4 Animals, Ethnic Minorities, and Villains in Animated Film during the Cultural Revolution

In the mid-1960s, the concept of national style, understood as a marker of a unique Chinese identity, began to change in animated filmmaking. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, national style was associated with traditional art forms, literature, folklore, and culture rooted in China's past. During the Cultural Revolution, it was characterized by positive heroes and revolutionary content in a contemporary setting. Rather than fixed, static, and timeless, then, national style is historically contingent and thus continuously changing. An examination of subnational forces such as ethnic minorities and villains represented in animated films during this decade provides evidence for the central argument of this book, namely, that national identity constructed through the positive revolutionary heroes in Chinese animated films was not solid, homogeneous, and monolithic. Instead, it was contested and destabilized by racialized and animalized Others who continuously transgressed and redefined national borders. National identity is therefore a fluid concept contested and reformulated by internal border-crossing movements. I address this issue by looking at animals to unravel the convoluted relationships among species, ethnicity, class, and national identity articulated in animated films produced in this period.

Conventional studies of the Cultural Revolution tend to have a human-centered perspective that focuses on politics, revolution, and class struggle as dramatized in well-established art forms. Such an approach draws attention to the most visible and spectacular scenarios. Here we look instead to what was invisible: how animals were represented and underrepresented in a marginalized art form. Like the fairy tale, fable, and parable, animation is suffused with fantasy and populated with talking animals. Before the Cultural Revolution, animated film was replete with anthropomorphic animals, as earlier chapters make clear, from *Princess Iron Fan* (*Tieshan gongzhu,* 1941) (chapter 1) to *Terrible Lice* (*Kepa de shizi,* 1943) and *Kitty Goes Fishing* (*Xiaomao diaoyu,* 1952) (chapter 2) to *Little Tadpoles Look for Mama* (*Xiao kedou zhao mama,* 1960) (chapter 3). As animation began in the mid-1960s to be dominated by positive heroes and politicized human

action, animals disappeared for more than a decade. They did not vanish entirely, however. Instead, they became metonyms and metaphors for ethnic minorities and villains. As such, they destabilized the concept of a totalizing and homogeneous national identity. In essence, the disappearance of animals marked the start of the Cultural Revolution and effectively paved the way for its ideological demise.

Film Culture

Political narratives conventionally depict the Cultural Revolution as having been launched by Mao in 1966 and ending when he died in 1976. Given the disastrous consequences resulted from the Great Leap Forward (1958–1960) and the subsequent Great Famine (1959–1961), Mao's authority temporarily declined and advocates of economic development, such as Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, gained support (see chapter 3). To consolidate his power and the centrality of political struggle, Mao and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Committee issued the May 16 Notification in 1966 against bourgeois elements in the government, which is widely regarded as the start of the Cultural Revolution. That autumn, Mao frequently appeared in Tiananmen Square and greeted millions of fanatical members of the Red Guards who had traveled to Beijing from all corners of the country. The decade is regarded as one of tragedy, turmoil, and devastation. Schools and offices were closed. Cultural relics and historic sites were attacked. Colleagues and family members were pitted against each other, and people were persecuted and killed. Traditional Chinese culture, morality, and ethics based on Confucianism were shattered. The tragedy did not end until Mao died in September 1976.[1]

Recently, however, a more fluid periodization has been proposed using a cultural rather than a political perspective. Paul Clark and Yingjin Zhang, for instance, maintain that in film circles the Cultural Revolution began in June 1964, when Mao criticized all forms of socialist cultural production and organization for their serious political problems. Nationwide campaigns were launched in 1964 to criticize "poisonous" films such as *Early Spring in February* (*Zaochun eryue,* 1963) and *The Lin Family Shop* (*Linjia puzi,* 1959). Xia Yan's writings on film and Cheng Jihua's book on film history were also severely criticized. Furthermore, the Cultural Revolution in the cultural sphere did not end with Mao's death in 1976. It lingered in filmmaking until 1978.[2]

The purge in animated filmmaking began in 1964 with the criticism and banning of *The Herd Boy's Flute* (*Mudi*, 1963), *Uproar in Heaven* (*Danao tiangong,* 1961–1964), and other animated films. The aesthetics typical of the period began with *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* (*Caoyuan yingxiong xiao jiemei*) in

December 1965. This rigid style began to loosen with the release of *The Golden Wild Goose* (*Jinse de dayan*) in April 1976, but not until *The Fox Hunts the Hunter* (*Huli da lieren*) in 1978 did animation finally break away entirely from the Cultural Revolution's rigid aesthetics.

Between 1966 and 1970, fictional filmmaking was suspended and no new fictional films were released. Most of the films made during the Seventeen Years (1949–1966) were banned. Given the shortage of films during this period, Chairman Mao's wife, Jiang Qing, and her cohorts modernized Peking opera, ballet, and symphony and made revolutionary model performances (*geming yangbanxi*) with the aim of establishing a new revolutionary aesthetics and culture for the stage. The Beijing Film Studio produced *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy* (*Zhiqu Weihushan*), a film adaptation of one of the model performances and released it in October 1970. More model performances were adapted into film, such as *The Red Lantern* (*Hongdeng ji,* 1970), *Shajiabang* (1971), and *On the Docks* (*Haigang,* 1972). These performances were represented in other artistic forms including posters and linked pictures (*lianhuan hua*), which dominated the cultural scene during the Cultural Revolution. A joke at that time quipped, "eight hundred million people watched eight model performances."[3] The initial performances included five modern Peking operas, two ballets, and one symphony. Additional performances followed.

These model opera films emphasized class struggle and revolution. Their guiding principle was the "three prominences" (*santuchu*), namely, the prominence of positive characters, of heroes among all positive characters, and of the most outstanding hero among the heroes. The appearance of the heroes should conform to the convention of being "tall, big, and full" (*gao da quan*) and should be portrayed with the style of "red, light, bright" (*hong guang liang*); negative characters were portrayed with the convention of "far, small, dark" (*yuan xiao hei*) in the background. Cultural Revolution cinema was dominated by the revolutionary aesthetics of these highly stylized model opera works. Encouraged by the success of the opera films, Jiang Qing and the ultra-leftists launched the production of fictional feature films to advance their political goals in 1973. These films, such as *Breaking with Old Ideas* (*Juelie,* 1975), often portrayed the Party's internal struggle. These films shared the aesthetics of model opera films but were less theatrical; model opera films continued to be made when production of fictional feature films resumed in 1973.[4]

When the Cultural Revolution turned its focus on culture itself, animated films produced during the Seventeen Years were—with only a few exceptions—criticized and banned.[5] Shanghai Animation Film Studio, established in 1957 as the sole animation studio in China (see introduction), produced most of the animated films made during the Cultural Revolution. In August of 1966, the Red Guards

took over the studio, renamed it Red Guard Film Studio, and established the affiliated film magazine *Red Guard Cinema* (*Hongweibing dianying*) in July 1967. Given the intensification of revolution and class struggle, from 1966 to 1971 the studio's only animated films were *The New Sprouts of a Village* (*Shancun xinmiao,* 1966) and *The Great Declaration* (*Weida de shengming,* 1968). Shanghai Animation Film Studio made several dozen animated films between 1972 when it resumed production and 1976.[6] Like other artistic forms at that time, these films were influenced by the aesthetics of model performances. However, the most prominent and invisible feature of these animated films is the disappearance of animals.

A Double Disappearance

In animation, animals, modernity, and cinema are intertwined in that cinema is a material icon of modernity yet the animal is the antithesis of it. Akira Lippit argues that when humans began to modernize the world and conquer nature with advanced technology, wild animals disappeared: "Modernity can be defined by the disappearance of wildlife from humanity's habitat and by the reappearance of the same in humanity's reflections on itself: in philosophy, psychoanalysis, and technological media such as the telephone, film, and radio."[7] It is no surprise that early cinema frequently featured animals.[8] Drawing on Lippit, I contend that in the context of socialist modernity during China's Cultural Revolution, wild animals not only disappeared significantly in the real world as Mao launched series of wars against nature but also vanished from the silver screen as a result of the radical artistic forms and cultural policies adopted at the time. The Cultural Revolution was thus characterized by a double disappearance.

During the Great Leap Forward, Mao launched a steel-making campaign, ordering trees to be cut down to fire the furnaces. Deforestation destroyed animal habitats and animals disappeared. In February 1958, Mao launched a campaign to eradicate what it identified as the four pests (*chu sihai*): sparrows, rats, flies, and mosquitoes (see also chapter 3). "All people," Mao ordered, "including five-year-old children, must be mobilized to eliminate the four pests."[9] Thousands of people in a particular place rushed outside simultaneously beating drums, pots, and pans, which induced such panic in sparrows that they flew until they died from exhaustion. For several decades after this campaign, sparrows rarely were seen in the countryside.[10] The Great Leap Forward lasted only two years, but the decade-long Cultural Revolution intensified the radical drop in the population of wild animals. After Mao launched the Learning from Dazhai campaign in 1964, peasants continued to cut down trees to clear land for industrial projects and to modernize the countryside. The animal population was decimated. At the time,

for example, the tiger was a metaphor for socialist enemies—US imperialists in particular—and was therefore widely despised. These campaigns brought the species close to extinction.

Animals also began to disappear from Chinese films in the 1960s. Model performance films during the period are typically characterized as being about class struggle and the cult of Mao. I assert that the absence of animals is a prominent albeit invisible feature of these films. Model works were usually performed in theaters, where accommodating and controlling live animals on stage is extremely difficult.[11] Furthermore, in line with the Chinese opera tradition, animals are suggested by gestures or props, as in the horse-riding scene in *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy* (figure 4.1). The removal of animals clears the space for revolutionary human action rooted in the realist mise-en-scène of these productions. Revolutionary cinema was less a phantom shelter for animals than a representational tomb during China's decade of radical socialist modernity.

The ban on anthropomorphic animals began with the persecution of the famous fairy tale writer Chen Bochui. In the late 1950s, Chen published several essays advocating for children's literature written from the perspective of children's heart (*tongxin*). Fantasy, he argued, distinguished children's literature as a genre and that the task of the children's writer is to create works suitable for children.[12] In 1960, Mao's wife, Jiang Qing, and her cohorts launched various campaigns to criticize this concept, countering it with rationalist and realist arguments: "Can cats speak? Can roosters sing?"[13] Animated films of the Seventeen Years era were belittled as being about "little dogs and cats, gods and spirits" (*xiaomao xiaogou shenxian guiguai*), and most were forbidden.[14]

Figure 4.1. Horse-riding scene, absent the horse, in *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy,* 1970.

Jiang Qing's negative view needs to be considered in an international context. The burgeoning popularity and influence of Disney films in the Third World during the Cold War era was equated with Western cultural imperialism. Anthropomorphism and plasticity were regarded as the antithesis of classical mechanics and rationalism. Donald Duck and other Disney animals, for example, were seen as political messengers of capitalist ideology and cultural imperialism in Latin America in the 1970s.[15] The more direct influence on Jiang Qing was likely Nadezhda Krupskaya, the Soviet educator and wife of Lenin, who advocated that children's stories should be based more on reality than on fantasy.[16] Fairy tales were attacked in the Soviet Union during the 1920s but not banned.[17] Numerous animated fairy tales with talking animals were in fact produced during the Stalin era. Although the validity of fairy tales in Republican China was debated in the 1920s and 1930s, the debates did not lead to a ban.[18] The United States had its own sometimes heated Great Fairy Tale Debate about the legitimacy of fantasy between 1929 and 1931, but no ban followed.[19] The double disappearance of animals during the Cultural Revolution, for all its intense and lasting effects, was a unique phenomenon.

Animal, Fantasy, and Realism

The animal in Chinese animation is typically a figure of the fantastic and an antithesis of realism. Most animated films made during the Seventeen Years drew on myth, folklore, fairy tales, and legends set either in a remote past or in an exaggerated and distorted world, as discussed in the film analyses in earlier chapters. The anthropomorphic animal was pivotal.[20] The disappearance of animals during the Cultural Revolution, though, had precedents in films produced during the Seventeen Years. The boundary between fantasy and realism in animated films was blurred by realist moments, even though the embodiment of fantasy in animals was dominant.

The realist entrée in socialist animation came in two propaganda films produced by Northeast Film Studio in the late 1940s: *Dreaming to Be Emperor* (*Huangdi meng,* 1947) and *Capturing the Turtle in the Jar* (*Wengzhong zhuobie,* 1948) (see chapter 2). Both were satires of Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek) in the context of China's civil war and his collaboration with the United States. Although the two films had a politically serious motif, they used caricature and humor. In *Capturing the Turtle in the Jar,* for instance, the character of Jiang Jieshi is transformed into an anthropomorphic turtle after he is arrested by the People's Liberation Army. Thus, although the film addressed an actual political conflict, the

fantastic element was present in its use of animals. These films were called political satire films (*zhengzhi fengci pian*) and targeted adults.

The second entrée came during the Great Leap Forward. The film *Long Live the Great Leap Forward* (*Dayuejin wansui,* 1959) was a deliberate and direct reference to the campaign. Despite its realist orientation, the film included fantastic elements and drew on fairy tales to recount how peasants, equipped with modern technology, outwit anthropomorphized black clouds and wind that are attempting to conquer the human world. The film *Little Carp Jump over Dragon Gate* (*Xiao liyu tiao longmen,* 1958) adopts a similar style. A group of anthropomorphic carp, after hearing the story that jumping over the legendary dragon gate transforms carp into dragons, are determined to find the gate. They then jump over what they assume is the legendary gate, but is Dragon Gate Dam (Longmen shuiku), which was built during the Great Leap Forward. Substituting the dam for the legendary dragon gate portrays the industrial achievements of socialist China. Films such as this that targeted children and combined contemporary reality with fantastic elements were called new fairy tales (*xin tonghua*) and contemporary fairy tales (*xiandai tonghua*).

Whereas the previous two realist entrées were characterized by a fusion of realism and fantasy (anthropomorphic animals and exaggeration), the third portrayed children's daily lives in a mimetic and verisimilar style and included neither animals nor fantastic elements. This trend began with the film *The Twins* (*Shuangbaotai,* 1957), which revolves around a series of funny stories that result from the mistaken identities of a pair of twins. Another is *A New Football* (*Yige xin zuqiu,* 1957), which recounts how an initially selfish child becomes willing to share his new football with other children. Verisimilitude continued into the mid-1960s with a new twist. Films such as *New Deeds on the Roadside* (*Lubian xinshi,* 1964), *Four and a Half O'Clock* (*Sidianban,* 1964), and *The Little Brothers* (*Xiao gelia,* 1965) revolve around children doing good deeds to emulate the model soldier Lei Feng. The films are light hearted, humorous, and not overtly political, but do not feature animals or fantasy.

The fourth entrance—revolutionary realism—came in the release of the puppet-animated *Red Cloud Cliff* (*Hongyun ya,* 1962).[21] Other films in this category include *The Rooster Crows at Midnight* (*Banye jijiao,* 1964), discussed in the introduction, and *The Red Army Bridge* (*Hongjun qiao,* 1964). Like the third group, *Red Cloud Cliff* adopts a mimetic style and excludes animals and fantastic elements. However, with its serious motif, *Red Cloud Cliff* does not have the humorous and comic twists characteristic of the third set. Thus it is a serious play (*zhengju*). Set in Sichuan province in the late 1940s, *Red Cloud Cliff* features an old stonecarver who sacrifices his life to defend the honor of the Red Army. When Nationalist soldiers learn that the slogan "reddening Sichuan province" (*chihua*

quanchuan) is engraved on a cliff, they threaten to kill the stone carver's grandson if he does not remove it. The stone carver agrees and climbs the cliff. Rather than obeying the soldiers' order, however, he changes the slogan to "reddening the whole country" (*chihua quanguo*). The soldiers kill the stone carver—the first human hero killed in the history of Chinese animation. The killing is designed to make viewers feel heavy hearted, saddened, and vengeful—which is exactly the affective function of revolutionary realism, to arouse in audiences a love for heroes and a hatred for enemies.[22]

The release of *Red Cloud Cliff* triggered heated debate in the mid-1960s about realism and fantasy. Sun Yi, a famous editor of children's periodicals, hailed the film as a "successful experiment" that constructs a positive peasant hero and directly inculcates the ideology of class struggle in children.[23] The renowned animator Jin Xi, by contrast, saw exaggeration as

> an indispensable technique in animated filmmaking. There is a reason for this. Animated cartoons, paper cuts, and puppetry cannot represent a real person true to life due to the limitation of the medium. If animated films have to represent persons, the more realistic they are, the more artificial they will become. Animated films are not suitable for realistic representations.[24]

He was echoed by animated film script writer Wu Lun:

> Due to the nature of being flexible, animated films can use exaggeration and fantasy to represent life. Animated film has its limitations in that it cannot represent the subtle psychology and sophisticated facial expressions of real people. Animated film lacks stereoscopy, so it is not suitable for representing real persons and real events.[25]

Wu Lun went on to sum up the genres that fit in well with the medium of animation: myths, fairy tales, comedies, and satires. That is, genres that deal with the past, fantasy, and exaggeration and are distanced from contemporary reality. Within the terms of Jin Xi's and Wu Lun's arguments, *Red Cloud Cliff* was a failure. If animated films have to represent reality, they should incorporate fantastic or exaggerated elements, as in *Little Carp Jump over Dragon Gate* (see chapter 3). The debate about fantasy and realism soon ended, because the revolutionary realism prominent in *Red Cloud Cliff* later became the official standard for animated filmmaking during the Cultural Revolution and was fully established with the release of *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland*.[26]

Animals and Model Animation

Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland has even more realist elements than the puppet-animated *Red Cloud Cliff*. *Red Cloud Cliff* draws on revolutionary legends set in the near past, and the characters are fictional.[27] *Heroic Little Sisters* is based on a true story of two Mongolian sisters who almost lost their lives trying to protect the sheep of the people's commune during a snowstorm in February 1964 and were immediately promoted as national models for children.[28] The animators began making the film as if it were a timely documentary or news report. It incorporated rotoscoping and was based on a live-action film, which lent smooth movement to the characters. The animation of the sisters was based on photographs of them to enhance corporeal verisimilitude and authenticity.

Accordingly, I identify *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* rather than *Red Cloud Cliff* as the true transitional film between the Seventeen Years and the Cultural Revolution. The first serious play (*zhengju*) in the history of cel-animated film, *Heroic Little Sisters* was also the first to directly portray, praise, and deify Chairman Mao.[29] Mao's portrait appears at the beginning and the end of the film. The film's theme songs directly praised him. In terms of revolutionary content and realist style, *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* served as the model for subsequent animated films during the Cultural Revolution, a decade characterized by repetition of both style and stories.

According to critics at the time, the images of the protagonists in the films of the period departed from the cute Western doll-like (*yang wawa*) style of the past and took on more national characteristics related to contemporary politics and culture.[30] These heroes thus became markers of national style and national identity. Guided by the three prominences, the heroes were portrayed using low angles and bright colors to heighten their monumentality and enemies by using high angles and dark colors.

It was precisely the disappearance of anthropomorphic animals that gave rise to this model of animation. The script of *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* was based on a fairy tale titled "Red Flowers on the Snowy Grassland" ("Xueyuan honghua"). In the original script, the sisters sing, dance, and play with anthropomorphic sheep. The villain is an evil hawk, which snatches the good animals and the sisters into the sky. After the animators went to Inner Mongolia and sketched from life, however, they decided to follow a documentary style to portray the sisters as they had been in the original news reports. They deleted the anthropomorphic animals.[31] The hawk disappeared. The sheep did not talk and were simply animals owned by the commune (figure 4.2). It is likely that the animators self-censored their work given that as early as 1964 the artistic coercion characteristic of the Cultural Revolution already had begun with the criticism of *Early Spring in*

February and other live-action feature films. Furthermore, criticism of fantasy, myth, and fairy tales intensified during the period. In January 1964, Ke Qingshi, the Party secretary for Shanghai, proposed "dramatizing the thirteen years after 1949" (*daxie shisan nian*) and "emphasizing the contemporary and slighting the ancient" (*houjin bogu*), arguing that only contemporary motifs featuring living people (*huoren*)—not ancient people (*guren*) and dead people (*siren*)—could properly disseminate socialist ideas.[32] Qian Jiajun and his colleagues began preparations for the animated film *The Story of Kitty* (*Xiaomao de gushi*) in 1964, but the project soon was suspended given the political sensitivity of the animal motif.[33] Anthropomorphism was condemned as a way of defaming workers, peasants, soldiers, and children, and was officially banned at the Shanghai Animation Film Studio in November 1965.[34] The release of *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* a month later was timely. Thereafter, animated films were characterized by the absence of anthropomorphic animals.

Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland is the only cel-animated film made during the Seventeen Years that survived artistic censorship and was continuously reproduced as a media fetish in different artistic forms during the Cultural Revolution.[35] At the height of the period, the film's realist animals disappeared. In November 1970, the Shanghai People's Press published a linked-picture (*lianhuan hua*) version directly adapted from the animated film. This version had the same title and the same plot as the animated version. The role of Chairman Mao is more prominent, however, and class struggle is more heavily emphasized. The father of the sisters is represented as an oppressed shepherd liberated by Mao. The Party

Figure 4.2. Domesticated sheep and the two Mongolian sisters of the people's commune in *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland,* 1965.

secretary staged "speaking bitterness" (*suku*) campaigns to publically criticize reactionary herd owners. The two sisters are little Red Guards who wear Mao badges and read Mao's little red books.[36] Because of the more prominent roles of Mao, revolution, and class struggle in the linked-picture version, animals are pushed into the background, as depicted in the cover image (see figure 4.3).

When *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* was made into the ballet model performance work *Sons and Daughters of the Grassland* (*Caoyuan ernü,* 1975), animals were all but absent. The sisters are represented as brother and sister and are played by two adults. The ballet makes the story more dramatic and sensational than either the animated or linked-picture version by adding as a class enemy a reactionary herd owner who steals the sheep of the people's commune by letting them escape. When he is exposed, he attempts to kill the children, but soldiers of the People's Liberation Army appear at the critical moment to save them.[37] The drama of class struggle further marginalizes the sheep's role. The children's whips and herding gestures are the only remnants of the sheep (figure 4.4). Stage lighting, which focuses exclusively on the positive heroes, further foregrounds human protagonists and pushes animals, if any, into darkness and invisibility.

The degree to which animals are invisible or absent marks the revolution's intensity and vice versa. The disappearance of the anthropomorphic sheep in the model-animated version of *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* indicates the penetration of the Cultural Revolution into animation. The absence of animals from *Sons and Daughters of the Grassland* reflects intensified revolutionary conflict. The ballet effectively transformed the animated film into a de facto Maoist model

Figure 4.3. Marginalized animals in the distant background in *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* (linked-picture version), 1970.

Figure 4.4. Landscape with sheep herders but without sheep in *Sons and Daughters of the Grassland* (ballet version), 1975.

work, the most prominent and the most invisible feature of which is the absence of animals.

The official disappearance of animals also gave rise to the "fetishization" of machines—telegraph poles, power lines, ship, tractors, trains, and helicopters—as icons of socialist modernity.[38] Telegraph poles and power lines in the landscape take on prominent roles in the various versions of *Heroic Little Sisters* (figures 4.3 and 4.4), for example, to valorize socialist modernity and its industrial achievements.

The iconography of socialist machines culminated in *Trial Voyage* (*Shi hang,* 1976), which drew directly on a live-action feature film by the same title (1959). *Trial Voyage* was the first film to feature the motif of heavy industry and the struggle between the proletariat and capitalist roaders. In the animated version, the protagonist Lu Dahai and his workers build *East,* a ten-thousand-ton oceangoing cargo ship. All of the ship's parts are made in China. After the ship is completed, Lu Dahai asks for a trial voyage. Party leader Chen Zongjie argues that Chinese parts are poor quality and tells Lu Dahai to use imported parts or he will postpone the trial. Lu Dahai refuses, insisting that China can build its own ship without relying on foreign parts. After numerous rounds of political struggle, Lu Dahai takes a highly successful trial voyage, on which he and his workers even rescue a Taiwanese fishing boat. A ship was a common metaphor for China during the Cultural Revolution, in which Chairman Mao as the helmsman steered the country on its socialist course.[39] The ship in *Trial Voyage* marked the height of the fetishization of machines and the cult of Mao in animated films. Such films differed from others in using adults as protagonists, resembling live action, and appealing to a more sophisticated adult audience.

When animals did appear, they were represented as the collective property of a people's commune, such as the sheep in *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland,* the pigs in *The Major Course* (*Zhu ke,* 1975), and the horses in *Galloping Horses* (*Junma feiteng,* 1975).[40] To highlight human action, these domesticated animals were positioned in the background and nearly invisible. They were also depicted in clamorous herds or packs without the individuality, personality, dignity, and freedom that solitary animals in the wild had traditionally been given.

The Lamb of the Commune: Ethnicity, Femininity, and Animality

Ethnic minorities began to appear in Chinese animated film in the late 1950s. The first such film, *Golden Earrings and an Iron Hoe* (*Jin erhuan yu tie chutou,* 1956), draws on a Yao legend in which an old man faints in front of his house and is helped by a poor Yao peasant boy. Grateful for the boy's kindness, the old man's daughter gives the boy a pair of golden earrings, which turn into two golden keys. The boy uses the keys to open a treasure-filled cave, where he picks out what appear to be an ordinary millstone and iron hoe, only to discover that they magically produce grain. The greedy landlord tries to seize the treasure but ends up being killed. The boy then marries the old man's daughter and they live happily ever after. Subsequent animated films portraying ethnic minorities followed this pattern. For example, *The Girl Made of Wood* (*Mutou guniang,* 1958) draws on a Mongolian legend, *A Zhuang Brocade* (*Yifu zhuangjin,* 1959) on a Zhuang legend, *The Shepherd and the Princess* (*Mutong yu gongzhu,* 1960) on a Bai legend, *The Girl with Long Hair* (*Changfa mei,* 1963) on a Dong legend, and *Peacock Princess* (*Kongque gongzhu,* 1963) on a Dai legend. Such films incorporated fantastic elements and emphasized ethnic diversity and cultural differences.[41] They often dramatized the different costumes, food, behaviors, ways of thinking, legends, and cultures of various ethnic traditions, rendering animated film a kind of socialist salad.

Whereas minority animated films during the Seventeen Years were concerned with ethnic traditions, myths, and legends, those during the Cultural Revolution were set in the revolutionary context and depicted cultural homogeneity. Ethnic difference was subordinated to class difference, though ethnic minorities were still marked as an exotic Other relative to Han Chinese, the aim being to construct a homogeneous and monolithic national identity. The transition from the past to the present, from fantasy to revolutionary realism, and from ethnic difference to class difference began with *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland,* which became a model for later animated films.

Issues of ethnicity reinforced the realist orientation of the film.[42] Scholars point out the strong ties between race and realism, even proposing the concept of racial realism. According to Madhu Dubey, "political claims about African-American literature have always depended on realist aesthetics, from the documentary impulse of the slave narratives to the reflectionist principles prescribed by the cultural nationalist program."[43] In his studies of ethnic minorities in China, Dru Gladney also observes that explicit realism was used to portray the female body of ethnic minorities in contemporary Chinese arts; however, the state restricted the use of realism to portrayals of the female Han body.[44] During the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese government also appropriated ethnic minorities to present a racially authentic revolutionary narrative in the name of constructing a coherent national identity. The logic of this nationalist discourse is that even unruly "barbarians" living in borderlands embraced Chairman Mao and his socialist revolution. Ethnic revolutionary realism was prominent in the minority films produced during the period.

Issues of ethnicity, childhood, and animals are often intertwined. According to evolutionary theory, humans evolved from animals, so it is no wonder that a child usually has some atavistic animalist characteristics. Like animals, children are usually unsophisticated and suspicious of nothing; they crawl, cry, bite, eat, and excrete to their heart's content. Functioning as "a liminal figure at the discursive threshold dividing species as well as races," the child, according to Andrew Jones, is a "housed beast" that needs to be developed and civilized.[45] These ideas are also pervasive in sociology. Karl Marx once proposed a progressive stage theory of human civilizations: primitive, slavery, feudal, capitalist, socialist, and communist. In line with this social evolution, ethnic minorities and aboriginals, regarded as primitive, are positioned as the early stage, or the childhood, of human history.[46]

Imagined this way, ethnic minorities and animals often have a metonymic relationship in mainstream Chinese narratives. In real life, ethnic minorities usually make their living from and live with animals in the borderlands.[47] In the folklore, myths, and legends of many ethnic minorities, ancestors are depicted as animals or animal totems are worshipped. In the semi-autobiographical novel *Wolf Totem* (*Lang tuteng,* 2004), for example, the author Jiang Rong notes that in many Chinese classics and legends, Mongolians are descended from wolves.[48] A story from *Book of the Later Han* (*Hou Hanshu*) illustrates that a dog named Pan Hu is the ancestor of the barbarians (*manyi*) in China.[49] It is no surprise that in the traditional Chinese writing system, ethnic minorities are often classified with animals. The most popular radicals in ethnonyms were associated with a bug or beast (*chong*) and a dog (*quan*). Animal radicals for ethnic minorities were replaced with human classifiers in the mid-twentieth century, but the stereotype remains current among Han Chinese.[50]

Ethnic minorities frequently appear with animals in visual representations in China. As a transitional film between the Seventeen Years and the Cultural Revolution, *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland,* compared with its linked-picture and ballet versions, still has traces of earlier fantastic animated films. Although in this film the sheep stop talking and become realistic, they are portrayed as adorable and are given prominent shots throughout. Some animators criticize the rigid stylization of animation during the Cultural Revolution yet regard *Heroic Little Sisters* as a success and attribute its success to the vivid portrayal of the sheep.[51] In fact, ethnicity sanctioned the relative overrepresentation of animals. This is because, as Paul Clark points out, minority films have the propensity to "explore normally avoided subjects" in socialist China.[52] Only two animated films were named after animals at that time, *Galloping Horses* and *The Golden Wild Goose*; the former is set in Inner Mongolia and the latter in Tibet. *The Major Course* features pigs and is set in the ethnic Zhuang Autonomous Region in Guangxi province. *Two Little Peacocks* (*Liangzhi xiao kongque*, 1977) features wild peacocks and ethnic Dai children.

Han stereotypes present ethnic minorities as innocent little girls with animal companions. Paul Clark argues that ethnic minorities of northern China tend to be represented as hard, masculine, and virile, and their peers in the South as softer, more feminine, and more likely to sing and dance.[53] Rather than using gender to analyze conventions of representing ethnic minorities, I propose using the concept of animality, which encompasses both masculinity and femininity. The anthropologist Louisa Schein notes the metonymic relationship between feminized ethnic minorities and animals (and nature in general). In Chinese mass media representations, ethnic minorities are figured through an infantilized woman, who "frequently appeared communing with animals or nestled among trees and flowers."[54] Ethnic minorities are therefore associated with primitiveness, fauna, and flora.

In communing and (over)identifying with animals, the ethnic girl herself becomes an animal or an anthropomorphic animal par excellence. The metonymic relationship culminates in the film *Peacock Princess*, which is based on an ethnic Dai legend. The metamorphosis of a peacock into a princess (as in the film) or of a princess into a peacock tellingly illustrates the symbiotic relationship. *Peacock Princess* is one of the few Chinese animated films that portray such a transformation. In Chinese animation, metamorphosis—understood as the transformation of body forms between humans and animals or other nonhuman objects—is typically portrayed using ethnic minorities. For instance, *The Girl Made of Wood* deals with a tree stump's metamorphosis into a Mongolian girl. *The Girl with Long Hair* is the story of the transformation of the long hair of a Dong girl into a waterfall.[55] In *The Hunter Hailibu* (*Lieren Hailibu,* 1985), a squirrel is transformed into a Mongolian girl, who turns out to be the daughter of the Mountain God. The

Mongolian boy Hailibu understands the language of animals and is transformed into a stone. *The Cloak Made of One Hundred Birds' Feathers* (*Bainiaoyi,* 1996) is about a canary's transformation into a Miao girl. Ethnicity is associated with the transgression of categories, with feminized ethnic bodies as pliant, malleable, and subject to animated metamorphosis.

When the animals disappeared in *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland,* the two Mongolian sisters took their place. The girls are cute and plump with round faces and big eyes. Their femininity, infantility, and naiveté are not only patronizing and trivializing but also render them objects of intense fascination. They radiate animalistic physical strength and agility. They run, jump, and boisterously keep running for days on end in harsh weather—all to protect the sheep of the people's commune.

Ethnic bodies, especially female ones, are prone to overanimation, literally and metaphorically, and display excessive physical movement, dancing, and noisy vocalizations such as chattering, giggling, and singing.[56] In *Heroic Little Sisters,* the girls are extremely animated, become exhausted, fall into a coma, and are taken to the hospital by a rescue party led by the Party secretary.[57] This marks the turning point in their lives. When the girls wake up at the hospital, they are symbolically dead as daughters of their father because the Party secretary reanimates them, giving them a new life and a new identity as "Chairman Mao's good children." In other words, they are assimilated into the family structure of the socialist state. As Tani Barlow points out, Maoist women/*funü* "got situated first in *guojia*/state and then, through the magic of metonymy, within the modern *jiating*/family."[58]

Like the domesticated sheep of the people's commune, the Mongolian sisters become docile lambs co-opted and owned by socialist China. A childish female voice sings the theme song: "Our dearest Chairman Mao, oh Chairman Mao, our grassland is prospering under the sunshine of Mao Zedong Thought. Our dearest Party, oh Party, little shepherds are growing up under your guidance; little shepherds are growing up under your guidance." The sisters are shepherds for the people's commune, and Chairman Mao shepherds Mongolians into socialist China.[59] Ethnicity is associated with the compliance of lambs as well as the transgression of exploring taboo subjects in mainstream socialist imagination such as animals and body metamorphosis.

The Wolf in the Forest: Villains, Masculinity, and Animality

Live-action films during the Seventeen Years featured what are referred to as middle characters (*zhongjian renwu*), those ambiguously situated between heroes and villains. However, as the Cultural Revolution intensified, such characters

disappeared in model performance works. Negative characters that appear include vicious landlords, traitors, and spies attempting to sabotage socialism. During the Seventeen Years, these were both male and female. During the Cultural Revolution, they were exclusively male.

Human villains were rare in animated films during the Seventeen Years, primarily because most story lines featured animals and fantastic stories, and only a few appeared in revolutionary realist films of the mid-1960s.[60] However, after the disappearance of animals in *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland,* human villains began to dominate the screen. Like those in model performance works, villains in animated films were exclusively male during the Cultural Revolution.[61] Their masculinity intensifies the life-or-death revolutionary struggle between rivals, because violent nationalism is usually configured in masculine terms, which is best exemplified in war.[62]

Rosemary Roberts argues that although villains in Maoist model works were male, the conventions of revolutionary aesthetics feminized them, as evidenced by dwarfed stature, high-pitched voices, and feminine movements and gestures.[63] Issues of gender were important partly because human action dominated Maoist model works. Because animation is considered an artistic form heavily populated by animals, I propose animality as a kind of third gender that blurs the binary between masculinity and femininity, and use this concept in examining animated films made during the Cultural Revolution.

The animality of the villains relates to the disappearance of anthropomorphic animals, who took metaphorical refuge in male bodies. In animated films at the time, most villains were named after animals: the Wolf in the Forest (*Shanzhong lang*) in the film *The Little Trumpeter* (*Xiao haoshou,* 1973), the Crabs with Two Legs (*Liangzhi jiao de pangxie*) in *Little Sentinels of the East Sea* (*Donghai xiao shaobing,* 1973), the Polar Bear (*Beiji xiong*) in *Arrows with Firecrackers* (*Daixiang de gongjian,* 1974), and the Stinking Pufferfish (*Chou hetun*) in *The Night of the Flooding Tide* (*Da chaoxun zhiye,* 1975). Similarly, villains in model works were named after animals: Vulture (*Zuoshan diao*) in *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy,* White Tiger (*Baihu*) in *Surprise Attack on the White Tiger Brigade* (*Qixi baihu tuan,* 1972), and Viper Gallbladder (*Dushedan*) in *Azalea Mountain* (*Dujuan shan,* 1974). Indeed, revolutionary language during the Cultural Revolution was replete with animal metaphors. The most frequent example is Ox Demons and Snake Spirits (*Niugui sheshen*), which was standard for so-called class enemies.[64] In chapter 1, I discuss wartime speciesism, specifically, the use of animal images to humiliate and denigrate wartime enemies in Chinese, Japanese, and American cartoons and animated films. I maintain that speciesism functioned in alternative ways when animals were visually absent from animated films during the Cultural Revolution, generating what I call a disembodied or invisible speciesism.

Exuberant with animality, animated villains can occupy only nonhuman space. Villains in live-action feature films during the Seventeen Years were not radically animalized, usually had human names, and lived like ordinary people before they were exposed and captured as enemies of the country. These villains, especially spies, lived in bourgeois wallpapered homes or seductive boudoirs away from socialist doctrine.[65] However, during the Cultural Revolution, the villains were animalized and given names of animals, were forced to leave their homes, and took shelter in caves, lairs, and dens, wandering like wild beasts in the forests and along national borders to escape revolutionary hunters.

The relocation of villains from home (humans and the built environment) to wilderness (animals and Otherness) is most clear in *The Little Trumpeter*. At the opening of the film, the major villain is a landlord who lives in a large, luxurious house and oppresses the protagonist, a young ox-herding boy (the ox is almost invisible throughout the film). The landlord's name is Wolf in the Forest, suggesting his inhumanity and cruelty. This animality is further dramatized by his appetite: he eats the gallbladder of vipers. When the Red Armies come, they oust the landlord and attach a pair of revolutionary couplets to the gate of his house. The horizontal couplet reads, "Long live the Chinese Communist Party," and the vertical one reads, "The sickle cut off the old world; the axe carves out a new world." With these couplets, the communists symbolically transform the landlord's house into a humane revolutionary headquarters. The landlord and his cohort are homeless, dubbed running dogs (*zougou*), and flee to the wilderness, where they wait for the opportunity to return and take revenge. Thus the landlord really becomes a wolf in the forest, one that ends up being tracked and killed by the ox-herding boy.

Given their animalistic instincts, such villains are capable of metamorphosis and assume malleable identities to survive in the wilderness. At the same time, they leave traces of their movement and put themselves in danger, as in *Little Sentinels of the East Sea*, which was released during a tense period of China-Taiwan relations. In this film, a group of Taiwanese spies, dubbed crabs with two legs (suggesting their movement across the Taiwan Strait), land at a coastal village and undertake acts of sabotage. The spies are exposed and attacked by the people's militia. Three of them escape and attempt to steal a boat and flee back to Taiwan. On their way to the seashore, they meet a girl and her younger brother, who herd the (almost unseen) sheep of the people's commune. To deceive the children, the spies dress in People's Liberation Army uniforms. Their identity, however, is revealed by their perception of the animals. One says flatteringly to the children, "Your family has so many sheep." Their words alert the girl to their treachery: socialist sheep belong to the people's commune, not to individual families. She then tells her brother to go back to the village for help while she follows the spies. They try to mislead her down the wrong road, but their footprints betray them and the girl tracks them

down. They try to kill her but are prevented from doing so by the pursuing soldiers who have come, after hearing her brother's story, to rescue her.

Animality both joins and separates villains and ethnic minorities, creating a common yet non-unified Other for the communist state to lord over. Whereas ethnic minorities are assimilated domestic animals ready to sacrifice their lives for the Party, villains are vicious wild beasts in the forest to be tracked down and killed by revolutionary hunters. Just as ethnic minorities are excluded from the Party-state in a superficial inclusion, villains are included by virtue of their expulsion. In both cases, humans, like animals (sparrows, tigers) at that time, are reduced to "bare life" in that their lives can be taken arbitrarily in the name of the Party-state. This shared reduction, Haiyan Lee argues, is a typical feature of modernity. Bare life in this instance is associated with Giorgio Agamben's concept of exclusion: it is about unprotected human and animal life (such as Jews during World War II and wild and domestic animals in the 2003 SARS outbreak in China) excluded from the sovereign state.[66] I contend that in radical socialist modernity during the Cultural Revolution, inclusion in the sovereign state can reduce humans and animals to bare life, as the case of the animated ethnic minorities and lambs demonstrates. Such extreme circumstances offer no escape.

Ethnic minorities are children and villains are adults, usually the oldest characters in animated films. In sharp contrast to rosy-cheeked ethnic girls in their brightly colored costumes, male villains usually have dark and gloomy faces and wear dark clothes, reinforcing their affinity with nighttime and secrecy. Villains are either skinny, always dwarfed by monumental heroes, or fat, suggesting hedonistic behaviors with excessive eating and drinking. Considered both nonhuman and inhuman, these villains exude animal vitality, which justifies the relentless revolutionary violence against them. Only after villains are eliminated can socialist children (both Han and minority) and Chairman Mao (the Party) live happily ever after in these animated revolutionary fairy tales.[67]

The Fox Hunts the Hunter: The Return and Revenge of the Animal

The reappearance of animals in animated film in 1976 more or less openly declared the imminent end of the Cultural Revolution. Just as the disappearance of the animal is associated with ethnic minorities (Mongolians) in *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland,* its return in *The Golden Wild Goose* is again bound up with ethnic minorities (Tibetans). Ethnicity is therefore self-contradictory as a category: it is associated with both revolutionary realism (the most realist and authentic) and with revolutionary romanticism (the most unreal and fantastic, which can be turned into a transcendental truth).

Figure 4.5. Tibetan children riding on the golden wild goose to Tiananmen Square in *The Golden Wild Goose,* 1976.

Golden Wild Goose is set immediately after the 1959 Tibetan Uprising. In this film, Tibet is plagued by grasshoppers. Rumor has it that only the golden wild goose, an auspicious bird in Tibetan legend, can exterminate the grasshoppers and bring happiness to the local people. The Tibetans pray to the Buddha but in vain. Chairman Mao promises to send a helicopter to exterminate the grasshoppers. Several Tibetan children volunteer to help prepare for the helicopter's arrival and in the process successfully thwart a scheme to blow it up. The helicopter finally arrives and kills the grasshoppers. The Tibetans, who marvel at the power of the helicopter, are convinced of the superiority of socialist modernity and Mao's effective leadership.

The animal makes its appearance in the film's daydream sequence. As part of their preparation work, the children climb a snow-capped mountain in search of a snow-lotus flower, which they plan to present as tribute to the helicopter. When they find the flower, a close-up shot shows them gazing at it in ecstatic reverence. This shot is immediately followed by a sequence from the children's daydream, in which they ride the legendary golden wild goose to fly across the Great Wall that traditionally separates ethnic barbarians from the Han, and present the snow-

lotus flower as a tribute to Mao in Tiananmen Square, where Mao's monumental portrait—first featured in *Heroic Little Sisters*—emerges among a sea of red banners and balloons with slogans of "Long Live Chairman Mao and the Chinese Communist Party" (figure 4.5).

The appearance of the magic wild goose—the return of the oppressed (à la Marx) and repressed (à la Freud)—foreshadowed the demise of Mao and the collapse of an ideological system (the Cultural Revolution) despite the association of the snow-lotus flower and a long life. Only several months later, Mao died and the Cultural Revolution soon came to an end. The revolutionary rhetoric, though touted as rational at the time, fell flat precisely because it was too rational.

Here the fantastic was associated with the metaphor of wings and flying. As mentioned earlier, the disappearance of the animal from children's literature began with the persecution of Chen Bochui in 1960. Chen's advocacy for fantasy was best represented by his book *Fantasy Has Colorful Wings* (*Huanxiang zhangzhe caise de chibang*). One of the stories in it tells of an ambitious cat who wants to fly. For Chen, fantasy is associated with wings and flying. The word "flying" was in fact a keyword in the movement against Chen and fantasy, which began with the essay "What Kind of Wings? Where to Fly?" ("Shenmeyang de chibang wang narfei") published in *The People's Literature* (*Renmin wenxue*) in June 1960. The essay argued that Chen's advocacy for fantasy demonstrated his bourgeois orientation; therefore his fantasy with colorful wings could not take flight in socialist China.[68] A popular slogan was coined at the time to criticize the flying animals and fantasy in children's visual culture and literature: "Ancients and animals flying all over the sky, poor those lonely workers, peasants, and soldiers" (*guren dongwu mantian fei, kelian jimo gong nong bing*).[69] As symbols of fantasy, flying animals were inimical to revolution and revolutionary realism, thus their disappearance in *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* marked the start of the Cultural Revolution, and their reappearance in *Golden Wild Goose* foreshadowed its end.

The boundary between the fantastic and the realistic in *The Golden Wild Goose* is blurred by the relationship between the magic golden wild goose and the helicopter. The goose is associated with both the primitiveness of Tibet and the helicopter as an icon of socialist modernity, challenging ten years of visual dominance of machines. The goose and the helicopter are two sides of the same coin. Both kill grasshoppers and bring happiness to Tibetans. Both are associated with physical movement. The difference is that the wild goose resides in dreams and legends, and the helicopter in reality. The distinction between the fantastic and the realistic, dream and reality, organic and mechanical is ambiguous. We can even say that the real helicopter is more fantastic and the fantastic wild goose is more real. This paradox culminated in the tribute-offering daydream sequence.

The Tibetan children's longing for Chairman Mao is depicted at the moment that Tibet was trying to break away from China in 1959. Was the socialist assimilation of Tibetans merely a dream?

If the fantastic animal displaced the machine in *Golden Wild Goose,* it supplanted it in *One Night at the Art Studio* (*Hualang yiye,* 1978). Produced two years after Mao's death, this film is a reflection on children's visual arts during the Cultural Revolution. Set in a children's art studio, the film features two machine villains: an iron club with spikes like wolf fangs and a tall metallic cap. The club and cap walk into the studio at night and destroy the pictures they deem inappropriate by crossing them out: drawings of animals (rooster, elephant, giraffe) and of children's daily life activities (studying, swimming, doing good deeds, greeting their teacher), and landscapes (see figure 4.6). When the clock strikes midnight, the children and animals come to life and restore the pictures. A human villain in a picture, however, also comes to life, runs away, and asks the club and the cap to come back to the studio. When the three villains return, the children and animals launch a battle against them (and win). The relationship between animals and machines in this film is far more confrontational and violent than that between the goose and the helicopter in *Golden Wild Goose*.

In the beginning of *One Night at the Art Studio,* only the club and cap are animated; the animals and children are still inside the pictures. The cross mark the villains used on the pictures was used frequently on stills of animated films criticized and banned during the period.[70] The lines of the cross effectively bind and immobilize the animals. The animals, however, break free, come off the

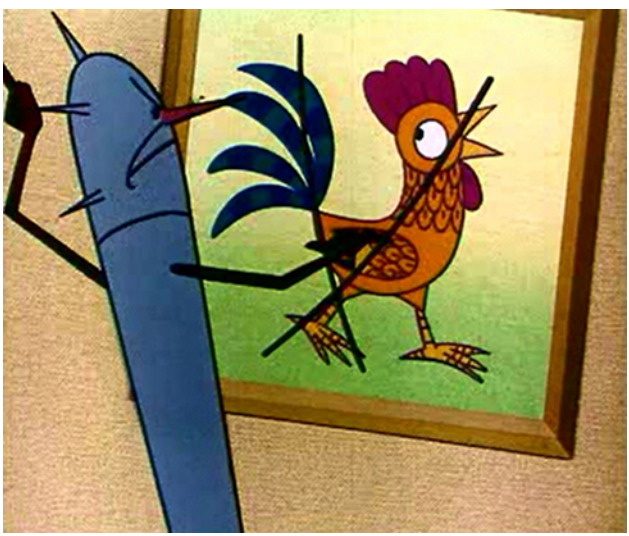

Figure 4.6. Animated machine (spiked club) crosses out the inanimate drawings of animals in *One Night at the Art Studio,* 1978.

pictures, and start moving. After they win the battle, they confine the animated machines within a picture, rendering them inanimate. This scenario vividly demonstrates the power relationship between animals and machines in animated films. What could and could not be animated was not only an aesthetic issue, but also a political one.

The club and the cap represent the notions of "beating to death with a club" (*yi bangzi dasi*) and "putting on a high cap" (*dai gaomao*), metaphors for the persecution of arts and artists during the Cultural Revolution. The machines' crossing out of animals in the beginning of the film pave the way for their own destruction, because the animals come to life to resist the artistic coercion imposed on them. Artistic transformation is a self-generated process, a revolution from within. In this battle against machines, animals side with children and regain their place in children's visual arts only after defeating the machines. These animals are enlarged to the extent that the children ride a rooster like a horse (see figure 4.7). The goose is similarly enlarged. The magnification of the returned animals radically reasserts their presence and visual dominance after a decade's absence from the screen.

Speaking human language is pivotal for the returned animals. Philosophers such as Descartes have pointed out that the difference between humans and animals is language.[71] Although humans have the capacity for language, animals have only cries, grunts, or croaks. Spivak's rhetorical question "Can the subaltern speak?" is often interpreted from the perspectives of class, gender, and race.[72] It

Figure 4.7. Aggrandized rooster in *One Night at the Art Studio,* 1978.

raises the question of species as well, because animals cannot speak and are the lowest of the low among the subalterns. However, in animated film, fairy tale, apologue, parable, and fable, what Akira Lippit calls the "minor genre," animals do speak and even "speak too much."[73] The talking anthropomorphic animal is probably the most prominent feature of these minor genres, partly because of their origin in oral tradition.

During the Cultural Revolution, animals expressed themselves only indirectly. Their return in the late 1970s gave speech back to them. In *Golden Wild Goose,* the goose speaks through ventriloquism. In the daydream sequence, the goose's flight to Beijing is accompanied by an off-screen song by Tsering Dekyi, a famous Tibetan female singer.[74] This disembodied voice is thus reembodied by the wild goose. In *One Night at the Art Studio,* the rooster does not speak, but at the end of the film finally gives a triumphant pre-dawn crow—a cry that welcomes the sun rise and puts an end to the night of the Cultural Revolution.

The Fox Hunts the Hunter is the first animated film featuring a speaking animal after a decade of silence. When the fox begins to speak, it is about getting revenge.[75] Reversing the relationship between animals and machines, as in *Art Studio,* is not enough. Instead, the fox aims to subvert the power relationship between humans and animals, the hunter and the hunted, and the eater and the eaten. *The Fox Hunts the Hunter* features a clever fox who takes a gun from a young and incompetent hunter and tries to kidnap and eat him (figure 4.8). Even though an old hunter intervenes and kills the fox, the young hunter is terrified. The film's male voiceover confirms his symbolic death: "If a hunter loses his gun and trembles in front of beasts, he is already dead even if he still physically lives." The fox has triumphed in symbolic domination. In reversing the two roles, the fox reverses the power relationship between humans and animals—both biologically and representationally—that began with the decimation of sparrows in the four pests campaign years earlier. The emphasis on the powerless hunter's youthfulness subverts the socialist rhetoric through which Mao manipulated children and young people in the late 1950s into becoming the major force behind the destruction of sparrows.

At the beginning of the film, when the forest animals spread the rumor that a fox has turned into a powerful wolf, a winking owl appears. It appears again at the end of the film when the fox and the wolf kidnap the young hunter and are ready to kill and eat him. The owl is modeled on *Owl* (*maotou ying*), originally painted by Huang Yongyu for a friend in 1973. Huang's *Owl* was severely criticized for the owl's having one eye closed. Displayed in a special exhibition of blacklisted paintings at the National Art Gallery in Beijing in March 1974, the painting was identified with the caption "Huang Yongyu produced this *Owl* in 1973. With its one open eye and the other closed, the owl suggests Huang's and like-minded artists'

Figure 4.8. Fox gives the usurped gun to wolf and asks him to kidnap the young hunter in *The Fox Hunts the Hunter,* 1978.

animosity toward the Proletarian Cultural Revolution and the Socialist system."[76] In traditional Chinese culture, the nocturnal owl is an ominous creature associated with darkness, night, secret, evil, and unknown forces. Beginning in the late 1950s, however, the owl came to be regarded as an auspicious bird because it eats sparrows and rats, two of the four pests. Despite these positive associations, Huang's winking owl became one of the most politicized animals during the Cultural Revolution decade. Its reappearance in *The Fox Hunts the Hunter* underscores the film's subtle connections with the period.

A Close-Up of Revolutionary Realism: Animal and Form

Conventional scholarship on literature and arts during the Cultural Revolution has a political perspective that traces back to Mao's 1942 Yan'an talk, in which he stipulated that literature and the arts should be subordinate to politics. More recent studies are beginning to challenge this political-determinist approach by highlighting the power of the arts to transform both themselves and social realities. In so doing, these studies draw attention to the internal rupture within the arts that contributed to their decline. In a study of sun-facing courtyards and urban communal culture in Shanghai during the mid-1970s, for example, Nicole Huang argues that "the reasons for their demise need to be located within urban communal culture itself."[77] In his studies on the model opera films of the period, Paul Clark points out that because film as an art that is close to indexical realism and naturalism, the adoption of a highly theatrical and performative aesthetic inspired by Peking opera was a poor fit, an internal illogic that contributed to the implosion of

the Cultural Revolution.[78] In a similar vein, Jason McGrath argues that the highly theatrical artistic form of model works used ironically to portray revolutionary realities, "must have contributed to the sudden collapse of the ideological authority of Maoism by the end of the 1970s."[79] The arts were not determined by politics and ideology; instead, they shaped themselves and even transformed the ideologies that policed them. The rupture between artistic form and revolutionary ideology was also prominent in animated films and was bound up with the disappearance of animals in the mid-1960s.

Animals, which dominate animated film, are closely associated with the formal style of animation. Thomas Lamarre points out that the force of animation—namely, its plasmatic movement—is usually channeled into animal and other nonhuman characters because the human audience pays less attention to the accuracy of animals' movement and is more tolerant of violent deformation and transformation of animal body forms than of human characters.[80] Animals therefore play a central role in defining animation as characterized by plasmaticity, movement, and fantasy.

The disappearance of animals in films thus led to a formalist rupture in animation, the embedded risks of which Chinese animators and critics pointed out. As early as 1962, Chinese animators sensed the dangers, as evident in debates over the release of *Red Cloud Cliff*. Skepticism culminated in the release of *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* three years later even though that realist orientation was officially sanctioned and oppositional views stifled. Chinese animators consider it more difficult in animation to portray humans than animals, contemporary than ancient subjects, positive than negative characters, and praise than satire. *Heroic Little Sisters* violated these conventions because it had contemporary subject matter and praised a human hero in a documentary style. Although the film was a hit, even its director, Qian Yunda, insisted that animators should appreciate the difficulty inherent in a realist approach with serious political themes. He wrote in the early 1980s explaining this stance:

> In regard to the realist orientation of *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland,* it is fine if it is just experimentation. We should not make this kind film often. This is because animated film is not suitable for constructing positive heroes in a serious way. This is the same with crosstalk and cartoons, which are not suitable for praising heroes.[81]

Animated films gradually returned to the plasmatic and fantastic mode after Mao's death in 1976.

The rupture between artistic form and realist ideology is best exemplified in the prominent use of close-ups in Cultural Revolution films. During the Seventeen

Years, the essence of animation had been motion and movement, and close-ups tended to freeze movement and expose the artificiality and limitations of animation. In *A Zhuang Brocade*, animators used close-ups to portray the face of an elderly ethnic minority woman and were questioned by reviewers who argued that in close-ups the hand-drawn lines became more visible and thus the artificiality of the form was exposed.[82] With the disappearance of animals and the realist turn in animation in the middle 1960s, it became conventional to portray heroes using close-ups at the most revolutionary, dramatic, and revelatory moments. Use of close-ups was guided by the principle of three prominences and pushed animated film to model on live-action film.

Take *The Little Trumpeter.* The film's protagonist is an embittered herd boy named Xiaoyong whose parents are killed by their landlord. The boy joins the Red Army to avenge his parents, becomes a trumpeter, and is wounded in battle. When he regains consciousness and sees his trumpet, the camera cuts to a close-up of his longing and determined face, which is gradually superimposed with a semi-diegetic Communist flag (see figure 4.9). At this thematically revelatory moment, the plasmatic movement is suspended and the fluidity of line comes to a stop.

The use of close-ups in revolutionary animated films proved self-defeating, however. The goal was to highlight the heroes' dignity and to draw attention to their determined, piercing eyes and heavy eyebrows, a trademark of Cultural Revolution–era animated films.[83] Rather than reinforce revolutionary realism, however, the close-ups drew attention to the constructedness of the heroic face. The revolutionary eyes and faces were nothing, the close-up made clear, but drawn lines and layers of pigment. The realism revealed the unreal.

Figure 4.9. Close-up of Xiaoyong's face in *The Little Trumpeter,* 1973.

Most animated films during the Cultural Revolution were characterized by the socialist realism prominent in live-action feature films of the Seventeen Years. Thus animation lost its medium-specificity (plasmaticness and fantasy) and became more like realist live-action, and live-action lost its medium-specificity and looked more like theatrical performative operas (best exemplified in the formulaic *liangxiang* pose in

model opera films), resulting in a domino chain of what Jason McGrath calls the "formalist drifts" of the Cultural Revolution.[84] Pushed to extremes, the formalist rupture within animation itself turned out to be a passing phase.

Conclusion: A Decade of Dis/appearance

Conventional studies of the Cultural Revolution typically center on presence by placing political struggle and human action in a revolutionary light. This chapter has focused on what was absent, namely, animals, which were critical to defining (socialist) modernity (in a negative way) and the medium specificity of animation. I thus reframe the Cultural Revolution as a decade of dis/appearance. Animals as both biological creatures and representations in film disappeared. Ordinary humans also disappeared to the extent that only heroes and villains and ethnic minorities inhabited the revolutionary world. In other words, humans also became an endangered species. In addition, many cultural relics, buildings, forests, and even landscapes disappeared in the political and economic campaigns launched during that time.[85] Dis/appearance here does not mean nonexistence, because what disappeared, or was forced to disappear, would return and scatter their traces, registering what Ackbar Abbas calls "a kind of pathology of presence."[86] Dramatized scenarios of dis/appearance were played out not only in material reality, but also in the realm of visual representations.

Animals disappeared not only from reality in Mao's wars against nature, but also from representation (model opera films, animated films, children's literature, visual arts) as radical artistic forms and cultural policies were adopted. I call this the double disappearance of animals, a phenomenon unique to the radical socialist modernity of the Cultural Revolution.[87] The animal is the crucial figure of fantasy and the antithesis of revolution and realism. Its disappearance marked the start of the Cultural Revolution and its return ten years later marked the end. Situated between the earth-bound sheep and the flying wild goose, the Cultural Revolution can be reframed as a decade of absent animals. They were displaced yet not completely replaced by humans and machines, however. Their visual disappearance gave rise to their spectral reappearance in language.

Animality as a category of third gender between masculinity and femininity is crucial in understanding animated films of the period. Whereas those during the Seventeen Years emphasized anthropomorphism, those during the Cultural Revolution emphasized disembodied speciesism in the form of metonymy and metaphor. Metamorphosis, or the transformation of body forms between humans and animals, no longer functioned in physical and visual terms. The fairy tale of the Seventeen Years was transformed into a revolutionary message. What made

the revolution real and fantastic was not the heroes, what Ban Wang calls the "sublime figures of history," but rather the internal Other(s) exemplified by ethnic minorities and villains, who constantly disrupted the ideal of a homogeneous and monolithic national identity under the solid leadership of Mao.[88]