

compelling grand narrative. It seems that in the hugely successful reconstruction of the grand narrative of revolution, representation of the war is a prosaic and much less relevant chapter, whose significance is severely mitigated because of an innate conflict it poses to the universal communist trauma of class struggle and the collective identity the latter so powerfully fostered.

### *The Grand Narrative and the 'Old Society'*

As “community of memories” (Weber 1978:903), modern nations, from the moment of their birth, are defined and constructed by the collective memories upon which they build their collective identities and national grouping. And collective memories, as a social construction contingent upon specific social configuration and historical conjuncture, is given form by mnemonic representations that are “circulated and stored in particular forms, such as narratives, pictorial images, textbooks, pamphlets, legal charters, wills, diaries, and statues” (Wagner-Pacifici 1996:302, quoted in Saito 2006:354). In light with this, to trace the collective memories of revolutions and wars in the first two decades after the founding of the People’s Republic of China, one helpful approach is to reconstruct the grand narrative of history through which the nation defines and legitimizes itself and through which it shapes its next generation into proper social and national beings.

A casual visit to the Tian’anmen Square could offer some helpful hint for the discovery of such a grand national narrative. At the very center of the Square, there erects the national monument of China, known as the ‘Monument to the People’s Heroes’. Unveiled in 1958 to commemorate the “Eternal Glory” of the martyrs who devoted their lives to the revolutionary struggle of Chinese people in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Monument plays a most important role in the self-definition of the new state as it is supposed to testify and crystallize the traumatic historical trajectory along which the new nation was brought into being. On the back of the monument, there is an inscription drafted by Mao Zedong and written by Zhou Enlai. It reads:

"Eternal glory to the heroes of the people who laid down their lives in the people's war of liberation and the people's revolution in the past three years! Eternal glory to the heroes of the people who laid down their lives in the people's war of liberation and the people's revolution in the past thirty years! Eternal glory to the heroes of the people who from 1840 laid down their lives in the many struggles against domestic and foreign enemies and for national independence and the freedom and well-being of the people!

While the words here sound mundane and redundant, they carry with them important message that helps to decode the founding myth of the new nation. First, it is indicated in these words that the new state stands as the finale to an old era, but the ‘old era’ is not too old, but traced back to 1840, the beginning of the Opium War designated as the symbolic start of the modern history of China, or what is to be known as the one-century of humiliation and insult. Second, note that the order by which different eras are mentioned is reverse to the temporal order. I would argue later that such an arrangement is made along a line of descending symbolic significance and what is indicated by this sense of hierarchy is that the class origin of different historical agents plays a decisive role in determining the symbolic significance of different conflicts and historical events. Third, as closely related to the first point, it is also implied in these words, that the nation was born as a salvation, a redemption of what had gone wrong. Indeed, it takes no less than the ultimately sacred mission as “the people’s liberation” and “the

national independence and the freedom and well-being of the people” to justify the tremendous human sacrifice that had to be paid for such a salvation.

If the founding myth of the new nation is only partially implied in this inscription, it is put straightforward in the opening speech given by Chairman Mao Zedong at the First Plenary Session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference held on Sept. 21, 1949. The speech was selected as the text of the first lesson in the Chinese textbook for Third Grade Junior High student, which serves to testify, though in a trivial way, the ultimate importance of the document. Indeed, given at a historic moment immediately preceding the inauguration ceremony of the new state, or the symbolic birth of the People's Republic of China, the speech not only composes part of the grand narrative of the nation, it actually performs the function of actively calling the new nation into being.

In this speech, Mao drafted an authoritative narrative that tells where the new nation came from and where it is destined to go. In one of the most pithy paragraphs, Mao locates the symbolic birth of the new nation into a world-historical framework and thereby invokes a sense of sacred mission and millennial salvation. He starts with “we share among us a common understanding that what we have achieved will go down in the history of mankind<sup>118</sup>”, and continues with perhaps one of the most symbolically empowering sentence that still resonate in today's China: “the Chinese people, comprising one quarter of humanity, have now stood up!” In the following sentences, Mao elaborates on the fundamental transformation that the nation had gone through and the historical trajectory that leads up to such a redemptive moment. It goes:

The Chinese have always been a great, courageous and industrious nation; it is only in modern times that they have fallen behind. And that was due entirely to oppression and exploitation by foreign imperialism and domestic reactionary governments. For over a century our forefathers never stopped waging unyielding struggles against domestic and foreign oppressors, including the Revolution of 1911 led by Dr. Sun Yat-sen, our great forerunner in the Chinese revolution. Our forefathers enjoined us to carry out their unfulfilled will. And we have acted accordingly. We have closed our ranks and defeated both domestic and foreign oppressors through the People's War of Liberation and the great people's revolution, and now we are proclaiming the founding of the People's Republic of China...Ours will no longer be a nation subject to insult and humiliation. We have stood up!<sup>119</sup>

According to this narrative, the new state is first and foremost a millennial salvation for Chinese people, a radical rectification of what had gone horribly wrong. What is presented is an archetypical progressive narrative based upon a teleological perspective, where good and innocent people, no matter how badly they had been hurt and exploited, and how hard and prolonged they had to fight for their emancipation, would eventually triumph over the anguish and redeem the wrongs and injuries they had to suffer for long. Here, the founding of the new nation, which represents the redemptive moment, is personified into a human action, a physical

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<sup>118</sup> Editorial Division for Chinese Course, People's Education Publishing House. 1960. *Chinese* (Textbook for Junior High School). Book No.5. Hangzhou: People's Education Publishing House in Zhejiang. P.4. Translated by the author.

<sup>119</sup> The original text could be found in the Chinese text book for Junior High School students in 1960. Editorial Division for Chinese Course, People's Education Publishing House. 1960. *Chinese* (Textbook for Junior High School). Book No.5. Hangzhou: People's Education Publishing House in Zhejiang. P.4. And the English translation is quoted from the following website: [http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5\\_01.htm](http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5_01.htm)

posture that conveys the transcendental leap from a state of subjugation and humiliation towards an empowering stance that indicates a sense of dignity and equity. It is exactly through such a transcendental leap that the darkness of the 'old and bad' world can be obliterated by the bright light of a new world which promises a different and consequently much better future.

Obviously, all progressive narrative entails a traumatic representation of the past, the negative point from which the transcendental leap to the positive can be made. It is therefore not hard to notice that necessary elements of a traumatic narrative could be found in both the aforementioned documents, and particularly in Mao's opening speech, where he explicitly identified the horrendous predicament that the nation had been suffering and the perpetrators who had inflicted such wounds were explicitly identified. In the preceding paragraphs to the one I just quoted, he traces the historical trajectory of the Political Consultative Conference, and by pointing out how the results of the first attempt of such a conference, held three years ago, were "sabotaged by Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang and its accomplices"<sup>120</sup>, unambiguously designates the camp of chief enemies that the Chinese people must fight against, "imperialism, feudalism, bureaucrat-capitalism and their general representative, the reactionary Kuomintang government"<sup>121</sup>. The profound lesson that people must learn from that first attempt, Mao concludes, is that "there is absolutely no room for compromise with Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang, the running dog of imperialism, and its accomplices -- overthrow these enemies or be oppressed and slaughtered by them, either one or the other, there is no other choice."<sup>122</sup> In this brief statement, Mao firmly built the fact that the fight against the three huge camps of enemies and their general agent KMT is a battle of life and death for Chinese people, a battle that is not only profoundly and thoroughly justified but a battle that must be won. By coding the war against the evil-doers as a battle for survival, Mao not only made a powerful argument for legitimizing the victory of the people and the building of the new state, but established a traumatic representation of the past, where people were oppressed and slaughtered and which consequently must be vanquished and transcended.

The fundamental outline that is sketched out in Mao's speech, and especially the traumatic representation of the past, reverberates in all the discourses and language that contribute to the construction of the national collectivity of China in the 1950s and 1960s. Because the founding myth of the nation emphasized a fundamental transformation from what is old and bad towards what is new and good, the binary code 'old' and 'new' is made one of the most powerful and prevalent codes in Mao's era and the stark contrast between the sacred 'new society' and the profane 'old society' becomes the perpetual motif in literary works and other cultural products. Take articles selected into the Chinese textbooks for junior high school in the 50s for examples<sup>123</sup>. While the texts, altogether 110 pieces of them, were sampled from a wide variety of literary works, including news story, memoirs, poems, dramas, novels, classic works, etc, **with the exception of a few**<sup>124</sup>, the majority could be easily put into five categories, each,

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<sup>120</sup> The original text could be found in the Chinese text book for Junior High School students in 1960. Editorial Division for Chinese Course, People's Education Publishing House. 1960. *Chinese* (Textbook for Junior High School). Book No.5. Hangzhou: People's Education Publishing House in Zhejiang. P.2-3. And the English translation is quoted from the following website: [http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5\\_01.htm](http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5_01.htm)

<sup>121</sup> Ibid

<sup>122</sup> ibid

<sup>123</sup> These include Chinese Textbook for Junior High School, book no. 1 to no. 6, published by People's Education Publishing House in 1954.

<sup>124</sup>

though slightly different in their way of relevance, is equally entrenched in the binary code of the 'old' and the 'new'.

Some texts, represented mostly by pieces selected from contemporaneous news reports such as 'I Love New Beijing', and 'New Masters of the Grassland', are straightforward odes to the new society. Almost invariably, at least parts of these pieces would be dedicated to depicting and condemning how miserable life used to be in the old time, in addition to extolling how excellent and wonderful the new life is nowadays. Some texts, mainly comprised of memoirs, biographies of famous social figures from the old society and novels written before 1949, were selected primarily for the strength and depth they revealed in exposing the darkness and inhumanity of the old social system. Representative pieces in this category include Lu Xun's most famous piece 'Hometown', 'the Diary of a Mad Man' and 'Stories of My Mother' written by Zhu De, all vividly and poignantly depicting how poor ordinary people had suffered before 1949. Some texts, usually selected widely from contemporaneous news coverage and novels written by writers under the leadership of CCP and published after 1949, deal directly with the transcendental leap from the past to the present. Many of articles of this category, such as 'The Land', 'Our First Harvest', 'Peasant Sanhei and his Land', were selected from novels that write about the land reform campaigns carried out under the leadership of CCP during various times. Tracing the tortuous way along which poor peasants eventually won the ownership of their land, the theme of these works is to highlight the stark contrast between life of the peasants before and after their ultimate emancipation, and thereby demonstrate how happy life is today in comparison with the pain of yesterday. The fourth category, comprised of articles that tell stories and biographies of revolutionary role models including heroes on the battlefield, communist martyrs, and socialist model workers and peasants, may appear less explicit in their relevance to the construction of the binary code between the old and the new. But it is not a coincidence that all the heroes in these stories, as represented by those in 'Heroin Grown up in the Battle' and 'A Soldier Like This-Memorizing People's Hero He Daqing', were depicted as coming originally from poor peasants families and having an extremely harsh and deprived life. In fact, their agonies and grievances under the oppression and exploitation of the old ruling class were usually given quite long descriptions so that the evilness of the old society becomes the very motive upon which they participate in the revolution and grow up to be staunch communist fighters. The fifth category, which may appear rather exotic, is composed of texts selected from novels and stories from other socialist countries like the former Soviet Union and Hungary. These texts, represented by 'A Conversation between Charcoals', 'Driving Away Poverty', demonstrate how superior the socialist system is to the old feudal or capitalist system, how the 'new' society has brought liberation and happiness for the people there, and thereby showcase the universality of the sacredness of the 'new' and serve to bulwark the construction of the binary code from a totally different yet powerful perspective.

This brief survey over the Chinese textbooks not only demonstrates how universally the narrative construction of the national collectivity is carried out via two opposite means, the positive construction that eulogizes the 'new society', and the negative construction that condemns the old one, it also reveals that the remembrance of the 'old' is ubiquitous and made the very base upon which the legitimacy of the 'new' is being built. In fact, the negative construction of the profane, almost always predominates over the establishment of the sacred, and the 'old society' as a signifier always assumes a much greater symbolic significance than the new one.

Indeed, there can not be any other signifier than old china, or more frequently the old society, that is more prevalently and firmly established as the profane signifier that denotes everything that had gone horribly wrong before 1949. In an article selected as part of the Chinese textbook for Junior High students, for instance, the author, to justify people's struggle for liberation and eulogize the noble sacrifice of countless martyrs, defines the 'old society' as a place where the only possible option left for human beings is to "exploit and subjugate each other" and it must therefore be characterized by "tens of thousands of evils"<sup>125</sup>. In the same vein, the horrible old society is so unfailingly portrayed in a series of speech genres, as demonstrated in Alexander and Gao's article on the failed trauma of Nanking Massacre, that it becomes difficult to imagine the old society without evoking the iconic images that these phrases crystallize. For instance, *Sang quan ru guo*, one of such phrases which literally means "losing the sovereignty and mortifying the nation," communicates the collective trauma induced by the series of unequal treaties that China was forced to sign under the threat of more violent aggression. *Shui shen huo re* and *min buy liao sheng* – respectively "in deep water and burning fire" and "there was no way for people to make a living" – figuratively evoked the inexpressible pain suffered by ordinary people under the stifling oppression of the "Three Big Mountains," imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucratic capitalism, suggesting that they were "constantly drowned in the depth of the water, and burned in heat of fire."

In case the horrendous nature of the old society has not been fully illustrated, in another text selected in the senior high school textbook, a short story written by Lu Xun, the most famous left-wing writer in early 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was indicated that the entire history of the 'old society' was being written with the language of cannibalism. The paranoid protagonist of the short story, who kept a diary daily, recorded faithfully how he gradually decodes one secret message from the behavior of people around him, that they "were one band, all eaters of human flesh" and eventually realized that because "I too am a man, they want to eat me!" Being extremely frightened and bewildered, the protagonist attempted to find why this is the case from a book, which serves a metonymy for the history of the old society, but only found "the whole book being filled with the two words—"Eat people.""" It becomes quite obvious here that the use of the figurative language that indicates cannibalism deepened the weighting of the evil.

To certain extent, the old society starts to assume an all-encompassing and absolute status of a sacred-evil and one telling testimony to this point is that the signifier seems to possess the ability to pollute by means of mere association. A good example could be found in the teacher's guide book for music course in junior high school. When talking about how to teach a folksong that has been popular among the people since the old era, the guidance book lists several pedagogical advices, among which point no. 4 reads:

Tell the students that folksongs composed in the old society reflect the painful suffering of the working people, their hatred towards and their struggle against the feudal ruling class; at the same time, these songs also demonstrate the invincible optimism of the people who, despite their unspeakable plight, are still filled with hope for happiness and a brighter future (p.28).

What is particularly interesting is that the editors appear to be apologetic for including folksongs into the music textbook in the first place. In pedagogical advices, no. 1,3 and 5, the editors are

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<sup>125</sup> Editorial Division for Chinese Course, People's Education Publishing House. 1960. *Chinese* (Textbook for Junior High School). Book No.5. Hangzhou: People's Education Publishing House in Zhejiang. P. 9.

again eager to justify why folksongs that are composed “in the old era” should be known and learnt by the students at all. For instance, in bullet point no. 1 the editors kept saying that folksongs, because of their “profound ideas, their rich expressiveness and their authentic emotionality”, are “extremely beneficial teaching materials” (p. 28); in no. 3, it is emphasized that folksongs are created collectively by the proletarian people and therefore are the crystallization of the wisdom and talents of the mass people over time (p. 28). It is not hard to notice here that folksongs are deemed as something not sacred enough to be included into textbooks, mainly because of its origin which is rooted in “the old society”, therefore, to purify folksongs and to diminish its profanity derived from “the past”, a universal and transcendent symbol of sacredness in communist culture, “the mass people”, must be employed: the folksongs can not be bad even if they came into being in the old society, for they were after all created by the sacred proletarian people.

*The Genre of ‘Remembering the Bitterness’ and the Cultural Trauma of ‘Old Society’*

The predicament and suffering brought by the old society would remain impersonal and abstract, and the evilness of the enemies, no matter how the coding has been weighted, intangible, if there is no symbolic identification to bridge the temporal and psychological gap between the new era and the old one. Such a symbolic extension and emotional identification was successfully achieved among the public in Mao’s China because the traumatic representation of the past was extensively and consistently dramatized in various types of cultural products. In fact, a new literary genre was created for such purpose, which is known as ‘Yi Ku Si Tian’, or literally, ‘appreciating the sweetness of today by remembering the bitterness of the past’.

A prototype of such genre could be found in the lyric of a song titled “The Past Story of Mum”. Selected in the music textbook for elementary school students, the melodious song is still popular among young kids of today. It begins with the usual building of a romantic ambience which also serves to depict a general picture that implies the better quality of life made possible in the new society:

The moon is moving through the white clouds that take the shape of beautiful lotus,  
Joyful songs flow with the gentle evening breeze.  
We sat next to the hill of millets that piles high,  
Listening to the story told by mum about the past.

Then, the traumatic past that mum had experienced was reconstructed, recounting how mum, a landless and impoverished peasant, had suffered unspeakable misery at the hand of the avaricious landlords. The song goes on like:

At that time, Mum was landless and all she has was her hands and labor,  
Toiling in the field of the landlord, the only food she could get was wild herbs and husks  
The blizzard of the harsh winter was howling like wolves, yet mum had barely anything  
on except for her pieces of rug.  
She fainted at the side of the road out of hunger and coldness, being on her way to sew a  
fur robe for the landlord’s wife.  
Only through such a tortuous ordeal did mum eventually hail the happiness of today.

Two salient features stand out from this lyric that are also characteristic of other works of this genre. First, the painful experience that one suffers in the old society is successfully

personalized because the victim takes the image of one's most intimate family member, which undoubtedly makes a psychological identification much easier. Usually, works of this genre adopt the form of memoirs, biography or autobiography, in which the protagonist recounts the story with first person perspective and recalls the unbearable torment and grief that she had experienced personally in the old society. The poignant and detailed recreation of the life story of a specific victim not only lends much authenticity and truthfulness to the story, but also facilitates a symbolic identification with the protagonist.

Second, it can not be missed that the major conflict as narrated in the lyric is explicitly developed along a class line where the victim, the mum, represents the impoverished proletarian class, and the perpetrator, the landlord, obviously serves as a metonymy for all the exploitative class that by definition also include the capitalists. This highlights the fact that the profanity of the 'old society' is principally constructed via the dramatic struggle and opposition between class enemies and it is thereby inseparably coupled with the trauma of class struggle. In fact, the following discussion would testify in a most compelling way that the genre of 'appreciating the sweetness of today by remembering the bitterness of the past' plays a crucial role in building the trauma drama of class struggle, which in turn becomes an essential component in the overall traumatic representation of the old society.

Another illuminating example of the genre (hereafter referred to as 'remembering the bitterness') could be found in the Chinese textbooks for school kids in 1960s, where many such articles or literary works were selected. In fact, in the Chinese textbook published in 1964, at least three pieces of such works can be found in each of the two books to be taught to second year students in junior high school. Among these texts, one article titled 'A New Watch' is again very informative of the basic format and structure commonly used in this genre. As with the lyric, the story also starts with a depiction of the happiness that the entire family enjoyed today, when the protagonist bought a new watch for his daughter. Then, predictably, the protagonist started to testify how such an apparently easy purchase was completely unimaginable for his family 20 years ago. The painful memories are long and replete with iconic images that evoke similar visualization resonated with that narrated in the lyric. In one of the most salient images, for instance, the protagonist recalls the scene he witnessed at the entrance of a watch store from a distance. He was enraged to find that "only those who had a private rickshaw or who came in cars, only those capitalists and the wives of bureaucrats who wear silks ever went into the shop, and never ever have I seen any single worker or peasant went in there."<sup>126</sup> Most revealing of the genre, this image powerfully visualizes the binary opposition across the deep trench of class between the allied perpetrators and the joined victims, both of whom are essential to the narrative construction of not only the trauma of class struggle, but also the profanity of the old society.

However, what differentiates the story from the lyric and makes it somehow more enlightening, is the last paragraph where the protagonist, after recounting the past torment, exclaimed to his daughter with passion: "What a society that was! What a miserable life! We must inscribe them line by line upon our heart! Even when we are one-hundred years old, when we are enjoying a happiness that is equivalent to paradise, we must not let these marks erode!"<sup>127</sup>

What is being conveyed in this paragraph adds another significant symbolic dimension to the genre of 'remembering the bitterness'. It shows that though the past, or the 'old society', as an evil has already been triumphantly conquered, its symbolic significance is not only not

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<sup>126</sup> Editorial Division for Chinese Course, People's Education Publishing House. 1964. *Chinese* (Textbook for Junior High School, newly edited in 1964). Book No.4. Beijing: People's Education Publishing House. P. 83.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid

diminished but strengthened, because the sacredness of the new society can not be firmly established or fully appreciated but through a perpetual symbolic recreation of the ‘bitterness of the past’. In fact, it is only through a constant cycle of reconstruction and remembering that the darkness of the old evils who feed on the victimization and suffering of the proletarian people, could be successfully built, without which, the positive image of socialist beings that become the true master of the ‘new society’ can not possibly come into being.

#### *Four Genealogies and the Collective Trauma of Class Struggle*

By the beginning of 1960s, the genre of ‘remembering the bitterness’ had surged with such momentum that from the year 1960 on, in the General Catalogue of Publication compiled by the central government, under the category of *Feature Stories, Profiles and Revolutionary memoirs*, there appeared a new column named ‘Four Genealogies’, namely, genealogy of factories, of PLA, of people’s communes, of village, and etc (usually with the additional one of family), which are exclusively composed of the ‘bitterness’ works published nationwide over any one specific year. In the prologue of one of the representative book series under this column in 1964<sup>128</sup>, the editors explain why they chose the new terminology ‘Genealogy’, which could also be taken as part of the justification of the formation and surge of this literary type from the 1960s throughout to the Cultural Revolution:

Since ancient time, having a ‘genealogy’ has been the privilege of the reactionary ruling class, who made use of it to strengthen its own rule and deceive the mass people. However, when our New China was established like the breaking of a spring thunder, history turned a new page from that moment on, and off with the old page was the ugly genealogy of the ruling class. From now on, under the leadership of CCP, we, the revolutionary people also have the privilege to record our own struggling experience, to write the genealogy of proletarians and to paint the most beautiful layout of our future (V1, 2; V2, 2).

The choice of the new term here conveys a significant message, that genealogy cannot be the records of just anyone’s history, it must be the collective memories of the ‘proletarian’ people<sup>129</sup>. And by such a shift in terminology, the class boundary that characterizes all the ‘bitterness’ works seems to be more intensified, and the focus upon class struggle fiercely stressed.

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128 This refers to an article collection titled “Red Genealogies”, which was published by the Xin Hua Daily Press in 1964 and composed of 12 booklets and two volumes of selected articles. The series was chosen first and foremost because the publisher was very prestigious which guarantees a wide circulation among readers; secondly, and equally important, the series cover all the four (though most of the time it refers to five) types of genealogies and therefore in itself forms an independent system that could offer us a more complete view of the genre. Owing to lack of source, I could only make access to three of the 12 booklets published in this series, but fortunately, the two big volumes of selected articles actually covered many of the articles in other booklets and thus makes the data more complete.

129 Such a definition bears extremely consequential repercussions upon the construction of grand narrative of the nation as well as on the representation and remembrance of any specific period of history, including, the War of Resistance against Japan that I would discuss later, because it stringently excludes from the agencies of history members of classes other than the proletarian.



Reading through stories with the label of ‘Genealogy’, it is not hard to notice that while they share all the features that characterize other ‘bitterness’ works, they also systematically reveal certain special patterns that are subtly yet significantly distinct from the other works, besides their heightened fixation upon class and class struggle. Taking the previously mentioned book series ‘The Red Genealogy’ for instance, like other works in the ‘remembering the bitterness’ genre, this series is composed of a collection of memoirs written by ordinary working people, recalling how miserable their life used to be under the rule of the reactionary forces before the liberation. What makes this series of ‘genealogy’ distinguished from other ‘bitterness’ works though, is that it seems more explicit and eager in creating a symbolic identification and emotional extension among the readers. And it attempted to achieve this goal through two means. One is that the protagonists in the stories seem to be intentionally chosen so that they could represent poor people from all walks of life, including peasants, factory workers, technicians, craftsmen, elementary school teachers, nurses, chefs etc, and of all ages and genders. Such an arrangement of course serves to better illustrate how proletarian people, no matter what they did and who they were, can not escape the tragic fate of being oppressed and exploited in the old society, but it would also facilitate the symbolic identification of current people, each of whom could find in these victims, in a concrete and personalized way, either their own painful memories, or the gloomy fate they were likely to suffer if they had the misfortune to be born into the old society.

Second, following each memoir, there is an editor’s words section, summarizing the ‘morals’ that the readers are supposed to learn. As articulated in the prologue of the volume, the editors encouraged the readers to identify with ‘those who had gone through the great transformation of our nation, because for these people, the anguish of being exploited, oppressed, insulted and discriminated against in old China, the excruciating memories of being undulated in pain and torment, are like a scar of whip on their back and a mark of burn on their chest; they will never be able to forget about it.’(4) And so must we, those who had the fortune to live in the happy new China, the editors continued, ‘never forget the agony of class oppression, the sacrifice made during the revolution and the history of class struggle’ (2), because ‘to forget is the equivalent of betrayal’ (2).

The endeavor to reach out for breadth of audience and for creating a symbolic collectivity is accompanied on the other hand by earnest attempts to ‘deepen the evilness’ of the perpetrators, to make the ‘wound’ upon the collectivity more painful and the ‘scar’ on the memory indelible. Indeed, another feature that distinguishes the ‘genealogy’ stories from other ‘bitterness’ works seems to be that they were much more articulate and focused upon constructing a trauma-drama for the proletarian collectivity, the process of which entails two building blocks.

One is to showcase the incredibly broad extent and the tremendous volume of the sufferings of the people, and this was successfully achieved with the sheer huge number of stories and memoirs published under the column of genealogy in the 1960s<sup>130</sup>, all basically adopting the same framework of plot and narrative development. In the prologues, epilogues or editor’s words of the genealogy publications, the editors all seem to be focused upon building the ‘universality’ or the ‘ubiquity’ of the distresses and afflictions experienced by the proletarian class in its entirety. They would not only justify the production of their own collections by emphasizing how ‘class grievances are just endless to speak’, as an editor acknowledged in the epilogue in one booklet that (V6, 40), but also apologize for being able to present only such a tiny parts of all the ‘representative cases’. Indeed, the most frequently quoted Chinese idioms in

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these texts is perhaps the term, “Qing Zhu Nan Shu”, which literally means that ‘(the horrendous agonies inflicted on us) are so tremendous and so profound, that even if all the bamboos (bamboo is the material the ancient Chinese used to write stuff on, like paper of today) in the world are used out, we still could not finish writing them.’ The overwhelming amount of publicity given to the tragic experiences of poor people in the old society not only magnified the sufferings of individuals and increases the enormity of the evil doings of the perpetrators, but elevated traumas that would have remained in the privacy of personal memories onto a public sphere, so that the pain and agony of a worker or a peasant became the sufferings of an entire collectivity. In fact, the universality of the agony of proletarian people seemed so well established that it became inseparably interweaved with the definition of the collective identity of the class; in other words, to have gone through unspeakable agony and suffered at the hands of demonic enemies is almost a necessary precondition upon which one claims his membership into the proletarian class and a common denominator he shares with his class brothers and sisters.

The second building block involves both the unequivocal identification of the victims, the perpetrators and the nature of the trauma, and heightening the weighting of all the symbolic codes and deepening the emotional involvements of the audience. Browsing over the titles of the publication under the column of ‘Four Genealogies’ from 1960 to 1965, one would be stricken by how dramatically gory and sentimental language is used to present a general images that is tinted with a touch of violence and blood. Take the afore-mentioned collection of ‘Red Genealogy’ again as a revealing example. The titles, or subtitles, of the memoirs in this collection, echoing the general trend, are full of words and expressions that are capable of reenacting violent visual images that would heighten the level of people’s alertness and emotional response. In one article titled “the Surge of Indignation Avenged the Feud of the Fishers’ Family”, for instance, the first section was subtitled “the Yangtse River was a River of Blood and Tears”; in another article titled “the Killing Ground of the Imperialists” (V3 □ 21), the title of a section reads “A Drop of Milk Was Produced with a Drop of Blood of the Workers Before the Liberation”. The extensive use of words like ‘feud’, ‘hatred’, ‘enmity’, ‘blood’, ‘tears’, ‘killing’ here alert the readers that what await them in these stories are not simply some ‘ordinary’ offense or ‘usual’ incidents of oppression or exploitations, but tragedies of bigger enormity, situations where people’s blood was spilled. In other words, the class trauma depicted here is an issue of life and death and definitely nothing less.

In fact, just as these titles indicate, what was being shown in all the genealogy stories is ‘a debt of blood that goes as deep as the ocean’ (a title of one of the genealogy publication in 1963), a collective trauma of the proletarian people who, according to these stories, had not only been oppressed, starved, tortured, persecuted, maltreated, insulted, humiliated, trampled upon, and relentlessly exploited, but also murdered, massacred, and carnally destroyed. That there must be at least one victim whose life was deprived by various evil perpetrators seem to be rule for every genealogy story. One very representative piece comes from the memoir of a nurse, titled ‘From a Slave to a Fighter in White Dress’, in which she recalled the tragic fate that her young female colleagues fell to before 1949: one of them being raped by a patient who was a high-rank government official, one being forced to marry a rich businessman as his concubine, and another committed suicide soon after being sold to a brothel by her rogue husband. And in case this is not adequate to make things traumatic, she continues to expose more horrendous details she witnessed in the practice of the hospital, that while hospitals in old time refused to treat poor patients because the latter can not afford the prohibitive expenses, some of them were taken in on purpose because the hypocritical medical ‘experts’ wanted to use these patients for experimental

purposes and many of them were thus killed during the process of being treated (V2, 93). To conclude this traumatic portrayal of the suffering of poor people in the old society, the author exasperated “how many young and vigorous lives have been ruined by this savage social system!” (V2, 93) and asked with indignation “Could this be a human world at all?” (92).

In another memoir written by a peasant, he recalled the destitute and agonizing life his family suffered when he was a child and then told a heart-breaking story of how his family was ruined after a fatal accident stroke. It was said that he was burned severely while serving as a tenant in the landlord’s household, whom he gave the nickname of ‘the Living Yanluo’ (or yama, the god in Chinese legend who was in charge of hell and who is famous for being extremely merciless, cruel and brutal and taking pleasure in inflicting pain upon people), and the landlord refused to lend him any money for medical treatment, leaving him to die. Deprived of any means of living, yet anxious to save their kid, his parents, who were already in their 60s, went out begging and his father was killed in a snowstorm out of hunger and coldness and his mum soon died because of sorrow and physical weakness. For the author, this tragedy not only left an indelible scar on his life but remained a debt of blood that must be avenged, as he claimed with a clenched teeth that “Two of my most beloved family members died at his hands and the bloodstain would be forever fresh.” (V1 113).

‘Death’ and ‘blood’ obviously functions as the transcendental mechanisms through which common sad stories about how good people suffer are elevated to a more dramatic and traumatic level where innocent and sacred people are being slaughtered. Through this transcendental mechanism the nature of the trauma and the perpetration was endowed with a much graver symbolic weight. For instance, it is very common for the authors in these memoirs to deny the humanness of the old society, as they frequently used terms like ‘hell in human world’ (V3 21), ‘killing ground’ □ V3,21), ‘slaughterhouse’ to describe the world they used to live in. Words and expressions associated with ‘killing’, ‘murdering’, ‘slaughtering’, were also frequently employed figuratively in various contexts to indicate how bad the exploitation and oppression had been. For instance, a prohibitive expense that denies the poor people of their basic substances would be described as ‘a price that is capable of killing’ (v1 20), a usury is called ‘a murderous debt that can not be cleared even if one sells one’s entire family’ (v4, 3), and a particularly exploitative business owner would be portrayed as “the one who slaughters without even having to use a knife!” (v4, 24). And not unusually, like in Luxun’s novel that I mentioned previously, ‘cannibal’ or ‘human-eating’ is used as the qualifying words that defines the ultimate evil nature of the perpetration inflicted upon the proletarian people. In a story, when the author told how the imperialist troops were sent to crack down a strike held by factory workers and many workers were shot to death as a result, he cried out indignantly: “the imperialists once again exhibited their true color of being cannibals!” (v3, 31) In an epilogue, the editor claimed that “capitalist class eat human flesh without even spitting out the bones!” (v6, 40)

The grim, hellish image of the perpetration is perfectly matched by the portrayal of perpetrators who take different yet equally dreadful forms in various contexts. Many times the perpetrators were compared to marauding predators in animals. For instance, one of the frequently quoted Chinese idioms in genealogy stories is ‘all the crows in the world are as dark as each other’, meaning that evil forces around the world are as bad as each other and they join together to bully poor people around (v1 67, 100, 104; v2, 24). But while this idiom could convey the ubiquity of the evil forces, crows are obviously too gentle and feeble to embody the real brutality and rapacity of the class enemies, and thus huge-size and cannibal beasts were more often employed. To expose the equally savage nature of all oppressors, for example, it was

rhetorically asked in one article that ‘can you find a tiger in the world that does not eat human beings?’ (v1, 67). In another memoir, the author compared the reactionary Nationalist government to “beasts that eat human flesh without even spitting out the bones” (v2, 24) and his own painful sufferings at the hands of different enemies as ‘once out of the mouth of the tigers, right into the dens of the wolves’ (v2, 3). In addition to cannibal beasts, venomous animals were also used to depict the virulence and malice of the evil forces in the old society. For instance, an actress grieved in her memoir that ‘in the old society, the thugs, rogues and gangs were harassing me as venomous bees’ (v2, 72); another author, recalling how the factory owners cracked down on workers’ strike with violence, claimed with anger that “venomous snakes will bite in desperation before taking in their last breath” (v3, 41).

Yet, it seems that even the most deadly and predatory beasts can not hold up to the comparison with the evilness of the landlords and capitalists class and therefore more widely adopted than the figuration of animals is the comparison of class enemies to the ultimate embodiment of cruelty and profanity in traditional Chinese culture. One most frequently employed symbol is “Yao Mo”, the Chinese words for devils and fiends, as shown by a subtitle in one article in volume 3, “the reactionary forces are a group of devils and fiends who were stinking with the odor of blood” (v3, 38). Another group of popular symbols could be found in the nicknames that local peasants attributed to particularly rapacious landlords. One particularly devilish landlord in a village, as the aforementioned genealogy stories showed, was called by the local peasants “Yan Luo in human world” (v1, 67) meaning the god of Yama, or the god in Chinese legend who was in charge of hell and who is famous for being extremely merciless, cruel and brutal and taking pleasure in inflicting pain upon people. ‘Ba Pi’, which literally means the ‘person who strips people’s skin’, is another most frequently employed metonymy typically reserved for ‘bad’ landlords who are notoriously rapacious and exploitative.

‘Remembering the bitterness’ genre, with the surge of Genealogy stories and publication as its climax, offers a very efficient mechanism through which the trauma-drama of class struggle was successfully built in Mao’s China. The huge-scale distribution and the wide popularity of the genre elevated individual tragedies onto the platform of a collectivity and brought the issues into the center of public discourse. Through the witness-perspective memoir genre, perpetrators and victims were concretely personalized, facilitating the symbolic identification of the audience. The dramatic plot setting, which unfailingly involves the sacrifice of lives and spill of blood, and the heightened weighting of the symbolic codes attributed to the nature of the sufferings and the enemies, both contributed powerfully to the recreation of the traumatic experiences of suffering and agony of the victims and the production of a wide emotional extension among the readers. Through the trauma drama thus constructed, through a process of recreation and identification, the audience either ‘relived’ the past, ‘redefined’ it as traumatic, or they would, especially for the younger generations, have the chance to be ‘traumatized’ by ‘experiencing’ and ‘sharing’ the hellish life of victims of the past. The diary of the a young PLA soldier, Lei Feng, a role model for all the youngsters in the 1960s and throughout to early 1990s, as selected in the Chinese textbook in the 1960s, demonstrates how powerful the trauma drama was in its impact among the public. In one piece of his diary, Lei was talking about the emotion he experienced after reading some ‘bitterness’ works: “How profoundly I could understand their sufferings and how indignant and aggrieved I felt when I read their stories! (quote?) I too was born in a poor peasant family and had been suffering unspeakably in the old society, just like them!” And it is very clear that such a close emotional and symbolic identification plays an essential role in building a collective identity based on class,

as Lei continues to express how he was determined to dedicate himself to the proletarian class: “I am always ready to sacrifice everything of mine, including my life for the interests of the party and our class.” (p.73)

### *The Trauma-Drama of Class Struggle*

What is extraordinary about the trauma-drama of the old society and class struggle constructed in Mao’s China is that the drama was not only written and read, but also performed and participated by real people on a daily basis. Since early 1950s, various nation-wide campaigns were carried out consecutively, that not only necessitates but also facilitates struggle meetings and other types of rituals being enacted at all levels up from the local communities (notes?). Among all the rituals, ‘speaking the bitterness’ is perhaps the most universally adopted and also exerts the most profound and broad impact on people. Emerging first in the first Land Reform Campaign as a form of struggle for CCP to mobilize the populace and to create a solidarity that is defined and strengthened by class boundary, ‘speaking the bitterness’ offers an efficient way where the ‘drama’ could be literally put on a show and the ‘bitterness’ got reenacted on a ‘stage’. In other words, ‘speaking the bitterness’ is to certain extent the performative embodiment of the literary genre, ‘remembering the bitterness’; only that it is much more powerful and compelling than the latter, as it rises beyond the cognitive argument and demands the acute physical presence, emotional involvement and performative action.

To observe how the ritual works and to understand its powerful impact on participants, we now turn to works that actually record the proceedings of such a ritual and a text titled ‘Struggling Han Lao Liu’, found in the Chinese textbook for junior high students in the 1960s proves very illuminating. The chapter was selected from a novel very well received in the 1950s and depicts a ‘speaking the bitterness’ meeting that occurred in a small village in the North-east region during the land reform movement led by the communist party in late 1940s. As a typical work of ‘remembering the bitterness’ genre, this chapter contains an extremely interesting co-presence of double ‘bitterness’ that is particularly enlightening to my research here. On the one hand, belonging to the genre of ‘remembering the bitterness’ makes the chapter a part of the general narrative building process of the trauma drama; on the other hand, with its substances relating the ritual process of ‘speaking bitterness’, it opens a live window to the historical moment where a trauma drama was being built on the local level.

What becomes salient from the very beginning of the article is the absolute coding and weighting of the chief antagonist, the target of the struggle, landlord Han. It was described that even before the ritual starts, women and kids had started to sing a folk Yang Ge song that they improvised on the spot. The lyric goes: “Thousands of years of hatred, and Tens of thousands of years of grievance (scores), can only be solved when the communist party comes! Han Laoliu, Han Laoliu, the people today will cut you to pieces!” The rancorous sense of animosity illustrated in the lyric made it lucid that the landlord had not only been coded as someone evil, but his evilness has been weighted to such a level that he deserves to be killed in a most relentless way.

When the meeting begins, the landlord was brought to the center of the courtyard where a certain kind of stage was set for the ‘struggle’, and one by one, people who felt that they had been wronged, oppressed or persecuted by the landlord came up to the stage to give a public testimony to the unforgivable sins of the evil doer. The ritual starts, with the first figure, a young man stepping onto the central stage. He claimed that Han had attempted to force him to be a

slave worker for the Japanese colonizers and when he refused and ran away, Han retaliated by sending his mum into prison who eventually died there. Then the chapter goes: “I want to take revenge for my mum today!”, as Yang San, (the name of the figure) bellowed with anger, people around all cried out, “Let’s beat him to death!” and started to push forwards with sticks to the center of the courtyard.” “Their chorus”, it goes on, was like “the thunder of spring roaring in the sky” (p.61)

What can not be missed from the scene is that the ritual of speaking bitterness is also a production of a trauma drama, where the tragedy that the victims had to suffer individually and privately was dramatized on the stage and publicized to an audience who share with victims their pain and distress and their hatred towards the common foe. If the bitter story told by each victim comprises one independent act of the drama, the momentum of each act would accumulate and eventually reach the climax of the drama when a collective effervescence is achieved and a stronger solidarity created among the whole community. Such a dramatic process could be found in the final act of the struggle described in the chapter.

When the last bitterness speaker Widow Zhang finished her story by yelling “Give me back my son!”, it was described that “men and women all pushed forwards, crying that they want their sons, husbands, fathers, brothers back. And the sounds of weeping, crying, beating and cursing all mixed together.” Indeed, the scene was so intense and moving that Xiao Wang, a young member of the land reform team who came from outside the village, “kept wiping his tears with the back of his hand”.

It is interesting to note that at this moment, when Xiao Wang emotionally identified with the victims of the village, the readers of the chapter would also have relived the trauma drama that occurred in the all-evil old society that they may or may not have experienced personally. So what we observe here is a dual process that parallel two mechanisms working at two different levels, one on the micro level of the local communities, where rituals, physical presence and intensified emotions produce a concrete and tangible collective effervescence that bonds individuals together into a corporeal entity, the other on the macro level of the wider ‘imagined community’, where the powerful textual recreation of a ‘common’ trauma produces widely spread symbolic identification and emotional extension among readers who are tightly united by both the past anguish that they believed they have shared, and the new proletarian class identity that emerges from the collective trauma and made the new China possible.

By examining the grand narrative which tells the founding myth of the nation, I argue that a collective trauma of the old society and class struggle was successfully constructed which plays a critical role in the narrative construction of the new national collectivity. Several elements contribute to the solidification of the trauma. First, the profanity of the old society, encoded with all the sense of evilness, darkness and profanity, endowed with an absolute symbolic polluting power that deepens the coding of everything that is associated with it, is very successfully established. Second, the trauma of the past was inseparably interweaved with a trauma of class struggle. And via literary genres of ‘remembering the bitterness’, and particularly the broad distribution and popularity of ‘genealogy stories’, the trauma was personalized and dramatized extensively and consistently in various cultural products. Third, the textual recreation of a shared trauma was ‘performed’ and ‘embodied’ by various struggle meetings and rituals that exponentially add to the force of impact. Through the construction of a grand national narrative, through a constant reproduction of the trauma drama in texts and in rituals, the bitterness and

darkness that characterizes the old society was being consciously revisited and relived. This perpetual recreation not only forms the solid foundation upon which the legitimacy of the new nation is built, but also facilitates the construction of a national collectivity through a symbolic identification and spiritual catharsis that can only be experienced via a narrow yet sacred salvation from an otherwise extremely traumatic fate.

*Remembrance of the War: Absent-minded Commemoration of the War in Public Sphere and Vice Chairman Lin's Commemoration Article*

In this powerfully built collective trauma of dark old society and ruthless class struggle, what kind of roles did the War of Resistance Against Japan play? How was it represented and memorized in the grand narrative of modern China? How did it contribute to the collective identity building in the new republic? It is my argument in the following sections that the grand narrative of revolution, with the compelling cultural trauma of class struggle at its core, preempted and blocked the emergence of the War as a collective trauma in Mao's China and I demonstrate that the process of 'preemption' has been worked through two cultural and symbolic mechanisms that converged to shape how the War would eventually be narrated and represented in the public sphere around the time. First, as I demonstrate in previous sections, the successful construction of the collective trauma of class struggle has been achieved with such sweeping scales and engrossing depth, that it basically left little symbolic space for the emergence of any other powerful cultural trauma which would inevitably compete with the former for symbolic resources and media venues; and this is particularly true for cases like the War, that, as I would immediately show by the second mechanism, claims an entirely different set of perpetrators, victims and nature of sufferings that is not necessarily compatible with the innate logic of the former. Second, and perhaps more importantly, the intrinsic logic and force of a collective trauma of class struggle rules that the world be defined and structured along a horizontal boundary of class and the collective identity be fostered along a line of fraternity that transcend any other border posed by gender, races, ethnicities, or nations<sup>131</sup>. This means that the fundamental conflict of the War, basically defined along a vertical boundary of national difference, runs contradictory to the predominant horizontal demarcation of the world, and to underscore the significance of the War would be at best irrelevant and at worst doing an inconvenient disservice to the legitimacy and truthfulness of the trauma of class struggle. The compelling force of the trauma of class struggle, therefore, entails that the symbolic significance of the War be toned down and that the identification of the enemies be put in an ambiguous light so that it would not be blatantly at jar with class lines. To substantiate my arguments, it perhaps makes sense to start with observing what happened in the public sphere in 1965, the 20th anniversary of the victory in the War.

Full 20 years after the end of the war, with the benefit of hindsight, one would assume that this could be an ideal time for the nation to come to terms with what happened during the

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<sup>131</sup> Evidences for such entrenched internationalism are ubiquitous. For instance, of the two huge emblazed slogans that hung on each side of Chairman Mao's portrait on Tian'an Men gate, one reads "Long Live the Solidarity of People of the World!", noted that "people" here, like anywhere else in Mao's China, had a strong connotation of proletariat people, or working people. Also noted that the other slogan of the two reads "Long Live the People's Republic of China". The juxtaposition here unmistakably demonstrates the ultra significance of internationalism and the horizontal way of interpreting the world that was so deep-rooted in Chinese society in the 1950s and 1960s. My summary and analysis of Chinese textbooks' contents on page 5 and 6 could also demonstrate how internationalism predominates in texts and media.



war, who were to blame, how horrendously people had suffered, how to rebuild the life of millions whose families and lives had been devastated, and what should be done to prevent something so disastrous to happen ever again. In other words, it was good timing to transform the profound sense of trauma and loss that still seared on the minds and bodies of millions of individuals into an indelible mark upon the entire collectivity, should there be any attempt or intention to inscribed a particularly devastating and traumatic war upon the collective memories of the nation.

Yet, such assumption proves to be ultimately counter-factual. A general survey over the media coverage and publications in 1965 reveals that none of the necessary elements that might contribute to the emergence and construction of a collective trauma based upon the War ever appeared in the public sphere. Indeed, not only was there not any attempt to build a traumatic collective memory, the institutional commemoration activities convened by the central government appeared to be rather limited in quantity and absent-minded in its intention. Browsing briefly through the General Catalogue of Publication of 1965<sup>132</sup>, one would be surprised to find that besides two monographs that were listed respectively in the Politics and Social Life and Military Columns, and a collection entitled ‘In Commemoration of the 20th Anniversary of the Victory in the Great War of Resistance against Japan’ that comprises four books<sup>133</sup> listed in the News Features and Profile Stories Section in Literature, there was hardly any special works published explicitly dedicated to the commemoration of the War<sup>134</sup>. The lack of commemoration works was even more underscored if it is taken into account that right after the News Features and Profile Stories Section where the collection was listed, starts the Section of Four Genealogies, and to pose a sharp contrast to the four books that were dedicated to the commemoration of the War, this section include 109 books whose titles cover six and half pages (Catalogue 1965, 127-133). And this is not to take into consideration the several book series published under Children’s Literature column, two of which were named ‘Class Struggle Must not be Forgotten Series’ and ‘Stories that Can not be Forgotten Series’ (check the other publication?) (Catalogue 1965, 510-511).

Another telling piece of testimony that demonstrates the lack of attention attached to the commemoration of the War could be found in ‘Editorials of the People’s Daily 1965’ compiled and published by the People’s Daily Press. Among all the 6 volumes of the collection, there was not a single piece dedicated to the commemoration of the War. While this does not mean that there was not any commemoration articles or publications at all (indeed, a most important commemoration article was first released on the People’s Daily as seen from the following discussion), it does very powerfully reveal what little historical significance the commemoration and the War had been attributed in the public sphere around that time. The very fact that People’s

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<sup>132</sup> The columns I observed include History, Politics and Social Life, Military, and the News Features and Profile Stories Section in Literature, and Literature for Children.

<sup>133</sup> The titles of the four books are respectively: *the Tunnel War*, *the Landmine War*, *the Yanling Team*, and *the Heroic Panjia Valley*. Showcasing the mightiness and bravery of the mass people in fighting against the invaders, it is quite obvious that these books were compiled first and foremost because they could exemplify the People’s War, the type of war that represents the best of the military and political thoughts of Chairman Mao, as will be shown in the following discussion of Lin Piao’s article.

<sup>134</sup> Quite a few novels were published in 1965 which writes about the War. However, the fact could hardly stand out as something noteworthy because these books compose only a tiny part of all the novels published that year, as is the case in all the other years, and they were not explicitly dedicated to the commemoration of the War. In the later part of this section, when I discuss the texts in the Chinese textbooks, some chapters of these works would be referred to because part of them were revised and selected into these textbooks.



Daily is the mouthpiece of CCP and editorials on it are usually meant to serve as the guiding book for all the provincial governments and local people to comprehend and implement policies and lines adopted by the central government, makes such absence more salient and the meaning more illuminating.

While the absence is striking, the contents of what had been published prove more rewarding to explore and one of the most significant documents is undoubtedly a commemoration article written by Lin Piao, the Vice-Chairman of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, Vice-Premier of the State Council and concurrently Minister of National Defense, namely, the military and political guru whose rank and prestige was only second to that of chairman Mao. The title of the article was 'Long Live the Victory of People's War! In Commemoration of the 20th Anniversary of Victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japan.' It was first released on People's Daily on September 3rd, 1965 and was then quickly compiled and published as a monograph and translated into several foreign languages. Because of the author and the venue where it was first published, the symbolic significance of the article was beyond doubt. It would be the authoritative version that not only sets the overall tone for the commemoration activities but also shapes and tailors the interpretation and collective memories of the War among the public.

The article was composed of 9 sections that could be divided into two parts. The first 6 sections, 'The Principal Contradiction in the period of the War of Resistance Against Japan and the Line of the CCP', 'Correctly Apply the Line and Policy of the United Front', 'Rely on the Peasants and Establish Rural Base Areas', 'Build a People's Army of a New Type', 'Carry out the Strategy and Tactics of People's War', 'Adhere to the Policy of Self-reliance' are mainly dedicated to an almost technical discussion on how and why the CCP, leading its revolutionary army and the masses of Chinese people, could eventually defeat an enemy that enjoyed extreme superiority 'in both arms and equipment' (Lin 1965, 2) and win the 'great war of resistance'. The last three sections, 'The International Significance of Comrade Mao Tse-tung's Theory of People's War in the International Community', 'Defeat the U.S. Imperialists and Its Lackeys by People's War' and 'The Khrushchev Revisionists Are Betrayers of People's War' immediately connects the significance of the War to the current political struggle in international community, and mobilizes the Chinese people for the possible regional conflicts and strives that were seen as imminent around that time.

Meant as a grand narrative of the War perhaps more than any other genre, the document explicitly defines the historical significance of the War in the modern history of China. In one of the first several paragraphs, Lin claims

Of the innumerable anti-imperialists wars waged by the Chinese people in the past hundred years, the War of Resistance Against Japan was the first to end in complete victory. It occupies an extremely important place in the annals of war, in the annals of both the revolutionary wars of the Chinese people and the wars of the oppressed nations of the world against imperialist aggression. (Lin 1965, 1)

What can not be missed from such a historical definition is the triumphant tone that singled out the War as the victorious starting point for an ascending grand narrative where the nation was led from one victory to another. And what is more, according to the Marxist-Leninist tenets, the War was interpreted as a necessary, ineluctable and thus almost 'essential' stage in a teleological history where the social progress must be brought up step by step:

The War of Resistance Against Japan constituted a historical stage in China's new-democratic revolution. The line of our Party during the War of Resistance aimed not only at winning victory in the war, but also at laying the foundations for the nation-wide victory of the new-democratic revolution. Only the accomplishment of the new-democratic revolution makes it possible to carry out a socialist revolution (10).

Not only was the War deemed a necessary and vital stage in history, it was also interpreted as contributing tremendously to the eventual victory of the Communist Party and its army over the Kuomintang regime, because, as Lin acknowledged in the following paragraph, it allowed the party and people's army to husband their power, hone their military skills and struggle experiences, and more importantly, establish revolutionary base areas that were to become 'the springboards for the People's War of Liberation' (25):

The Chinese people's victory in the War of Resistance paved the way for their seizure of state power throughout the country. When the Kuomintang reactionaries, backed by the U.S. imperialists, launched a nation-wide civil war in 1946, the Communist party of China and Comrade Mao Tse-tung further developed the theory of people's war, led the Chinese people in waging a people's war on a still larger scale, and in the space of a little over three years the great victory of the People's Liberation War was won, the rule of imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism in our country ended and the People's Republic of China founded (3).

Such a historical definition, which interprets the War as playing a critical and almost 'positive' role in bringing up the eventual triumph and liberation of Chinese people, entails the construction of an immaculate hero whose virtues must be perfect and victory complete, and a defeated foe whose 'badness' must be definite but prowess understated. In other words, the binary code in this heroic, ascending narrative must be that of the 'David vs. Goliath' genre, instead of a helpless 'victim' vs. ruthless 'perpetrator' type, lest the latter would convey too much a sense of agony, suffering and distress that contradicts the heroic images of the victors and dampens the revolutionary optimism and heroism that was deemed as the soul of the revolution.

Predictably, eternal glory goes to the CCP and Comrade Mao Tsu-tung. Main part of the monograph composes an ode to the 'mission impossible' achieved by CCP during the War, who had, according to Lin, managed to build a national united front "that embraced all the anti-Japanese classes and strata" (Lin 1965 11), "compel the Kuomintang ruling clique to stop the civil war and co-operate for joint resistance" (8), "hold aloft the banner of national liberation"(7) against all odds, take upon their shoulders "the heavy responsibility of combating Japanese imperialism" (2), and fought courageously and tenaciously against the aggressors until the final victory came to their side. And of course, none of such heroic feats were possible if it were not for the sagacity of Chairman Mao who scientifically analyzed the contrasting features between the Chinese nation and the Japanese imperialism (8), wisely concluded that this would be a 'protracted war' (8), put into effect the correct Marxist-Leninist political and military lines (2), and formulated the most efficient strategy and tactics of people's war.

And loyal to the logic of a heroic narrative, the sacred protagonist must be endowed with such undaunted fearlessness and buoyant heroism that not a trace of tragic sense of loss or

suffering is allowed in the depiction even when it is confronted with ‘extremely difficult circumstances’ (Lin 25). A telling piece of evidence could be found in the following paragraph where Lin attempted to demonstrate how the development of the revolutionary base areas is not “plain sailing all the time” (Lin 24):

Between 1937 and 1940 the population in the anti-Japanese base areas grew to 100,000,000. But in 1941-42, the Japanese imperialists used the major part of their invading forces to launch frantic attacks on our base areas and wrought havoc. Meanwhile, the Kuomintang, too, encircled these base areas, blockaded them and went so far as to attack them. So by 1942, the anti-Japanese base areas had contracted and their population was down to less than 50,000,000. Placing complete reliance on the masses, our Party resolutely adopted a series of correct policies and measures, with the result that the base areas were able to hold out under extremely difficult circumstances. After this setback, the army and the people in the base areas were tempered and grew stronger. (24-25)

Notice here how the tragic loss of more than 50,000,000 lives were being dismissed lightly with a brush of ‘the population was down’, and how a series of most brutal and murderous massacre committed by the Japanese forces during the War, which later became notoriously known for its guiding line of ‘**Three Extinction Policy**’, literally meaning “**burning all, killing all and looting all**”, was presented as just another ordinary ‘setback’ through which the army and the people could be tempered.

While the eulogy to heroes was ardent and the construction of the sacred solid, the identification and portrayal of the profane side was not without ambiguity. Browsing through the monograph, one cannot but get a curious impression that the major antagonist in this document, which was intended as a piece of commemoration work for the War of Resistance Against Japan, is not Japanese imperialism at all. In fact, throughout the entire 68 pages, not a single war crime or brutality committed by the Japanese forces was mentioned, and except for a negative adjective ‘barbarous’(Lin 8) , used only once when the nature of the war was being discussed, not any characterizing profane code heavier than this was attributed to the Japanese forces. To make the camp of the enemy more equivocal, the former foe were depicted as harboring the potential to become the loyal alliance of the sacred camp, as Lin proudly claimed that

During the anti-Japanese war we... succeeded in converting not a few Japanese prisoners, who had been badly poisoned by fascist ideology. After they were politically awakened, they organized themselves into anti-war organizations such as the League for the Liberation of the Japanese People, the Anti-War League of the Japanese in China and the League of Awakened Japanese, helped us to disintegrate the Japanese army and co-operated with us in opposing Japanese militarism. Comrade Sanzo Nosaka, the leader of the Japanese Communist Party, who was then in Yenan, gave us great help in this work (30).

In comparison to the Japanese camp, which seems to verge on the border of ‘sacred’ and ‘profane’ and harbor the potential of being ‘sacredized’ from time to time, the profanity of the leading devil of the antagonist in this narrative, Chiang Kai-shek and his Kuomintang reactionaries, seems hard to redeem. One might have already noticed how in narrating Japanese forces’ attack on the base areas in 1941-42, the Kuomintang forces were identified as their

accomplices. Indeed, it seems the rule that the Japanese were seldom constructed as the sole offender without the accompanying profanization of Kuomintang forces; and more often than not, Kuomintang reactionaries were not only singled out as the main devil, the profane code assigned to them carries much heavier symbolic weight. The following words and expressions sampled from the monograph, all of which are quite explicit in their demonizing message, help to illuminate the point.

According to these depictions, it was the Kuomintang reactionaries who “had betrayed the revolution, massacred large numbers of Communists and destroyed all the revolutionary mass organizations” (26) after the First Revolutionary Civil War; it was their forces that “crumbled and fled into one defeat after another”, when the Japanese forces surged into China’s hinterland; when the CCP called for a national united front, it was them again who were engaged in ‘passive resistance to Japan and active opposition to the Communist Party’, suppressed ‘people’s resistance movement’ and carried “treacherous activities for compromise and capitulation” (15); and what’s more, it was Chiang Kai-shek, “our teacher by negative example”, who “repeatedly lectured us with cannons and machine-guns”, that launched ‘surprise attack’ on the part of the New Fourth Army located in Anhwei in 1941, “slaughtered” many of our “heroic revolutionary fighters” and brought “disastrous losses” to our units (17). Obviously, in comparison to the verbs or adjectives used to depict the Japanese forces which tend to be neutral in its undertone, the Kuomintang, as the antagonist, were portrayed explicitly as ‘treacherous’, ‘brutal’, ‘ruthless’, ‘cowardly’, and its crime of ‘massacre’ and ‘slaughter’ more unforgivable. Such a comparison indicates that there exists in the identification and coding of the enemies a sense of hierarchy, with the Kuomintang ranking as the top, irredeemable devils, and the Japanese imperialism much lower in the ranking and prone to be converted or salvaged.

Because of its particular literary genre and the current political needs it has to serve, Lin’s commemoration piece as a whole may not be able to stand for all the works that commemorate the War, however, two narrative and semiotic features that become salient in this piece, as discussed above, are to be found recurring repeatedly in most of the materials and texts that represent and depict the War in Mao’s era, including those that preceded the document in time. First, it is manifest that the War was emphatically narrated in a rosily romanticized and fiercely heroic pattern, or what Frye would have referred to as Romance<sup>135</sup>, which, by putting ultimate symbolic significance upon the eventual outcome of victory, localized and temporarized the War into a self-contented and transitional historical stage that had been gratifyingly sealed with a happy-ending and thereby prompted the continuous triumphant march of history along an ascending spiral.

Second, the article shows an intriguing sense of semiotic hierarchy and ambiguity that exists in the identification and coding of the profane camp of enemies which not only tends to rank the Japanese forces as a much lesser evil than Kuomintang reactionaries, crucified as the ultimate representative of all class enemies, but from time to time, renders the former precious symbolic possibilities for redemption and transcending opportunities to be allies and friends that has been absolutely denied for the latter.

Combined with the absent-minded and scanty commemoration of the War in public sphere, these features as shown in Lin’s article help to highlight the salient absence of a collective trauma making process centered on the War experience. They demonstrate that there

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135 As this is a term that was coined by Frye (????) in the context of Western literature, the denotation and connotation of the concept may not be able to convey the meaning of the situation in the most relevant and accurate way. However, it does perhaps help to showcase a general pattern with which the War was narrated in China.

has neither been a carrier group making trauma claims nor any conscious endeavors to build the trauma on a collective level. At the same time, two other essential elements to a trauma building process were also evidently missing. On the one hand, unlike the oppressed, exploited, massacred and trampled proletariat class as constructed in the trauma of class struggle, the identification of victims of the War were curiously yet thoroughly shunned, turned into a non-identity or non-existence; in its place, as Lin's eulogy to the People's war so vividly illustrates, any potential victims would have been constructed as heroic soldier of resistance, intrinsically rejecting and denying enactment of victimhood. On the other hand, unlike the unequivocal and absolute evil of class enemies, the brutality of the potential perpetrators in the case of the War, the Japanese invading army, was always posed in such a way as it appears not worthy of consideration in comparison with the ultimate vile of Kuomintang regime and all the class enemies it represented; the identification of a perpetrator group for the War was thus eluded, eclipsed and shifted back to the identical target of the trauma of class struggle.

While different texts might differ in their degree of convergence to the general pattern, and in some local and concrete derivative works, deviant representations might occur from time to time, in the following analysis, it could be forcefully demonstrated that these features as well as the absence of a traumatic construction are overwhelmingly representative and prevalent of the cultural framework in the representation and memorization of the War in Mao's era.

### *Representation of the War in Cultural Products*

Take *The East is Red* for instance, a song and dance epic of the Chinese revolution that debuted at the Great Hall of the People, Beijing, in October 1964. Made in celebration of the 15th anniversary of the founding of the new republic, the epic performance presents a vivid depiction of Chinese revolution in forms of songs, dance, opera and ballet and thus offers an ideal text for interpreting how the nation represents its own past and defines its collective identity to the public, including the construction of the War in public arena<sup>136</sup>. Among the five major episodes that compose the epic performance, each referring to a historical stage understood as critical to the revolutionary cause, the fourth one was dedicated to the War of Resistance against Japan, with the title of 'the Anti-Japanese Beacon-Fire'. Following the general pattern of the entire performance, paragraphs of 'explicatory words' were inserted in-between performances, which were usually recited by anchormen and women with passion and artistic presentation. These paragraphs serve to inaugurate the episode, connect between sections of performance as intermissions and also to contextualize the episode within the larger picture of

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<sup>136</sup> The significance of this epic performance is unquestionable. Not only was it one of the most spectacular extravaganzas in the cultural horizon of Mao's era, it has ever since been remembered as "one of the grandest art performances since the founding of the P.R.C.". Indeed, its influence among the Chinese audience has been so profound and enduring that even today, when its ideological messages cease to function effectively, its aesthetic and artistic values still play an important role in shaping the public imaginaries and compose an inseparable part of the collective representation. This point could be powerfully demonstrated by the broad popularity and wide acclaim it enjoys among the Chinese public over generations. There has been numerous publication of the music score or song books based on the original soundtrack since the debut of the performance and countless local reproduction of the performances among the mass people throughout China. The zest perhaps faded for a while since the end of Mao's era, but from early 1990s on until today, with the resurgence of the 'red', or 'revolutionary', cultural trend, there has been another long-lasting growth of the popularity of this epic performance, accompanied with the release of innumerable copies of CDs and DVDs that recorded the original performances, the countless remix of the original recordings, and innumerable renditions and concerts that reproduce the symphonic and choral version ever since the debut of the performance.

historical background. But functioning more than just links, they also seem to indicate a 'preferred reading' of the performance to the audience and thus play an important role in shaping their interpretation of not only the performance but also the memory of the War that it represents.

A browse over the 'explicatory words' of the fourth episode does illuminate the specific understanding of the War that the epic performance attempts to convey. At the beginning, it was introduced that the scene now had shifted to the period when the Red Army of Workers and Peasants had already finished the 'unprecedented' heroic feat of the Long March and the CCP called on for a united front against the invading Japanese forces. The tone of the words was then sharply turned into indignation as it claimed that

the Chiang Kai-shek reactionaries, however, disregarding the danger of extinction faced by the nation, insisted on turning the guns towards their own people, and persisted in their opposition to the Communist party. They **bowed and scraped** to the Japanese imperialism, conceded our territory and land to the enemy without even resisting. How many people have lost their beloved family ones and how many have been displaced as a result! The fire of fury was burning in the hearts of the mass people!"

After the performance of several songs and dances that showcased the indignation of the people towards the 'passive resistance' strategy adopted by the Kuomintang reactionaries and the heroic endeavors made by CCP to build base areas in the enemy occupied territory, another paragraph of 'explicatory words' were presented which goes like

Our Eighth Route and New Fourth Army fought with tenacity and bravery, bathing in blood on the battlefield, and holding back the barbarous attack of the Japanese imperialists. Yet what Kuomintang reactionaries were doing then was to besiege our base areas with their major troops, attempting to starve us to death! But all were in vain! Because the revolutionary people would not be daunted by hardships nor would they be defeated by embargo! Responding to the call of the Party and Chairman Mao, the mass people and our armies in the base areas were mobilized and started a momentous campaign of 'Great Production'! Adopting the policy of 'self-reliance', they would overcome any sort of difficulty and persevere in the War of Resistance!"

The message that these words are meant to convey is explicit, that the CCP and its armies are the staunch pillar of strength in the War of resistance and have been fighting tenaciously and bravely with the invading Japanese forces throughout. In stark contrast, the only deed that Chiang Kai-shek and his Kuomintang forces have been engaged is to undermine the nation's chance of survival by not only not resisting the aggressors at all, but sabotaging CCP's endeavor by assaulting the base areas and suppressing and killing revolutionary people. In this message, the significance of the War in itself was no longer the prior issue to be handled, rather, it was reduced to a piece of meaningful and particularly revealing backdrop picture against which the dialectically oppositional construction of the ultimate sacred and the ultimate profane, that is, the CCP and its antagonist devil Kuomintang, can be highlighted.

While 'explicatory words' convey explicit messages, the performance in themselves are also telling platform where the representation of the War was being showcased. Among all the performance in the fourth episode, one calls for special attention because it is the only piece in the entire epic performance that directly recreates CCP's fight during the War of Resistance, instead of its conducting a 'Great Production' Campaign or mobilizing students' movements (?). The performance is a dance performed by a dozens of dancers, accompanied by '*the Song of Guerillas*', sung by a chorus at the backstage. Though a small section of the dance attempts to reproduce the scene of a battle, the enemy never materialized and the major theme seems to be

focusing on the demonstration of the superior tactics of the guerilla soldiers and the merit of the particular type of War that had been advocated by Lin Piao in his article, namely, the People's War. Such a choice of the theme and of the way that it was choreographed was not without meaning, though it must also be determined by the needs and requirements of an artistic stage presentation at the same time. The absence of the enemy on stage downplays the significance of the identification of THE enemy, and thereby makes the scene consistent with the main message of the episode. At the same time, concentrating upon eulogizing the extraordinary fighting tactics of the guerilla forces also contributes positively to the heroic ascending narrative pattern of the entire epic performance. Just as the lyrics of the Song of Guerillas demonstrates, these guerilla soldiers were portrayed as being capable of conquering any possible adversities and finding ways to triumph throughout regardless the dangers and insurmountable difficulties they have to face:

We are sharpshooters, wipe out one enemy by only one bullet; we are pilots, no matter how high the mountain and how deep the water is; in the tight forest, comrade's camp is all over; on the high mountains, there's unlimited numbers of our brothers. If we haven't food and clothes, enemy will give us; if we haven't weapon, enemy will supply us. We are born in here, every inch of the land is ourselves'; no matter who want to occupy it forcefully, we will struggle with him till the end<sup>137</sup>.

Obviously, the heroic construction of the protagonist here is thoroughly optimistic and cheerful. They were empowered with agency and autonomy, and a mighty capacity to surmount any obstacle and prevail. Notice that in this heroic construction, there was even little symbolic space for a tragic hero, because no signs of suffering, pain or sense of loss, signs that would betray a sense of helplessness or vulnerability was involved. This is perhaps to comply with and exemplify the guidelines that advise the production of artistic and literary works representing Chinese revolution as stipulated by the Central Committee of the Party (?note), namely, the 'revolutionary romanticism' and 'revolutionary heroism'<sup>138</sup>, both of which entail not only an ascending narrative pattern that must end in triumphant note, but the portrait of immaculate heroes that remain undaunted and buoyant no matter how much pain they have to suffer and how much danger they have to face. Such a portrait could of course boost up morale and strengthen revolutionary spirit, but it would also preempt the possibility of the emergence of a tragic or traumatic reading, because the denial of human defects or signs of human weaknesses in these hero characters intrinsically rejects the construction of victimhood. Indeed, with an assertion as hyper-romantic and light-hearted as that being made in the lyrics "If we haven't food and clothes, enemy will give us; if we haven't weapon, enemy will supply us", who would even feel a slight trace of sadness or sympathy for these guys, but not want desperately to be one of them and enjoy the romantic experience of fighting as a guerilla soldier?

What had been shown from the analysis of the fourth episode of *The East is Red* is that the general patterns that were summarized from Lin's commemoration article in the previous section are also prevalent in the artistic representation of the War, i.e., the heroic ascending narrative that are characterized with revolutionary romanticism and revolutionary heroism, and the emphasis upon the construction of a primary enemy that hinges upon class struggle which

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137 The English translation was revised by the author, based on a version that comes from the following website: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guerillas'\\_Song](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guerillas'_Song).

<sup>138</sup> The two 'isms' are the soul of the revolutionary discourse in China and permeate throughout not only the grand narrative that tells the modern history but also creative works that contribute to the propaganda campaign for the revolutionary causes both before and after the founding of the People's Republic.



diminishes the War as being meaningful only as a stage background where the fight against Kuomintang was put on a show.

### *Construction of the War in Literary Works*

Such patterns were being reproduced extensively also in literary works published in 1950s and 1960s, part of which were being revised and selected into school Chinese textbooks<sup>139</sup>. Among all the texts taken into Chinese textbooks for senior elementary and junior high schools in the 1950s and 1960s, there were eight that tell about stories of the War, all selected from novels or other literary works written by writers under the leadership of CCP and published during the 1940s to late 1950s. And with the exception of one<sup>140</sup>, almost all the works focus upon stories of the guerilla forces or civilian soldiers in the CCP-led base areas, and particularly their fight and experience in the face of the ‘Annihilation Campaign’ launched by the Japanese forces, mainly during 1941-1942 (?).

Reading through these chapters, one could not but get a curious mixture of feelings that combines excitement, envy, sense of empowerment, and joy; indeed, one could hardly refrain from exclaiming loudly, ‘what an extraordinary and romantic life these guys had!’ and feeling an irresistible urge to go and become one of them. Such a response, which implies a strong sense of symbolic identification, of course, comes as a result of the picture of the War that emerges from the portrayal of these chapters. And the picture of the War, as depicted from these pages, is not only predictably victorious and heroic, but incurably romantic and rosy.

In fact, one theme that all these chapters share in common is that any conflict between the CCP-led forces and the Japanese invading armies must inevitably end with a thorough triumph of the former party. What is even more amazing is to find that in none of these chapters was there a single loss of life or casualty being mentioned or depicted on the side of the Chinese people; it seems almost a rule that ‘our’ victory must come at no cost of lives or blood, lest it will ruin the immaculate image of the revolutionary people. This was even true for texts that depict battle scenes that are admittedly bloody and gory. For instance, in the text titled ‘Triumph in the Pingxing Valley’, it was depicted that the battle lasted from afternoon to late evening, that the entire battle field was bombarded by the enemy bombs and the soldiers had to fight with their bayonets; still, the victory comes clean of any single word on the death or sacrifice made by ‘our’ side. In a more dramatic chapter, titled ‘At the Baiyang Lake’, the ‘zero casualty’ rule was

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139 My original data come from Chinese textbooks for senior elementary and junior high school published during 1950s and 1960s. There were altogether two versions published by the central People’s Education Publishing House, one around mid 1950s, published consecutively through 1954-1956, the other around early 1960s, through 1963-1964. Focusing on school textbooks proves to be more yielding than sampling directly from the pool of novels and other literary works being published because of two reasons: first, because textbooks must fulfill the most significant function of inculcating values and morals into the younger generation, and shape them into collective beings, the literary works and novels selected into them would have already been scrutinized and are considered as being most representative and consistent with the ideological and political message that the central authority endorsed. This makes the novels and literary works selected into texts most revealing of the way that the society wants the War to be represented and memorized by the next generation. Second, while it is hard to estimate the amount of readers of novels and literary works, the extent of circularity of textbooks was perhaps the widest, given the 9 year obligatory education system in China. This means the picture of the War as represented and depicted in the texts is perhaps one of the most widely accepted versions among Chinese people.

140 The exceptional one is titled ‘the Triumph in Pingxing Valley’, selected into Book no. 3 of the Chinese textbook for elementary school published in 1955. The text will be discussed in detail later because it is almost the only one that depicts a headlong confront between the CCP-led Eighth-route army and the Japanese forces.



even extended to animals; a big cock that became the target of Japanese soldiers' chase, the latter of whom obviously wanted to grab it for a long-awaited treat of meat, escaped its doom unscathed. On the contrary, every single casualty of the War as mentioned in these chapters came from the side of the Japanese forces and the Chinese puppet troops, and their loss was usually quite severe, as demonstrated by the previously mentioned text about the battle in Pingxing Valley, where the narration was concluded with the following sentence "the bodies of the enemy covered the roads and the hillsides...the battle was won and victory belongs to us.<sup>141</sup>"

Not only must 'our' victories be tremendous and come at no cost, in these chapters, they also come with such convenience and ease; usually, the right thing happens about the right time in the right place so that all the conducive elements coincide to contribute to the eventual triumph of the people. In a text titled 'Yanling Troop', for instance, that tells about how a small guerilla dispatch team thwarted a round of attack made by the Japanese water forces, the defeat of the enemy was portrayed as just a piece of cake; as soon as the enemy characters made their appearance into the scene, they fell into the trap prepared by the guerilla soldiers and their fate already doomed. And predictably, the battle scene barely started when all the dozens of Japanese soldiers were erased with a light brush, and their much more advanced weapons and the impressive modern steamboat became the booty of a boisterous crowd of guerilla soldiers. In the previously mentioned text 'At the Baiyang Lake', to give another example, at the critical moment when three young women who hid themselves into piles of reeds were exposed and faced with the fate of being captured, handily, one of them came up with a grenade and efficiently killed all the three soldiers that chased them. And afterwards, even when 'Guizi' took revenge by setting fire to all the piles of grasses, they somehow miraculously escaped to safety without a scratch.

The incredible prowess and good fortune of the Chinese people as depicted in these chapters is juxtaposed sharply with the portrait of their antagonists, always constructed as being ridiculously weak, absurdly stupid and incredibly unfortunate. As a matter of fact, though they were most frequently referred to as 'Guizi', Chinese words for 'the devils', their images as portrayed in these chapters were far from being devilish at all<sup>142</sup>; on certain occasions, the image of 'Guizi' was so deprived of evil characters that the word starts to pick on it a certain comic connotation. To demonstrate this point, it is again worthwhile to turn to the text titled 'At the Baiyang Lake', where the 'guizi' were more vividly portrayed than the other pieces.

At the beginning of the story, several 'guizi' soldiers, who came to attack the Baiyang village, were depicted as being exclusively absorbed with catching a cock so that they could give themselves a treat; then as their very awkward and absurdly frantic chase was successfully

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141 Page 12, Book no.3, Chinese (Textbook for Senior Elementary School). Beijing: People's Education Publishing House. Texts translated into English by the author.

142 This does not mean, of course, that they were not unequivocally coded as 'evil' or 'bad. In the text titled 'the Tunnel War in the Jizhong Plain', after claiming that "unable to vanquish the people, Guizi started to use other attacking techniques, including fire, poisonous gas, and water" (124), it was commented that 'the means adopted by the Guizi were heinous indeed'(122). In the story of 'Er Huzi', 'guizi' were portrayed as so debased and conniving as to attempt to cajole the kids in the village to give out the name of the hidden CCP cadres. And in the worst case, in the story titled 'Yulai is still alive!', 'guizi' was even portrayed as torturing the little boy who they believed knew about the whereabouts of an injured CCP cadre, and attempting to execute him when he ran loose miraculously. Indeed, the encoding of 'guizi' as profane is made very clear and punctuated. However, at the same time, the deepening of such an evil never occurred, as I would demonstrate in the following paragraphs.

thwarted by the cock, which was personified as brave and tactful as its Chinese master, they came across three young Chinese women who hid themselves in the piles of grass. As “guizi” happily cried to each other that they found some ‘young pretty women’, they quickly met with their premature death by a grenade thrown to them by one of the Chinese girls. One could even share a bit of pity to these pathetic ‘guizi’, as they seem not capable of doing any serious harm, even less of posing any daunting threat to the invincible and brave Chinese people. Their cardinal sin exposed in this piece, the desire for delicious food and beautiful young women, makes them even empathizable as human beings.

If they were allowed to have feelings, these ‘guizi’ soldiers as portrayed in the above chapter would perhaps feel satisfied because at least they could appear as some comic figures with individual characters, unlike their fellows in other cases, who were not even given a recognizable figure, but reduced to an abstract number of casualty or blurred backdrop image of the stage where the bravery of the CCP-led forces, as well as the impotency and cowardice of the Kuomintang troops could be showcased. The following text ‘Triumph in the Pingxing Valley’ was a great example to the point. It is discussed here at length also because it embodies all the characterizing features analyzed above and thus represents an archetype of the narrative telling about the War.

This article is really a rare piece among the texts as well as other literary works because it deals with a battle scene between the Eighth Route Army with the Japanese on the frontline, which, historically speaking, is one of the few battles where CCP-led forces confronted directly with the Japanese armies other than in guerrilla warfare often conducted in enemy-occupied areas. The text starts with an introduction of the context of the battle, which, significantly informative, took up almost 2/3 of the entire text. While the Eighth Route Army soldiers were depicted as brave, fearless and eager to join the battle, the nationalist army was predictably portrayed as the dialectical opposition of the CCP soldiers, and the portrayal of their cowardliness and panic, and their acquisitiveness and detestable mug towards the civilian people almost occupied the entirety of this part of the text.

To illustrate how the Kuomintang troop had been corrupted and impotent from top to the rank and file, it was said that the commander of the troop, “even before he could see the Japanese army through his telescope, had already escaped with his troops... and he ran in a run for hundreds of miles before he dared to stop to take a breath.” (8) And to pose a sharp contrast, the eighth route army was depicted as heading straightforward to the direction where the enemies came and thus confronted the nationalist escaping soldiers face to face, when they were portrayed as “some of them lost their caps, some even their military badges... yet they carried with them the properties and chickens that they grabbed from the civilian’s household on their way of running away.” (8) To make their thug-like images fuller, in the next paragraph, the civilian people were depicted as complaining to the eighth route army their predicament at the hand of the Kuomintang troops, some with tears. In their words, Kuomintang were ‘worse than the bandits’ (9) and people ‘hated them with such a profound resentment that their teeth start to itch whenever the nationalists were being mentioned’ (9).

The text then turns to write about the strategic maneuver made by CCP commander Lin Biao, which predictably is composed of a long eulogy to the wisdom and talent of the leader and the sense of dedication and strength of the CCP soldiers. It was not until the last several paragraphs of the text that the battle was briefly narrated, and the real enemy of the battle eventually stepped onto the stage. But as we have observed repeatedly, their doom was prearranged and came along almost too quickly; and within a few sentences, the story already

ended with a triumphant tone “the bodies of the enemy covered the roads and the hillsides...the battle was won and victory belongs to us.” (12) It will be hard not to notice that in this ‘recreation’ of one of the most famous battles fought by the CCP with the Japanese forces, the ‘legitimate’ enemy were not even an active human player; rather they were presented like stagnant puppet figures without recognizable individual faces and function only as a necessary yet passive part of the ‘stage’ setting in the scene. And except for the label of ‘enemy’ assigned to them, no enthusiastic attempts were made to ‘construct’ the ‘evilness’ of the figure or to make the images more concrete or tangible.

With the discussion of ‘Triumph in Pingxing Valley’, we will be able to conclude our analysis of the narrative of the War in Mao’s era because the former is almost an epitome of the latter with all the characterizing features present. With unfailing and thorough triumphs that always come with as little cost as possible, and with rosy binary construction that reminds one of childhood tales where bad rascals will always be defeated by good people, the narration of the War is a perfect embodiment of the ‘revolutionary heroism’ and ‘revolutionary romanticism’ and serves loyally as a masterpiece chapter in the grand ascending narrative about the founding of the new nation. Defined as a hard yet necessary transitional stage through which revolution shall be won, representation of the War always appeared a bit absent-minded and off-the-target, because the literal enemy in the War are not necessarily the ‘legitimate’ and ‘true’ enemy of the people and the perpetrators ‘correctly’ defined in other more successfully ‘told’ stories must be given more symbolic significance. With the heroic construction of the protagonist that inherently denies victimhood, and with the hierarchy in the ranking of the ‘evilness’ where the Japanese forces were always toppled by the more ‘proper’ camps ‘class-wise’, such a narrative intrinsically preempts the emergence of a traumatic representation of War.

In the larger picture, the emergence of a traumatic construction of the War was hindered in the first place by the powerfully built collective trauma of the old society and class struggle which, as I have tried to show in the previous sections, serve as the very basis upon which the new nation and collectivity came into being. The absolute evil of class enemies and the unspeakable nature of the sufferings as built in the collective trauma leave little space for the portrayal of another evil of a similar symbolic weight. And the class abyss that divides the victims and the perpetrators made other conflicts that do not come along the line seem erasable. After all, in comparison with a landlord who would not hesitate to strip your skin and who therefore must be eliminated without mercy, a Japanese soldier, not capable of doing any serious harm and possibly also a victim of class oppression himself, is a much more amicable figure and demonstrates more potential of redemption.

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## **A Fire That Doesn't Burn? The Allied Bombing of Germany and the Cultural Politics of Trauma<sup>143</sup>**

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A lot of seriously bad things happened to Germans during and immediately after World War II. More than five million soldiers were killed, most of them on the eastern front. Those who survived the war in the east were often wounded, half-crazed or frostbitten, and were further decimated by the harsh conditions in Soviet POW camps. British and American bombers attacked more than one hundred German cities and towns, reducing many of them to a sea of rubble, killing around six-hundred thousand civilians, and making many more homeless. Millions of ethnic Germans who had settled in Poland or Czechoslovakia fled the onslaught of the Red Army, or were later expelled by the newly established communist governments. On their way to Berlin and in the fallen capital itself, Soviet soldiers raped altogether perhaps one and a half million women, often “in the presence of their menfolk, to underline the humiliation” (Evans 2009: 710).

This list of horrors is, of course, deliberately one-sided in that it ignores not only the endless suffering inflicted by Germans on their non-German victims including their own Jewish fellow-citizens, but also questions of causal and moral responsibility. Historians like Richard Evans have shown that such questions are not only been asked in hindsight, but were already on the minds of many ordinary people during the war itself. To some degree at least, Germans saw their own misery filtered through a sense of what had been done to others in their name. Given the context that has shaped the experience of suffering especially of German civilians, we believe it is interesting to explore how they have represented their own suffering, how these representations have been transmitted into the collective and national memory, and to what extent the political culture has been shaped by war-related memory projects.

In his influential lectures *On the Natural History of Destruction*, the German-born writer W.G. Sebald notes that some of the occurrences of the war, in particular the mighty air raids against German cities “left scarcely any trace of pain behind in the collective consciousness” (Sebald 2004: 4). We suggest to rephrase this statement by saying that the memory of the bombing war has not been turned into a national or “cultural trauma.” In other words, Germans do not remember the situation of their cities being firebombed and often completely flattened by identifiable actors as a psychologically searing event that has forever transformed and still defines their identity. The destruction of much of Germany is not remembered and commemorated to mark off this nation against others in fundamentally new ways. The question we try to answer is why this particular collective experience of suffering has not, in spite of its horrifying proportions, given rise to a cultural trauma. The answer given by Sebald (2004: 11) is that there has been a “taboo” on speaking about the devastation and suffering caused by the Allied air war. What is implied is that Germans felt no longer entitled to speak of themselves as victims as they increasingly accepted their image of being perpetrators of war crimes and the Holocaust. We believe that this answer is flawed. For one, the term “taboo” insinuates that

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