

■ Translating Memory, Transforming Identity: Chinese Expatriates and Memoirs of the Cultural Revolution

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Abstract

This article explores a newly emerged popular literary genre in the West at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century: Cultural Revolution memoirs by expatriates. This literary phenomenon is revealing of the continuous imbalanced power dynamics between the East and the West, manifested in an interesting mutation of the discourse of Orientalism that Edward Said has theorized of a similar phenomenon in the nineteenth century. These Cultural Revolution memoirs guarantee the Western reader a direct linguistic experience (without the mediation of translation) as well as absolute cultural and experiential authenticity about Mao's China. In addition to feeding the West's perennial fascination of the Orient, these memoirs of victimhood—which always end with finding salvation and happiness in the West—also help to strengthen the moral and emotional vulnerability felt in the post-Cold War and post-911 West.

Keywords: memory, identity politics, Chinese diaspora, memoirs, Cultural Revolution, self-Orientalism, schizophrenia

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This article discusses a newly emerged popular literary phenomenon in the United States in the 1990s and early 2000s—a large number of publications of Cultural Revolution memoirs and diaries by Chinese expatriates who have personally lived through the Mao era and experienced the socio-political upheavals, most notably the Cultural Revolution. Many of these Chinese expatriates made their literary debut with such a memoir or an autobiographical account disguised as fiction. For example, Nien Cheng and her *Life and Death in Shanghai*, Anchee Min and her *Red Azalea*, Dai Sijie and his *Balzac et la Petite Tailleuse Chinoise* (Balzac and the little Chinese seamstress), Ji-li Jiang and her *Red Scarf Girl*, Chun Yu and her *Little Green*, Li Cunxin and his *Mao's Last Dancer*, Da Chen and his *Colors of the Mountain*, among others.

What is truly remarkable about this body of writings and its authors is that not only the majority of such works embody the first attempt of their authors in writing in a foreign language, but these titles are also best-sellers upon publication and winners of literary awards. The instant commercial success of these works spawned a new popular literary “genre” (in a loosely defined sense of the term) in the English publishing world and cultivated a new breed of diasporic Chinese writers of memoirs, diaries, and testimonies. This literary phenomenon is revealing of the continuous imbalanced power dynamics between the East and the West, manifested in an interesting mutation of the discourse of Orientalism that Edward Said has theorized of a similar phenomenon in the nineteenth century.

Authored by native Chinese and written in a Western language (primarily English), these Cultural Revolution memoirs guarantee the Western reader a direct linguistic experience (without the mediation of translation) as well as absolute cultural and experiential authenticity about Mao's China. In effect, these Chinese diasporic writers play the role of cultural informants who provide not only first-hand knowledge of the communist China but also personal testimonies to an incomprehensible human tragedy. In addition to feeding the West's perennial fascination of the Orient, these memoirs of victimhood—which always end with finding salvation and happiness in the West—also help to strengthen the moral and emotional vulnerability felt in the post-Cold War and post-911 West. One may surmise that in this particular political, moral and psychological climate, Western readers are ready—or in Nicholas D. Paige's words, are “groomed for a new mode of relating to texts” (8)—for this body of “personal true stories,” whether in the form of memoirs, diaries, or autobiographies, to appear in the market.

Western Readers and the Cold War Context

When President Truman at the beginning of the Cold War drew the distinction between the free world and the oppressive Communist world (Walker 29-58),¹ he also imprinted in the collective psyche of the American people the conviction that the United States of America has a God-given duty to help people who long to be free. The military and political race between the US-led capitalist West and the Soviet-led Communist East thus was added with a moral characteristic, at least to the people in the West. This competition grew taut when the US-backed Chinese Nationalist Party lost the mainland to the Chinese Communist Party in 1949. Psychologically it created an imminent sense of threat to the West, as Martin Walker makes plain, “[t]he crisis of morale over the loss of China was to be one of the worst such times” (67).

This sense of crisis deepened throughout the 1960s and the 1970s with a series of setbacks: riots that sprouted up in the US, in several Western European countries such as France, West Germany, Italy, and Britain, and in Asia such as Japan; popular support from students and intellectuals in the West of the then little understood Mao and his Red Guards; the American defeat in and loss of Vietnam to the Communist side; the Soviet’s successful invasion of Afghanistan; the US-Britain’s failed coup d’état in Iran and the subsequent demoralizing American hostage crisis; and of course the increasingly unpredictable nuclear competition among several emerging powers.

Despite the fact that the West won out in the Cold War in the end, because of the long drawn-out exhausting competition over the course of forty seven years (1945-1992), the eventual victory in fact did not bolster the moral superiority of the free world. Moreover, the fact that the U. S. and Britain did not come out of the Cold War more dominant over the world affairs, but on the contrary became weakened in their global influences—all of which contribute to an even shakier leadership of these two Western powers. It is therefore not hard to imagine how the Cultural Revolution memoirs, which began to come out in early 1990s, would draw such attention and attracted an immense readership in the West, if not because they serve to remind the West of its ideological triumph and the value system it has advocated and fought for.

Particularly the extensive popularity of these Cultural Revolution memories in the U. S. attests to the highly-treasured value of freedom and democracy held by the American people, a value instigated by Truman at the onset of the Cold

¹ For this discussion, please see Martin Walke, *The Cold War: A History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1993) 29-58.

War. To push this line of argument a little further, it is even highly plausible that the majority of the readers of these memoirs are the baby-boomers who grew up during the Cold War, witnessed on the television screen the brutality of the Vietnam War, then went on to the streets to protest the war and to support civil rights for the ethnic minorities, who now embrace those Chinese diasporic writers as people who uprooted themselves in order to find freedom in the West. Particularly enabled by the West's freedom of speech, these Chinese expatriates now can openly expose Communism's oppression and brutality. Once again, these Cultural Revolution memoirs justify the American baby-boomers' changed mind towards Communism and Maoism as the anti-Communist sentiment grew with the intense fight against Viet Cons. The predictable happy ending of these memoirs in which the author-protagonist finds a new chance in life in the West also confirms the legitimacy of Western values and its moral leadership.

Furthermore, these memoirs' exposure of the atrocity in Mao's China helps to make the world easier to live in because in these memoirs, the division between good and evil remains distinct, victims and victimizers are easily distinguishable and evil is always defeated in the end. In reality, though, the world has become more complicated since the end of the Cold War, and ever more so after the September 11th attack. Now the free world finds itself fighting an invisible enemy—the terrorists—in an unconventional war where there are no battlefronts and no clear targets to shoot at, and more importantly, good and evil are not as apparent as they used to be.

Reversely seeing from the vantage point of the Cultural Revolution memoir writers, the play on the unquestionable authenticity of suffering facilitates the writer-individual in his/her formation of a new socio-cultural identity endowed with moral and cultural authority. Jung Chang's immensely successful memoir, *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China*, has established for her, at least among the popular reading public, an indisputable authority of Mao's China and its history. The popularity of *Wild Swans* has also paved the way for Chang's subsequent publication, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, which is probably the most ambitious, not to mention controversial, biography of this Chinese leader, to date. Another similar example can be found in Anchee Min who, riding the tidal wave created by *Wild Swans*, employs a completely different but equally effective strategy in her instant best-seller, *Red Azalea*. By confessing to Western readers her public denunciation of her high school English teacher and her homosexual relationship with her commander in the farm where she labored, Min sets herself up as the real survivor who has "done it all" during the most insane period in modern Chinese history. Her intimate and femininity-oriented approach of narrating her personal experience in a historical moment, including a close encounter with Madame

Mao (Jiang Ching), opens up the fictional space for Anchee Min to write her subsequent quasi-historical novels centering on this female leader of the Cultural Revolution. So, if we combine Jung Chang's obsession with Mao and Anchee Min's enthrallment with Madame Mao, these two Chinese diasporic writers surely have provided Western readers a full picture of modern China's most powerful political couple.

Cultural Revolution Memoirs and Their Chinese Context

My textual analysis here will focus on the most representative of Cultural Revolution memoirs, *Wild Swans* by Jung Chang published in 1991. But before I proceed with the analysis, it is necessary to pit it against the mainland Chinese context in which similar mnemonic practices have also taken place.

In the last couple of decades, we saw the collapse of the Maoist socialist idealism in China. One of its by-products is a memory boom that has been enthusiastically consuming various historical and individual traumas, the Cultural Revolution in particular. In the literary front, writings in China in the 1970s and the 1980s generally reflect the enormous suffering people have endured (the "scar" literature) and critical examinations of what went wrong (the "root-seeking" and the reflexive literature). However, upon entering the 1990s, this trend took a drastic turn. Mnemonic practice of the Cultural Revolution experiences began to assume a nostalgic, personal, and intimate characteristic, and more importantly, they became popular marketing items. Collective remembering of the Cultural Revolution, ironically, has manifested in popular cultural forms of fashion and entertainment—of which I call "lite" memories of a heavy historical tragedy, or according to the Chinese official depiction, a "ten-year calamity" (*shinian haojie*).

Scholars of China's Cultural Revolution have noted that the emergence of the nostalgic narratives in the 1990s in China is a reflection of a generation's loss of identity amidst the nation's sweeping social, cultural and economic changes. This lost generation—identified as the *zhijing* (the educated youth) generation who were students and Red Guards during the early years of the Cultural Revolution, and who were later sent down to harsh rural areas for reeducation until the end of the Cultural Revolution—finds itself once again left behind by the nation's reform policies. The *zhijing*'s collective attempt to sustain its identity in contemporary Chinese society is manifested in the boom of nostalgic publications of memoirs, diaries, essays and novels. Various *zhijing* communities have been formed, most of which exist on the Internet. But this "lost" generation's

identity crisis persists as its members continue to find it difficult to adjust to, or even to be competitive in, a new (almost capitalist) China.

Nostalgia may be helpful for *zhiqing* to reestablish their identity in a fast changing society, but the Chinese government's sanction of any open criticism of the Cultural Revolution poses a great hindrance to any effort at identity rebuilding. The fact that these narratives of nostalgia lack moral and critical reflections is a proof. An honest and productive relationship with the past is a crucial element in any identity construction; not being able to face the past responsibly and to learn about the historical truth of a national human disaster is detrimental to *zhiqing* identity re-building and recovery from their difficult past.² While we may view the nostalgic narratives of the Cultural Revolution as a form of resistance to the Chinese society's rapid transformations, this strategy is nevertheless passive and is always in danger of being subsumed by the market economy. The price it pays is to be reduced to a "lite" memory of a profound collective experience of a generation sacrificed and victimized.

The ambivalent and "lite" characteristic of the mnemonic practice of a horrendous national trauma reveals a lack of moral and critical reflection and this can be seen both in the domestic and diasporic productions. In China, this moral crisis cannot be resolved until deeper and more sincere reflections take place in the whole society. But what I find most interesting is the foreign-language memoirs of the Cultural Revolution such as those mentioned in the beginning of this essay, also reveal the same lack of moral and critical reflection even though their authors (who are the Cultural Revolution generation, with the exception of Nien Cheng) write and publish in the free, democratic West where there is no limits on political literature.

Two common mnemonic practices among Chinese diasporic writers are self-victimization (capitalizing on the authenticity of the suffering "I") and self-exoticization (emphasizing on abjection to create an eternal incomprehensibility that characterizes the exotic Orient). Together they form a new discourse of self-Orientalization. The commercial success of their works also reveals a complex process of literary production that exposes a number of issues: how the Chinese diasporic writers' narratives of pain and recovery can be treated as political and commercial actions; how self-victimization can be used to forge a kind of moral authority, cultural capital, and a new identity for the diasporic Cultural Revolution generation; and how the West's continuous fascination for the socialist China encourages the Chinese diasporic writers' unbalanced and uncritical

² An excellent study of this subject is by Guobin Yang, "Days of Old Are Not Puffs of Smoke: Three Hypotheses on Collective Memories of the Cultural Revolution," *The China Review* 5.2 (2005):13-41.

examination of their personal and their nation's traumatic past.

Personal Memoir as a Moment in History: Towards the Moral Sense of Self

Helen M. Buss asserts that the memoir, more so than the autobiography, has an intrinsic affinity to history in that, it contains the memoir writer's "personal knowledge" of a certain historical moment in its cultural, political, or social events, and that it serves as the vehicle through which the interrogation of "the private individual's relationship to a history and/or a culture" is conducted (3). The subject matter of a memoir, therefore, is often about recounting unusual life experiences or circumstances whether of the memoirist's or of that of the person(s) outside of the narrating "I." Autobiography, on the other hand, focuses on no one but the author (*auto-/self*) and tells a complete life story (*bio-/life; graphial* account or record) of the author. As forms of life writing, both the autobiography and the memoir share the same impulse of needing to understand a life lived or certain life experiences through representation. Jane Marie Todd prefers to treat such act of representation as a psychic manifestation of "repetition of a life experience (generally a trauma or loss) with the intent (not necessarily, or even usually, conscious) of mastering that experience and of assigning it a meaning" (1).

The search for meaning in any form of life writing is inherent in the author's desire for identity (re-)construction. The narrating "I" thus plays a complicated role in this endeavor. As in the case of the memoir, whether the memoirist functions in the narrative as the primary participant/protagonist, the witness/recorder from a subjective perspective in time past, or a retrospective voice armed with extra-contextual knowledge to supplement the recollected events (Buss 16-17), it is vital to the success of the memoir to maintain a delicate balance between personal emotion and factual accuracy. To this end, Buss explains thus: "This 'self-vigilance' with which a memoirist reassesses, reconsiders, and reconfigures her memories and subject positions while allowing for the possibility of more change in the future—at the same time allowing her reader to observe that process—is a very important aspect of the narrative voice. Without the reflective/reflexive consciousness, the memoir fails to do the work of identity making for its writer, and by implication for its reader . . ." (17-18).

A crucial connectivity here is between the "reflective/reflexive consciousness" of the memoir narrative and the conscious or unconscious goal of the memoirist to forge a new identity at the end of his/her writing process. To understand the value of one's life—to make sense of it—implies applying certain moral con-

cepts to the on-going self evaluation. This moral preoccupation is imbedded in the memoirist's language and, if the values are embraced by readers, the publication then would likely to enjoy commercial popularity. Because the genre of life writing has the unique aura of authenticity and authority—that it concerns truthful telling of and reflecting on a real life or life experience by the very individual who possesses such knowledge—a widely received memoir or autobiography may reveal a psychological, emotional, and moral “trend,” or “pack” in Nicholas Paige's word (8), of a collective mentality or subjectivity at a given historical moment.

The memoirist's establishing of a moral self is transmitted to the readers who get the satisfaction of learning how to live their own lives. The “lesson learned,” then, means the moral good has been transmitted from the writer to the reader. As argued by David Parker, “the good is an inescapable framework for understanding any human agent and therefore for any writer of life narrative. . . . [T]hat making the best sense of lives requires the use of ‘thick’ evaluative languages of the good” (6). Value-loaded notions/words such as “honesty,” “courage,” “love,” and “truthfulness” are the moral core of identity; in other words, relation to one's self is anchored by such moral values by which one finds self worth. But it is important to remember that moral good is also shaped by culture and conditioned by historical time, and what one individual upholds to be the core of his/her moral good often reflects what are deemed the most important values in his/her culture and time. In the next section, I will analyze *Wild Swans* and its author Jung Chang to see what moral good is driving the narrative and if the narrating language reflects any moral values that are particular to the author's cultural background and historical positioning, and with its wide popularity in the West, how the reader's reception in turn reflects the core values of the West in this particular historical juncture of late 20th and early 21st century.

Schizophrenia and the Narrative of Pain: Wild Swans

Among the many Cultural Revolution memoirs published in the West, *Wild Swans* by Jung Chang definitely stands out. Today it probably still holds the biggest grossing non-fiction paperback in publishing history worldwide, with more than 10 million copies sold and translation in more than 30 languages.³ This

³ Figures of the sale of the book are between 9 millions and 10 millions. See Lisa Allardice, “Author of ‘Wild Swans’ Chases Down Chairman Mao's Ghost,” *The Guardian* (London: June 14, 2005) 5. Also see Saxton Speaker Bureau on Jung Chang, www.saxton.com.au/default.asp and Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jung_Chang.

is Chang's second book—the first one, which she co-authored with her then-not-yet husband Jon Holliday, *Madame Sun Yat-Sen: Soong Ching-Ling* (1986), did not seem to make much of a splash. Chang's third and latest book, also co-authored with her husband, *Mao: The Unknown Story* (2005), is a highly controversial biography of Mao among many China historians and political scientists in the United States who question the authors' methodology and many of their sources.

Popular and commercial reviews of *Wild Swans*, however, are full of admiration and adulation. Commonly found praise words include “evocative,” “riveting,” “inspiring,” “powerful,” “moving,” “courageous,” “truthful,” and so on. I have surveyed numerous reviews on the Internet and found that general readers seemed to have taken this book as a historical introduction to modern China. Many expressed surprise to learn about the “true condition” of Mao's China and the Cultural Revolution. But primarily they admired the author's ability to transcend personal bitterness as well as her family members' love and devotion for each other. Ultimately to the Western readers, *Wild Swans* is hailed as an intimate testimony to the triumph of the human spirit despite unprecedented hardship and suffering.

Reviews by literary critics and scholars, however, are much more critical of the book and of this genre in general. American literary scholar Xiaomei Chen argues that these writers, who are mostly women, intentionally represent the narrator “as the only heroine while rejecting others as ‘prosecutors’ of the innocent.” Shu-mei Shih, another literary scholar in the United States, critiques such memoirs of sensationalizing traumatic experiences about China's Cultural Revolution in order to gain a market niche in the West (Shih 21). Their colleague, Min-bao Yue adds that these memoirs are “geared towards an audience in the West and expound the ideology of victimization or personal suffering” (47). One academic book review challenges the historical and experiential comprehensiveness posited by the author—that the memoir recounts lives of three generations of Chinese women from the pre-revolutionary time to the end of the Cultural Revolution. The reviewer questions such authority since Chang's judgment on and criticism of a period of tremendous social turmoil is essentially informed by her privileged position of being a member of a “high official” (*gao gan*) family (Lin 121-28).

While agreeing with the above assessments, I believe the essential issue here is how Jung Chang and writers of this genre are able to, on the one hand, establish themselves as spokespersons of China and to present China in a stereotypical, monolithic fashion: that of hardship and victimization; while on the other, present their personal life stories as testimonies to moral good such as courage, honesty, and love for family and freedom. Answers to this question are inevitably com-

plex, since we must consider both ends—the producer-writer and the receiver-reader. But I believe the narrative strategy devised by Jung Chang in *Wild Swans*, among those employed by writers of this genre, is one of the most effective to establish for the diasporic writer-individual moral authority and authenticity, which in turn, guarantee them the place of the spokesperson and a new identity in the West.

Consistent throughout *Wild Swans* are two Jung Changs: the narrator who stands on moral high ground, detached and objective; and the heroine (one of the three Chinese daughters) who lived through the Mao era, experienced the brainwash and hardship, and witnessed the unjust treatments suffered by her parents. The memoir is told by a third-person, omniscient narrator similar to that in a realist novel. From the onset, the narrative of *Wild Swans* is conditioned by the narrator's large dosage of historical anecdotes that reads more like a historical novel than a personal memoir. *Wild Swans* tells the stories of three Chinese women—Jung Chang's maternal grandmother, who was married at the age of fifteen to a Manchurian warlord general as a concubine and later escaped the oppressive marriage and was remarried to a doctor; Chang's mother as a devoted Communist, a popular local political leader and wife to a loyal high-ranking party official; and Chang herself and her growing up experiences in Mao's China. The book ends with Chang arriving Great Britain as one of the first Chinese graduate students studying in the West. That year was 1978, two years after Mao's death.

The book opens like a typical memoir or autobiography—with a family tree and a chronology from the year 1870 when Chang's maternal grandmother's second husband, Dr. Xia, was born, to the 1978 when Chang arrived at Britain. Interestingly next to this "family/personal" chronology is the "general/national" chronology of major political events that shaped and comprised the history of modern China—events such as the overthrow of the last Manchu emperor and the establishment of Republic of China, Kuomintang-Communist Civil War, the birth of People's Republic of China, the Cultural Revolution, the deaths of Lin Biao, Zhou Enlai, and Mao, and finally Deng Xiaoping's rise to power. Immediately after this corresponding family-nation chronology is a map of China. Unlike a conventional memoir in which the larger context normatively falls within the perimeters of the author's family and more specifically the author's personal life experiences, Jung Chang's memoir of three generations of mothers and daughters is closely pit against the political trajectory of modern China, particularly Mao's China. The family's ups and downs correspond closely to the twists and turns of the nation's political developments. To achieve this mirroring of the personal and the national, Jung Chang's strategy is to create a double role for

herself—one as the omniscient narrator-commentator of history, and the other the third woman-character in this female family genealogy.

This “schizophrenic” approach of splitting herself into two identities with different narratological functions allows Chang to be a spectator of the horrendous historical events while still maintaining her role as a victim of those events. This “double standing” gives Chang moral authority (as someone who is in line with history and justice) and authenticity (as someone who actually experienced the trauma). Because of her detached self-positioning in the narrative, her characters often appear flat, with the only exception of her mother. The story of her grandmother is sketchy; Chang’s own personal story is shallow at best. The main thrust of this memoir lies primarily on Chang’s mother who is the most developed character in the entire book. But the real protagonist in this book, I would argue, is Mao and his Cultural Revolution. *Wild Swans* is a book that tells the human stories of the impacts of Mao’s politics culminating in the Cultural Revolution through the lives of Chang’s mother primarily and her own secondarily. Instead of employing her first-person autobiographical narrator to navigate her private psychological space, Chang reflects little on growing-up, personal memory of the past, and as a result, we see no ingenious search for identity that is so crucial to the awakening of the self.

A good example of lack of complexity, or a rather feeble “reflective/reflexive consciousness” in the exploration of the self, can be found in the author-narrator’s recollection of her Red Guard experience. From the first moment the Red Guard organization was formed in her school, author-narrator Chang’s portrayal of her involvement throughout is a consistent picture of herself either as a reluctant participant or a totally passive instrument in this political movement. In this part of the book, Chang, in her usual narrative tactic, inserts in between relatively shorter segments about herself many longer passages on the peripheral information or background analyses of the political event of the moment. If we take away those documentary references, here is a picture of the heroine Chang’s participation in her Red Guard organization.

First she “feign[ed] illness to escape the political meetings and frightening slogans” (Chang 287), then after she was summoned back to school and learned that a local Red Guard organization had been formed and the “immense prestige of being Mao’s babies” (viz. Red Guards), she “immediately” submitted her application. As most Red Guards were high officials’ children and her father was the Party first secretary for Sichuan Province, she was a “natural” candidate (Chang 287). Despite of such readiness, Chang does not forget to repeat how in fact she was not all that willing—she felt “compelled” to stay at school with other Red Guards; she hid her shyness because of her “guilty” feeling of not adher-

ing to Mao's calling; and finally she had to "suppress [her] sense of reason" altogether (Chang 289).⁴

By portraying herself as a person unable to think on her own and blaming her lack of reflection to fear and blind worship of Mao, Chang is responsibility free. In other words, she was a total victim in a crazy time, and whatever she did or did not do in the face of right and wrong, she was not to be responsible since she was this passive young person who was unable to reason, much less to take action. I find this persona to be totally incongruent with the critical narrator that Chang is throughout this book. Are we to believe that before she came to the West and was somehow miraculously enlightened and transformed into this sharp critic-historian of Mao's China, she was merely a frightened, unthinking, and submissive woman in China? It is hard to believe the Jung Chang portrayed in this memoir and the one who wrote this book are the same person—there is hardly any continuity in the person then and now. Because of such inconsistency, we can only conclude that "schizophrenia" is the name of the game Jung Chang is playing here.

Chang's interest in this memoir, apparently, is not to seek understanding of what the experience of the past means to her and her family. By constantly characterizing herself as a frightened, passive, and insulated child and young adult, Chang thus is able to steer away from reflecting or engaging with her past. The heroine Chang is basically muted in the narrative who is portrayed as an innocent and frightened object; while the author-narrator Chang functions as a speaking subject who freely expresses her criticism and judgment on any incidents that caused hardship to her and her family.

Instead of creating a psychological space in which the emotional and the mental state of the suffering victims is explored, the memoir's plotting of events adheres strictly to the chronological line. Instead of self-conscious reflective narration, omniscient didactic voices take over the narrative. In sum, *Wild Swans* is not an individualist self-reflection narrative as expected of a memoir; but rather it fashions after the former collective, socially-oriented realism produced since the 1930s. It is thus fair to say that the main thrust of this memoir is the author

⁴ In summer 2006, through a friend in Hong Kong I met a person who was a close colleague to Jung Chang in Britain and has remained a good friend to her. This person has disclosed to me that Chang's Red Guard experience in fact was not what she characterizes in *Wild Swans*. Learning first-hand from Chang's Red Guard rival—a Chinese woman who is now a training instructor in Beijing's secret service agency—Chang was rather an aggressive faction leader among the Chengdu Red Guards, and this Chinese woman who led a different faction, was Chang's archenemy. Although I cannot verify this information one hundred percent, but given the high respectability of this gentleman whom I met in Hong Kong (who has asked me not to reveal his identity), I am prone to believe the story; but given the circumstantial nature of this information, I have decided to put it here in a note.

Jung Chang's subjective commentaries on the Mao era. Her real object of interest is never "the three daughters of China," instead it is the historical period and the person who dictated it. It is therefore no accident that her next book should tell the "unknown story" of Mao.

Similarly, there are two Chinas present in the narrative: one is the collective suffering Chinese victimized by a treacherous regime, and the other the vicious regime/victimizer who inflicts injustice and cruelty to the masses. In Chang's own words, "the whole of China was like a prison. Every house, every street was watched by the people themselves. In this vast land, there was nowhere anyone could hide" (Chang 332). If a prison is guarded by the prisoners, and if the prisoners are tortured by prisoners themselves, then the line between the victim and the victimizer is ultimately blurred. But in Chang's following description of her parents' predicaments at that time, there is obviously a line that clearly divides up the bad guys and the good guys: "The atmosphere outside was terrifying, with the violent street-corner denunciation meetings and all the sinister wall posters and slogans; people were walking like zombies, with harsh or cowed expressions on their faces. What was more, my parents' bruised faces marked them as condemned, and if they went out they ran the risk of being abused" (Chang 332). Here the house that shelters her parents segregates the innocent victims from the vicious victimizers who are essentially the rest of the people and the world outside. So, is Chang claiming that the entire Chinese populace is guilty while only a small handful of people like her family are not? In a massive human atrocity like the Cultural Revolution, this claim can hardly sustain itself.

In this book, the clear distinction between the absolutely good and the absolutely bad—be it to portray herself or to characterize her parents—is highly problematic and suspicious. There is an interesting review of Chang's *Mao* biography in which the author Timothy Cheek points out a tactic Chang and Halliday employ in their documentation of Mao:

Despite its impressive reference apparatus, Chang and Holliday's book is not a history in the accepted sense of a reasoned historical analysis. It is, ironically, a Maoist denunciation of Mao himself, done in the florid style of the Cultural Revolution denunciations . . . an unrelenting People-magazine story-line in which all action derives from Mao or Stalin or moles or traitors, all of whom are completely and consistently bad, bad, bad. (Cheek 109-18)

The first and foremost rhetorical device of the Maoist-style denunciations, Cheek explains, is a "black-and-white dichotomy" (Cheek 112). Without going any further on other rhetorical applications, this one clearly explains what lies behind the schizophrenic approach that I have been arguing here—what Chang has done in this book is precisely the same exercise she has witnessed (and perhaps

participated at some level?) over and over again during the Cultural Revolution: she has employed in her own memoir the same condemnation strategy formulated by Mao to “write back” to the man—Mao—who has “victimized” her and her family. In effect, *Wilde Swans* is a lesser version of what she and Halliday have accomplished in their Mao biography; but basically both books are what Cheek argues: an ironic Maoist attack on Mao himself.

Chang’s Cultural Revolution-style of denunciation or what I argue schizophrenic approach is seen again here in her dubious treatment of China. On the one hand, she needs a sympathy-worthy “China” to strengthen her self-victimization strategy; on the other hand, she requires a vicious and irrational “China” to help her exoticize suffering and also to strengthen her narrator’s moral authority. Essentially this split “China” establishes for Chang a new identity in the Western world: it legitimizes and exoticizes her as a new Orient who reaffirms the West’s rescuing power for its suffering Asian Other. Jung Chang has thus achieved the kind of recognition that would mark her new identity in the West. By inscribing her particular “I” into the socio-political-cultural-historical landscape of the post-Cold War, post-911 world, she achieves the moral authority and authenticity of a Chinese expatriate who has had her share of injustice and hardship under a Communist dictator, who now fights for all of those who also have endured the same fate. The moral spot light of this memoir is constantly cast on the self of the author-narrator Chang—she speaks for individual courage, prevails against authoritarian suppression, and tells the truth of history. It is this “I” who has successfully bonded with Western readers, the moral self with whom Western readers identify.

While autobiography or memoir should go beyond political debate to more a profound examination of the self and the moral fabric of a culture, *Wild Swans* seems to have gone on the opposite direction. But we should also bear in mind that the culture and the media industry in the West, or in the United States to be more specific, has been driven by consumer capitalism and can barely sustain its social responsibility. Ranging from reality TV to the memoir industry, confession no long expresses self-reflection and moral examination, but instead it produces “identities of ‘victimhood’” (Jolly 496). *Wild Swans* and other diasporic Cultural Revolution memoirs mentioned earlier in this paper are precisely such products.

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翻譯記憶與認同政治

摘要

本文主要討論在二十世紀末及二十一世紀初新近在西方(特別是美國)出現的一個新的通俗文學現象，即由離散海外的中國人或華人以英文所撰寫的文革回憶錄。這些回憶錄的流行暗示了一個仍不平衡的東、西方權力關係。這個不平衡關係體現在一種變異的東方主義，即自我東方主義。這些文革回憶錄多半強調個人在文革中所遭遇的悲慘與不公平的對待，結局總是作者終於在西方找到幸福快樂。這種敘述結構往往透過一種直接的文字、文化、及個人經歷，讓西方讀者體會在毛澤東統治下的種種酷行與實際生活經驗。這樣的故事除了滿足西方讀者對共產主義統治下中國／東方的好奇之外，同時也為後冷戰、後 911 權威及道德感低迷的西方強權國家打一劑強心針。

關鍵字：記憶，認同政治，離散華人，回憶錄／自傳，文化大革命／文革，自我東方主義，精神分裂