an Forum.<sup>195</sup> From that time on, China's literature and art became political propaganda tools, and honesty, personal feelings and artistic pursuits became secondary. The intellectuals who wanted to write honestly were criticized severely by the CCP.

Politicizing of literature had a negative effect because honesty and truth became a rare thing in CCP's literature and art fields. Under the rigorous control of the CCP, not only writers, journalists and artists but also the readers, editors and publishers, critics, and the top leadership were all involved in the use of literary means to achieve political ends.<sup>196</sup> A few years after the fall of the Gang of Four, which marked the end of the CR, literary creation of all genres began to enter a new stage.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Cyril Birch, *Literature Under Communism*, (*The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 15, Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 743-4; Perry Link (ed.), *Stubborn Weeds: Popular and Controversial Chinese Literature after the Cultural Revolution* (Indiana University Press, 1983), p. 1; Richard H. Solomon, *A Revolution is not a Dinner Party: A Feast of Images of the Maoist Transformation of China* (New York: Anchor Book, 1978), p. 142; Yeh Ching, *Inside Mao Zedong Thought: An Analytical Blueprint of His Actions*, translated and edited by Stephen Pan, et al., (New York: Exposition Press, 1975), p. 285.

[Yan'an Forum speech: On May 24, 1942 at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art, Mao Zedong stated "All our literature and art are for the masses of the people, and in the first place for the workers, peasants and soldiers and are for their use... In order to meet this need, to abolish the gap between his own consciousness and that of the people by 'making himself one with masses,' the necessary standpoint of the artist must be that of proletariat and broad masses, and his attitude toward the masses must be to praise their toil and struggle and to educate them." See Mao Zedong, *Selected Works of Mao Zedong, Vol. III* (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1975), pp. 69-97.]

<sup>196</sup> Perry Link, p. 3.

<sup>197</sup> Cyril Birch concludes that "Three areas of concern rapidly took shape. First came the recognition that the topsy-turvy moral world of the CR and its aftermath had left traces, deep and perhaps ineradicable, on the minds of all Chinese and especially of the young. The result was 'literature of the wounded'. [Second] As the immediate heat of indignation against the Gang and their followers began to wane, writers undertook more searching examinations of the entire course of events since the late 1950s and of a persistent range of wholly contemporary abuses and injustices. With the destruction of the myth of infallible leadership, these could now be reflected in a 'literature of exposure.' The third great theme of post-Mao writing was the private values of personal life. The proper place of love in socialist life, the damage done by love's denial—these above all are matters that occupy fictional confessions, romances veering between melodrama and fantasy, and an impressive number of quietly thoughtful stories, poems, and plays" (p. 800).

The late 1970s and the 1980s witnessed a wealth of youth literature, especially the “wounded literature” and “root literature.”<sup>198</sup> A large number of formerly rusticated youth (*zhiqing*) writers emerged;<sup>199</sup> also, many non-*zhiqing* writers<sup>200</sup> have dealt with the same themes in their works in an effort to denounce the Gang of Four by exposing people’s sufferings during the CR. Since the late 1980s and the early 1990s, a number of writers with *zhiqing* background have established themselves as major figures in the Chinese literary circle, with works drawing on their respective experiences of rustication throughout the country, as well as works on other themes.<sup>201</sup> However, post-Mao China was open only to a limited extent and Chinese intellectuals had to face limitations of one form or another in their writing and publications.<sup>202</sup>

The authors of MCPC category are under strong political pressure to say something or not to say something in their writings. Most of the memoirs may focus on the general information but by pass the very personal level. This phenomenon happens not only with Liang Xiaosheng who tells his Red Guard story (see section 6.1), but also with writers of the old generation like Ba Jin, Chen Xuezhao and Yang Jiang. For example, Ba Jin, a famous Chinese writer called for the building of the CR Museum in 1985, and asked people never to forget; he also declared his intention to dig deep into his soul on what he

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<sup>198</sup> Root literature: following the wounded literature, Chinese writers search for cultural roots and emphasize their perceived roots in Chinese tradition, try to expose the dark-side of the society before the CR, which have in effect used literature as a means to build their own social constructions. The typical works of the root literature are: *Ba Ba Ba* by Hang Shaogong (*Renmin wenxue*, 1985. 6) and *Xiao Baozhuang* by Wang Anyi (*Zhongguo zhujia*, 1985. 2).

<sup>199</sup> For example, Liang Xiaosheng, Ye Xin, Shu Ting, Deng Xian, and so on.

<sup>200</sup> For example, Feng Jicai, Gu Hua, and Liu Xinwu, and so on.

<sup>201</sup> Richard King, *Renditions*, No. 50, p. 6.

<sup>202</sup> Many literary writings and films have been criticized by the CCP, for example, *He Shang* (River Elegy): a six-part TV series broadcast in June, 1988, directed by Xia Jun (26-year-old), written by Su Xiaokang and Wang Luxiang, et al., and Bai Hua’s film scrip “Bitter Love”, *Shi Yue* (October), 1979, No. 3. Cyril Birch points out, “The attack in 1981 on Bai Hua’s film *Bitter Love* was the first major condemnation of a creative work since the end of the Mao era.” p. 811.

did during the CR.<sup>203</sup> “Later on, Ba Jin found that the top Chinese leaders did not like continued exposure of the evil of the CR, so he immediately stopped his *Random Thoughts* writing, and his last article was written on August 20, 1986. Furthermore, he agreed to remove the suggestion regarding the construction of the CR Museum from his article, when the Sichuan People’s Press reprinted his book in 1997.”<sup>204</sup>

In Yang Jiang’s book, the reader senses her indignation at being wronged, but the author does not seem to feel any hatred or reproachfulness. Her *Six Records* ought to be comprised of seven sections, says Qian Zhongshu, “I had the feeling that she had left out a section, one that might be called ‘Politics—Section on Shame.’ I say this because the main task of our Academy of Studies cadre school was to ‘make political,’ and weed out ‘May 16th Elements’. Political struggles and criticism were like a fever that stayed with us for the two years we were in the countryside.”<sup>205</sup>

In addition to these political reasons, the authors also lack freedom of speech. They dare not say what they really want to say because they have to face many other constraints, for example, many characters are still alive or still in power. To avoid trouble, an author tries his/her best to pick what he or she could tell, trying not to offend someone in power. So, they could not say all of what they wanted to tell their readers. As a result,

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<sup>203</sup> See p. 45.

<sup>204</sup> Zhu Jiangguo, <http://www.bookoo.com>. April, 1, 2000.

<sup>205</sup> Qian Zhongshu, Foreword to *A Cadre School Life: Six Chapters*, p. 11.

they left a lot unsaid. Of course, when the authors were unable to reveal their thoughts freely, they could not state it explicitly for fear of getting into trouble.<sup>206</sup>

Third, the memoirs were written for Chinese readers who have much knowledge about what really happened during the CR. The authors appeared to be rather conservative and stopped short of telling the whole truth. Although they also idealized themselves, their idealizing was less conspicuous than authors of the MCPE group. Furthermore, they also criticized the CCP, but their criticism was not as harsh as that of the MCPE group and they were less bold in revealing personal feelings.

### 7.1.3 MCPE: Talking More Freely

One evident feature that clearly divides the two categories is the extent to which the authors freely expressed themselves. The authors of the MCPE category written for the Westerners reside in the West, where they could talk freely and create freely without any political restrictions in writing memoirs regarding the CR. These memoirs made significant contributions in introducing the CR to the West, especially in a literary form combining fiction with history, with the stories becoming more readable for general readers than a purely historical document. It is evident that most of the memoirs have been truthful in exposing the evils of the CR and criticizing the CCP without the slightest

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<sup>206</sup> For example, it is known that there were fighting between Yang Jiang, Qian Zhongshu and their neighbor Lin Fei (a scholar of Lu Xun studies), and his wife Xiao Feng during the CR. But who was the first one that started the beating and why had this happened? This has now become a subject of debate in the crossfire of articles between Yang and Lin, Xiao and several others. This debate began with Fan Zhou's 1979 paper 'What I Know About Qian Zhongshu' carried in *Mingbao*. Fan says that, during the CR, Qian was beaten by rebels Lin and Xiao. In 1995, when Qian was hospitalized, Lin published an article saying that it was Qian who beat him and his wife Xiao. After Qian passed away in late 1999, Yang's short memoir 'Cong chansha zhi dao liu wang' (From Mixing Sand to Going to Exile) appeared in many newspapers, recall this event. In early 2000, Lin and Xiao also published articles in many newspapers to defend themselves. The debate continues at the time of writing.

hesitation. For example, on page 250 of Ye Tingxing's account, the author is opposed to the belief that "Every wrongful act of the past ten years was ascribed to the Gang of Four." Ye notes perceptively, that the downfall of Jiang Qing and her henchmen followed quickly on the heels of Mao's death. "Had it really been a Gang of Five, not Four?" This is an excellent point and, of course, it is no secret that the real mastermind behind the CR was Mao, and that the Gang of Four were merely Mao's followers. Zhai also writes: "Was he saying that we were all going to become peasants? That was impossible! Mao couldn't be that heartless! Not after all we did for him in his CR!" (Zhai, p.150). This also says something about the intellectuals' contempt for peasants. Mao was, after all, of peasant background.

However, the authors could talk freely, feeling no pressure, but this freedom may result in the authors' desire to change the characters or even the true stories in order to idealize themselves or their parents. The clearest example of this is Zhu Xiaodi, whose idealization of his father was been mentioned in Chapter 4 above. In spite of its status as a bestseller, *Wild Swans* is a highly problematic memoir (for more detail see 5.2.1), as the author Chang Jung paints her previous life in such a way so as to completely suit today's Western reader. During the highest tide of Mao's worship, when youth came to Beijing from every corner of the country to see Mao in person, Chang admitted, "This was the happiest I had been since the start of the CR" (p. 315). After travelling to Beijing, according to her, when everybody else lost control and became very emotional in the reception, Chang controlled herself very well, feeling only calmness and disappointment. "Looking back, I suppose the idea was really a subconscious attempt to quantify my devastation at having my dream smashed, especially after all the hardship I had suffered

on my journey” (p. 321). The major problem of her account lies in Chang’s “looking back” from the day after the reception in Tiananmen Square rather than from the time of her writing. In other words, Chang tells her feelings not at the time of China’s CR but at the time of her residing in England some twenty years afterwards.

Admittedly, no memoir is free of errors. Some simply show the author’s ignorance and lack of precision in giving incorrect information.<sup>207</sup>

Problems may occur depending on whether the author tailored his/her story, consciously or unconsciously, to suit the taste of today’s Western readers. Writers choose to appeal to Western readers because they now reside in the West. Some descriptions in the memoirs may mislead Western readers in their views of China. According to Hodge and Louie, an image of China has its roots in a particular tradition of Chinese culture, but it is often “a product of Western sensibilities and perverse desires of a Western audience, who are happy at the end to close such books and think: Yes! West is best!”<sup>208</sup>

Some of the memoirs painted the Chinese society all black. In contrast, “The West was badly misled by another literary tradition, that of Maoist sympathizers like Han Suyin

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<sup>207</sup> Several examples are taken from Ye Tingxing’s memoir. “In half an hour, the train pulled into Tianjin station (p. 235).” That is incorrect, because the distance from Beijing to Tianjin is around 120 km. Given the speed of railway cars in the 1970s, it took at least one hour and a half to get to Tianjin from Beijing by train. Again, related to railways, Ye states “...Fengtai, a small town between Tianjin and Tangshan (p. 244).” This is wrong again in that Fengtai is a famous small town on the outskirts of Beijing. In her description of the horrible earthquake of 1976, Ye tells her readers that, “Tangshan was the capital of Hebei Province.” This is totally wrong because, as known to all, Shijiazhuang has been the capital of Hebei Province for decades. Previously, Tianjin, and then Baoding, served as the capital of the Province for a certain period of time, but not Tangshan. After the CR came to an end in 1976, the author reckoned, “A foreboding atmosphere hung over the camp... Maybe Chiang Kai-shek had attacked Mainland China from his stronghold on Formosa (p. 248).” That is incredible. Given the fact that Jiang died in April 1975, how could he launch any attack against Mainland China one year after his death? Moreover, Mainland Chinese never use the colonial term “Formosa” to name Taiwan.

<sup>208</sup> Bob Hodge and Kam Louie, *The Politics of Chinese Language and Culture: The Art of Reading Dragons* (Routledge, 1998), p. 151.

who gave glowing reports on Mao's China during a time we now know was a period of incredible hardship. During the CR, Han Suyin reported that she met no one who was unhappy, no one who was dissatisfied with Mao and his regime, and many visitors to China came back with similar comments... These glowing images of a happy, united China under Mao were a half-truth, one which misled a whole generation of left-wing thinkers in the West. How could we have been so wrong? They ask. The unremitting gloom of 'scarred' writers in China in the 1970s and 1980s, and those outside such as Chang Jung [has gone to the other extreme.] But, a picture of unrelieved misery is not necessarily any less ideological than the naïve euphoria of Han Suyin; it is only a different ideology."<sup>209</sup> Actually, Han Suyin changed her position from one extreme to another. In other words, the images of the Red Guards and Jiang Qing were portrayed entirely differently by Han in her two autobiographies.<sup>210</sup> Simon Leys concludes that Han Suyin's "work displays two different faces simultaneously, heads as well as tails; the subtle

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<sup>209</sup> Bob Hodge and Kam Louie, p. 151.

<sup>210</sup> Han Suyin, *Wind in the Tower: Mao Zedong and the Chinese Revolution, 1949-1975* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1976), p. 292, "The Red Guards were not allowed to carry weapons, nor to arrest or to try anyone, nor to arbitrarily replace any administrative cadre. They were to 'criticize and repudiate,' combat the 'four olds,' proselytize the masses, arouse them into a climate of total involvement... The Red guards performed a task no one else could have; they literally spring-cleaned the cities, turning up caches of gold and firearms, ferreting out many a secret agent and spy. Their propaganda action, carried out in the streets every day, talking to the people everywhere, did involve the population and disseminate the idea of criticism and debate. This leavening action was very important, for the dough of an older generation could not have been made to ferment otherwise. And very early in September they were already being attacked, and sometimes killed, by groups of workers and peasants, mobilized by the Liu [Shaoqi] faction in the Party..." In Han's *My House has two Doors* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1980), pp. 458-9, "There were so many absurd and ugly things being done... The Red Guards changed the names of streets and of shops, until the Post Office complained that they could no longer deliver letters, 'since every street and every shop has the same name'. There were good and bad Red Guards. The good ones—among them the children of my friends—helped the peasants with the harvest, and protected people and state property. But the worst not only burnt books and destroyed historic monuments; they also killed and tortured... 'The Red Guards who beat my husband were directed by Lin Biao and Jiang Qing,' says Lao She's wife, the painter Hu Jieqing, to me."

counterpoint can only be properly appreciated if one takes the trouble to put them into stereoscopic focus.”<sup>211</sup> For this, Han will undoubtedly complain, “The human soul is an assembly of contradictions. And therefore both of your versions, the one of these years, and the one you give today, are correct.”<sup>212</sup> Leys questions, “Dialectically speaking, it was she [Han] who was right to be wrong, whereas it is we who are wrong to be right.”<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Simon Leys, *The Burning Forest: Essays on Chinese Culture and politics*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1985), p. 178. Leys quotes some of Han’s works, in p. 181, “It fell to Jiang Qing to denounce the Ultra-Left, and she was the first to do so... Jiang Qing was the deputy head of the CR Group, in no sense responsible for their depredations, for she was the first to fight against them...(*Wind in the Tower*, pp. 316-17)”. “Jiang Qing’s speech to the Red Guards in Peking on 22 June 1967 aroused unprecedented fighting... and provoked many deaths (*Moisson*, p. 168)”. “This paragraphy which should appear on p. 513 of *My House Has Two Doors*, was deleted from the English edition and is to be found only in the French version.”

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.* p. 190. Cites in Han Suyin, *My House Has Two Doors*, p. 485.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.* p. 192.

## 7.2 Conclusion and Future Research

To check out “How close is the narration to the truth?”<sup>214</sup> is probably the most important way in revealing a memoir or an autobiography. Memoirs hardly tell the whole truth although those analyzed in this thesis have made important contributions to the study of the CR and, indeed, of contemporary China. These memoirs enable the reader to have some understanding about the happenings of the CR. They tell the stories of the authors and their families, give reader an emotional dimension in understanding and interpreting China’s history in general and the CR’s history in particular, but a memoir is not equal to a historical record.

Generally speaking, all the Chinese authors agree that the CR was an enormous human and cultural disaster for China. They are all painting and interpreting a big picture of the CR’s failure. But judging by the personal level of account, besides psychological reasons and some honest mistakes, the two groups’ authors have their own reasons to invent stories in their writings. Authors of the MCPC group fear too much to tell the whole truth and have left a lot unsaid. Authors of the MCPE group are too brave and they tend to idealize themselves. Besides descriptions of the major events, all the memoirs in the MCPE category also contain detailed explanations of the background and terms of the CR. Each author appears to believe that his or her book is the first account to deal with the CR; none of them recognizes precursors in the genre. They cannot accept the fact that

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<sup>214</sup> Phillip Roth, pp. 163-4, “What one chooses to reveal in fiction is governed by a motive fundamentally aesthetic; we judge the author of a novel by how well he or she tells the story. But we judge morally the author of an autobiography, whose governing motive is primarily ethical as against aesthetic. How close is the narration to the truth? Is the author hiding his or her motives, presenting his or her actions and thoughts to lay bare the essential nature of conditions or trying to hide something, telling in order not to tell? In a way we always tell in order also not to tell, but the personal historian is expected to resist to the utmost the ordinary impulse to falsify, distort, and deny.”

readers may have already learned some basic background of the CR from numerous sources in the same field. The authors feel they need to explain about the CR for fear that non-Chinese readers are totally ignorant about this period.

It is true that many evil things did happen during the CR, but when the authors tell their readers what they did and explain the reasons and how other people felt, they may not be truthful. Being untruthful is irresponsible and it may mislead Westerners and aggravate distortions about China.

Obviously, my thesis only focuses on the memoirs concerning the CR. It will be of great interest, at least from an academic perspective, to extend my approach and apply it to comparisons of the post-CR memoirs or such writings, again, between the two categories: Mainland Chinese authors and overseas Chinese authors. Although the CR is history already, its negative impact is still haunting many people in present-day China. Many social problems have their origin in the poisoning effect of the CR. One of the youth writers, Ye Xin, has published *The Wages of Sin* (Nie zhai).<sup>215</sup> It is anticipated that more books like this will appear in the years to come, and that it will be a long time before the facts of the CR are revealed, and some at least of the residual problems resolved.

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<sup>215</sup> Ye Xin, *nie zhai* (The Wages of Sin), (Shanghai: Novel Magazine (xiao shuo jie), 1992, 1993); (Jiangsu wenyi Press, 1992).

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### **Annex: Acronyms and Abbreviations**

- CCP: Chinese Communist Party  
 CR: Cultural Revolution  
 MCPC: Memoirs by Chinese and published in Chinese  
 MCPE: Memoirs written by Chinese and published in English  
 PLA: People Liberation's Army  
 PRC: People's Republic of China  
 WPS: Worker-peasant-soldier