

REMEMBERING THE GREAT PROLETARIAN CULTURAL REVOLUTION:
WOMEN'S MEMOIRS IN THEIR CULTURAL CONTEXT

by

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Cultural Context

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Beida	Beijing University
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
GMD	Guomindang
GPCR	Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

ABSTRACT

REMEMBERING THE GREAT PROLETARIAN CULTURAL REVOLUTION: WOMEN'S MEMOIRS IN THEIR CULTURAL CONTEXT

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This thesis examines the memories of sixteen Chinese women who recall their experiences in living through the Chinese Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). It describes the living conditions and characteristic experiences of urban, educated adolescent women and women of their parents' generation, for the period as portrayed in the subject memoirs. The two generations differed in their experiences and attitudes, but GPCR policies which targeted a division between youth and adults ultimately failed to pull these families apart. The memoirs document the subjects' gradual disillusionment with Maoist policies and their turn toward more individual, privately satisfying goals for their lives. The memoirs are discussed in the context of their mixed heritage, in form and content, from both Western-European and Chinese traditions of self-narrative.

1. INTRODUCTION

Overview

This project investigates the memoirs and autobiographies of women who experienced the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR) in China in the decade from 1966 to 1976. Its purpose is to throw new light on what the events of the Cultural Revolution meant for individuals, both as they were living it, and in its aftermath. Today, approximately three dozen individual memoirs incorporating substantial reflections on the period of the Cultural Revolution have been published in English, roughly half of these by women. To this point, although scholars of the period are obviously familiar with a number of them, these accounts have not been investigated thoroughly as a source of anthropological detail about the period, nor have the women's memories been treated in depth as a possibly distinct set of experiences.¹ This project begins to fill that gap.

Purpose and methods

The focus on the memoirs of women is made with the assumption that the experiences of women in mid-twentieth century China were different than those of men, and that in the ensuing years these experiences were likely remembered and

¹ Ye (2005), in her discussions with Ma recorded in the book, addresses a number of topics of particular interest to many women, such as beauty and dress, competition with men, awareness of gender, and so forth. However, both the introduction by Paul Cohen and her first chapter largely dismiss the material in other memoirs as imbalanced and insufficiently nuanced. Her book really only addresses her and Ma's personal experiences.

communicated differently. It assumes that there may be differences, between women's and men's accounts, which are systematic and go beyond the normal variation that can be expected between individual accounts. At this time, this remains an assumption.

Examination of the systematic differences awaits a companion study of men's memoirs of the same period. In the meantime, the body of material encompasses enough variety, and displays enough similarities, while remaining reasonably manageable in size, to justify this method of selection.

The List of References cites fifteen memoirs that I have reviewed in detail. Most are book length. Chihua Wen's *The Red Mirror*, however, is a compilation of short accounts from a number of people. Of this material, I have only used her fairly extensive introduction, in which she discusses her own experiences. I have also reviewed a number of other memoirs by and about women which include material on the GPCR. Pan (1992), Mah (1997), Ying (1998), Xinran (2002, 2008), are notable examples. However, I have considered these only as background material, as there was insufficient detail on the period for me to compare the accounts with the specifics of the core memoirs.

Given the memoirs, autobiographies, and other personal accounts in English of women who lived through these often dramatic events, what specifically do we can be learned from them to better understand how the GPCR affected the lives of individuals, both during and after? Anthropology has traditionally focused on a description of the objective, material and observable aspects of people's lives. It explores the meanings that these objective details appear to carry for the individual. Since human experience is various within any culture or setting, more than one person's view is considered in order

to that a range of conditions and their meanings can be identified. I follow this approach by looking at a number of memoirs and the range of experiences they describe. First I set the stage by describing the scholarship on why and how people remember their lives and recount those memories. Then I discuss selective aspects of the cultural context of the memoirs – what is in the academic literature about Chinese narrative and some particularly important concepts related to the role of the educated classes in Chinese society. The core of the analysis of the memoirs starts in Chapter 4 which describes the predominant conditions of the subjects' lives, drawn from their books. This includes some description of family life, education, housing, food, finances, as well as the more obviously GPCR experiences such as struggle meetings, house raids, and work in the countryside.

Chapters 5 and 6 consider the subjects' responses to these conditions, as nearly as I can discover them. I consider in the category of meanings and interpretations explicit statements by the subjects describing how they felt and what they thought. These include emotional and cognitive responses to particular incidents as well as statements of a more general nature about larger time spans in their experience. Meanings and interpretations include subjects' attempts to reconstruct what was felt at the time, as well as their retrospective judgments, and a variety of responses in between, that is, whose chronological source seems quite unclear to either subject or reader.

For a number of possible reasons which are discussed in more detail later, considered as a whole, these books are not heavily laden with direct expressions of

feeling or interpretation.² In most, the language is relatively objective and matter of fact. The memoirs make use of little commentary, and novelistic or poetic detail to help the reader interpret mood or intuit emotions is sparse: the rain does not conveniently fall when the subject may be sad, nor the sun necessarily shine on more optimistic days. This sparseness of overt comment, by the subjects themselves, poses problems for interpretation. If the writer does not explicitly tell or strongly imply what the experiences meant to her, how is she to be understood without the reader supplying too much interpretation?

I address this problem by looking for four additional types of evidence in the text. (1) What does the author talk about and what does the author leave out? Since there are a relatively large number of accounts, the absence or presence of certain kinds of information can be determined by comparisons. There are also some absences of information that are manifest by unanswered questions which occur to me as the reader. Additionally, many of the authors incorporate material concerning more distant relatives, friends or acquaintances. Since there is obviously a wealth of possible information, the recounting or remembrance of certain kinds of these supplementary materials gives some insight into themes which the subject felt was important. (2) What kinds of materials appear to be most vividly realized? Vivid realization is generally accomplished through the provision of details and the length of treatment of any particular subject matter. (3) What are the specific actions remembered as having taken place in response to different incidents and how did those actions change conditions for the people involved? An action

² Oddly, when I begin quoting from the material, primarily in Chapter 5, this statement may seem incorrect. However, I will be quoting, in general, the most emotional and judgment laden portions.

taken in response to an outside stimulus can imply or suggest an emotional/cognitive state. Hiding may suggest fear or pragmatism. Going out in the face of possible danger can suggest curiosity, or foolishness. Additionally, the meaning of an incident to someone can sometimes be observed in the consequences. If positive action was taken to try to improve a situation, was this met with success or failure? (4) Where does the book begin and where does it end? The larger meaning of the book in a subject's mind can frequently be signaled by where she begins and ends her story.

To track this detailed information for each account, I maintained three spreadsheets. The first contains biographical information about the subjects: locations and dates of their experiences, details on parents, grandparents, siblings, schooling, marriage, children. The second contains details of specific incidents – the incident itself, the feelings described in response, the actions taken in response and the ultimate results. Additionally, I record the overall treatment of such incidents in the book. I consider nine incident types: struggle meetings; Red Guard parades; house searches; being sent to the countryside; being arrested or witnessing the arrest of a close family member; obtaining help in the form of clothing, housing, medical care, or food; exoneration of self or close family member; receiving sympathy from someone; celebration of a traditional holiday or festival event during the GPCR period. These types of events certainly do not cover all that is recorded of significance in each memoir nor all topics that other scholars might feel are important to discuss concerning the GPCR. My discussion in Chapters 4 through 6 is not limited to these topics. However, the comparison of memoirs concerning these

specific topics at this level of detail allowed me to systematically track differences and similarities across a large number of accounts.

My third spreadsheet focuses on further aspects of the subjects' interpretations of their experience, through analysis of features of the entire account. It captures explanations offered for the GPCR, the beginnings and endings of the books, some important stories told within the books about people external to the author's immediate household, what seems left out of the account, what is most vivid in the account and what might be an overall point or message that the subject seems to aim at communicating.

Anthropologists, and other ethnographers, typically work with informants, members of whatever group they are investigating, whom they both observe and question. In this study, my informants are represented by their written memoirs. This has both limiting and liberating consequences. I cannot directly ask or pursue questions that I wish answered. I am limited to what is on the page and to the information the subject has chosen to present. My spreadsheet topics are in effect the questions I have asked of each of these informants. Where my notes are blank, they have not answered my questions. At the same time, the material is liberating because it is already published, and I do not have to protect anyone's privacy, nor concern myself with whether I am unfairly exploiting someone else's materials. As already indicated, what people choose to tell of their own accord is highly indicative of what they feel is important.³

³ This method also overcomes the limitations Crapanzano (1984) notes concerning the use of life histories. He is, of course, discussing elicited life histories. My method acknowledges these memoirs as constructed text and by aggregating experiences and responses across a range of subjects, avoids treating any one as a too significant representative of her group.

I have selected my corpus based solely on what I found available in English, written by women. The sample size, while large from the point of view of managing the analytic task, is obviously small and skewed relative to Chinese women who experienced the GPCR. The focus is on urban, educated women, partly because those are the women who were the main female participants in the GPCR events. Additionally, these are the people who wrote about their experiences. But among the larger set of urban, educated women who lived through this period, this group of memoirists all share the experience of having been thoroughly exposed to both European-American as well as Chinese culture. It is unclear how well their experiences and responses generalize even across their social group. Of the sixteen women, all have studied outside China and all but four now live abroad. At the time at which they went abroad (often the early 1980s) this was still not a common experience. Their success at leaving China at that time suggests a significant level of personal determination and desire to learn about the rest of the world, as well as connections abroad and within China which others, even of the same social class, may not have had.

The use of informants, especially for in-depth and nuanced investigation, is always fraught with the difficulty of appropriately interpreting the informants' *individual* viewpoints and placing them in the context of what is commonly or more broadly felt among other members of the group. When considering historical events and practices, as opposed to immediately contemporary events, the evaluation of source material becomes complex. People not only have individual viewpoints. The vagaries of both individual and social memory play a large role in the selection of what people remember as well as

how they judge it and explain it. When memories are in some way disturbing or painful there seem to be pressures on the human mind to account for the past in particular ways. In any case, memories, whether of individuals or groups, cannot be considered naively as an unmediated reporting of facts, such as an external, uninvolved witness might have registered (Portelli 1991, 2003).⁴ A considerable body of mostly recent scholarship in anthropology, historiography and psychology has discussed these issues of memory and the memory of disturbing events. I begin by reviewing this general scholarship in Chapter 2.

Chapter 3 discusses key narrative themes and forms of narrative from traditional and 20th century Chinese philosophy, history and literature. I have selected those I believe useful as background to understanding these memoirs. Given the vastness of the subject, the treatment is necessarily selective and somewhat superficial. However, I have included some of this general material, especially on Confucian ideas of social structure, where I believe it has enriched my own understanding of the memoirs. The material on Chinese historical and fictional narrative and autobiography is based on a more thorough review of recent scholarship.

Additional contextual material is helpful in understanding and interpreting these memoirs. I address background topics in the remainder of this introductory chapter. First, I provide an overview of the changing position of the educated middle class and

⁴ While such an ideal observer does not exist in reality, still we often imagine such a person and it is useful to do so. We cannot understand the meaning of what people say, to themselves or for us, unless we have some notion of the reality of the objects or events to which they refer.

especially middle class women during the first half of the 20th century in China. Second, I outline the main events of the GPCR.

Background: 20th Century Chinese Middle Class

As with any historical period, the people who experienced the years of the GPCR did so based on what had preceded it. Most of the study subjects discussed here were born after the CCP victory in 1949, and so for many there were memories of childhood and elementary school in the late 1950s or early 1960s. Their parents matured during the 1930s and 1940s, experiencing the tumult and material hardships of the civil war with the Guomindang (GMD), the Japanese occupation and World War II. Many of these parents were closely involved in the establishment and growth of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) during that time. These experiences naturally helped shape the way they raised their children, and the ways in which they viewed and responded to the GPCR.

That period of turmoil was itself a time of significant social change. The subjects of this study were all members of the educated, urban middle class in the PRC, which was the Chinese Communist reincarnation of the traditional Chinese literati-gentry⁵ class. From the late Qing period, well before the CCP rise to power, this social class had been undergoing considerable alteration in its sources of income and influence. In China prior to the 20th century, government was centralized in the Emperor who was supported by a comparatively small bureaucracy, selected largely on the basis of an examination system. Imperial decree abolished the examination system in 1905. Many literati, already starting

⁵ Exactly what to call this class of people is not a simple matter; many terms may be used in English. I use literati-gentry, and sometimes literati in abbreviation. Literati emphasizes their educated status and role in governmental service. Gentry emphasizes their role as landowners with power and governmental/social responsibilities in rural areas.

to educate themselves in Western science, literature and history, advocated the demise of the old system. The opening of Chinese society and government to more egalitarian participation was widely supported among most social groups. The incorporation of ideas from modern science, technology, arts, social science, and medicine were strongly desired as ways to better the lives of all Chinese and help China discard its backwardness, shake off its subservience to the authority of tradition, and take its rightful place in the world of nations (Bergere 1986; Schwarcz 1984).

However, these changes meant that as a class the literati were transitioning away from a relatively secure and sanctioned role in the government at the national and provincial levels. The utility of education as the path to economic, social and even moral security was not so assured as it had been. Their motivation and sense of duty to help their country did not disappear (Wang 1966). Many moved into new roles as scientific and technical experts, merchants and entrepreneurs, teachers, writers and publishers. Studying abroad in Japan, Russia, United States and Europe, or simply from their readings of foreign literature and journals, they were avid consumers of the latest ideas from abroad (Lee 1999; Schwarcz 1991). They read, translated and discussed Bertrand Russell, John Dewey, and a host of French and Russian writers. They were sensitive to nationalist themes and the appeal of Marxism. In the end, many supported the Communist cause, both before and after Mao established himself as leader of the CCP in the 1930s. Whatever misgivings they might develop about Communism, they saw Mao as

less corrupt, more able to unify all of Chinese society, and more competent against the Japanese than Jiang Jingguo and the GMD.⁶

The subjects of this study either themselves grew up during this period of intense change, or their parents did. The influence of their literati-gentry heritage is evident not only in their educated and relatively comfortable social status, but in their focus on learning and education as a path toward serving their country and self-improvement.

The social position of women

Not surprisingly, during this period of rapid change for the literati-gentry, the position of educated women within Chinese society was also changing. In pre-1900 China, the position of women was certainly not uniform throughout history, across social classes, ethnicities or across the country. However, in the literati-gentry class of the Ming and Qing, there were considerable restrictions on women's lives and activities. Footbinding was widely practiced until later in the Qing, and in many areas, literati-gentry women lived mostly in women's quarters in the household. They could visit their friends, go to the temple or theater, if accompanied and properly sheltered in a palanquin or other conveyance. Parents had absolute control over marriages of both women and men of that class. How severely this control was exercised depended upon the parents and family custom. Women of this class might or might not be educated – that is, taught to read, and made familiar with poetry, the classics, literature and philosophy, over and

⁶ Interestingly, Edgar Snow's panegyric to Mao, *Red Star Over China*, may have been influential in China as well as in the US in leading people to believe in Mao's extraordinary capabilities, and helping them to discount or ignore the extent of the coercive methods he was using to consolidate his power in the CCP in the 1930s and 1940s. So little information was available at the time in China about Mao that Snow's work may have had disproportionate influence. His being a foreigner made him seem less obviously a propagandist. (Nien Cheng 1987)

above the common knowledge in circulation through the oral culture. However, in many families they were educated enough to supervise the early education of their children, including their sons, and to be able to converse intelligently with their husbands. Some might be as deeply educated as their fathers and brothers; they wrote poetry, essays, and other genres of *belles lettres* (Wang Lingzhen 2004), which were circulated among friends and often collected in anthologies for preservation and even wider readership.

Reforms in education at the turn of the 20th century made public and missionary schools available to women as well as the private tutoring that they had had accessed previously. A key tenet of the New Culture/May 4th Movement (1915-1921)⁷ was equality for women. Specifically, women were to have access to education, jobs and careers. The idea that both men and women should be free to select their own marriage partners and to marry for love was one of its most powerful precepts. Conflicts with parents over marriage and the difficulties facing a young woman trying to break free of old-fashioned parental restrictions on education and jobs are constantly repeated themes in fiction of the period (Link 1981; Mao 1992; Yan 2006). These seemed a concrete, as well as romantic, step that young people could take to help overturn the stultifying obedience to patriarchal authority which they believed characterized the worst of the traditional Confucian social system.

Women became highly active in the intellectuals' movement to reform China. Some, like their male counterparts, studied abroad. They became novelists and story writers, journalists and academics, covering the entire spectrum of political viewpoints of

⁷ A movement among Chinese intellectuals aimed at the reformation of China.

the time. Many wrote autobiography and memoirs, as well as the traditional genres of poetry and essays (Dooling 2005). The publication (for profit) of these materials suggests a robust audience interested in women's writings. Women took on a more public face by appearing in movies and advertising. With the changes in society, women could also participate more freely in public life – going shopping, enjoying the parks, attending the movies, and so forth, more freely than previously (Yan 2006).

Chen Xuezhao, one of the subjects of this study, was an active participant in this cultural reform movement. She was born in Zhejiang province in 1906. Her father, a school teacher, died when she was seven and her mother became bed ridden shortly afterwards. Chen was thus at the mercy of her brothers who beat her, but did send her to school, and she also had access to classical literature at home. She left home to attend the Shanghai Patriotic Girls' School from which she graduated in 1923, and where she became friends with a number of other women who later also gained key places in the leftist literary world. By graduation, she was already publishing short pieces defining herself as an advocate for women's liberation. She began by teaching but within two years was living from her writing, and was able to finance her trip to France from this income, in 1927, where she continued to support herself by writing, news reporting, and translating. She returned to China in 1935 with her husband, living first in GMD controlled areas, finally joining the Communists in Yan'an in 1938 (Kinkley 1990).

After 1927, when the GMD pushed the CCP out of Shanghai and the eastern coastal region, there was some retrenchment in GMD controlled areas toward a more conservative attitude that women, now protected by a marriage law that outlawed

concubinage, should be educated but that their primary responsibility was within the home, caring for their families (Dooling 2005). However, the CCP maintained its strong advocacy for complete equality for women. While women continued even within the Communist movement to play a secondary role to men in many ways, nonetheless the CCP promise of complete equality was appealing (Wang 2005). The Communists provided more opportunities for leadership than the GMD, even if, in practice, these fell short of the ideals of complete equality advocated by both men and women reformers during the May 4th period.

There is little question from the content of twentieth century Chinese fiction among other sources, that despite the liberalization in the position of women both before and after the CCP take- over in China, women in the educated classes struggled in their personal lives to break free of the restrictions imposed by certain aspects of an old-fashioned Confucian morality (Huang 2004; Mao 1992). They continued in the mid-twentieth century to exist within a kind of dual framework in which many intellectual options were available, but expectations and dynamics within the family often required a level of loyalty and obedience which still seemed to them too limiting. At least in the cities, they might have jobs and meet men, and yet be expected to live at home, under parental supervision. Their wishes might be more fully consulted about marriage than in the past, but they were still required to carefully consider marriage partners suggested by their parents and to respect a parental veto on any unsuitable ideas of their own. Sons continued to be prized over daughters in many families, and while men could no longer

have multiple wives, the keeping of mistresses, at least among those who could afford to, seems not to have been uncommon.

The subjects of this study, then, were born and matured during a period of considerable social change for themselves as women and as members of the educated urban middle class in China. They inherited a strong sense of duty to support their country through their intellectual skills and a belief in their ability to play an important role in their country's strengthening. Within many families and in the workplace, they often played subordinate roles to men and felt obligations to follow their parents' guidance on many issues.

Background: the GPCR

The GPCR has been variously interpreted as primarily a factional struggle within the upper echelons of the CCP, the machinations of Mme Mao intended to secure her a position of near imperial power after Mao's death, the result of serious miscalculations on Mao's part in his attempt to regain power after the decline of his influence in the early 1960s, the attempts of an aging giant to prove his continuing vigor, the mistaken attempts of an old revolutionary to insure the state of perpetual revolution he believed necessary to achieve his goals for a truly Communist society, or the inevitable next steps of an increasingly despotic and paranoid regime (Farquhar and Schoenhals 2006). These interpretations are not mutually incompatible and for the purposes of this paper the exact degree of responsibility of different factions and participants at the helm of the GPCR are not enormously important.

However, it is significant that the GPCR was an engineered revolution, deliberately instigated and managed by one or more factions within the national government. It required, of course, people's widespread participation to make it happen, especially since the military were not employed initially⁸. Mao's genius enabled him to arouse people to action along roughly the lines he wished. He was further adept at changing his tactics should the results of initial actions not be what he wanted, or to take advantage of new, unexpected developments to further his goals. The result was a more rapidly changing and unpredictable political environment after 1966 than people had known before. While many of the adults at the time of the GPCR had already considerable experience with anti-rightist campaigns and factional politics, their previous methods of protecting themselves did not work as well under these new conditions. The widespread incorporation of youth, the Red Guards, as the initial "shock troops" of the GPCR was one surprise, as was the extremity of the rhetoric and the numbers of people involved.

Anti-rightist campaigns – a rightist's thinking and actions were bourgeois and did not support the masses – had been a Maoist tool since the 1930s of consolidating the Party behind his policies and goals. Such campaigns employed enforced self-criticism, varyingly severe public criticism, reform through labor, exile to the countryside, imprisonment or detention, and a certain amount of publicly administered physical punishment. Most adults in responsible CCP positions (e.g. cadres) appear to have either

⁸ There was military involvement from the beginning. However, it was limited and largely hidden. Pro-Mao military forces were moved to positions around Beijing before Mao launched a full fledged attack on the leadership of the *People's Daily* and other party propaganda organs (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006).

experienced some of these disciplinary measures themselves or known people among family and friends who had. Thus, they knew what to do when confronted with the necessity of taking part in such activities again during the GPCR. Mao did not have to teach either the management of self-criticism or the participation in self-criticism to anyone as the method for revolutionizing the Party. People knew what they were supposed to do, at least in form.

A brief and somewhat simplified summary of the origins and main events of the GPCR follow. Toward the end of the 1950s, Mao –against the advice of much of the CCP leadership – carried through a movement known as the Great Leap Forward in which Mao promised rapid modernization through accelerated, massive collectivization and intensive industrialization. The burden of this movement fell upon the peasants and working classes. Peasants worked both day and much of the night for several years and agricultural output declined. Famine, from 1959-1961, killed possibly 30 million people mostly in rural areas. In consequence, the senior CCP leadership pressured Mao into stepping aside, and a group with a more conservative, pragmatic approach succeeded in turning the economy around in the early 1960s. The leader of the recovery movement was Liu Shaoqi, who was also Mao’s second in command and designated successor.

During the early 1960s, while Mao was in semi-retirement, there was a change in the education of young people, in which the personality cult of Mao received gradually increasing emphasis. Lin Biao, head of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), and a close ally of Mao’s wife, Jiang Qing, was prominent in the intensification of the personality cult. Thus, when the GPCR started, large portions of the PLA and most children in their

early and late teens were extremely loyal to Mao, aware of his revolutionary exploits, such as the Long March (1934-5), and convinced of his benevolent, indeed, highly personal and critical role in their lives.

Through a public argument, initiated behind the scenes by Jiang Qing and carried out in the Beijing and Shanghai newspapers, over the meaning of a play based on a historical incident from the Ming Dynasty (1368 -1644), the GPCR was launched in the spring of 1966. While most recognized the signs of a new anti-rightist campaign, many in the CCP, both middle and high ranking cadres, did not realize for several months that the main target was Liu Shaoqi, and that the goal was a wholesale remaking of the middle and upper ranks of the Party. Other important targets for reform were the education system, especially from grade seven through the universities, and all cultural, communications and entertainment departments in the government. As is well known, many foreign and traditional books and works of art were destroyed, and the university system was essentially shut down for over ten years. The production and showing of movies, plays and operas was completely halted except for eight revolutionary operas which were designed by Jiang Qing to showcase the goals of the GPCR.

Eventually, Liu Shaoqi was forced from power in August 1966, detained and sent into internal exile, where he died, alone, of untreated complications to diabetes in the fall of 1969. Lin Biao was elevated to the position of second in command (in the Party, also August 1966) and named Mao's successor in the new constitution adopted by the CCP in April 1969. Lin in turn, however, fell from power in 1971, apparently as the result of a failed coup against Mao. He and his family died in a plane crash as they attempted to flee

to the Soviet Union. Throughout this period, until Zhou Enlai's death in 1976, the country was actually managed by an uneasily competitive coalition headed by Jiang Qing on the one hand and Zhou Enlai on the other. Jiang Qing and her allies, the Gang of Four, were widely seen as the greatest force for radicalization and violence. Zhou Enlai was widely perceived as a force for moderation.⁹

More details of the characteristic experiences of the GPCR in which the subjects of this study participated directly will appear in Chapter 4. However, the main events for youth in the first year were the establishment of the Red Guards in the early summer of 1966, their carrying out of the campaign to rid the country of the “four olds” by searching houses for evidence of bourgeois and foreign influences among people's possessions, Mao's eighteen reviews of the Red Guards in Tiananmen Square in August and September, and then the great link up, in which young people, freed from having to attend school in the fall of 1966, were encouraged to travel around the country to spread revolution and make contact with their revolutionary comrades in other provinces. Sometime after the young people returned home from their travels, Red Guard leadership changed from the hands of the children of upper level Party cadres, where it had started, to the hands of the “good classes”, that is the children of peasants, soldiers and workers. The children of cadres were pushed out, when their parents became the target of attacks. Secondary schools were reopened (fall 1967), although substantive teaching did not resume. Children from the age of fourteen generally spent vacations working in the

⁹ While this is widely believed, the memoirs bear out this perception. Chang, Chen, and Cheng all report interventions and appeals directly to Zhou. Luo and her sister spent considerable time preparing an appeal to Zhou, which seems not to have born fruit but which draws attention to his reputation for relative compassion.

countryside and from the age of seventeen (secondary school graduation) were sent to the countryside to work as peasants. Colleges reopened in the early 1970s for soldiers-peasants-workers, although the teachers were often relatively uneducated workers and peasants or were closely supervised by them. Serious education in secondary and university levels did not resume until after 1976, when Mao died and shortly afterward Mme Mao and her allies were arrested.

The GPCR did not unfold with a unified time-table across the whole country. It was primarily an urban phenomenon and focused on the educated and middle class. The most serious and widespread violence appears to have occurred in many places during the summer and early fall of 1966. However, this was merely the prelude, a kind of softening up, to the more serious struggles for the upper hand, which persisted for many years in the universities, many provincial and urban governments, and other key organizations, especially those involved in media and communications. The Red Guards broke into factions, supporting different bids for power among political factions, and in many areas, using weapons stolen from or supplied by the PLA, fought pitched battles with each other. The PLA, primarily loyal to Mao, and a power-player, if silently so, from the beginning, eventually was deployed as oversight to governmental, factory, workplace organizations where once the Party cadre would have been considered sufficient. In an effort to keep the economy functioning, PLA representatives came to manage most industrial enterprises.

While after 1967 the publicly obvious practices of house searches, massive struggle meetings, accosting people in the streets, and so forth, had considerably died

down, instances of this kind of harassment continued for those caught in the midst of particularly stubborn power struggles. Mao formally declared the GPCR over in April 1969 at the Ninth Party Congress, but almost everyone considers it to have lasted at least until his death and sometimes beyond. Attempts at justice or rehabilitation for victims could not begin in earnest until after the arrest of the Gang of Four. Detentions and imprisonments lingered for many years and the habits of lawlessness, extreme political favoritism, and reliance on back-door influence that sprang up during the height of the disorder disappeared only slowly. These practices were a self-perpetuating necessity of the lack of a fully functioning government for so many years. Additionally, the Party loyalty and idealism of the intellectuals had been severely damaged, so pressures against taking advantage of personal and family connections to advance one's own interests had more or less ceased to operate.

Summary

These subjects' lives took place against a background of rapid social and economic modernization, in which their social class and their role as women were significantly evolving. The GPCR, which attacked the urban, educated class as well as the traditional culture associated with it, was but one additional step, if a particularly violent one, in the changing relationship of that class to government and to Chinese society as a whole during the twentieth century. Looked at in retrospect, the GPCR was also but one more period of turmoil in more than a century of turmoil.

This is not to say that these subjects were particularly conscious of the very broad sweep of the changes upon which they were riding in the 1960s. They generally accepted

the Maoist vision of these events, which until the GPCR emphasized the grandiose sacrifice and heroism of the revolutionary period, the external threats to China of the US and, by the end of the 1950s, of the revisionism of the USSR, the corrupt venality of the GMD, and the viciousness of the landlord class. Mao had not yet established a tight connection of education and traditional culture with elitism and counterrevolutionary thought. Anti-rightist campaigns of the 1930s, 40s and 50s, had focused on suppressing direct criticism of Mao. Land reform, however violent in some cases, had emphasized the overthrow of landowners and the confiscation of their property, not the destruction of the traditional educated culture. In fact, many, many intellectuals had supported the Communists during the revolution, as the family backgrounds of these subjects makes clear. Thus, although intellectuals had been persecuted in the past, particularly after the Hundred Flowers in 1957, it was as critics of the CCP. The major change of the GPCR for which people were not prepared was the persecution of people for having the wrong beliefs and attitudes, deducible simply from their family background and educational attainments, rather than their actual behavior (Thurston 1985a).

This introductory chapter has outlined my study of women's memories of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and provided an overview of the sources and methods I have employed. Having provided a brief summary of the historical and social background against which these subjects lived their lives, I now turn toward the two broad contexts within which I consider these memoirs. In Chapter 2 I address at a general, theoretical level the manner and purposes with which people remember and recount their pasts. In Chapter 3, I address aspects of Chinese cultural traditions which

influenced the subjects' interpretations and recording of their experiences. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 analyze at a detailed level the conditions and significant events of the subjects' lives during the GPCR and the responses and interpretations these conditions provoked. Chapter 7 discusses the meanings the subjects themselves drew from their experiences and concludes with an analysis of this material in the context of the memory theory summarized in Chapter 2 and the Chinese cultural traditions summarized in Chapter 3.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW: REMEMBERING

Introduction

Memoirs, autobiography, and testimonies, as well as statements taken in oral history, are sources for the study of individuals' experiences and their meanings. Multiple such documents, read together, start to portray the range of experiences and meanings ascribed to them by a group of people. The study of these first person accounts advances knowledge of what one segment of humanity has confronted in their lives and what they made of it. At the same time, such study bears witness, always with respect, to the experiences of fellow human beings.

I have proposed to read these memoirs at three levels. At one level the memoirs reveal much about the material conditions of the subjects' lives. At another level, they reveal the varying ways the subjects make sense of those conditions. How subjects make sense of their experience can be derived or synthesized from several overlapping kinds of evidence: (a) what subjects say they did in response to events or conditions, for action is a kind of interpretation of an event; (b) what subjects say those conditions or events meant to them, how these things made them feel, and why they thought they happened; and finally (c) into what kind of story or structure the subjects incorporated the events. At the final level of interpretation, I will consider how this "making sense" (a, b, and c)

seems to reflect or relate to significant themes in Chinese culture and current theory on remembering.

Aspects of this approach are supported by ethnographic practice. Although ethnographers typically learn material conditions through personal observation, including immersive experiences, and interviews, many of the same observations can be made through attentive reading of subjects' personal accounts. Similarly, while observation and questioning are the usual ethnographic method for discovering what people think about or how they respond to the circumstances of their lives, their recorded stories provide some of the same material. These stories are more carefully shaped, less spontaneous, than what can gain through personal interactions. However, they have the advantage of being unambiguously in the public domain and while shaped for an audience, they have not been constructed solely to please the ethnographer.

My approach is also supported by memory scholarship, particularly as developed in Europe and the United States since the mid-1980s. Several fundamental points from this body of scholarship underlie the present study. In the first place, gaps exist between experience, remembered experience, and told experience. These gaps exist in both group and individual memories and in both formal and informal records. They result from similar causes – people cannot remember everything and have many cultural, accidental, and personal reasons for remembering and recording as they do. Studies summarized below document the mechanisms by which people learn from childhood to tell stories about themselves that are culturally appropriate.

Literature on Remembering

Memory scholarship has taken a number of overlapping directions since the mid-1980s and encompasses studies from a range of disciplines, including philosophy, history, psychology, women's studies, and literature as well as anthropology. Studies address the development of Western historiography (LeGoff 1992; Hutton 1993). Some explore the many manifestations of social memory – which includes written history, but also oral history (Portelli 1991) and almost any kind of linguistic or social practice, since these also involve the passing of information from one generation to the next (Connerton 1996). Others concern themselves with the traditions of autobiography, with a few focusing on the special issues of women's memories and autobiographies (Stewart 2003). Some approach memory by exploring narrative practice, since narrative is an important form in which history, biography and autobiography are recounted (Fivush and Haden 2003; Straub 2005a). Still others are interested in people's historical understanding of memory itself, how it works and why it is important (Yates 1966). Yet others address the truthfulness of remembered traumatic events, particularly, can such memories be trusted (perhaps in a law court), or in what ways they can be trusted (Antze and Lambeck 1996; Langer 1996; deRivera and Sarbin 1998).

Much of this scholarship *primarily* concerns the Western European evolution of ideas and practice in history, psychology, narrative, and autobiography. As such, at this point in scholarly understanding, memory scholarship provides guidelines, but only a few specifics, for issues that need to be addressed by this study in dealing with Chinese memories of the GPCR. There is also a small body of academic literature which focuses

on Chinese traditions and practice of narrative and autobiography. I will summarize general theory in this Chapter, based on the broader scholarship, and address what is known about related Chinese traditions in Chapter 3.

This scholarship suggests four main lines of inquiry that I wish to explore as most applicable to women's memoirs of the GPCR. The first is a discussion of the winnowing process by which material is selected to get incorporated into history and, more broadly, social memory (Portelli 1991; Trouillot 1995; Connerton 1996; Linenthal 1998; Sato 1998). The second explores the development of the Western historical narrative form (Hutton 1993; Straub 2005a), and closely related to this, how individuals learn and practice the art of self-narrative (Ochs and Capps 1996; Fivush and Haden 2003; Caughey 2006). The third addresses the different patterns displayed by women's self-narratives from those of men (McDermott 2002; Stewart 2003). The fourth reviews scholarship concerning the memory of traumatic experiences (Antze and Lambek 1996; Rivera and Sarbin 1998; Alexander et. al. 2004). Embedded in these discussions, more explicitly in some (West et. al. 1998; Gergen 2005) than others, is the insight that people's expressed memories of the past are culturally conditioned. People do not, and cannot, remember everything, or even record or tell everything they do remember, either individually or collectively. Given that undeniable condition, what do people choose to remember and how do they choose to tell about it? Each of the above lines of scholarship provides a different perspective on this question, but all point to cultural factors as highly influential in these choices.

History in the European tradition

What gets selected for remembering and how does it get interpreted? The literature describes a process for the development of a historical record in which information and interpretation are selected at many points along the way. As life unfolds at any point in time, only some artifacts are retained and only some events and aspects of events are observed, recorded or remembered. Of these, only some artifacts and records are preserved, protected and passed on to future generations. Of these, in turn, only some are eventually investigated, analyzed, and finally transmitted according to the formal standards of history. At each point, selection occurs based on the capabilities (intelligence, understanding, power, observation point, technology) and interests (motivations, including self-protection or self-aggrandizement) of the people doing the selection (Portelli 1991; Trouillot 1995).

What gets recorded and retained of all that happens in the world is thus subject to both accident and social forces, including the forms that society relies on for retaining its memories, which are significantly influenced by the available technology. In turn, the forms in which something is remembered determine not only how long it lasts, but influences the kinds of things that get remembered and how they are later understood (Yates 1966; Trouillot 1995). Those who dominate a society have a large hand in the writing of its history. They have the opportunity and means to destroy or to save, and thus to record the events and interpretations they want remembered. However, there are caveats to this power. Newly dominant groups may attempt to erase the memory of the old. Shakespeare's history plays legitimize his Tudor patrons at the expense of their rivals

in the earlier Wars of the Roses. Subordinate groups retain their own traditions and often subversive oral accounts (Scott 1990). Similarly, individuals who know how to tell and sell their interpretations of the past can make that interpretation dominant through the telling.

History is not only the formal written record of events, but also is incorporated in many other cultural forms. Museums exhibiting a great deal more than written records are an important formal repository of a group's concept of its history. They are formal and public in the sense that they are frequently state funded and maintained, and because they make use of agreed upon, repeated processes (if contentious in some situations) for determining what will be exhibited and in what manner (Linenthal 1998). However, history also incorporates less formal, often oral traditions (Connerton 1989; Portelli 1991; LeGoff 1992). Ancient oral and performance traditions transmit memory of events, struggles and triumphs, from a pre-literate time. Even in societies where written history has appeared to supplant oral traditions, or where oral traditions have become codified – captured, collected and annotated as oral histories, folk stories and songs – the unwritten traditions continue in many guises. Some may support the formal, dominant culture, Easter Passion plays, for example, or ceremonies of imperial coronation in Japan. Others are kept alive among those who either do not wish to incorporate their experience into the formal historical tradition or do not have the opportunity to do so (Portelli 1991; Hodgkin and Radstone 2003; Taylor 2003).¹⁰ Today, the opportunities for expanding social and

¹⁰ This book also deals with performance as history-making. This has its own relevance to the GPCR, as Mao certainly saw the effectiveness of – was even a master of – ritual and performance (MacFarquhar and Schoenals 2006) in establishing his form of control and instigating social movement. We will be dealing with women's perceptions of and participation in this kind of performance.

collective memory abound with the proliferation of memory media – video, photography, audio recordings – and storage (the internet, blogs, Facebook, youtube, etc) to all elements of society, and to a large extent under the control of individuals and outside the processes of formal history making.¹¹

In sum, formal history largely reflects the concerns and justifies the dominant position of the dominant social group at the time the history is written. Social memory, including formal history, extends beyond it to include all of a society's culture. It is less unified in viewpoint than formal history, but also results from a process in which some practices and knowledge are preserved and others forgotten. Which aspects of a culture dominate lesser themes and are perpetuated are not wholly predictable, but the result of combined chance and social forces (Portelli 1991; Trouillot 1995; Linenthal 1998). One has only to reflect on the role of black culture in influencing the shape of modern American jazz, literature, and fashion, and through that a shared world culture, to see that not all that dominates in certain spheres necessarily means dominance in other spheres (Taylor 2003)¹².

¹¹ The actual effects of these less controllable media on social memory are quite difficult to predict, of course, at this point. Many of the media are actually impermanent – much less easily preserved than pottery, cuneiform tablets, oracle bones or paper. At the same time, their widespread use in the near term for near term memory tasks means people are possibly forgetting how to remember. Likewise, the process of selection, for what will get noticed and recorded in history as a formal discipline, is changing. The scholar, doing his research on the internet, uses tools much less under his own control and possibly less well understood, than the scholar who searches using card catalogues, stacks of old documents, or the arrangement of materials on the shelves of a library. The illusion of plenty, created by the sheer quantity of files and web pages, is yet another issue. These are complex times.

¹² There are also, of course, parallel cultures; one may dominate in one form of remembering (formal history); one may dominate in another form of remembering (oral history), even though both operate in the same physical space, such as Scott (1990) demonstrates.

Western-European narrative tradition

In the European tradition, narrative is the form that many histories take and it is the form in which people typically recount the events of their own lives.¹³ It is also the form used by short and long fiction, and with some modifications, aspects of narrative form underlie the construction of drama and movies. Narrative poetry also exists. Although typically history, novels and stories are written in prose, prose is not a prerequisite for narrative.

Western narrative is usually chronological and, even when its ultimate significance or purpose may lie in themes or lessons, it relies on an ordered sequence of events to provide its structure or plot. Most plots rely on common patterns – the hero departed and returned, lovers frustrated and finally joined – to engage the reader or listener to learn what happens next and how the problem is resolved. Plots should be coherent and relatively unified. The events of the plot need to relate to each other in a logical manner, generally based on causality. Events which are included should be selected for their explanatory power – what they tell about character, about the way the world operates, about the reasons that the story unfolds as it does (Booth 1961).

These expectations, of course, apply to written narrative, usually authored by individuals. Oral narrative, in European as in other traditions, follows different conventions, which are difficult to know in their early forms, given the corruption of older texts and the hand that individual compilers and retellers have had in preserving

¹³ Some kind of narrative form appears to exist in all cultures. Everyone, many believe, tells “stories”. However, I have not been able to readily locate a definition of narrative that seems to me to have been well tested across a wide range of traditions. I confine myself here to the discussion of what is known about Western narrative tradition and in Chapter 2 discuss the narrative tradition in the Chinese context.

those texts. The impulse to plot coherence and unity, however, began early in the West, with Aristotilean Poetics. Conventions for dramatic and story plots restricted the numbers and roles of characters, and required a singular location and unity of time period. Even after these strict formal prescriptions for plot were eased, issues of character or problems raised during the narrative are expected to be resolved by its end (Kermode 1966).

While the writers of narrative history are more restricted in the material they have to choose from than the writers of fiction, the most powerfully written histories lean on many of the same plot conventions as the fiction writer uses – events are included to reveal character and events unfold depending upon the personalities of the participants; the ending is caused by or at least heavily shaped by the preceding events that the historian has described. One of the selection processes of the development of history, described above, is precisely a process related to narrative development. History becomes shaped by the narrative tradition in which it is written. Events and people are selected for investigation because they are deemed appropriate for history. Causes and effects are sought, at least partly because narrative requires it. Certain types of explanations are given prominence, because these are the “plots” that resonate within that cultural tradition (Connerton 1989; Straub 2005).

Personal narrative

People absorb narrative methods as they learn language (Fivush and Haden 2003).¹⁴ Some memories may be images, but many are coded in language, and it seems,

¹⁴ Although the research summarized in the following paragraphs is based on experimental psychology largely with children, it is consistent with the literary view of the ways in which an audience’s or reader’s expectations help to shape what an author will write and how it is interpreted, such as is reflected in Ochs and Capps 1996.

in the language in which they occurred (Schrauf and Rubin 2003). Learning to recount information about oneself is a life long social process, required for cooperative social functioning (Markowitsch and Welzer 2005).¹⁵ For the learning child, care givers initially provide much of the guidance, asking questions and supplying the details of an experience that a novice talker may have missed, or does not realize are important. If the child does not remember or feel the things his mother suggests he should, he still learns what she thinks is significant and appropriate, as well as the proper order in which to tell it. The next time he is required to talk about a past experience, he knows the kind of thing to say. The next time he has a similar experience, he knows some things to look for while he experiences it, and even possibly what he might feel or consider feeling about it.

Such learning is expanded and reinforced by school, television, video, video games, or reading. The more consistent or homogenous the cultural environment, the easier this process is for the child. The same mechanism of home and environment teaches children to create future narratives about themselves. They learn not only many of the expectations of their cultural environment for personal capabilities, relationships, responsibilities and life's path, but also the kinds of achievements, values and relationships which will constitute an acceptable life narrative (Foucault 1973).¹⁶ Of

¹⁵ Findings of neurobiology support the psychology experiments detailed in Fivush and Haden 2003 and that this process progresses differently in different cultures. Markowitsch and Welzer conclude that autobiography requires consistency across the self and that that consistency is required for social collaboration. However, I think we will eventually find that there are degrees of consistency required in the personal autobiography and that these parallel the differences in collectivist versus more individualist cultures.

¹⁶ Foucault describes a number of institutions responsible for disciplining the individual to the society's purposes, from the Middle Ages onward. Expectations of identity and life-story would be one of the means by which this disciplining took place.

course, within any one culture and society there are multiple narratives to choose from.¹⁷ Children may or may not find themselves willing to accept the options they are taught, may accept some and not the rest. Both culture and language are flexible, and individuals make their own accommodations, so that none of us ends up completely alike (Geiger 1986; Ortnner 1994).

The experiments described by Fivush and Haden (2003), summarized above, include a number which compare self-narrative formation in different cultures. Several of the reviewed studies compare Chinese learning of self-narrative versus North American (Leichtman et al 2003; Hayne and MacDonald 2003) childhood learning. Discussions of past personal experience was shown to be less important for Chinese parents interacting with their children than for North Americans. Emotions associated with past events were treated differently, with Chinese mothers providing fewer explanations for the causes of emotional reactions, de-emphasizing the intensity of the emotions, discussing shared emotions (as opposed to individual reactions), and looking for resolution (social harmony) in instances of anger or conflict. Chinese children were shown to acquire information more slowly about emotions, and the emotions considered appropriate to various situations, than children from cultures that place more value on early independence. In general, parents in more collectivist cultures, such as the Chinese, showed a comparatively less elaborative style in discussing memories with their children, providing fewer details, and asking more factual questions with right or wrong answers, as opposed to open-ended solicitations of what the child might think, than is true for

¹⁷ It would be very interesting to try to get a notion of the scope of the options from narrative literature, as certainly intuitively we know that more narratives are available in some societies than others.

individualist cultures. Chinese parents' discussions with their children tended to emphasize proper behavior, hierarchy, and social engagement.¹⁸

The evidence just summarized explains how children are taught the expectations of self-narrative in their cultures, and demonstrates that these expectations differ from culture to culture. Consistent with this is further evidence that the quality of the interaction between children and the people around them, at the times of experience and at the times of first recounting of experience, considerably influence the ways in which that experience is felt and remembered (Schrauf and Rubin 2003). Portelli (1991) also shows that there can be subtle differences between expectations for oral stories and written ones within the same culture.

Western narrative - Summary

When people talk about themselves, in autobiography, with friends, in religious contexts, in psychotherapy, they use the narrative method learned as they grew up, although modified by the expectations of their adult audience. In the European tradition, at least, broadly similar narrative standards are employed for the writing of history and fictional genres. These include the following often linear characteristics: the earlier incidents in the account need to lead toward or explain the later incidents; events should reveal character; the narrative should seem coherent, and rely on chronological order. An account of a life, or a history, should, to the extent possible, reflect events and character traits that are culturally valued, and a plot pattern that is familiar. The most valued plots, for lives and histories, show progress and redemption. The protagonist is morally better,

¹⁸ Whether some of these differences are developmental delays, as opposed to differences which remain through into adulthood, was not addressed by the literature reviewed.

or more successful and powerful towards the end of life, than earlier (Lambeck 1996). He has overcome obstacles through persistence, hard work, or great faith. Failure to achieve economic or moral progress needs to be explained (Lifton 1993). Where narrative, including autobiography, departs from these standard practices of theme and coherence, the reader should question why, for within that discrepancy may lie some deeper meaning.

Women's autobiography

Since self-narrative reflects, or even constitutes, the sense of personal identity, women's autobiography can be expected to differ from men's, at least when considered generally. As children, women may be taught to tell of their experiences differently than the way boys are taught. Women tend to be more elaborative in their reminiscences than men (Webster et. al. 2010). Obviously, certain experiences related to the bearing of children are unique to women, and other experiences, based on social expectations and options, are far more likely to be prominent concerns in women's lives than in men's. As such certain kinds of experiences might be expected to take a larger role in women's autobiography than men's. However, in learning to construct their self-narratives, women are subject to two not always convergent influences in childhood and adulthood. On the one hand, they are taught to explain their lives with more attention to their own feelings, others' feelings, and their relationships and ties to other people than are men (Fivush and Buckner 2003). Certain emotions and responses are considered more appropriate for them, so, for example, sadness is one of the emotions shown to be associated with women.

On the other hand, the predominant narrative model for biography and autobiography, at least until recently in Western society, is that of men. Men's accounts not only mention fewer other people and fewer feelings, than women's, but also tend to emphasize the self and its accomplishments (Fivush and Buckner 2003). Heroism, confronting conflict, and personal accomplishments within traditionally male pursuits are important themes for Western men. Thus, the ideal held out to women of the effective autobiographical narrative can be considered to be bifurcated, which may prove conflicting for some women. To the extent that women may feel silenced by their environment, in childhood or adulthood, autobiography can become perhaps a somewhat complicated exercise in revealing and not revealing (Geiger 1986; Stewart 2003).

Studies cited above, as well as others, demonstrate that there is good reason to consider men's and women's autobiography and memoir separately, as this project does (Webster et. al. 2010). Studies reviewed by Leichtman et. al. (2003) and Hayne and MacDonald (2003) suggest differences between women's and men's self-narratives exist in more than one non-Western European culture but those differences are not yet well understood do not appear to be consistent across cultures (Leichtman et. al. 2003; Webster et. al. 2010). Hayne and MacDonald (2003) studied earliest memory and elaboration of memory in Maori and Pakeha men and women in New Zealand. They show Maori women to have somewhat earlier first memories that are significantly more elaborative than those of Maori men. In contrast, Pakeha women's first memories are from the same ages as Pakeha men. While their first memories are also more elaborative

than those of Pakeha men, the difference between the elaborativeness of men and women is much less than in the Maori case.

Memories of trauma and suffering

The final important thread of memory scholarship for this review concerns the ways people remember and talk about traumatic experiences (Antze and Lambek 1996; Langer 1996; Larrabee et. al. 2003; de Rivera and Sarbin 1998; Linfield 2003; Hinton and O'Neill 2009). The truthfulness of such memories, whether or not they accord strictly with other documented evidence, is often of considerable importance when responsibility for the events concerned is being determined in legal proceedings or in the judgment of history. Ideas derived from Freud's work on early childhood memories have led to the perception that memories can be completely hidden or suppressed. Such suppressed memories, from the subconscious, can affect the life choices of a person, and can be eventually recovered later under the guidance of a therapist. This concept of suppressed memories has been applied at times to memories of events that occurred in post-infant years, but is now largely discredited in this interpretation (de Rivera and Sarbin 1998; Alexander 2004). However, there is still abundant evidence that memories of extremely stressful and difficult conditions or events can have dramatic and lasting effects on people's behavior, and that their memories of specific traumatic incidents may be heavily colored by their emotional reactions at the time (Walker 2003).

One area of investigation has been the memories of the Nazi Holocaust and life in the Nazi concentration camps, as well as studies of the victims of other genocides. These studies have shown that victims of such terrible experiences frequently dissociate their

non-holocaust life from their holocaust life. Because the experience of the Nazi camps, for example, operated on a completely different plane from their other experiences of life – the rules of behavior to survive were so completely different – the survivors do not see their present self as related in any way to the person who lived through the traumatic time (Langer 1996). Some survivors recount an entirely different sensation if they are inside the memory of the traumatic time, than if they are recalling other times of their lives. Additionally, many such people are severely affected later in their personal relationships by the distrust of the rules of normal life which they learned in the abnormal times.

A related area of investigation has concerned peoples' responses to somewhat more general experiences of trauma and the resulting Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, PTSD, where memories of rapes, firefights, torture, for example, return involuntarily and cause uncontrollable physical and emotional responses, inappropriate to the present. In the West, repeated discussion of such events is used as treatment; this repetition is considered to bring mastery of the emotions surrounding the event, replacing feelings of helplessness, and to achieve reintegration of the extra-ordinary personal experience into a unified self-narrative, or identity (Leys 1996; Kenny 1998).

How people remember episodes of trauma, terror and suffering is applicable to this study of memories of the GPCR, which for a considerable number of people included the often prolonged exposure to painful conditions. Whether the participants themselves classified their experiences as traumatic or as including terror and suffering is something that I will discuss later when analyzing the memories in detail. However, as these – trauma, terror, suffering – are emotions experienced in response to events (Hodgkin and

Radstone 2003; Alexander 2004), rather than the events themselves, they are difficult to define across different personalities and translate across languages and cultures. The underlying view of the reviewed studies appears to be that occurrences that cause harm and that are beyond the experience of everyday life and ordinary expectations of justice and humane treatment are likely to cause extreme reactions¹⁹, such as in English are called trauma.

This line of analysis leads to the conclusion that the definition of what might be a traumatic reaction has a significant cultural component. Cultural and experiential expectations of normality likely have some bearing on people's concepts of trauma, terror and other similarly fearful feelings. Likewise, their psychological/emotional ways of coping with extremely painful, out of the ordinary events, seem to have a significant cultural component. Healing practices vary across cultures and under different historical circumstances (Kugelmass 1996; Leys 1996; Dower 1998; Kenny 1998; Robben 2009). Not all groups find the talk therapy advocated by Western psychological practice to be useful (Larrabee et. al. 2003).

Within this scholarship on traumatic memories, there is a significant distinction made between the experiences of victims of an event and of those who are held responsible for its perpetration. The distinction is not solely a moral one, although victims, by definition, are considered to be largely helpless, and thus absolved of moral responsibility. Perpetrators, who exercise more freedom of action, must shoulder blame both morally and legally. Those perpetrators who can be shown to have been in some

¹⁹ The degree to which perceived intent of the perpetrator contributes to traumatic reactions does not seem to have been directly addressed in this literature, although it is probably of considerable significance.

ways helpless themselves – as victims of childhood abuse, as acting under duress, as doing what they were assigned to do – are then to some extent relieved of moral and often legal responsibility depending upon the depth of the pressures on them to act as they did (Dower 1998). Additionally, in Western psychology, the experience of helplessness is itself considered harmful and in need of being expunged or at least reduced.

The memories of victims have been studied more extensively than those of perpetrators, in this literature. However, the desire to forget or ignore what is shameful or likely to result in blame or need for restitution is certainly noted (Linfield 2003) both at the individual and societal levels. Still, examples abound among memoirs and autobiographies of self-examination to determine one's sense of responsibility for harmful actions in the past.²⁰ These memories must also reveal significant aspects of cultural practices and values, but they seem to await further study.

At least in Judeo- Christian cultures, tales of suffering play a special role. Those who have suffered deep injury or extreme difficulties are automatically of interest and can often lay claim to special treatment or consideration (Theidon 2009). This can lead to the exaggeration and fabrication of experiences of trauma for personal financial gain, personal aggrandizement or other more subtle psychological and moral positioning (de Rivera and Sarbin 1998)²¹.

²⁰ See for example West et al (1998).

²¹ The term suffering, in English, carries with it religious overtones which make the person who has suffered, through no fault of his own, to some extent untouchable. Such a person deserves sympathy, according to at least American cultural norms, and almost without any questioning. This makes it a tempting role to play for those willing to take the position of a relatively powerless victim.

The concept of trauma, as the result of deeply wounding events, has also been applied at the national or cultural level (Alexander et. al. 2004). Events which affected a large number of the people in a group, causing in effect many individual traumas, can be perceived by the group as a whole as traumatic. Such events may cause a deep change, rift or break in the society or culture which they affect, and for Alexander (2004) that substantial change is a necessary condition for the classification of “trauma” to the experience. But for the change or disruption to be considered traumatic, the group must see it as collectively traumatic. In Alexander’s formulation, a claim of group trauma is established when the nature of the pain is sufficient (very brutal, many victims), the group is ethnically distinct, wider sympathy for this group can be established, and responsibility can be assigned. Alexander’s (2004) interest is primarily in “group trauma” as a meta-narrative and why it can be effective in some instances and not in others. The conditions he establishes must be met for a larger (often world wide) audience to accept a claim of group trauma, especially in claims of genocide. Such group claims to trauma can be made to help establish a group identity, often by emerging leaders, as well as for the more direct purposes of gaining support for a group’s goals of restitution or justice.

The literature on the remembering of traumatic events supports the important themes already identified in the discussion of the formation of history, of narrative form and of women’s autobiography. At a social and individual level, these studies view remembering as the central way in which people experience or define their identity. Trauma and suffering are one of the themes available, at least in Western culture, for

helping to establish a distinctive identity, with a number of positive psychological and social results, at least for some personalities. It seems likely that concepts of trauma and suffering are not entirely universal, but like other narrative themes have different significances in different societies. In the European cultures, the important themes of coherence and causality imbue the discussion of memory of trauma as they do the other discussions of memory. Trauma shatters the unity of a life-story and can explain or cause many of the feelings and actions which follow it chronologically. Within this framework, to heal the traumatic wound is to reunite the broken pieces of the self-narrative and reduce trauma's power, regaining mastery through the understanding of its causes and effects.

Other narrative constraints

The problem of what a self-narrative will contain is not simply a cultural, but also a practical matter. People's self-narratives are guided not only by what kinds of narratives they have been taught are appropriate, but also by the not unrelated considerations of the effects of their revelations on their reputations and their political, social and economic status (Theidon 2009). Any autobiographer or memoirist is faced with the problem of what to reveal, what to hint at or suggest only in metaphor, and what to withhold completely. Proust is only a most obvious example of an autobiographer who went to great lengths to not say what possibly he wished to say most desperately. The other side of this coin is that people may also reveal certain kinds of experience, exaggerate or even invent material, precisely because such revelations do violate norms, injure those they believe have wronged them, or otherwise make their own story dramatic or more saleable

(DeRivera and Sarbin 1998). Additionally, personal memory, like a collective memory, can be flawed. People may not observe correctly to begin with or have psychological or emotional reasons for believing, quite genuinely, in a different version of events than actually happened (Portelli 1991, 2003).

These issues of possible mistakes, self-protection, self-promotion, and vengeance – whether to reveal or withhold information – are highly relevant to the GPCR memoirs. Most of them were written at a time when the political implications of what people said were of some concern. Injuries had been done and received, including criminal acts. Many of the participants, their relatives and friends are still living. People may be ashamed of what they did or experienced, either for themselves or for their society. Some may wish to even old scores; some may wish to contribute to greater understanding. Many may have wished to sell their books; almost assuredly their editors, translators, and publishers wished to sell their books. This multitude of factors influenced the way each memoir is written to an unknowable degree.

How to address these uncertainties and influences on the source material depends upon what kind of information is to be derived from it. If the goal is a reasonably objective, historically useful account of what happened to these subjects, as I discuss in Chapter 4, then the reliability of the subjects' accounts needs to be addressed. Each memoir thus can be questioned for the ways in which it not only reflects cultural expectations but the way it may be constructed to protect, dramatize or recriminate. Such an evaluation cannot achieve a perfect measure of any source's reliability, of course. However, as is standard practice, my evaluation of source reliability includes an

assessment of the self-interest of the subject, the completeness and plausibility of the detail, an evaluation of the source's capabilities²² and access to information, self-consistency, and consistency with other reliable materials.²³

At the same time, the historical grounding is not the only information to be derived from these accounts. A possibly more important goal is to learn about what the experiences meant to these subjects and how they express that meaning. For this purpose the omissions and fabrications, the emphases and de-emphases, become important evidence, when they can be detected (Geiger 1986).

Implications for This Study

Since 1980, the formal history and social memory of the GPCR are being contested. What is to be remembered and what forgotten is being decided and interpretations of GPCR events are being formed in social memory – especially through novels and movies (Lee and Yang 2007). The subject memoirs of this project are one part of this process. For a number of reasons, the present government of China has not been particularly interested in having this material worked through in detail (Yang 2007; Vivian 2010),²⁴ although, increasingly, official materials have become available to

²² This can and should include an assessment of general intelligence and education, as well as capabilities for self-expression, including use of language by the original source and/or by the translator or editor.

²³ These are standard practices of the historian, the journalist, the anthropologist, and, in fact, any information analyst. The need for these kinds of examination of self-interest and source reliability are nicely dramatized in Margery Wolf's *A Thrice Told Tale* 1992. Some are discussed in or implied by controversies that have arisen such as that over Rigoberta Menchu or Marshall Sahlins' interpretation of Captain Cook's death in the Hawaiian islands. However, I have not been able to uncover a source which directly articulates methods for dealing with the problem of source reliability in the terms I use here.

²⁴ Different societies make different decisions about how to move on from a major mistake. One can understand that the Chinese government and many of its citizens do not want to get bogged down in recriminations and blame-finding concerning the GPCR when important economic and development issues need tackling, even if this decision also seems to favor the retention of power by the CCP and an avoidance of free debate.

scholars since the late 1980s (Schoenhals 1996).²⁵ The contributions of foreign scholars and Chinese living abroad are thus of significance in developing a reasonably complete record. Additionally, it is a time when people who have first hand accounts are growing old. These accounts are important to insure that as many perspectives on these events are transmitted to future generations as possible (Sanford 2009; Vivian 2010).

The scholarship reviewed above on learning personal narrative suggest that this study address both the European and Chinese cultural traditions of narrative and self-narrative. While the women in question were born in China, they have lived in both cultural milieux (Caughey 2006), and the Chinese culture of their childhood was also influenced heavily by Western narrative traditions. Many of these women were young during the GPCR; their memory of their experiences should be tightly linked to their early close relationships, often severely disrupted by the founding of the PRC and by the GPCR from the traditional patterns families were expected to follow.

The applicability of the scholarship on the memory of trauma is more difficult to assess since concepts of trauma, suffering and hardship are linked to culture. How Chinese concepts may relate to similar concepts in European culture is a complex question²⁶ which this study does not cover. However, since the published memoirs were written for an English speaking market, I can be sensitive to the ways in which feelings of suffering may or may not be deployed to engage particularly Western interest.

²⁵ The degree to which the current government restricts discussion of the GPCR is not clear to me, but there seem to be some inhibitions on what people can say, and there certainly were restrictions when many of these memoirs were written (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006).

²⁶ We run up against major issues for which there appears to be little background academic literature: the problem of the complex sources of this special view of suffering in Western cultures, the equally complex sources of ideas about suffering in China, and the problem of comparing terms for emotions and feelings across cultures. Thurston(1985b) addresses this by discussing people's reactions within context of PTSD.

Although Alexander (2004) lays out a convincing case for a cross-cultural theory of cultural trauma construction, the remaining essays in his book discuss only Western examples. Assertions of cultural trauma have been made by some Chinese (Tu 1996; Wang Ban 2004; Yang 2007) with respect to the experience of the GPCR and echoed by some Western scholars (Thurston 1985a, 1985b; Berry 2008)²⁷. However, the focus of the present study is individual experience, and how that might aggregate to a larger group experience. I do not address the ways these experiences, even if widely felt, might be, or are being, used for political purposes. Others (Lee and Yang 2007) have addressed this question. To relate these accounts to the academic literature on the memory of trauma, I need evidence in these memoirs that subjects found the GPCR far outside their expectations and wounding to a point of near incapacitation. At this point, on the basis of my research to date, I do not believe I have the necessary analytical tools to make that kind of comparison, nor do these memoirs provide sufficient evidence.

People write memoirs for many different reasons. Ultimately memoirs are an expression of a personality, of the assertion of the individuals' claims to their own viewpoint and to the importance of their own experience and their own understanding of that experience. The act of publication insures that the memoir is intended to communicate this individual viewpoint to others. Within this framework, there are a

²⁷ It is worth commenting, although a diversion from the main focus of this study, that Mao Zedong relied on "us-them" meta-narratives of injury and victimization to help unify support for the 1949 revolution as well as the GPCR. The meta-narrative of establishing cultural or social trauma seems to fall within this larger impulse to build group solidarity by blaming and vilifying some other group. The claims of genocide or trauma, however justified they may be, "up the ante" by making the injury so heinous that the "other" is completely de-humanized. Mao's "others", of course, were more or less, as he kept adding them: the Japanese (1930s-40s), the Guomindang and Jiang Jingguo (1940's onward), the landlords and intellectuals (1950s onward), the Americans (1950s onward), the Russians (early 1960s onward), and the bourgeois counter-revolutionaries (GPCR).

number of common motivations. People may wish to set the record straight and explain their view of what really happened, especially when other people are recording different views of the same events. They may be trying to understand their own behavior and feelings and the effects of the past on their situation at the time of writing. Especially where painful or unexpected experiences are involved, people may be looking for explanations of why things happened as they did. What were external causes over which as individuals they had no control, and what was the result of their own actions? If they feel guilty or regret what they have done, writing down what happened can be a way of expiating or at least understanding that feeling of guilt. Where people feel that some wrong has occurred to themselves and others, they may wish to educate and warn others against the same kinds of mistakes and conditions.

Each of these motivations can also be thought of as a structure within which people can understand and share their experiences; they suggest what types of incidents people should record and emphasize, and what types of incidents they will accompany with detailed explanations, reflections and evaluations. The motivations also suggest endpoints for the memoir. The memoir is finished when the motivating questions have been answered sufficiently, the motivation has been satisfied, the story has been brought to a close. The sense of completion which following these narrative structures through to the end provides may be what the memoir writer seeks. Where the events involved are difficult in some way, the sense of completion may allow writers to put their conflicts and concerns to rest, to tie them up and make them into something useful, possibly even to

put them aside or behind them, and move on to another phase of their lives (Leys 1996; Stewart 2003; Straub 2005b; Polkinghorne 2005).

I have reviewed academic memory literature on the formation of social and historical memory, the formation of individual memory and its recording in personal narrative, and the literature on the memory of trauma. This literature is primarily focused on Western European approaches to history, narrative, and psychology, although there are many important moves in the academy to extend these ideas to other cultural traditions. In Chinese studies the most comparable academic literature, in English, to the memory literature just reviewed, discusses traditional Chinese attitudes toward and standards for history and narrative. I review this material in the next chapter, as well as important themes in traditional Chinese culture which are the frequent topics of historical and fictional narrative in both their literary and popular forms. These themes influenced the subjects' interpretations of their own feelings and a number of them can be seen reflected in their goals and behaviors, as they remember them.

3. CULTURAL ASPECTS OF CHINESE NARRATIVES

Narrative, in both the Chinese and European traditions, has both formal characteristics and thematic content. There are not simply stories to be told, but stories told in a certain limited number of ways (Frye 1966). Thus, the Homeric style made use of set pieces, repetitions, epithets, similes and so forth. The Chinese vernacular fiction of the Ming period relied on a narrator modeled after a marketplace story teller, who freely commented on the moral lessons to be drawn from his tale, incorporated bits of verse and humor, and told his story in short, relatively self-contained episodes, between which one can imagine him asking for pieces of cash to enable him to go on (Hanan 1973).

Form and theme have some bearing upon each other, although they are not rigidly linked. In the European tradition, written histories tend to rely heavily on a chronological organization of material and an objective narrative style, but this tendency is widely violated. Biographies and autobiographies may be written chronologically or as single threaded accounts, following only the subject's viewpoint. However, this form also varies. The novel form may be often focused on character development. A common theme is maturation of the protagonist toward socially valued character traits, such as the capability for independent judgment and action, bravery, or greater understanding and consideration of others. However, this theme is by no means a universal in the Western novel form.

Many narrative forms and many narrative themes are available to the participant in the Western tradition. Any particular work, in any of the narrative genres, may employ multiple interwoven themes, and draw formal or stylistic elements from several traditions. Formal requirements for narrative, however, are primarily the concern of art. Such art may be and often is put to the service of religion, philosophy or psychology, but those realms of thought do not dictate the form of the narrative. They are concerned primarily with content, the themes, purport and lessons of the stories, rather than their form.

Similarly in China, there is a vast historical, philosophical, religious, and literary tradition available to people, with formal distinctions in genre between history, belles letters, fiction, drama, and poetry. Different genres have some accepted links to particular themes and subjects. Traditionally, poetry was the domain of feelings; short classical language tales concerned themselves with the marvelous; and vernacular fiction with stories of adventure and heroism. At the same time, there are more diffuse stories and explanations – themes, characters and moral values – which underlie the culture as a whole and can appear within any genre of writing. These memoirs display some characteristics of traditional Chinese narrative form. Additionally, important themes from both the Chinese traditional and Maoist cultures significantly influence their content. In this chapter, I describe both these formal and thematic sources of inspiration for the subjects' memoirs.

Chinese Narratives before the 20th Century

Three characteristics of traditional Chinese narrative form appear to have influence on these memoirs. One is the reliance in Chinese historical writing on an impersonal narrator, who strictly divides his accounts into two voices. In one he is the impartial recorder of events, which he has carefully culled and sorted for reliability. The fact that he selects the events for telling because of the ways in which they support the judgments he wishes to make is hidden from view. He uses spare language to tell the events of his story – few adjectives, only the most objective descriptions, little or no insight into the feelings or inner conflicts of the characters. In the other voice, the historical narrator may sum up or pass moral judgment on the events he has recounted. Traditional Chinese fictional narrators follow this same model. In fiction, if there are judgments or feelings to be expressed, they are also set aside either as explicit comments of the narrator, or they may be distinguished from the events of the story by being expressed in verse. These might be verses written by the character, to express his or her feelings at the time, or they may be quotations by the narrator of well known verse, with the comment that these were the feelings of the character, or that these lines express the wonder, sadness, puzzlement and so forth, that such an event could be expected to arouse in the character, the narrator or the reader (Lu 1994; Plaks 1977b).

A second feature of Chinese fictional narrative is the episodic plot. This feature may also have its roots in history writing, where a plot is not supposed to be shaped, but to be the natural arrangements of a reality that is recognized to be somewhat untidy. Episodic plots are built around episodes, as the name implies, which may have only a

loose connective between them. They lack the unity, tidy denouements, resolution of issues, and neat endings expected in much European fictional or historical narratives. Episodic plots may seem a less obviously constructed form, evoking the elaboration of historical chronicles, or personal diaries. Although episodic plots are not unknown in European fiction, they are almost universal in traditional Chinese fiction. Even very short pieces make use of this form, recounting more than one story within the space of a few pages. One effect of the episodic plot form is to emphasize the importance of any themes that tie the events of the plot together. Secondary episodes should frequently be read as a kind of commentary on the primary (longest) episodes of the story (Hanan 1973). Another effect of the less tightly shaped plots is that events can only make sense when seen against the broad background provided by the author (Plaks 1977b). The most significant events are not isolated or selected for the reader. He must view the interwoven detail and contradictory information as a whole system in order to draw out of it an appreciation of the patterns that give it meaning.²⁸

The third feature is the frequent inclusion of poetry within prose narrative works. In traditional China, poems were a primary mode of the expression of personal feelings and were frequently written to mark significant moments or occasions in a person's life

²⁸ A good example is the *Sanguo yanyi* (Romance of the Three Kingdoms) cited below page 45. This is a sprawling novel with multiple subplots. It encompasses many themes, many of which themes are touched on here in this thesis chapter, such as loyalty, revenge, the role of the advisor to an emperor or would be emperor, the granting and withdrawing of the mandate of heaven, and so forth. Any one theme is not highlighted in the *Sanguo* by any carefully crafted set of incidents which show how important it is, but rather by the themes repeated appearance in different forms, guises, degrees of importance and degrees of elaboration in a wide variety of contexts, all within this one book. Although loyalty might be a top level theme of the book, there is really no attempt to strictly prioritize these themes or in any way relate them to each other hierarchically, or as dependent upon one another – which type of prioritization is more likely to happen with a highly linear, tightly constructed plot. One might think of the plotting and related use of metaphor of a Charles Dickens, for example, as occupying the opposite approach.

(Young 2008). They were included as part of the story of a person's life, fictional or factual, because they recorded a great deal of someone's internal life that could not be expressed, by literary convention in other ways. From the point of view of a narrator wishing to maintain the appearance of historical reliability and objectivity, poems were documentary evidence of what a person thought and felt at important junctures in his life. For these memoirs, the inclusion of poetry and songs is not only a stylistic link to earlier narrative practice, but an assertion of the reality of the original experience. In the cultural context, they are an assertion that "this is what I felt" or "this shows that I was there."

Autobiographical writing in China differs somewhat from the Western tradition. This is hardly surprising given the traditional Chinese literati-gentry inhibitions against focusing on oneself and one's own feelings, and the corresponding emphasis on filiality to one's older kin, one's teachers and one's mentors. These ties considerably constrain what one might say or reveal about the actions of almost anyone of significance in one's life. Formal biography was additionally restrained by the strict traditions of Chinese historiography from including any material which could not be verified by an outside source, and thus excluded much of what can give biography its special flavor. Some autobiography was also written within this rather impersonal tradition.

Writing about one's own feelings and experiences might appear embedded in writings about one's elders, for example, in a biography of one's father or uncles. However, poetry, essays, and travelogues were the common ways in which personal experiences could be recorded and shared (Nienhauser 1986b). Some traditional collections of essays have a character close to the modern concept of a memoir, evincing

an emphasis on the moral and reflective life (Wu 1990; Wang Lingzhen 2004; Spence 2007). None of these personally expressive forms used extended or continuous narrative. Poems and essays were typically short and thematic,²⁹ and the travelogue, like a diary, was completely episodic.

There are echoes of these Chinese narrative and autobiographical traditions in these memoirs. Zi-ping Luo's (1990) memoir, *A Generation Lost*,³⁰ is epistolary in style and incorporates a number of traditional poems. Nanchu's (2001), *Red Sorrow*, quotes contemporary songs, sayings, letters as well as traditional poetry³¹. Aside from Luo's work, the structure of the books cannot be described as primarily episodic or thematic. Although there is some use of themes to organize the narrative (Chang), the stories are told mostly chronologically, focused on the author, and without any obvious omissions of main events.³² The objectivity traditionally required of the narrator of Chinese histories is echoed in the restraint these subjects practice in revealing their feelings. These influences will be further discussed in Chapter 7.

²⁹ There is an exception in the tanci poetry of the Qing, which was employed by women for autobiographical writing (Widmer and Chang 1997). However, it appears to have no relevance to this discussion.

³⁰ The memoirs are listed in the first section of the bibliography. I have provided a very short description of each in the bibliography to help the reader keep these different people identified. The first time I cite each subject in the text of this paper, I will cite her by her full name, and give the name of her book. However, after that I will cite subjects by last name only. I use whatever form of their names they have used in their books. Some do not provide surnames; some put their surnames last, some put their surnames first.

³¹ Wen 1995, Zhai 1992, Min 1994, and Niu Niu 1995 also quote poetry, songs and letters, although not as pervasively.

³² This is not true of the traditional memoirs I have read. One is a simple chronicle or diary (Watson 2007 trans); Chen 1953 is mostly topical in its treatment of the author's life. Spence 2007, translator and compiler, is not strictly speaking a memoir, but what appears a faithful retelling of the material from the subject's essay collection. The result is, of course, episodic and topical. Shen's nineteenth century *Six Chapters from a Floating Life* (1966) is entirely episodic.

The mix of distinctively Chinese narrative techniques with a standard Western chronological approach to the memoirs can be expected given the degree of change the literati class experienced during the first half of the twentieth century, the reliance of leftist and specifically Communist writing on European models, and the subtleties of the differences between Chinese and European forms. In addressing thematic content, certain traditional themes are particularly important for interpreting these memoirs. I summarize here four important interlocking themes: service to the state, loyalty, education, and patterns of history.

Service to the State

The traditional social position of the literati-gentry class, as justified by Confucian teachings, has already been described briefly in the introductory chapter. The purpose of this social group was to provide the government officials necessary to the emperor to guide his policy and implement it. The major Chinese philosophical traditions – Confucians, Legalists, and Daoists – all presented their founders as advisors, or at least as providing advice to, the ruler. Personal conduct was described to show how it supported the ruler and state order. The highest goal of the literati-gentry class was fulfillment of a duty to serve the emperor through entry into the bureaucracy and faithful service there after. This service is often portrayed in literature as onerous, requiring long hours of relentless hard work, insufficiently appreciated or remunerated, demanding difficult trips to outlying, barely civilized provinces, and years spent on lonely assignments away from family and friends (Young 2008).

One duty of the literati bureaucrat, in this idealized picture, was to speak truth to power. He was to advise what he saw to be the correct policy, even if it countered the emperor's opinions or desires, and then accept the consequences. In cases where the situation was critical for China, a prominent official might be expected to undergo death to prove his sincerity. However, in most instances it was assumed that he would be dismissed if he disagreed with the emperor's decisions, or that he might voluntarily resign his position if he felt he had lost his ruler's trust and confidence.

Resignation or dismissal might allow the bureaucrat to return home to his village. It might involve internal exile in a distant province, or demotion to an obscure (usually remote) provincial position. Such demotions and dismissals were often portrayed as a disgrace. But the other side of removal from office was a chance to rest, avoid the political struggles of the capital or court, and to live quietly with one's family in the countryside. The Confucian literati gentleman was admired for his ability to take such reversals of fortune in his stride and turn them to good purpose. Some might give up their participation in the bureaucracy entirely and willingly, having satisfied their obligation to serve. Others might spend their years in retirement hoping to be recalled for another opportunity to serve.³³ Such a passion for duty to the state, the sense of disgrace in exile, and the turn toward study and intellectual work as a relief in adversity show in the behavior of a number of these subjects as well as that of their parents.

³³ The explicit role for women in this cultural narrative is covered further on in this discussion, under the topics of loyalty and women in pre-20th century narrative. Actual practice was, of course, different and is covered pp. 10-11 in the first chapter.

Loyalty

A second important aspect of traditional culture, associated closely with Confucianism and the Confucian explanation of the social order, was the high value placed on loyalty - loyalty to the emperor, loyalty to one's family, and loyalty to one's friends. Loyalty encompassed the concept already described, of arguing with one's superior on the basis of principle or a rational disagreement about the wisdom of an order or a planned action. However, it was understood that in such disagreements the superior's word was final and loyalty would require obedience. Loyalty also included the idea that one should not shame or disgrace one's family or superior by ill behavior on one's own part or open disagreement. The bond of loyalty – sworn between brothers, of wife for husband and of minister to ruler – could only be broken by death. Widows were not supposed to remarry and the ministers of an emperor who was overthrown were not supposed to support the government that usurped him. Under pressure to transfer their loyalties to another husband or ruler, either might commit suicide with honor. Although court and government factionalism was not condoned by Confucian teachings, it certainly existed and could be justified or supported by the concept of one's loyalty to one's superior, to one's friends, and, in the extreme, to principle. In return for their loyalty, followers could be expected to be protected and taken care of by their superiors, or their sworn brothers.

Loyalty was closely linked to the practice of filial piety, or the obedience to and serving of one's parents, and the reciprocal duty of the parent, to care for, listen to, and guide the children. This familial hierarchy was embedded in the hierarchy of the imperial

government, that is, as the child was to serve the father, so the father should serve the emperor. Thus, the ties to the imperial government were conceived of in highly personal terms (Hwang 1998). The father's loyalty, duty, and obedience to the emperor superseded his obligations to his family. Women took an inferior position in this ideal hierarchy. Within the family, wives were expected to defer to their husband's leadership, as ministers might defer to the emperor. Chastity, compliance, and ignorance were often promoted as Confucian ideals for women (Hou 1986). Sons were more important than daughters because they carried on a male line of descent, and it was through that line that ancestral sacrifices/offerings were carried out, as an extension of the filial relationships beyond the grave. Daughters might be considered wasted effort for parents, since as upon marriage they joined their husband's families and transferred their total loyalty to the new family. They applied their labor – farming, weaving, sericulture, house-keeping – to their husband's household and under the guidance of the husband's mother adopted the customs of the new household. They bore and raised children according to the mother-in-law's direction and participated in the ancestral sacrifices for the husband's family.³⁴ If the husband died, they were expected to continue these same obligations.

Education and self-improvement

The Confucian canon and commentaries provided the basis for the traditional education system upon which the examination system for entry to the imperial bureaucracy was itself based. History, essays and poetry were equally important. Through

³⁴ It is well to reiterate that actual practice with regarding these ideals varied considerably, across historical periods, regionally, by family and by social class. The traditional families even within the small sample set of this study exhibit a variety of patterns in actual practice.

studying history, people learned the origins of the Chinese empire, the good and bad deeds of the emperors and their consequences, the ways of politics, as well as much practical information about how to manage the empire, and keep it safe and prosperous. Essays and poetry exposed them to the art of writing and provided a significant personal bond between contemporaries, who exchanged letters as well as their other writings, and who wrote poetry as a part of many social gatherings or personal events.

Literati-gentry children were schooled by their parents, tutors, or learned friends and relatives. Education was perceived as a long and arduous process, which did not end with the passing of an examination. Young men might grow old attempting to pass the national level exams. The same path into the bureaucracy, through education and the examinations, was open to peasants as well as to gentry. Education was not impossible to obtain for an ambitious peasant boy. He might catch the attention of the local landlord and be educated with his own children or at his expense. Two fathers of subjects of this study benefited in this way. Literati-gentry (and by the Qing, merchant organizations) often sponsored local schools. Monasteries also provided education which might include Confucian as well as Buddhist subject matter.

Most literati during the Qing were Neo-Confucianists, following the philosophical school originated by Zhu Xi in the Song (960-1279) dynasty, which combined ideas from Buddhism, and to a lesser extent Taoism, into the mainstream of Confucian thought. An important feature of this syncretism was an increased emphasis on self-cultivation, on moral and spiritual growth. The goal was a kind of enlightenment – a state of harmony with the universe, which a Confucian might achieve through the conscientious

improvement of his intellect and his moral behavior. These ideas reinforced the puritanical strain in Confucian thought, ideal behavior requiring strict discipline in the governing of one's emotions as well as hard work in the pursuit of duty, knowledge and career. Corresponding feelings of guilt when one did not live up to the strict standards of behavior also became more important in Neo-Confucianism. To fall off the wagon of selflessness, loyalty, and the pursuit of duty had always been a serious offense, at least in theory. But with the reinforcement of the Neo-Confucian goal of attaining, through study and self-knowledge, a quasi-religious insight or peace of mind, the pressure towards duty, self-sacrifice and self-restraint, and the concomitant guilt when one failed, took on a religious flavor not unlike that of Protestantism in Europe.

Patterns of History

The study of history was an important component of traditional education and the examination system, and closely allied with the study of Confucianism. It was from the events of the past that one could learn the lessons of Confucian morality. History was also believed to manifest larger truths about the nature of the universe and the patterns of human events. As with the Daoist concept of yin-yang and Buddhist concepts of cycles of karma and rebirth, historical conditions might show patterns of impermanence and regeneration, of alternating to and fro between two extremes. Within one extreme lay always the seeds of the growth of the other (Plaks 1977; Jan 1986). Personal fortunes might expand and then decay; economic prosperity could ebb and flow; military success could easily lead to military failure.

At the same time, historical events are seen to recur in regular cycles. The most obvious of these is the dynastic cycle, in which a new dynasty arises from the disorder at the end of the previous dynasty. The new dynasty re-unifies and pacifies China. After some decades or even centuries of relative strength, the ruling house loses the mandate of heaven through inattention to the proper management of government. The empire falls back into chaos, and the man able to again reunify and bring peace to China is the new recipient of heaven's mandate.³⁵ The appropriate state of the empire is peace, prosperity and strength. The violence of rebellions or invasions is itself a sign that the mandate of heaven is weakening. These were the accepted accompaniment of the end of one dynastic cycle and the beginning of the next.³⁶

Such concepts of cyclic historic patterns pervade Chinese culture, not solely the serious discussions of literati scholars. They underlie many of the sentiments expressed in poetry and many of the plots of novels and stories of the Ming and Qing periods. One of the most popular novels, even today, is the *Sanguo yanyi*, (*Romance of the Three Kingdoms*), a compilation of historical stories about the period immediately surrounding the fall of the Han dynasty in 220. Main themes of the novel include the ebb and flow of

³⁵ The Mandate of Heaven was the legitimizing myth of imperial rule, from ancient times in China.

³⁶ The change of dynasty from the Ming to the Qing (1644) was the most recent example of the end of a dynastic cycle, prior to the 20th century. Some personal memoirs of that period have been studied (Struve 1993, 2005). The events were remembered and influential through most of the Qing. The Qing conquest was held to have been particularly brutal, and the Qing were resented in any case for their Manchu origins and culture. For many Chinese the end of the Qing in the early 20th century may have only seemed like justice, or at least the legitimacy of the dynasty was already weak, even before the 19th century assault of the Western powers and Western ideas weakened it further. However, any possible influence these historical memories of end of dynastic violence may have had on personal responses to the GMD-CCP civil war, the Japanese invasion or the GPCR has not been explored. No relevant reference appears in these GPCR memoirs.

military and political fortunes, the efforts and qualities needed in a leader to gain the mandate of heaven, and the central importance of the goal of reunifying China.

The concept of human character that goes hand-in-hand with this traditional view of history (see above, the aesthetic of the episodic plot) does not glorify the individual as unique or highly independent of action, as is found in the heroes and heroines of much European literature. Human actors are shown in the context of their relationships and interactions with others. Consistency of characterization is not particularly prized. People are valued for their flexibility and ability to react with the right skills and wisdom in response to the exigencies of the times. Consistent adherence to moral principles is valued, but its sources in character are neither explored nor explained. Personality traits and motivations are not seen as particularly original, and so a character's inner deliberations and conflicts are rarely shown. The author can assume the audience knows why his characters are doing what they are doing (Plaks 1977b). Discussing the reasons in much detail, or providing insight into the character's thoughts or conflicts, might be viewed as insufficiently subtle, or even somewhat distasteful, as those motivations in so many cases are unsavory.

Women as a theme in pre-20th Century narrative

I have already summarized something of the social position and education of literati-gentry women in traditional China in the context of describing the ideal role of the literati class in the earlier part of this chapter, and in describing the changes in social position of that class sketched in the introductory chapter. Women's chastity, self-sacrifice and loyalty to husband and husband's family were important in historical

writings; these were the qualities for which women's biographies might be included in the official histories, or survive in tomb inscriptions or commemorative essays (Hou 1986; Fong 1997).

Popular literature – novels, stories, plays and operas – celebrated women's virtue too, but the rather more enticing themes of the fox-fairy, the beautiful and talented woman, and the woman warrior (or knight errant) pervaded these genres in many variations. Such themes were often interwoven within the same stories and characters. In fox-fairy stories, or very similar ghost stories, a woman who is a spirit but looks like a live woman attaches herself to a young man as a lover. In many cases, he is drawn away from his proper duty to his family by his love for the beautiful spirit. He may fail to study hard enough for the imperial examinations, or neglect his parents. In some cases, the relationship is physically debilitating for the man. The spirit, being of a non-corporeal world, may be sucking away his life energy, through their intercourse. In others, the spirit helps the young man to attain worldly success through the imperial examinations. In no case can he marry her, and so their love is eventually doomed. The line between stories of the love for a fox-spirit or ghost and stories of the love for a courtesan is very thin. The courtesan also can be viewed as either helpful to the young man – encouraging his study and career – or as ruining his health, morals, and finances, and their marriage is almost always portrayed as impossible because of family objections.

Stories concerning beautiful women and talented men bear some relationship to the fox-fairy and ghost stories, also. However, the emphasis of this theme is the appropriateness of the romantic attachment between the two. Love might still be

thwarted, but the reader rather than accepting the justice of the separation, believes that the two people were meant for each other. In this theme, the beautiful woman who is also talented in the literary and performing arts is the just reward for a man who has talent himself and who has studied hard to achieve success at his examinations. Such a woman can be suitable for marriage. She might be a courtesan and thus become a secondary wife or concubine. However, there are a few stories in which intimacy develops, through accidental circumstances, between such couples of equal rank, so that the woman might be a candidate for primary wife.

Another important theme was the woman warrior. She might be an ordinary woman of exceptional determination and bravery, or in the more fantastic romances, a woman of supernatural powers. There are historical examples of women aiding the Ming resistance against the Qing, which make their way into popular drama. Their heroism consisted largely of inspiring and assisting their male partners. There are additional stories of women putting on men's clothes and going into battle to be with their partner or as a substitute for a family member (Li 1997; Robertson 1997). Women warriors with magical abilities played increasingly central roles in stories toward the end of the Qing. Capable with a sword, brave and acting in isolated independence, they might avenge wrongs or repay debts or obligations of their own or their loved ones (Ma and Lau 1978; Mair and Weinstein 1986).

Chinese Narrative in the 20th Century

From the late Qing through the May 4th movement Chinese narrative literature, including autobiography, underwent rapid changes paralleling the modernization of society and the increasing interest in what European, Japanese and Russian cultures had to offer. By the end of the Qing, thousands of novels were being published, often serialized in newspapers (Ma 1986). Additionally, much literature was translated from foreign languages, if often in an abbreviated form. A major component of the rapidly expanding publishing business in Shanghai through the 1930s was the publication of translations, which in addition offered employment for students returning from their studies abroad. The intellectuals, especially in Shanghai, remained remarkably attuned to artistic and literary events in the US and Europe despite the increasingly unsettled conditions of the society surrounding them. Such ideas were made available, primarily through periodicals, to a readership not only in Shanghai but scattered across the country.

Following a trend started in the late Qing, Chinese novels and short stories grew more closely modeled on Western styles in the early twentieth century. The objective, impersonal narrator gave way to first person narration and to epistolary novels where feelings could be expressed directly and freely. Autobiography became more self-revelatory (Wu 1990; Zhao 1995). Women were now regularly the central protagonists of pieces of fiction (Wang Lingzhen 2004). Themes included the difficulties encountered by women leaving home to venture forth on their own, conflicts with their parents, as well as the conflicting pulls within themselves of obligations to their families and to their internal imperative to independence and a role in the larger world. Butterfly literature was the

popularized, romantic genre, which developed from the traditional stories about the beautiful woman and her talented literatus mate (Link 1981).

The oral tradition of story-telling and street performance remained strong in China well into the twentieth century, even in a thoroughly modern city like the Shanghai of the 1930s and 1940s (McDaniel 2001). Folk and popular versions of many traditional historical stories and legends remained readily accessible to everyone, whether or not they could read. Women, even those still somewhat isolated by tradition, enjoyed these tales either through attendance at village festivals and theaters in urban centers, or through the stories of their servants and companions in their women's quarters. Story-telling transferred additionally to the radio, and the tradition of opera eventually to the cinema. Another important performance form was the shadow play, with intricately cut puppets projected on a screen through backlighting. Both operas and puppet theaters relied on many of the same stories that appeared in written fiction. Thus, the older stories remained extremely popular, at least through the period of the Japanese occupation, at the same time that the newer forms, more influenced by foreign trends with their modern themes, were being developed.

Serious literature during the New Culture/May 4th Movement focused on analyses of what was wrong with the traditional society and the changes people believed were necessary for China to develop into a modern state. Confucianism was held responsible for a highly patriarchal society, in which unquestioned obedience to the Emperor, to a stultifying tradition, and to the authority of parents, particularly fathers, was keeping China stagnant and weak. Superstition and ignorance had to give way, and scientific

modes of thinking, equated with European science, had to be embraced. The often interrelated themes of romantic love and the independent woman played a large role in the May 4th Movement propositions. They challenged the authority of the parents and of the traditional duty of children to provide grandchildren to carry on the family name. They promoted individual fulfillment, rather than unmitigated sacrifice for the family. The concept that women should choose their own mates was promoted as an important method for improving the strength and vitality of the Chinese people, which was conceived of as a race.³⁷

In 1927, an already uneasy collaboration between the Communists and the GMD was shattered, when Jiang Jingguo, moving north from the Guangdong area, finally captured Shanghai. Then with the collusion of the Shanghai merchants, and the gangs they controlled, the GMD turned on the Communists in the city and slaughtered them. The result was not only a split between the CCP and the GMD, but a hardening of ideological positions on both sides. It became the explicit aim of CCP policy to gain complete control of the Chinese cultural narrative. This meant consolidating or unifying both style and message. The free discussion and competition of ideas epitomized by the May 4th Movement was to be gradually snuffed out in favor of a literature and narrative forms which followed Party guidelines for serving the masses and promoting an eventual CCP victory.

³⁷ Reformers of the May 4th Movement considered the Chinese people to be the Chinese race. They considered that parentally arranged marriages interfered with Darwinian natural selection and that young women, left to themselves, would do a better job than their elders of selecting fit mates, and thus promoting a stronger 'race' overall. There was a remarkable (to this 21st century reader) belief among reformers that physical and moral weakness afflicted the Chinese 'race' in late Qing times, and was responsible for the weakened place, as they saw it, of China in competition with Japan, Europe and America.

The way to teach people to be good, modern citizens, with the goals and loyalties required by the CCP, was to guide them through the use of cultural productions that extolled particular goals and values. History was to emphasize the down trodden peasants and evil landlords of traditional China. Novels and plays were to emphasize happy endings, simple and unambiguous optimism for the new China, sacrifice of the individual for the group, loyalty that survives adversity and so forth. Religion and traditional philosophy were no longer needed. Psychology, at least as a field of modern scientific study, never took root. Thus, the whole world of ideas about democracy, individualism, self-fulfillment, romantic love, scientific endeavor, and so forth, that had caused so much excitement in the New Culture/May 4th Movement (1915-1921) was co-opted, drastically narrowed, and even reinterpreted for the purposes of the CCP (Schwarcz 1987). The essential iconoclasm and multiplicity of explanations and interpretations that blossomed during that period were dangerous to CCP control of the story.³⁸ Control of the narrative was imperative to unify the Party and gain the unity of China. This narrowing of narrative options – for identity, for behavior, for belief – can be viewed as a process beginning in the 1920s and climaxing in the GPCR.

The literature produced under the rule of the CCP was focused on the needs of the state as articulated by Mao and later also his wife Jiang Qing. Narrative was written in modern style (with plots, for example, built around personal emotional growth), entirely

³⁸ It is worth reiterating that many intellectuals were aware of what was happening, but accepted this simplification of explanations and interpretations as necessary to establish unity. It is also worth noting that periods of privation and uncertainty – such as those endured during the Japanese occupation – do not give people much energy or time to worry a lot about the impoverishment of their culture. Additionally, both the Japanese and the GMD were exercising their own attempts to control the interpretations of events. The Japanese seem to have been largely ignored (Smith 2004). However, Japanese and GMD censorship helped to increase the influence of the CCP story.

in the spoken language³⁹, but with social realist content required of all artists. This meant a literature glorifying the ideals of communist life with only the simplest rhetorical or poetic usage, as was considered appropriate for peasant tastes. Stories portrayed women in every sphere of activity, including leadership and technical positions (if always secondary), and celebrated their physical prowess as workers and soldiers. The relevant themes were: personal sacrifice for the state, individual heroic effort to modernize the economy, extreme loyalty to Chairman Mao, and a life of devotion to “the people.” All sentimentality was supposed to be removed. No sympathy could be expressed for the suffering of anyone who had a “bad class” background. It also meant no hint of romance. Love and freely chosen marriage partners were no longer significant themes. Young men and women could admire each other for their health, activity and bravery in the service of the country and of Mao, and for their hard work and sacrifice, but not for looks, sexual attractiveness or feelings. If they were paired off at the end of a story, it was to combine their efforts to work for the Party and produce healthy, strong children who would do likewise.

Socialist realism allowed for only the most pro-forma confusion on the part of a hero or heroine concerning their possible actions or feelings: these internal conflicts resulted in the sacrifice of personal feelings for family, love, comfort or material possessions in order to serve others in the cause of Mao. Introspection was “allowed” on the subject of class background – that is, the hero might introspect over whether he really

³⁹ Traditionally, history, poetry and other serious literature were written in Classical Chinese, an entirely written language which is spare and often filled densely with allusion. Some poetry, drama and fiction began to use a written language much closer to speech (vernacular) beginning in the Song Dynasty. Most narrative fiction of any length from that period was written in the vernacular. One of the changes brought by the New Culture/May 4th Movement was a complete switch to education in the vernacular language.

had bad class attitudes; and to some extent the conventions could incorporate a struggle over ties to family versus ties to the Party. Themes from history or traditional literature had to be chosen carefully, so they were not misinterpreted as praising bourgeois values or criticizing current politics.

For young people born after 1950, such Communist themes made up the major portion of what they knew from their schooling, the press, movies, and the government. The range of cultural narrative from these government controlled sources, already narrow in the late 1950s, narrowed again in the early 1960s, just prior to the GPCR, and then narrowed even further in 1966. This was after all the ostensible goal of the GPCR, to wash modern Chinese culture clean of any traces of traditional Chinese cultural narrative and European/American cultural narrative (except that embodied in Mao's version of Marxism).

Violence in Traditional Society

Violence is a final important theme in both the actuality of the GPCR and in writings about it. Mao justified, even encouraged, the violence that accompanied the GPCR by calling it a revolution. This official label for the movement recalled for everyone the violence that had accompanied the struggle for supremacy with the GMD and the land reform movement as the CCP gained control over rural areas. The GPCR was a further stage in this continuing revolution and violence was the inevitable result of class conflict and revolution: "A revolution is not a dinner party."⁴⁰ However, many who

⁴⁰ http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/china_1900_mao_war.htm; accessed February 19, 2011.

have studied the GPCR, as well as those who experienced it, were surprised by the extent and depth of the violence and have endeavored to explain it. Personal responses and explanations of the violence will be discussed below. It is useful here to summarize what a few scholars have said about violence in Chinese society, particularly because the manifestations of violence in the GPCR have roots in traditional and earlier 20th century Chinese practices.

The avoidance of violence was a significant element of the state philosophy of Confucianism and of the neo-Confucianism of the Ming and Qing eras. In Confucian and Legalist theory, as well as in Maoism, military capabilities and careers were always at the service of civilian state and civilian values. Daoist and Buddhist teachings, in China, also valued peaceful and pragmatic approaches to conflict, both at the personal and societal level. Thus throughout China's long history although there have been many episodes of tumultuous violence, as the result of invasion and civil war, the traditional philosophy of government has been based on civilian rule and peaceful means of control.

As in European and other cultures, violence was practiced by the traditional Chinese state in its policing functions, both for interrogation and punishments. Confession was the goal of the justice system, as the preferred manner in which offenses could be put right. Physical abuse and the threat of physical pain were sanctioned within certain guidelines as promoting confession. Members of any class could be executed⁴¹ or caned, as well as imprisoned or fined (Ho 2000; Mueggler 1998; Moore 2001; ter Haar

⁴¹ Even when threatened with execution, a person might choose to confess as the conditions of execution would be different depending upon the degree of remorse and contrition expressed by the victim, as well as the nature of the offense.

2000). These punishments were frequently carried out publicly. People to be executed might be paraded through the streets on the way to the execution ground, possibly with signs hung around their necks stating their crimes. Their names might be written upside down and crossed out with red paint. These public displays were intended to shame the perpetrators and warn the public. Publicly carried out, physical punishment, inducing pain, was held to be shameful for the victim, largely because people could not help responding to it in ways that indicated weakness. Those who could “take it” without giving in to cries, tears, or expressions of abjection were admired; those who could not might be pitied, but seem frequently to have been scorned.

There is, in addition, a strong injunction in Confucian teaching to protect the sanctity of the body, which was handed to one by one’s parents. In filial deference, one was supposed to preserve the body whole. The severing of the head in an execution, for example, was considered a violation of this injunction, by the executed party, who should not have put his body at risk by his misbehavior (Fong 1997). Other attacks on the body, such as canings or beatings, must have carried, explicitly or implicitly, a similar sense of violation not only of the physical but of the moral person.

Extra-legal violence, but in the name of social order, was also pervasive in traditional and early 20th century China. Ter Haar (2006) documents a wide range of cases, from 900 to 1900, of vigilante style justice meted out by ordinary citizens against perceived witches and kidnappers, recorded in local histories. In some cases, the apparent perpetrators of witchcraft were brought to the local magistrate for punishment. In others, the mob beat them to death. In some of these cases, the leaders of the citizen mob were

themselves investigated to determine their motivations. While the judgment of the mob was often accepted, the government also recognized that such rough justice could be unfair, that it threatened state authority, and that it might originate in local and personal vendettas rather than actual misdeeds.

Much enforcement of local order in China, at least following the rebellions of the 19th century, was carried out by forces having only a tenuous relationship to legitimate government. The central government had always been comparatively underfinanced, and the Qing military was stretched beyond its limit by the demands of the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1871) and other internal disorders. Merchants managed much urban government and were allied with or supported by gangs and secret societies, who pursued their sponsors' interests, such as the recruitment of labor for factories, the suppression of labor unrest, the collection of debt, extortion, and the management of illegal gambling, prostitution, and entertainment industries. Militias, but a step up in formal legality from the gangs, played a significant role in policing of the countryside during the 1930s and 40s (Perry 2006). With the civil war and the Japanese invasion and occupation, as well as the resistance to it, the immediate experience of many Chinese in the twenty years prior to the CCP victory was one in which hardship – dislocations, separations, hunger – and violence were relatively common.

The coercion and violence⁴² within the Party employed by Mao during the Yan'an period (1935-1947) and the immediate aftermath of the CCP victory in 1949 have been

⁴² I take violence to mean action which physically injures someone purposefully. I take coercion to mean pressure on someone to change their behavior, which might include some physical force, but might include other types of force such as imprisonment or cutting off of income. However, in Maoist practice every level of persuasion to conform, if not satisfactorily complied with, led to the next level of pressure. Behind every

documented by journalists, some historians and memoirists. Thought reform and self-criticism may have been clothed in the language of psychology and the opportunity to change and improve oneself (Lifton 1963). However, even the apparently milder practices, such as self-criticisms, were from the beginning rooted in methods for maintaining security in underground revolutionary cells. They were backed by coercive social pressure and the threat of physical harm (Cheek 1984; Noumoff 1968). To a great extent, the violent practices of the GPCR were an intensification of Mao's and the CCP's earlier practices for insuring conformity and controlling dissent. Additionally, many physical punishments, such as public struggle meetings, parading with dunce caps and sign boards, aimed at inducing public humiliation had their counterparts in even earlier Chinese practices. Yet, for many experiencing the GPCR the violence and extent of the coercion came as a considerable shock.

Summary

Narratives and themes appear in these memoirs from all the three major traditions that were accessible to these subjects – traditional Chinese culture, direct exposure to Western-European culture, early 20th century literature from the May 4th movement forward, and Communist socialist realism. These subjects had access to both Western and traditional Chinese literature at home and a number found comfort in these literatures during their darkest days in the GPCR. Their ideals of behavior – particularly the drive to sacrifice self for the Party, the strong impulse towards heroism and loyalty – reflect the

self-criticism session, no matter how apparently benign, was the ultimate threat of either direct violence or coercion.

Maoist values with which they were raised. What is possibly most interesting, however, is that they also reflect many of the values of the Confucian literati-gentry class who were their forebears. I will return to these mixing and overlapping cultural narratives in Chapter 7, after I have described the contents of the memoirs in depth.

4. MEMOIRS: A RECORD OF LIVING

The fifteen memoirs⁴³ of this study tell much about the conditions of life in urban China in the mid-1960s through the mid-1970s. The story is told largely through the eyes of youth, aside from four accounts by women born before 1950, who provide a perspective from middle age. The women who wrote these accounts come from the intellectual class that was the target of the GPCR. They were the daughters of educated parents, or held intellectual jobs themselves, as teachers at both the university and middle school levels, writers, actors, and administrators. In keeping with Communist practice, almost all were directly employed by the state, although Nien Cheng (*Life and Death in Shanghai*) had recently retired from the China branch of Shell Oil, a British firm which left China shortly before the GPCR. The most prominent of the families in 1966 were Yue Daiyun's (*To the Storm*) and Jung Chang's (*Wild Swans*). Yue's father-in-law, deceased in 1964, had been president, and later a vice-president, of Beijing National University (Beida), and her husband's career at Beida was beginning to blossom in the 1960s. Chang's father was the director of the Public Affairs department for Sichuan Province⁴⁴. Rae Yang's (*Spider Eaters*) father was from a powerful old Manchu family in

⁴³ To clarify, there are fifteen memoirs listed in the bibliography, but one, by Ye, covers the experiences of two subjects in enough detail, as a series of dialogues between them, that I have sixteen subjects for this study.

⁴⁴ This was a more powerful and important department than the American English connotation of "public affairs" would suggest. Since the task was to communicate government achievements and goals to the public, in a context where the government carefully controlled everything the public could learn, the

Beijing. Her parents had had successful careers in the Intelligence service, but by the time of the GPCR, they had moved from that high pressure world into university teaching.

These subjects all descended from relatively wealthy and influential progenitors on either the mother's or father's side, sometimes both. But these families had, during the first half of the twentieth century, generally seen a reduction in wealth and influence, and the adults' jobs, by the 1960s, were often modest if comfortable positions. Additionally, whatever their natal family origins, the adults had long been highly committed to the Communist Party and Revolution. Nanchu's mother, for example, ran away from her Guomindang family at the age of sixteen to join the Communists. But neither early commitment and sacrifice for the Party, nor early financial hardship, nor, in at least one case, impeccable peasant lineage, seems to have guaranteed safe conditions for these families during the GPCR. Luo's father came from several generations of a poor peasant family in Hunan, but by 1966 he was clearly an intellectual of the old school – intimate friends with painters, himself a poet and writer, and editor for one of the Shanghai publishing houses. He had already endured exile as a “rightist” as a result of the anti-rightist campaign of 1957-8, in conjunction with the Hundred Flowers.⁴⁵ His position weakened further by the beginning of the GPCR due to his failure to report his wife's brother for a plan to flee to Hong Kong.

department wielded considerable influence and its employees were supposed to be highly trusted by the regime in Beijing.

⁴⁵ In the Hundred Flowers movement (1958), Mao and the CCP invited people to speak out and criticize the Party, for the sake of improving the way the government and party were ruling China. Many intellectuals took him at his word and published suggestions and criticisms. This outpouring of criticism, although much of it was entirely constructive, apparently startled Mao, and the result after some months was a crackdown on those who had participated. Yue was also labeled a “rightist” at this time. Luo's father was sent into internal exile near Tibet for a year or more.

These families neither labored in factories, nor farmed the land as peasants. Their jobs were relatively secure, their housing comparatively comfortable, and they had no day to day financial worries that are recorded. But what linked them together more than their economic or political status was a life of intellectual pursuits. They appreciated traditional Chinese culture, and in a number of cases were passing on to the younger generation elements of the ancient scholarly tradition not taught in the schools. This did not detract from their firm support of the Communist Revolution in most cases. Families such as Luo's and Cheng's had passed up opportunities to leave in 1949 in order to remain and contribute to the building of a new China.

To explain what this group of people experienced under the GPCR, I will first outline something of their expectations for life in the early 1960s. Then I continue, in this chapter, with the details of the material context and objective conditions of their lives from 1966 to the late 1970s. In the following chapter, I will explore their responses to the radical shift they underwent, transitioning from relatively benign expectations to harsh reality. The material in these two chapters is derived entirely from information from the fifteen memoirs. A number of these books⁴⁶ provide a certain amount of explanatory information to make the GPCR more accessible to non-Chinese readers. As much as possible, I focus on the material that relates to their personal experience and personal recollection.

⁴⁶ Particularly Chang, Cheng, Yue, Ye and Yang.

Life on the Eve of the GPCR

My subjects, for the most part, came from intact, two parent families, with two or more children. Only Chen Xuezhao (*Surviving the Storm*) was divorced and Cheng was a widow, and their children were young adults. Zhimei Zhang's (*Foxspirit*) parents remained married, although Zhang herself was married and divorced twice during the period covered by her memoir. Most households included a grandmother, usually the father's mother, although in Chang's case the mother's mother lived with them. Both Yue and Yang lived at least part of the time in extended family compounds, in Beijing. Ji-li Jiang (*Red Scarf Girl*) lived in the remnants of a family compound in Shanghai, now reduced to a two family dwelling with her father's sister-in-law living downstairs from her own family. A number of the families had servants of long standing, generally an "Amah"⁴⁷ or combination housekeeper and nanny. The ties between servants and their employers appear to have been strong. These seemingly non-egalitarian arrangements were permitted, at least until the GPCR, in order to keep as many people employed as possible. However, since both parents worked, having a grandmother or Amah meant that the children could be cared for and supervised at home. Those children without such arrangements were expected from an early age to manage for themselves and take care of younger siblings while their parents worked. Anchee Min (*Red Azalea*) reports, for example, picking up her younger siblings from kindergarten and nursery school and

⁴⁷ A number of different terms are used in these books to refer to this type of servant. I use this term because I am familiar with it.

supervising their late afternoon play when she was only five years old herself.⁴⁸ Daytime and boarding nurseries were available also, although apparently not universally used by this group. Ma Xiaodong and Ye Weili (*Growing Up in The People's Republic*) mention attending a boarding kindergarten; Yang's brother attended one for awhile and Chang and her brothers spent some time in boarding nurseries when they were very young. But the memoirs describe very little about this aspect of their early experience.

Most of the adults in these accounts worked extremely hard through the 1950s and early 1960s. For those wishing advancement, particularly in the Communist Party, utter devotion to the cause of the revolution to the exclusion of all consideration of self and family was expected, if not demanded. Willingness to spend long hours at work and away from one's family was one of the most important signs of one's devotion to the cause. However, continuing the intense involvement in politics of their contributions to the Revolution before their triumph in 1949, most did it eagerly, convinced of the importance of their work and its contribution to the rebuilding of China, after centuries of decline. The children born after 1950 were imbued with a fierce patriotism, similar to their parents', by the example and teaching of their parents as well as the teachings of the society and school system in which they participated. They, like their parents, wished to serve their country – participate in its modernization and help to improve the lives of its large, and largely impoverished, population.

⁴⁸ Min does not explain who took care of them before she was 5; one would guess, given the arrangements explained in the other books that her mother may have remained at home for that time, or possibly the children were in day care arrangements, or they may even have had a servant, initially.

The young women of these families were brought up with the expectation that they would themselves become educated in both modern and traditional Chinese culture. They expected to go to university and, like their mothers, to be employed afterwards in an intellectual occupation. While fathers outranked mothers in these memoirs, many of the women were nonetheless well educated and held responsible positions in their workplaces. Grandmothers also were often educated, although rarely had been employed outside the home. Even housekeeper/nannies might be educated, being sometimes relatives or gentlewomen who had fallen on hard times. Jiang's amah, for example, needed employment after her wealthy husband went bankrupt and committed suicide. She knew how to read, both books and musical notation. More typically, of course, the amahs were not literate. However, they might provide a fund of traditional stories and practices as Yang describes her "Aunty." Thus, this study's subjects, as girls and young women entered the mid-1960s with the expectation that they should not only work hard to attend a good university, but that upon graduation they would enter on a career of use to their country, involving responsibility and intellectual labor.

Young people expected to marry with significant input into their decision from their parents, but also with freedom of choice in the matter, particularly if they should fall in love with a suitable person. As had always been the tradition, marriage was considered an important responsibility by most families for the purposes of producing grandchildren. Likewise the state had an explicit interest in the production of children and during the

1950s vacillated between advocating late marriages and small families and encouraging large families, as an insurance in the case of nuclear war (Chang).⁴⁹

Jobs were assigned by the Party and with it housing and residency permits. Assuming good grades, test scores, and behavior, young people might have some influence over their future jobs through the schools and departments they applied to in the university, the professors and Party secretaries they were able to impress, and through family influence. Marriage could affect these plans, as couples might or might not be assigned jobs in the same location, and thus people might shy away from marital alliances that would result in long separations or the inability to live near their natal families.

Mao had always been a charismatic leader who was deeply revered by many in China for uniting the country after decades of civil war, and bringing the country to a point where it could begin to modernize.⁵⁰ The early 1960s saw an already fervent patriotism converted, for those of school age, into a “cult of Mao” through planned central government policy, in which Mao was increasingly portrayed as the country’s infallible savior and protector. Most young people succumbed to this cult, even while some of their parents may have been skeptical following the failure of the Great Leap Forward, and the widespread injustices of the anti-rightist campaign of the late 1950s.

⁴⁹ Because I cite the memoirs so frequently, I use only the surnames of the authors and omit the date. None have the same surname and the memoirs themselves are listed in the first section of the bibliography and are easy to locate.

⁵⁰ Whether or not this was true, this is what people seem to have believed. Recent scholarship is suggesting that China was actually modernizing extremely rapidly in the first half of the twentieth century and that the Communist portrayal of the period as stagnant and backward was a significant piece of propaganda. There was great hardship in the years right before the Communist victory in the civil war, but that was mostly due to the Japanese war, not either to the Guomindang or the backwardness of China, as claimed by the CCP.

While, by 1966, parents might have some problems with the CCP and even Mao, they believed the unity that Mao had achieved with such difficulty was necessary to bring China into the modern world. They understood that mistakes would be made and were willing to tolerate personal setbacks and society's false starts, even when they were directly affected, for the sake of their country's progress. They believed that not only was China backward with respect to the rest of the world, but that there were vast inequalities within China which had to be corrected. They also believed in progress; if they worked hard, society would move forward and the peasants' lives would become easier.

The children, more ignorant than their parents of the real conditions in China before the 1949 Revolution, and thoroughly embracing the Mao version of that history, abhorred landlords and pitied the downtrodden peasants. Many believed deeply in Mao's romanticized version of peasant life: simple, straight-forward, hard-working, wise, enduring, patient and so forth, while they had no experiential knowledge of such a life at all. In those families with servants, or grandmothers living with them, to care for the children, a sizeable number of these children may also have had little experience with any kind of chores or household tasks. When added to their privileged positions in school, this does seem to have led to some initial feelings of entitlement and a hesitancy about physical labor in a few. However, the mythology of the revolution was clear. Hardship and physical labor were glorified and so all knew the ideal towards which they should strive.

Many of the adults and parents, of course, had already known tremendous political upheaval and physical hardship during the Japanese war and occupation, as well

as the conflict with the Guomindang. Some had undergone reform through labor during the anti-rightist campaign of the late 1950s. However, few of these details are reported on by the children, who seem to have been largely protected from knowledge of these experiences. It appears that most adults in the late 1950s saw anti-rightist activities as relatively limited in scope. Even those targeted seem to have believed that once they had been rehabilitated, as promised, their political problems would be over.

In any case, parents were inhibited from talking about politically sensitive matters with their children in order to protect their children's social and political standing. It was feared that small children, blurting out information about family background at school, or even about their parents' contributions to the revolution before 1949, might say something that would bring ridicule to themselves or trouble to the parents⁵¹. This mindset of cautiousness in relationships between parents and children on these political subjects seems to have been well established even before the outbreak of the GPCR. Chang discusses it explicitly, but the general ignorance of children of their family's likely predicament, should there be another anti-rightist effort, underlies most of these memoirs. This will be discussed in more detail in the next Chapter. Here it is sufficient to point out that this very inhibition in discussion with children was a sign of the parent's belief that (1) their children's future could be separated from their own pasts, and their belief that (2) the situation was relatively stable, so that their children would continue to have a position worth protecting.

⁵¹ This is not to say that there were not additional reasons for parental reticence both before and after 1966. They did not want their children to worry. They wanted their children to have a positive view of the government and society. They may have felt shame about their experiences.

Conditions during the GPCR

In the mid-1960s, these expectations and beliefs ran head-on into the strange realities of the GPCR. A significant component of the messages of these memoirs is simply that: This was a time that violated the expectations of these women and their families concerning how life was supposed to unfold. To understand and discuss this message, as well as other meanings to be read in this experience, I first draw a detailed picture of the conditions of life for these subjects during the decade or more from 1966 onward. This composite description is drawn directly from the memoirs. Of course, not everyone either saw or recorded exactly the same things. Conditions varied depending upon many factors and people experienced these conditions differently, depending upon personality and the specifics of their family life. Whatever people may have observed or felt at the time, in their memoirs they have selected different aspects of the times as important to discuss.⁵²

⁵² The twenty-first century American reader might question what these women report, especially if accounts are taken individually or seem contradictory. The levels, extent and arbitrary nature of the violence at first reading seem almost unbelievable and inexplicable. A number of the authors are avowedly anti-Maoist, their families were seriously abused, and some remain understandably bitter. Others continued to live in China and at the time they wrote were working within the Party system. Some details have certainly been mis-remembered and other material possibly knowingly exaggerated. Many acknowledge changing details to protect others, and it is difficult to know exactly how far such writer's license has been extended. Additionally, it is possible they have borrowed from each other, possibly to fill in material where their own knowledge was less complete, thus leading to an unnatural consistency in reporting. However, after a detailed reading of these accounts and careful comparison of them on many points, I see no evidence of systematic slanting or borrowing of material. While I have some skepticism about certain isolated incidents as described, overall the material appears to have been prepared with care and without obvious exaggeration. The voices within each memoir are distinct from each other, each author having a different, individual interpretation of the meaning of the events for her life. Each voice is consistent within each memoir. Many authors tie their own experiences to the events happening at a national level, and these links are consistent with accepted historical sources. Where the memoirs overlap – for example, the multiple descriptions of the Red Terror in Shanghai (Luo, Cheng, Jiang, Nanchu) and the multiple descriptions of Beijing during the same period (Ye, Ma, Zhai, Yue, and Yang) – they appear appropriately consistent with each other, while remaining distinctive for each account. The chronologies within each memoir are reasonably clear, logical and self-consistent.

However, taken together, including the variations in viewpoint of these subjects and the vagaries of their memories, there is sufficient quantity and breadth of material to provide a collective description of the material conditions and practices of the GPCR. Considered as a whole these memoirs give detailed, consistent and convincing descriptions of the range of events and conditions with which these people had to cope in 1966 and the following decade.

Life Conditions

Location: The memoirs cover experiences in three major cities, Chengdu (Sichuan), Shanghai and Beijing. Chen's account concerns Hangzhou, a smaller city, located some 100 miles to the southwest of Shanghai, in Zhejiang. Shu Jiang Lu's (*When Huai Flowers Bloom*) stories primarily concern Hefei, the capital of Anhui Province. While recent scholarship is throwing more light on the differences in the way the GPCR was carried out in different locations, without tying these accounts in detail to this other material there are few conclusions one can draw about differences based solely on location from these accounts. This effort is outside the scope of this study. Differences in

In some cases, I have wondered why material that I might expect to see seems left out, but much of this material relates to family relationships. Thus, it seems highly likely that the material is omitted either to avoid airing family conflicts or to simply protect the privacy of family members still in China. Authors may be sheltering people who either have committed serious infractions or provided too much sympathy or support to the author. In other cases, events, although not the fault of the victim, were considered too painful or too shameful to discuss. Thus the extent of Ma's mother's abuse in 1966 was never revealed to Ma until 1998, nearly 20 years after her mother's death. Such omissions do not in any way invalidate a person's account. They may, in fact, contribute to a kind of under-reporting of violent incidents. On the other hand, a few authors provide details of violence or victimization of which they had no personal experience. It is even possible that some of these third hand accounts may represent personal or family experiences which have been reported as happening to outside parties to protect family feelings. However, unless the circumstances are claimed to have been personally observed, or reported directly by close friends or family to the author, I have treated them as background and they do not play a substantial role in my analysis.

timing are fairly easy to identify, as Beijing was in the lead and other areas followed suit. Chang speaks of Red Guards coming from Beijing to Chengdu to explain how to set up Red Guard units.

However, the most obvious difference between the cities lies in the conditions of the rural experiences of the youth, because the students on the whole were sent to different rural locations depending upon their home town and school. Chengdu people might end up in the mountains near Tibet or in the border area with Vietnam (west and far southwest); the Beijing youth frequently went to Heilongjiang (far to the northeast); the Shanghai youth could be fortunate and end up in the fields in nearby Jiangsu or Zhejiang (relatively central) or be sent to Shandong (somewhat northeast). The physical conditions in these rural areas were dramatically different. Heilongjiang was the most remote and, while not without beauty and natural resources, had long and bitter winters. The areas of Shandong turned over to the Shanghai youth camps were also forbidding, an apparently desolate flat landscape with infertile soil. Yunan and Tibet, by contrast, offered spectacularly beautiful mountain scenery and isolated, backward and poverty stricken villages. In Jiangsu or Zhejiang, one might be assigned to a relatively prosperous commune with the promise of getting enough to eat. However, malaria and other tropical diseases were always a danger.

School: Children and youth were politically organized through their schools. Elementary schools ran through the sixth grade, and middle schools had lower and upper divisions each consisting of three years. Under normal circumstances a child went to

school at age 6 and graduated at age 17.⁵³ There also were preschool nurseries available, some of them boarding nurseries. A few authors report that they attended these at least for certain periods, when their mothers were on assignment away from home, but they tell little about them. Schools were completely closed during the first year of the GPCR, from fall 1966 through fall 1967.⁵⁴ They then reopened through the two levels of middle school, but the universities remained closed until the early 1970s. When primary and secondary schools reopened in 1967, at least in many cases it was only for a few hours a day and this did not mean that much real teaching resumed. Children attended only sporadically in many cases. Most classes were political. Children read newspaper articles and discussed them, along with the latest policies from the central government, under the teacher's supervision or the guidance of a Party representative. Several subjects also report being required to do physical labor training, which in Yang's case involved carrying coal from one part of the school yard to another, then during the next physical labor class carrying it back again.

Teachers were one of the groups heaviest hit by the GPCR. They were considered to be the purveyors of the bourgeois doctrines that were infesting the younger generation. Or, more cynically, they could be seen as an easy target with which to mobilize young people for the "rebellion" and as a base from which to control the politics of the younger generation. Many teachers were removed and persecuted in 1966 -7, so when schools did

⁵³ The terminology for schools is somewhat confused as some authors appear to have used Americanized terminology and referred to grades 7-9 as middle school, and grades 10-12 as high school, where others refer to all six years as middle school.

⁵⁴ This is actually somewhat unclear. Different sources say different things, and I cannot see any way to choose between them. Possibly elementary schools opened again in the fall of 1966; possibly it was different in different locations. Possibly some of the memoirists are not clear or themselves were confused. History books on the period are equally unclear on the subject.

finally reopen students were confronted with new, inexperienced and often uneducated teachers, whose political views were considered appropriate by the radicals now in power. The original teachers might be doing janitorial or grounds keeping work at their old schools. Most teachers in the classroom seem to have been afraid and demoralized. They could not teach anything that was not mandated by the Party secretary in charge at the school. Old teaching materials had been discarded, and the new materials were usually in the form of mimeographed sheets distributed by a Party authority. A very few may have continued to teach with their own materials.

Prior to the GPCR, many of these subjects went to elite elementary and middle schools. Those who excelled academically received honors and privileges as well as educational opportunities unavailable to others. It seems in practice to have been something of a winner-take-all system; those at the top of the class academically received considerable visibility, overt praise, and many honors, including student leadership positions. For a number of these children, the change brought about by the GPCR was significant as it meant, from 1967, being assigned to middle schools based not on competitive examinations, but by neighborhood location. In some cases, this meant subjects were now in classrooms with “toughs” who had previously taunted them in the streets. It also meant that their academic excellence was no longer valued, and in fact could be held against them. This phenomenon is described in the Shanghai memoirs (Nanchu, Jiang, Luo). Everywhere, at school education had stopped. Since the subjects came from families where education was prized and who had often for generations

earned and kept their place in society through educational achievement, this was a significant loss of both personal and social purpose, as well as prestige.

Red Guards: In all of these accounts, the Red Guard movement quickly took over student leadership in the late Spring and Summer of 1966. Initially Red Guards were established in Beijing among the children of high party cadres from the elite Beijing schools. Imitation organizations, sometimes established with the help of Red Guards from Beijing, rapidly arose elsewhere. By 1967, however, Red Guards leadership changed from the children of the elite, to those of “good” class background, or at least those who could convincingly claim it, or who were approved by the new Party secretaries or work committees in the school. “Good” class background meant the children of workers or peasants and revolutionary cadres, that is, parents who had served the Party during the civil war.

There was a significant difference between the Red Guards at the college/university level and those in the middle schools. None of these subjects was in university in 1966. The closest look at university Red Guards is from Yue, who was a teacher at Beida and lived with her husband and family on campus where she observed the height of the Red Guard movement. The university students, at Beida and nearby Qinghua, were more attuned to politics than the middle school students and, at least according to Yue, had more freedom to plan and participate in violent events. They were aware of the opportunities that the upheavals in authority offered them, in terms of gaining notice and favor among those who could offer them employment or Party positions when the GPCR was completed. In the struggle for control of a place like

Beida, they had the chance to come to the attention of Mme Mao, and others on the Central Cultural Revolution Group⁵⁵ who managed the GPCR for Mao. If they could establish their utility to this group, by retaining and interrogating people, or harassing an enemy by attacking his home, or digging up potentially useful “dirt” on someone else, they were only too happy to do so. In Beijing, at least, the middle school Red Guards were often acting as supporting troops to the university Red Guards.⁵⁶

Through these new student leaders, guided by the new party secretaries and the teachers allied with them, participation in the GPCR --- to include membership in the Red Guards and Red Successors,⁵⁷ assignments to work locations for the summer or after graduation – was organized. Additionally, the Red Guards implemented the middle schools’ versions of self-criticism and harassment/struggles. These were far less onerous for students than for their teachers, many of whom were treated very brutally. However, depending upon the school, children of families in disgrace could be regularly taunted and harassed, sometimes stoned, or otherwise physically assaulted. A few children stayed away from school for long periods of time, with their parents’ encouragement, as a matter of self-protection – emotional and physical. Others faced the same dilemma faced by

⁵⁵ This is the infamous “Gang of Four”, who were operating under Jiang Qing’s (Mme Mao) direction, but who were largely given a free hand by Mao. Occasionally, they seem to have been reigned in at the behest of Zhou Enlai, who had some influence over Mao from a slightly less radical, somewhat more pragmatic position.

⁵⁶ This hierarchy does not seem to be reflected in the memoirs outside of Yue’s. In part, this may be because Yue was attempting to explain her own children’s participation in the Red Guards and to lessen their responsibilities. In part, it may be because the others, as elementary and middle school students at the time were fundamentally unaware of the ways the Red Guards were being manipulated. Or it is possible that this hierarchy was clearer in Beijing than elsewhere and that Yue, being an adult and experienced teacher at the time, was able to observe it.

⁵⁷ Children could not become Red Guards until middle school. So some elementary schools organized junior Red Guard feeder organizations. Red Successors is the name given this type of organization in at least one case.

their parents at work. However much they may have abhorred what happened at school, they were forced by the Red Guard leaders to attend and participate. Otherwise, they or their families would become targets of criticism and violence, or they would lose opportunities later to obtain good job assignments.

Two other Red Guard experiences are important to mention. One was the opportunity to see Mao in person, as he made eighteen appearances before Red Guards massed in Beijing's Tiananmen Square during the late summer and early fall of 1966. The other was the opportunity for young people to travel on their own around the country during 1966 to share experiences with their counterparts in other areas. Train travel was free and extremely crowded. Various organizations in cities and towns were required to both feed and house the young travelers where ever they might choose to go. Some took walking tours, and many visited revolutionary locations such as Mao's birthplace. Many Chinese youth took advantage of this completely unaccustomed opportunity to travel and to live essentially unsupervised for several months; Zhai Zhenhua (*Red Flower of China*), Yang, Chang, Ma and Ye participated.

Work: Adults' lives were organized around their workplaces, with both men and women employed in full time jobs. Since most of these jobs were in educational or governmental institutions, which Mao wished to have thoroughly restructured, these people were at the vortex of the GPCR. Throughout a period of one or more years, little actual work seems to have been accomplished. People were nonetheless required to go to their offices to participate in the struggles and conflict over reorganization and the decisions about who should be punished for what counter-revolutionary infractions.

Cadre schools were another institution associated with the workplace. Work places managed their own cadre schools for the reformation through work of the adults, whom investigation had found to be insufficiently revolutionary. Investigations of people's revolutionary fitness were conducted largely through struggle meetings and self-criticism in the workplace. The cadre schools were something like labor camps, and similar to some of the farms established for the young people who were sent to the countryside. Participants, however, were all from the same office. At the cadre school, people might be required to bring new land under cultivation – likely marginal land that was difficult to farm – and build their own dwellings and community buildings. While they were subsidized, part of the purpose was for people to feed themselves, as their original jobs had either been eliminated or someone else was now in their previous position, taking their salary and living in their housing. Finally, removing these people to the countryside and keeping them busy in often futile manual labor and writing self-criticisms meant they were out of the way of the new power holders in their old workplaces.

Party organizations and party secretaries and later the PLA supervised at the workplace as they did at the schools. Work places also produced some Rebel organizations – akin to the Red Guards – who occupied themselves with similar activities, such as house searches, parading of revisionists/ counter-revolutionaries through the streets, evictions, and arrests.

Neighborhood: Neighborhoods also had supervisory committees, similar to those at work and school. These already existed, working with the police to report on people's

comings and goings.⁵⁸ While they had in the past been intrusive, their power seems to have increased during the GPCR, particularly in Shanghai, as they play a larger role in the Shanghai memoirs than elsewhere. It was through the neighborhood committees that unemployed grandparents living with their children might be supervised or investigated. It was these committees that knew whether people had maids, how many rooms people might live in, or what kind of furniture they owned, if their housing was privately owned. There was close collaboration between neighborhood committees, the Red Guards and Rebels, the police, and the factions struggling at the higher levels of the municipal government. People's police records were open to these neighborhood committees. When someone was being uncooperative at work, it would be known in the neighborhood committee, and then possibly at the child's school. If the municipal government wanted someone attacked, they could work through either the Red Guards or the neighborhood committee. These committees appear to have operated under few real constraints, and, according to these subjects, often used the general disorder to pursue their own agendas of vindictiveness or acquisitiveness.

Finances: For a while most adults, even under investigation, continued to draw their regular salaries from work. Later their salary was either cut or stopped completely. In a number of these families, people were reduced to living on a portion of one parent's salary (Luo mentions 7% in the case of a friend), when they had been used to two full salaries. This money might have to cover expenses for members of the family who were in detention, or for a child's participation in Red Guard activities. Depending on the

⁵⁸ As a number of authors have noted, neighborhood organizations for supervision and mutual responsibility have traditionally been a feature of Chinese governance.

family's circumstances, very little might be left for those at home to live on. In Luo's case, friends of the family contributed money to their support every month. After a period of time, even this method of supporting people was found to be too expensive; segments of the economy were faltering due to the disruptions in work and transportation. After 1967, at graduation from middle school (aged seventeen), most urban youth were sent to agricultural jobs in the countryside. A few in Shanghai were assigned to factory jobs, but only one child in a family could get a paying job, and at least one child per family had to work in an agricultural job. Min's allowance at the farm in Shandong barely covered her costs for food, kerosene and toilet paper.

Housing: The general practice in China was for housing to be assigned and maintained by the work unit of the parents. This often meant living in a compound with other employees of the same workplace. It also meant that the quality of the housing depended upon the rank of the parent whose job provided the housing, usually the father. However, in this study, a number of the subjects lived in their own housing, at least initially.

Whether owned by the family or assigned through the workplace, housing quickly became a significant point of contention in the GPCR. Most memoirists record major negative changes to their housing conditions after 1966. People who had started with a small house, or a several room apartment, would find themselves in one room for everyone (e.g. parents, several children, plus grandmother). Some were moved to very squalid conditions (e.g. an old garage). The newly freed space was given to other families. Sometimes this decision was made through the workplace that managed the

housing, in order to provide nicer housing for those taking over the higher level positions. In other cases, the decision seems to have been made or encouraged by the local neighborhood committee, in order to house people they had selected, possibly relatives or friends.

Sharing toilets and kitchens was common and neither might be readily available. For example, cooking might be done on a shared landing, or the privy in the yard shared by several families. House searches left many people with almost no possessions: little furniture, no pictures, a change of clothes, no toys, and the only books allowed being the collected works of Mao. The house in addition might have been wrecked – the walls broken through and windows smashed.

People moved to the countryside were housed in make-shift dormitories, barracks, or in some cases with peasant families. “Make-shift” could range from something they built themselves under instruction from local cadres, to an empty schoolroom, to an old hut or out-building that they had to clean up and try to make livable. A peasant house would mean a dirt floor, well water or water from a stream, that had to be carried, a privy or a communal dumping area, a kang (heated shared bed and living platform), and maybe a table and a couple stools or chairs.

Some people were imprisoned in legal detention centers or jails, with extremely spartan furnishing, often filthy, and terrible food; others were confined in or near their homes, but in cowshed conditions – perhaps, like Yang’s grandmother, in a single, old storage room without light and heat, for several years.

Food: Many, although not all, report going hungry while living with their families. Food had been rationed since the early 1960s because of the famine resulting from the Great Leap Forward. Even after the economy recovered, the system of ration coupons was retained. Coupons were linked to one's area of assigned residence, and not valid elsewhere. The food coupons made casual travel or change of residence close to impossible without Party approval, and thus were useful in maintaining Party control over the population.

During the GPCR, many foods and other consumables were in short supply. By 1968, in Chengdu, Chang mentions that the meat ration was $\frac{1}{2}$ pound per person per month. It was often necessary to negotiate long lines in order to obtain even basic items. While living in the cities, people describe rising early in the morning (5am) to go to market, and using multiple people to hold places in line to get the items they needed. They also describe eating gruel to save and pool their ration coupons in order to manage a feast for a wedding or for the New Year's festival. For a young person, such as Nanchu, suddenly left on her own with very little money to cook for herself and her younger brother, these conditions were a major challenge. She scrounged for dropped food on the ground in the market and brother and sister gathered what edible leaves and wild plants they could find along the roadsides.

In some places in the countryside the food situation seems to have been much worse.⁵⁹ People ate communally and were at the mercy of the kitchen management, both

⁵⁹ It is worth noting that the government may have at times kept rations higher and food in the cities at a better quality to the extent possible, in order to prevent urban unrest. Whereas people confined to cadre schools and youth farms were in the grand scheme of things surplus labor, and any unrest they might be able to muster was not threatening to overall state stability.

in terms of what food was allotted and how it was cooked. Boiled cabbage soup was a common meal, which might have a little meat in it on special occasions. Rice might not be available and sorghum, a kind of cereal grain, would be substituted, or the rice combined with husks and bits of the stalks. Steamed bread was another staple on the military farms. At Yang's commune they ate nothing but bean curd for six months of the year. In Ye's case, living in a poor village in Shanxi, her rations were supplemented by food from her family in Beijing. On the other hand, once Chang moved to a reasonably prosperous commune near Chengdu, food does not seem to have been an issue for her. Yue describes feasting on their first harvest of rice, with fish from the nearby lake, in cadre school.

Medical care and illness: The need for medical care and instances of illness loom large in these memoirs as a cause of intense anxiety. Extreme stress, poor diet, and injuries from struggle sessions and interrogations exacerbated existing health problems and seem to have led to an even greater number of illnesses than might normally be expected. Mental illness is reported as the result of the harsh conditions of interrogations, detention or work in the countryside. When adults suffered these setbacks, children might suddenly be put in the position of having to care for or find help for their parents.

The availability of medical care and its quality seem to have varied widely. This depended upon people's social networks, as well as their locations. Uses of "the back door" to obtain medical care are widely reported, even by people who disdained what they considered the improper use of personal/positional influence otherwise. There was always the hope of finding sympathetic doctors who could materially help people's lives.

A sympathetic doctor might provide useful care and medicine, but could also order an increase to a person's food allowance, and even write an order to return home, because of illness, from the countryside or even detention.

Often, however, people could not get adequate care. They might be refused permission to even seek care for routine problems because of their class status. If they got to the hospital, they could be treated by incompetent or untrained doctors. Some were given care for their regular illnesses but refused care for any injury done through interrogation or struggle session (i.e. the injury and the refusal to treat it were both considered part of the punishment for not confessing as the interrogator wished). Sometimes, the responsible cadre simply ignored the doctor's orders for medicine, rest, or better food. Malingering or faking illness was a commonly reported accusation, even in the face of obvious injury, or well known physical problems.

Some found in illness, whether brought on by stress and severe treatment, unconsciously exaggerated, or knowingly faked, a rest from persecution or harsh working conditions. Luo reports an elaborate plot to alter her medical records to show she had rheumatoid arthritis so she could maintain her residence in Shanghai to care for her father and younger brothers. Her father, with the help of his children, faked paralysis, confined to his bed for twelve years, to avoid detention or labor camp. Chang reports a debilitating rash which meant she could return to Chengdu from the village in Tibet where she had been assigned to labor. Several trips to the hospital during her imprisonment gave Cheng short periods of respite, helping her to survive the isolation, cold, and ghastly food of her detention house. Others were completely unfortunate and sustained serious injury or died

from illness which these authors believe would have been successfully treated in better times. On the other hand, doctors of both Western and traditional medicine also saved many lives and ameliorated the severe conditions. Nanchu recovered apparently completely from the fire that covered her with third degree burns through her doctor's care in Heilongjiang.

Persecutions, Investigations, Interrogations and Detention

Struggle sessions and other public spectacles: Public humiliation, both as warning and as punishment, was standard practice in traditional China and had been already adapted by the CCP in its anti-rightist campaigns in the past, starting in the Yan'an Period. This practice was put to wide use during the GPCR. All subjects record at least some instances of public humiliation in their experience. Yang reports participating in so many public struggle sessions in Beijing during the summer of 1966, as a Red Guard, that they blurred together, even at the time. She lost track of who was being struggled or for what. One she describes in her memoir was held in a stadium with 80,000 spectators and lasted several hours, in the rain.

In struggle meetings, the accused were made to stand before an audience and listen to denunciations of their bad behavior as well as to acquiesce or confess to these faults and misdeeds. Some such meetings were open to the public; others involved only groups of people in the same organization. The purpose of struggle meetings was punitive and they were more abusive than the criticism sessions described below. Those in the audience were expected to participate, either with cheering/jeering or with specific accusations. Especially in work groups, people who did not attend such sessions to attack

others were themselves subject to being struggled as insufficiently revolutionary in their outlook. People being struggled against at open meetings were usually placed on a stage in humiliating and uncomfortable positions, such as balanced on a bench with heads hanging in a posture of shame. Heavy signs, notifying others of their key offenses, might hang on their necks by wires. Or, someone behind might be pushing down on their heads to keep them bowed as far as possible, often for many hours. The “airplane” position with arms twisted behind and artificially raised was also frequently used.

Some were struggled on street corners for several days at a time; others wore the signs and had heads bowed while being paraded through the streets. Yue describes at Beida the venerable professors paraded through campus with waste baskets over their heads, in lieu of dunce caps, and posters pasted to their backs with library paste describing their misdeeds and errors. Nanchu describes looking up and suddenly seeing her mother, who had been absent from home for days, strapped terrified, high up on the extension ladder of a fire truck, being driven slowly through their neighborhood. Children and spouses might be forced to attend such struggle sessions, parade behind parents, or be the ones holding their parent’s arms in the airplane, while the crowd shouted insults. Children in particular were pressured to denounce a parent who was being struggled or who was under investigation. Spouses or siblings could come under similar pressure. In some cases, family members seem to have had the option of going on record as drawing a line between themselves and the rightists in their families, without necessarily having to publicly denounce them, or even sever their relationships with them. A child might

register his separation from his parent's way of thinking at school, but continue to live at home. Nanchu records taking this option.

Other forms of public humiliation included the infamous big character posters, the writing of which was a key task at the height of the GPCR fervor for middle school students. Teachers instructed them concerning the main targets of the day. In the absence of real knowledge, the students usually copied the accusations in the newspapers to ascribe the necessary bad behaviors to these targets. However, local teachers or even students could also become targets. One might go to school one day and with little warning find posters publicly attacking oneself, one's parents, or favorite teachers. Allegations might be entirely groundless, yet form the basis for an investigation and struggle sessions. Sexual innuendo and insults were standard content as well as accusations of corruption, favoritism, or insufficient adoration of Mao.

In other public activities, Red Guards patrolled the streets and cut women's hair if it fell below the shoulders or had been curled. They slashed shoes considered too fashionably styled with high heels or pointed toes, and slit people's pants if they were considered too tight. Luo (aged sixteen at the time) describes being recognized in the street as someone whose struggle meeting had been scheduled and advertised, and chased by a mob, barely escaping with her life by running into a hotel and being let out the back while her pursuers beat on the locked front door. Several authors describe listening to the ominous nighttime sounds of Red Guards marching through nearby streets, banging drums and gongs, and shouting slogans. Where would the Red Guards stop this time? Was tonight the night the listener's house would be raided?

House searches: Most of the memoirs describe the experience of having their houses invaded and searched. Several also describe participating in such searches. Early in the GPCR, Red Guards searched houses for the “Four Olds” that is signs of traditional or bourgeois ideas and sympathies. These might include family photos, art work, books, papers, westernized clothes, phonographs, records, jewelry, stamp albums, watches, traditional furniture, china and so forth. While the timing of the search might appear random, many families realized they would be searched eventually, and prepared for those searches by destroying or hiding items they believed would cause problems. Additionally, house searches were often coordinated with other activities, as prelude, for example, to struggle meetings or interrogations.

Anything considered emblematic of traditional culture or in excess of what was deemed a necessity might be confiscated, stolen, or destroyed. Books and paintings were often ripped up or burned; antique furniture and porcelains were smashed. Some items confiscated were put in storage and eventually returned as was the regulation; but these seem to have been in the minority. Money was supposed to be put in escrow, but was often stolen. Individual Red Guards might steal during the search – cash, ration coupons, and watches were particularly prized - but there were obviously opportunities once items had been confiscated for them to be diverted into private hands. A number of subjects report being locked in small rooms to keep them from trying to intervene in these search proceedings.

Even after the early campaign to eliminate the Four Olds, house searches continued for some families. These might be lightning raids for looting and continued

harassment; the Luo family experienced eleven in the space of a year. In many homes there was little left to confiscate except cash or food coupons; food might be made unusable by being dumped on the floor or contaminated. But Red Guards or Rebels might also be searching for specific information or objects, either as a result of the direction taken during an interrogation or as a result of information derived from informers, either voluntarily or through interrogation. People accused others to reduce the pressure on themselves, or out of vindictiveness. Thus, the search might be for non-existent material – a radio to listen to foreign broadcasts seems to have been something informants made up more than once.

Occupants were subjected to physical abuse to reveal where these specific items were concealed, whether they were real or not. Walls and ceilings might be broken into, as possible hiding places. People could be kicked, forced to kneel in uncomfortable positions, or to watch a grandmother or other parental figure being abused. Jiang, twelve or thirteen at the time, hid an incriminating letter for her mother and nearly blurted out its location when a group from her parents' work came to search for it, and she had to watch her grandmother slapped and forced to kneel, face to the wall. In the end, the Rebels found the letter in the cat's litter box with help from the cat.

Criticism and self-criticism: Criticism sessions were the province of the adults in their work groups. The younger memoirists thus did not have much experience of them except when a somewhat milder version of the same process was carried out at school, although a few felt the sting of such sessions once they had entered the workforce. The accounts of criticism sessions are from the older memoirists. The criticism session, long a

Party practice for insuring adherence to Party doctrine, was the fundamental process for achieving the changes mandated by Mao during the GPCR. All workplaces, other than those declared exempt from the GPCR,⁶⁰ were required by government policy to reorganize and rid themselves or at least their management of people with bourgeois and reactionary outlooks. The purpose of these sessions in the work place was initially to determine who could be retained and what kind of job they could get, as well as who required reform or punishment and what form that might take. Despite their functional importance, criticism sessions do not play a large role in the records from youth, probably because youth did not witness many themselves and it is likely their parents did not talk about them very much.

In practice, the use of criticism sessions to make revolution often meant that one or more factions arose and attempted to seize power by proving their revolutionary credentials and discrediting the previous management. The sessions might be managed by the very people who were establishing themselves as the new leaders of the organization. Since people were judged on thoughts, feelings, and political opinions, there was wide range for interpretation: Were someone's thoughts revolutionary; did she really support Mao and the GPCR; was this a secret supporter of Liu Shaoqi.⁶¹ Extremely minor infractions might be employed to disqualify people from work. In some cases, such minor, even fictional, misdeeds, led to imprisonment or execution. A favorite example of

⁶⁰ Prisons, the PLA (People's Liberation Army), governments in certain border areas and eventually certain industries. These exemptions were dictated by national security considerations.

⁶¹ A main target of the GPCR, formerly Mao's designated second in command and successor.

excess in a number of sources was the punishment of someone for defacing a picture of Mao, perhaps in an old newspaper that was crumpled in the trash.

This criticism process, to establish a new organization, seems to have continued more or less non-stop for a year or more, depending upon the location and importance of the organization. While the process was ostensibly a ground-up, independently managed one, in fact, it might be directly initiated from above. The rebellion at Beida was apparently spontaneously sparked by Party secretary, Nie, of the Philosophy Department when she wrote the first big character poster in May 1966 denouncing the leadership of the university for operating a bourgeois institution. In fact, as Yue describes, she had been instigated and encouraged through people acting for Jiang Qing (Mme. Mao).

Similarly, people had to continue the conflict until those in power at a higher level were satisfied with the outcome. Investigative teams, made up of party bureaucrats from another organization, might be sent to re-do the reorganizations where the leaders in Beijing did not approve results. Both Yue and her husband spent time on such investigative teams, even though during other periods they were themselves the subjects of investigation. Changes in factional power in Beijing and related changes in policy could result in new study teams, or study teams might be sent when local organizations failed to come to agreement, marked by continued violence and a complete standstill of work.

PLA teams, assigned to work places, became more important as the GPCR continued. These often became permanent as the only way to insure order and compliance with national policy. With the arrival of any new investigative team, another

round of personnel review and criticisms resulted. The upshot was prolonged turmoil and uncertainty, which at least in Shanghai, Beijing and Chengdu, was continually being renewed for several years. In some cases, a revolutionary provincial level government satisfactory to Mao was achieved only after personal intervention of Zhou Enlai.

There were some guidelines covering how the rebellions/reorganizations were to be conducted.⁶² Unless accused of crimes, people were supposed to be considered misguided rather than evil and given every opportunity to change their minds and reform their thinking. Persuasion was to be preferred over force. Official channels for complaints of violence and unfairness, however, were probably not viable. Chang's father attempted twice to send complaints to Mao by letter, but the only effect was that the letters were intercepted and his persecution increased. However, his wife privately petitioned in person in Beijing and was able to achieve some protection for him and her family. Other suggestions of a "back door" for those with connections higher in the government appear in these accounts.

Generally, everyone in the work group had to participate in criticism sessions; that is, everyone's record was to be reviewed. People had to listen to what others said about their performance and were supposed to accept and acknowledge the validity of these criticisms. There might be ameliorating comments, but they are rarely recorded by these subjects. As with any group activity, group criticism could vary from the perfunctory, to the unfair, to the violent. People might be housed away from their homes in dormitories during intensive sessions. They would share rooms at night with the people

⁶² Communicated in statements from Mao and some documentation from the Central Committee.

they were criticizing and being criticized by during the day. They could not confide in or support each other for fear that confidences might be exposed in the criticism session. Any sympathy or support for someone who had been criticized could be seen as coddling those who had the wrong viewpoint, and thus inhibiting their reform. There was considerable pressure to criticize others to prove the strength of one's own revolutionary and proletarian view, in addition to the use of these sessions to get back at people who were envied or resented.

Very frequently one had to write down one's self-criticism at the end of the day, taking into account everything that had been said and adding more material to make it clear that the message had been absorbed. The facilitators of these sessions might also supply guidance as to the kind of criticism or confession that was expected or would help get one a better evaluation. At some point these self-criticisms or confessions became essentially full length accounts of a person's entire life, starting at whatever point was considered necessary to get back to the root of the anti-revolutionary, bourgeois mindset. The self-criticisms had to cover any situation that might be construed as a request for, acceptance of or enjoyment of material privilege. Thus, many consisted of minutely specific records of how much one had been paid, what kind of housing one had, and what kind of furniture and possessions.

Corruption was also a target, so self-criticisms detailed who had approved the housing and salaries, as well as carefully recorded how one had used or dispersed any government funds under one's control. Since conspiracies (spying was a particular target) were also assumed to exist and were supposed to be uncovered through this process, one

also had to record whom one had visited and contacted, when and for what purpose, often throughout a long career.⁶³ A final category of information would include any bourgeois, reactionary or disloyal thoughts or motivations people noticed in themselves, or could impute to others. Such bourgeois feelings might include valuing one's relationship to one's family or spouse above one's relationship and duty to the nation. This could be manifested, for example, by leaving meetings or work promptly at the end of the day to be with one's family, or by keeping elderly relatives in one's house to care for them. It could include questioning one's work assignment from the party or desiring to advance one's career with interesting or rewarding jobs.

These self-criticism documents were then reviewed by the assigned monitor, and handed back with suggestions. Some effort might be required to produce a series of documents that showed that one was "making progress". New revelations, new incidents remembered, or new interpretations of old incidents and so forth might be necessary to convince the monitor one was really trying. All versions were kept, so one could not be too self-contradictory, either. Eventually, as the document became closer to satisfactory, and it was judged that one was not hiding anything, it would then be important for changes to be only minor refinements, so that the document could become complete.

This continuous listening to criticism and writing about oneself was extended from the workplace into the cadre schools. There people labored during the day, met in groups in the evening and wrote confessions often deep into the night. Weekly

⁶³ Chen's memoir, written in Chinese and translated, is an interesting example that appears heavily influenced by her repeated writing of self-criticisms and confessions as it contains many of these kinds of details, although she was an accomplished novelist in a (heavily European influenced) Socialist realism style, and thus had other narrative models to select from.

confessions, handed in at the local police station, might be a form of probation, once one had been sent home from cadre school or from rural labor assignments.⁶⁴ The criticism process was often supervised by other members of the work team who had been judged to have achieved a significant level of reform, and who were on the way to being rehabilitated. These people monitored the small group discussions, and reviewed people's written confessions.

Investigations of serious offenses: A number of memoirists report that there was a quota system in place. Three to five percent of the population was held to have disloyal (e.g. traitorous) thoughts. Therefore, the people managing any criticism or interrogation process were under pressure to find at least some level of serious deviance among their charges.

Investigations and interrogations into serious offenses, in a continuum with the practices of self-criticism, aimed at confession as the government's desired outcome⁶⁵. The interrogators and investigators were rewarded for pushing people to the point where they would confess or for trapping them, with clever questioning, into a confession. Normally, this kind of investigation would have been carried out by the police or official intelligence services. However, in the GPCR, criminal like investigations were also often carried out by Red Guards and Rebels, who are widely reported to have been more brutal

⁶⁴ It could also be part of imprisonment, if one was in prison for political crimes (see, for example, Lifton for a detailed description), but the only one of our memoirists (Cheng) who was in prison went through interrogation, plus written confessions, instead. That is, she was not part of any group, but was kept in solitary.

⁶⁵ Traditional Chinese justice aimed at confession, often encouraged by beatings. Punishment was then determined once the crime was confessed and the sincerity of the guilt as well as the extent of the crime were considered. Traditionally, for the educated class punishment was often forced retirement, banishment to a rural area, or an undesirable government position. For peasants, forced labor or imprisonment were common. Beatings or executions were possible for either class.

than the normal government investigators. Red Guards additionally had strong motivations to keep themselves in business, since they had no formal role in the government. If the investigation petered out, they might not get another assignment. Such investigations might be at the behest of one political faction or another, and so the assigned Red Guard group had a great interest in finding the answer desired by the faction that had tasked them with the investigation. In addition, getting a simple confession was often not enough. To remain occupied, they needed to extract the names of additional culprits during interrogation, so they had an ever widening circle of “revolutionary traitors” to continue to investigate.

Formal detention in a prison, such as experienced by Cheng, required the participation of governmental authorities, and was subject to some kinds of regulation. In fact, some people believed genuine imprisonment was preferable to the free-wheeling “justice” of the Red Guards and Rebels. It may have, in fact, saved Cheng’s life, as ironic as that may seem given the harshness and length of her imprisonment.⁶⁶

Red Guards and Rebels detained people under a variety of conditions in their efforts to obtain confessions of guilt or incriminating evidence against others. It is true that Cheng was actively abused in prison – kept one winter night in an unheated, filthy shed in the prison yard, and hand cuffed for eleven days, her hands behind her back, with specially designed heavy handcuffs that pulled on her shoulders, cut into her wrists

⁶⁶ This is suggested to Cheng after she was released, that left to the Red Guards she most likely would have been killed. It seems probable, that in her case, her survival was the result not only of her own determination and courage, but also that she was kept alive by her captors, one faction of whom wanted her to confess so they could use the information to incriminate Zhou Enlai, and the other faction of whom pitied her, was grateful for her refusal to confess, and when possible probably ameliorated somewhat the conditions of her imprisonment.

causing swelling and infection. Her feet also swelled, and she could not lie down to sleep. Receiving her food and water at the cell door required great dexterity. She could only eat by dumping the food on a towel laid on a bedboard she used as a table, and licking it up off that surface. Using the toilet was made extremely difficult.

However, outside the formal justice system, the Red Guards not infrequently beat people with their heavy leather belts, with metal buckles, in addition to pushing people from windows, kicking, shoving, and other abuses already described. Such beatings frequently enough ended in the death of the victims. The bodies might be dumped in the streets or the river, but were also often cremated before the families were even notified of the death. Many such deaths were labeled suicides. Of course, people often did genuinely commit suicide rather than face the abuse or humiliation they believed was coming. Suicide, genuine or as a cover up, came with a high practical cost for the family, in addition to its emotional cost. Suicide was anti-revolutionary, an avoidance of one's duty to society and of one's obligations to reform, so the children of suicides could be discriminated against even further and a proper funeral often was not permitted. Many such funerals were held only after the GPCR was over and the persons in question rehabilitated posthumously.

Removals: This political turmoil, violence and threat of violence was accompanied eventually by vast movements of people. Many were forced from their homes into less desirable housing. Many more were forced to move from the cities to the countryside. During their middle school years, youth might be sent to the farms during breaks to help with planting, harvesting or other tasks. After they finished middle school

(aged seventeen), they would be permanently assigned to rural communes. Some of these communes were already working operations, but others were established specifically to take urban youth who might be required to establish new farms, often with inadequate planning and guidance. The justification for these youth camps was that educated youth were to learn from the peasants; youth were told also that they would be helping to revolutionize and modernize the countryside. Initially, many volunteered out of enthusiasm for this revolutionary task, and also in order to have some say over their assignment. In fact, the first groups sent to the countryside were Red Guards being removed from the cities to places where they could be more easily controlled and where they would do less harm. Additionally, the university system was not yet reformed enough to take middle school graduates. Later, economic motives were added to these political ones as the downturn in the economy meant there were insufficient jobs in the cities to absorb all the new middle school graduates.

Job and rural assignments were determined by the school, that is, basically the same power structure, including party secretaries and student leaders, which had overseen students' revolutionary education for their middle school years. There were some opportunities for individual students to request or lobby for prime locations. They could volunteer to go to live with relatives. They might try to get an assignment that would allow visits home on the weekends. For Shanghai youth, for example, that meant working in nearby Jiangsu or Zhejiang which had the additional advantage of being rich agricultural land with operating farms. Youth might go with groups from their school to a common location, although since there were thousands of people involved, this would

mean knowing only a few of the other young women in the camp. Most co-workers and dormitory mates were initially strangers.

The memoirs describe harsh living conditions and very hard physical labor for which the young women in many cases were not well prepared. While the purpose for the youth was not punitive, at least ostensibly, they were under the supervision of somewhat older cadres and had little or no recourse should they have grievances. If the cadres were kind hearted and fair, conditions were ameliorated. But cadres also took advantage of their power to extort gifts from families to obtain favorable treatment for their youth, to sexually harass the young women, to force very long working hours or set unrealistic production goals in order to promote their own careers.

Adults were assigned to rural cadre schools usually managed by the work place, so people ended up in locations with their colleagues (for better or worse). While the purpose was labeled as re-education through labor, the attitude was more punitive than the youth camps. These were adults who – through the struggle campaigns already described – had been determined to be rightist or reactionary in some way, and thus lost out in the power struggle in their workplace and were being displaced so that new people could take over their jobs. When the tour in the cadre school was completed, if they were considered sufficiently reformed they in theory could return to their former employment. Their new position would typically be much lower in the hierarchy, their old high level jobs having been taken over by the faction that had gained power. Conditions in cadre schools seem to have varied considerably, ranging from hard work under primitive

conditions, to forced labor despite severe weakness, illness or injury. All were confined; many were overworked and underfed.

A very limited amount of visiting was allowed mostly in the form of home visits although occasionally a parent might visit her child in the country under special circumstances. Nanchu's mother, for example, visited her in Heilongjiang after Nanchu was nearly killed in a fire. Her brother, however, although assigned to a farm close by was not at first able to visit her even though she lay severely injured in the hospital. Youth might be allowed a bit over three weeks of home leave, once a year. Once assigned to a commune, youth had lost their city residencies. Many were not able to return to their homes for over ten years, even after Mao's death and the arrest of the Gang of Four, because the bureaucratic difficulties of getting reassigned permits to their original home were so great. If they married while on their rural assignment, they were considered to have forfeited their opportunity to return home. Some acquiesced and settled in the countryside. Some simply returned home illegally, if they could avoid being reported and their parents could feed and house them.

Adults generally did not lose their residency through their forced participation in re-education camps or in the villages. Their stays were more likely to be limited – a year or two might be enough, although much longer detentions were also possible. Some are reported moving in and out of reeducation fairly regularly, spending time at home, and then returning to the work camp, or essentially commuting to the cadre school with home leave allowed on weekends. Still, as with the youth sent to the countryside, adults could end up in bureaucratic limbo. Unless family members took an active part clearing their

names, and providing them with the proper paperwork, they might remain in detention or rural exile for many years.

Summary

These subjects describe a world of violence and lawlessness that was unexpected for the young people who later wrote these memoirs, and that seems to have exceeded the scope of turmoil the more knowledgeable adults expected, even as they saw the new anti-rightist campaign getting started in 1965-66. The GPCR period saw tremendous pressures on people to denounce and inform on each other, or to pressure others to denounce and inform. Not everyone acquiesced to these pressures. It is possible even that the majority did not. But the system, structured as it was, gave license and encouragement to those who were willing to accuse and bully others, rewarding them often with new or additional power. The opportunity to advance one's career, to steal, to avenge, and to save oneself by accusing others was irresistible to enough people to start and perpetuate the turmoil. For most of the decade, these vindictive and selfish elements seem to have had the upper hand in many locations.

The GPCR brought families and individuals of the intellectual class under enormous strain. People had to choose, often under tremendous pressure, whether to denounce or draw the line to isolate family members under investigation. They experienced precipitous drops in living standards and physical displacements. Labor camps and cadre schools, exile to the countryside and detention separated parents and children, siblings and spouses for years and often inexplicably. Families could not always care for or protect those whom they were bound by tradition and natural feelings to

protect – young children were left fending for themselves and elderly relatives forced from their homes. Millions of young people, at an age when they would be expected to be guided by their elders, suddenly acquired unprecedented power and independence from families and teachers. Public discourse completely denigrated learning and expertise, as well as the class that had for centuries supported not only themselves but the state through their intellectual abilities and pursuits. All of society appeared to attack the *raison d'être* of the intellectual class, as well as their lives, with greater virulence, and for longer, than in any of the CCP's previous anti-rightist campaigns.

In this chapter I have recounted something of the stress, restrictions and threats arising from the environment in which these subjects lived during the decade of the GPCR. These were unexpected conditions of life over which they and their families had little control. In the next two chapters, I discuss how they responded to these conditions, what they felt and what they did, as reflected in their memoirs.

5. RESPONSES: THE YOUNGER GROUP

Introduction

This chapter and the next address the question – given the difficult conditions that these subjects faced beginning in 1966, how did they respond? The conditions were difficult not simply because they were often physically and emotionally painful, but because they were a significant change for all of these subjects from the lives they had been leading prior to that time.

Especially for those born after liberation (1949)⁶⁷ this was not the way they expected life to “play out”. These younger subjects were confronted, often in their early teens, with several conflicts and betrayals of trust. Excellence in academics and the arts, which had previously been valued both in their families and at school, a ticket to future security, suddenly became a precarious attribute outside their homes. Parents who had been successful, powerful and well able to provide for them were weakened, distracted, ill and often poor. Understanding a rapidly shifting world of factional politics, from which they had previously been mostly sheltered, became extremely important to their personal survival and advancement. Offered an unexpected chance to rival their parents in their contribution to the Chinese Revolution, they learned to see the new stage of revolution as betraying them personally and many of the things they valued.

⁶⁷ 11 subjects were born between 1950 and 1960; one, Niu Niu, was born in 1966.

The older subjects born before the revolution⁶⁸ confronted with the GPCR a heightened level and broader extent of violence and disruption than they had previously experienced either personally, or among their relatives and acquaintances. Chen and Yue had both been attacked as rightists in the 1950s, but because they had completed their punishment and been rehabilitated they did not expect to be attacked again. They, as well as a number of the parents of the younger subjects, had made a significant commitment to the Communist cause. During the 1950s, despite some set backs, the system seemed to be largely working and they believed they had put behind them the hardships of the pre-revolutionary period. They had been looking for continued improvements, not a reversion to class based violence and vicious factional fighting within the Party.

The experiences of the younger and older groups of subjects were distinct, both in the expectations they brought to the GPCR period, and in the nature of their own maturity. The younger group was struggling to grow up during the GPCR and was targeted by Mao as the spearhead of the GPCR. The subjects in the older group were more likely to directly experience violence in the GPCR, but were also mature adults, with families, children and jobs. Thus, I have divided the discussion of responses into two chapters. The first discusses the responses of the younger group of subjects. Chapter 6 discusses the responses of the older group.

These two chapters deal with the responses of the subjects to certain kinds of events, such as a struggle session or the discovery of the parents' family background. I have selected a limited number of these events to explore for each group, so that I can

⁶⁸ Chen, Cheng, Yue and Zhang.

describe their responses in some detail. Within the concept of response I include emotional responses, actions taken, and causal explanations of that incident. The organization of the discussion by incident type allows me to compare reactions between subjects and to draw a composite picture of the range of responses that these subjects exhibited. These responses have been filtered over time and through memory with all the possible effects on memory discussed in Chapter 2. They are what the subjects remember having felt, thought or done in response to these incidents at the time they occurred.

Responses of a different sort are discussed in Chapter 7. These are the more consciously judgmental responses which the subjects supply, clearly thinking in retrospect about the larger meanings and implications of their experiences, and answering the kinds of questions which they believe their experiences raised. These segue easily into my own conclusions about these memoirs which I cover also in Chapter 7.

Six Key Experiences

The younger subjects experienced many events in common, despite their living in different cities and their range of ages as the GPCR unfolded. I have selected six experiences in order to examine their responses in some detail: (1) the initial call to participate in the revolution; (2) their confrontation with the story of their families' class and revolutionary heritage; (3) the experience, witnessing or perpetration of violence; (4) the need to protect or take care of family; (5) being sent to the countryside; and (6) the opportunity to attend college. For most of these younger subjects, these six events define the period of the GPCR. They began with enthusiasm, became disillusioned at somewhat different points along the way and for different reasons, and ended in a determination to

make something they valued from their lives. This often meant emigration, although not in every case.

Participating in the revolution

All subjects but Niu-Niu (*No Tears for Mao*), who was an infant in 1966, felt at least something of the pull of Mao's call to young people to rebel against the revisionist elements of the party in their schools and in society, and purify China's communist culture. They were excited to participate in real revolution. They had been taught about the glorious revolutionary deeds of their parents' generation. This was their chance, if an unexpected one, to make a similar mark and live out the kinds of lives they had been taught to idolize in revolutionary literature/movies and history class. "My enthusiasm at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution also reflected my yearning for more thrills in life. I had always wished to be born during the time of war. Now my turn had finally come. My spirits were very high." (Ma, in Ye, 73)⁶⁹ Additionally, Mao was their personal hero. They had been taught to value his relationship to them above their relationship to anyone else, including their families. They would do anything for him.

The loudspeakers shouted all day long: 'Capitalism and revisionism are threatening our country. China is in danger. Chairman Mao is in danger. All young people must stand up to protect our socialist country and our great leader.' A white-hot heat burned inside me. How could I look on with folded arms? Although I was only thirteen in 1966, I felt I had to participate in the great revolution. (Nanchu, 43)

⁶⁹ The quote is from Ma. The book by Ye records discussions between her and Ma concerning their experiences during the GPCR.

Subjects were drawn into participation by the desire for companionship with their peers, and by the extraordinary freedom and power they were suddenly handed.

Now those who had made decisions for us—teachers, parents, administrators- were swept aside by the storm. We were in charge. We could do things on our own initiative....we organized meetings at which we shared our family history.... Suddenly I felt that these classmates of mine were dearer to me than my own brothers and sisters. I loved them! They loved me!... We were the hope. The future of China and the fate of humankind depended upon us....We must uproot bureaucracy and corruption in China, abolish privileges enjoyed by government officials and the intelligentsia, reform education, reform art and literature, reform government organizations...In short, we must purify China and make it a shining example.” (Yang, 120-121)

The chance for leadership in their respective groups was also enticing.

I longed for challenges. I was at the school day and night promoting Communism, making revolution by painting slogans on walls and boards. I led my schoolmates in collecting pennies. We wanted to donate the pennies to the starving children in America. We were proud of what we did. We were sure that we were making red dots on the world’s map. We were fighting for the final peace of the planet. Not for a day did I not feel heroic. I was the opera. (Min, 26)

Parents encouraged their children’s participation, in many cases, and joining in the revolutionary activities was a way of helping the family become more “red” in some instances. “That day was to be a special day for me, the day I was to be sworn in as a new member of Little Red Guard, a revolutionary organization for elementary students. For me it was one of the few hard-won opportunities that I hoped could help my family,

especially my father.” (Lu, 177) Or in Min’s case “In the early seventies my being a head of the Little Red Guards at school brought our family honor.” (26)

Several of these subjects report ambivalence even as they make their commitment to the revolutionary activities. Chang was “thrilled by my red armband with its gold characters” (305) when she joined the Red Guard, but felt uncomfortable wearing her mother’s old uniform with her father’s belt. The image was too aggressive once she went out onto the street. Zhai, repeatedly elected to revolutionary leadership positions in her Beijing middle school class, was unsure and frustrated. She felt politically in the dark because classmates, from the highest level cadre families, living in Zhongnanhai⁷⁰, had advance advice from their parents about the meanings of the directives from the central committee and concerning the latest directions the revolution was taking. When Mao turned against Liu Shaoqi, “The leader of yesterday’s campaign became its object today. ‘What an unpredictable revolution!’ I thought.” (Zhai, 72)

Confrontation with family background

One of the most difficult experiences for these subjects was the differentiation of people into categories based on their family backgrounds. This categorization by the Party was not a new practice, of course. However, the consequences during the GPCR were far reaching and parents’ backgrounds came as a surprise to a number of subjects. Family background and labeling eventually could become a tremendous liability. Even parents that started out the GPCR in a reasonably secure position, perhaps as a red

⁷⁰ The area in Beijing where families of leaders such as Mao, Liu Shaoqi, Lin Biao, Deng Xiaoping and so forth, lived.

“revolutionary cadres”,⁷¹ could end by being investigated for various counterrevolutionary or bourgeois tendencies. These investigations in turn would affect the position of their children.

People could be labeled red (loyal families), gray (ambiguous) or black (traitorous) and the distinctions had serious effects on these subjects’ lives. They could be the targets of ostracism, bullying and other tormenting at school by both fellow students and teachers. Their assignments to jobs and to a rural destination, when they graduated, and then their eventual opportunity to attend college, were all dependent upon their family category, as well as their own behavior.

Some embraced their higher status.

I became aware of a special responsibility I had as a cadre’s child.... Until this point I was ignorant about family background and stuff like that.... But before long I began to realize that I was in a “red” category as a revolutionary cadre’s child. It made me feel real good. I had never thought that I was any different from my childhood friend Fan Lili. Now seeing myself in a new light, I started to hang around with girls from the same family background. (Ma, in Ye, 54)

Even those in the “red” category could resent the preferential treatment given to those with yet better family ties. “Part of me liked my new status, part of me felt uneasy, and a third part resented what was going on. The fact that high cadre’s children dominated the scene at my school really turned me off.” (Ye, 75)

Within a few months of the beginnings of the GPCR, subjects were being asked to register themselves in their category. Often they had to stand up and announce their

⁷¹ That is, a higher ranking cadre who had joined the CCP early and fought in the civil war.

family category in meetings or public settings. Such differences in background broke up friendships in some cases although not in others.

But the pressure of the Cultural Revolution meant that some villains had to be found. As a result, half a dozen became ‘grays’ or ‘blacks’.... One girl bent her head and tears streamed down her cheeks. We had been friends. After the meeting I went over to her to say something comforting, but when she raised her head I saw resentment, almost hatred, in her eyes. I walked away without a word, and wandered listlessly through the grounds. (Chang, 295).

Subjects might be initially confused and doubtful, thinking their parents must be evil, if their families had been landlord families. They might lash out at their parents as responsible for the torment they were enduring.

I did not hear the rest of what Mom was saying. My mind was swimming. ‘Half-City Jiangs’ and ‘thirty-three hundred acres of land’! Everybody read the Workers’ Revolt. Suddenly I pictured my teachers and classmates reading the sensational article, passing it around and gossiping about it. ‘Jiang Ji-li’s family is the Half-City Jiangs...thirty-three hundred acres of land.’ Somehow I found myself standing up, a teacup in my hand, and a puddle of spilled tea on the table. Why had my parents hidden these things from me? What else was there? Had Dad really committed a crime? Why hadn’t the theater let him come home? Anger rose in me. Didn’t they know how hard I’d been working to overcome my family background? Now all my efforts were wasted. ‘I hate landlords. I hate this landlord family,’ I burst out.” (Jiang, 210)

Children might be pressured to denounce their parents. These subjects report they knew of cases where children did so. However, among these subjects none recounts

doing so themselves, although several were under considerable pressure to do so. Nanchu refused to give any evidence against her father when General Ma, the head of the Red Guards at her father's university, came to her family's apartment to question her, when she was by herself, but she would not give him the answers he wanted.

General Ma stood up and stamped his muddy feet on the floor as if to warm them up. 'All the evidence has proved that he's a traitor and a spy. You must draw a line between yourself and your father. Now is the time to show whether you're loyal to Chairman Mao or not,' he warned before he slammed the door behind him. I stood transfixed. The world had suddenly turned dark. Those words left me in serious doubt about Father's real identity." (24)

As a result, she questioned her father when he came home, exhausted from his day of struggle meetings. They argued; her father became violent but her mother intervened and then her father explained about his background. Eventually, Nanchu did draw a "spiritual line" (52) between her family and herself at school, with her parents' support. However, this seems not to have caused problems within the family, and it left her free to pursue revolutionary activities at school. Her brother, who was several years older, broke more formally with the family, believing his loyalty to Mao and to the revolution demanded it.

In other cases, from the beginning of the GPCR, the subject was already aware of her parents' categorization as rightists and was anxious, as a result, but also supportive of her parents' position. Luo's parents had been labeled rightists in 1957 and her father had

already spent two years in a labor camp and returned. As a result Luo had to defend herself at school beginning in May 1966, the very start of the GPCR.

Today, however, the controversy confronting me was far more serious, one I could not brush off as a prank. If I did not stand up now, I would be sealing my own political fate as well as that of my parents, who were already in trouble with the authorities. I decided to fight back.... I browsed through the books of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Mao Zedong to find ammunition for the debate. I had trouble sleeping that night. If I could not prevail the next day, I would be branded as anti-Mao and most likely sent to reform school for my political heresies. My family would certainly suffer ostracism forever. (Luo, 9-11)

Lu, although much younger than Luo in 1966, had been explicitly warned by her parents of her danger.

That was the warning I grew up on, the warning that was passed on to us from our parents' generation who learned through endless class struggles and political movements how words—a slip of the tongue or a single sentence spoken ten years earlier—could turn one into an enemy of the state and wipe out one's existence. "You know how your father escaped being smeared as a rightist in the 1957 Anti-Rightist Movement?" My mother often reminded us. "He didn't say anything during those arranged study sessions and meetings. If he had, this family wouldn't be here, I tell you. We would be plowing fields and planting rice in some remote village. We would grow old and die there. So would you." (2)

As a result, of course, although they spoke freely within the family, even as a young child Lu had to remember never to repeat certain things outside and to "say what everyone else said and be able to show that you were the same as everyone else." (3) She felt stifled, extinguished, hidden always behind a mask.

Experiencing violence/coercion (as victim, perpetrator, witness)

As described in Chapter 4, violence took a number of forms during the GPCR and all subjects report witnessing episodes of violence that they found highly distressing. Because physical abuse so often either followed or accompanied self-criticism sessions, these sessions carried an implicit threat of violence in many cases, although not always. These subjects report only a few instances of revolutionary violence directed against themselves; domestic violence is also rarely reported. Suicides among acquaintances and neighbors are widely reported and gave rise to many disturbing feelings. Four of the subjects themselves participated in direct violence/coercion against others and have described their feelings, in several instances taking probable, if partial, responsibility for someone's death.

Initially, as with other aspects of the GPCR, a number of subjects found certain kinds of violence relatively distant from their own lives and, while not seeing it as exactly benign, felt it was more exciting than fearsome. Jiang, then aged twelve, describes participating in the destruction of a food market sign, Great Prosperity Market, whose name seemed to the Red Guards to evoke old superstitious beliefs and the desire to make money at the expense of the common people. Her younger brother squeezed through the crowd to help break the heavy sign board. "They stamped, bounced, and jumped with excitement. One stepped on another's shoes. Hips and shoulders bumped. We all laughed.... At last the sign gave way.... Everyone cheered.... Bathed in the evening's glow, we jumped and giggled all the way home."(23-24) When they reported their

experience to their parents at dinner, the grandmother protested that destruction of the sign was a shame, but the parents, at least overtly, supported their children's actions.

However, for these subjects, the violence during the summer of 1966 rapidly became personal and frightening. They report hearing the sounds of beatings and denunciations in the street, in the next classroom, in the next door apartment. They learned in detail about the physical injuries and indignities experienced by acquaintances, their own teachers, their friends' parents, their neighbors. And they personally witnessed the physical punishment of both strangers and people they knew. On the whole, certainly at the beginning, they shied away when faced with a gruesome scene. For those whose family background was being questioned, they associate their revulsion with the realization that such things could happen to themselves or to their families.

Now the two administrators were once again united with Xue on a platform [also being denounced]....After hesitating to approach the scene, I tried to get Old Man Xue's attention.... His shirt was drenched with sweat and he moved with obvious pain....Sweat, blood, and iodine on his forehead turned his head bandage into a hideous rainbow. Some of the younger students peppered him with pebbles....I felt like vomiting, and tears came to my eyes. No one really remembered what he had done ten years earlier. A terrible feeling crept over me that I was witnessing my father's future. (Luo, 21)

For those whose families were more secure in their political position, the feelings of sympathy seem to have been more ambivalent.

Witnessing such a scene, I suddenly felt sick to my stomach. I would have vomited, if I had not quickly turned round and walked away. Forget about lunch. My appetite was gone.....

Then it dawned on me that I was shocked by the ugliness of the scene. *That's it! In the past*

when I read about torture in revolutionary novels, saw it in movies, and daydreamed about it, it was always so heroic, so noble; therefore it was romantic and beautiful. But now, in real life, it happened in front of me. It's so sordid! I wish I'd seen none of it! (Yang, 118-9, italics in the original signify her inner commentary)

Witnessing an attack on a family member or destruction of family property, the instinctive reaction of the subject or her siblings could be to try to stop the attack. The child might rush out and grab the legs of the attacking Red Guards, for which they were either themselves beaten, or locked in a closet or otherwise guarded so they could not interfere. Those forced to witness or even participate in the tormenting of their parents describe an extremely painful experience, which in the end strengthened their feelings of loyalty to their parents. Nanchu was initially conflicted by the attacks against her father, as he had been found to have written a love-letter to a pretty assistant,⁷² and so she felt her mother's humiliation, and anger at her father while they watched his humiliation. "When he wrote the love letter to the young woman, had he been prepared for today? Father's wounded face jerked with pain. Although I felt sorry for him, his behavior disgusted me." (17) After the Red Guards switched their tactics to try to prove he was a GMD spy, she was at first doubtful. Perhaps he was a traitor? Then her father explained his real history, as an early supporter of the Communists despite his landlord background, and she came to believe his persecution unjustified. "He wasn't a traitor or a spy but still my good father. My knitted brows relaxed. That night, a big weight was removed from my chest." (28)

⁷² Illicit love affairs were a common accusation, both fabricated and, as in this instance, with some basis in fact. Such affairs were considered selfish, sentimental, and thus "bourgeois".

Luo never seems to have harbored doubts about the accusations against her parents; she knew they were unjust. Forced twice to witness her already ill father struggled and beaten in neighborhood meetings, she resolved to do whatever was required to protect him and her younger brothers. Their mother had already been arrested and was in prison. Jiang's witnessing of the Rebels' (sent from her father's office) mistreatment of her mother and grandmother, along with her father's arrest, crystallized in her mind her commitment to her family. She might, she realized, have played with the idea of denouncing her ties to her family. But now "I would never do anything to hurt my family, and I would do everything I could to take care of them.... Now it was my turn to watch her [the grandmother] and take care of her. I no longer worried that she was a landlord's wife. She was my grandmother." (263)

Relationships with teachers were treated similarly to those with parents. Subjects thought to be particularly close to teachers could be pressured to speak out against them at struggle meetings. Min, in the absence of parental advice, did so and never felt forgiven. Chang was also forced to observe the beating of a well loved teacher.

Before they started, they called for me especially and made me attend. "What will she think when she sees you, her pet pupil, there!" I was considered her favorite because she had praised my work often. But I was also told that I should be there because I had been too soft, and needed "a lesson in revolution." When the beating started, I shrank back of the ring of pupils who crowded into the small office. A couple of classmates nudged me to go to the front and join in the hitting. I ignored them. In the center my teacher was being kicked around, rolling in agony on the floor, her hair askew....I met her eyes through her

knotted hair. In them I saw agony, desperation, and emptiness. She was gasping for breath, and her face was ashen gray. I sneaked out of the room. (294)

Those who describe the most vicious attacks against their loved ones (Luo, Chang, Niu-Niu) had great compassion for other victims. Neither Luo nor Niu-Niu acknowledge ever feeling any justification for the coercive tactics of the GPCR. Chang had no question that the violence was wrong, but her distaste for the violence against her family and others at first did not lead her to question the GPCR or Mao's plans for China. "I was not forced to join the Red Guards. I was keen to do so. In spite of what was happening around me, my aversion and fear had no clear object, and it never occurred to me to question the Cultural Revolution or the Red Guards explicitly. They were Mao's creations, and Mao was beyond contemplation." (304) However, Chang mostly restricted her participation to non-violent activities, and she quickly grew disillusioned. She believes that many of her contemporaries were equally ambivalent – afraid and reluctant to hand out abuse.

Nanchu took a different path. She suffered with her family's disgrace, and the severe abuse leveled at her parents, but in the end opted for full participation in the GPCR, without questioning Mao. Upon entering middle school in 1967, she joined one faction of the Red Guards. She describes two assignments to catch a former chief administrator of their district, and the two unsuccessful building searches her group carried out to try to locate him. She details one instance of bullying an old man into giving up part of his apartment for their Red Guard headquarters. However, she left for

the countryside in 1970 and tells little about the time when she was living with her parents, while aiding the GPCR that had hurt them so considerably.

Min's parents, previously teachers, were assigned manual labor and her mother suffered some criticism at her factory, as well as ill health brought on by those pressures and the physical strain. However, Min does not describe abuse of her parents, but rather her own participation, at the age of thirteen, in a struggle meeting against her teacher, named Autumn Leaves. The Party Secretary at the school persuaded Min that she should denounce this teacher, although until that point Min had admired her energy and selfless devotion to teaching. Min's reaction to the struggle meeting was terror of its own kind.

It was hard to bear what I saw. The string of the heavy board seemed to cut into Autumn Leaves' skin.... I was getting more and more scared when I saw Autumn Leaves struggling with the two men who had been trying to press her head toward the floor while she tried to face the sky.... There was some slogan-shouting, during which I glanced secretly at Autumn Leaves. She was breathing hard and was about to fall. I stood, my limbs turning cold. I tried to remove my eyes from Autumn Leaves, but she caught them. I was terrified when I saw her staring at me without her eyeglasses. Her eyes looked like two Ping-Pong balls that almost popped out of her eye sockets. (32-4)

Later in the meeting, Autumn Leaves asks to speak directly to Min, to try to determine if Min really believes the accusations in her speech.

When she put her glasses back on, she started to question me. I was scared. I did not expect that she would talk to me so seriously. My terror turned to fury. I wanted to get away. I said, How dare you put me in such a spot to be questioned like a reactionary? You had used

me in the past to serve the imperialists; now you want to use me to get away from criticism? I would be ashamed if I lost to you! (36)

Min portrays here an evolution of feeling that appears also in the other subjects who describe their direct participation in violence (Zhai, Yang and Ma). She begins by finding the violence difficult to bear, but is urged forward by the duty she believes she has to perform, and in the end, dehumanizes her victim, becoming genuinely angry with the injustice she now perceives the victim has done to her. In this case, Min was initially afraid of having to speak at the meeting. However, she perceives the teacher's questioning of her as an attack, and it becomes a fear of being shamed in front of the large audience attending the meeting. She had not expected to be put on the spot when she accepted her task (however unwillingly). She now sees the situation as a direct conflict for control and power between herself and Autumn Leaves. That gives her the courage or impetus in the end to completely denounce her. "I do believe that you are a true enemy! Your dirty tricks will have no more effect on me! If you dare to try them on me again, I'll shut you up! I'll use a needle to stitch your lips together!" (38)

Min recounts two corollaries to her denunciation of Autumn Leaves. The reader does not unambiguously find out what happened to her teacher, but Min appears to have gone to beg forgiveness over twenty years later and was rejected; so apparently Autumn Leaves did survive. Min's younger siblings had attended the meeting and "were terrified". They told her parents who talked about disowning her. "My mother said, I am a teacher too. How would you like to have my student do the same to me?" (38) In the end, her punishment was to copy out the Confucian saying "Do not treat others how you

yourself would not like to be treated” a thousand times, using brush, ink and rice paper. The cultural significance of this punishment could not be stronger: the old ways set against those of the GPCR, respect for one’s elders against the persecution of them, kindness and empathy set against cruelty.

Other participants in violence and harassment as Red Guards (Ma, Yang, and Zhai) report similar mixed feelings which during any particular violent incident are overcome by the belief that they were commanded to do these things by Mao, that one had to expect violence in a revolution, and by feelings of disgust for their victims. They also felt they needed to conquer doubts about their own loyalty and revolutionary adequacy. These had been built up for years by their education, Communist literature, and Party campaigns promoting extreme ideals of self-sacrificing behavior, which it would be almost impossible to fulfill. At the same time, in school they were learning the methods of probing self-criticisms, where they were required to examine their own behavior for loyalty to Mao and to the revolution. They saw their perpetration of violence as a way to prove their loyalty and dispel their doubts about their own worthiness. Ma, Yang, and Zhai report no consequences from their Red Guard leadership for their violent acts, which went well beyond certain of their guidelines, but were completely in line with actual practice of the GPCR. Whatever remorse they felt was completely self-induced, and initially pushed aside in the turmoil of the times.

All these elements are present here as Zhai describes how she learned to beat other people and overcome her natural distaste for physical violence.

When I first saw a Red Guard remove her canvas belt to beat her victim and saw his clothes tear and blood appear on his skin, I was afraid. I was not the most blood thirsty person in the world; I was even afraid to watch wars or fighting in the movies. However, I was a Red Guard leader and a member of my school's Revolutionary Committee. In this Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution not only had I not been among those who led, I always seemed to fall behind. I felt unworthy. If by beating these people from the five categories I could prove my political consciousness and my valour in the class struggle, I would do it. Thus, when that Red Guard left off, I removed my belt and learned to beat like her. (96)

In another case, Zhai was put in charge of a house search. The Red Guard headquarters at her school assigned the target, and provided her with the information that the person, currently unemployed, had been a landlord who did not love Chairman Mao and was "insolent to the revolutionary masses." Despite their best efforts her team could find nothing incriminating.

And the woman was arrogant! She wouldn't even talk to us or answer our questions. I was annoyed. Everything about her – her loose, large body, her flaccid face, and her fishy eyes – was hateful....As soon as they started to strap her with their belts, she slid down onto the floor with her back against the wall and from then on hardly moved. Her eyes never looked up. (97)

The next day a friend informs her that the woman died.

It wasn't our habit to check whether our victims were dead or alive when we left them. But I didn't mean to kill her! I didn't! Although I had no problem beating people hard to make them suffer, I never wanted to kill anybody and I never beat people on their heads. Perhaps [she] committed suicide after we left or had a heart attack during our beating....The

headquarters never did talk to me about [the woman]. I never discovered whether she died or not....[Her] death would hardly have been news, but the thought that I might have killed her weighed heavily on me for days. Still, eventually I managed to persuade myself it was all right. We were in a war and there are always casualties on battlefields. I shouldn't be intimidated by the death of one class enemy....When I was assigned new tasks, I tried to be as brave as before. (98)

Caring for a parent or other family member

All but four of these subjects (Yang, Ma, Ye, and Zhai) report having to take significant responsibility, at least for certain periods, in caring for a parent or sibling due to the persecution of their families. Nanchu, who was 13 or 14 at the time, was left by herself in a ruined apartment to care for her younger brother, while both parents were in detention. The experience was terrifying. She had little money and they had to scavenge for food, although eventually she learned to stand up to the neighborhood children who pelted them with bricks and stones, and spit on them whenever they went to get food or charcoal for the stove. Her brother became extremely timid, learning to "endure the beatings silently, as if he didn't exist in this world, as if nothing was happening to him." (35) Eventually, Nanchu realized "that simply withdrawing would only make things worse. I, as the elder of the two, had to take a stand." (38) In a fury she beat up one of their tormenters, who was bigger than she, finding the revenge "sweet".

However, in the remaining cases, although the subjects had to learn to act independently and take on responsibility, they continued to have the company of at least one adult family member. Luo's father was completely immobilized by the necessity of pretending to be paralyzed in order to avoid further persecution, but he remained living

with his younger children, while their mother was in prison and the eldest sister off working in the countryside on a farm. Luo, who was 16, did her father's assigned labor, fed her brothers, attended required meetings for her father, and maintained contact with her father's friends, from whom they received some financial and other assistance. This was an arrangement she and her younger brothers insisted upon and eventually persuaded their father to accede to.

Father's entire world would be less than twenty square meters, and most of the time only his bed. He would be little better off than a prisoner, except for the luxury of having some of his children around him. The plan also meant that we would have to do much more menial labor to make up for his impairment.... However, if it meant keeping Father from further brutality, it was worth it. (55)

Luo phrases the advantages of this arrangement in terms of the benefits to her father. Other subjects also speak of their "service" to their parents and the tasks they had to perform to ease their parents' physical pain, similar to caring for a child. Luo, again, after her father's second major beating, "Hours later, as the sky was darkening, Father regained consciousness. Overjoyed to see him awake, we tripped over each other trying to serve him. The three of us tucked him in, brought him water, and cooked gruel for him." (55)

The responsibility and worry involved could be immense. Jiang, aged fourteen at the time, expresses it best:

Life was very hard, so hard that I could hardly breathe sometimes. I not only needed to manage our limited income and take care of Mom's bad health, I had to bear the stares and the gossiping of our neighbors and attend the study sessions at school. But these were not

my biggest worries. The worry of tomorrow haunted me constantly. I worried that Grandma would be sent to the countryside, as other landlords had been, and would be punished by the farmers there. I worried that Mom would be detained for attempting to help Dad. I worried that Dad would be beaten to death for his stubbornness. I worried that Ji-yong's temper would get him into trouble, and that Ji-yun would be so frightened that she would never laugh again. (261)

When she was sixteen, Chang cared for her mentally ill father in their wrecked apartment, her mother living separately because he had tried to kill her.

The apartment was in a dreadful state: the windows were broken, and there were bits of burned furniture and clothing all over the floor. My father seemed indifferent to whether I was there or not; he just paced incessantly around and around. At night I locked my bedroom door, because he could not sleep and would insist on talking to me, endlessly, without making sense.... Many times, I wanted to run away to my mother, but I could not bring myself to leave him. A couple of times he slapped me, which he had never done before, and I would go and hide in the back garden under the balcony of the apartment. In the chill of the spring nights I listened desperately for the silence upstairs which meant he had gone to sleep. (351)

Her father later went up on the roof to jump off, but she was able to coax him down. Eventually, Chang's mother found a doctor willing to treat him, and his mental condition did improve.

Lu also reports having to coax her father away from despair. At the age of eleven or twelve, she went to stay with him in a remote TB sanatorium. He had contracted tuberculosis at least partly as a result of being weakened by excessive manual labor and

untreated injuries to his back. While Lu was visiting, one of her father's friends in the sanatorium died. Motioning toward the building where his friend's body lay awaiting burial, her father said,

"I am going there soon. One of these days. Real soon." He closed his eyes. A solitary tear leaked from beneath the closed lids of his eyes. The corner of his mouth twitched into a bitter smile.... A few evening stars bloomed around the moon; one of them flew directly toward me, its wings flashing as it made its way through the dense air and its voice splashing over the dusty river, resonating in the wilderness: "No, baba⁷³, you are not going anywhere. You are staying with me. You are staying here. I won't let you go. I won't!"
(172)

Indeed, he is able to go home and spend more years with his family.

A number of subjects visited a parent in detention, prison or work camps. This could involve an arduous journey, often requiring considerable enterprise and determination, undertaken with little or no adult support. The child might be seeking help from her parent, or to take supplies or attempt comfort to the parent. In all cases, they missed their parent dreadfully. Such visits seem rarely to have provided the comfort for either parent or child that Lu describes of her visit with her father. The parents were too mentally ill or under too much pressure from the conditions of their detainment to be able to respond very adequately to the needs of their children. The child ends by feeling utterly abandoned.

⁷³ "Baba" is her pet name for her father. Although, in the story, she attributes to a singing star the resistance to his acceptance of death, as though it came from outside herself, it is clearly her voice and her wish, however it was vocalized.

Nanchu describes going with her brother, at the request of those detaining her mother, to bring her some winter clothes and other necessities.

Mother was so surprised to see us that her body jerked. We rushed to hug her, but she remained stiff, like a statue.... She paused, then cried in a muffled tone, "Leave! Leave now! Hurry! Get out of here!" Her expression was brutally cold, devoid of any sign of affection. It hurt me deeply. How could our loving mother reject us? Didn't she still love us? ...Many years later, I still couldn't forget the way she looked at us then.... We fled the building as fast as we could and sobbed all the way home. (37)

Wen, twelve or thirteen at the time, was living at home with only her grandmother and little brother who got hepatitis and needed medicine. She went with a friend, whose parents were at the same camp with her mother, to get help. They hitched a ride in a truck, arranged by the friend's brother, and after a twelve hour ride hidden in the back, were dropped off in the late afternoon over an hour's walk from the camp with no knowledge of where they were. A peasant woman gave them water and set them on the right path. Eventually, they made their way into the camp, when a friend of her mother recognized Wen through the bars of the gate.

"My mother looked at me for a moment without even smiling. No excitement. It was not much of a reunion after such a long separation." And her mother, tucking her into her bed had nothing to say to her. The cadre insisted Wen be sent home the next day. All night her mother worked on a self-criticism document. "Who was my mom writing her self-criticism for? Who was going to punish her? I could not answer the questions, so I

promised myself that I would ask my mother when she came to bed. She did not come to bed that night.” (23)

The next day, Wen’s mother is able to give her a packet of sugar for her son’s treatment, buys her breakfast, and a bus ticket home. She apologizes to Wen.

“Daughter, I’m sorry I let you down.” All the way home, and for weeks later, I wondered what she had meant. Why was she sorry, and how had she let me down? If she was sorry, why had she had to obey the zhengwei⁷⁴ and send me home? And I was more uncertain than ever before. I wondered when my parents would come home or if I would ever see them again. (25)

These subjects show a tremendous loyalty to their families, but the state’s attempt to degrade their parents and take them out of a protective and powerful role obviously had its effect and was in a sense successful. These subjects were often hurt and puzzled by the ways in which their parents had been made powerless to protect them. Yet, that did not mean that these young women, in any case, turned away from their families or the obligations they felt to help care for them. The strength of the persecution of their parents in most cases simply made them more determined to help them.

Going to the countryside

Most of these subjects were eager to go off to the countryside. They had graduated from middle school⁷⁵ and wanted to set out on their own. They believed they were being sent to the countryside for the sake of the peasantry, whom they had been taught to revere. Peasants would get opportunities to be educated, live and work in the

⁷⁴ The cadre.

⁷⁵ At age 17, this was a graduation from 12th grade.

city if these young people made way for them by leaving the cities. In this way age-old and unfair disparities between the Chinese urban and rural life could be wiped out. As revolutionary youth they also had the mission to help reform and modernize life in the rural areas.

Many enjoyed the relative political tranquility of the rural areas, and in some cases the beauty of the locations where they had been sent. Some adapted to manual labor and harsh conditions reasonably well, although others did not. Most made at least some friends among the other youths with whom they worked. A few made friends among the local peasants and workers, and report the general kindness and often respect with which they were treated, at least once they had shown their willingness to work hard. Many of them learned greater sympathy for peasant life, especially those assigned to villages, as opposed to the military style youth communes.

However, this was in the end a universally disillusioning experience for those subjects who undertook it and who have described it.⁷⁶ It was in the countryside that those who still believed in Mao finally confronted the reality of at least some of his policies. Peasants told them about the actual effects of the Great Leap Forward, from which the major cities had been somewhat insulated, and the massive hardship and starvation that had occurred in rural areas from 1959 through 1962. They learned that the resulting food shortages, which many of these subjects in the city had also experienced,

⁷⁶ Jiang does not say whether she went to the countryside or not. Luo managed to avoid it with her elaborate medical ruse, claiming she had rheumatoid arthritis. Niu-Niu was too young and by the time she graduated from middle school the colleges were open again. Wen went but does not describe her experiences.

were not caused by natural disasters, as the government had told them, but by disastrous government policies.

Living conditions in the villages and on the state farms were often harsh, with inadequate food, poor heating, and no privacy. Quite a few subjects became ill and were given leave to return home temporarily for medical treatment. Chang was one of these. She never did adjust to life in the countryside, and spent many months of the year away from her rural assignments on trips to see and help care for her family, thus not doing work for the villages. How she paid for her living expenses is unclear. Much of the time she was actually in the villages she spent reading, at one point becoming one of the bare-foot doctors. Not surprisingly, she was unpopular among the villagers: “I learned that the best way to get by was to be regarded as an unobtrusively aloof outsider. Once you became ‘one of the masses,’ you immediately let yourself in for intrusion and control.” (424)

The more common response of these subjects, however, was to work as hard as they could. They were spurred by a number of motivations. Zhai was already completely disillusioned and bitter about the GPCR and her being sent to the countryside, cutting short her dreams of further education. Still, she “felt obligated to do my utmost” (167) and at the same time, by working too hard, “torturing my body gave me a way to vent my spleen. Let me help them to destroy myself!” (168) She also wished to show the peasants that she was not a useless city girl. Ma was eager to prove that she could do the same level of work as a man and would labor even through her monthly period although she was supposed to rest. Yang also took pride in how well the women worked. “Everyone

worked side by side. Men, women, old, young. It was a marathon race. By the day's end, those who carried off the palm were always some 'iron girls'. At first, the men tried to compete with us. After a while they gave up the attempt." (178) Min became a platoon leader, and "assigned the hardest tasks to our platoon—applying manure, taking night shifts, digging canals. I told my soldiers that my ambition was to make the platoon well-known in the company so everyone would have the best chance to be considered for membership in the Communist Youth League." (84)

Although these subjects went to a wide range of rural locations, there were two main kinds of opportunities open to them. One option was the military run communes, where youth were primarily living and working with other city youth under closely regulated conditions. Min, Nanchu, and Ma worked in such locations. Yang, Chang, Ye, Lu, and Zhai were also on communes, but ones comprised of older villages, where life was closer to traditional peasant life and less regulated. In the villages, there were other city youth with whom they usually lived, but all worked with the peasants in the fields and had more opportunities to interact with them.

Min and Ma, on the state farms, worked in the fields for perhaps a year and then were assigned to jobs in the entertainment sector. Min dealt with the loneliness and eventual despair, at the descent of a friend into madness, through a love affair with her female commander. Much of her description of her time on the commune consists of details about the political rivalry and treachery between the two commanders of her brigade. Nanchu worked in a construction organization, hauling rocks. After refusing the sexual advances of her superior she came to believe she might never escape the

assignment. Within less than a year “she was the only city girl in the platoon still carrying the heavy building materials up to the high scaffolds during construction season and still blasting rocks on the mountain during winter. I had no hope of changing jobs anytime soon. I shivered at my gloomy future.” (106) Indeed, even after almost dying in a fire, into which she had run to rescue equipment, and following months in the hospital, and though named a “living hero”, once recovered from her injuries, she was returned by the Party Secretary to the same heavy labor.

Ye, assigned in a village, was frustrated with her inability to “break through the invisible wall separating us from the peasants....after I saw what life was like for the peasants I had the urge to do something to help....By myself I didn’t know how to start and what to do. It was difficult for a young urban woman to do much on her own. But of course this was an excuse.” (119) She describes the division of the youth assigned to her village into two factions who shared their food and had parties. She kept aloof from these factions, but as a result might not have anyone to eat or celebrate the holidays with. Gradually she became closer to others who were critical of the government. Many in Ye experience shared a love of learning, so they exchanged books within the village and with others in neighboring villages. “Once I had to finish Standahl’s *The Red and the Black* in one night before passing it to the next person in line. I stayed up the whole night reading the book.” (121)

Yang and Zhai describe somewhat closer relationships to the local peasantry with whom they shared work. Both came to admire the skills and acumen of some of their peasant co-workers, in addition to their capacity for hard work. However, they also

realized that the idealized picture of peasant life that they had been taught in school was far from reality. They came to understand how far from the peasant's interests were many of the campaigns and factional conflicts with which the Party was totally absorbed in the major cities. Peasants could be ignorant, foolish and dishonest as well as the opposite and they had little interest in class struggle or sympathy for rivalries among the country's leaders, like Lin Biao and his wife's attempted coup against Mao. Both Yang and Zhai express gratitude for the kindness they were shown by the peasants they went to live with.

Nonetheless if the villagers had some luck, got a pheasant or a wild duck, they always sent their kids to fetch some of us from our dormitories. *They don't have to do this! Why are they so kind to us? They know as well as we do there's no way we can repay them.* When I asked the villagers, they all gave the same answer. "You Beijing students are used to comfort. You had such good lives in the city. Now you come here, so far away from home, doing this hard labor in the fields....Your parents' hearts would ache if they should see this! How badly their hearts would ache!" Such talk I heard over and over again. It made me wonder. *Is this the bourgeois fallacy of humanity we've criticized? The one about universal human feelings?...it overlooked class struggle. And now real peasants, poor peasants, are also talking like this!...* Thus thinking I breathed a deep sigh of relief. (166-7, italics in the original)⁷⁷

In the end, there is none of these subjects that did not want to get away from their rural assignments. As Ye describes it, "The first several years I worked in the field, farming gave me joy. I was proud... But this romantic feeling eventually faded. After

⁷⁷ Sympathy for someone's hard plight, if they were a class enemy, was considered bourgeois. She expected the peasants to be scornful of their soft life in the city, rather than sympathetic for their loss of it.

years of repetitive physical labor I felt my life was stagnant...[when she left] Once again I was overcome by a strong feeling of guilt. I had done little to help the local people.”(125) For Lu “The glorious dream turned into an empty hole I hardly knew how to fill.” (118) Even Ma, who reports an overall positive experience, eventually changed her mind.

I have to say Yunnan revitalized my romanticism and idealism. But even so, questions began to come to my mind as time went by....eventually people around me began to leave, one after another. I debated intensely with myself. Would I betray my ideals if I return to the city?....To change the backwardness of the countryside? The task was too daunting for any individual. To integrate with the peasants? What did that mean? Marrying a local person and having lots of children? That would be my worst nightmare. (109)

Getting into college

These subjects were eager to attend university and continue their studies, as well as eager to leave the smaller cities and villages where they had been told they were to spend the rest of their lives. One way out of the countryside was to join the Army although none of these subjects could avail themselves of this path. It required considerable back-door influence which their parents either did not have or which was expended on brothers rather than themselves. Zhai, in particular, expresses great bitterness at the number of youth whose parents used their influence to ameliorate their conditions under the GPCR, as her own parents, still adhering to Party discipline, refused to do. She comments on a friend who had worked with her in Yan'an, “In mid-August he joined the army through a backdoor located by his Red Army-soldier father. For a year

and a half I had thought him courageous to stand up against his crooked parents. In the end he yielded and swerved onto the same corrupt path.”(217)

In 1971, colleges and universities began to reopen but only for students who were workers, soldiers, or peasants. However, educated youth who had been sent to the countryside or working in factories since graduation from middle schools were considered in these categories if they had been there for at least two years. Therefore, many of these subjects were eligible to apply. Places at particular universities were allotted to certain work locations; so one factory might have the opportunity to send one student to a single technical school or university. The applicants first took exams. If they passed, their fellow workers or peasants then voted on which of the candidates would be recommended. Lastly, the usually single applicant had to be approved at a higher level by the Party. Chang, Ye, Ma, Zhai, and Nanchu went through this process and were able to enter universities between 1972 and 1974. Luo and Yang both studied on their own and entered graduate school directly in 1978. Lu and Niu-Niu were young enough so that they entered college through a more normal competitive examination process which started in 1977. The others do not discuss their college education.

Three features of this experience warrant special attention. One was the degree to which some of these subjects, deprived of the chance for education as expected in middle school and college, pursued it on their own. The second was the degree to which those in the first group had to use personal influence in order to actually secure their places in the university. This was itself a learning experience for them. Most had been brought up to

detest the use of guanxi⁷⁸ which was considered backward and corrupt by the CCP. They had to come to terms with this way of accomplishing things and learn how to do it. The third was disappointment with the quality and character of the education offered in universities in the later years of the GPCR.

Although Ye, Chang, Nanchu and Yang all mention some efforts to study on their own, or with friends while they were still working as peasants or in factories, Luo's story is one of unusual persistence and self-discipline. She and her siblings began their independent study project in 1967. She describes her realization that they could do this. "Just because the schools were no longer teaching, there was no reason that I could not keep learning. 'Independent study' was a magical term holding more beauty and hope than anything else in the world. So excited that I could barely breathe...." (102) For awhile a few of their friends joined them. Their father guided their studies in the humanities and Luo, for ten years, was able to enlist the assistance of friends and their contacts, to help her and her brothers pursue their interests in mathematics and the natural sciences.

Luo's father was a poor peasant's son who had been educated in the 1920s in the traditional culture at the expense of the landlord in his area. He became a translator, poet, editor and linguist. Luo thus had the opportunity to be educated in the traditional culture as well as the modern science she pursued more independently.

The attic was perfect for conspiracy. Yellowed newspaper covered the wooden walls upon which our exaggerated shadows were cast. The one window, accessible only by ladder,

⁷⁸ Guanxi are personal relationships. While reciprocal personal relationships are important everywhere in getting things accomplished, they were long emphasized in Chinese culture as particularly significant. The reliance on guanxi was considered by the Communists to be backward and corrupt.

rattled noisily with the wind as the walls allowed drafts to swirl around us. The thought that I would be educated under these clandestine conditions seemed romantic to me, and I thought of an old couplet by Tien-xiang Wen:

*'We study and learn as the storm outside rages,
Led in spirit by fallen heroes and sages.'*

....Had I been a good Red Guard, I would have contemplated some of Chairman Mao's quotations about overcoming difficulties, but instead I considered the exhortations of Confucian philosophy to overcome laziness." (104-106)

In her pursuit of learning, Luo exploited every personal relationship she could discover - her father's friends, her sister's friends' parents, and anyone they thought might provide her and her brothers with tutoring or textbooks. Everyone who helped her took on some measure of risk, especially in the earlier years. Some, of course, refused to participate. Luo was completely aware of these risks and repaid their assistance at the very least with gratitude, and with needed help when she had the opportunity.

The use of personal influence to get into college, which is mentioned by everyone but Ma as of significant importance in obtaining a college position in the 1972-4 period, was of a far more cynical kind, and not infrequently involved reciprocating with presents. First, the subject had to find the right people, the ones who made or could influence the college admission decisions. As Zhai recounts, "I told everything to Yuehua [her friend], and she suggested that I go to see the person in the municipal administration who was in charge of recruitment. Because of her work, Yuehua was more familiar with the

municipal government. She took me to the compound, and there we inquired and found out that Limin was our man.” (234)

Second, if there were problems with a subject’s record, that is, the dossier which had been following her since grade school, these had to be fixed or removed. Ye’s middle school diary had been confiscated during a house search. Unbeknownst to her, it was included in her dossier in 1966-7. This caught up with her when she applied to college.

The previous year [1971] I was recommended by the peasants in my village to go to the prestigious Beijing University, only to learn in the last minute that I didn’t meet with political approval and so couldn’t go. Later I found I was rejected because of my old diary.... Due to a more liberal political climate around 1972, I was able to get the diary removed from my dossier. (127)

Finally, the appropriate officials then had to be persuaded. After Chang’s father refused to help, her mother, an extremely resourceful lobbyist for her husband’s as well as children’s protection during the GPCR, “went to the wife of the head of the Enrollment Committee, who then spoke to her husband. My mother also went to see the other chiefs, and got them to back me. She emphasized my exam results, which she knew would be the clincher for these former capitalist-roaders.” (457)

In 1970 Nanchu had successfully changed her rural assignment to one she thought more desirable by writing repeatedly to the recruitment center, reiterating her revolutionary devotion and enthusiasm for going to the Heilongjiang Military Farms where she was eventually assigned. In 1973, having passed the college entrance exams, her admittance was put on hold, and she repeated that approach.

While awaiting authorization to leave, I submitted one report after another detailing my current ideological attitude toward Mao and the Cultural Revolution. But I knew that behind the scenes those in power were creating false excuses to disqualify the original candidates and replace them with either themselves or their relatives.... Then one day an official letter came... and informed me that I had been cleared politically and was permitted to leave. (168-9)

For these subjects, the opportunities to study, to move away from manual labor and to return to an urban environment were so important that they over-rode whatever scruples remained against using family influence, gifts or bribery to obtain their goals. Zhai's attitude is most telling. She had been, generously, ready to give up her college place to some one else when pressed to do so by the Party Secretary at her factory, in return for Party membership and the recommendation for college in the next year. It was her friends who changed her mind and told her what she had to do. But her initial approach to Limin led to nothing.

Suddenly a new light went on. Until now I hadn't met a cadre corrupt enough to seek bribes, but Limin might be one. I abhorred back doors and bribery, but now was not the time to protest. I wanted to get the position, which, after all, belonged to me in the first place.... Three days later I was in his office again. Instead of claiming my rights, this time I abased myself and begged for his help. Suppressing my aversion to him, I put on my sweetest smile Eventually, he said what I wanted to hear: "I'll see what I can do, but no promises!" (235)

The price was a box of fancy chocolates bought by her mother in Beijing.

Yang describes what she learned about dealing with the bureaucracy, although she was not at that point trying to insure her entrance to college, but working to get her residency permit changed from Heilongjiang to her parents' current residence in the capital of Hebei Province, where Yang had been living without official permission.

... now I had knowledge that led to power....To deal with officials.... Use reason and appeal to move the honest ones. Back it up with connections, for even the honest officials did not want to offend their superiors and colleagues. As for the dishonest ones, bombard them with cannons [cigarettes] and hand grenades [liquor]. (270)

However, as with Zhai, this was not without personal misgivings. *"In order to achieve my goal, I am willing to do all sorts of despicable things: cry, smile, pretend to be naïve or frank or angry or delighted, give honeyed words, use bribery.... Morals principles and dignity, I have given them all up. I'm changed beyond recognition."* (271)

Finally, when these subjects reached university in the early 1970s, they found a political atmosphere that was as difficult in its way as the earliest years of the GPCR. Many schools were embroiled in the factional conflict between Jiang Qing and Zhou Enlai for ultimate control. Political attitude was still far more important than study. At least in some cases, subjects report having to study in secret. Open discussion of ideas was impossible in the classroom, and teachers and students could again find themselves pilloried for incorrect political thought. Subjects were disappointed and often had to compromise severely to protect themselves.

... I found life in college much more complicated than on the farm. I used to be able to prove myself with hard work and to say what was on my mind. Now things were different. After the first several weeks of classes I became dissatisfied with the quality of lectures

given by some teachers. In one lecture the professor denounced all Western classical novels. I thought what he said was unconvincing so I expressed this opinion during a discussion session. Soon I was criticized by some people for being too 'right leaning.' I had to watch my mouth from then on. (Ma, in Ye,133)

Nanchu, in university in Shanghai, found similar conditions. "But I soon learned that beneath the serious academic surface, East China Normal University was at the forefront of Mao's ideological war..." (183) "Most of the day was still devoted to political activities. When I did squeeze in a little time to study, I felt enormous psychological pressure. Since learning was discouraged, I felt everyone could be spying on me and I risked being exposed." (189) She defended a teacher who was being struggled, and as a result her Party candidacy was canceled. She thought:

Are people crazy? Do they really not know the truth? Looking at the serious faces of my classmates, I felt I didn't understand them at all. But I knew I had better keep my mouth shut. I had already taken the wrong side once. I couldn't afford to stand up and fight the trend again. After all, I shouldn't have opinions of my own anyway. (195)

Chang, in university in Chengdu, describes campaigns in the countryside to do labor, a seventeen day interlude of military training, and many interactions with Party officials in charge of her class who criticized her aloofness, her lack of enthusiasm for tutoring her classmates, her bourgeois disinterest in volunteering to clean the toilets or wash her comrade's clothes. "...we must not be seen to be too devoted to our subject: that was considered being 'white and expert'. In the mad logic of the day, being good at one's profession ('expert') was automatically equated with being politically unreliable

(‘white’).” (467) She “...found this environment unbearable. I could understand ignorance, but I could not accept its glorification, still less its right to rule.” (468) Her refuge was with friends her own age and discussions about life in Western countries. “By then I had come to the conclusion that it was a wonderful place.” (471)

Ye sums up her responses to the continued emphasis on politics over learning in the university in a way that might speak for them all:

What bothered me even more were the constant political meetings we had to attend....

When I first spoke at such a meeting, I blushed badly not only because I was not used to public speaking but also because I had to say things I didn’t believe. I was sympathetic to Zhou and Deng’s policies, but I knew better than to say what was truly on my mind.

Eventually I was able to tell political lies without blushing. By then I had become rather cynical. All they wanted to hear was lies. Why not give them? At the same time, the image of the ghost in Pu Songling’s⁷⁹ famous story, “The Painted Skin,” started haunting me.

When the ghost went out he would wear a painted human skin in the shape of a beautiful woman. Once he retreated to his own place he would take off the painted skin. Then his true identity was revealed: a monstrous-looking ghost.... I saw myself as that ghost.... At the end of my college years, I felt I had learned more about political survival than anything else. (132-3)

Summary

The memoirs of the younger group portray their growing up during the GPCR. This was not the world their earlier education and upbringing had taught them to expect.

⁷⁹ A 17th century editor and writer of stories. His famous collection is called *Liao chai chih yi* (Strange Tales from Make-Do Studio). (Mair 1994)

Even Luo, who was old enough to know about the anti-rightist campaign of 1957 when her father was persecuted, notes a difference with the advent of the new campaign. Much of this sense of a break with the past was also enhanced by Mao's reliance on the public theater aspect of his politics; the drama of the Red Guards, the destruction of the 'four olds', the reviews in Tiananmen Square, and the great link-up were signals that would be hard to miss.

The focus of these subjects maturation was a working through of their relationship to the state. Some (Lu, Luo, Ye) began with more inclination to question the message of the GPCR than others. However, all moved toward greater disillusionment with the Maoist vision and methods. Their stories highlight experiences where they began to doubt and when doubt was strengthened. By the end, political engagement was no longer a matter of excited commitment but a practical matter of one's own survival. What could one say or not say, how deeply did one have to bury one's real thoughts, whom did one have to influence to achieve what was necessary?⁸⁰ While at the beginning most had some visions of public heroism and glory as the fit goals for their lives, their goals transformed into much more personal kinds of rewards, especially, education and a more satisfying relationship with their parents. The goal of greater freedom from government restrictions, in order to pursue their own self-actualization came later, as did their relationships with young men, which are touched upon only lightly in these memoirs.

⁸⁰ A related issue – whom can one trust – is also addressed fairly substantially in these accounts, but I have not had the space to deal with it.

6. RESPONSES: THE OLDER GROUP

The four older subjects were Chen (b. 1906), Cheng (b. 1915), Yue (b. 1931) and Zhang (b. 1935). Chen was thus 60 at the outbreak of the GPCR, Cheng was 51, Yue 35 and Zhang was 31. They were all mature women at the time of the GPCR. Chen and Cheng were single women with daughters in their late teens; Yue and Zhang had husbands and children still living at home. All had memories of pre-liberation days. Chen, Zhang and Cheng had all lived abroad. Chen was a writer in Paris and Cheng studied in London, and also lived with her GMD diplomat husband in Australia. Zhang lived in East Berlin for two years in the 1950s as an interpreter for a Chinese trade mission. Chen and Yue had long careers within the Communist Party. Cheng obviously did not, but she and her husband had given up their opportunity to emigrate to Hong Kong and saw themselves as loyal Chinese citizens, supporters of Mao, who had stayed in Shanghai to help support the building of the new China. Zhang's father had worked for the Japanese in Manchuria and Beijing. After liberation Zhang had limited opportunities for higher education and was never able to join the CCP, despite her stated desire to do so.

These subjects suffered direct persecution by the Red Guards and other rebel factions during the GPCR. They appear to have had few ways to protect themselves, at least in any direct manner. Both Chen and Yue as loyal Party members endured their

situation with more resignation than either Zhang or Cheng, who were openly defiant in the face of physical abuses. In the end, Zhang and Cheng both emigrated, while Chen and Yue accepted rehabilitation into the Party and remained in China.

Since there are only four of these accounts they do not represent as broad a picture of the experience of the GPCR for adult women as the eleven accounts of youth that I have already discussed. They are also distinct in style and viewpoint from each other. Chen and Cheng record very little of a change in attitude toward the Maoist state; their stories are more stories of endurance and, in Cheng's case, learning to cope with her situation. Zhang's memoir on the other hand, has something of the flavor of the youthful accounts already discussed. Like them, she is questioning her past behavior and sees her story as at least partly a story of growth. Yue's book, written with a co-writer, and thus more outside involvement than is obvious in any of the others, records changes in her attitudes toward the GPCR and Maoist methods, but she does not portray this as a story of personal growth.

Chen's book is unique in that it was written for a Chinese audience. Originally published in Chinese in possibly the early 1980s⁸¹, the version cited here is the translated second volume of her memoirs covering the period from 1949. The style is extremely spare and circumspect in its self-expression. While it is clear Chen is unhappy and critical of what happened to her, she expresses this in an oblique manner by detailing her physical injuries, the destruction of her property, the rudeness of her persecutors, and the kindness of her maid. The kindness of the maid is particularly significant because the

⁸¹ Kinkley (1990) is unfortunately not clear exactly when this volume of her memoirs was published in China. He implies that it was in the early 1980s, as she was rehabilitated in 1979.

maid was poor and thus of “good” class background. Therefore her kindness to Chen was testimony to Chen’s correct attitude on class issues, despite the fact that she employed a maid.

Chen also criticizes the behavior of the rebels as harkening back to feudal times, a serious allegation, since the professed point of the GPCR was to rid China of outmoded ways of thinking. The style and content of her book probably also reflects the many self-criticisms she had been forced to write over her long career in the Party (Kinkley 1990). Chen’s audience consisted of her contemporaries and they could be expected to understand the significance of what she was saying without having to have it spelled out. Additionally, she would not wish to say anything that might cause her, or her daughter, too much trouble during some later change in the political winds.

Of the other accounts provided by the older group, two (Cheng, Zhang) are quite outspoken. However, Yue’s account lies somewhere between Chen’s reserve and these others. Carolyn Wakeman who is a co-author with Yue (1985), comments in her Preface, ...she spoke more openly about her life than many of our Chinese acquaintances. I was struck by the earnestness of her tone, the quiet animation of her voice, but most of all by her uncommonly expressive eyes.... For a second time, I realized that she spoke about her experiences with a candor I had never before encountered. (xvii-xviii)

However, Yue’s comments and reactions are muted, when contrasted to Cheng or Zhang. Wakeman may be comparing Yue to other Chinese accounts more like Chen’s. It is worth noting again, however, that Yue, like Chen, remained faithful to the CCP, despite her sufferings and misgivings. She questions or accepts far more often than she

criticizes, and she does not particularly highlight the effects of the cruelty experienced even by her own family. Whether this somewhat more accepting view enabled her to stay in the CCP, or whether her desire to stay involved in Party work somewhat inhibited what she was willing to say, is not something that can be decided based on this evidence. Nonetheless, the Wakeman-Yue account itself is not written in a narrative style that more closely resembles the traditional, as Chen's does.

One of the most valuable aspects of Yue's account is that it covers much of the same material as the youthful accounts, but from the point of view of an adult who was herself the parent of children involved in the youthful activities of the GPCR. She and her husband were teaching at Beida, which was, of course, one of the hotbeds of Red Guard activity and one of the primary locations of factional contention throughout the entire decade. Thus she also had the opportunity to witness and describe the activities of college age Red Guards, of which there is no direct record in this sample.

Yue and her husband were also long time observers of Party politics in Beijing, so that she was aware, in considerable detail, of the factional alignments and power struggles which led to the public events of the GPCR and is willing to describe them. Again, her viewpoint is that of a labeled rightist; therefore she, as well as her husband, was a target rather than primarily a perpetrator. She describes their personal difficulties that resulted from their being targets. However, she also participated in a number of work or investigative teams (which could lead to interrogations, struggle sessions and so forth) but does not describe these in a personal manner, taking only the rather formal view of a government functionary. What kinds of tactics her teams may have applied to further

their investigations is not discussed. One can see in her account, possibly, something of the experiences of Yang's or Zhai's mothers if they had written them.

Four Key Experiences

The older generation, being the group the GPCR targeted for the greatest change, experienced significantly different events than the youth, as described in the previous chapter. I organize this chapter around four of the key experiences for the older group: (1) struggle meetings, (2) interrogations and confessions, (3) cadre schools, and (4) caring for family. While youth might witness or participate in these events, as has been shown, these memoirs suggest that some could be unaware of, or were unwilling to talk about, what was happening to their own parents. Something of the reactions of those who did talk about their witnessing of the abuse of their parents has already been described. Here I discuss the responses of those who were on the receiving side of this abuse.

Additionally, as parents, the older generation's role was to care for and protect their children. Unlike the youth who were called upon to take a more strongly protective role than they would normally expect, the parents either could not protect and guide their children (or elderly relatives in some cases) or had great difficulty doing so, as Yue's memoir demonstrates. Circumstances very much restricted their influence over their children's lives much earlier than they had expected. I close this chapter with a discussion of families where both generations met on some common ground.

Struggle meetings

Struggle meetings, one step up in severity from criticism sessions, were often violent in these accounts, and a preface to or accompaniment of detention. They were part of the public spectacle associated with the GPCR. These subjects learned to see them as such and to endure them to the extent possible.

Chen describes one of the meetings where she was struggled; she was over sixty years old at the time.

The rebels often seized me to exhibit me to the people.... [They] took me to a meeting hall and ordered me to stand on a bench that was on a narrow table on the stage. The audience jeered while the rebels on stage criticized me, and some young Red Guards behind me threw stones at my head. I remained composed as I made the difficult climb up to the bench. I came out of the meeting with a few lumps on my head from the stones, but afterward I realized that if I had fallen, I could have been killed.... One day as I was walking home, I saw Comrade Fang Lingru, another object of criticism, getting off a bus. When she saw me, her eyes filled with tears. Since I feared the others were listening to us, I simply said, "We have to keep on living!" (92-3)

Several times in her book Chen criticizes the rebels' treatment of others, but even this she does somewhat indirectly. "I had a hard time understanding the rebels' behavior, because parading people around, cutting their hair, and forcing them to kneel were feudal tortures used two thousand years ago. I did not see how a socialist country could restore feudalism to such a degree!" (92) She objects only mildly to their harassment of herself, as being "treated very poorly." (93) Instead she records carefully those things which were

done improperly, such as the confiscation of her belongings without proper receipts, or the many injuries she received.

Zhang describes her interrogation at the hands of the Red Terror Group at the college where she taught.

The student then turned to me: “Do you know what your crimes are?” I stammered something about having kept in touch with Frau Hentze, who [sic] I had worked with in East Berlin.

“Isn’t there something else? What about your private life?”

I hesitated, not sure what he wanted. I thought perhaps an all-purpose confession would satisfy them. “I’ve committed serious mistakes,” I said.

“You’re an immoral woman, a fox spirit!” he screamed...

“This is what you deserve,” he said, yanking off his belt. A slap of the belt stung my face and my glasses flew off. Someone snatched my hands away whenever they flew up to cover my face. I don’t know how long the whipping and punching lasted; I don’t know how many people took part. I was only aware of the pain, the grunts of my attackers and my own cries for them to stop (145-6).

Eventually, her boyfriend, Pang, whose revolutionary credentials were impeccable, intervened and took her home to her room. Although the first doctor they asked would not treat her, the next day Pang was able to find a doctor who would. Not long after, she married Pang, primarily because he had stood by her already through

several difficulties and she knew could rely on his support and protection as she continued to face severe criticism.⁸²

Zhang was able to tolerate the criticism fairly well, as long as it remained verbal. “At the meeting called later that day, my students’ criticisms stung me, but I didn’t find the proceedings all that unbearable. It was mostly a shower of empty slogans, and I knew many of them had been forced to attend as a test of loyalty.” (149) At the same time, she became extremely sensitive to any kindness. “The slightest show of sympathy or kindness in those days would move me to tears.” (149) And she worried about anyone who might express it, so that when a student came to apologize for attending a criticism meeting against her, she responded by telling him to leave at once so he would not be in trouble himself.

By her second beating, also at a struggle session, Zhang was almost philosophical. I knew that resistance would only prolong the beating. I said nothing; no whimpering, no tears. I just braced myself to withstand the blows as best I could without reacting. After my earlier beating, at the hand of the Red Terror Group, my capacity for fear was greatly reduced. My attitude was: what could they do to me that was worse than that? I don’t know how long this assault lasted. During beatings, I lost all concept of time. (154)

Cheng was struggled in an open meeting designed to pressure her into confessing that she was a spy for the British. She remained stoical through the long meeting, feeling if she

⁸² Zhang makes it abundantly clear that while she was fond of this husband, her relationship with him was primarily pragmatic and that he was aware of this. He was loyal to her, and had sufficiently close ties with those persecuting her that he could be useful to her. Friends could offer similar help. How much of his ability to protect her was due to the opposition accepting his relationship with her as valid because it was a sexual tie is very difficult to say without much more evidence.

...made any move at all, the mob would have jumped me. I could only stand there looking straight ahead, with my eyes fixed on the distant wall, hoping their anger would soon spend itself.... Looking back, I remember distinctly that my predominant emotion was one of great sadness.... I was sad because I knew I could not reach out to these people around me to make them understand that I was innocent and that they were mistaken. (120-1)

Asked to confess several more times as her guards led her to the black jeep that would take her to prison, she simply said she was innocent and finally began reciting the Twenty-third Psalm to herself silently.

In the summer of 1969, as part of the celebration of the Ninth Party Congress, Cheng was subjected to one struggle meeting after another in a practice called “rotating struggle”. It was a “mind-numbing experience.”

Day after day, my ears were filled with the sound of angry, accusing voices, my eyes were blurred by images of hostile faces, and my body ached from rough handling and physical abuse. I no longer felt like a human being, just an inanimate object. Sometimes my spirit seemed to leave my body to look on the scene with detachment. Though I stopped thinking or observing what went on and withdrew into myself for a time, I was never really confused or frightened (276).

Yue records her struggle meeting, lasting three days in 1969. The threat directed against her was that, once labeled a rightist (in 1957), she had had her rightist label removed, but still clearly opposed the Party. The evidence was that she had praised a student essay, written by a reactionary. So her department could now label her a rightist again. Yue felt defeated, contemplating suicide, but was pulled back from this thought by the everyday obligations she had to her family.

...I could think of no defense. Believing that they had the power to ...class me as an enemy at any time, I grew ever more depressed. When they ordered me to stand up and listen to their criticism, all of my resilience, all of my inner reserves, seemed to ebb away.....

[Later] Tired of the whole ordeal of living, I thought for the first time about death, wondering if that might save my children from ruin. Perhaps if their parents were dead, the shadow we had cast on them would be removed.... Finally, I roused myself and headed home, knowing that another criticism meeting awaited me that evening and that in the meantime I must cook for my children. (249)

Interrogations and confessions

Zhang was imprisoned in a small room for ten months at her school and pressured through beatings and struggle meetings like the ones described above to confess. Initially her captors wanted her to confess to being a spy, due to her relationships with the Germans she had known during her assignment in East Berlin in the mid-1950s. However, eventually her husband discovered that the faction that held her understood that they had no evidence at all for her being a spy. He learned they had changed their demands and wanted her to confess to an illicit personal relationship. He was able to communicate with Zhang by passing her a note while she swept the stairwell, as part of her labor reform. From this she guessed that her jailors wanted her confession to a brief liaison she had indulged some years before with one of her fellow detainees. He had already confessed this transgression. "I was desperate to get out of detention and so I, too, confessed. As a result, my poor husband had to face yet more malicious gossip." (162) A friend managed to alert her of the day she would be freed, if she handled her verbal confession, in front of an audience, with the proper attitude.

I was invited to make a self-criticism. I said I was an immoral woman, who had led good male comrades astray. And I had damaged our national reputation when I accepted gifts from an East German woman. The head of the revolutionary teachers stood up and elaborated on these themes. He ended.... 'Those who agree she should be freed, hands up.' I stood up and thanked Mao, the party and the revolutionary teachers for releasing me. This conformed with the accepted view that everything they did was just. (163)

When Zhang got home, her neighbors were cold and uncommunicative, but that was a relief as it offered the opportunity not to be embroiled in any more factional battles. Her husband took her out to dinner, but she could not even order, and when he selected dishes for her, she could not eat. "I think I need time to recover from oblivion," she said (164).

Zhang's experience, and her response – what she felt and how she coped – seems to have had much in common with most of these subjects' experiences. On the one hand, it was important to find out what those in charge wanted in the way of confession and exactly what would satisfy them. On the other hand, it was important not to confess too much. Although none of these subjects did, many people fabricated confessions implicating others, bringing trouble to their friends, and incorporating false misdeeds in their permanent dossiers. Confessing to material of which the interrogators were not already aware simply opened up the investigation to new and potentially more damaging suspicions. Chen, for example, took the opportunity to quietly ask the rebel in charge of her interrogation for that day what she should say when they asked about her life before 1957. "He replied, 'Say absolutely nothing! Talk only about the anti-rightist campaign.'

His simple words inspired me, so when I was interrogated later, I followed his advice.”

(91)

Yue’s experience in cadre school in 1970 illustrates the difficulties of confessing dishonestly or bending too far to accommodate the wishes of an investigatory team in order to obtain reinstatement and escape from the rightist label. She had confessed to alleged misdeeds to secure her return from the countryside to her young children and to teaching in 1961. She had confessed again during the GPCR. However, when selected to start teaching again in 1970, she soon discovered that she had been chosen as “someone from outside the ranks of the people who could be held up to the students as a warning.”(279) She was expected to tell her students about the corrupting effects of the Western literature she taught so her students could discuss her past transformation from a good revolutionary to an enemy of the Party.

...I felt stunned. I couldn’t bear to tell the newcomers I had been labeled an enemy, to expose before them my past humiliation, to reveal that I still bore the stigma.... When I did think back on those two years, it was with the sense of having been unjustly accused. I could accept the newspaper reports that some people had in 1957 genuinely opposed the Communist Party, but I knew in my heart that I was not one of them. Such blasphemous thoughts could never be revealed to the students, of course, because the price of taking off my cap [removing her rightist label] had been to admit my mistakes and confess my guilt.... I was given three days to prepare my talk. When I stood before the students, I modified my story as much as I dared. (279-80)

Of these subjects, Cheng suffered the longest and most difficult series of interrogations. She was held in prison for six and a half years, in solitary confinement,

undergoing regular questioning, without initially any firm understanding of the purpose. Before her arrest she had been warned by a friend of her late husband not to confess to anything that was not true, and she stuck to this advice, partly out of sheer stubbornness and partly because she wished to protect her record for the sake of her daughter's future.

She began by trusting that her interrogations would quickly lead to her release, since she knew the main charge against her was spying and that it was groundless. She believed any competent investigator would be able to see this immediately, but she learned in her first interrogation session two months after her arrest that it would not be so straightforward. By the summer of 1967, she realized from reading the newspaper (which was allowed for several years) that there was complex factional conflict at the highest levels of the Party and that her own situation was likely to remain unsettled for a long period. It took her another year to discover that her jailers wanted her to confess to being a spy in order to have evidence with which to attack Zhou Enlai. She became adept at manipulating the interrogation sessions at least to some of her own purposes. Her biggest asset seems to have been her ability to step back emotionally and realize how the guards and interrogators were trying to frighten her and gain a psychological advantage. She was able to plan ahead to avoid those traps, and used her quick wit to turn aside and resist their attempts at intimidation.

She describes an almost comical scene in which her interrogator, flanked by several members of the Workers' Propaganda Team, tried to use the final disgrace of Liu Shaoqi⁸³ to prove to her that her own case was hopeless.

⁸³ Specifically, the Central Committee resolution denouncing him in 1968.

His argument was so absurd and the accusation against Liu Shaoqi was so ridiculous that I felt disgusted.... Furthermore, I looked upon these men seated in front of me with contempt.... My one wish at that moment was to irritate them. Pretending to be stupid, I said, "I always had the greatest respect for Chairman Liu Shaoqi. I'm not at all sure he is really guilty of the charge against him. Perhaps there was some mistake...."

I was pleased to see that my seemingly innocent remarks had the effect of a bombshell. All of them stood up and shouted at me, "How dare you defend a traitor..."

They were behaving as required...but strangely, only one of the younger workers and the military officer appeared really angry. The other three were staring at me with curiosity and amusement....

Intrigued by the discovery that among the seemingly ardent supporters of the radicals there were some who harbored sympathy for Liu Shaoqi, I decided to prolong this dialogue a bit further. "...I do not oppose Chairman Mao. Who would dare to do that? I merely suggested that the evidence against Chairman Liu Shaoqi might not be completely reliable," I said.

"Shut up!..." the young worker shouted vehemently. The interrogator was gazing at the paper in front of him, and so was the man taking notes. The old worker seemed to be enjoying the situation. The ghost of a smile hovered at the corners of his mouth. (222-3)

It was during this interrogation that she began to understand that the interrogators wanted her confession as a spy to attack those who had let Shell Oil remain in Shanghai after 1949 (e.g. Zhou Enlai) and to understand that even within the prison there might be supporters of a number of different government factions. Her defense of Liu Shaoqi made

her some friends among the prison staff, who later were able to help her in small ways and to get better medical care for her.

To people who have not dealt with such men as the Maoists, my persistent effort to fight back against my persecutors may seem futile and pointless. But the Maoists were essentially bullies. If I had allowed them to insult me at will, they would have been encouraged to go further. My life at the detention house would have become even more intolerable than it was already. (249)

Even at the point of her release, in 1973, she could not accept the hypocrisy of the judgment that the government planned to put into her dossier, as it concluded that she deserved punishment for “divulging the grain supply situation in Shanghai” in a 1957 letter to England, and that she had defended the “traitor Liu Shaoqi”. However, in their magnanimity they would not press charges. Furious, she announced she would refuse to leave until they revised the statement. In the end, two female guards had to drag her to the gate.

Cheng, an exceptionally self-aware subject, stresses throughout her memoir that the defiance with which she chose to respond to her tormenters was, in her mind, the response that enabled her to survive. After so many years in confinement, it had become a habit that she could not give up, even as she was about to be released. She believed it enabled her to restrict some of the violence that could be done to her. It helped her keep her sense of dignity and a closely related feeling of some control over her own situation.

Cadre school

Cadre schools were another experience which the older generation had in common. The most complete descriptions among these subjects come from Yue. Chang,

however, who visited her parents' in cadre school for several months, also provides descriptions of their experiences and responses to them.

Yue, her husband and son went to May 7th cadre school, in a joint project between Beida and Qinghua University. The attendance at cadre school, like the youth being sent to the countryside, was supposed to reform intellectuals' attitudes through peasant style labor. I have only three accounts of some detail about the cadre schools: Yue's, Zhang's and Chang's account of her visits to her parents' cadre schools. Yue and Zhang echo a number of the youthful accounts of countryside experiences. Zhang, with her husband, was sent to a village where they lived with peasants, joined an already existing labor regime, and learned to accommodate to uncomfortable living conditions. Yue's camp, which she attended with her husband and son, was under the supervision of the military, and like a number of the state farms for youth required the inhabitants to bring new ground under cultivation. Chang's parents, on the other hand, were in separate camps and, particularly her in father's case, found the conditions more severe than either Yue or Zhang.

Zhang and her husband were sent to a village in 1970 along with other families from their school. They left their newborn baby in Beijing with Zhang's mother. The university families met regularly for political study. "We felt closer to each other than before because we were facing the same problems. We had no idea whether we would ever be allowed back to the city. We all just quietly hoped for a change in policy." (172) Although initially unhappy in the village Zhang eventually got to know the peasants and learned they "were genuine and warm and more human in their simple ways than most

city people tended to be. They didn't discuss class struggle and they didn't discriminate against me because of my family background or my divorce. I was just a city woman to them, and it was a relief to be accepted as such.”(172) She did not mind the manual labor, got used to their way of life and enjoyed their crude humor. Zhang and her husband returned to their school when the colleges began to reopen in 1972.

Yue was offered the option to remain at Beida when her husband, and the larger part of the university, was sent to the location in Jiangxi selected for them by their Army leaders. Her husband wanted her to stay behind so that their son (now aged twelve) could also reside in the city. However, Yue thought the experience at the cadre school would help her career, as she was sure, from her previous years in the countryside, she could excel at manual labor. Additionally, she looked forward to “leaving the political tension of the university behind.” (254) In the end, the offer to stay at the university was withdrawn, when the Army leaders found she was ungrateful for it. So, in October 1969, she, her husband and son set out with the rest of their colleagues by train and truck for a swampy lakeside where they were expected to reclaim and farm the land. Yue was strong and well able to withstand the physical labor, and in fact enjoyed it. Initially, she was set to making bricks.

Every day I participated in this same work, which despite its monotony, was strangely satisfying. Always before I had devoted my time and energy to abstract tasks, never creating anything with my own hands. Even in Zhaitang [a previous location of peasant labor for her] I had never seen the fruits of my labor, but had carried rocks for a reservoir that was never finished, cared for pigs that only grew thinner, worked in fields along with many others. Here in Liyuzhou I could for the first time see the results of my efforts. I

could produce by myself a hundred bricks a day, hold them in my hands, so smooth and even and red, and know that my labor was of immediate benefit to the community.

As I worked, I reflected upon the lot of the peasants. If they led such a life, I decided, why indeed shouldn't we intellectuals live in a similar fashion. It was refreshing not to have to think about anything, not to have any worries, not to be assaulted by political concerns, but just to fulfill simple menial tasks. I didn't want to remember the past or recall the suffering we had put behind us; I wanted merely to rest and savor the peace of this simple life. I was thankful that in the cadre school our past histories were ignored, and even Lao Tang [her husband], so recently denounced as a major enemy, was treated equally with the others. We all were expected to participate in the labor together, with only a few singled out for punitive treatment. (259)

The two being punished that she cites were women, once leaders in the outbreak of the GPCR on the Beida campus, now assigned the task of hauling buckets of nightsoil used for fertilizer. As Yue watched them she "always felt compassion for their suffering." (260) If she questions the justice of this situation, it is only indirectly by describing it.

Not surprisingly, life in Yue's cadre school was not quite as bucolic as the above quotation would suggest. The army leaders deliberately made things more difficult than necessary, and there was little variety in the food (rice and soy oil for many months). However, Yue was in sympathy with the aims of the re-education. She believed the military leaders were acting in the best interests of the intellectuals under their supervision. "Agreeing that intellectuals should become more productive members of society, I seldom joined in the bitter complaints of many of my colleagues." (266) She follows this comment with a story about an incident in which two professors were

assigned to kill two pigs for their company's dinner. Having just been instructed in the method, they were not initially successful with the first pig, which runs about wounded before finally being subdued. Yue herself is unable to eat the meat after cleaning the pigs and gives the extra food to her son.

After the pig-killing fiasco, one of the teachers from our department wrote a crosstalk⁸⁴ called 'Two Doctors Kill a Pig,' which quickly became famous. It poked fun at the two professors who had studied so diligently at prestigious universities and had acquired so much knowledge, but who still could not kill a pig. The [army] leaders liked the parody so much that they broadcast it repeatedly over the radio at mealtimes. (268)

In her description, this is the end of her discussion, so it seems clear she also thought this episode amusing. She does not emphasize the point that the second pig was killed without problems or say anything about how the two professors felt about the crosstalk or its constant playing over the loudspeaker. This suggests that even in retrospect and despite her other doubts, Yue continued to accept this kind of public hazing and ridicule as appropriate ways for the government to treat people. She also continued to accept that intellectuals, by nature, were incompetent at the practical work of every day life, despite her confidence in her own ability to work hard at physical labor.

The cadre school experience for Yue and her colleagues lasted for less than a year. In the fall of 1970 they were instructed to set up branches of their universities in the same location for the education of workers, peasants, and soldiers. Teachers and students were to rotate between labor and classroom education. Six months later, in the spring of

⁸⁴ A popular form of comic dialogue that uses understatement and ambiguity to satirize contemporary life. [Note from Yue, p. 268]

1971, students and teachers were returned to the Beijing campus as they had not been able to establish sufficiently good educational facilities at the rural school and many students had complained. Yue was disheartened by the ultimate uselessness of their efforts as they took apart the community they had built and abandoned the fields and rice paddies. She remembers the waste in terms of lives lost, sickness and injury. “Our battles against the snails and mosquitoes, against the oppressive heat and the treacherous rains, were totally wasted. Both the human and economic costs of constructing Beida’s cadre school were just to be forgotten.” (298) By now she had begun to question even Mao. “Chairman Mao had said that when you strive for revolutionary goals you must expect to have some victims, but I felt that the price we had paid, both today and over the past years, was too high.” (287)

It is useful to briefly contrast Yue’s and Zhang’s apparently relatively benign experiences with those of Chang’s parents to provide some sense of the range of conditions that might occur. Chang’s mother initially suffered punishment in her cadre school, also run by military officers. She got hepatitis and came under the protection of the doctors, whom she had herself protected in the 1957 anti-rightist campaign. They exaggerated the contagiousness of her condition and sent her to an isolated and deserted pigsty, where she was cared for, fed and nursed by her friends. “As far as she was concerned, her hepatitis was a godsend.” (431) Soon afterwards, both officers and inmates tired of denunciations and the endless work. The atmosphere relaxed somewhat, and her mother’s cheerfulness and kindness led to general popularity and the nickname “Kuanyin – the goddess of kindness.” (433)

Chang's father was subjected to much harsher treatment, having to undergo frequent denunciation meetings as well as put in a full day's labor. Chang stayed with him for three months, attending his meetings so he would have someone there supporting him and doing some of his labor for him, as well as cooking and caring for him. "As soon as the meeting was over, we would go off together on our own. I would tell him cheerful things to make him forget the ugliness of the meeting, and massage his head, neck, and shoulders. And he would recite classical poems for me." (437) Her presence was permitted because, as in other situations, there were some sympathetic people in the camp administration, who allowed Chang and her brothers to visit their father, but who could not stop his overall mistreatment.

Both of Chang's parents – who survived the cadre schools to return to Chengdu, although with severe health problems – found themselves, in their difficult conditions, regretting some of their behavior in their previous lives. Chang's mother regretted the time she had not been able to spend with her children, because she had devoted her life so completely to the Communist cause. Her father, who had been a strict, temperamental and occasionally abusive father, reproached himself for his harshness. He was "in a constant state of remorse" (439) for earlier acts of rigid selfishness toward his mother, sister, and grandmother, as well as his wife and children. He questioned his entire devotion to the Communist cause, telling his son,

"I've tried my best through the years. But what good has it done for the people? As for myself, why is it that in the end I have come to be the ruin of my family? People who believe in retribution say that to end badly you must have something on your conscience. I

have been thinking hard about the things I've done in my life. I have given orders to execute some people... But these people had done so much evil that God himself would have had them killed. What, then, have I done wrong to deserve all this?" After a long pause, Father said, "If I die like this, don't believe in the Communist Party anymore." (443)

Caring for family

Yue was the only of these older subjects who had on-going responsibilities for young children during the GPCR. Her daughter was thirteen and her son eight in 1966. Zhang sent her very young children to live with relatives, and the daughters of both Cheng and Chen were in their late teens in 1966. Yue was also living with her husband, who was a target of the radical groups through much of the period. Additionally, she had responsibilities and ties with her husband's family with whom they lived until the summer of 1967, and who were relatively nearby even after Yue, her husband and children moved to another house. Yue's parents and brother also lived in Beijing. Thus, Yue was thoroughly enmeshed in family relationships and responsibilities in a way that the other three older subjects were not.

Yue received some help from her own parents in terms of child care. Her sister-in-law and mother-in-law were also helpful, initially. However, when both Yue and her husband came under scrutiny by their departments at Beida, the sister-in-law complained; she and Yue argued regularly. When Yue and her husband were in detention in 1969 for more self-criticism and struggles, Yue moved her children back to her in-laws' house. However, the children complained so bitterly about the conditions living with their aunt, who blamed them for the whole family's difficulties, that Yue reluctantly allowed them

to move back to their own home under the older daughter's care. The children were eleven and sixteen at the time.

Yue's family, although beset by the persecution of both parents, does not appear to have lacked financial resources, nor do they appear to have had to send money to any of their extended family for their support, except for one elderly aunt who had been sent to the countryside in the summer of 1966, only to die a year later. Despite her promise to her now dead father-in-law to protect his sister, Yue had been forced to send her back to Wuhan in accordance with a policy that "landlords must be returned to the place where they had formerly exploited the peasants.... Finally, unable to conceive of any way to protect this old woman for whom I felt great affection, I told Fourth Aunt with great sadness that she must go, as we could find no alternative. Her tears made my heart break." (176-177)

Yue's children, given their ages and their living on the Beida campus at the very heart of GPCR turmoil, almost inevitably became involved in Red Guard activities, although they were too young in 1966 to be members of any of the Red Guard groups. However, they supported a group on the Beida campus which opposed the radical Nie Yuanzi faction⁸⁵ that was persecuting their parents. They distributed handbills and argued with people against the allegations made on posters by Nie's group. "When I learned of my children's activities, I felt proud of their independence and determination but very worried about their safety." (199) At times Yue followed her son secretly in case he

⁸⁵ Nie was head of the radical faction at Beijing University, and carrying out policies approved by Mao and Jiang Qing. This information was well known at the time, although in Yue's mind Jiang and Lin Biao were acting somewhat separately from Mao's approval.

should be beaten. Before a planned battle in the summer of 1967 she managed to persuade both children to come home, rather than participate.

It was because of the closeness of their family home to the violence on campus that Yue applied to her department for less prestigious housing further away from student dormitories. A year after pulling her children away from a pending battle, her daughter now fifteen, Yue had to accept her daughter's decision to join yet another battle between the two Beida rebel factions. "I realized at that moment that my daughter, though only fifteen, was now fully grown, that she had her own views, her own imperatives, her own life. My emotions were a complex mixture of sympathy for her grief [at the beating death of a fellow activist], pride in her fervent commitment to a cause, and anxiety about her future." (229) When her daughter returned with the announcement of victory for her group, "I shared her excitement, marveling at what these young people could accomplish. My generation had always been obedient, had endured whatever befell them, but these young people were different. They would resist, they would struggle for what they believed in, they would even fight, and I admired their resourcefulness, their determination, their courage." (230)

Yue was thirty-seven years old at this time. She had already undergone condemnation as a rightist, unjustly as she perceived, and her husband had been under almost continuous attack for over two years. Her support for her daughter's activities is partly a result of the side that her children determined to fight for – as they were fighting against the faction that was persecuting her and her husband. But, she also accepts the premise of the situation. She does not question the necessity of the fighting, and even the

persecutions. She is primarily sad about the harm it may do to her own family and friends. The problem in her view was Nie, and by extension Jiang Qing. It was only later, as shown above, after her experience in the cadre school, that she began to more broadly question Mao's approach and his guerilla campaign methods of managing a country.

Families

Families were, of course, the space where both youthful and adult lives intertwined most persistently, although relationships with teachers (Niu-Niu) and cadres (Min, Nanchu) could also be highly significant. Families dealt with the challenges of the GPCR differently. A number (e.g. Luo, Lu, Jiang, Ye) maintained close relationships throughout the period, and had the ability to talk frankly between husbands and wives, and between parents and children. Luo's father, for example, was willing to speak out against the activities of the Red Guards to her, to support her in her wish to study, and reinforce her dislike of the cruelty she witnessed. However, even he had not told her or her older sister about all the accusations against him. Luo discovers the details of her parents' trial by sneaking after them and, clinging to the bars of a window while her older sister kept watch, listening to the proceedings through a wall.

Parents' silence about their own problems with the Party seems to have been common. It is mentioned by several subjects, for example, Chang, Yang, Jiang, and it is implied by Yue's story which recounts no conversation on her part, to her children, to explain either her own or her husband's situation. Ma does not hear about the severity of her mother's experiences until nearly twenty years after her death. Several subjects regret

this silence. When Zhai asks her mother why she did not tell her at the time about her experience of self-criticism and punishment, she answers, “‘What good would that have done? It would only have made you unhappy as well.’ ‘We could at least have comforted you.’ She just shook her head and sighed.” (136)

For Chang and Ye, however, the experiences of the GPCR eventually brought them closer to their parents. “My mother began to treat me like a friend. After dinner we always took a walk together.... My mother told me a lot about her past, especially her life during the war. Her calm demeanor, her refusal to give up hope, and her sense of humor were invaluable to me.” (Ye, 87-88) Chang’s mother does not tell her the full story of her own family and experiences until after Chang has moved to England. But it is clear from her account that her mother relies increasingly on Chang to help keep the family together. They share the care of Chang’s father, when he is mentally ill, for example. And both parents become more sensitive to the needs of their children as a result of their own misfortunes. At the same time, as described in Chapter 5, Chang gave up a great deal of her normal adolescent striving for an independent identity because of her need to help her parents in their suffering.

Summary

The experience of the GPCR varied for people depending upon their ages. Those born before 1950 saw it with a different perspective than those born later. In Chapters 5 and 6, I have emphasized some of the differences between the kinds of events they experienced as well as in some of the emotional responses they brought to those

experiences. It was the older subjects who were the primary objects of persecution. They were the victims of the struggle sessions, beatings, investigations, and detentions. They were the ones writing the endless self-criticism and confession statements. They lost their jobs, and in a number of cases their sanity (Chang's father, Nanchu's mother). Although there is primarily Yue's descriptions of how any might have felt about it, they saw their children in many cases running wild, heading into both physical and moral danger, and were torn. They might want to keep their children from behaving badly, such as Luo's father, Jiang's grandmother, and Min's mother, all of whom spoke out. At the same time, adults took a grave personal risk in speaking against Mao and Party policy, nor did they, for example, Nanchu's and Jiang's parents, want their children's future irreparably damaged by any failure to support this latest campaign. At the beginning of the GPCR, many of them thought they knew what was coming, since they had experienced the anti-rightist campaigns of the past. Most seem to have thought they could ride it out, as they had or had seen others do in the past. In the end, most of these people did, if often with severely damaged health, both mental and physical.

The younger subjects were the group charged by Mao with the beginning phases of the GPCR. Very few did not find the initial call to revolution exhilarating and liberating. They were eager to lend their energy to support and protect the man they had been taught to believe was not only their personal hero but the potential means of saving the whole world from poverty and the vicious conditions of capitalism. Many were happy to overthrow their teachers' authority and take on what they saw as important responsibilities for the furtherance of this new phase of the revolution. Ambivalence

came at different times for different people. The sample is too small to draw serious conclusions about what factors made the most difference – such as, the subject's age, the class status of the subject's parents, the factional contradictions and unfairness of the persecutions, the location, their banishment to the countryside, the failures of the education system, and the futility of their work alongside the peasants. However, all these factors seem to have been important to at least some degree to all subjects in gradually coming to question Mao and the viability of the Party.

Four kinds of experiences ran across this division of age. One was the house search, another was an assault on personal health; additionally, there was the division or separation of families, and finally, the experience of going to the countryside for manual labor. Young and old dreaded the house searches and had to stand aside while their possessions were confiscated or destroyed. Little could be done except to proactively destroy or occasionally hide the things most likely to incite the wrath of the Red Guards. The difficulties of getting medical care and the anxiety that produced for most people are described in Chapter 4. For the younger subjects, the hard conditions in the countryside were the most common source of health problems; for adults, it was hard labor, but also the punitive conditions of detention and interrogations. The gratitude to doctors who were able and willing to help is, not surprisingly, a feeling common to all ages.

For the younger subjects, being sent to the countryside was an experience, on the whole, more to be resented than the parent's cadre schools. There seem to be a number of reasons. The parents did not lose their city registrations. The assumption was that after a period of labor reform, the parents could return to their old work units. Also, the parents,

on the whole, did not spend more than a year or two in cadre school, while the youth were expecting to have to stay a lifetime, and a number of these subjects spent over five years in rural areas. Additionally, parents seem to have resented sending their children to rural areas, although most of the evidence presented by these accounts is indirect. However, many parents, according to these reports, did pull bureaucratic strings to ameliorate their children's conditions. And Nanchu's mother, for example, after visiting her in the hospital in Heilongjiang, returned to Shanghai to agitate among parents concerning the dangerous and unhealthy conditions their children were being subjected to at the military farms.

Both parents and young people had expected the youth to go on to university after middle school. The cutting off of that opportunity both for personal growth and for getting established in an intellectual career was resented by all the youthful subjects in this study. Zhai, for example, was bitter that after all she had done for Mao in the GPCR, he should have relegated her to the hinterlands, rather than rewarding her with greater opportunities. For these young people, opportunity meant not only further education, leading to a good job, but also life in the "big city" as they knew it. Finally, despite the companionship of friends the experience was a deeply lonely one for many of these subjects, since they were prematurely separated from their families.

As has been shown, families were separated from each other, both physically and emotionally, by these experiences. There is no obvious family circumstance that predicts either which families dealt with the separations by overcoming them through great personal efforts, and which ones seem to have acquiesced in their own fragmentation.

Several of these younger subjects – Chang, Lu, Luo and Jiang – exerted themselves mightily to help their parents and siblings survive and to retain significant relationships among family members and friends.

Others, such as Min, Yang, and Zhai, portray family relationships that are more distant and less satisfying, and talk of the GPCR with little reference to their parents. The response, among these families, was to further fracture under the stresses of the GPCR. Min had conflicts with her parents, over her leaving of the youth commune to become trained as a possible lead for a revolutionary movie. The change meant her youngest sister, considered by the parents to be less physically strong than Min, had to go to the commune in her place. Yang seems to have failed to keep track of her grandmother, although both were living in Beijing. When she visited her Nai-Nai in 1971 on a home leave from Heilongjiang, she was surprised to find her grandmother near death after years confined in a “cowshed” in the old family compound. Yet, Yang’s Aunty, the woman who brought her up, sent her food packages to the commune on every important holiday and also cared for Yang’s younger brothers, despite her advancing age. The parents were in cadre school, in Hebei, during the same time period. There was contact between these people during their long separation, but it is unclear from the book exactly who knew what about whom. Zhai mentions her parents only rarely and is one of the most vehement in criticizing other parents for using personal ties to bring their children back from the countryside.

Min, Ma, and Yang imply earlier divisions within their families underlay the further fracturing of the family during the GPCR. Yet, all subjects make clear by the ends

of their stories that any rifts between parents and children had been healed, if not perfectly, at least well enough for a sense of wholeness to have returned. Niu-Niu describes her feelings as she left for France in 1986, this way: “I cried tears of joy, but at the same time I was wistful. I knew that I would come back some day. I would never forget my family, my friends, and my country. I would never forget that I was Chinese.” (278) Other subjects make much the same point. Whatever stresses the GPCR put on their relationships with their parents and their relationships to their country, they were intent by the end of their memoir accounts to state their continued strong ties to both these important sources of identity.

7. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Each of these accounts presents its own, individual viewpoint. While many people, including these subjects, experienced the same or very similar events in their lives during the GPCR, of course, not everyone saw the same things, reacted in the same ways, or developed the same ways of dealing with these events. So, I have endeavored to capture something of the variety of these subjects' responses to these key happenings in the previous chapters. This has provided an overview of what living during the GPCR was like and the feelings and thoughts it produced in both younger and more mature educated women. This was one goal of this study, to document and explicate what these subjects have said about their lived experience.

The previous two chapters have also allowed me to derive from this detailed level of analysis a number of preliminary conclusions. These observations indicate that the experience of the GPCR was distinctively different for youth as opposed to their parents' generations. Since as people mature they view life differently, this is hardly surprising. However, this divide was exacerbated by the policies of the GPCR which pitted one generation against another and deliberately divided youth from their parents. The detailed analysis also portrays the accumulating frustration and disillusionment with Maoism that overcame even the most enthusiastic of these subjects. It shows a turning away,

especially for the youthful group, from a devotion to public causes to a more individual- and family-centered set of personal goals.

However, there is additional significance to be drawn from what these subjects have shared through their memoirs. As discussed in Chapter 2, people writing memoirs have broader motivations than simply recording all the events of their lives, or everything they remember from the period on which they have focused. Their selection of incidents, emphasis and interpretative commentary reflect these broader motivations. The observations I have just summarized suggest at least three themes which underlie many of these accounts: growing up, turning away from more public to more private lives, and disillusionment. Before turning to a final discussion of the forms of these memoirs and these three themes, in the context of both Western-European and Chinese traditions of narrative and memoir, I will first discuss the subjects' direct commentary about their purposes in writing about and sharing their experiences.

Subjects: Interpreting the GPCR

These subjects see their experiences as historically significant and part of the larger, shared experience of their generation.

I was born in China in 1951, a little more than a year after the Communist Party took power on October 1, 1949. My generation was called the Socialist New Generation.... When the Cultural Revolution finally ended my generation had an unofficial new title: The Destroyed Generation. (Zhai, Prologue)

Luo titles her book *A Generation Lost*. She describes the aggregated effect on her contemporaries. "Many of my peers, however, died at an early age or lost their health due

to this Revolution.... Others developed mental or emotional problems, and some went on to a life of crime.” (92) Thus, the memoirs detail not only the stories of these subjects, but the experiences of friends or people the subject has only heard about. These secondary, elaborative stories serve a number of roles in the narratives, but one effect is to draw attention to the universality of the extraordinary and often terrible happenings. *It’s not just me*, the subjects say, *This happened to many others as well*. Additionally, these side stories highlight those aspects of the GPCR the subject remembers best or finds most important to communicate. On the whole, the elaborative stories, even more than the core narratives of the memoirs themselves, emphasize hardship and injustice to which people were subjected. The knowledge that other people, beyond one’s own immediate family, were experiencing tragedy, seems to have been one of the defining feelings of the times. There was no escaping. At the very least this knowledge saddened the subjects (e.g. Cheng). In most cases, it was also frightening.

People died so easily during those weeks. Almost every day we heard news of suicides.... After the body of the famous novelist and playwright Lao She was pulled from a Beijing lake, for example, the Red Guards insisted that he had taken his own life, but people always believed he had been beaten to death. By the end of August the situation had become so terrible that we could see no end, no future, no hope. People just tried to survive day by day. (Yue, 184)

One of the struggles for these subjects, and part of the reasons underlying their memoirs, was coming to terms with the circumstances of the GPCR itself. How could something like this happen? Having suffered as they did, most wanted to assign the cause of their suffering. Not surprisingly, they often see factional conflicts at the highest levels

of the Party as a central problem. Lin Biao's death and reported attempted coup against Mao (in 1971) was a key event which highlighted the unreliability of the Party and the violent swings of factional politics, although subjects like Cheng, Yue, Zhai, and Luo were already well aware of the rapid about faces in policy by the late 1960s. Min's explanation relies heavily on the role of Jiang Qing, fighting for the opportunity to take control and succeed Mao, in revenge or defiance of the Party's insistence on her absence from politics when she married Mao. Others put the largest blame on Mao. Zhai, on visiting Mao's home in Yan'an, comments:

The lesson did not restore my love for Mao.... Besides, his great past was over. In his present old age, he was paranoid.... He really thought that all of us, students in universities, middle schools, and even primary schools, were capitalists. He was mad. By then, I firmly believed that China, and hence my own life, would be better only after he was dead. (164-5)

They also search for broader social explanations. "I am still puzzled by why our generation was capable of committing violence. Before the Cultural Revolution we saw violence such as torturing only in movies. It was always done by the enemy to revolutionaries – so it was unacceptable." (Ye, 82) Ye and Ma discuss a possible contributing factor as the obedience that children were taught to observe to parents as well as teachers. Ye's family had encouraged debate when she was young, and Ma's had not. Ye believes this made her skeptical more quickly than others when confronted with the circumstances of the GPCR. Luo makes a similar point, although from a different perspective. She was circumstanced, by her family being labeled rightists from the

beginning, not to have the opportunity to participate in the GPCR. Her story also makes clear the independence of thought which was valued in her family. However, she does not blame others for their participation in the Red Guards. Speaking of her classmates, in 1978, on the eve of taking the entrance exams for graduate school, she says,

Although many of them had once been Red Guards, they were no better or worse than people of any other era. Placed in the same historical and political setting, any generation would have made the same stupid, cruel mistakes as mine did, taking the roles available at the time. Many decisions were dictated by family situations, the primary cause for most actions. (291)

A number of subjects also highlight the selfish motivations of those Red Guards and Rebels who participated most vigorously in persecuting others. It is not that these people caused the GPCR, but that they enabled it to grow and persist. Chang explains how she believes Mao tapped into selfish feelings to manipulate the Chinese populace. “He ruled by getting people to hate each other.... In bringing out and nourishing the worst in people, Mao had created a moral wasteland and a land of hatred.” (496) She goes on to attribute the targeting of traditional Chinese culture, by the GPCR, to Mao’s perception of the extreme division between the largely illiterate peasant class and the cultured class, as well as his own “deep resentment of formal education and the educated.” (496)

Part of the reason for sorting through the causes of the GPCR was for subjects to come to terms with their own role or responsibility for what had happened to them. Despite their belief that Maoism bore heavy responsibilities for the GPCR, they by no

means absolve themselves of any responsibility for the individual circumstances of their own experiences. Some regret certain of their own actions and appear to be expiating guilt or trying to work out their reasons and sense of culpability through telling their story. Cheng is haunted by guilt for bringing her daughter back from Hong Kong in 1949, thus, she feels, ultimately allowing her death as a teenager in the GPCR. Chang, one of the more introspective of these subjects, feels guilty for neglecting her grandmother on her deathbed, and resolves at the time to give up close relationships with boys as a way of punishing herself. In Heilongjiang, Yang is tormented by remorse, seeing her inability to return home, at the same time others were able to arrange returns to the city, to be punishment for her misdeeds as a Red Guard. Ma, after describing her participation in the beating of a middle aged woman by Red Guards in a classroom at her school, explains,

But I was too young to tell the difference between a political crime and a mental illness. I had neither the courage nor the maturity to behave differently. Besides, Mao's personality cult was at its peak. Anybody who dared insult Mao [as the woman had] was inviting his/her own termination. Still, I cannot make peace with what I did that night. This is the first time I have ever talked about it with another person. (Ma, in Ye, 83)

The ultimate judgment of most of these subjects concerning the period can be seen in their decisions to leave China permanently. The experiences their government and society had forced upon them and the complex feelings and memories these engendered were simply too heavy a burden once they found the opportunity to escape. "Fifteen years ago when I left China for the United States, I wanted to forget the dreams my peers and I

used to have.... Some of them had long since turned into nightmares for me. I wanted to open a new chapter in my life. Let the old fear, anger, and guilt melt away....” (Yang, 1)

Images of personal freedom and choice – the airplane flight out of China – end Chang’s, Zhang’s and Niu-Niu’s accounts. Min describes her decision to come to the US. After six years of “loneliness and abandonment” and a boring, menial job, she had lost her courage. A friend in Los Angeles suggested she might move there.

The idea was as foreign to me as being asked to live on the moon, the moon as my father described it – icy, airless and soundless. Yet my despair made me fearless. Though I spoke not a word of English, though I hated to leave my parents, my sisters, my brother, and to fight for permission to leave would take all my energy, I knew that escaping China would be the only solution. (305-306)

For those who did not leave – Chen, Wen, Ma and Yue – it was not, at least for the younger three, that they did not probably have the opportunity to do so, as all three went to study in the US in the 1980s. Yue and Ma, although believing responsibility for the GPCR rested with actions of Mao and Jiang Qing, saw not only possibilities for themselves in China, but felt they could continue to live with the past. The lesson they drew from the GPCR was the need to work within the system to improve conditions in their country. “Ma Xiaodong, meanwhile, has clearly decided to apply the knowledge she acquired in the United States to help people who most need attention in today’s China: peasant men and women, especially women, in poverty-stricken regions.” (Ye, 150) Yue sums up her feelings on being given the opportunity to rejoin the Party in 1979.

But even as I recalled the disappointments of my own life and the tragic loss of my friends, I realized that some flame still burned in my heart.... I would join in the efforts to rebuild the Party, convinced that whatever its past mistakes, it alone could lead China forward. I was far less confident of success than in 1949 and far less certain that I could contribute, but I knew that I had to try. (387)

Remembering the GPCR in Context

These memoirs reflect a complex set of cultural contexts. All but Chen's were written for publication in a Western-language market.⁸⁶ Several of the subjects (Wen, Yang, Ye with Ma, Yue with Wakeman) have an academic background in the social sciences. Although their books were written for general audiences, this background is nonetheless evident in some of the issues they raise and concepts they apply. Two are the work of accomplished fiction writers (Min and Lu), who have firm control of their narrative voices and whose eye for consistency of detail and attention to what makes a 'good story' make their accounts seem far less naïve or transparent than the others. That is, their original experiences seem more thoroughly transformed into crafted stories than those of the others, although they may communicate their sense of what happened and what it felt like more memorably. The remaining works all acknowledge help from some Western-European source – journalists and writing teachers.

Thus, all but Chen's memoir may have received considerable shaping from editors who may have encouraged that certain kinds of incidents be described more fully, that certain kinds of feelings be explored, or that certain kinds of interpretative material

⁸⁶ Niu-Niu's book was originally written in French, the remaining in English.

be included. These editorial suggestions I assume to have been aimed at making the memoirs more acceptable to Western audiences and more easily understood by them. However, as I have reiterated a number of times, Western-European ideas about appropriate content for life-stories were already familiar to these subjects before they began to write. Most had read Western literature either in the original or in translation, as had most of their parents. Until the GPCR, elementary education included stories from Western traditions (Ye) as well as Chinese traditions. The socialist realist literature and drama which was the mainstay of Chinese Communist cultural production was itself an amalgam employing literary forms and concepts of purpose and heroism from both Western and Chinese traditions.

The other context of these memoirs of course is the history of the period these subjects recall. Many of the practices and events of that period were firmly rooted in aspects of traditional Chinese culture, contradicting the stated purposes of the architects of the GPCR who claimed to be ridding China of its dependence on reactionary traditions. However, this continuity of traditions is one part of the explanation for the occurrence of the GPCR in the way it unfolded. Familiar practices do not raise the suspicions of participants as easily as unfamiliar ones. At least as reflected in these memoirs, they must cross some unanticipated threshold in intensity or the results must be of unexpected or unjustifiable severity before it becomes clear to those living in that context that they are now unacceptable.

In my interpretation of these memoirs I address three broad topics: the persistence of traditional Chinese Cultural themes in the practices of the GPCR (ref. Chapter 3); the

conflict between public-self and family-self for many of the study subjects; and the form and overall themes of the memoirs in the context of the Western-European traditions outlined in Chapter 2 and those of Chinese autobiography outlined in Chapter 3.

Chinese Cultural Narratives

A number of Chinese cultural narratives are woven through the practices of the GPCR as recorded in these memoirs, some noted by the subjects, others perhaps less obvious. Traditional and Communist approaches to persuasion, coercion and punishment through public humiliation (Chen, Chang) played major roles in many GPCR practices. It is hard not to see in the Red Guards and Rebel bands which arose during the GPCR a reincarnation of the gangs and militia used by the elite in traditional and early 20th century China to administer justice and keep “order” (Perry 2006). The particularly personal, close to parental, relationship a teacher was traditionally supposed to play in a student’s life, can be seen not only in the pressure on students to torment their teachers, but in the role that teachers had played in the Communist system for guiding behavior, political and moral thought (Ye).

The bitterness of factionalism in the government was a long standing complaint of traditional literati-gentry. Because of the code of personal loyalty to one’s superior and to one’s co-workers, which included, at least traditionally, an obligation to revenge, to protect, and to reward, factionalism was easily established and difficult to eradicate. The code of building and relying on personal relationships – *guanxi* – is a closely related and traditional practice (Hwang 1998; Kiong 1998). The Communists made some attempts to eradicate these practices as being feudal and backward. However, in the face of what

were perceived as highly unfair implementations of policy and other perceived injustices, without apparent recourse to any redress, during the GPCR people widely participated in factional conflict and turned to personal relationships and influence to try to protect themselves and their children (Chang, Luo, Zhai).

One of the great myths of the traditional Confucian view of the world is the essential beneficence of heaven and the corresponding benevolence of imperial order, when it is in harmony with the ways of heaven. Mao's adoption of the role of father, protector, hero, and guide to young people was built upon this fundamentally benevolent view of the role of the emperor. Mao expanded it, however, in at least two important ways. The traditional emperor was not either a military or revolutionary hero in the way that Mao established himself. Mao in this role was able to extend his moral commands to include the destruction of traditional culture and the infliction of violence. While intra-social violence certainly existed in traditional Chinese culture, it was not part of the myth of either imperial order or the role of the intellectual (Harrell 1990). Furthermore, Mao established his personal, benevolent relationship with young people directly, by-passing the traditionally mediating role of the father, and by extension parents, and in the GPCR throwing aside also the traditional role of the teacher as an interpretive guide to the young. His policies deliberately divided youth from their parents and limited parental influence.

As many of these subjects noted, this was a heady and intoxicating mix. It melded together traditional ideas of paternalistic and protective, essentially kindly, dictatorship with appeals to the most individualistic of modern concepts of complete freedom from

parents, teachers, or cultural restraints. However, since the traditional component of this mix was based on the idea of Mao's benevolence, his protective role, and since it became obvious fairly quickly that the GPCR was neither benevolent nor, for youth, protective and nourishing, the narrative shattered. Mao could not be depended upon as had been promised and these youth turned against him.

Another Maoist myth that played an important role in the 1949 revolution, throughout the 1950s and the GPCR was the portrayal of intellectuals as effete and useless in the creation of the new Communist utopia. Important elements of this Maoist narrative were the wide difference between peasant culture and literati-gentry culture, the corresponding divide between rural and urban life, the abhorrence of physical labor by the literati, and the resentment by the peasantry of the educated and urban classes. These elements are clearly present in the memoirs of this study but their significance is not completely obvious.

What is obvious is that the subjects initially accepted this picture of the peasant – intellectual divide as true. For those who went to the countryside, in this sample, most began to question these ideas given what they experienced. They note kindness and a lack of resentment or revolutionary enthusiasm where they had not expected these qualities. They learned they could work hard⁸⁷ and came to respect the skills and knowledge of some of their peasant co-workers and be respected in turn. They discovered that peasants were not all heroes as Mao had said. Chang goes so far as to say that most urban youth

⁸⁷ An interesting related question, which is implied here but which I do not pursue, is what the peasant and intellectual cultures did hold in common. Maoist thought so emphasized the divide that discussion of the common elements seems to have gotten lost. From brief hints in these accounts, I could suggest three common features at least – the importance of the parental roles; the value placed on hard work, endurance, and persistence; and, ironically, the value placed on education.

sent to the countryside came to despise the backwardness and conservative nature of peasant life. It is certainly true that all these subjects wanted to leave and return to urban life when they had the chance. They saw no productive, interesting or personally rewarding role for themselves as educated people within rural life, or even life in one of the smaller cities.

Traditional imperial practice banished officials to rural areas, away from the capital as punishment. Although accomplished on a much vaster scale, it is still hard not to see the cadre camps and the sending of the youth to the countryside as echoing this practice. This is especially true as subjects mention (i.e. Yang, Yue) their relief at the lack of factionalism and conflict in the countryside, the same expression of relief often expressed by the traditional bureaucrat when similarly exiled. However, the traditional literati bureaucrat had his roots in the countryside and he had a role of some prestige when he got there. Although a number (Yang, Zhai, Zhang) report being treated with some deference by the peasants they encountered, they perhaps did not always recognize it. These subjects had no comfortable role there in the Maoist thought. This had changed from expecting them to sacrifice themselves for the sake of the peasants and their country, which role was an extension of the sacrifice for country of the traditional literati class. He now expected them to become peasants, which was clearly unacceptable to these subjects.

Of Chinese literary forms, the one with the highest cultural value is history. These subjects not only see their stories as historically significant. They anchor them to a remarkable degree in the political events and policies of the central government. Of

course, the events and policies of the central government had direct, visible and often painful influence on their immediate well being. Additionally, they spent much of their school time after the spring of 1966 reading and discussing policies and directives. Their parents had learned to sense the political winds by closely following and interpreting the articles in the government sponsored newspapers. These habits of mind were not dissimilar to traditional careful parsing of classical texts which required commentary and often subtle distinctions to be adequately interpreted.

Conflict between family loyalty and public life

There is an obvious conflict in the lives of the younger group between their selves at home and their selves as Red Guards. As Red Guards, or in other school related activities, they were asked to participate in the humiliation and persecution of teachers and other enemies of Mao and the revolution. But in their private lives, their own parents, often teachers themselves, were being persecuted as rightists, and their grandparents frequently punished as former landlords, by Red Guards not unlike themselves. While these subjects discuss freely how they came to address many of the other emotional dilemmas they had to face during the GPCR, this dilemma is touched on only lightly.

Chang describes her ambivalence about the Red Guard activities in more depth than the others, although she does not openly draw the parallel between the victims she sees, her participation even if reluctant and minimal, and the persecution of her parents. Min describes her mother's punishment of her for speaking at the struggle meeting of her teacher, explicitly drawing the comparison with herself – how would Min feel if her mother's students treated her that way. Yang provides one brief passage, describing her

participation in the destruction of a private garden, when she recollects her grandmother's garden. Her remembered justification at the time was her loyalty to Mao, and the landlord, that is 'evil,' status of her grandmother. Her grandmother had nothing to do with her.

Nanchu's memoir, although told roughly chronologically, also partially employs an arrangement of material by topic. In this way, she begins with the dramatic episodes of their house search and her father's struggle meetings and the sub-threads of the story, parents' persecution versus her activities as a Red Guard, can be told each in a unified manner. Thus, her parents' harassment is described with sympathy but separately from her participation in the Red Guard, even though she pursued Red Guard activities at the same time that her father's investigation was being intensified and after she had already witnessed his terrifying struggle meetings and her mother's violent mistreatment. Nanchu does not describe how she remembers dealing with these two apparently contradictory spheres of feeling and by the construction of her story line avoids having to address it or call attention to it.

Parents were co-conspirators in this dance of avoidance. I have already referred to the silence in many families and the absence of parents, often through no fault of their own. Since Zhai's or Yang's parents, for example, may not to have been well aware of what their children were actually doing, they could not or would not guide their children to reconciling their behavior between home and the GPCR. Also, of course, many believed that their children would survive better if they followed the direction the Party

was taking them and were willing to sacrifice their own physical and moral comfort for the sake of their children.

It seems that one of the most troubling aspects of the GPCR for the younger group of subjects was this conflict between the outer world and the world of the family. The fact that parents were in physical danger was important, but so was the fact that they were being condemned by the Party and Mao. What had previously seemed to these youth a unified value system split suddenly, for many, into two separate and antagonistic systems. Jiang organizes her book around the choice she made finally for the values of loyalty to her family, but it was a choice between them. There was no way for her to reconcile the two. While she was still wavering in her decision -- she almost changed her name at the police station -- she lives part-time in one world, and part-time in another.

For youth whose parents, as far as they knew, were not being persecuted, at least among these subjects, there was not such an explicit sense of choice or it appears to have been an easier one, and fell on the side of Mao and the Red Guards until they felt the betrayal of their banishment to the countryside. The absence of the parents from their lives – their parents are largely absent from their stories, anyway – made this easier. They also remember initially more antagonistic relationships with their teachers than the youth whose families were being persecuted. Zhai and Yang, for example, seem to remember no teacher with particular fondness, and they are explicit about their dislike of the education system, whereas close relationships with teachers are a feature of Luo's, Chang's, and Niu-Niu's memories and are associated with their resistance to the Red Guard and Rebel activities.

The memoirs of the older group acknowledge a not always comfortable division between the outer world of chaos and violence and their personal world, but their inner worlds were more certain. Cheng was saddened at what she saw happening and often incredulous. However, she had no great uncertainty about what she should do or where her loyalty lay: she wanted to protect her daughter and herself. She saw her continuing conflict with her investigators and guards as the best way to do that.

Yue's book is particularly instructive. She speaks readily of the integration of her family self with the self dealing with the harsh realities of the world outside. She speaks repeatedly of the transitions between these two spheres; she thinks of her family while she is in the countryside; she helps and supports her husband when he comes home from his struggle sessions. She follows her son to protect him on his escapades to help the Red Guards. She is not one person in one place and a different person in the other. She never sees herself having to make a choice between loyalty to Mao and Communism on the one hand and her loyalty to self and family on the other. She describes the feeling after her first expulsion from the Party:

I was cut off from the central meaning of my life, ... and I felt utterly lost, a stranger in my own land. But even in the dismissal meeting, another voice had spoken inside me.... Even if I was no longer an official member, in my mind, my heart, my thoughts, I vowed, no one can separate me from what I believe.” (42)

Here, despite the difficulty of the experience for her, she does not question herself or loyalty. Zhang's account shows the least personal certainty of the accounts from the

older group, and she appears initially to be indicating a division between the world of Mao and her home life.

I had tried hard to fit into the accepted mold...to confess my innermost thought, to do things that went against my conscience and my personality to demonstrate my loyalty to the system... [But] I would never be accepted, and my children would also bear the stigma. It had taken me 20 years of adult life to realize this. (13)

However, this is a different kind of conflict. Most importantly she never saw herself or her parents as fully part of the Communist way of life. Her father was discriminated against from early on. Her youth had been spent, after liberation, on the outside, looking in and trying to get in. She knew she did not believe everything she was supposed to believe. She did not feel particularly guilty about it. But for the group of youthful subjects, they were uncertain, and they often did feel guilty.

The memoirs in context of the memory literature

The subject memoirs exhibit all the potential motivations assigned to memoirs in Chapter 2, often interweaving a number within one memoir. These motivations emphasize (a) setting the record straight, in opposition to other accounts, (b) understanding the influence of the past on the present self, (c) looking for causal explanations of what happened, (d) laying experiences to rest, especially ones associated with guilty feelings, and (e) warnings to others, so this might not happen again. Described at this level of abstraction, the motivations for writing a memoir appear consistent between these memoirs and those motivations described for memoirs in the Western-European tradition. There appears to be less obvious overlap at this motivational

level, however, between these memoirs and the motivations of traditional Chinese autobiography, at least as described in Wang Lingzhen (2004) and Wu (1990). The only exception might be the rather spare, largely chronological memoir by Chen, whose style Kinkley (1990) attributes to her repeated writing of confessions. However, her account may bear some relationship to traditional autobiography which often emphasized official career, appointments and responsibilities. The writing of confessions themselves might be considered within this same tradition, however.

At the same time, there are distinctively Chinese themes, forms and emphases in these memoirs which are less typical in the Western-European tradition. Since these subjects are all women writing during a relatively restricted period, it is difficult to know how these differences may generalize to men or to other periods. However, they provide some indications for further investigation.

The formal differences are, of course, a matter of trends. However, there appears to be more reliance on an episodic type of form in these memoirs than one might expect in a set of Western memoirs. Several of these memoirs use a disjointed type of plot structure. At one extreme, Lu has chosen to write a book of distinct stories. These explore different aspects of her perceptions of the GPCR and are arranged in a rough chronological order related to the maturity of the voice she uses as a narrator. The stories thus provide much of the same spirit of the other memoirs and can be classed with them. Luo has written her memoir in epistolary style, covering certain topics in each letter, again arranging them in a rough chronological order. Although Chang's memoir is carefully chronological, covering all years with no gaps, nonetheless, she provides a topic

heading and topic focus for each time segment she covers, which device, along with the relatively short chapters, gives an episodic feel to the account.

A second stylistic device reminiscent of traditional narrative practice is the regular inclusion of poetry and quotations of songs in many of the accounts. As in traditional literature, these serve both as commentary on events and, in some cases, as a kind of documentary evidence of the events people experienced.

A number of the accounts of the younger group cover their growth from children through adolescence and into young womanhood. This is, of course, a common theme in European writings. My discussion in Chapter 5 has followed roughly this outline. For the younger group the “growing up” they describe consists of their declaration of independence from Mao and the Party. They comment explicitly on particular instances they recall as triggering their doubt in the message of the GPCR, strengthening those doubts, and finally signaling complete disillusionment. The impression created by the accounts following this pattern is not so much that of an emotional maturation process as an accumulation of painful experiences, betrayals and doubts which these young women wish to document as turning points in their attitudes. From an outside viewpoint I can speculate that these changes in attitude were facilitated not simply by these external events but by some changes in psychology as the young women also gained in emotional maturity and experience. However, the memoirs themselves do not emphasize the internal growth or maturation which I see must underlie them.

In several cases, subjects look backward to search for explanations for why they acted as they did, especially in cases where they later felt guilt. Many have also been

haunted by remembered images that were simply very frightening or puzzling. Images of parents being persecuted or of parents who were at such extremity they could give their child nothing or very little of what was needed are examples of such images. Describing these in writing perhaps helped to bring these images under control.

What is noticeably absent that would be present in typical Western memoirs of young adolescents maturing to young women is much discussion of romantic love. A number of these subjects comment on such relationships, or the lack thereof, in their lives, but except in Min's memoir, they play a very minor role. Another common aspect of growing up stories in the West is the rebellion against parental restrictions and parental life choices. These themes also are largely absent from these memoirs. I have pointed to a few conflicts, such as resentment of family background and the disagreements with parents over where the subject might go when sent to the countryside. But these are not major themes. Relationships with siblings and friends, another possible component of the memoir in the West, are clearly important to many of these subjects. They play a more important role than romantic love and parental conflict but are adjuncts to the stories rather than major themes.

Some cultural factors contributing to these differences have already been suggested, which influenced traditional Chinese autobiographical writing. One is protection of the privacy of people who were close to the subject. Another is a reluctance to sharing information either about family conflicts or about the extent of romantic attachments. A third is a reluctance to appear to criticize one's parents. These traditional constraints were reinforced in the case of the theme of romantic love by Maoist

Puritanism. They appear even more significant when set against the prominence of romantic love and youthful rebellion in the fiction of the May 4th Movement or that of Shanghai during the Japanese occupation (Link 1981;Huang 2005; Chang 2007a, 2007b).

However, the focusing of the memoirs on the subjects' relationships with the state, especially for women, reflects a significantly different balance between individual and society than would be expected, for example, in North America, and a significant difference from traditional Chinese women's roles. The Maoist state was ever present in a relatively intimate way in these subjects' lives through the various mechanisms of Maoist Communism, intensified for the purposes of the GPCR. Thus, the working out of one's relationship with that state – the degree of acquiescence to its demands and the degree and manner of resistance to them – was what demanded the attention of the adolescent.⁸⁸ Looking back on what happened to them, most of these subjects are concerned with the questions already suggested: what was responsible for what I did and how and when did I come to feel this? The reflection on the reasons for their behavior is based on a sense of puzzlement that this could have happened. This puzzlement reflects itself the belief that the GPCR was a kind of madness that afflicted many people. It was a break from the past in some way. It also reflects a change in life values in a number of cases, a growth of compassion, and a growing belief that what happened was wrong.

Not all the memoirs emphasize this same evolution of feelings. For a significant number of these subjects in both the older and younger groups, the change in attitudes is focused on their learning how to live through and survive the difficulties they faced.

⁸⁸ This echoes Kipnis (2003) who found that a number of post-Mao studies by American anthropologists reported almost constant rebellion and questioning of authority in the Chinese workplace.

Cheng carefully documents the measures she took to save herself physically, mentally, and emotionally. However, so does Luo, who was a member of the younger group. This theme of the learning how to deal with the social environment, rather than simply living at its command, becomes more pronounced in the adolescent growth memoirs as the subjects get older. Thus, one of the more “grown up” lessons they learned was the ability to deal effectively with officials and bureaucracy in their quest to attend university, change their residency, or obtain permission to leave China, for those who did.

The focus on the personal struggle with the social-bureaucratic-government presence in their lives is interestingly not so different, after all, from a major topic of the memoirs of the traditional literati-gentry (Wu 1990). It is completely compatible with the enormous commitment to serving the government which was their heritage from the literati-gentry class, as I have summarized in Chapter 3. These women saw this commitment to extreme effort in service of governing the nation actualized in the work habits, willingness for self sacrifice, and sense of duty of their parents’ generation. Its relationship to traditional literati culture was evident to many in the reading tastes of their parents and in some cases the elements of traditional education they received at home. It was a commitment which the Communists had relied upon for the achievements of the 1949 Revolution. This commitment was further nurtured for those educated under the Communist system. What is possibly the most dramatic change from earlier society is the confidence these subjects felt, as women, that their commitment to serve their country in a public capacity was a significant part of their lives.

The turn toward family obligations which a number of these subjects experienced should not be interpreted as a backing away from that belief in an equal role for women in the work of the world. The turn toward family responsibilities and commitment to supporting their parents through their difficulties rather reflects one survival strategy for the children as well as the parents.⁸⁹ Those who retained close ties with their families (Jiang, Luo, Lu, Chang), even though the parents were severely incapacitated, clearly derived strength from the continued presence of their parents. Those who went through significant periods of separation from their parents (Yang, Zhai) appear considerably more lost or adrift. The reliance on the family as a survival strategy, in extremity, is hardly unique to China. What appears more Chinese is the way in which these subjects talk about or view their relationships with their parents when they had to care for them. They repeatedly talk about serving their parents, and provide a kind of personal care which speaks to a special family intimacy. However, it is also important to note that not all families followed this pattern. In some, the parents, even in extremis, remained distant and did not show their vulnerability to their children.

The importance of the increased responsibility of children for their parents, in those cases where it happened, is two fold. On the one hand the adolescent (in most cases) was put in the position of having to mature more quickly than would otherwise have happened. Given the vividness of these cases within these memoirs, it seems that this was a highly charged and difficult experience, which led to considerable anxiety. On

⁸⁹ Whether the role of caring for younger siblings and for ill parents and other relatives was more frequently taken by young women than by their brothers is not completely clear from this sample. All who cared for family were the eldest child at home during the period. Grandmothers, Aunts and former servants also often helped, of course. Most people mentioned in the mature caretaking roles were women.

the other hand, the goal of the GPCR of driving a wedge between parents and children, at least among these subjects, where the parents were directly attacked and the children knew it, was not completely successful. Certainly parents were weakened in their children's eyes, but the result was compassion and, for many,⁹⁰ a turning away from the state that had done this to their parents.

Those adolescents who were emotionally or physically separated from their parents ended by being thrown back on their own devices to navigate the difficulties of an independence for which they were barely ready, in a world – both in middle school and in their rural experiences – which was hardly benevolent. The perceived unfairness of the way in which they were treated turned them against the state and Mao whom they held responsible. So although their path was different, they ended in much the same place, turning toward more reliance on their own resources and pursuing a path toward education and an intellectual life far more consistent with their intellectual family heritage than the mindless devotion to the radical Maoist vision which had attempted to co-opt them.

So the GPCR, which had attempted to break apart families and install the state more firmly in the role of the family, as well as tie young people more closely to the state's purposes, overstepped the bounds which these families and their children could tolerate. The result of this radical implementation of social policy was the opposite of what was intended – a turning away from an intensified level of communal life toward a

⁹⁰ We have seen that Nanchu (and we know from reports there were others) retained her desire to support the GPCR much longer than others, in the face of the persecution of her parents. That is way it would be interesting to know more about how she felt and thought about that contradiction, which topic is skipped over in her memoir.

greater individualism and a reaffirmation of the importance of family relationships. The balance of public and private, pushed too far by the GPCR toward public interference in the private, has had to readjust. Whether it has adjusted sufficiently for most Chinese people today is certainly not within the scope of this study to even suggest and is perhaps not yet decided.

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Chang chronicles the lives of her grandmother, her mother and herself. Her parents were officials in Chengdu, and the family was heavily persecuted during the GPCR. She emigrated to England.

Chen Xuezhao

1990 *Surviving the Storm: A Memoir*. Ti Hua and Caroline Green, trans. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

Chen was a leftist writer beginning from the 1920s in Shanghai who joined the Communists in Yan'an. She lived near Hangzhou and suffered persecution in 1957 and again in the GPCR. She remained in China until her death.

Cheng, Nien

1987 *Life and Death in Shanghai*. New York: Grove Press.

Cheng was the widow of a former GMD official and Shell Oil executive living in Shanghai. She was jailed and persecuted for seven years during the GPCR. She emigrated to the US, and has since died.

Jiang, Ji-li

1997 *Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution*. New York: Harper Collins.

Jiang lived in Shanghai. Her family was persecuted during the GPCR as rightists. She moved to the US where she lives now.

Lu, Shu Jiang

2007 *When Huai Flowers Bloom: Stories of the Cultural Revolution*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Lu lived in Anhui Province during the GPCR and now lives in the US. Her parents were persecuted as rightists. This book is a group of stories about her experiences, as opposed to a chronological memoir.

Luo, Zi-ping

1990 *A Generation Lost: China Under the Cultural Revolution*. New York: Henry Holt.

Luo's family lived in Shanghai and were persecuted as rightists in 1957 as well as during the GPCR. Her book is written as a series of letters to a fellow survivor of the GPCR to persuade him not to commit suicide. She emigrated to the US.

Min, Anchee

1995 *Red Azalea*. New York: Random House.

Min lived in Shanghai and has since moved to the US. Her book, written in a stream of consciousness style, focuses on two love affairs, one with her female commander on the commune, the second with her supervisor during training as a movie actress for a Jiang Qing movie.

Nanchu

2001 *Red Sorrow: A Memoir*. New York: Arcade Publishing.

Nanchu lived in Shanghai and her parents were persecuted as rightists in the GPCR. She was a Red Guard and recounts her experience on a military farm in Heilongjiang in considerable detail. She emigrated to the US.

Niu-Niu

1995 *No Tears for Mao: Growing up in the Cultural Revolution*. Enne and Peter Amman, trans. Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers.

Niu-Niu lived with her grandmother in great poverty in Chengdu. She was the youngest of these subjects. Her grandparents were persecuted and her parents in cadre school during her childhood. She emigrated to France.

Wen, Chihua and Bruce Jones

1995 *The Red Mirror: Children of China's Cultural Revolution*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Wen lived in Chengdu; her parents were rightist writers and sent to cadre school. She continues to work in China.

Yang, Rae

1998 *Spider Eaters: A Memoir*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Yang lived in Beijing during the GPCR. Her parents were left relatively undisturbed. She was a Red Guard, spent several years in a commune in Heilongjiang, and finally emigrated to the US.

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2005 *Growing up in the People's Republic: Conversations between two daughters of China's revolution*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

This book is edited by Ye and consists of a series of dialogues between her and Ma on various topics. They both lived in Beijing during their school years and the first part of the GPCR; their parents, except for Ma's mother, were not heavily targeted. Ye emigrated to the US. Ma remains in China.

Yue Daiyun and Carolyn Wakeman

1985 *To the Storm*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Yue lived in Beijing and was already an adult in the GPCR, labeled a rightist in 1957. Her husband was heavily persecuted throughout the upheavals at Beida where they both taught. They were in cadre school. They remain in China.

Zhai Zhenhua

1992 *Red Flower of China*. New York: Soho Press.

Zhai lived in Beijing. She was a Red Guard. Her parents were not heavily targeted. She spent her countryside experience in Yan'an. She emigrated to the US.

Zhang Zhimei

1992 *Foxspirit: A Woman in Mao's China*. Montreal: Vehicule Press.

Zhang lived in Beijing. She knew English from attending a Catholic high school, and was employed first in an Import-Export agency, with an assignment in East Berlin for a couple years. Later she was a teacher and persecuted during the GPCR, first as a probable spy, later for her life-style (divorced, illicit affairs). She emigrated to Canada.

General

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