

# *Days of Old Are Not Puffs of Smoke: Three Hypotheses on Collective Memories of the Cultural Revolution*

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## *Abstract*

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, collective memories of the Cultural Revolution became a means of power struggle and a target of political control. In the 1990s, however, memories of the Cultural Revolution proliferated. This article proposes three hypotheses to explain this memory boom. A repressive hypothesis postulates that the mnemonic control in the earlier periods bred its own resistance. A market hypothesis holds that the rise of a culture industry provided a market for memory products, and cultural entrepreneurs seized the opportunity. A social hypothesis posits that while opening up spaces for alternative memories, the booming market paradoxically created social discontents, especially among the *zhiqing* members of the Cultural Revolution generation. Whether in China or as diaspora, they articulated a nostalgic imaginary of an alternative Chinese modernity in which the reconstruction of morality took central place.

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## Introduction

The title of this article, “Days of Old Are Not Puffs of Smoke,” is borrowed from Zhang Yihe’s book of the same name, a memoir about her father and his intellectual friends in the Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957. Written with poignancy and alive with intimate details about an exclusive circle of elite intellectuals, the book was a sensational hit after its publication in 2004 by the prestigious People’s Literature Press in Beijing. It was the latest best-selling product in a growing industry of memoirs and reminiscences about Maoist China. Reportedly banned soon after its publication, the book conveys a sense of desolation and bitterness about China’s socialist past. Does its publication by the People’s Literature Press, with its strong official background, indicate official endorsement of its political message? Or was it published for its anticipated social impact and commercial success, despite its politics? Is it not true that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Propaganda Department and the State Press and Publication Administration dictate the past, issuing repeated directives about what of the past can be written about, who is authorized to do the writing, and how?

Zhang Yihe’s book raises anew intriguing and important questions about memory, history, and power. These questions are particularly relevant to collective memories of the Cultural Revolution (CR).<sup>1</sup> Like the Anti-Rightist campaign, the CR was a central part of China’s socialist history. In June 1981, the Sixth Plenum of the Eleventh CCP Central Committee passed the “Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party since the Founding of the People’s Republic of China (PRC).”<sup>2</sup> That document laid down the golden rule for writing histories of the Cultural Revolution: Let it be known that the Cultural Revolution was a ten-year disaster and leave it at that — above all, do not be nosy about the details. As if this verdict were not enough, a campaign was launched in 1984 to “totally negate the Cultural Revolution.” Besides exposing “three types of people” associated with the Cultural Revolution leftist radicals,<sup>3</sup> the campaign hammered home the same message as the 1981 “Resolution”: The Cultural Revolution was bad — forget about it unless you want to ask for trouble.

Yet history seems to refuse to be dictated to. In the late 1980s, collective memories of the Cultural Revolution were already beginning to burst out of their confinement. Cultural products such as fictionalized accounts of the Cultural Revolution, not to mention the “educated youth” literature<sup>4</sup> and everything associated with “Mao fever,”<sup>5</sup> appeared in a

fledgling cultural market. Since the 1990s, narratives, images, sounds, sites, bytes, and voices of Cultural Revolution memory have multiplied, presenting numerous tantalizing and forbidden details of various aspects of the Cultural Revolution. They offer counter-narratives to the officially constructed “master narrative” of the CR. As a result, it has become increasingly difficult to speak of *the* Cultural Revolution. A thousand Cultural Revolutions have blossomed.

Studies of CR memories, especially in the English language, have matched their proliferation. Earlier studies by Mobo Gao and Michael Schoenhals, for example, examined the relationship between memory and history with respect to the Cultural Revolution, revealing both the problematic and subversive nature of memory as history.<sup>6</sup> Others have shown how popular memories of the Cultural Revolution are used as resources for collective protest.<sup>7</sup> Still others have studied embodied memory as resistance,<sup>8</sup> memory as commodity,<sup>9</sup> memory and trauma,<sup>10</sup> gendered memory,<sup>11</sup> memory, nostalgia, and identity,<sup>12</sup> memory and the creation of civil society spaces,<sup>13</sup> and so forth. While these studies have illuminated the nature, representations and present uses of CR memories, they often take for granted a basic question that demands explanation: What accounts for the proliferation of CR memories in the first place? Is it not true that one “single authorized version of the past was fabricated,” as Kleinman and Kleinman put it so forcefully?<sup>14</sup>

This article proposes three hypotheses to explain the proliferation of CR memories. First I reformulate the repressive hypothesis underlying current studies of CR memories. Then I propose two new hypotheses to supplement it — I will call them the market hypothesis and the social hypothesis, respectively. If the repressive hypothesis in its current formulation cannot fully explain the memory boom of the 1990s, it is because it does not adequately address the nature of resistance under conditions of repression. Resistance should be considered as inseparable from repression. If it is true that where there is power, there is resistance, then a repressive memory regime creates its own resistance. I will argue that the repressive regime of CR memory produced countervailing forces of resistance in its very attempt to regulate CR memories. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the social groups privileged to express memories of the CR were elite intellectuals and senior cadres. They had been the targets of the CR. The voices of the ordinary people and former rebel Red Guards were missing. It is these muted voices that found their way into the memory boom of the 1990s.

In the 1990s, furthermore, the repressive memory regime found itself confronted by two others forces. One was the market — hence the market hypothesis. The market hypothesis holds that in the process of the marketization of China, memories of the CR are turned into commodities. Cultural entrepreneurs tapped into the new cultural market by offering CR-related cultural products. The other force is social — hence also a social hypothesis. The social hypothesis postulates that collective memories of the CR in the 1990s had a broad social basis, namely, members of the Cultural Revolution generation. Specifically, the social hypothesis holds that the boom in Cultural Revolution memory is a critical response to contemporary conditions rather than an indulgence in the past.<sup>15</sup> The nostalgic elements in this memory boom constitute what I will refer to as a nostalgic imaginary, not an “imagined nostalgia” as some critics have dubbed it.<sup>16</sup> This nostalgic imaginary contains inklings of an embryonic social imaginary in which Chinese modernity is being rethought and re-imagined.<sup>17</sup>

In developing these three hypotheses, I emphasize the role of social agents in controlling or articulating collective memories. This actor-centred approach shows how social agents negotiate political, economic and social conditions, how they mobilize memories to articulate criticisms of the present and visions for the future, and how they challenge a repressive memory regime. The final part of the article discusses the broader social and political implications of this blossoming of CR memories and its direct consequences for the writing of Cultural Revolution history.

## **The Repressive Hypothesis**

In scholarly studies of memories of China’s Cultural Revolution, there exists, implicitly or explicitly, a repressive hypothesis. In this hypothesis, memories of the CR are under strict political control in China. What of it can be remembered, and who has the right to articulate memories, is dictated by a repressive memory regime. They are matters of political struggle. Lowell Dittmer argues, for example, that retrospective views of the CR reflect “the factional balance of power at the top.”<sup>18</sup> Kleinman and Kleinman articulate the repressive hypothesis explicitly in the following terms:

Thus the social memory of the Cultural Revolution was silenced or reworked in an authorized version, a “public transcript” that located blame in the Gang of Four and their ultra-leftist associates, while exonerating the Party, the state, and their local representatives.... Bitter memories, hatred of leaders and

coworkers, burning grievances, and inflamed traumas were all officially suppressed. A single authorized version of the past was fabricated, collective grieving was brought to an end, and the people were ordered to get on with the projects of socialist reconstruction and, later on, economic reform.<sup>19</sup>

The context in which the “single authorized version of the past was fabricated” was the early 1980s. Subsequent history shows that people did get on with the economic reform, yet they did not forget the past. Quite the contrary, in fact. In the middle of it, memories of the Cultural Revolution returned with a vengeance.<sup>20</sup> In order to understand the revenge of history in the 1990s, it is necessary to trace the historical evolution of a repressive regime of Cultural Revolution memory.

In the late 1970s, as the Maoist era came to an end, its history and memory became arenas of political struggle. The fall of Hua Guofeng, Mao’s hand-picked successor, and the rise of Deng Xiaoping, were played out in these symbolic struggles. One of the first feats Hua accomplished in his six years as China’s supreme leader (1976–1982) was the construction of the “Chairman Mao Memorial.” In his manoeuvres to undermine Hua, Deng similarly resorted to mnemonic practices, though of a different kind. As Harry Harding puts it, Deng “encouraged popular pressure for a more explicit repudiation of the Cultural Revolution and a more rapid and thoroughgoing rehabilitation of its victims.”<sup>21</sup>

The popular pressures for repudiating the CR took two concrete social forms. One was the “literature of the wounded” literary movement, the other was the Democracy Wall social movement.<sup>22</sup> Works of the “literature of the wounded” tell stories of the victims of the Cultural Revolution, where the culprit was invariably the “Gang of Four” and the CR was summarily dismissed as “ten years of disaster.” The authors were limited to a small number of intellectuals. In comparison, the Democracy Wall Movement was much more wide-ranging in its assessments and critiques of the CR. The dominant forms of the movement, wall-posters and unofficial publications, made it possible to voice alternative views. There were not only scathing exposures of the injustices and sufferings inflicted on ordinary Chinese people. There also appeared critical analyses of the CR that challenged official views. Liu Guokai’s *A Brief Analysis of the Cultural Revolution*, for example, appeared initially in an unofficial publication which he edited in Guangzhou at that time. Portraying rebel Red Guards as victims of a repressive regime, Liu’s analysis challenges the official view of the rebels as the associates of the “Gang of Four” and the

perpetrators of the ten-year disaster.<sup>23</sup> However, these alternative critiques of the CR were often linked with demands for democratic political reform, demands that could have undermined Deng's own position. Consequently, as Kleinman and Kleinman put it, "... when these popular expressions began to coalesce into the early phase of a movement for democratization, they were attacked. Thus the social memory of the Cultural Revolution was silenced or reworked in an authorized version...."<sup>24</sup>

In these two movements, then, mnemonic practices related to the CR became a means of winning political gains for the emerging Dengist regime. The CR was made to form a historical foil to the rise and moral rejuvenation of the new regime. Yet when the popular grievances appeared to be going off political limits, the emerging Dengist regime withdrew its support. Instead, a more coercive memory regime shaped up. This memory regime adopted three strategies to shape the history and memories of the CR. First, it introduced policies and regulations concerning Mao and the CR. The historic communiqué of the Third Plenum of the Eleventh CCP Central Committee in 1978 stated that the problems of the Cultural Revolution "should be summed up at the appropriate time."<sup>25</sup> This made it clear that some settling of accounts would take place sooner or later. Shortly afterwards, a process of de-Maoification got under way. In February 1979, an official party document was issued to suspend the distribution of the Mao quotation books.<sup>26</sup> Another party directive was issued in July 1980, to cut back on "propagating individuals,"<sup>27</sup> which ordered, among other things, the reduction of the number of Mao portraits and statues in public spaces. One month later, the National People's Congress removed Article 45 from the PRC Constitution. Article 45 gave citizens four "great freedoms," namely, the freedom to speak out freely, air views fully, hold great debates, and write big-character posters. These so-called "four greats" were the officially endorsed "weapons of struggle" in the Cultural Revolution<sup>28</sup> and had provided some degree of legitimacy to all forms of social protest up to the Democracy Wall Movement. Removing them from the constitution was another strike at the ideology of the CR.

A watershed document in the control of CR memory was the "Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party since the Founding of the PRC" mentioned earlier. This document officially denounced the CR as a ten-year disaster, for which Mao and a small handful of leftist radicals were held responsible. Mao, however, was partially absolved from his responsibility. His was not only "the error of a

great proletarian revolutionary,” but he personally “led the struggle to smash the counter-revolutionary Lin Biao clique” and “made major criticisms and exposures of Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, and others, frustrating their sinister ambition to seize supreme leadership.”<sup>29</sup>

The second strategy in the control of CR memories was the use of public spectacles to exercise a symbolic rejection of the CR. In 1978 and 1979, numerous funerals and memorial services were held all over China for government cadres and intellectuals persecuted to death in the Cultural Revolution. Following the rehabilitation programme, the new regime turned its attention to criminalizing the CR radicals, both top leaders like the “Gang of Four” and leading rebel Red Guards. The nationally televised trial of the “Gang of Four” in January 1981 marked the climax of this criminalizing project.<sup>30</sup>

The third strategy was the political campaign (*yundong*), the classical form of political struggle in the history of the PRC. At the end of 1983, an intra-party rectification campaign was launched to remove “three types of people” from positions of authority.<sup>31</sup> Although the three types of people were identified as “followers of Lin Biao and the Gang of Four, those seriously affected by factional ideas, and the ‘smashers and grabbers’ of the Cultural Revolution,”<sup>32</sup> they were interpreted as referring broadly to rebel Red Guards. Following the rectification, a nation-wide campaign was launched in 1984 to “totally negate the Cultural Revolution.”

The above strategies used for controlling CR memories marked a repressive memory regime in full swing. Yet these control efforts both reflected and created resistance against state-sponsored memory projects. The campaign to “totally negate the Cultural Revolution,” for example, betrayed the level of resistance against the total rejection of the CR. The campaign would have been unnecessary if there had not been resistance to the negation of the CR in the first place. Resistance also broke out when Mao statues were being demolished nation-wide, forcing the Central Office of the CCP to issue a circular on this specific issue.<sup>33</sup> Finally, if the voices of elite intellectuals and party cadres dominated the public sphere in the late 1970s and early 1980s, with a few exceptions (such as Liu Guokai’s study of the CR), the voices of ordinary people and former rebel Red Guards were missing. In fact, leading rebel Red Guards such as Kuai Dafu, Nie Yuanzi and Han Aijing were sentenced to long terms in prison.<sup>34</sup> These muted voices would find their outlets in the 1990s.

## The Positive Functions of a Culture Industry: A Market Hypothesis

If the campaign to “totally negate the Cultural Revolution” showed the repressive CR memory regime in full swing, it also marked the beginning of its weakening. Policies regulating CR memories continued to appear in the late 1980s, yet at the same time, CR-related cultural products began to multiply, eventually evolving into the “Mao fever” and *zhiqing* (educated youth) nostalgia of the 1990s. Because this process coincided with China’s transformation from a planned to a market-based economy, it is crucial to examine how and why the market transformation influenced memory production. It is all the more interesting to examine this question because the market change marks China’s entry into capitalism, the arch-enemy of the Cultural Revolution. It is a supreme historical irony that the proliferation of CR memories in the 1990s coincided with the accelerated development of capitalism in China.

The development of modern Western capitalism was accompanied by the growth of a culture industry. This culture industry serves at least three functions. First, like other industries, it is a profit-making enterprise and thus serves an economic function. Second, since the culture industry produces cultural products, it satisfies the non-material needs of members of society. In this respect, it serves a social function. Third, the culture industry serves a hidden political function. By saturating society with commodities for entertainment, it numbs people’s critical capacity and turns citizens into mere consumers. Worse still, because capitalist values are often embedded in these commodities, the consumption process in effect becomes one of socializing people, unawares, into the values of the capitalist system.

Yet historically, the rise of a culture industry in a capitalist society served a revolutionary role. To the extent that a bourgeois public sphere of critical discourse existed in early modern Europe, as Jürgen Habermas argues, it depended essentially on the development of an early form of culture industry — newspapers, periodicals, and book-printing. This culture industry made possible the dissemination of revolutionary ideas as well as commercial news.<sup>35</sup>

A market-based culture industry is part and parcel of China’s capitalist economic development. Maoist China had a culture industry, but it was centralized, made to serve political and ideological goals, and minimal in scale. Part of the reason for the popularity of the “literature of the

wounded” was that, coming in the wake of a period of cultural impoverishment, it slaked a thirst for culture. This was a thirst both for knowledge and for its material forms — magazines, books, newspapers, and so forth. In this social context, a market-based culture industry found its niche.

From the beginning of the economic reform, CR-related cultural products occupied a central place in the development of the culture industry. In the field of literature, some of the most influential literary movements in the past quarter-century have focused on the representation of the CR. Besides the “literature of the wounded” already mentioned, these literary movements include “misty poetry,” “root-searching literature,” “*zhiqing* literature,” “self-reflexive literature” (*fansi wenxue*) and “prison literature” (*daqiang wenxue*). In the field of reportage literature (*baogao wenxue*), celebrity figures from the CR period are the subjects of numerous short and long stories (more of this below). In music, rock star Cui Jian often makes explicit references to images of the Maoist era in his songs, such as those in the album *The Egg under the Red Flag*.<sup>36</sup> In painting, the so-called “political pop” represented by Wang Guangyi’s parodies of Mao and the CR makes direct use of CR images such as CR posters.<sup>37</sup> In the film-making industry, major fifth-generation directors all explored themes related to the CR, from Chen Kaige’s *King of the Children* (1988), Tian Zhuangzhuang’s *The Blue Kite* (1993) and Zhang Yimou’s *To Live* (1994), to Jiang Wen’s *In the Heat of the Sun* (1995).<sup>38</sup> In the field of television drama, the first great success story was perhaps *Aspirations* (*Ke wang*). Set in the CR period and aired in 1990, it reportedly forced some factories to change their work schedules so that employees could go home to watch it.<sup>39</sup> Besides inspiring many other TV dramas related to the CR, *Aspirations* directly contributed to the rise of the Mao fever and the *zhiqing* nostalgia of the 1990s. In short, it is no exaggeration to say that the CR has been an inexhaustible source of cultural production in the reform era and that many authors and artists made their names by exploring themes related to the CR.

Except for works from the earlier literary movements, most of these CR-related cultural products appeared in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s. During this period, the repressive regime of CR memory continued to control collective representations of the CR. The CCP Central Propaganda Department and the State Press and Publication Administration issued several directives concerning the publication of CR-related materials. One of the most comprehensive regulations, issued in 1988, states that “From now on and for quite some time, publishing firms

should not plan the publication of dictionaries or other handbooks about the ‘Great Cultural Revolution’” and that “Under normal circumstances, one should not plan to publish titles specifically researching the ‘Great Cultural Revolution’ or specifically telling the history of the ‘Great Cultural Revolution.’”<sup>40</sup> A party circular issued in March 1992 concerning the commemoration of Mao’s centenary required that works to be published in conjunction with the centenary “are to be strictly reviewed and approved according to the stipulations and guidelines that have been set out.”<sup>41</sup> In 1997, the State Press and Publication Administration issued more regulations to Chinese publishers about the reporting of “weighty and big” (*zhongda*) publication projects, including projects related to the CR.<sup>42</sup>

Despite such political control, CR-related cultural products multiplied. This reflected new social trends, especially the rise of a consumer society in China. Historian Jay Winter has argued that affluence is a precondition of the “memory boom” in the West. “Dwelling on memory is a matter of both disposable income and leisure time.”<sup>43</sup> He notes that economic growth and the expansion of the service sector after World War II increased the demand for cultural commodities such as those having to do with memory — books, films, television shows, and museum exhibitions about the past. In China, growing affluence now provides the disposable income and leisure time for people to dwell on the past. This is a significant factor behind the overall trend of a rising interest in the past, not just the Cultural Revolution, but all periods of the Chinese past. In the 1990s, when China was jettisoning its socialist heritage, there arose an intense interest in the re-evaluation of the Chinese revolution, of which the CR was an important part. Thus besides CR-related cultural products, histories and memoirs about the Yan’an rectification campaign, the Anti-Rightist campaign, the rural People’s Communes and other major events and personalities were published, with enormous market success. The publication of Zhang Yihe’s book *Days of Old Are Not Puffs of Smoke* mentioned at the beginning of this article is the most notable recent example.<sup>44</sup>

While the rise of a consumer society provides a necessary condition, cultural entrepreneurs play an essential role in steering an environment of market competition and political control. Cultural entrepreneurs understand the market and know how to negotiate political control. A good example is the writer Ye Yonglie. Ye was originally a writer of “pure literature.” Later he began to write “reportage literature” and published biographies of members of the “Gang of Four” and other CR leftist

radicals.<sup>45</sup> He explained this shift as a response to market opportunity, because after he started publishing “reportage literature,” he found that his works in this genre sold much better than his serious literature. “Thus I began to write for readers instead of for myself.... I think books are commodities and are subject to market constraints. Writers must consider market demands.”<sup>46</sup> The subjects of Ye’s books were closely watched by public security personnel. To obtain permission for an interview required complicated official procedures. Archives on the CR were closed. Nevertheless, Ye made use of his reputation and personal connections to gain access to his subjects and to historical archives.<sup>47</sup>

Cultural entrepreneurs like Ye Yonglie gain access to forbidden areas of the CR history by negotiating their way through China’s political system. Yet others tap the rich reservoir of ordinary folks’ memories in order to meet market and social demands. Yue Jianyi, an editor in the Workers Publishing House in Beijing, is a good case in point. Yue was the editor of Lao Gui’s novel *Blood-Red Sunset* (*Xuese Huanghun*). After being rejected by fourteen publishers, the novel was an instant hit when it was published in 1987.<sup>48</sup> Since then, Yue Jianyi has edited many other books related to the CR and his press has become known for publishing books in this area.<sup>49</sup> Most recently, he launched a new series of fiction and non-fiction called *Books Written by Ordinary People in Memory of Chinese Zhiqing* (*Zhongguo zhiqing minjian beiwang wenben*). The first eleven books in the series, published in 2001 and 2002, were a huge market success. An important reason why Yue Jianyi has focused on publishing works related to *zhiqing* is that he himself was one. He identifies himself with these ordinary folks, whose memories he says he wants to be preserved. He writes that in Chinese history, the memories of ordinary folks, or folk memories (*minjian jiyi*), have seldom been kept, and he intends this series to be such a preservation project.<sup>50</sup>

There are of course numerous other cultural entrepreneurs. These two cases illustrate their important role in the culture industry. Without these entrepreneurs, it would be hard to imagine how things work out on the ground. Thus despite repeated official attempts to regulate the discourse about the CR, such discourse has never stopped appearing in the market place of contemporary culture. In a commercialized society, the logic of profit can underplay and compromise political factors. In this sense, the process of marketization in China has had some liberating effects in a society where politics had long been in command.

## “The Problem of Generations”: A Social Hypothesis

While the market helped to undermine the control of CR memories, it soon became a problem in its own way. In the memory products of the 1990s, the market became a target of criticism, whereas experiences in the CR became symbolic critical resources. The contradictions of contemporary Chinese society are here brought into sharp relief. The proliferation of CR memories in the 1990s marked the intensification of critical responses to market transformations, yet it was made possible by the very same process.

To understand this paradox, it is necessary to bring back the “problem of generations,” as Karl Mannheim termed it long ago.<sup>51</sup> The reason is obvious: the agents of these memories are members of a generation variously called “Mao’s Children,” the Red Guard generation, the Cultural Revolution generation, and the third generation. These terms refer to the age-cohort born “under the red flag,” as it was commonly put in Maoist China. Its formative experiences were the Red Guard Movement, the Cultural Revolution, and the sent-down movement. The core of this generation, totalling some ten million, was in middle school in 1965, at the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution. If we count the elementary school population in 1965, which was less likely to be directly involved in Red Guard activities but equally likely to be sent down, then the number reaches 120 million.<sup>52</sup>

My social hypothesis is that this Cultural Revolution generation was pivotal in articulating CR memories in the 1990s. Yet who of this generation remembers the CR? What aspects of it are remembered and why? How are the memories expressed? Here it is necessary to distinguish among different units of the CR generation. In Mannheim’s work, while a generation is forged by common historical experiences, it is not homogeneous, but often has subgroups and divisions called “generation units.” As he puts it, “youth experiencing the same concrete historical problems may be said to be part of the same actual generation; while those groups within the same actual generation which work up the material of their common experiences in different specific ways, constitute separate generation units.”<sup>53</sup>

Broadly speaking, the units of the CR generation involved in the memory culture of the 1990s consist mainly of *laosanjie*, *zhiquing*, and the diaspora.<sup>54</sup> *Laosanjie*, or the “old three classes,” refers to students who, but for the outbreak of the CR, would have graduated from junior or senior

middle school in 1966, 1967 or 1968. Most of them were sent down in 1968 and 1969. *Zhiqing* is an umbrella term for all sent-down youth, including both *laosanjie* and those sent down throughout the 1970s. Diaspora here refers exclusively to those members of the CR generation who reside overseas. Because diaspora memories of the CR differ from those of *laosanjie* or *zhiqing*, they will be examined in the next section.

Collective memories of the CR in the late 1970s and early 1980s were mainly articulated by elite intellectuals and party cadres. Consistent with the official verdict, these memory narratives represent the CR as a ten-year disaster. While such memory narratives continued to appear in the 1990s, the most significant development in CR memory in the 1990s was the proliferation of retrospective writings by ordinary people, especially former *zhiqing*. These are mostly short essays about brief episodes of life in the sent-down period. Thus they are not stories about *ten* years of disaster. Their authors are diverse. The contributors to one such collection, for example, include office employees, accountants, doctors, union officials, a nurse, a storage employee, a department store manager, a bus conductor, an archivist, a laid-off worker and a department store salesperson, as well as journalists, editors, and professors.<sup>55</sup> Many retrospective essays represent the voices of people whose experiences have been marginalized in CR narratives. Their informal and essayistic style conveys a degree of sincerity and authenticity that often surpasses the well-crafted English-language memoirs.<sup>56</sup>

Retrospective narratives by ordinary people appear in both printed and digital forms. Members of the CR generation have embraced new media technologies in their mnemonic practices. The internet and writeable CD-ROMs make it much easier to record, reproduce, transmit, and transact memories. There are many individual and collective efforts to collect, publish, and archive documents and memoirs related to the CR on the internet. Reflecting their different political contexts, they take somewhat different forms in and outside China. In China, the main forms are bulletin board systems (BBS) and web sites. The two topics with the biggest web presence are *zhiqing* and Mao. Web sites devoted to Mao often contain Mao's writings and pictures, as well as historical documents on Mao. They often also have discussion forums. One such web site is Maostudy.org. Founded in May 2000, it is apparently run by an ultra-leftist "Mao Zedong Study Society." It openly attacks China's economic reform and its main political supporters Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zeming and calls for the restoration of Maoism. Besides Mao's works, it publishes a monthly

electronic newsletter. No contact information is available, making it resemble an online version of an underground publication.

*Zhiqing* web sites are usually run by and oriented to former *zhiqing*. The mnemonic practices are diverse. Some sites contain digital archives of historical documents about the sent-down movement and thus represent efforts to preserve the history and memories of the movement. Other sites contain commercial information and even online stores, indicating that collective memory can be put to commercial uses. The most distinctive feature of *zhiqing* web sites is that they are spaces for building virtual communities. Almost all of the *zhiqing* web sites have BBS forums; some have chatrooms; other have archives. Hua Xia Zhi Qing (www.hxzq.net), for example, maintains an online archive of the “collected works” (*wenji*) of dozens of its BBS users. Some web sites feature well-known published works about *zhiqing*. “Shanghai Zhiqing Net” has video files of *zhiqing* activities for downloading or online viewing.

A unique set of data provides insights into why former *zhiqing* eagerly seek out *zhiqing* web sites. The data set consists of a collection of essays written by frequent users of Hua Xia Zhi Qing in celebration of the site’s anniversary. On 15 June 2001, the management collective of the web site published a call for essays on the theme of “hxzq.net and me.” Users were invited to write about their personal experience of using hxzq.net. A collection of nearly 20 essays was eventually published on the web site. Most essays describe how the authors initially went online in search of a virtual community for former *zhiqing*. One essay tells the following story:

Whenever I got the chance I would surf online, mainly to search for web sites about former *zhiqing*. For many years, I had a strong “*zhiqing* complex.” I wanted to establish some kind of connection with former *zhiqing* who had similar life experiences. I wanted to find a home that belonged to former *zhiqing*. Yet for about half a year, I didn’t find even one. At that time, I really felt sad for us *zhiqing*. I thought former *zhiqing* had either retired or been laid off and, as a social group, had already been forgotten by society. I thought I was a lonely ghost wandering on the web.... Once, after a random click, however, I entered hxzq.net, and then “Huaxia zhiqing Forum,” “Random Talk” forum, and “Old Three Classes” forum. A brand-new world appeared in front of me. Isn’t this the home I have been earnestly searching for!<sup>57</sup>

Besides specialized web sites devoted to *zhiqing*, Mao, and the CR in general, CR-related topics appear frequently in the numerous BBS forums on the internet. Messages posted in the bulletin boards suggest there is a vibrant current of CR memories in daily life that mostly goes unnoticed. A

message posted to the popular online forum *Qiangguo luntan* (fandui jia da kong, 2003-12-24 21:57:30), for example, attests to the growing discontent in Chinese society with inequality, poverty and corruption, and the renewed fascination with Mao. The author of the message writes that a remark he heard from a farmer reveals the cause of Mao fever better than anything else. The farmer told him that when there are too many mice, people will miss the cat. For this farmer, Mao was the cat and corrupt officials are the mice.

If CR memory narratives multiplied in the 1990s, what did they amount to? What meanings did they infuse into contemporary Chinese culture and politics? From the perspective of a symbolic sociology of generations, what is important is not that an entire CR generation found itself lost in nostalgia for the past. Perhaps nothing is further from the truth. The generation is demographically so large that only a small fraction of it could be directly involved in the memory culture of the 1990s. What is important, however, is the emergence of *zhiqing* as a new generational identity. Not the CR generation, not the third generation, not the Red Guard generation, though these labels were all occasionally used, but the *zhiqing* generation dominated the memory discourse of the 1990s. Alongside such fashionable terms as “white-collar” (*bailing*), “petty-bourgeoisie” (*xiaozhi*), “stock-holders” (*gumin*), “big money” (*dakuan*) — indeed an entire vocabulary for anointing the marketized society and its *nouveau riche*, *zhiqing* became one of the most powerful symbols of the 1990s.

The irony is palpable. What the *zhiqing* identity stands for is the opposite of the values represented by those other terms. Nor does the term *zhiqing* have much to do with its historical origins, for the historical term *zhishi qingnian* (literally “knowledgeable youth”) was rarely used in its current abbreviated form. In this sense, *zhiqing* is a contemporary invention. It is the identity not of the generation sent down in the Maoist period, but of the generation that has experienced the social transformations of the post-Mao era. Demographically the two generations may well be one and the same, but sociologically they are not. A sociological generation forged by some common experiences of the past may undergo continual transformation as circumstances change. Today’s *zhiqing* generation is no longer the same as the *zhishi qingnian* of the 1960s and 1970s.

That is why it is wrong to view the nostalgia of the *zhiqing* generation as a mere “fashion” that “uses the construction and embellishment of remembrance to assuage the present” or “an imagined haven in the face of

a reality of weariness and toil.”<sup>58</sup> If *zhiqing* is a contemporary invention, it has been invented for contemporary purposes. It is a symbol of cultural resistance. Its nostalgia is a protest against the present. That is why nostalgic references to Mao and the CR were so common among discontented urban workers and rural villagers,<sup>59</sup> for these references are weapons of the weak, so to speak. The nostalgia for the CR is thus Janus-faced. It flirts with money, and even power, while subverting power. It is less an imagined fashion than a nostalgic imaginary, one that betrays inklings of an embryonic social imaginary. In this embryonic social imaginary, Chinese modernity is already being rethought and re-imagined, albeit in tentative and hazy terms.<sup>60</sup> Open any collection of *zhiqing* reminiscences, and one can find passages like the following:

Thirty years have gone by. Nowadays, people are all locked up in their own apartments. The cement walls stand as solid barriers between apartments; highways have not necessarily shortened the paths to seeing one another. TV networks transmit global information. People busy themselves endlessly with “existence” and “development.” The pleasures brought by increased wealth are not sweeter than the melons we grew with our own hands in those years.<sup>61</sup>

The flourishing memories of the CR generation in the 1990s thus boil down to a moral critique of the present. Their fundamental difference from the memory narratives in the late 1970s and early 1980s is that in the earlier period, the condemnation of the Cultural Revolution was a means of legitimating the present.

## Diaspora Interventions

There is a diaspora of the CR generation. Undoubtedly only a tiny fraction of the CR generation left China to settle abroad. Of this tiny fraction, only a small number have been involved in memory projects related to the CR. Yet the volume of works produced and the energies expended are remarkable enough to constitute important interventions in their own right. These interventions fall into three categories — the publication of English-language memoirs, the collection and preservation of documents, and other kinds of social and cultural activities.

By far the best-known representations of the CR outside China are the numerous English-language memoirs, or “memoirs of exile,” as Peter Zarrow puts it.<sup>62</sup> The earliest contingent of such memoirs appeared in Europe and North America in the mid-1980s, not long after Chinese students began to leave China to study or settle overseas under the

open-door policy.<sup>63</sup> The genre gained unprecedented popularity with the publication of Jung Chang's *Wild Swans* in 1991. Written for a Western audience and published outside China, these memoirs did not have to follow the official narrative of the CR in China. They told stories of unknown aspects of lives in the Cultural Revolution — homosexuality,<sup>64</sup> extreme rural poverty, violence, personal trauma, and so forth. Ironically, however, many of these memoirs subscribe to the same trope of individual victimization that the Chinese official narrative promotes. As Peter Zarrow and Shuyu Kong argue in their critical studies of these memoirs, many memoirists fail to probe into the broader and complex socio-political causes of the Cultural Revolution.<sup>65</sup> The self-serving motives underlying many such memoirs are often as evident as the unwillingness to acknowledge personal complicity in some of the problematic behaviour during the Cultural Revolution.<sup>66</sup>

An exception is the essays in a recent volume entitled *Some of Us*. The editors and authors of these essays are Chinese women who grew up in China in the Mao era and who now teach in American universities. They are critical of what the editors call the “dark age master narrative” of the Cultural Revolution presented by the best-selling English-language memoirs, and are convinced that “people who lived through the Mao era have their own diverse memories which cannot be easily replaced, explained, or represented by a few famous memoirs and well-known intellectuals’ suffering narratives.”<sup>67</sup> They thus set out to “write our past honestly and at the same time critically.”<sup>68</sup> Some of the nine stories are about happy childhoods, others about female friendships, and still others about how revolutionary ideals lost their “revolutionary” content at the individual level and became equivalent to personal dreams of going to college. Together, these stories offer a new counter-narrative about the CR and show how the complexities of human experience defy the dichotomous thinking that has dominated not only the official narratives of the CR in China but also the English-language memoirs published outside China.

Secondly, members of the CR generation diaspora have devoted many efforts to collecting and preserving CR-related documents. These include both historical documents such as Red Guard newspapers, testimonial evidence about specific historical events and personalities, and personal reminiscences. Song Yongyi, a trained librarian with a personal history in the Red Guard Movement, has undertaken a comprehensive project of historical preservation by publishing first in 1997 a collection of documents titled *Heterodox Thoughts during the Cultural Revolution* and

then in 1998 a bibliography on the CR (both jointly with Sun Dajin). In 2001, he published a 40-volume *New Collection of Red Guard Publications*, and in 2002, a *Cultural Revolution Database* (CD-ROM) with approximately 10,000 primary sources.<sup>69</sup>

In another CR project, the Chicago-based scholar Youqin Wang has been collecting and recording information about individuals persecuted to death during the CR, in her web-based Chinese Holocaust Memorial (<http://www.chinese-memorial.org>).<sup>70</sup> The memorials include the names of the victims, where they died and how, and other biographical information. Wang explains her motive for launching the memorial in the following terms:

After the Cultural Revolution, the authorities in power only permitted the publication of names and life stories of the highest-level cadres and social celebrities who had been victimized during the Cultural Revolution. Large numbers of ordinary victims are excluded from the framework of historical records. Because of the absence and loss of records of CR-related deaths, the complete picture of the Cultural Revolution is distorted.<sup>71</sup>

Still another project to counter the official control of CR memories is the Virtual Museum of the Cultural Revolution, run by China News Digest (CND). CND was launched in March 1989 by four Chinese students in Canada and the United States. Originally published as an English newsletter distributed to Chinese students in North America, CND has evolved into a large non-profit portal site integrating news service, online magazines, and online communities. Its Virtual Museum of the Cultural Revolution was launched on 10 February 1996 as a supplement to its Chinese-language magazine *Hua Xia Wen Zhai*. From then to 27 April 2005, it published 265 special issues on the CR.

The virtual CR museum represents a radical departure from official mnemonic practices in China in two important ways. First, while Ba Jin's proposal to set up a CR museum never materialized in China,<sup>72</sup> the founding of CND's virtual museum shows how new internet technologies have made possible the building of a large-scale digital museum beyond the purview of the Chinese state. It shows that new mnemonic institutions based on the internet may serve as virtual counter-institutions to state practices of amnesia. Second, in contrast to the uniform view of the CR presented in the official narrative, the collections in CND's virtual museum are more diverse. The express goal of the virtual museum is to collect all "truthful materials and records" (*zhenshi de ziliao he jizai*) on and about

the CR, in addition to CR-related works of art and literature.<sup>73</sup> Accordingly, the collections not only have reminiscences of tragedies, horrors, and cruelties during the CR, but also of happier days. The authors of these reminiscences are diverse, including, notably, reminiscences by former rebels whose voices are suppressed in China.

Finally, members of the CR generation diaspora have contributed to the production of CR memories in China through many other kinds of activities. For example, a *zhiqing* association established in San Francisco in 1997 edited a volume of essays by former *zhiqing* about their lives in North America. Many authors compare the hardships of life as new immigrants with their lives during the sent-down period. In fact, the subtitle of the book is “A Symphony about Being Sent Down Overseas” (*Yang chadui jiaoxiangqu*). As in reminiscences written by former *zhiqing* in China, many essays invoke the *zhiqing* spirit, a will to survive under austere circumstances, as the spiritual pillar of immigrant lives.<sup>74</sup> Another *zhiqing* association, called the Zhi-Qing Association of Southern California (ZQSC), was registered as a non-profit organization in the USA in 1998. One of its unique features is its web site ([www.zqus.net](http://www.zqus.net)), which showcases the association’s activities and has an active BBS forum. When former *zhiqing* in China began to surf the web in search of *zhiqing* web sites, this was one of the first they found. As a result, this BBS forum attracted many users from China. For a period, its technicians provided technical support and server space to some *zhiqing* web sites in China that had been closed down for political reasons.<sup>75</sup>

Diaspora contributions to the production of CR memories are closely linked to a global chain of cultural production and consumption. It should not be forgotten that there is a sizeable Western community of Cultural Revolution memories. The scholarly community immediately comes to mind. Students in Asian Studies, for example, consume Cultural Revolution memories in the courses they take. Researchers and teachers in related areas are consumers too. In fact, they were also among the very first to contribute to the construction and production of CR memories. Some made contributions through co-authorship with Chinese insiders; others produced biographies of former Red Guards; still others wrote about the Cultural Revolution that they personally experienced or witnessed;<sup>76</sup> many more made contributions through scholarly research work.<sup>77</sup> Such research both depends on the preserved memories of the Cultural Revolution and contributes to their preservation and construction, for example by enticing insiders to recall and talk about their experiences through interviews or

discovering, collecting and preserving historical and personal documents relating to the Cultural Revolution.<sup>78</sup>

## Conclusion

This article began by arguing that a repressive regime of Cultural Revolution memory took shape in the early 1980s and yet, despite persistent political control, the 1990s saw a virtual boom of CR memories. I then proposed three hypotheses to explain this phenomenon. A repressive hypothesis holds that repression breeds its own resistance. Thus the heavy-handed promotion of an official version of the history of the CR in the early 1980s suppressed other voices, which would later seek alternative spaces for expression. A market hypothesis posits that the rise of a culture industry provided a market for CR-related products. Seizing the opportunity, cultural entrepreneurs negotiated their way through China's political system to publish CR-related works, thus expanding the space for articulating memories of the CR. Finally, a social hypothesis postulates that members of the CR generation, especially former *zhiqing*, are the main social agents in producing CR memories in the 1990s. Whether in China or as diaspora, they have made important contributions to the articulation, collection, and preservation of CR memories.

The proliferation of Cultural Revolution memories takes place in the context of a repressive mnemonic regime. This memory boom is thus not a simple cultural or social phenomenon. It is a political development in two important senses. In a narrow sense, it shows how the intertwined dynamics of power, market, and social change have encroached upon the politics of collective memory in contemporary China. If all political regimes have a vested interest in controlling collective memories of their societies (as part of a broader political process of inventing traditions),<sup>79</sup> the effect of control is never complete. It appears that with the resurgence of competing memories about multiple dimensions of the Cultural Revolution, the standard official narrative of the CR has become increasingly strained. More than ever before, the Cultural Revolution now appears as a period of enormous complexity. Because of such complexity, any attempt to construct an official master narrative about it is doomed to fail. There will be more localized histories and personal stories. With the changing times, the history of the Cultural Revolution, especially the social and cultural dimensions, will be rewritten and reinterpreted.

Second, the proliferation of Cultural Revolution memories also reveals broader political change in China. The memory boom cannot encroach upon a repressive memory regime without also encroaching upon the political regime in its entirety. It both reflects and contributes to the opening of China's political spaces. Because of the proliferation of CR memories, there is now much more of a public sphere of Cultural Revolution than before. Discussions and narratives about new aspects of the CR, such as underground literature, marriage, and sexuality have appeared. The circulation of the cultural products of CR memory cannot but contribute to more public discourses about the meaning of Chinese politics in the CR era. These discussions in turn provide opportunities for comparing Chinese politics in the two eras and for examining current social and political problems. One of the most important issues of contention between the liberals and the new-leftists in China today, for example, concerns the evaluation of the Cultural Revolution.<sup>80</sup> The debates, however, are as much about interpretations of the CR as about solutions to China's current problems.<sup>81</sup> In this sense, opening up the debates about the Cultural Revolution is a way of opening up the spaces for political debates more generally.

There are limits to China's political opening, just as there are limits to the ways in which the CR may be remembered. Despite their proliferation, CR memories remain a field to be controlled. There are still many forbidden zones. Thus the tug-of-war among the various memory fields will continue. Given the complex nature of the Cultural Revolution and the numerous links between then and now, this cannot be otherwise. The repression of Cultural Revolution memories will only serve as an incitement to more discourse.

Two conditions will facilitate the continual flourishing of CR memories. One is that the CR generation will be around for quite a while and will continue to be the most important social force behind the CR memory. The other is that the social, cultural and political challenges of China's market transformation will not be resolved in the near future. As long as these challenges remain, the CR will remain a terrain of struggle. Those affected in both positive and negative ways by the reform will both draw on CR memories for cultural, emotional, and political resources.

Popular fascination with memories of the past is not just a recent Chinese fashion. Numerous studies outside the China field — in history, sociology, anthropology, political science, women's studies, ethnic studies — suggest that the fascination with memory is a world-wide phenomenon

today. What does the Chinese preoccupation with memory say about this global trend? At the centre of the CR memory are individual concerns with meaning, community, and identity. These concerns are the results of great social change. Whether such change is for the better or for the worse, it is a source of psychological dislocation and anxiety. Thus the past becomes something to hold onto or work with. In short, if the proliferation of CR memory is a symptom of unease in China, the world-wide trend of popular memory may also be a symptom of a world-wide unease. What it is that people are troubled by in today's world is a question for another day.

## Notes

1. The Cultural Revolution is here considered more as an era than as a single historical event, spanning the decade from 1966 to 1976. On the politics of periodizing the CR, see Anita Chan, "Dispelling Misconceptions about the Red Guard Movement: The Necessity to Re-examine Cultural Revolution Factionalism and Periodization," *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1992), pp. 61–85.
2. CCP Central Committee, "Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party since the Founding of the People's Republic of China," *Beijing Review*, No. 27 (1981), pp. 20–26.
3. The "three types of people" (*sanzhong ren*) were specified as "followers of Lin Biao and the Gang of Four, those seriously affected by factional ideas, and the 'smashers and grabbers' of the Cultural Revolution." See Keith Foster, "Repudiation of the Cultural Revolution in China: The Case of Zhejiang," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (1986), p. 6.
4. On educated youth literature, see Kam Louie, "Educated Youth Literature: Self Discovery in the Chinese Village," in Kam Louie, *Between Fact and Fiction: Essays on Post-Mao Chinese Literature and Society* (Sydney: Wild Peony, 1989), pp. 91–102. Also see Cao Zuoya, *Out of the Crucible: Literary Works about the Rusticated Youth* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2003) and Yang Jian, *Zhongguo zhiqing wenxue shi* (A History of Chinese Educated Youth Literature) (Beijing: Zhongguo gongren chubanshe, 2002).
5. Geremie R. Barmé, *Shades of Mao: The Posthumous Cult of the Great Leader* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1996).
6. Michael Schoenhals, "Unofficial and Official Histories of the Cultural Revolution — A Review Article," *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (1989), pp. 563–72; Mobo C. F. Gao, "Maoist Discourse and a Critique of the Present Assessments of the Cultural Revolution," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars (BCAS)*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (1994), pp. 13–32; Mobo C. F. Gao, "Memoirs and Interpretation of the Cultural Revolution," *BCAS*, Vol. 27, No.

- 1 (1995), pp. 49–57; Shuyu Kong, “Swan and Spider Eater in Problematic Memoirs of Cultural Revolution,” *positions*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1999), pp. 239–52; Peter Zarrow, “Meanings of China’s Cultural Revolution: Memoirs of Exile,” *positions*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1999), pp. 165–91.
7. Kevin J. O’Brien and Lianjiang Li, “Campaign Nostalgia in the Chinese Countryside,” *Asian Survey*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (1999), pp. 375–93; Ching Kwan Lee, “From the Specter of Mao to the Spirit of the Law: Labor Insurgency in China,” *Theory and Society*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (2002), pp. 189–228; Ching Kwan Lee, “The Revenge of History: Collective Memories and Labor Protests in Northeastern China,” *Ethnography*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (2000), pp. 217–37; William Hurst and Kevin J. O’Brien, “China’s Contentious Pensioners,” *The China Quarterly*, No. 170 (2002), pp. 345–60.
  8. Arthur Kleinman and Joan Kleinman, “How Bodies Remember: Social Memory and Bodily Experience of Criticism, Resistance, and Delegitimation Following China’s Cultural Revolution,” *New Literary History*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (1994), pp. 707–23.
  9. Barmé (Note 5).
  10. Vera Schwarcz, “A Brimming Darkness: The Voice of Memory/the Silence of Pain in China after the Cultural Revolution,” *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (1998), pp. 46–54; Ban Wang, *Illuminations from the Past: Trauma, Memory and History in Modern China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004); Zhang Xudong, “National Trauma, Global Allegory: Reconstruction of Collective Memory in Tian Zhuangzhuang’s *The Blue Kite*,” *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 12, No. 37 (2003), pp. 623–38.
  11. Nora Sausmikat, “Female Autobiographies from the Cultural Revolution: Returned Xiaxiang Educated Women in the 1990s,” in *Internal and International Migration: Chinese Perspectives*, edited by Frank N. Pieke and Hein Mallee (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1998), pp. 297–314. Xueping Zhong, Wang Zheng, and Bai Di, “Introduction,” in *Some of Us: Chinese Women Growing Up in the Mao Era* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), pp. xiii–xxxiii.
  12. Dai Jinhua, “Imagined Nostalgia,” translated by Judy T. H. Chen, in *Boundary 2: An International Journal of Literature and Culture*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (1997), pp. 143–61; Guobin Yang, “China’s *Zhiqing* Generation: Nostalgia, Identity, and Cultural Resistance in the 1990s,” *Modern China*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (July 2003), pp. 267–96.
  13. Mary G. Mazur, “Public Space for Memory in Contemporary Civil Society: Freedom to Learn from the Mirror of the Past?” *The China Quarterly*, No. 160 (December 1999), pp. 1019–35.
  14. Kleinman and Kleinman (Note 8), p. 714.
  15. This is not to ignore the important role of past experiences in shaping

- memories. While psychologists under Freudian influences emphasize the inescapable power of the past, sociologists tend to stress the influences of the present. For an excellent review of this and related issues in the study of memory, see Patrick Hutton, "Recent Scholarship on Memory and History," *The History Teacher*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (August 2000), pp. 533–48. For sociological discussions of the relative malleability or persistence of memory, see Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins, "Social Memory Studies: From 'Collective Memory' to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices," *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 24 (1998), pp. 105–40 and Barry Schwartz, "Social Change and Collective Memory," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 56 (1991), pp. 221–36.
16. Dai (Note 12).
  17. On the concept of the social imaginary, see Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).
  18. Lowell Dittmer, "Rethinking China's Cultural Revolution amid Reform," in *China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution: Master Narratives and Post-Mao Counternarratives*, edited by Woei Lien Chong (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002), pp. 3–26.
  19. Kleinman and Kleinman (Note 8), pp. 713–14.
  20. Lee (2000, Note 7).
  21. Harry Harding, *China's Second Revolution: Reform after Mao* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1987), p. 61.
  22. On the Democracy Wall Movement, see Andrew Nathan, *Chinese Democracy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).
  23. Liu Guokai, *A Brief Analysis of the Cultural Revolution*, translated by Anita Chan (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1987).
  24. Kleinman and Kleinman (Note 8), p. 713.
  25. Quoted in Dittmer (Note 18) p. 7.
  26. Cited in Geremie R. Barmé, "The Irresistible Fall and Rise of Chairman Mao," in Barmé (Note 5), p. 55.
  27. See Duo Chunsheng, *Zhongguo gaige kaifang shi* (A History of China's Reform and Opening Up) (Beijing: Hongqi chubanshe, 1998), p. 320.
  28. See CCP Central Committee, "Decision Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution," *Peking Review*, No. 33 (1966), pp. 6–11.
  29. CCP Central Committee (Note 2). Harry Harding suggests that this "document marked the Party's formal acceptance of Deng's political and economic program. It repudiated the Cultural Revolution and the ideological tenets connected with the later years of Mao Zedong." See Harding (Note 21), pp. 64–65.
  30. See *A Great Trial in Chinese History: The Trial of the Lin Biao and Jiang Qing Counter-revolutionary Cliques, Nov. 1980–Jan. 1981* (Beijing: New World Press, 1981).

31. Citing official sources, Richard Baum notes that about 40,000 people were expelled from the Chinese Communist Party during the campaign, 25% of whom belonged to the “three kinds of people.” See Richard Baum, *Burying Mao: Chinese Politics in the Age of Deng Xiaoping* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 168.
32. Foster (Note 3), p. 6.
33. An English translation of the directive is available in Barmé (Note 5), p. 133.
34. Han was sentenced to 15 years in 1983, the other two to 17 years each. See appropriate entries in Chao Feng (ed.), *Wenhua da geming cidian* (A Dictionary of the Great Cultural Revolution) (Hong Kong: Ganglong chubanshe, 1993).
35. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, translated by Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989).
36. On Cui Jian and his music, see Huang Hao, “Voices from Chinese Rock, Past and Present Tense: Social Commentary and Construction of Identity in *Yaogun Yinyue* from Tiananmen to the Present,” *Popular Music and Society*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (2003), pp. 183–202.
37. Julia F. Andrews and Gao Minglu, “The Avant-Garde’s Challenge to Official Art,” in *Urban Spaces: Autonomy and Community in Contemporary China*, edited by Deborah Davis, Richard Kraus, Barry Naughton, and Elizabeth J. Perry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 221–78.
38. According to Xudong Zhang, *The Blue Kite* and *To Live*, among others, “mark and culminate a cultural and intellectual trend of pursuing cinematic narrative of a traumatic experience of the past or, more precisely, a visual reconstruction of the national memory through a post-revolutionary catharsis of trauma.” See Zhang (Note 10), p. 624.
39. Huang Huilin (ed.), *Dangdai Zhongguo dazhong wenhua yanjiu* (Studies of Popular Culture in Contemporary China) (Beijing: Beijing shifan daxue chubanshe, 1998), p. 58.
40. CCP Central Propaganda Department and State Press and Publication Administration, “Guanyu chuban ‘wenhua dageming’ tushu wenti de ruogan guiding” (Regulations Governing the Publication of Books about the “Great Cultural Revolution”), in *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo xianxing xinwen chuban fagui huibian (1949–1990)* (Operative Press and Publishing Laws and Regulations of the People’s Republic of China, 1949–1990), edited by PRC State Press and Publication Administration Policy Laws and Regulations Section (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1991), pp. 231–32. For an English translation, see Michael Schoenhals (ed.), *China’s Cultural Revolution, 1966–1969: Not a Dinner Party* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1996), pp. 310–12.
41. The English translation of the document is reprinted in Barmé (Note 5), p. 237.
42. Xinwen chubanshu (State Press and Publishing Administration), “Tushu,

- qikan, yinxiang zhipin, dianzi chubanshe zhongda xuanti bei an banfa” (Measures for Reporting Major Projects in the Publication of Books, Magazines, Audio-visual and Digital Publications), in *Zhongguo chubanshe nianjian* (Beijing: China Statistical Publishing House, 1998), p. 238.
43. Jay Winter, “The Generation of Memory: Reflections on the ‘Memory Boom’ in Contemporary Historical Studies,” *German Historical Institute Bulletin*, Issue Number 27 (Fall 2000). <http://www.ghi-dc.org/bulletin27F00/b27winterframe.html>.
  44. Of the growing literature on collective memories of the Chinese revolution in general, see Paul Pickowicz, “Memories of Revolution and Collectivization in China: The Unauthorized Reminiscences of a Rural Intellectual,” in *Memory, History, and Opposition under State Socialism*, edited by Rubie Watson (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 1994), pp. 127–48; Gail Hershatter, “The Gender of Memory: Rural Chinese Women and the 1950s,” *Signs*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (2002), pp. 43–70; Erik Mueggler, *The Age of Wild Ghosts: Memory, Violence, and Place in Southwest China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Kirk Denton, “Visual Memory and the Construction of a Revolutionary Past: Paintings from the Museum of the Chinese Revolution,” *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Fall 2000), pp. 203–35; and Xinmin Liu, “Play and Being Playful: The Quotidian in Cinematic Remembrance of the Mao Era,” *Asian Cinema*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Spring 2004), pp. 73–89.
  45. These include *Zhang Chunqiao fuchen shi* (The Rise and Fall of Zhang Chunqiao) (Changchun: Shidai wenyi chubanshe, 1988), *Jiang Qing zai Shanghai tan* (Jiang Qing in Shanghai) (Hong Kong: Mingxing chubanshe, 1988), *Wang Hongwen xingshuai lu* (A Record of the Rise and Fall of Wang Hongwen) (Changchun: Shidai wenyi chubanshe, 1989), *Chen Boda qi ren* (Chen Boda the Man) (Hong Kong: Xianggang wenhua jiaoyu chubanshe youxian gongsi, 1990); *Yao Wen Yuan zhuan* (A Life of Yao Wen Yuan) (Changchun: Shidai wenyi chubanshe, 1993), and *Jiang Qing zhuan* (A Life of Jiang Qing) (Changchun: Shidai wenyi chubanshe, 1993).
  46. Ye Yonglie, “Ye Yonglie jishi wenji zong xu — da cehuazhe Ma Shujian xiansheng wen” (Preface to *Selected Nonfiction Works by Ye Yonglie* — An interview with the Planner Mr Ma Shujian), in Ye Yonglie, *Wenge mingren fengyun lu* (Stories of Cultural Revolution Celebrities) (Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe, 1995), pp. 1–4.
  47. He obtained a special pass from the Ministry of Public Security to interview imprisoned CR celebrities. See Nan Laisu, “Weile lishi buzai chongyan — ji jishi dawan Ye Yonglie” (So That History Will Not Be Repeated — On Big-time Nonfiction Writer Ye Yonglie), in Ye (Note 46), pp. 446–55.
  48. Yang (Note 4), pp. 377–78.
  49. Besides the series *Zhongguo zhiqing minjian beiwang wenben* (Books Written

by Ordinary People in Memory of Chinese *Zhiqing*), the press has published the following titles: Caoyuan Qishi Lu Editorial Committee, *Caoyuan qishi lu* (Lessons from the Grassland) (Beijing: Zhongguo gongren chubanshe, 1991); Xing Qi, *Lao zhiqing liaozhai* (Tales of Former Educated Youth) (Beijing: Zhongguo gongren chubanshe, 1994); Hei Ming, *Zouguo qingchun: Hei Ming baiming zhiqing baogao sheying ji* (Paths out of Youth: Reportage Photography of a Hundred Educated Youth by Hei Ming) (Beijing: Zhongguo gongren chubanshe, 1997); Wang Dawen (ed.), *Ke shu hui wang cheng guxiang* (The Temporary Abode That We Now Call Our Hometown) (Beijing: Zhongguo gongren chubanshe, 1998).

50. Yue Jianyi, "Bianzhe de hua: Xiwang zaiyu minjian wenben" (Editor's Words: Hope Lies in Folk Records), in Yang (Note 4).
51. Karl Mannheim, "The Problem of Generations," in *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, edited by Paul Kecskemeti (London: Routledge, 1997).
52. See statistics on the student population in Yang Dongping, *Jiannan de richu: Zhongguo xiandai jiaoyu de ershi shiji* (The Difficult Sunrise: Modern Chinese Education in the Twentieth Century) (Shanghai: Wenhui chubanshe, 2003), p. 164.
53. Mannheim (Note 51), p. 304.
54. Of course more categories can be distinguished, but my emphasis is on the common generational identities articulated in these narratives. For a case study of how such generational identities may mask internal divisions, see Nora Sausmikat, "Resisting Current Stereotypes: Private Narrative Strategies in the Autobiographies of Former Rusticated Women," in Chong (ed.) (Note 18), pp. 255–84.
55. Wang (ed.) (Note 49).
56. For an empirical analysis of these *zhiqing* narratives, see Yang (Note 12).
57. "River water" [user name], 2001. "Shang wang san yue zhi tihui" (Three Months after Going Online: Personal Reflections). <http://www.hxzq.net/home/cunwei/xlu184.htm> (accessed 17 June 2004).
58. Dai (Note 12).
59. O'Brien and Li (Note 7); Lee (2000, 2002; Note 7) and Hurst and O'Brien (Note 7).
60. Taylor (Note 17).
61. Cited in Yang (Note 12), p. 285.
62. Zarrow (Note 6).
63. Examples include Liang Heng and Judith Shapiro, *Son of the Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 1984); Gao Yuan, *Born Red: A Chronicle of the Cultural Revolution* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987); Fulang Lo, *Morning Breeze: A True Story of China's Cultural Revolution* (San Francisco: China Books and Periodicals, 1989), and Zi-ping Luo, *A Generation Lost: China under the Cultural Revolution* (New York: Avon, 1990).

64. Wendy Larson, "Never This Wild: Sexing the Cultural Revolution," *Modern China*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (October 1999), pp. 423–50.
65. Kong (Note 6) and Zarrow (Note 6).
66. An exception is Rae Yang's *Spider Eaters*. See Kong (Note 6)
67. Zhong, Wang and Bai (Note 11), p. xxi.
68. *Ibid.*, p. xxviii.
69. Song Yongyi and Sun Dajin, *Wenhua da geming he ta de yiduan sichao* (Heterodox Thoughts During the Cultural Revolution) (Kowloon: Tianyuan shuwu, 1997); Song Yongyi and Sun Dajin, *The Cultural Revolution, A Bibliography, 1966–1996: Bibliographical Series, No. VI* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Yenching Library, 1998); Song Yongyi (ed.), *Xin bian Hong Wei Bing ziliao* (A New Collection of Red Guard Publications), 40 volumes (Oakton, VA: Center for Chinese Research Materials, 2001); Song Yongyi, *Chinese Cultural Revolution Database* (Hong Kong: Universities Service Centre for China Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2002).
70. On an alternative view of the holocaust analogy, see Vera Schwarcz, "The Burden of Memory: The Cultural Revolution and the Holocaust," *China Information*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (1996), pp. 1–13.
71. Youqin Wang, "Wangshang wenge shounanzhe jinian yuan qianyan" (Preface to the Chinese Holocaust Memorial), 2001. [http://humanities.uchicago.edu/faculty/ywang/history/big5/qian\\_yan.htm](http://humanities.uchicago.edu/faculty/ywang/history/big5/qian_yan.htm) (accessed 22 July 2004).
72. Ba Jin proposed the idea in an essay published in his memoir. See Ba Jin, *Ba Jin suixiang lu* (Ba Jin's Random Thoughts) (Hong Kong: Sanlian shudian, 1988), pp. 134–38.
73. CND Editorial Office, "Rang women xieshou zai wangshang gongjian yizuo wenge bowuguan" (Let's Join Hands to Build a Cultural Revolution Museum on the Web). *Hua Xia Wen Zhai Zeng Kan*, No. 77, 10 February 1996. <http://www.cnd.org/HXWZ/ZK96/zk77.hz8.html#1> (accessed 22 July 2004).
74. Dai Mingkang (ed.), *Xunmeng Bei Mei: yang chadui jiaoxiangqu* (In Search of the American Dream: A Symphony about Being Sent Down Overseas) (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 1999).
75. This discussion is based on my long-term online participant observation of the interactions in several active *zhiqing* BBS, especially those associated with the Hua Xia Zhi Qing web site.
76. For example, David Milton and Nancy Dall Milton, *The Wind Will Not Subside: Years in Revolutionary China, 1964–1969* (New York: Pantheon, 1976); Ruth Earnshaw Lo and Katherine S. Kinderman, *In the Eye of the Typhoon: An American Woman in China During the Cultural Revolution* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1980).
77. Indeed the rising academic interest in the Cultural Revolution in China responds directly to what some Chinese commentators view as an anomaly: that the Cultural Revolution happened in China and yet studies of it have been

carried out mainly outside China and by foreign scholars. See Sun Yijiang, “Jin ri ‘wenge xue,’ hua kai zai shui jia?” (The Flower of Cultural Revolution Studies Today: Where Does It Bloom?), *Huasheng yuebao* (Chinese Voices Monthly), No. 3 (1996). Downloaded from <http://museums.cnd.org/CR/CK97/zk114.hz8.html> (accessed 26 January 2004).

78. One of the best books of interviews is Laifong Leung, *Morning Sun: Interviews with Chinese Writers of the Lost Generation* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1994). A recent influential project is the documentary film *Morning Sun* produced by Carmen Hinton, Geremie R. Barmé, and Richard Gordon and its associated web site ([www.morningsun.org](http://www.morningsun.org)). One of the most remarkable things about the film is its use of new historical footage (e.g. the section about the *Da chuanlian*), which the producers obtained from private collectors.
79. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
80. Xu Youyou, “The Debates between Liberalism and the New Left in China since the 1990s,” *Contemporary Chinese Thought*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Spring 2003), pp. 6–17.
81. Yang Xiao, “Rediscovering Republicanism in China: Beyond the Debate Between New Leftists and Liberals,” *Contemporary Chinese Thought*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Spring 2003), pp. 18–34.