

“Enjoying the Four Olds!” Oral Histories from a “Cultural Desert”

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China’s Cultural Revolution (*wenhua da geming*, 文化大革命 1966–1976) has been regarded as the period featuring the most dramatic repudiation of traditional Chinese as well as foreign culture in the twentieth century.¹ One reason for this view is a movement that took part in its earliest days: when the Cultural Revolution was launched, Red Guards *Hong weibing* 红卫兵—student groups who had followed Mao’s call to stand up against the authorities—were encouraged to make revolution by “smashing the Four Olds” (*po si jiu*, 破四旧)—old thinking, old culture, old customs, and old habits (*jiu sixiang*, *jiu wenhua*, *jiu fengsu*, *jiu xiguan* 旧思想、旧文化、旧风俗、旧习惯). This political campaign was broad in scope and had a long reach, both materially and geographically, and included attacks on and the looting of artifacts from so-called “feudal,” “capitalist” or “revisionist” culture (*fengzixiu wenhua*, 封资修文化). These three epithets, were used quite polemically to describe traditional Chinese as well as foreign cultural products from either the West or the Soviet Union, the destruction of material artifacts and historic sites, and ideological critiques of “old” Chinese and also foreign traditions—all over China, in the cities as well as in the countryside. This paper builds on findings from oral history which suggest that “smashing the Four Olds” entailed more than the destruction and censored restriction of what was termed “feudal,” “capitalist” or “revisionist” *fengzixiu* culture. I will argue that to take “smashing the Four Olds”—which was put into practice during this rather short-lived but fateful campaign in the first months of the Cultural Revolution—as emblematic of the cultural experience during the entire Cultural Revolution decade, and to define the latter as a whole as a period of “great chaos,” of wholesale censorship and destruction and of total propaganda,² may not be enough—and

1 This essay is dedicated to my long-time mentor and later colleague, Rudolf Wagner, in honor of his 70th birthday on November 3, 2011. It probably would not have come into being without him, for it was he who once prompted me to pursue the study of Cultural Revolution culture almost 20 years ago, an adventure which has culminated in a recently published book: Barbara Mittler *A Continuous Revolution. Making Sense of Cultural Revolution Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, Harvard East Asian Monographs, 2012). Rudolf Wagner also taught me to always be open enough to radically rethink what I had once learned and believed about this crucial period in Chinese history (and not only that). This, in short, is something which this essay attempts to grapple with, in grateful acknowledgement of Rudolf Wagner’s most generous teachings.

2 Barbara Barnouin and Yu Changgen, *Ten Years of Turbulence. The Chinese Cultural Revolution* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1993), 93–152.

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may also be misleading. In this paper I shall try to undo this common reading on several levels:

1. Time and scope: Only a very short period, the summer and fall of 1966, not the whole Cultural Revolution decade, was actually determined by "smashing" activities. Even if we allow for certain repetitions in later years (such as during the anti-Confucius campaign "To criticize Lin Biao 林彪 and Confucius 孔子" *pi Lin pi Kong* 批林批孔 of 1974–1975), the effects of which will be discussed later in this paper, as well as for considerable local diversity, these movement(s) were temporary and never long-lasting. Indeed, it is very difficult to measure just how pervasive the first "smashing" movement (along with its subsequent repercussions) and its attendant censorship really was, even during its high tide in the summer of 1966: the figures we have are not certain or reliable, they are selective and locally and temporally restricted.
2. Re-readings: Oral history provides a picture not only of smashing, but also of enjoying the "Four Olds"—of people assiduously reading and appreciating artworks that fell in the (transcultural) categories of "feudal," "capitalist," and "revisionist" *fengzixiu* both during the "smashing" campaign and during the later movement criticizing Lin Biao and Confucius. What happened clandestinely behind closed doors, and in spite of the censors, throughout the Cultural Revolution decade—the reading of foreign and old materials—may prove to have been no less important than activities in the open when we come to measure their impact on cultural memory and cultural production.
3. Re-conceptions: The paper will conclude with an afterthought concerning the evidence that "smashing" did not have the lasting effects it is often said to have had: The fact that precisely the kind of "feudal, capitalist and revisionist" heritage which was officially criticized and "smashed" during the early years of the Cultural Revolution, and again prominently during the movement criticizing Lin Biao and Confucius in the mid-1970s, was also the staple of and much celebrated in Cultural Revolution propaganda art—which constituted the "New Culture" for which the "Four Olds" had to disappear—must be taken into account when evaluating the effects of the years under consideration and their repercussions in later Chinese cultural developments.

Drawing on data from oral history, my paper finds evidence that people assiduously read, listened, and thus profited and learnt not only from those

cultural objects propagated by the “new culture” that was officially prescribed and over(re)presented, day in and day out, but also from those censored cultural objects that were officially removed and destroyed. It argues that the Cultural Revolution experience was deeply transcultural in that it involved the encounter not only with objects and products from China’s own but heavily criticized past, but also with those of foreign origin. Quite contrary to the widespread notion that the Chinese Cultural Revolution was a period of political and cultural iconoclasm as well as of isolationism, and consequently a “cultural desert,” oral history provides extensive evidence for a vibrant and transculturally informed experience of cultural consumption. Moreover, the way this campaign was perceived and read, and the fact that it thankfully did not last too long, had a distinctly transcultural dimension (not unlike many events and activities during this period): one might even argue that this had more to do with China’s international reputation than with its internal politics. In addition, the New Culture created in response to the movement can likewise not be conceived but in transcultural terms, both in its aesthetics (since it combined elements from foreign as well as Chinese traditions) and in its perception.

By plugging into the Cultural Revolution as a lived *experience*, this paper makes use of the material collected through a series of over three dozen in-depth interviews conducted in Beijing, Shanghai and Heidelberg in the early 2000s (most of them in spring of 2004) with representatives from many different classes and generations—from a young taxi driver to an elderly musician, from a middle-aged journalist to a housekeeper and a museum curator. While they wished to remain anonymous, they are characterized by their occupations, their family backgrounds, and their particular political experiences,³ and are thus not cloaked in “blanket anonymity.”⁴ The interviewees were randomly chosen from a group mostly involved currently in education, art, or the media. About half of them had experienced being sent down to the countryside or being made to work in the factories in the late sixties and early seventies. While half of them came from either working class, or rural, or from what would then be considered “capitalist/bourgeois” backgrounds, the other half came from intellectual families, some members of which had been severely criticized and declared “Rightists” before and during the Cultural Revolution.

All interviewees were asked the same set of questions so as to sharpen the focus of the interview results.⁵ These were questions about their personal memories

3 A complete list of the interviewees, their occupations, ages, and backgrounds is given in Appendix 1.

4 Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide*, (2nd edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 127.

5 Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 128.

of cultural life during the Cultural Revolution, about listening to traditional Chinese music—as well as foreign classical music—and about reading (stolen) comics, about criticizing Confucius and watching or performing the officially sanctioned, so-called model works *yangbanxi* 样板戏, and about being sent to the countryside.⁶

Obviously, the more controversial a subject—and the Cultural Revolution is clearly one of the most controversial subjects in modern Chinese history—the less an interviewee's testimony can stand alone. Moreover, "anecdotal" evidence from interviews may contain many mistakes, even when the oral evidence as such is extremely informative, not necessarily about the facts but about mentalities reflecting a particular historical era.⁷ However large, a set of interviewees alone may be considered insignificant for forming a statistically relevant basis for critical analysis.⁸ Be that as it may, I have been convinced by the high degree of resonance and consonance (despite significant dissonances) to be found among different source materials I have studied in my overall endeavor to understand the cultural experience of the Cultural Revolution,⁹ that taking into account findings from oral history will enable us to gain a better understanding of this period and, even more so, its major impact and repercussions. This is because evidently the Cultural Revolution still has a resonance (both in the positive and negative senses), even to this day: it is not forgotten, on the contrary, many people—even youngsters who were born afterwards—flock to Cultural Revolution restaurants, buy the more expensive collections of the model works and Red Sun CDs with remakes of revolutionary songs from the Cultural Revolution, and visit Cultural Revolution flea markets. This cannot be fully explained if one follows the standard discourse on the Cultural Revolution as a period of cultural chaos and destruction.

This essay is, on the one hand, informed by a much broader reading of Cultural Revolution culture¹⁰ in which I juxtapose findings from interviews with analyses of the cultural products and media emanations from this period (and before and after). On the other hand the study deliberately focuses on oral history and includes much patch-working from the original interviews¹¹

6 A complete list of interview questions is included in Appendix 2.

7 Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 120/121.

8 Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 122, calls for the use of a variety of source types to test findings from oral history.

9 See Mittler, *A Continuous Revolution*.

10 Mittler, *A Continuous Revolution*.

11 Throughout, I have attempted to provide the necessary "signature of responsibility," illuminating

in an attempt to trace and tease out the extremely multifaceted and complicated nature of the Cultural Revolution as a lived (cultural) experience. Oral history gives visibility to the contradictions in the Cultural Revolution experience because it reveals “dissonances” between people’s different recollections of the past, and presents quite obviously “fragmented memories.”¹² This evidence helps us to reconstruct a history full of inexplicable fissures and disjunctures, and this is perhaps the only history adequate to relating the experience of the Cultural Revolution. Many interviewees say one thing when prompted and the opposite just a few moments later, sometimes even in the same breath. What these interviews illustrate most clearly is that the Cultural Revolution defies categorization. *A Collection of Cultural Revolution Jokes* (文革笑料集 *Wenge xiaoliao ji*)¹³ published in 1988 makes this quite apparent: on its cover page it claims that the Cultural Revolution was a “tragic, comic, hateful, and pitiful moment in history”—(all at the same time) “一段可悲复可笑可恨复可怜的历史). The joke collection is advertised as an important document for those growing up after the Cultural Revolution, so that they may understand the period even while they will find some of it strange and hard to believe (70年代后长大出生的后人们, 你读到这段难以置信的历史, 也许会拍案惊奇吧). Accordingly, and perhaps most importantly, this paper aims to illustrate that the Cultural Revolution cannot be adequately discussed in simple terms and categories (不要简单地说).¹⁴ The Cultural Revolution was one thing and yet another—both at the same time, and accordingly, there are those who will say (and believe) one thing and yet another as well, and each one of them will have an important point to make. It is imperative to listen to all of these voices. These memories are indeed wavering, but they are nevertheless significant “visions of the collectively experienced past,” reconstructions by those who have lived through it. Naturally, they cannot be taken as “an objective chronology of the past,”¹⁵ but they are valuable indications of its importance in the present.

The constant ruptures within and between individual memories show the immense complexity of this cultural experience (and its memory work). It is true that “once the post-Mao leadership set to work—dismantling the Maoist

the background of the interviewees and the argumentative structure of my arrangements (see Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 128–129).

12 Lee, Ching Kwan, and Guobin Yang, “Introduction: Memory, Power, and Culture.” In *Re-envisioning the Chinese Revolution: The Politics and Poetics of Collective Memories in Reform China*, edited by Lee Ching Kwan and Yang Guobin (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 1–20, 5.

13 Cheng Shi 橙实 et al. eds. *Wenge xiaoliao ji* 文革笑料集 (Collection of Cultural Revolution Jokes) (Chengdu: Xinan caijing daxue, 1988).

14 This statement can be found on the cover of the *Wenge xiaoliao ji*.

15 Lee, Ching Kwan, and Guobin Yang, “Introduction: Memory, Power, and Culture.”

strategy, expunging its achievements from the public record, and forbidding anything but a negative verdict on every aspect of the entire Cultural Revolution decade—everyone, willingly or not, came under the spell of the new official line."¹⁶ This was obvious at the beginning of all my interviews: even today, it is not easy to talk about the experience of the Cultural Revolution outside prescribed mnemonic stereotypes. Yet because it produced a cultural experience that allowed for individual agency and pluralistic reception, even as it served as an instrument for maintaining power and control, the experience of Cultural Revolution culture as a whole meant many different things in different places to different people, and even to one and the same person.

This essay thus features the voices of different sets of people and generations to show how many unique individual perceptions there are of the Cultural Revolution, all significantly departing from those prescribed in the 1981 *Party Resolution*, which states that the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, launched by Mao in 1966, carried out by the "Gang of Four," and concluded with his death in 1976, was nothing but a "period of chaos and destruction."¹⁷ The idea that for ten years, the China of the Cultural Revolution was the realm of the omnipotent propagandist, a space of total propaganda, is not paradoxical to those who have chosen to believe in this periodization. But it does not tally with much of the lived cultural experience of the Cultural Revolution, although this clearly came in many variations.

If these many different testimonies have one common element, it is their significant departure from the Party line as decreed in the *Party Resolution*. They are often quite distinct from official history, although the official line still significantly determines collective memory structures and ways of speaking about them. Whenever confronted with evidence that would suggest a different reading from the official line (but not only then), my interviewees tended to get involved in (even more) contradictory arguments. The phrase, "Really, it was not like that," uttered in so many of the interviews is thus a staple of this essay. Even among the relatively small sample of people interviewed for this essay, most of whom came from urban areas (even if many of them spent long sojourns in the countryside), memories of Cultural Revolution propaganda varied substantially with

16 Pepper, Suzanne, "Education." In *Cambridge History of China, Vol 15. The People's Republic, Part 2: Revolutions within the Chinese Revolution, 1966–1982*, edited by Roderick MacFarquhar and John K. Fairbank (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 540–93, 589.

17 "Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party Since the Founding of the People's Republic of China," edited by the CCP Central Committee. *Beijing Review* 1981.27: 20–26, 21; hereafter Resolution 1981, 21; Schönhal, Michael, "Review of *The Cultural Revolution: A Bibliography, 1966–1996*." *China Quarterly* 59 (1999): 744–45.

age, class, and locality of the experience.¹⁸ Their conflicting memories illustrate the importance of delving deeper into the multiple Cultural Revolutions that took place in multiple spaces, geographically as well as sociologically, so as better to explain some of the repercussions of the Cultural Revolution in Chinese reality today.

The fissures and discrepancies within and between different memories are important in their own right.¹⁹ They illustrate the many inconsistencies in the Cultural Revolution experience to which we may have not paid enough attention so far. This is why they are given such prominence: not in order to deny or gloss over the horrors of the Cultural Revolution, but in order to lend visibility to the multifaceted experience it yielded. We find that if this kind of material is taken seriously, the student of the Cultural Revolution ends up navigating between Scylla and Charybdis: s/he is neither able to entirely condemn the Cultural Revolution, nor to take a Maoist stance exclusively emphasizing its idealistic intentions. It is the aim of this essay to neither accept nor deny any of these positions—each has its merit and its justification as well as its blind spots. By scrutinizing the versions given in my interviews of the lived (and remembered) experience of Cultural Revolution Culture, this paper intends to complicate our view of this highly complex and important period in Chinese history. It argues for a more comprehensive view of the Cultural Revolution that acknowledges both its horrors and its joys, both its dictatorial and its democratic natures.

Smashing the Four Olds: Time and Scope

On the 9.600 square kilometer surface area of the Chinese Mainland there were many areas of culture and civilization still untouched but there was apparently no nook or cranny that the movement to “smash the Four Olds” would not look into.²⁰

18 Most importantly, it may be time to let the peasants and the workers speak for themselves. This is something this essay has not been able to do, but their voices—so often muted—can be heard in Han Dongping’s pioneering work (Han, Dongping, *The Unknown Cultural Revolution: Life and Change in a Chinese Village* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2008) and in some of the essays collected in *The Chinese Cultural Revolution as History*, edited by Joseph W. Esherick, Paul G. Pickowicz, and Andrew G. Walder (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006) and in *Re-envisioning the Chinese Revolution*.

19 Sometimes, these discrepancies are due to factual mistakes. Accuracy of the oral evidence has been checked through corroborating sources and accordingly, the reader will find a number of correctives to the words of the interviewees both in the main text and in the footnotes (Ritchie *Doing Oral History*, 126, 132).

20 Yen Chia-chi and Kao Kao, *The Ten-Year History of the Chinese Cultural Revolution* (Taipei:

It is commonly assumed that propaganda activities, political campaigns and mass movements were all-pervasive in the China of the Cultural Revolution. The prime task laid down in the Central Committee's *Decision on the Cultural Revolution* (*Guanyu kaizhan wuchan jieji wenhua da geming de jue ding* 关于开展无产阶级文化大革命的决定, *short: shiliu tiao* 十六条) of 8 August 1966, was to overthrow the exploitative bourgeoisie by "smashing the Four Olds: the old ideas, culture, customs and habits of the exploiting classes" and "to establish the Four News" (*po si jiu, li si xin shi wenge de zhongyao mubiao* 破四旧、立四新是文革的重要目标). This call echoed the demand made in an editorial which had been published a few months earlier in the People's Daily *Renmin Ribao* (人民日报) on 1 June 1966 "*Hengsao yiqie niugui sheshen*" (Destroy all ox-ghosts and snake-demons 横扫一切牛鬼蛇神) which had already called for the complete destruction of the old ideas, culture, customs and habits of the exploiting classes (*pochu jiqian nian lai yiqie boxue jieji suo zaocheng de duhai renmin de jiu sixiang, jiu wenhua, jiu fengsu, jiu xiguan* 破除几千年来一切剥削阶级所造成的毒害人民的旧思想、旧文化、旧风俗、旧习惯).²¹ But what exactly did "smashing the Four Olds" mean? Few seem to have been clear, so in order to become effective it took the *Decision's* reaffirmation as well as a speech by Vice Chairman and Minister of Defence Lin Biao 林彪, approved in advance by the Chairman, Mao Zedong 毛泽东, and addressed on 18 August 1966 to the rally on Tian'anmen Square in Beijing, in which Lin exhorted the Red Guards to "smash" (*pochu* 破除) the Four Olds. When the Red Guard movement took off immediately after this event, "smashing the Four Olds" became one of their *raisons d'être*.²²

Starting on 19 August, first in Beijing, "a large and unprecedented movement broke out," as two observers remarked, which "spread like a mystical wildfire across the nation." According to these two, within a short while, "the nation was embroiled in what Lin Biao had just called for: 'Turning heaven and earth completely on their heads, bringing wue turmoil everywhere, unleashing destruction like high winds and great waves, bringing great disturbances and agitation; in this way, the bourgeoisie will not be able to sleep, and the proletariat will also not be able to sleep.'" ²³

Institute of Current China Studies, 1988), 72.

21 The decision was adopted by the Eleventh Plenum of the Eighth CCP Central Committee on 8 August 1966 and published in the *People's Daily* the next day.

22 MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 113.

23 Yen and Kao, *Ten-Year History*, 55–56.

In the standard narrative, the activities of the Red Guards were twofold: they destroyed objects of “feudal,” “capitalist” and “revisionist” *fengzixiu* culture and substituted them with examples of “new” and “red” culture. The description of an early attack on a Beijing roast duck restaurant by students from different prestigious Beijing high schools illustrates their approach rather dramatically:

On the spur of the moment, sparked by the shouting and encouragement of the throngs of Red Guards, the restaurant’s sign (which had the characters for classical Confucian “virtue” *de* 德 in it) which had hung outside the store for over 70 years was torn down by the workers and smashed to bits. Then, they replaced it with a long wooden sign painted with the characters for “Peking Roast Duck Store.” After this, the Red Guard group felt too roused to simply leave. Instead, they entered every room in the restaurant ... and took down all of the Chinese landscape paintings from the walls and tore them to shreds. ... the students who would live at the store went to the Hsin-hua book store where they ordered 100 large photos of Mao Tse-tung. The workers quickly brought this first batch and when they were delivered they worked through the night putting them up on the walls in every location in the store, kitchen and the dormitories, together with the sayings of Mao Tse-tung. The Red Guards then led the workers of the store in instruction. First they made them realize that the ... characters of their store’s original name ... were cast in the sweat and hard work of the workers, ... a product of the capitalist exploitation of our laborers. ... Destroying the sign shows our determination to completely crush anything still left over of the exploitative capitalistic system.²⁴

Similar depictions can be found again and again, in historical writings as well as in memoirs: Red Guards ransacked stores and offices and castigated their staff.²⁵ On 23 August, the Beijing Red Guards went to the City’s Cultural Affairs Bureau and confiscated its collection of props and costumes from Chinese opera. They took them to a nearby Confucian Temple where they burnt them. Several newspapers, such as the People’s Daily *Renmin Ribao* (22.8.1966) and the Beijing Daily *Beijing Ribao* 北京日报 (23.8.1966) congratulated the

24 Yen and Kao, *Ten-Year History*, 57. For a more elaborate survey of different sources relating to different smashing activities, see Denise Y. Ho “Antiquity in Revolution: Cultural Relics in Twentieth-Century Shanghai,” (unpublished PhD thesis, Harvard 2009).

25 Yen and Kao, *Ten-Year History*, 60, mention the ransacking of a Beijing silk store a few days later which involved the destruction of paintings “representing the ideals of feudalism,” but also contracts, records, painted screens and flower pots were smashed, torn and destroyed and the rubble piled up in a small room. According to them, the action also involved the Red Guards painting over the antique paintings on the walls and their putting up some 50 pictures of Mao instead.

Red Guards for such actions in front-page articles, complimenting them for "sweeping away the dust of all the old ideas, culture, customs and habits of the exploiting classes."²⁶ Such explicit encouragement of vandalism from official organs impelled the Red Guards to continue their raids and destroy historical monuments and cultural relics. According to much-cited statistical evidence, during the months of August and September 1966, more than two thirds, i.e. 4933 of the 6843 classified historical sites in Beijing were damaged or destroyed.²⁷ Numerous valuable old books, paintings and other cultural relics were burnt to ashes. The imperial palace had to be closed and safeguarded by troops in order to avoid demolition—on Zhou Enlai's 周恩来 order. This was one of the few reported cases in which his attempt to save some of "the old" was successful.²⁸

Perhaps the most remarkable act of destruction centered on the Confucius Temple in Qufu county, Shandong province, in November 1966, when around 200 teachers and students from Beijing Normal University are said to have gone to "thoroughly demolish the Confucius family shop" (*dadao Kongjia dian* 打倒孔家店). During their four-week stay, they joined forces with the local population and like-minded students from the Qufu Teachers' Institute. Together, they managed to destroy, according to one set of statistics, some 6,618 registered cultural artifacts, including 929 paintings, over 2,700 books, 1,000 stone steles and 2,000 graves.²⁹

However unreliable they may be, these are distressing figures. Even if we do not take them at face value, it is clear that destruction of public property in these dimensions must have been not only far more organized, but—more importantly—more officially sanctioned than is generally acknowledged today. These numbers would become more meaningful, however, if they could be related to numbers from earlier acts of destruction during the Great Leap Forward, for example, and—even more deadly to Chinese material cultural heritage, as some sources maintain—during the modernist May Fourth Movement of the 1910s and 1920s which also called for a battle against "feudal" and

26 Yen and Kao, *Ten-Year History*, 62.

27 MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*, 118. For pictorial evidence of such acts of destruction see Yang Kelin, *Wenhua dageming bowuguan* (*Museum of the Cultural Revolution*) (Hong-Kong: Dongfang Publ., 1995), 152–165.

28 Cf. MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*, 118–119.

29 MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*, 119. Cf. also Daphon David Ho, "To Protect and Preserve: Resisting the Destroy the Four Olds Campaign, 1966–1967," in *The Chinese Cultural Revolution as History*, Joseph W. Esherick, Paul G. Pickowicz and Andrew G. Walder, eds. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 64–95.

“superstitious” Chinese traditions.³⁰ Then, as during the Cultural Revolution, the destruction would not have been possible without the complicity of the local leaders (indeed, there are local examples of documents announcing that the general measures for protecting cultural heritage that had been passed in 1962 were now null and void). In spite of obvious disagreements, it would have been impossible as well without the direct responsibility of central leaders, too—including Zhou Enlai.³¹

Yet already in the autumn of 1966, one also finds an awareness of the bad reputation that China might get if these happenings were made public. Clearly, China’s international position here played an important role, one perhaps even more important than that of internal politics: Visiting foreigners are reported to have seen relics intact and to have lauded the Red Guards for keeping them so.³² However these news items came about, they are signs of the uneasiness that the movement evidently caused, not just among politicians. The movement thus had its transcultural dimension: considerations of China’s international reputation were one reason for the attempts to end the campaign, next to the factional fighting that had resulted right from the beginning.

Efforts to call off the movement may also have been due to the fact that “smashing the Four Olds” had entailed many human tragedies. These began in the summer of 1966 with the home searches and the confiscation or destruction of property falling into the three “heinous” categories (feudal, capitalist, revisionist) and belonging to families of allegedly “bad” class background. In little over a month, some 33,695 households in Beijing are said to have been “ransacked” *chao jia* 抄家. Again, these numbers, especially in their cynical exactness, are meaningless by themselves and only cited here in order to give some dimension to the drama. In Shanghai, the figures for the number of households that were attacked are even higher, amounting to some 84,222, according to one statistic.³³ One victim was the painter Liu Haisu 刘海粟 (1896–1994) in Nanjing, who reports having been visited some 24 times by Red Guards, and who had literally everything in his house taken away from him:

30 For this point see Denise Ho, “Antiquity in Revolution,” chapter 4, her “Revolutionizing Antiquity: The Shanghai Cultural Bureaucracy in the Cultural Revolution, 1966–1968,” *China Quarterly* 2011.207: 687–705, and Rana Mitter, *A Bitter Revolution: China’s Struggle with the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

31 See Ho, “Antiquity in Revolution,” chapter 5.

32 MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, *Mao’s Last Revolution*, 120–121, provide ample evidence from news media and official documents to support the points made in this and the preceding paragraph.

33 MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, *Mao’s Last Revolution*, 117, see also Yen and Kao, *Ten-Year History*, 77.

On one of my receipts was written "one antique gold statue for 15 yuan, and one diamond ring for 35 yuan," there were also 20 some pieces of valuable stoneware and porcelain pieces from the Six Dynasties, the Tang Dynasty and the Sung Dynasty. There were also 70 or 80 paintings and calligraphic works from the Sung, Yuan, Ming, Ching dynasties as well as some of my own works, none of which have ever been seen again.³⁴

Although the movement was short-lived, reaching its apex in the summer and autumn of 1966 and clearly not enduring the whole decade of the Cultural Revolution, the resulting loss of public and private cultural capital was enormous. Moreover, the human and material as well as cultural destruction caused by the movement was to prove fateful, for it had traumatic effects: Chinese and foreign architecture was ransacked, Chinese and foreign literature was burnt, Chinese and foreign paintings were torn apart, antiquities shattered. People in possession of such goods were punished. Intellectuals were targeted as personifications of the Four Olds, they were mocked, harassed, imprisoned, tortured, or killed. The movement thus served as the reaffirmation of a political willingness to destroy particular elements of foreign and Chinese culture and to restrict them through censorship:

Public libraries also suffered considerably from the destructive activities of Red Guards in the autumn of 1966. Yet the loss of books during that relatively brief flurry of activity was small compared with that caused by the state's cutback in funding and almost total neglect of libraries after 1966. By the end of the Cultural Revolution, one third of China's 1,100 libraries at or above the county level had been closed, and more than seven million library books had been lost, stolen, or destroyed in the provinces of Liaoning, Jilin, Henan, Jiangsu, and Guizhou alone.³⁵

What however did this loss of books, first to Red Guards and then to unknown thieves, mean? How successful was the attempt to restrict cultural experiences and to determine an individual's exposure to this culture? These questions will be probed in the next section.

Re-readings of "Smashing" in Oral History

There was nothing to do, so I would just read in the library: Mao's writings, for example, his unpublished papers and all that. There was

34 The painter is cited in Yen and Kao, *Ten-Year History*, 81.

35 MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*, 121.

nothing else to be read, really. They did not allow us to read any “feudal,” “capitalist,” or “revisionist” *fengzixiu* literature. And, of course, we did not dare borrow books that were *fengzixiu*, I did not dare to read them either. I already had been labeled a counterrevolutionary’s kid..... (Businesswoman, b. 1940s)

In the 1980s I read voraciously: I did not drink tea or smoke or chat, I just wanted to read. And I felt, I must do that. Part of it was that working in the factory was really not what I wanted to do. Whenever I was reading a good book, I would develop my own thoughts. But all of that was after the Cultural Revolution. During the Cultural Revolution that kind of behavior would have been impossible, it was a time of real waste (*huangfei* 荒废). We did not learn anything. Maybe in some families with intellectual backgrounds, they could still rely on themselves to teach the children. But not us worker’s kids! (Photographer, b. 1960)

Reading these statements, the argument that the entire Cultural Revolution was determined by an iconoclastic and xenophobic spirit of destruction which was most violently discharged during the “smashing” campaign, and that “smashing” itself should thus become an apt and emblematic symbol of the Cultural Revolution experience, appears to make a lot of sense. Yet we need to deliberate on what the mixture of iconoclasm and xenophobia captured in these memories really meant, how far it went, and what impact it had on the experience of different cultural traditions and cultural production during the Cultural Revolution more generally. Who was encountering what and why? And what was the role of the “smashing” campaign in this regard? How, for example, did books from the libraries get lost, and what did this mean in terms of the destruction of cultural traditions and the cultural experience during the Cultural Revolution as a whole?

If one is to believe evidence from oral history, one tentative answer could be: many books were taken away, from private homes as well as from libraries, not to be destroyed but rather (and perhaps even primarily, after the initial revolutionary enthusiasm died down) to be read clandestinely. What is suggested by many of the testimonies we have in oral history is that a lot of more or less secret reading went on throughout the Cultural Revolution. Many suggest that the “smash the Four Olds” movement may indeed have set the tone and created ideal opportunities for this behavior.³⁶ It opened the vistas for those young men and women who did not have

36 For literary evidence of this phenomenon, see a manuscript by Jie Li, “Idols, Commodities, Artifacts, and Ruins: The ‘Four Olds’ Through Three Writers,” especially p. 11, presentation held at the 61st Annual Conference by the Association of Asian Studies, 26.-29.3.2009 in Chicago.

extensive libraries at home to reach out into the unknown—and enjoy. One editor from a poor working-class family, who was in his mid-30s at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution and had become a Party member early on, observed the following:

From the 1960s on, there was an interesting phenomenon, the so-called *jinshu* 禁书 forbidden books. There would always be these lists, so, for example, Romain Rolland's *Jean Christophe* would be forbidden. It was too "individualistic," and we were against individualism, of course. The Red Guards, these "little devils," would ransack the homes *chao jia* 抄家 and hit people for owning these books, but then they would take them home and read them. (Editor, b. 1930s)

Many of those who were primary or secondary school students in the early years of the Cultural Revolution would agree with this, emphasizing how much during the Cultural Revolution they read: books given to them "by friends." Their comments illustrate that restrictions through censorship were felt, but not necessarily effectively so:

During that time the "8 model works" *bage yangbanxi* 八个样板戏³⁷ were being performed, there was really nothing else. The rest was all considered "feudal, capitalist, and revisionist" *fengzixiu*. But we read all kinds of things that were *fengzixiu* anyway, Balzac and Romain Rolland! At the time, I was looking after an ox, reading all the while, I thought this was quite fun. I also read Guo Moruo then, and I really enjoyed my life. (Musician with working-class background, b. 1942)

During the Cultural Revolution I read more books than ever before. I would get them from friends: all literary classics, translated from French and German; modern literature only started to come in after the Cultural Revolution. We also read Chinese Classics: the Ming novels, but also the *Shiji* (*Records of the Historian* 史记), or collections of ancient philosophical works. (Journalist from a "capitalist" family, b. 1949)

We all did our own thing, studying by ourselves. We read books it was not so easy to get and read, especially "feudal" and "capitalist" or "bourgeois" titles. They were not supposed to be read, but we read them anyway. The books were passed on, from one to the next: Romain Rolland (*Jean Christophe*), for example—oh, the book was so interesting and so

37 For the falseness of this polemical term, see Barbara Mittler, "'8 Stage Works for 800 Million People': The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in Music—A View from Revolutionary Opera" *Opera Quarterly* 2010, vol. 26/2-3: 377-401.

romantic! (Artist from a family of intellectuals, b. 1954)

A lot of my friends would read foreign novels. I did, too. Balzac, for example, Chekhov, Zola. All of them had been translated before the Cultural Revolution. Of course, you didn't read these things outside in the open. They were exchanged underground. Once, a very young worker informed on me, said that I had been reading this story of Chiang Kaishek. The Party Representative took me to one side and asked me what kinds of books I was reading. I told the guy that this story was just a story and asked him to reconsider: in the encyclopedic dictionary, the *Cihai* (辞海), there are a lot of "feudal" things, really, but does that mean I must not look at the *Cihai* anymore? He laughed—and let me go. (Librarian who spent the Cultural Revolution in the People's Liberation Army, b. mid-1950s)

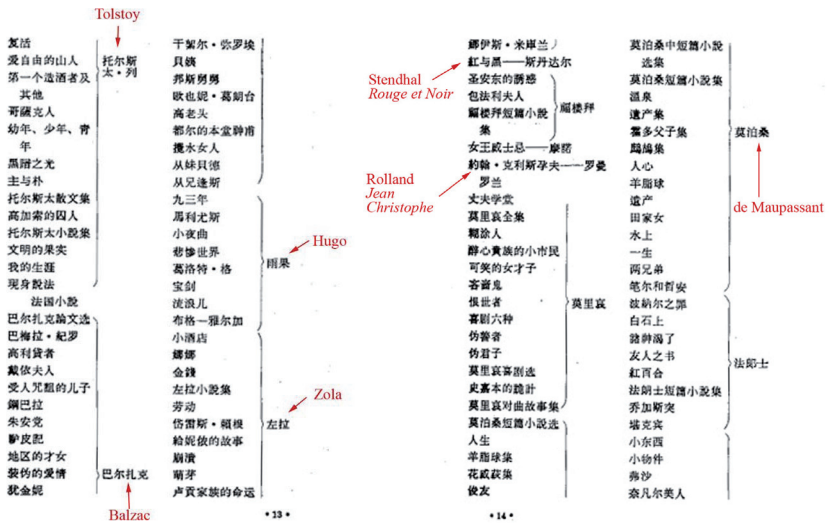


Fig. 1: Two pages from the Red Guard Publication *Destroying the Old World Completely*, featuring a list of "forbidden books" by writers such as Romain Rollande, Emile Zola, Guy de Maupassant, and Lev Tolstoy. Red Guard Publication Chedi polan jiu shijie (*Destroying the Old World Completely* 彻底破烂旧世界) edited by Shanxi gongnongbing yishu xuexiao (Shanxi Worker, Peasant Soldier Art School "Red Guards") no place, no publisher, 1966. 13–14.

There were different ways of getting at "forbidden" books. The "smashing" campaign was one option, but after the campaign ended, quite a few remember that stealing books from libraries was the preferred means. Many remember

veritable "reading orgies" with such stolen books:

We stole so many books from the library and then we would exchange them, reading them in secret. We felt great when we did so, if also a bit scared: Indeed, I became a very fast reader when I was small, because there was always this atmosphere of secrecy. But in fact, there never was a concrete black list, they just said that things which were *fengzixiu* (feudal, capitalist, revisionist) were not acceptable. But they could not list everything in detail, since there was so much to be criticized, so they just used these three standards of *fengzixiu* (Writer from a well-off family of intellectuals, b. 1958).

I did not take part in the revolution, really, I was not all that interested. I just read every book I could get. Of course, there were not so many. And they did not let you into the libraries. But nobody would actually be there to guard them, so I would climb the wall and just grab any book and leave again very quickly. This is how I was able to read voraciously: Russian stories, Chinese stories, old and new, whatever! (Intellectual from a family of translators in which the father had been declared a "Rightist," b. 1955)

There seems to be one surprising consistency in these descriptions of reading experiences during the Cultural Revolution: almost everyone felt restrictions and the keen (and evil) eye of the censors. But this apparent consistency only superficially hides the many contradictions: if there was censorship, if reading was restricted, were there precise lists telling everyone what to read or not? Some say no, but there were: Red Guard Publications such as *Chedi polan jiu shijie* (Destroying the Old World Completely 彻底破烂旧世界) were available (and point very clearly to the "illegality" of every single title mentioned by the interviewees: Balzac, Zola and Romain Rolland, the late Ming erotic novel *Jin Ping Mei* 金瓶梅 *The Golden Lotus*, works by the Confucian philosopher Mencius and the neo-Confucian Three Character Classic 三字经 *Sanzijing*).³⁸

38 Shanxi gongnongbing yishu xuexiao "Hongweibin" ed., *Chedi polan jiu shijie* (Destroying the Old World completely), (Shanxi gongnongbing yishu xuexiao, 1966). See, for example: Balzac (ibid. p. 13) Zola (ibid. pp. 13–14) and Romain Rolland (ibid. p. 14), *Jin Ping Mei* (ibid. p. 11), Mencius (ibid. p. 10) and the *Sanzijing* (ibid. p. 10)



Fig. 2: Another two pages from the Red Guards publication *Destroying the Old World Completely*, listing Chinese classics that are forbidden to read. Chedi polan jiu shijie, 10–11.

In addition, official lists were sent internally to publishers and editors (May 2008). But who did these lists reach? Clearly, as we have seen in some of the testimonials cited earlier, not everyone was aware of these lists or even their existence, although they knew of their more general substance, and this may have been as deliberate as it was inevitable: using a vague label such as “feudal, capitalist, and revisionist” to condemn “unhealthy” types of literature, not only allowed critical interpretation in all directions, but also the instigation of the greatest possible fear and thus effective self-censorship. The vaguer the label, the better it was able to cover a multitude of works which it would have been impossible to list singly. Yet, some of the voices cited above suggest that even those who were in fact very aware of specific restrictions did not feel they had to go by these standards all the time. The editor cited above even remembers the situation as slightly paradoxical:

It was really only on the surface *biaomianshang* 表面上 that particular books were not there. In fact, of course, they were there and they were actually *shijishang* 实际上 quite widespread. For example that late Ming erotic novel *Jin Ping Mei* (*The Golden Lotus*, 金瓶梅), I read it during that time. We would simply go to the old cadres and get these types of books

from them. Then, in the 1970s, some of the standards were reset, and maybe 10 per cent of the books which were formerly forbidden could officially be read again. Tolstoy, and Chekhov, for instance, were acceptable again. It was strange, there are things that then and even today³⁹ we could not find in the book stores, but through booty from the ransacked homes, we were able to read these books then: *Mein Kampf* is one such example. One could say that in spite of heavy censorship and restrictions, all the chaos which the 1960s brought also meant that there was some space. At the same time, when restrictions were slightly loosened in the 1970s, this space was no longer there. Then as before, there was always this feeling of "covert repression" (*anzhong de kongzhi*, 暗中的控制). (Editor, b. 1930s)

In this description, the Cultural Revolution becomes a time which, even by means of restriction, may have opened up hitherto unknown avenues of cultural experience. While few books were sold in the bookstores, many were nonetheless available: they would be passed from friend to friend, originating from one's own home, or a friend's, as loot from a Red Guard ransack, or stolen from the libraries.

Memories of whether there were lists of "forbidden books" and whether the libraries were open to everyone or closed, differ considerably. These contradictory recollections are not necessarily inaccurate, but suggest, however, an enormous range of local variation. Nevertheless, almost everyone seems to agree on one point: even if the doors of the libraries were closed and books blacklisted, they were being read regardless.

As far as I know, lists of forbidden books were not published officially and even in the middle of the Cultural Revolution they were anyhow publishing these translations of Russian novels. The libraries would be closed, of course, with the explanation that "it has not been determined what is good or what bad among these books." (*hai mei jue ding zhexie shu* 还没决定这些书) (University Professor from an intellectual family, the mother being a foreigner, b. mid-1950s)

He: It feels like the pressure went away pretty quickly and we were able to read whatever we wanted. She: Yes, it was not even a year or so in which I didn't dare read what I wanted to. He: In fact, we read and discussed a lot of the things from the 1950s, for example *Qingchun zhi ge* (*Song of Youth*, 青春之歌). We read so much, really, it's not true that you couldn't read anything during the Cultural Revolution. She: In fact the library was always

39 Contrary to what the interviewee states here, the book was available for sale at the time of the interview (personal observation, April 2004).

open to us, even in the evening, we could go in and simply read whatever we wanted. So even if there was pressure, it did not destroy the culture. (Housewife with Husband from a “capitalist” background, b. 1950s)

So books were available to many different people from very different backgrounds, and came from different sources, both clandestine and legal. And what was considered clandestine and what was considered legal also depended on where and how one was situated. While foreign books made up the bulk of the literature that has found its way into the collective memories presented here, with works by Rolland, Tolstoy and Soviet authors being the most frequently mentioned—thus highlighting the transcultural experience that the Cultural Revolution remained, and turning notions of China’s isolation during this period completely on their heads—traditional Chinese literature also seems to have played an important role: Ming novels, the *Dream of the Red Chamber*, as well as Tang and Song poetry, were available and read by almost everyone I interviewed during the Cultural Revolution. Despite the fact that accounts of education during the Cultural Revolution often stated that school classes may have regularly substituted Mao’s poetry for classical texts, classical poetry does not seem to have disappeared either:

Mao’s poems cannot be considered classical Chinese, really. Of course, we would read some of his old-style poems at school, but as for important Tang and Song poets, Su Shi and Li Bai and Du Fu, we would read them, too, and actually it seemed to be perfectly ok to read them. (Intellectual from a family of intellectuals and musicians, b. 1958)

Indeed, one interviewee, not from an intellectual but from a working class family and now a musician (b. 1942), included a Tang poem in his “revolutionary photo album” dating back to the second half of the Cultural Revolution. He was quite taken aback by my surprise at this: “Of course. We would memorize these poems during the Cultural Revolution.”

How much each person actually read in spite of censorship, and how their reading compared to the amount of reading of the same kinds of literary works before and after the Cultural Revolution may, as the interviews suggest, have differed greatly from one person to the next. Many youngsters did not go to school for months on end, a factor which may (or may not) have promoted extensive reading. And while reading remained a primarily urban phenomenon, because all of these memories of libraries are urban memories, the reading habit was, as the interviews also suggest, carried on to the countryside as well.

Dai Sijie's story of *Balzac and the Little Seamstress*⁴⁰ gives one fictionalized impression of a phenomenon mentioned frequently in oral history. Rusticated youths and intellectuals were reading even in the countryside, and some of them also took to teaching what they read. So just how much an individual might or might not have read during the Cultural Revolution depended on his or her class background. Workers' children may have read less than those of intellectuals, as seen in the testimonies at the beginning of this section, simply because they did not have access to a private library, but more perhaps than before the Cultural Revolution because the ransacking of family homes and libraries would have granted even them access to precious and previously entirely unattainable loot). How much a person may or may not have read during the Cultural Revolution would also have depended on the place where they read (the countryside could only offer as many books as the rusticated youth were able to bring with them, hence there was probably little variety, whereas the situation in urban areas may have been dramatically different). One rusticated youth, originally from a family of intellectuals, remembers the importance the location had on reading conditions by comparing her urban and rural reading sessions as follows:

At home, with all these girls' and boys' parents gone to labor camp, we would meet all the time. We would read things like (Romain Rolland's) *Jean Christophe* and listen to music by Beethoven. Everybody would do that. Really, *Jean Christophe* was one of the most popular novels all that time. And what we did was somehow like group education, the books just moved on from one person to the next and then became a topic of conversation, and we would develop these collective fantasies about writing great novels ourselves. Music actually always accompanied these readings. Of course, it was not allowed and I seem to remember that all of these books that we passed round had a kind of paper cover. I was 13 then, I knew and had read so little before and so for me, this whole period at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution was like a great awakening. A few years later, in the countryside, of course, there was rather little to read, even though I had brought some books of my own. But I would borrow books from others. I was really interested in detective stories, for example, which I discovered there, stories from the 1940s and 1950s. (University Professor, b. mid-1950s)

Was this type of reading dangerous? Many interviewees seem to suggest as much: people learned to read fast because they were afraid of being caught, they would wrap the cover pages of all their books in paper so they would

40 Dai Sijie, *Balzac et la petite tailleuse chinoise* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000).

not be immediately recognizable, and they would never take a suspect book outside the confines of their homes. The many stories of being called in after being caught reading suspicious books, also speak for themselves. Again, who precisely dared to read in spite of the dangers it may have involved (and who did not) may have depended on class background and position: a person working as an editor may have felt particularly pressured to conform, and someone whose parents had once been labeled Rightists or counterrevolutionaries may also have felt he or she had reason to do so. Yet, the question of “to read or not to read” would have been handled in radically different ways by families even of similar class background and political standing: one proscribing, the other clandestinely allowing, a third even encouraging the reading of “forbidden books.” While one interviewee who frequently broke into libraries remembers, “my father (who had been labeled a Rightist earlier) would not let me read these old things” (Intellectual, b. 1955), another with a rather similar (if apparently politically unblemished) family background and from the same generation says the opposite:

I would read everything in primary school and middle school. I read Stendhal, and all these books at home.⁴¹ There was no restriction on what I read, I could read everything at home. Indeed, my father always made us learn things by heart, Tang poems, for instance. (Intellectual, b. 1958)

Not only were people secretly defiant in their reading practices, but cases of open, outright and witty resistance when caught with “dangerous” readings are also not the exception. This is what one particularly outspoken interviewee (from a family of intellectuals) remembers:

One day when they searched the family, they found some books and called me in. I said: “How can I criticize these books without reading them?” That killed the conversation dead. Although I obviously was not thinking about criticizing these books, really, there was nothing they could say. I told them, “Mao says that if you want to know how carrots taste, you have to taste them.” They knew that, too. (University Professor, b. mid 1950s)

Such audacity may have been facilitated by the fact that a lot of reading of so-called “black literature” took place quite officially under the auspices of criticism movements to “eradicate” such writings. Whether or not this literature could in fact be appreciated, then, while being criticized, is a point on which memories differ quite radically. One journalist (b. 1946) from a

41 For a criticism of *The Red and the Black* from the later period of the Cultural Revolution see Liu Dajie, “*Du Hong yu Hei*” (“Reading *The Red and the Black*”), *Xuexi yu pipan (Study and Criticize)*, vol. 1, (1975), 61–69.

precarious family background of intellectuals and “capitalists” remembers that for her, even a hidden enjoyment of these works would have been unthinkable:

During the Cultural Revolution, it was impossible to borrow or officially buy these foreign books and traditional books. This was only possible during the criticism movements, but then you would read them for the sake of criticism. If you were to use and read them because you enjoyed them ... mmh... it would have been strange to actually enjoy them... On the other hand, the Red Guards were looting a lot of houses by then, and such black books would be taken and read. Libraries, too, would be destroyed: when we stole books on those occasions, it did not really feel like stealing, and so we read a lot of black books just by accident, only to be astonished by the kinds of criticism raised later.

This reader admits to enjoying black books before they were officially and openly attacked and criticized. She could not imagine, however, enjoying them while they were being criticized. Yet her opinion is not shared by everyone. This is what a musicologist remembers, a slightly younger person with a father who was declared a “Rightist” before the Cultural Revolution and whose family was consequently sent to the countryside for a long while during the Cultural Revolution and on into the late 1970s (b. 1950s):

In the 1970s we read quite a bit of Russian literature... While there was a lot of criticism directed against revisionist literature, they would publish all these Russian novels as negative examples. We would read them and actually thought they were great: of course, people read their own ideas into that kind of material—just like during the campaign to criticize Lin Biao and Confucius. All of these criticized novels were in fact an important influence on us. We were not supposed to like them but we did, anyway. It was just not the same as all that trite, predictable worker-peasant-soldier literature which we had been reading day in and day out!

His view is echoed by a historian of the same generation (b. 1950s from a family of university teachers, who emphasizes once more that, in spite of official restrictions, and even when he was sent down to the Sichuan countryside, a lot of reading was done, extensively and indiscriminately, both of traditional and of foreign lore, throughout the whole of the Cultural Revolution:

There was very little to read. We all thought it quite monotonous. But when all this criticism came of the old novels, and since we had never read them, we would go off to the library to steal them and see for ourselves. The

libraries kept all these “feudal, capitalist, and revisionist things” *fengzixiu de dongxi* 封资修的东西. On the one hand, we would attend these sessions to read Mao’s Works, and on the other, we would also read these other things. *How the Steel was Tempered*, for example, and then this book about Chiang Kaishek that you were not supposed to know about, that was everyone’s fare. (Historian, b. 1950s)

During both the “smashing” campaign in 1966 and the “Criticize Lin Biao and Confucius” campaign in 1974–1975, enjoyment of the condemned “Four Olds” was evidently not impossible. During the second campaign,⁴² Confucius and with him the “feudal age,” as it was called at the time, were to be criticized.⁴³ The campaign was aimed openly at Lin Biao, who was accused of having had couplets from the Confucian *Analects* hanging above his bed.⁴⁴ Lin had been Minister of Defense and Mao’s designated successor, but had fallen out with the Chairman as a result of a coup he had allegedly planned against him and which ended in Lin’s fatal flight to Mongolia in 1971

42 The basic assumption of compatibility between Confucianism and Communism was questioned in the early years of the Cultural Revolution (1966–69) and again during the Anti-Confucius Campaign of the early 1970s. Red Guard publications ranted that in a “socialist new China, there is absolutely no room for Confucian concepts and capitalist and revisionist ideas which serve the exploiting classes. If these ideas are not uprooted, it will be impossible to consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat and build socialism and Communism. In the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, one of our important tasks is to pull down the rigid corpse of Confucius and thoroughly eradicate the utterly reactionary Confucian concepts.” (*Hongweibing ziliao* 红卫兵资料 (Red Guard publications), Washington: Center for Chinese Research Materials, 1980, Suppl. 1, vol. VII: 3233; see also Kam Louie, *Critiques of Confucius in Contemporary China* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1980)). Anyone who reveres Confucius, as these Red Guard sources contended, was suspected (if not accused) of revering Mao less. The Anti-Confucius Campaign saw the return of many of the arguments prevalent in the early years of the Cultural Revolution (Louie *Critiques*, chapter 5). See further Kam Louie, *Inheriting Tradition: Interpretations of the Classical Philosophers in Communist China, 1949–1966* (Hong Kong: OUP, 1986).

43 The inauguration in September 1973 of the journal *Study and Criticism*, which aimed to be a pendant to the Party theoretical magazine *Red Flag*, and the organization of a forum for anti-Confucius criticism called for by Jiang Qing in the same month were important steps in speeding up the movement. It became a large-scale campaign in late January 1974 with the organization of mass rallies—not always fully approved by the Central Committee (Barnouin and Yu *Ten Years of Turbulence*, 255).

44 After February 1974, the critiques also included Lin Biao. Earlier articles had attacked him but had not singled him out as a Confucianist. Rather, he was criticized as one of a number of leaders (Liu Shaoqi being the most prominent among them) whose “wrong line” had been rooted in Confucian tradition. Only when the Central Committee was presented, on January 18, 1974, with a number of Lin Biao’s scrolls and notebooks (which then quite conveniently appeared some two years after his death)—most prominently the so-called *keji fuli* scroll that contained the line from the Confucian *Analects* 克己复礼, “curbing one’s desires and returning to the rites,” which allegedly had been composed in calligraphy by Lin Biao in 1969 and hung over his bed—was there enough consensus to include him in the Anti-Confucius Campaign. These objects allowed for the establishment of a direct link between Lin Biao and Confucius who, according to Maoist logic, both represented retrogression and the desire to turn back the wheels of history (Barnouin and Yu *Ten Years of Turbulence*, 255)

by airplane.⁴⁵ The campaign to "Criticize Lin Biao and Confucius" which followed his death after a short hiatus had quite a few unintended effects, though: millions of people now were called upon to read, by official order, the Confucian classics. This included factory workers and peasants. And they would think whatever they chose to think, regardless of what the critical propaganda said. One Chinese journalist, born in 1946 with an intellectual-capitalist background, admitted how much he learned of the Confucian traditions during this time: "The anti-Confucian movement had a very strong influence on me. Because nobody believed it, we took it for black humor!" A historian of China, ten years her junior (b. 1957) with intellectual parents who were long-standing members of the Communist Party, remembers:

I participated in the movement. It was in fact quite interesting. We got to talk about history. Mao wanted us all to study history and I actually became interested in history because of that. The discussions were very exciting, even more exciting than now, in a way, because everybody, really everybody had to participate! We criticized and studied the stuff at the same time. But even while we criticized, we realized that there was something valuable in it all as well. . . . Indeed, I did not believe any of the criticisms. I really thought some of their logic was really quite unlogical (*tamen de daoli meiyou daoli*, 他们的道理没有道理).

Certainly there were quite a few who criticized the critical voices in the propaganda publications, even during the Cultural Revolution. One female writer, born in 1958, from a family of well-off Party cadres, remembers:

Since 1949 the classics had not been taught very much. If we read old-style poems they were the ones by Mao. As for the *Three Character Classic*, the *Sanzijing*, I read it when it was criticized, the same as with Confucius, Mencius, I read all of them when they were criticized. I thought the criticism was stupid, but I also did not like the books themselves. (Female writer, 1958–)

In spite of the fact that there was no real basis to build on, no prior knowledge of the Confucian tradition, an interest in and understanding of ancient Chinese

45 As discussed earlier, the campaign was fought out, complete with songs, rallies, and heavy use of the mass media (which even reprinted summaries of seminal books and articles that had earlier appeared in academic publications in very small print runs). To criticize Confucius had become part of contemporary politics, even of daily life (Louie *Critiques*, 107n37). And it was part of this politics now to "negate everything" (否定一切, *fou ding yi qie*). Not since the May Fourth Movement had criticism of Confucius and Confucianism been so harsh. Moreover, May Fourth had been different because it had never focused on Confucius as a person, but only on his teachings. Marxist theory, on the other hand, did not allow for a separation of work and author (Louie *Critiques*, 135).

literature and philosophy was kindled in some. One artist, born in 1954, and from a family of intellectuals, remembers:

This movement was critical of Confucius, true, but since we had not actually read any Confucian stuff before that movement, it was through this movement that we learned how important Confucius actually was... We were blind, then, of course, but somehow I did not think he was really all that bad. (Artist, b. 1954)

The most prominent example for the unintended educational effect that this movement had is a China historian (b. 1949), now director of one of the most important research academies in China. The son of peasant parents who were both illiterate, he relates that they would never have been able to send him to school had it not been for the anti-Confucius campaign. As a member of one of the criticism groups, he received his training in the Classics, and otherwise, he would never have studied Chinese history and philology. The peasant boy thus became a renowned scholar by means of an anti-scholarly movement, and his is not an isolated case.

One could argue that through the anti-Confucius campaign, a much greater part of the Chinese population came in contact with the Confucian heritage and Confucian values than would ever have been reached if regular teaching had been continued without any political bias during the Cultural Revolution years. While we may need more empirical evidence—as for instance from memory reports, which often focus on the early years of the Cultural Revolution rather than its ending and thus do not discuss the Anti-Confucius campaign in great detail—to examine the actual effects of this admittedly short-lived practice, the obvious popularity of Confucian morals in the years after the Cultural Revolution—as is apparent for instance from soap operas such as *Kewang* (*Yearning* 渴望) from the 1990s⁴⁶ or the foundation of Confucius Institutes (*Kongzixueyuan* 孔子学院) since the 2000s, together with the renewed popular interest in the Neo-Confucian *Three Character Classic* (*Sanzijing* 新三字经) in kindergartens and primary schools in the People's Republic of China⁴⁷—points our attention in a particular direction: It may have less to do with a revival of a long-lost (at least “for ten years,” according to the 1981 *Party Resolution*)⁴⁸ tradition, than with a perpetuation

46 See Chao Xi and Yifu, eds., *Nuandong-Jiuling Kewang re* (A Warm Winter: Fever of Yearning) (Beijing: Zhongguo guoji guangbo chubanshe, 1991).

47 See “Old-time primers revive in modern classroom” (Xinhua 1.1.2004) available through DACHS Heidelberg.

48 “Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party Since the Founding of the People's

of these values, through black material during the entire period of the Cultural Revolution. It is necessary to reconsider, therefore, what was lost and what was found in terms of a traditional cultural background for different social groups and different generations during and as a result of the Cultural Revolution.

Campaigns against the "Four Olds" were accompanied by alternative—if not necessarily subversive—readings of the objects under scrutiny. While the destructive violence of the "smashing" movements certainly did not produce a sophisticated understanding of the objects that were destroyed, some of the looting and denunciation may have led to an exposure to cultural artifacts hitherto barred for various reasons. Some of the "smashing" activities could and would in fact have been a pretext for preserving cultural products, as Denise Ho has shown.⁴⁹ Her findings are echoed in the story told by one museum curator (with a "capitalist" father who owned a small store) who remembered his early days at the Shanghai museum, thus casting an ironic light on the statistics of ransacked homes in Shanghai cited earlier:

A person with a high position in the Communist Party would call the museum, saying that he had all these precious objects at home, and knew that he could not keep them. So he would ask us to go and ransack his home—in order to save these objects. And so we did: we would put on Red Guard attire, go to his home, and take all of his porcelain and other precious belongings. These are now all in the Shanghai Museum. And there was not just one person who did this. There were quite a few people, all of them with a certain position in society, who would call us in the same way. Of course, there was a lot of real *chao jia*, without anyone calling and asking for it, but this kind of thing also took place regularly. So the "smashing of the Four Olds" meant that quite a lot of very valuable objects came to our museum. Many of them were never returned to their owners and those that were would have been kept at the museum for the owners, free of charge. Since the Shanghai Museum was never ransacked, it was able to keep many of these objects, preserve and save them. I must say, these experiences left a very strong impression on me. (Museum Curator, b. early 1950s)

Smashing, then, in these instances, is quite radically redefined. It comes to stand for "saving" and "enjoying" rather than "destroying" and "condemning." These examples may have shown that when measuring the impact of "smashing" movements on cultural memory, the secret consumption

Republic of China," CCP Central Committee, ed. *Beijing Review* 27 (1981): 20–26.

49 Denise Y. Ho, "Antiquity in Revolution," chapter 5.

of “forbidden fruit”—not even necessarily behind closed doors—throughout the Cultural Revolution decade, may have been equally important, because it was potentially equally important and culturally constitutive as that of the “smashing” activities in the open.

Conclusion: Smashing Reconceived

Establishing the Four Olds in the Propaganda Art of the Cultural Revolution

The traumatic experience of having one’s home broken in to, of having precious objects destroyed and robbed, of being deprived of books and records, paintings and musical instruments, porcelain, clothes and much more, has been described in many a memoir or fictional account of and from the Cultural Revolution.⁵⁰ These narratives often omit, however, the flipside of these experiences: what happened to the objects of so-called “bourgeois,” or “capitalist,” “revisionist” and “feudal” heritage after they had been taken away by Red Guards? What happened to the books and scores, the films and drama plots—foreign as well as old and Chinese—locked away from the public as potentially poisonous?

The story reconstructed here from a set of interviews, conducted with different generations and social groups who lived through the Cultural Revolution, offers an alternative rendering of “smashing the Four Olds” and the later campaign against Lin Biao and Confucius, one that emphasizes the transcultural experience of assiduous reading, listening, profiting and learning from the cultural objects that were taken away from some, to be enjoyed by others not just during this early period of the Cultural Revolution but throughout this entire decade of “cultural stagnation,” as it often is called.

The kinds of contradictions hinted at here are typical of the Cultural Revolution experience in art and culture. This paper has argued that our understanding of the destructive and numbing forces during the Cultural Revolution may have blurred our ability to see another history which continues to shape artistic activities in China to this day. Indeed, throughout the Cultural Revolution there may have been harsh restrictions on what was propagated as official culture, but the importance of the manifold and varied local and private cultures both in urban settings and in the countryside has not earned enough attention. They form an extremely important backdrop for the particular effects and repercussions which Cultural Revolution propaganda art was able to have.⁵¹

50 In the third part of her manuscript, “Idols, Commodities, Artifacts, and Ruins: The ‘Four Olds’ Through Three Writers,” Jie Li describes in great detail these very private experiences and their reflection in literature.

51 For these after-effects see e.g. Wang, Ban, *The Sublime Figure of History: Aesthetics and Poli-*

Contrary to common notions that the Chinese Cultural Revolution was a period of political and cultural iconoclasm as well as of isolationism, and consequently a "cultural desert," this paper intended to provide evidence for a vibrant and transculturally informed experience of cultural consumption. It was directed at China's traditional as well as foreign cultural products, which, even if officially banned, were unofficially available, especially during the "smashing" campaign and similar, subsequent campaigns.

At the same time, and perhaps paradoxically so, precisely the kind of "feudal, capitalist, and revisionist" heritage which was criticized and "smashed" in the early years of the Cultural Revolution and again, prominently, during the movement criticizing Lin Biao and Confucius in the mid-1970s, is the staple of Cultural Revolution propaganda art and actually celebrated in it. Studies of Cultural Revolution cultural production show very clearly how, paradoxically, what could be termed "feudal, capitalist, revisionist" elements abound in the model works *yangbanxi* 样板戏 and all other official art which was to be modeled on them.⁵² The model works perpetuate the semantics of "bourgeois" and "revisionist" symphonic romantic music and ballet, as well as those in the "feudal" traditions of Chinese theatre. Through the model works, urban youth learned about traditional (should we say "feudal"?) Chinese opera and peasants about ("bourgeois/revisionist") ballet. One youth from a family of intellectuals and another, the son of a small "capitalist" shop owner, recalled:

I never used to watch Beijing opera, I did not like it, but the revolutionary operas (among the model works) actually made you like the form—or get used to it... a lot more people actually were now confronted with and, at the end, knew something about Beijing opera. (Male Artist, b. 1954)

If you listen to the model works, even if you don't like symphonic music, you nevertheless experience it. Through the model works, you may see a ballet for the first time (or a virtuoso piano concerto for that matter). This had a kind of enlightenment effect *qimeng xiaoguo* 启蒙效果. (Museum Curator, b. 1950s)

tics in Twentieth-Century China (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997) and Barmé, *In the Red: On Contemporary Chinese Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), as well as Mittler, "Popular Propaganda? Art and Culture in Revolutionary China." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 2008. 152/4: 466–489.

52 See Paul Clark, *The Chinese Cultural Revolution. A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) and Mittler, *A Continuous Revolution* which discusses several examples of the pivotal importance which "establishing the Four News" had after the smashing campaign for the later development of Chinese cultural production.

The Cultural Revolution can thus be regarded as a time when, through the propagation of the model works, which reached practically every household, more people than ever were exposed to both Chinese traditional music and foreign music.⁵³ In accordance with Mao's most important utterances on the function and form of artistic production, manifested in his *Yan'an Talks* of 1942,⁵⁴ and binding to the present day, good art had to make use of the most accomplished forms, both foreign and Chinese, and fill it with the most adequate contents. This means that the establishment of the "Four News" amounted to a perpetuation of the styles and artistic practices condemned in the "Four Olds," albeit filled now with the correct ideological content. If our reading of the significance of the Cultural Revolution is restricted solely to the tragically destructive elements of "smashing," which were only one influential experience during this period, if this reading leaves out not only what was "simply there" in spite of censorship and propaganda, as described in this article, but also what in fact was "established" (i.e. the "Four News," the model works from the Cultural Revolution which the same campaign called for in the second part of its slogan of "smashing the Four Olds and establishing the Four News:" *po si jiu, li si xin* 破四旧, 立四新), it fails to account for the recent craze for Cultural Revolution art and culture and the reasons why this has remained strong and unabated now for two decades.⁵⁵

Cultural Revolution propaganda art, as epitomized in the model works, served as a surrogate or proxy for the artistic styles smashed as "Four Olds."⁵⁶ A memoir published in Shanghai in 1998 has epitomized this direct substitution of the "Four Olds" by "Four News" with essentially identical stylistic features and content. It tells the story of a young man who had once aspired to become a violinist. He was first sent to the countryside, and then called back to play in an orchestra specializing in performances of the model works. In his memoirs, he actually comes to the ironic conclusion that the model works are in fact nothing but examples of the literary and artistic phenomena he had learned to condemn during the smashing campaigns of

53 Rulan Chao Pian, Review of *The Performing Arts in Contemporary China*, by Colin P. Mackerras, *Ethnomusicology* 28 (1984): 574–576.

54 *Mao Zedong's Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art, a Translation of the 1943 Text with Commentary*, translated and edited by Bonnie McDougall (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, 1980).

55 See Barmé, *In the Red*, and Barbara Mittler, "Popular Propaganda?" 466–489.

56 For a thorough discussion of "bourgeois" and "feudal" elements in the model works, see Chen Xiaomei, *Acting the Right Part: Political Theater and Popular Drama in Contemporary China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), and Barbara Mittler, "Cultural Revolution Model Works and the Politics of Modernization in China," 53–81.

the Cultural Revolution. While playing *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy* (*Zhi qu Weihushan* 智取威虎山), the narrator keeps remembering the violin concerto by Mendelssohn—a “bourgeois” composer in the derogatory language of the time. “Why,” the narrator asks himself, “why do I keep remembering this music, which sounds like the worst salon music of the bourgeoisie?” His answer is that the model works, however grand and heroic they sound, are very similar in style—if not much the same: and they are not as great as Mendelssohn’s music, after all...⁵⁷

Consequently, the model works perpetuate the styles once declared part of the “Four Olds”—both in terms of foreign styles and in terms of traditional Chinese styles—and propagate them to those who had never been confronted with them. In much of what the interviewees said, it becomes clear that consumers of Cultural Revolution propaganda may even have derived pleasure from a text, even if they did not necessarily share or accept its ideological message. This ambiguity and openness in reception explains some of the after-effects of Cultural Revolution propaganda, which is not merely appreciated by those with nostalgic memories of performing it, but also by a younger generation who never even went through the Cultural Revolution.⁵⁸ A musician, born in 1942 into a working class family, remembers:

My generation likes the model works, they are our youth. Yes, there are people who dislike them, too, but we like them, really. In fact, when I was young, 18 or so, I really needed art, we all did. And our only sustenance then was the model works, which we actually thought were quite great. Jiang Qing used really good performers, writers, artists and musicians. Of course, this was propaganda for Mao’s ideas, but it was also simply good art. (Musician, b. 1942)

While “smashing the Four Olds” can be said to have fostered clandestine readings and the conservation of the very objects declared as proscribed, and thus, by consequence, the making of alternative cultures—often local and private—within the interstices of a regime of censorship, “establishing”

57 “Yinwei Mende’ersong” (Because of Mendelssohn), in ed. Zou Jingzhi, *Zhiqing xiantanlu* (*Records of what Sent-down Youth talked about*) (Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe, 1998), 156–160, esp. 158. For an elaborate analysis of the stylistic similarities between the model works and so-called “bourgeois” music, not only through the use of “pentatonic romanticism,” see Mittler, *A Continuous Revolution*, especially chapter 1.

58 This younger generation, now singing karaoke, rapping and rocking to the model works, figures prominently in a 2005 documentary on the model works: Yuen Yan-Ting dir, Yang Ban Xi (*The Eight Model Works*) (Rotterdam: Scarabee Films, 2005).

perpetuated some of the most intricate stylistic features of this proscribed culture. All of this helps explain the continuing fascination and attraction of Cultural Revolution art and culture which perpetuates the very forms and styles that once were criticized and smashed (as well as enjoyed) at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, during the campaign to “smash the Four Olds.”

Appendix 1:

List of Interviewees (Ordered by Age)

Occupation	Year of Birth	Gender	Family background	Place and date of interview	Experience in factory/ countryside
1. Family of a Cartoonist	1915	male	well-educated	Shanghai, 14 March 2004	
2. Musicologist	1922		parents underground Communists, PLA members, later declared rightists	Shanghai, 15 March 2004	
3. Musician	1930s	male	intellectuals, musicians	Shanghai, 14 March 2004	
4. Editor	1930s	male	father a rich landowner, died early, family poor, working-class background; mother a nanny; he soon became a CCP member	Beijing, 19 March 2004	cadre school, c. 1968–71

5. Composer	1937	male	father in the military, Yan'an background, died before 1949; mother traditional background, bound feet	Beijing, 18 March 2004	propaganda troupe (文工团 <i>wengongtuan</i>), PLA, 1949–57; sent to countryside 1964–78
6. Art Historian	1940s?	male	parents from landowning class, well-educated <i>wenren</i> literati family	Shanghai, 12 March 2004	
7. Business-woman (and husband)	1940s	female (and male)	father declared a “counterrevolutionary”	Shanghai, 14 March 2004	
8. Guqin Player	1940s	male	Father a musician	Beijing, 22 March 2004	four years in countryside in Henan
9. Ethnomusicologist	1940	male		Beijing, 20 March 2004	Shandong song and dance troupe (歌舞团 <i>gewutuan</i>)
10. Musician	1942	male	father a worker	Shanghai, 9 March 2004	
11. Journalist	1946	female	parents from intellectual family, grandparents Shanghai capitalists	Shanghai, 11 March 2004	

12. China Historian	1949	male	parents illiterate peasants	Shanghai, 12 March 2004	
13. House-keeper	Ca. 1950s	female		Beijing, 17 March 2004	
14. Journalist	1949	male	family: capitalists from Guangdong	Shanghai, 12 March 2004	factory, 1968–74
15. Museum Curator	Early 1950s	male	grandfather middle peasant, father “capitalist,” owned a small store	Shanghai, 13 March 2004	
16. Artist	1954	male	parents intellectuals	Beijing, 22 March 2004	two months’ work in village near Beijing, 1969
17. Housewife (and husband)	1950s	female (and male)	he: capitalist background	Beijing, 20 March 2004	she: sent to Dongbei until 1972; he: left alone in Beijing
18. University Professor	mid-1950s	female	family: from the countryside, cadres at film academy, father in PLA but maybe GMD background	Beijing, 17 March 2004	sent to countryside of Heilongjiang, c. 1967

19. Intellectual	1955	male	family: capitalists, landowners, intellectuals; father declared rightist, parents worked as translators for the Foreign Office	Beijing, 18 March 2004	entire family in Shanxi, gaizao
20. Playwright	1956	male	parents intellectuals	Beijing, 17 March 2004	in the countryside as a teenager
21. Language Instructor (now living in Europe)	mid-1950s	male		Heidelberg, 5 December 2000	
22. China Historian	1957	male	parents intellectuals, Party members	Shanghai, 10 March 2004	
23. Librarian	mid-1950s	male		Heidelberg, 6 January 2001	in the PLA throughout the CR.
24. University Professor	mid-1950s	female	parents intellectuals, mother foreigner	Heidelberg, 2 January 2001	in countryside 1969–71 and again 1971–73
25. Intellectual	1958		family intellectuals and artists/musicians	Beijing, 20 March 2004	

26. Writer	1958	female	parents well-off intellectuals and cadres before CR, father in a shipping business	Shanghai, 10 March 2004	
27. Musicologist	1950s	male	father declared a rightist	Beijing, 19 March 2004	
28. Artist	1959	female	parents workers	Beijing, 22 March 2004	
29. Historian	1950s	male	parents both university teachers	Beijing, 21 March 2004	Sichuan country-side
30. Photographer	ca. 1960	male	parents long-time workers	Shanghai, 11 March 2004	factory worker
31. Music Student	1969	male	parents musicians	Shanghai, 15 March 2004	
32.-40. Taxi Drivers	1930s-1970s	male	diverse	Shanghai and Beijing, 2004, 2010	

Appendix 2: Interview Questions

(in English translation; interviews were conducted in Chinese)

GENERAL INFORMATION

Date of birth

Family background

Personal experiences during the Cultural Revolution (1966–76)

How old at the beginning and end of the Cultural Revolution?

Countryside/Military/Factory?

What did you do/learn at school?

CULTURE GENERALLY, ART AND LIFE

What do you associate with the Cultural Revolution in terms of cultural products? (Yulu? Posters? Books? Poetry? Music?)

What was available to you in terms of cultural products during the Cultural Revolution? Which films/books/pictures/pieces of music/poetry do you remember? Why? Was Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana*, or He Zhanhao and Chen Gang's *Butterfly Lovers' Violin Concerto* forbidden music? How did you know what was forbidden and what was not?

Did you have a feeling of reduced aesthetic possibilities and thematic restriction during the Cultural Revolution? Did you know which books (not) to read, which songs (not) to sing, which records (not) to buy? How did changes in cultural policies affect your everyday life, and how were they made public? Was it obvious to someone living through the Cultural Revolution that at one point in 1969, only five records could officially be sold? Did you realize that you could see fewer films than before?

Did you ever participate in internal screenings of films, secret record listening sessions, secret book readings, etc.? Where did you turn to read literature, see films, and listen to music?

When did cultural production play a role? Were there peak times throughout the ten-year period?

PERVASIVENESS OF ART

How did the special battle-call rhetoric of the Cultural Revolution influence your lives?

Did you use MaoSpeak? When and why?

Did you realize that Cultural Revolution literature is characterized by short sentences? Were you taught stylistic features such as this at school?

Did you feel a difference between the underground and the official literature you read? In terms of style? Subject matter?

Did you ever participate in poetry declamations? Revolutionary/quotation dances or music-making, productions of model works etc.? Was it fun? Did one believe in what one did? Were there any uncertainties as to whether you were performing the right and correct versions of the model works?

How new did the model works and other Cultural Revolution cultural products appear to you? How familiar were you with their stories before the Cultural Revolution?

Was there a Chinese version of *Chinese Literature* and *China Reconstructs*?

Did you ever read those foreign-language journals?

Who did you learn to think of as the composer of “Red Is the East”: He Luting or Li Youyuan?

MODEL WORKS

Were the model works really the model that needed to be emulated in everything?

Which of the model works do you remember? Why?

How were the model works publicized? Did you know about Jiang Qing’s role in their production? How were changes in the model works publicized?

Did you know about the political discussions that took place around them?

Are the model works good art? Are they Chinese art?

MODELS

What appeal do the models from the model operas, books, and comics have for you? Whom do you admire?

When does the credibility of models stop when imposed from above? (For example, with Zhang Haidi, or before)?

Who are the heroes and models you remember from the Cultural Revolution?

What did they mean to you? Were they discussed or even questioned as “persons”? Were there specific heroes for specific times? What martyrs were most prominent during the Cultural Revolution? Why?

Was the idea of modeling oneself on the model heroes feasible? Did you ever envisage yourself in terms of a revolutionary hero or martyr? Which?

Did these heroes set “fashions” or “standards of beauty” for you to aspire to? Which heroes do you remember best: those from literature, the model works, comics, paintings?

How relevant were directives such as the Three Prominences or Revolutionary Realism and Revolutionary Romanticism to your real life-experiences during the Cultural Revolution?

POLITICS/CAMPAIGNS

How political was the Cultural Revolution? Were you aware of factional fighting? How did this influence your lives, your artistic production?

How tangible was the control that the Cultural Revolution Group around

Jiang Qing had over the media?

How did you feel about the different campaigns throughout the Cultural Revolution (and before and after)? What is the greatest difference between these campaigns? And was there ever a lukewarm response to the campaigns? Were different groups more or less enthusiastic? Did the Anti-Confucius Campaign actually reach the masses? How weary were people of campaigns by 1975; did they still believe in them?

THREE CHARACTER CLASSIC

In the campaigns against Confucius, did you hear of the attacks on the *Three Character Classic*? Did you read and understand the text, and its innuendos? Why? What did you know about Confucius and Confucian morals? How much of the criticisms against Confucius did people believe? What did these do to their attitudes toward Confucianism in general?

Did people believe in the negative descriptions of Confucius? What did they know or not know about him? Did their knowledge increase because of the Anti-Confucius Campaign? How much did they read? What? How? What did they think of it?

Is it true that people felt relieved when ritual practices such as those performed under Lin Biao were stopped? Do you remember when they were stopped?

What textbooks were used in school? Was the *Three Character Classic* among them? When was it used?

PERIODIZATION

Were different periods in the Cultural Revolution experienced in different ways?

In terms of contents: what, precisely, changed during different periods of the Cultural Revolution?

MEMORY

Could you give one word to sum up your memories of the Cultural Revolution? Did the Cultural Revolution feel like a "time of youth," or a "holocaust?"

How long did the Cultural Revolution as a "continuous" movement last in your mind? When did it begin? What were the great changes that one felt?

To what extent must the Cultural Revolution be described in the terms prescribed by the State? Or in terms of nostalgia? Can you explain the nostalgia for the Cultural Revolution? Is it a broad social phenomenon? Does it apply to specific groups, or to everyone?

Do you understand Cultural Revolution nostalgia? What is its relationship to nostalgia for the "golden" 1920s and '30s in great cities such as Shanghai?

Did you ever visit a museum during the Cultural Revolution? Were museums

powerful (weapons of state propaganda) during the Cultural Revolution? Does the Cultural Revolution itself need a museum?

How does reconceived Cultural Revolution art (in the form of avant-garde paintings, revolutionary pop songs, films, etc.) appeal to you?

What pieces of avant-garde art/music/literature/film/television that you know capture the atmosphere of the Cultural Revolution best of all?

Does the audience determine the way one talks about the Cultural Revolution and its culture? Do you feel free to write your own and personal version of Cultural Revolution cultural memories?

Does the meaning of Cultural Revolution Culture change when performed/seen/read today?

In what ways has the Cultural Revolution facilitated particular changes after its end (particularly in the cultural field)?