Toward a Socialist Soundscape: The Making of an Auditory Authority in Post-1949 China

by

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Defense Date: March 28, 2024

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

This thesis is an inquiry into sound and voice associated with China's official authority after 1949. It reconsiders the process in which sound and voice weave into the fabric of governmental authority and socialist nation-building and eventually outlive the political model as the sonic imaginary of an era. Rather than considering "the voice of authority" as a monolithic whole, this thesis questions its construction – how the embodied individual voice is attributed to an inanimate collective — and its decline — how the voice of a past is allegorized and mystified as a means to explore the dynamic between national body and individual body and issues over corporeality and embodiment. By analyzing the relationship between sound and power, this thesis argues that authority in the context of post-1949 China undergoes continuous construction and transformation and is shaped by an interplay between human will and historical contingency. In addition to the formation process at its historical origin, it also considers the post-socialist disavowal of socialist legacy in consolidating the imaginary of authority. Through looking for the voice of early broadcasters in the People's Republic of China, the voice of Mao, and the voice of documentary films, this thesis reveals that these voices are heard and imagined in equal measure. The dynamic between the materiality and the metaphoricality of voice underscores the difficulties in narrating and memorializing China's socialist decades.

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I offer special thanks to my parents for their unconditional love which makes my literary

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Lastly, I dedicate this thesis to my former mentor Professor Sophie Volpp. In reflecting on this thesis, I realize there are many ideas and details that I regretfully fail to include. Equally regrettable is the fact that three years ago, I did not have the chance to properly express my profound gratitude for her mentorship, care and support. Both oversights weigh heavily on me.

1. Chapter 1: Introduction

In the 2022 documentary *Blue Island* 憂鬱之島 (dir. Chan Tze-woon), the discussion of contemporary Hong Kong identity is in part formulated against a story of escaping the propagandistic sound. As part of the Up to the Countryside Movements, Chinese urban youths were sent to the faraway area to be reeducated. Some of them who were sent to the costal Guangdong area took advantage of the geographical proximity to escape to Hong Kong. The influx of the approximately 200,000 mainland refugees, together with the already large number of displaced persons, constitutes the demography of Hong Kong populace at the time. In order to show what motivates them to leave, the documentary director reenacts an educational and mobilizational rally that two escapees, Chan Hak-chi and his wife, attended in the late 60s. Due to its low budget, the documentary had a limited selection of props and shooting sites to choose from.[1] In contrast to its rough recreation of an actual rally is the emphasis of recreating the mood and the feeling.

Following the session leader's passionate recitation of Mao's quotations and a calling out to join the revolution, the camera spans away to focus on the audience who applaud and raise their fists, shouting "Long live Chairman Mao" under the guidance of the session leader. With a fast cut of the excited, pious faces of the participants – all of whom are nonprofessional performers recruited by the production team — the camera is eventually fixed on the face of Chan Hak-Chi, one witness of these sessions in the 1960s. In a close-up of this face, Chan only seems uneasy and hesitant but raises his fist nonetheless.

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[1] Chan Tze-woon 陳梓桓, "*Youyu zhi dao* de zhuangzuo licheng" 《憂鬱之島》的創作歷程 (How Was Blue Islands Produced), in *Youyu de Biannian: Dianying Youyu Zhi Dao Yu Xianggang Shenfen Tanxun* 憂鬱的編年:電影《憂鬱之島》與香港的身分探詢 (Chronicles of Blueness: The Film Blue Islands and the Search for Identity in Hong Kong (Taipei: Chunshan chuban, 2023), 166-8.

This particular scene attempts to reenact the socialist soundscape of China's 70s. In his fundamental text *The Tuning of the World*, R. Murray Schafer frames a soundscape as the acoustic equivalent of a landscape. A soundscape, Shafer further asserts, "can be read as an indicator of social conditions which produce it and may tell us much about the trending and evolution of that society."[2] The educational session in *Blue Island* indeed presents a scene that is characteristic of the revolutionary culture of the time. Slogan chanting and propaganda speech are distinctive ways of mobilizing the masses to join the revolution.

The scene is deliberately staged to juxtapose the Hong Kongers of two distinct generations (the two reenactors grew up in Hong Kong; Chan and his wife escaped from the mainland in 1973 and now permanently resides in Hong Kong), and through this pairing, to foreground the formation of a Hong Kong identity under the shadow of China. As a documentary made during the height of Hong Kong-China conflict (Umbrella Movement in 2014 and massive protests in 2019–2020), the scene of educational rally, as the only scene that attempts to imagine what had been happening in the mainland, reveals the importance of imagining China's past for the diaspora. The imagining is cast in the light of its authoritarian governance and acquires its power through the affective power of sound.

This thesis is an inquiry into sound and voice associated with China's official authority after 1949, of the Chinese Communist Party. Part of my analysis is how sound and voice are woven into the fabric of governmental authority and socialist nation-building and eventually outlive the political model as the sonic imaginary of an era. Rather than considering "the voice of authority" as a monolithic whole, this thesis questions its construction – how the embodied voice of individual is attributed to an inanimate collective — and its decline — how the voice of a past

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[2] R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester: Destiny Books, 1977), 7.

is allegorized and mystified. As I will argue through analyzing the relationship between sound and power, the authority in the context of post-1949 China underwent a process of construction and transformation and always combines an interplay between human will and historical contingency. In addition to its formation process at its historical origin, I consider post-socialist disavowal of the socialist legacy in consolidating the imagining of authority in China.

Bring sound to the center of the historio-cultural examination of the socialist decades and Cultural Revolution is to facilitate conversations in a context in which the public has been actively discussing and reinterpreting China's socialist legacies in order to concretize the decades — whether nostalgically or resentfully. Being also the medium for registering the socialist decades, sound registers the history while attuning us to the unnoticed and hidden traces as well as moments of contingency and emergence. Meanwhile, it also attunes us to moments of disenchantment when the imagined future fails to transpire. Attending to these discursive and uncertain moments allows us to reconsider the accomplishments of China's socialism comparing with its aspirations. More importantly, its historical development would serve to remind that the authority is also constituted of multiple voices and that even the modifier "socialist" connotes not necessarily a status but a process with unforeseeable consequences.

1.1 The Official Popular Culture, Sound, Body and Authority

In a 2003 essay, Lydia Liu uses the term "official popular culture" to suggest a seemingly contradictory condition of cultural entertainment in socialist China: despite being popular, early socialist popular culture in China was produced and created with consistent governmental investment and intervention.[3] While what concerns Liu is the persistent appropriation of folk

[3] Lydia H. Liu, "A Folksong Immortal and Official Popular Culture in Twentieth-Century China," in *Writing and Materiality in China: Essays in Honor of Patrick Hanan*, ed. Judith Zeitlin and Lydia Liu (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003), 553–609.

material in creating the state-sponsored art forms, the official popular culture as a concept reveals the difficulties in theorizing the cultural production in modern China. As the nation-state and cultural workers always took the initiative in the production of official culture, a dichotomy of the official and the popular fails to maintain its currency. Every aspect of popular forms could be mobilized as part and parcel of nation-building, and through this machinery, ideologically inflected cultural products dominate and become beloved by the people.

If we contextualize this notion of "official popular culture" amidst recent scholarship that aims to reinterpret the propaganda culture at the height of China's socialist decades, it will seem that Lydia Liu has already started this shift in reconsidering the official socialist propaganda by questioning where the official ends and where the popular starts in a nexus of the nation-state, media apparatus and the audiences. With the increasing recognition that totalitarianism was an inadequate framework for understanding the cultural products from socialist China, more scholarly attention is paid to the popular aspect of the official culture that grants propaganda its power in the first place. Music historian Nancy Yunhwa Rao's work on model opera (*yangbanxi* 樣板戲), for example, highlights the creativity and expressivity of this music genre that is oftentimes conceived as suppressing artistic impulse. The richness in the *yangbanxi*, as Rao argues, is why this music genre continues to influence music practices in post-Cultural Revolution era.[4] Media scholar Jie Li studies the role of socialist mobile projectionists not only in bringing films and electricity to rural China but also in mobilizing the local masses, turning the official film screening events into localized, spectacular gatherings. The bodies of mobile projectionists become the nodes on the state media networks that "[electrify] the populace with

[4] Nancy Yunhwa Rao, "Sonic Imaginary after the Cultural Revolution," in *Listening to China's Cultural Revolution: Music, Politics, and Cultural Continuities*, ed. Paul Clark, Laikwan Pang, and Tsan-Huang Tsai (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 213–39.

the revolutionary spirit" and induce the masses to also partake in the media infrastructure as not passive receivers of state propaganda but creative agents.[5]

The shared interest in the people behind the scenes — including the cultural workers (*wenhua gongzuozhe* 文藝工作者) and grassroot organizers — in the two works cited above can also be seen as expanding the definition of the official authority in the context of Chinese socialism. This reworked definition acknowledges that even the official propaganda is devised and executed by the brains and hands of individuals with varying connections with the state apparatus and the collective political pursuit. If the creation of socialist official culture bear similarities to other forms of cultures, it implies that, at the very least, the "official culture" is not so much as a tangible product but as a process, echoing the early meanings of the word "culture": the process of tending the natural growth of crops or animals.[6]

This thesis aims to tend to China's socialist official culture. Through examining its sonic dimension, it proposes to use sound as a methodological device to reconsider what the official would entail in the imagining of China's socialist era. Sound contributes a perspective that reveals China's socialist condition as not always fixed and determine but as characterized for dynamics, transmutations, imperfections and limitations. It meanwhile offers us a way to break free of analyses of power as an abstract monolith in order to explore the inter-relativeness between the official and the popular, message and medium, propaganda and lived experience of Socialist China. Through examining the cases of the PRC's early broadcasters, former Red Guard students and poetry reciters in contemporary China, it ultimately aims to "push" the limit of

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[5] Jie Li, *Cinematic Guerrillas: Propaganda, Projectionists, and Audiences in Socialist China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2023), 147.
[6] Raymond Williams, Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 49.

socialist official culture to consider it also as a popular practice that is substantiated through repeated rehearsals and embodiment of the People.

The question of human body and embodiment remain a crucial thread in the discussion of sound and voice. In his work on the leftist poetry tradition, Ling Kang reviews the emergence of a new socialist body politics whose "primary assignment is to restore the relationship between language, societal conditions and the body."[7] Poetry recitation, as Kang suggests, exemplifies a form of "auditory art" (*tingjue yishu* 聽覺藝術) that "foregrounds the centrality of corporeal feeling and its political potential in experiencing poetry." "In leftist poetry recitation, the tensions between hearing and language, the materiality of sound and the semantics of words point toward a rich and ambivalent space in which the reciters and the listeners can simultaneously contest and negotiate with their bodily feelings and the ideological identification."[8] Leftist poetry tradition, as Kang highlights, brings about not only a new aesthetics for poetry writing but also a novel way of conceptualizing and practicing the corporeal body. To consider this corporeal aesthetics is to question the presumed link of sound and disembodiment, voice and embodiment. Within this "rich and ambivalent space," sound can barely be decoupled from a body (of the poet, the reciter, the reader, or the listener) and therefore inherently embodied. The aesthetics of sound is therefore an aesthetics of voice and body.

1.2 Listening to China's Cultural Revolution: Sound Archives

Though focusing on sound, I am also careful not to propose a brutal break off from visual- or logo-centric approaches. Instead of showing the potential of a sound-centric analysis,

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[7] Kang Ling 康凌, *Yousheng de zuoyi: shilangsong yu geming wenyi de shenti jishu* 有聲的左翼：詩朗誦與革命文藝的身體技術 [The Audible Left: Poetry Recitation and the Corporeal Technologies of Revolutionary Art and Literature] (Shanghai: shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 2020), 13.
[8] 27.

this thesis should show the flaws of such an attempt in (1) its primary reliance on written record and oral histories and (2) the still importance of image in analyzing a documentary's sound design. I envision the use of sound not as a methodological alterity but a means of intervening in current research practices. In particular, I highlight the issues over archive and knowledge. If an archive relates to modern mode of knowledge production, to unsettle the authority presumed by this archive demands a critical examination of the cultural logic behind preexisting archives, the current mode of using archive in practice, and if possible, the reconstruction of archives themselves.

Tracing sounds would offer us the ears to listen across forms and genres, to create sub-archive and new means of reading through imagining what could be heard. Here I expand the definition of an archive to refer to not only any physical or official archive but also how records and documents are situated with one another to carry a narrational potential. While the inscribed narrative would be speaking on the behalf of those in power, the institute, and the archivist, to counter it demands us to read against the grain of the archive and to pay attention to the relationship of document, records and stories and the organizing power that allows for the archive's constitution. I also consider focusing on sound and voice in an archive as another strategy that disturbs the coherency and self-evidence in a received archive, and through which hidden narrative could be brought to the surface for a close examination. Chapter 4 is, in some sense, a practice of this strategy.

The three body chapters of this thesis focus on two sets of sonic repositories regarding to China's socialist decades. Here I propose to read them as two archives that shape our knowledge of the sounds from the socialist era. The first sound archive (chapter 2) is constitutive of memoirs and oral histories of the PRC's early broadcasters. Their immediacy to the official voice of China and their direct involvement in the act of voicing turn them into the first-hand sources for

understanding the epochal sound and the voice they produced. This chapter pays attention to the language about sound and voice as they emerged from their memories of working at the Shanghai People's Radio from the late 1940s to the 1960s. By reading this archive against the grain, it is possible to speculate how these broadcasters actively created knowledge about body, technology, institution, and nationality.

Chapter 3 and 4 foreground the issues over sound, memories of sound and narrative about sound, by focusing on another form of repository — documentary film. Through envisioning a documentary film *Morning Sun* (2003) as a sound archive of China's Red Guard movement, this chapter asks what kind of historical narrative has been presented by putting sound of different sources together in the form of a documentary, and how our knowledge about the Cultural Revolution is produced in this process. Chapter 3 uses *Morning Sun* in a conventional way, drawing on the interviews as testimonies to how Mao's voice has been discussed by the Red Guard members. Chapter 4, on the contrary, reads *Morning Sun* for its incoherence in narrative and use of sound in order to forge an understanding of how the Cultural Revolution has been remembered.

Historian Antoinette Burton has called our attention to the notion of "archive stories," underlining the importance of telling the story behind an archive and of an archive.[9] While some sources might be deemed as "historical sound" — past sound preserved as recordings and thus replayable to contemporary ears — a large majority of sound and voice this thesis includes take forms of transcription, indirect mentions and recounts. An acoustically tuned exploration of these archives reveals sound and voice remaining central as the medium and metaphors for remembering China's socialist decades. Furthermore, in approaching a research object that is

[9] Antoinette Burton, ed., *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writings of History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 2–9.

ephemeral by nature, the availability of sound material of all kinds could barely be taken for granted. In other words, the ephemerality of sound serves to urge more unpacking of archives to tell their archive stories.

1.3 Chapters

The following three chapters concentrate on the sound of socialist during the seventeen years and the Cultural Revolution, the latter being discernable height of China's socialist official culture. Chapter 2 examines China's early socialist years (1949 to early 1960) when the nation went through major social and cultural transformations. Chapter 3 and 4 discuss Carma Hinton's 2003 documentary *Morning Sun*, a film that combines media-inscribed voices from the Cultural Revolution, voices of the former Red Guard members collected in the 2000s and a working documentary voice.

Chapter 2 focuses on how the voice behind official propaganda is formed in the first place. It examines the radio network emerging in the 1950s that established a transmedial relay. The broadcaster's voice, this chapter argues, forms the affective labor that enables the basic functioning of the network and invite us to consider the symbiosis between media network and human bodies. In cultivating a "communist voice," PRC's early broadcasters kept cultivating a delivery style and a vocal quality in respect of China's internal and international conditions. The second half of this chapter considers the vocal models and antimodels available for them and how transformation of a collective national body is achieved through the transformation of individual body. This chapter understands the broadcasters' voice as what mediates the constant conflicts between China as anticipated and as lived by placing the official and the popular in close dialogue.

Chapter 3 and 4 shifts its attention to the post-Cultural Revolution period. They discuss Carma Hinton's documentary film *Morning Sun*, with an interest in the documentary's layered

mentions and usage of sound. I examine how voice mediates social relations in post-Mao China with a focus on the symbolic work of voice and listening. The official voice of China, represented by the broadcasting voice from radio and loudspeakers, has become the sound to be listened against. Sound and voice from the Cultural Revolution are reheard, values were reassigned to give way to the sound of new era.

Chapter 3 examines the understandings and interpretation of Mao's voice. In drawing on testimonies from *Morning Sun*, it analyzes how the Red Guard generation mobilizes the discussions of sound, especially Mao's voice, to reconfigure their relationship with the Party. The conventional way of imagining the Mao cult as an overwhelmingly radiating sun might fail to hold when applied to the Mao's voice. Indeed, this chapter shows how Mao has been rendered mute in state-produced films during his lifetime. His muteness allowed for the appropriation and speculation resolving around his authentic voice. The last part of this chapter reads the afterlives of Mao's voice in the practice of poetry recitation in contemporary China. Mao being emptied out of his own voice is reinforced by the on-stage reenactment of Mao's voice in contemporary China. Post-socialist reciters deploy different performance idioms and vocal styles to commemorate Mao, but their versatile impersonations acquire a momentum which further obscures Mao's voice. Chapter 4 listens to the music and sound design of *Morning Sun*. Analyzing the film's juxtaposition of two socialist songs, "The East is Red" (*Dongfang hong* 東方紅) and "Let's Swing up Our Sculls" (*Rang women dangqi shuangjiang* 讓我們蕩起雙槳) within its soundtrack yields a nuanced interpretation of *Morning Sun*. Sound and music are politicized and depoliticized during the different stages of China's socialism that form a matrix of sentiments that cannot easily disentangle.

My intention in the close listening of the voices of broadcaster as well as the documentary *Morning Sun* is to show the processes in which the voice of the authority is

constructed and deconstructed. In either case, the voice of the authority offers a means of positioning and situating with a revolutionary future/past. Then, what is the voice of the authority like? Ultimately, this thesis considers China's socialist past as a form of ephemeral yet reproducible sound. The relationship we make with it, through close scrutinization or reenactment, is to partake in its fervor while acknowledging the inadequacy of this act in containing its indelible impact on post-socialist China and the future.

2. Chapter 2: Voice of a New China

On the evening of May 24th, 1949, the Chinese People's Liberation Army took control of the streets of Shanghai, along with the previously KMT-owned radio stations. On the following morning, Zou Fanyang, an underground communist journalist based in Shanghai, sneaked into the building where one KMT-run radio was located. Before that day, Zou had already received instructions from other Communist factions in Shanghai, directing him to protect broadcasting equipment left by the fleeting KMT so that they could use them when the CCP came. Before arriving at this radio station, Zou had already composed "The Notice of PLA's Takeover of the City" in a notebook. "The Chinese People's Liberation Army entered downtown Shanghai in the early hours of this morning. The city has been liberated." The notice reads. His language is concise and easy to understand, largely thanks to his background in journalism. Zou, however, gave the note to Shi Yansheng, a former KMT broadcaster who voiced what would later be recognized as "the first voicing of Shanghai People's Radio." By having a KMT broadcaster read the notice, what Shi and her voice had done was more than just deliver the message that Shanghai City was under the control of the Chinese Communist Party but also to actualize this transition through her voice. After the first announcement, a group of female broadcasters at the station, including Xu Wei (who broadcasted for the KMT radio station but was also an underground communist), Shi Yansheng, Shi Suihua (Shi Yansheng's sister) and Qian Naili (who had been performing radio drama for KMT-run radio station), took turns to broadcast the same message for the rest of the day (with the exception of Xu who left after her first broadcasting.)

This chapter aims to understand what had changed acoustically after the CCP's takeover of Shanghai in 1949. It starts with an examination of how news about the Communist takeover of Shanghai alternates between the printed page and radio sound to demonstrate the various forms the broadcaster's voice might take as part of the *transmedial relay*. Among the media available

for the Shanghai civilians at that time, radio, as the following section shows, is where print media, radio, film and performance industries intersect. Tracing the development of radio in China shall illuminate not just the history of radio but also provide an angle for examining the interconnectivity within the mediascape.

After the success of the Communist Revolution, the CCP took over the complex mediascape and constructed its media infrastructure based on the preexisting model. The next section of this chapter pays attention to the labor that enables the transmedial relay. It understands the broadcasters' work and labor as a form of "affective labor" that constitutes the backbone of the official popular culture. Here I propose to use the broadcasters' voice as a delimiting tool for tracing the boundary of the actual influence of the socialist official popular culture. On the one hand, the broadcasters served as the mouthpiece for the government. In addition to relaying the official message from the Party, the broadcasters were also responsible for digesting the official language so that the broader masses could understand. In this sense, their work and labor enable the basic functioning of the nation. On the other hand, the official media network, after the total nationalization in the second half of the 1950s, continued to provide auditory entertainment to the general public. In other words, the radio and broadcasting networks are at the crossroad of the official and the popular cultures. The figure of the broadcaster embeds the tension between the governmental control from the top and the affective production from the below.

After the victory of the Communist Revolution in 1949, it immediately became clear that radio broadcasting was a salient component of state propaganda and post-war reconstruction that needed to be formalized and routinized immediately. What the voice of new China would sound like became a practical problem that the PRC's first-generation broadcasters were required to work on. For the broadcasters based in Shanghai, there have been the vocal and delivery style models of Yan'an and the Soviet Union to build upon; meanwhile, they would also adjust their

vocal styles against antimodels that would be aurally associated with pre-1949 Shanghai and KMT. In addition to the multiple models and antimodels these broadcasters base on to construct a new broadcasting voice, equally important are the substantiation of vocal qualities (pitch, volume and emotionality) as well more abstract qualities such as revolutionariness and *aizeng fenming* (expressing a clear-cut position in what to love and what to have).

The communist takeover in 1949 introduced new rules of oratory, and the change in the new paradigm was substantiated through the broadcasters' repeated rehearsals and practices. Voice as a form of affective labor mediates the gaps between China as anticipated and China as lived in the seventeen-year era. Continuous revolution functions on the bodies of these early broadcasters and manifests as a politics of desire to sound more revolutionary, to become not just individual but the voice of the Party. Echoing Mao's theory of continuous revolution (*jixu geming* 繼續革命), constructing China's official voice is an impossible task, even though there must be such a voice to be delivered across the nation. This chapter takes a look at this paradox behind the official voice of China and reads it as symptomatic of the constant bidirectional translation between the official and the popular culture, the collective body and the individual body.

2.1 Transmedial Relay: Conceptualizing Everyday Listening in the 1950s China

The broadcast on the day of the communists' takeover has been given a significant amount of attention in these broadcasters' memoirs and oral histories.[1] Being able to partake in the liberation of Shanghai through their voice marks a monumental moment in their lives. Only from the backgrounds of those broadcasters involved in CCP's first broadcast in Shanghai it is

[1] Xia Zhiping 夏之平, *Mingxin wangshi: yige guangbo dianshi ren de jishu* 铭心往事——一个广播电视人的记述 (Remembering the Past: An Account of Working for Radio and Televsion) (Beijing: Zhongguo guangbo dianshi chubanshe, 2009), 33–41.

possible to infer the basic condition of the radio and broadcasting system in Shanghai. First, the members come from diverse backgrounds. Both Xu Wei and Zou Fanyang, for example, were underground communists who were not necessarily based in Shanghai prior to 1949. Zou had been working as a journalist, while Xu had been performing songs and operas for the military troupes and also on air. Qian Naili, Shi Yansheng, and Shi Suihua have worked for radio stations in Shanghai, broadcasting stories and radio dramas, but their jobs are considerably part-time.[2]

The makeup of the group also suggests that radio broadcasting is at the intersection of multiple fields — such as journalism, theater performance, and storytelling. The broadcasters' versatility and multitasking skills reveal not only a lack of talents with relevant training in PRC's early years, so that most of their talents were drawn from other fields, but also speaks to radio broadcasting as a medium. Because radio programs are ephemeral and radio recordings and archives are harder to access, the study of radio history relies on printed traces to understand these historical voices. These traces, like radio listings and radio highlights, are often read as evidence of the transpiring of a lost voice. Approaching these materials evidentially, however, evades a consideration of how and why these written records were produced in the first place.

The takeover of radio stations was documented in the first issue of Shanghai *Liberation Daily,* published on May 28th, 1949, one day after the first official broadcast as the Shanghai People's Radio Station. This newspaper listing provides information about the station's wavelength and frequency, regularity of broadcasting, program schedule and timeframe and their content. The listing grew increasingly detailed and standardized as Shanghai and its surrounding area gradually transitioned out of wartime conditions. This radio listing on May 28th shows the

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[2] See *Lao guangboren koushu lishi* 老廣播人口述歷史 [Oral Histories by Veteran Broadcasters], ed. Shanghai Audiovisual Archives 上海音像資料館 (Shanghai: Xuelin chubanshe, 2009).

diverse content available to the Shanghai listeners immediately after the transition of power. In addition to news, review, communication, "revolutionary literature," proclamation and decree, the regular broadcasting of music, play and traditional opera was also resumed. The return to prewar normalcy is perceptually and symbolically enacted through the re-establishment of routinized radio broadcasts.

It is worth noticing how print media and radio propagate news about the communist takeover in 1949. In sum, newspaper coverage and radio coverage compete to reach their audience. In the case mentioned earlier, the newspaper serves as the secondary media while the information about the PLA's takeover has been circulating on the airwaves for several days. In other instances, radio waves become secondary as the auditory reiteration of newspapers. The condition situates newspaper and radio in an interconnected temporality. Often associated with timeliness and immediacy, radio and its connected media form a broad network in which the same message would be distributed and received respectively in different media and forms. In other words, a message would be circulated and processed backward and forward within the official media network before circulating beyond the political center, forming the initial loop of relays. Wu Zhonghua, who joined the Shanghai People Radio station as a reporter in 1949, remembered that her report on the Huadong Agricultural Fair was impeded from broadcasting immediately after the fair because there was not enough time for the radio listing to be published. Her report was broadcast on time and before the listing, nevertheless, as she convinced her colleagues of the importance of the report. In the end, the correspondent report and a longer piece of news were broadcast on air first while the newspaper highlight came out one day after to preview the rebroadcast.[3]

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[3] *Lao guangboren koushu lishi*, 25.

The post-1949 conceptualization of the radio-newspaper network recognizes Xinhua News Agency 新华社 as the primary sources of news and the Central People Radio Station as the initial radio relay of Xinhua. Meanwhile, municipal and regional radio stations were encouraged to improvise their own commentary based on the Xinhua material and to develop regional programs.[4] The flexibility at the regional level marks radio as an important mass medium that targets the broader population of civilians. Not soon after the founding of New Nation, the state began to conceive a radio reception network 广播收音网 to broaden the reach of radio. With more radios and loudspeakers installed and collective listening sessions organized, the message from the center found itself more stations in peripheral areas to carry over the relay.

Besides relaying political messages, the radio network was also valued as a medium for providing education and entertainment. Local radio stations broadcast programs that teach foreign languages and professional knowledge and provide platforms for exchange and conversations among factory workers. Events Revolutionary songs that were sung in Yan'an were now taught through airwaves. Local radio stations would pass out pamphlets with scores and lyrics to accompany the radio broadcasting. Also in 1950, the Central Radio broadcasted PRC's first radio drama and edited film recordings.[5] The CCP took over these preexisting infrastructure and propaganda tools as a means to establish a new collective subjectivity. These programs were not unseen in pre-1949 Shanghai. Yet, they have been remembered as characteristic of the socialist listening culture, revealing the success of the Communist Revolution in its thorough takeover and appropriation of media infrastructure.

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[4] 京津新聞工作會議關於《新聞工作》統一與分工初步意見摘要, April 2, 1950, 2–3, cited in Zhao Yuming 趙玉明, *Zhongguo guangbo dianshi tongshi* 中國廣播電視通史 [A General History of Radio and Television in China] (Beijing: Zhongguo guangbo yingshi chubanshe, 2014), 168.
[5] *Zhongguo guangbo dianshi tongshi*, 185.

2.2 Voice as Affective Labor

This brief survey of media infrastructure in 1950s China has not yet addressed what enables the intermediality and interconnectivity of the mediascape in the first place. Whereas they appear to be the intrinsic characteristics of radio and print media — preconstructed by the ways they acquire the content and reach their audience, what connects different media platforms and mediates the transmission across forms is the extensive human labor underneath the nascent structure of state capitalism. Skilled and unskilled workers constantly translate information between media, and their inputs are the precondition of the basic functioning of the transmedial relay circuit.

The broadcasting voice, which occupies the sonic realm of the transmedial relay circuit, imbues distinct media and platforms with emotionality and affect. Voice could be inscribed into words, yet meanwhile, it is also a means of inscribing the voicing body. Marxist and Feminist theorists have studied affect in involving social organizing and resistance as a form of immaterial labor that has long been obscured by product-yielding material labor. To emphasize that labor could be immaterial, and that affect is a form of labor are to recognize that "communication and information have come to play a newly central role in production."[6] The shift in the mode of production is at cost of changes in the laboring bodies that adapt to performing the roles of transmission and mediation.

A conceptualization of voicing as affective labor captures the inward and outward operations of voice. The broadcaster produces a voice that would be perceived as the voice of authority, forging a collective subjectivity in the form of sound. It works directly on the listeners' ears, informing the experience of living in a new nation-state as of listening to the state-run radio.

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[6] Michael Hardt, "Affective Labor," *Boundary* 26, no. 2 (Summer 1999), 93–6.

The voice meanwhile works inward, orienting the bodies of broadcasters toward a synecdochical body of the nation. Progressing as relay disseminating across medium platforms, the broadcasters at the national and municipal levels have their bodies interconnected in the acts of voicing. Though each broadcaster might have received varying training and developed distinct styles of delivery (what the following sections elaborate on), through coordinating their bodies with an imagined national body, their voices with an imagined voice of the nation-state, they collectively project a new voice of the People's Republic of China.

The official message has been popularized through this form of affective labor. In this case, what ensures the compatibility of the official and the popular is no longer the top-down efforts of appropriation but localized and specified cases of encoding and decoding, embodiment and disembodiment. To look for the broadcasters and their voicing bodies in a dichotomy as such should expand the scope of the socialist official popular culture as how Lydia Liu initially envisions. The state-sponsored project of sending around intellectuals and cultural workers to appropriate folk cultures and narratives for recycling in a socialist context only captures part of the socialist official culture. What the nation-state appropriates is also the bodies of cultural workers, turning their voices into specific voices that comply with the body politics of the new Republic.

2.3 A Voice of Socialist China in Formation: Antimodels and Aizeng fenming

Addressing the affective and bodily dimensions of these efforts would take us to consider how the socialist official culture reflects in a specific human body. The broadcasters' accounts testify to the various models and antimodels that existed at that time to form a socialist body. What socialist China could and could not sound like is captured in the expressions describing the vocal qualities the PRC's early broadcasters aspired to accomplish. The broadcasting voice would

become a site for demonstrating the dichotomous contrast of past and future, friends and enemies, emphasized in phrases like *aizeng fenming* and *gangrou bingji* ("to combine strength and tenderness") that broadcasters frequently cite as the distinguishing characteristic of socialist broadcasting.[7]

The delivery of this new voice is valued in the same act as the political and military takeover in Shanghai. Xia Zhiping, the first director of the broadcast group in Shanghai, remembers the strict instructions she received about the first broadcast in Shanghai (on May 27th):

> Our superiors set very stringent requirements for our first day of broadcasting. There was absolutely no room for error or mistake. We needed to deliver the content of the document accurately and get every word clearly. At the same time, we should keep up the broadcasting style from the radio station of the liberated areas — which is not only solemn (*zhuangzhong*) but also cordial and moving (*qinqie dongren*). The new broadcasting style should distinguish us from the voice of old Shanghai radio stations.[8]

Past broadcasting practices are discredited to clear the way for the new voicing technique. Yet the nationalization of private radio stations in Shanghai was completed not until 1956. Residues of Shanghai's colonial and capitalist past persisted and caused friction in the daily work of the broadcasters. Huang Qi joined the Shanghai Radio Station immediately after the takeover in 1949. She remembered being called "Miss. Reporter" (*baogao xiaojie*) when collaborating with broadcasters working for private stations prior to 1949. She immediately corrected them, asking, "how come I become a 'Miss. Reporter'?" The episode ends with that person changing to the acceptable way of addressing Comrade Broadcaster (*boyinyuan tongzhi*)[9]

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[7] "Zheli shi zhongguo de shengyin: zhongyang renmin guangbo diantai zhuming boyinyuan de gushi" 這裡是中國的聲音——中央人民廣播電台著名播音員的故事, *Zhongguo Guangbo* 中国廣播 6 (2010), 37–48.
[8] *Lao guangboren koushu lishi*, 47.
[9] *Lao guangboren koushu lishi*, 139

Zou Fanyang notices at another context that "the underground [Communist] broadcasters perform much better. They convey a sense of passion. Shi Yansheng was a broadcaster from the KMT radio station. Her tone is tender and soft."[10] Chen Chun, who joined the Shanghai Radio Station in 1953, notes an anecdote which he finds "paradigmatic" of the differences in delivery style:

> In the past [the early 1950s], some of our broadcasters were from those private stations. Some had been working since the KMT era. Sometimes when I took their shifts and went in (to the broadcast room), I needed to turn down the volume of the microphone. That is because my voice is louder than theirs. It is something very paradigmatic. [11]

What Zou and Chen describe as tenderness and softness was not just the voice qualities of Shi Yansheng and other broadcasters but also, more profoundly, the manner in which the CCP and KMT have been imagined. The CCP was the passionate revolutionary who won the war with the support of the People, in contrast to the KMT, who was corrupt, unpopular and "soft" in terms of political capacities. The ideological differences between the two regimes were translated into the distinct sound quality each regime represents. Technology — mentioned here as the microphone — is set as an invariable to show the difference unbiasedly.

The habit of imagining the two political powers as having distinct voices and vocal qualities was carried over in the post-1949 radio-borne warfare. Chen Chun was transferred to the Central People Radio Station in 1954 to broadcast programs targeted toward Taiwan. Chen offers a finely grained account of how they developed the delivery style for broadcasting to Taiwan. In addition to accentuating the sonic differences between the rival states, broadcasters like Chen also considered the possible listening conditions across the strait and altered his vocal strategy accordingly:

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[10] Zou Fanyang, interview, 2009, Shanghai Audio Visual Archives.
[11] Chen Chun, interview, 2009, Shanghai Audio Visual Archives.

> Since listeners in Taiwan were tuning in to our radio surreptitiously, we could neither adopt the "shouting-to-the-enemy" style (*duidihanhua shi*) in a blanket manner, nor could we purposely emulate the broadcasting tone of Taiwan Radio Station. We developed a unique style of being earthy yet decent, rigorous but cordial. When Taiwanese listeners turn on their radios, they will know it is mainland broadcasting to Taiwan as soon as they hear our voice.[12]

Broadcasting toward Taiwan presents challenges for broadcasters like Chen Chun as they need to continue to adjust their broadcasting style to meet the needs of political campaigns on the one hand and the listeners in Taiwan on the other. Though there have been several standard styles for broadcasting targeted toward the enemies — the style of "shouting-to-the-enemy" being the main one — Chen still stresses the necessary deviation from the standard so the political message could be better delivered. Broadcasters like Chen would also tune into radio programs from Taiwan so they could further adjust their voices based on what could be heard across the strait.

In this way, the voice of new China was not simply formed as a direct result of the communist takeover but also emerged out of the stressed opposition to its own colonial past and the KMT in Taiwan. These vocal formats such as *aizeng fengming* and "shouting-to-the-enemy" are expressions for demarcating a voicing self from the other. The 1950s and early 1960s witnessed this self-transformation into an aurally distinguishable voice of socialist China that would be heard domestically and transnationally.

2.4 A Voice to be Made: Voice Model and Continuous Revolution

Apart from the antimodels of old Shanghai and the KMT, PRC's early broadcasters learned from the Soviet Union and Yan'an to cultivate a distinctive voice that would be considered of the new socialist China. In tracing the history of Yan'an Radio, Paulina Hartono

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[12] Chen Chun 陳醇, *Chen Chun boyin wenji* 陳醇播音文集 [A Collection on Chen Chun's Broadcasting], ed. The Broadcasting Committee of China's Radio and Television Association 中國廣播電視協會播音主持委員會 (Beijing: Zhongguo guangbo dianshi chubanshe, 2007), 201–2.

offers multiple accounts of how early Yan'an broadcasters consciously cultivated their delivery to ensure the accuracy of pronunciation and delivery of emotion.[13] These broadcasters took language and its affective power seriously, and this tradition persisted after they arrived in Shanghai. In the early 1950s, the Shanghai broadcasting team was made up of people from mainly three types of backgrounds: (1) broadcasters from the old-liberated area, mainly from Yan'an Radio, (2) broadcasters from the KMT era and (3) newly recruited members.[14] For the broadcasters from the KMT era and the new recruits, Yan'an presents a model for them. They found the broadcasters from Yan'an had a more standard accent, whereas broadcasters from southern China would need to deal with their dialect-inflected accent.

Furthermore, broadcasters from Yan'an were also said to have done better at conveying a revolutionary mood and displaying the emotions of the working and peasantry classes. Movie actor and also radio drama performer Sun Daolin recalls the first time he met an actor from Yan'an in the early 1950s, remarking on his mastery of playing a railway worker. His acting technique is in contrast to those from the newly liberated area who would need more "thought reform" before playing the characters of new China.[15] Yan'an meanwhile represents a mode of working and companionship. Xia Zhiping, who worked at the Shanghai Radio Station until 1953, notes that her colleague broadcasters in Shanghai would return home after work, which was not what her colleague comrades from the liberated area would do. "In the liberated zones, we were all members of the same family. We were all brothers and sisters working together day and night, like one big family."[16]

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[13] M. Paulina Hartono, "'A Good Communist Style': Sounding Like a Communist in Twentieth-Century China," *Representations* 151, no. 1 (July 29, 2020): 26–50.
[14] *Lao guangboren koushu lishi*, 16.
[15] Sun Daolin 孫道臨, *Zoujin yangguang* 走進陽光 [Walking into the Sunlight] (Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe, 1997), 115–6.
[16] *The Old Broadcasters Oral Histories*, 52.

Here, Yan'an occupies a discursive space where these broadcasters at the 1949 turn engage with the past accomplishments of the CCP and the future of the nation. Yan'an is both imagined and experienced. While most Shanghai broadcasters had no experience working in Yan'an (except a few cadres), some of them had been tuning into Yan'an Radio since 1945. They are familiar with Yan'an's delivery style as well as revolutionary songs such as "The East is Red," which had been broadcast to non-CCP occupied areas. The broadcasters from Yan'an represent an ideal voice of the nation which they want to imitate in order to counter the influence of the KMT/old Shanghai style of broadcasting.

Yet, to their Yan'an counterparts, they are also experimenting with the voice of the new Republic.[17] Not to mention, in the 1950s, even standardized Mandarin had not attained a mature shape. What confronted the Shanghai broadcasters was the condition in which the nation is in the process of construction, a status of to-be-made. Voice, being both concrete (as what could be experienced) and elusive (for its ephemerality), captures this sense of to-be-made. On the one hand, the broadcasters served as the mouthpiece for the government. In addition to relaying the official message from the central government, the broadcasters were also responsible for digesting the official language so that it could be better understood by the masses. On the other hand, the discrepancy between their voice and the voice of the nation always underscores the imperfection and incompleteness that always require refinement and more work.

This somehow paradoxical condition ironically reveals how socialist nation-building is possible in the first place. The imagined nationhood is never something fully imaginative but always promises a possibility that could ultimately be accomplished through diligently practicing and rehearsing. Despite each rehearsal being imperfect, it connects the broadcasters with their

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[17] Hartono, 29–30.

listeners while forging a listenership shared by a broader community. What the listeners tune in to is never the full-fledged voice of the new nation-state but a voice in the process of construction. Under this interpretation, the voice of the nation becomes a slippery phrase as voice and nation are more likely to be mutually constitutive.

Unique to the broadcaster's work is the sense of concreteness their voice gives to this inherently unfinishable project. Voicing becomes an embodied technique for imagining the new socialist nation-state. The imagining is not fully imaginative but forms a practice of projecting the imagined as vocal qualities and affect perceivable by the listeners. The listeners assume the authoritativeness represented by the radio voice as the very evidence of the palpability of a nation, disregarding the possible imperfection. Yet, what does a good communist voice sound like? Rather than an actual style of delivery, the communist style of broadcasting seems to predicate on deficiency, a status of lacking which would ultimately translate into an existential crisis. The broadcasters would always desire their delivery to improve, to become a better presence of being.

The perpetual desire to sound more revolutionary echoes the Maoist philosophy of the *continuous revolution*, a concept that was not formally in use until 1967. What distinguishes Mao's continuous revolution from its precedent, Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, is a shift to emphasize "the idea of the revolutionary nature of a single stage becoming […] permanent."[18] The unstress of the revolutionary outcomes displaces the focus from a distant future to the present struggles and lives. Rather than class struggles or actual societal transformation, the continuous revolution discussed in this context occurs every day. It is also part of the embodied experience of living in a socialist nation: an individual body is turned into

[18] John Bryan Starr, "Conceptual Foundations of Mao Tse-Tung's Theory of Continuous Revolution," *Asian Survey* 11, no. 6 (1971), 614.

the site of continuous revolution and struggle. What Mao would consider as the ubiquitous conflict or contradiction might not be simply understood as the different factions within a society, but rather, the contradiction is from within, as the disparity between China as imagined and as experienced.

The unfinishability bespeaks a condition of the official popular culture in China that predates Mao, that is, the constant translation and appropriation between the official culture and the popular culture that perpetually renews the culture-scape in China. In Lydia Liu's initial formulation, the official popular culture was a phenomenon that "did not come into its own until folk literature and arts were presented in mass-mediated forms." Liu's consideration of the official popular culture assumes a narrow take on what constitutes the popular culture (in her discussion of *Liu Sanjie*, the popular culture is a synonym of folk culture). The Yan'an culture would, in Lydia Liu's definition, exemplify an official popular culture as it is a derivative of the folk culture of Shaanxi and its surrounding areas. The conditions in Shanghai as described above complicate the scenario by questioning Yan'an as the origin of this official culture. The official sound cultivated among the Shanghai broadcasters, in addition to taking Yan'an as the model, also takes the KMT/capitalist sound of Shanghai as its antithesis.

Cultural workers like the broadcasters might have occupied a distinct position in forming the socialist official culture. In the brief genealogy of the official popular culture Lydia Liu presents, intellectuals working on the folk and masses cultures during the Republican era "were cast aside and rejected as inauthentic voices"; during the socialist era, cultural workers behind the adaptations of folk stories were again rendered anonymous.[19] The two situations Liu considers question the natural linkage between artwork and the bodies that produce them. In the case of

[19] Liu, 570.

these broadcasters, however, their voices are not inseparable from themselves, nor could they be construed as the exact equivalent to the ruling authority. What appears to be a conscientious attitude shared among socialist cultural works might have been compelled by this ambivalent symbiosis with the voice of the Party underlying the official popular culture. While assimilating the official ideology and messages, the broadcasters were also improvising the auditory aesthetics of voicing, which would ultimately be taken as the official aesthetics.

2.5 The Loss of Voice: Interruptions and Continuities in Post-Socialist Era

This examination of the affective voice labor behind the media infrastructure in PRC's early years breaks down the assumptions about socialist cultural production and propaganda infrastructure. In following the early broadcasters' heightened attentiveness to the materiality of sound, it shows how vocal qualities become historically packed and implicated in the formation of a new national identity. By situating the body of the broadcaster within the landscape of official popular culture in order to expand the original definition of official popular culture, the discussion decodes the mechanism behind the propagation of socialist ideology that relies on the bodies of these cultural workers for the basic mechanical operation and vitality.

In March 1979, an article titled "On the Problems of Lowering the Pitch in Broadcasting" was published to criticize the exaggerated style of broadcasting currently in use. "The People had never love to shout (*hanhua*)," this article makes explicit. The writer Zhang Song, a broadcaster at the Central Radio Station, alludes to the broadcasting aesthetics during the Cultural Revolution such as "no shout, no revolution" (*bu han bu geming* 不喊不革命) and "higher the pitch, higher the mood" (*diao gao qing yi gao* 調高情亦高), suggesting them as detrimental to the future

practice of radio broadcast.[20] Zhang Song became one of the first broadcasters to advocate a "lower-the-pitch" (*jiangdiao* 降調) movement when the nation was preparing to return to a new normalcy.[21]

With the welcoming of a new paradigm of oratory, the work of early broadcasters was rendered as historical and divorced from the present. The Cultural Revolution has been renounced, and so should the sound associated with it be. Though most early broadcasters have remained professionally active by taking up teaching positions in schools and colleges, it is still possible to question what their work has brought into life against the backdrop of the post-socialist politics of remembrance and disrememberance above all. In the memoirs and oral histories of the PRC's early broadcasters, there is the tendency to evade the broadcasting of official messages while highlighting the popular programs they had initiated and partook in. The apparent imbalance shows the encroachment of post-socialist revisioning of the seventeen-year era and the Cultural Revolution, self-censorship and post-2000 Chinese nationalism — a theme explored in chapter 3 (on Mao's voice) and chapter 4 (on *Morning Sun*). Their appearances in various recitation events (including those mentioned in chapter 3) nonetheless suggest that they have been continually working on their techniques of voicing even though the official popular culture in contemporary China has changed. In this sense, their rehearsal has outlived "the official voice of China" as another official voice is in its full force and legitimacy.

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[20] Zhang Song 張頌, "Tantan boyin de jiangdiao wenti 談談播音的降調問題" [On the Problems of Lowering the Pitch in Broadcasting], *Xiandai chuanbo* 現代傳播 1 (1979): 37–41.

[21] Also see Chen Chun, *Chen Chun boyin wenji*, 21; and Chen Gang 陳剛, "Tantan pinglun boyin de jiben yaoqiu he yuyan biaoda tedian" 談談評論播音的基本要求和語言表達特點 [On the Basic Requirements and Language Features of Broadcasting Commentaries], *Xiandai chuanbo* 現代傳播 1(1980): 39–43.

3. Chapter 3: Voice of Mao

Scholarly research on the cult of Mao has focused extensively on its image magic and word magic. This chapter draws attention to the less prominent aspect of this cult, focusing on the representations, interpretations and afterlives of Mao's voice. It first analyzes two mentions of Mao in *Morning Sun* and the tension between Mao's voice and voiceover. It has been a widely recognized convention that early documentary films rely on voiceover commentaries to solidify the meaning of moving images while establishing "an aura of truthfulness" for their audience.[1] Testimonies from *Morning Sun*, however, show that the voiceover of the socialist documentary newsreel is construed as more than just one ingredient of the documentary. It instead offers a space for the Red Guards to articulate and renegotiate their relationship with the Great Helmsman and other Party leaders in order to engage with the question in retrospect: who is culpable for the Red Guard violence? Though Mao's muteness in many documentary films and newsreels is largely due to the technical constraints at that time, the voice of Mao is rendered enigmatic and thus invites close listening for the Red Guards to imagine what has been muted from their ears. After Mao's death in 1976, his voice acquires additional dimensions of liveliness through performances on stage and in life. The performance of the political prose poem "Long Live the People" (1993), in particular, gives a case study of the contemporary impulse of resounding Mao's voice as part of the practice of poetry recitation that continues to be practiced today. Impersonating Mao has become an event less for commemorating Mao but for displaying vocal virtuosity of individual reciters.

3.1 Listening Against the Grain

[1] Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 21.

In *Morning Sun*, sound is presented both in a physical sense, as what the socialist era was remembered for, and in a metaphorical sense, as symbols of subjectivity. Sound is a locus through which subjectivities are formed through hearing and listening. Coming-of-age becomes a battleground where one strives to find their voice and be heard by others. For one of the interviewees, Rae Yang, waging a revolution entails a shift in the adults' attitude, and the experience is told through using metaphors for sound: "In the past, grown-ups never took us seriously. But now, they paid attention whenever we opened our mouths."

Yang's sensitivity to who possesses a voice and who garners attention is not so merely a personal reaction; the questions of voice and representation are also intricately nested within the Party's agenda — which the documentary explains with reference to a close listening of the song-and-dance epic film *The East is Red* (1964). As the documentary's voiceover commentary points out, *The East is Red* is choreographed in a way that it indexes China's anticipated role on the global political stage — as the torchbearer of the proletariat revolution and also as the lead singer who would mobilize other socialist countries in joining the singing of "The Internationale."[2] Embedded in the concern over who would lead the sing-along is China's everchanging role in the Cold-War dynamic, which was ultimately projected upon the teenage-age Yang as her longing to have a voice and be respected by surrounding adults.

Sound is what brings the past and the present into dialogue. The editing of the documentary constantly posits the voices of former Red Guards from interviews in stark contrast with the high-pitched, emotive voice from the historical footage, accentuating the former's regret and the latter's artificiality. Song Binbin, whose interview the following section will elaborate on,

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[2] For an analysis of the role of "The Internationale" in socialist China and its post-socialist impacts, see Barbara Mittler, *A Continuous Revolution: Making Sense of Cultural Revolution Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asian Center, 2012), 111–7.

is one such example in which her story is told with an alternation between her interview clip and the historical newsreels that assumably brought her nation-wise attention.

The significance of distinguishing the genuine human voice from the propaganda voice is noted by one of the interviewees, Luo Xiaohai. Luo, also a central Red Guard member, points out that it was possible to infer the changing power dynamic within the Party through a close reading of newsreels. When watching the newsreel film of the 9th meeting of the National People's Congress (1969), he immediately recognized that the Party's veteran members might have fallen out of grace as significantly fewer reels were given to them. He specifically points out the rarity of hearing Mao's "original words" (*yuanhua* 原話) within a newsreel documentary as evidence of Mao's power-hungry mentality and his undisguised attempt to dominate the meeting.

Luo's observation is based on the use of voiceover commentary (*jieshuo* 解說) within China's early documentary and newsreel films where the voices of the Party leaders are often not broadcast but reiterated by a narrator. For Luo and his contemporaries, the voiceover narration is more than a mere description of what can be seen on screen. Instead, it constitutes a symbolically rich text for them to decipher.[3] For Luo, the 9th Meeting of the National People's Congress is presented in a hilarious and absurd (*huangtang* 荒唐) way. Mao's "original words" — without being reiterated by a disembodied voiceover — reinforce the level of absurdity. Without further clarification, it is hard to tell whether Luo's feeling is prompted by hearing Mao's words or his voice. Yet *Morning Sun*, in editing Luo Xiaohai's interview alongside the specific newsreel footage he cites, directs the viewers' attention to Mao's voice. His distinctive Hunan accent, standing in stark contrast to the standardized accent of the impassioned female voice in the

[3] For an introduction to newsreel documentaries in socialist China, see Stefan Landsberger, "Background: Scripting Chinese Realities — Documentaries for the People," Leiden and Boston: Brill, accessed November 1, 2023, http://primarysources.brillonline.com/browse/chinese-filmscript- and-advertisement-collection-19461985.

newsreels, suggests a gap within state-sanctioned media. After watching this sequence, the viewers might agree with Luo that upon hearing Mao's voice, it is hard not to question his real personality behind the political persona and the iconic image.

The audience during the socialist era developed their own standards to distinguish authentic expressions from propaganda. Among them, the discussions of voice are central to this grassroots process of reassigning meanings and value. The standard, nevertheless, is somewhat capricious. *Morning Sun* cites "translated films" (*yizhipian* 譯製片) and the Soviet-made film *The Gadfly* (1955) as paradigmatic examples of the diverse cultural products available to the Chinese public prior to the Cultural Revolution, arguing their differences from the state propaganda. *Morning Sun*'s positive attitude toward translated films mirrors a mainstream sentiment toward the role of these translated films. Especially during the post-Mao era, there was a resurgence of interest in translated films among Chinese audience. The dubbing of these translated films, in particular, is acclaimed for evoking a sense of foreignness despite being delivered in standardized *putonghua*.[4] Notoriously performative, marked by their unusually prolonged vowels and unnatural pauses, the dubbing in these translated foreign films can barely be deemed as natural nor familiar to the ears of their Chinese audience; their popularity and reputation stem largely from being perceived as the imagined opposite to state-produced model works. The dubbing in translated films is invested with similar qualities to what the "genuine voice" has been valued for, even as they are undoubtably produced under the Party's authorization and surveillance.[5]

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[4] For the discussions on the dubbing voices and their "foreign accent", see Huang, 198–203; Weijia Du, "Exchanging Faces, Matching Voices: Dubbing Foreign Films in China," *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 12, no. 3 (2018): 285-299. Also see Du's "Beyond the Ideology Principle: The Two Faces of Dubbed Foreign Films in PRC, 1949-1966," *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 9, no. 2 (May 4, 2015): 141-158, for the significance of translated foreign films to China's film industry during the Cold War.

[5] The version *Morning Sun* uses is the one dubbed by Shanghai Dubbing Studio (*shanghai dianying yizhichang* 上海電影譯製廠), one of the state-run dubbing studios.

The arbitrary and sometimes contradictory standards capture an underlying assumption in the discussions of voice. Voice is turned into an entity onto which a narrative of resistance is projected. This is, in part, because voice is often associated with a physical, material body that is presumably impermeable, immutable, and therefore, indicative of truth. By noticing these instances of auditory differences and oddities, those including Luo Xiaohai, intentionally or subconsciously, accentuate the integrity of their voice and body while assigning the newsreel voice to a corporeal alterity, that is, the body of the nation. The divisions between the people and nation, individual and the Party, are imagined as the opposition of two distinct bodies that possess two different voices.

Considering Mao's "original words" and voice as the potential site of breach in state propaganda is unsurprising, given that the Maoist cult notoriously targets Mao's image instead of his voice. The sonic dimension of his cult is primarily relegated to the broadcasts of Mao's quotations (*mao yulu* 毛語錄) and their derivatives, the quotation songs (*yulu ge* 語錄歌). These quotations, removed from their original context and the author's persona, lose their ties to a tangible human body and voice so they can be further amplified beyond Mao and multiplied across mediums almost redundantly.[6] The dissemination of Mao's quotations is ironically predicated on the detachment from a body and a voice. The exact opposite of what Walter Benjamin concerns as the loss of aura, Mao's quotations only become imbued with aura as a result of replication and distribution.[7] In some sense, the dissemination of his quotes empties the aura of the original so that when his voice reappears, it brings less of fascination but more of

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[6] For Mao's *Quotations*, quotation literature as a genre and the singing of quotation songs, see Andrew F. Jones, *Circuit Listening: Chinese Popular Music in the Global 1960s* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020), 56–9, 71–2.

[7] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," 1936, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, edited by Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968): 219–220.

disenchantment. It is even more ironic to consider that when Luo uses Mao's "original words" to distinguish Mao as a real person from his cult image, the "original" he heard from the newsreels is still a recording of Mao's voice. What Luo perceives as the original might still be another copy, but he continues to mystify it as what is contrary to state propaganda, as the clue toward a certain truth.

This leads to the question that, given the omnipresence and pervasiveness of state media, is it even possible to find Mao in his true original? The next section will analyze another anecdote to further examine the relationship between Mao's voice and newsreel voiceover, and its significance to the Red Guards and the documentary *Morning Sun*.

3.2 A Mute Mao

The interview of Song Binbin has been singled out by some of the viewers in order to develop conjectures about the authorial intent of *Morning Sun*.[8] This is in part because Song, after she met with Mao, has become a symbol for further militarizing the revolution. Her school, the Beijing Normal University's Affiliated Middle School for Girls, even before this exchange at Tiananmen Square, had witnessed the probably most notorious and momentous incident of Red Guard violence in which the school principal Bian Zhonglin was beaten to death by her students. Song's meeting with Mao happened after the incident but only further exacerbated the violence. Not soon after Song's meeting with Mao, multiple girl schools changed their names to the Red Seeking-Militancy Middle School (*hongse yaowu zhongxue* 紅色要武中學) as a homage to the exchange at Tiananmen and also to Song.

[8] Hao Jian, "*Morning Sun*: The Cinematography and Ethics of Documentary," *Rememberance*, no.17 (2010), 49.

As important as Song's involvement in the Red Guard violence is her appearance in the documentary to retell the meeting after almost forty years. Consider how Song's anecdote has been presented by the documentary:

> *MORNING SUN* VOICEOVER: The events of the day were made into a propaganda film and narrated by a Red Guard. The young people who have been imbued with a sense of history from *The East is Red* were now on the stage themselves.
> NEWSREEL FOOTAGE VOICEOVER: Beloved Chairman Map once said to us, "You young people are full of vigor and vitality. You are in the bloom of life like the morning sun. Our hope is placed on you,"
> SONG: The Red Guards were all excited. They went around putting armbands on Party leaders. Someone said, "Binbin, why not give one to Chairman Mao?" So [someone brought me] up to him.
> NEWSREEL FOOTAGE VOICEOVER: A Beijing Red Guard [from Beijing Normal University's Affiliated Middle School for Girls] named Song Binbin put a red armband on Chairman Mao. Chairman Mao asked if the *bin* in her name was the character meaning *gentle* and *refined*. She said, "Yes." Chairman Mao said, "Better to be militant."
> SONG: I was very naïve and took it to be a casual remark. But an article soon appeared in the newspaper with the title "I Put a Red Armband on Chairman Mao." It was written in the first person and sign "Song Be-Militant" with my name Song Binbin in brackets. I couldn't believe the Press would fabricate a new name for me and put words in my mouth for their propaganda needs. My name didn't belong me anymore. I changed it.[9]

In this interview clip shown in *Morning Sun*, Song portrays herself as also a victim of the revolutionary whirlpool, who absentmindedly approached Mao and unjustifiably lost ownership over her name as a result. She specifically notes that "someone brought [her] up to [Mao]" to show her involuntariness in approaching Mao, not to speak of becoming a symbol for the revolutionary violence and militancy in the state-sponsored press. Her denial of her involvement in the Red Guard crime disturbs many viewers of the documentary, including one of which directly points out "[Song] as an active participant in the then-emerging Red Guard movement."[10]

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[9] Modifications to the original English subtitle are in brackets.
[10] Hao, 49. Also see Emily Honig's "Maoist Mappings of Gender: Reassessing the Red Guards," in *Chinese Femininities, Chinese Masculinities: A Reader*, edited by Susan Brownell and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002): 258–260, for a contextualization of Beijing Normal University's Affiliated Middle School for Girls and Song Binbin during early Red Guard movement. Honig specifically highlights, in citing a former Red Guard's writing, that Song after the meeting "led a group of her classmates to shave their heads and march barefoot through the main streets of Beijing."

Morning Sun's editing, particularly its use of voiceover from the footage, seems to side with Song's retelling, attesting to the ubiquitous coverage of the state media by leading the viewers to sympathize with Song. Song's recount is followed by the newsreel's account of the meeting, which is then followed by Song's response to the journal article. This intricate structuring itself performs Song's claim that the media has been misrepresenting her. She has not only lost her name due to the publication of that article but also lost her voice to the female voiceover. Having her words always indirectly delivered by the voiceover narrator, Song is deprived of opportunities to speak for herself. Her testimony in *Morning Sun* then becomes powerful, for she, in appearing in the documentary, reclaims the right to represent herself and meanwhile, retells the meeting in her own voice.

Yet the editing only complicates the scenario by going beyond how the state media has misrepresented Song. In the featured newsreel footage, neither Song's nor Mao's voice appears. Their exchange is instead fully delivered by a female narrator who, mentioned earlier in this sequence, is also a Red Guard. The female voiceover at times addresses Mao with honorifics like "*nin*" 您 "*jingai*" (敬愛, "beloved") and at others, she becomes the omniscient third-person narrator who reiterates his words. While Song's voice is replaced by the voice of the voiceover, this is also of true of Mao. In this sense, Mao is no less mediated by the voiceover than Song, as their conversation is delivered in the footage by the same narrator.

In this sequence that intends to invite empathy, it equally affords the possibility to question Song's motivations and the nature of mediated voices. By pointing out her being misrepresented by the voiceover commentator in the newsreel, Song aims to disentangle herself from the convoluted relationship between the Red Guards and Mao. Showing her unrefined voice is to decouple her image from the name "Song Be-Militant" while showcasing the discrepancy between how the state media has represented her and her as a real person. In doing so, the

documentary compresses Song the Red Guard, Mao, and other Red Guards into a cluster, threading together through the voiceover, to serve as the foil to Song the interviewee. The clustering, however, is a fragile one. This is not solely due to Song's probable participation in the Red Guard violence, which *Morning Sun* does not explicitly address, nevertheless. Equally important is the editing of *Morning Sun* that underscores the metonymic association between the Red Guards and Mao, within which the Red Guards were commissioned by Mao to represent him.

This relationship is so well established that, as shown in the newsreel, Mao has also lost his voice to the voiceover narrator. The editing has therefore turned Song's self-vindication flimsy as it also serves to remind the power the Red Guards were once granted. Though the use of voiceover commentary in newsreels is mainly due to technological difficulties in recording onsite sound at that time, the voiceover discussed above ironically reaffirms the affinity between the Red Guards and Mao. These Red Guards were authorized to act as Mao's proxy, but the power balance is so ephemeral that soon Mao also recognized them as threats.[11] The voiceover delivered by a Red Guard ironically foreshadows the situation that Mao is rendered completely inaudible and relies on a Red Guard member to recite his famous line: "You are in the bloom of life like the morning sun." The morning sun has become so bright and dazzling that by 1968, even Mao felt the need to suppress its radiance.

In her retelling, Song insists on juxtaposing the circulating reports of her image with her actual feelings and intentions so that the viewers might sympathize with the less-mediated, unfiltered version of her. In this respect, voice is imagined as a symbol of a natural and authentic

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[11] Carlos Rojas offers an interpretation of the Red Guard movement in terms of the *du*/*xia* binary and Mao's concept of "continuous revolution" (*jixu geming*). Carlos Rojas, *Homesickness: Culture, Contagion, and National Transformation in Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 123–7.

self that is vulnerable to the intrusion of technological mediation. This vulnerability is what turns the voice valuable, as it always involves recurrent struggles to escape mediation (as in Song's case) and extra attention to discern the "original words" (as in Luo's case). Their postures of claiming the possibilities of discerning the ideological fabrication of state propaganda and maintaining moral integrity may be seen as evidence of the everlasting shadows of state propaganda cast on their cultivation of their own voices. Seen in these terms, voice resembles a false bottom that these former Red Guards use to build on a narrative that portrays their initial naïve political devotion that progressed to a state of mesmerization; and through a belated recognition of China's social realities, the narrative culminates in their profound torment and regret. In this regard, it is possible to say that, what Luo perceives while watching the congress meeting might not necessarily be Mao's voice nor his unabashed political ambition, but rather "an effect of interiority," as formulated by literary critic Mladen Dolar to describe how the inherent meaninglessness of voice paradoxically allows it to appear even more meaningful than words.[12] Mao's voice becomes an empty signifier through which these former Red Guards can rehearse something more profound, such as their feelings and memories as well as their relationship with the Party. This can occur even though Mao's actual voice remains unheard most of the time.

3.3 The Man Who Chanted "Long Live the People!"

Mao's death in 1976 marks the full disassociation of the voice from a corporeal presence. As Mao is now dead, the only way of showing his voice is through historical footage or reenactment — also two commonly used approaches for documentary making. With the proliferation of new Red Classics during the reform era also came the need to impersonate Mao, from his appearance and demeanor to his accent and voice. Mao words reappear through the

[12] Mladen Dolar. *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2006), 10.

public recitations of his speeches and poetries, sustaining the liveliness of his voice to the public ears.

To commemorate the centennial anniversary of Mao's birth, contemporary poet Wang Huairang (1942–2009) composes the recitation poem (*langsong shi* 朗誦詩) "Long Live the People" 人民萬歲 (1993).[13] The poem takes up the tone of a eulogy to genealogize Mao's political and literary accomplishments. Each part of the poem ends with the proclamation "Long Live the People," echoing the iconic scene of Mao announcing the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. The printed poem includes instructions specifically before the line "Long Live the People," serving to remind the reciters that it needs to be delivered "in imitation of Mao's voice." Though composed in second-person point of view, the poem has necessitated the reciters shifting the role to impersonate Mao when reciting the line "Long Live the People." As part of the poem's variations, the descriptions for Mao's voice change each time when it is mentioned. While the line "Long Live the People" remains unchanged, Mao's "voice with Hunan accent" are at once "deep" (*shenchen de* 深沈的), "sonorous" (*hongliang de* 宏亮的), "penetrating the cosmos" (*chuantou qiankun de* 穿透乾坤的) and "honed" (lit. "harness the winds and clouds," *jiayu fengyun de* 駕馭風雲的). The varying descriptions of Mao's voice are to avoid repetition in poetry but they create difficulties for the reciters who need to substantiate these descriptors through their performances.

The performance of "Long Live the People" contributes to Mao's posthumous aural complicity. The careful manipulation of emotion and calibration of Mao's accent at the lines "Long Live the People" present difficulties for reciters and performers. Even though the

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[13] Wang Huairang 王怀让, *Wang Huairang zixuan ji* 王怀让自选集 (Wang Huairang's Self-Selected Anthology) (Beijing: Zuojia chubanshe, 1997), 521–4. See Appendix for a translation of my own.

audiovisual footage of Mao on the balcony of Tiananmen Gate is widely circulating and accessible, reciters barely follow the original but only use it as one reference material, alongside with the video recordings of professional language artists and even film clips of Mao's impersonators such as Gu Yue 古月(1939–2005).[14] The actual on-stage performances of "Long Live the People" largely deviate from the poet Wang Huairang's initial suggestions. In their performances, professional language artists like Zhang Jiasheng 張家聲 (1936–2012), Ding Jianhua 丁建華 (1953–) and Xu Tao 徐濤 (1960–) all choose to avoid the tedious repetition but reciting each "Long Live the People" with varying rhythm, tone and emotion.[15] Mao's Hunan accent is occasionally or completely eliminated and replaced with standardized accent, making it impossible to tell who is chanting "Long Live the People," the reciter or Mao. It is then up to the reciter to decide where to put the emotional emphasis. Subsequently, with each performance, their audience would applaud at different poetic lines, yet it is always at the end of "Long Live the People." Their applause is in part attributed to the emotional intensity of hearing a voice that resembles Mao's, but it also entails the listeners' recognition of the reciters' vocal mastery. A successful recital of the poem involves not so much a mechanical imitation of Mao's voice as appeared in historical footage but the ability of exciting expansive emotional response.

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[14] Qiao Cuiyang 喬翠陽, "Cong Langsong 'Renmin Wansui' Tan Langsong Zuopin Jingdian de Zaisuzao 從朗誦《人民萬歲》談朗誦作品經典的再塑造 [On Reshaping Classical Recitation Works from the Recital of 'Long Live the People']," *Zhongguo Wenyijia* 中國文藝家 4 (2018): 87..

[15] The recitation performances of "Long Live the People" analyzed in the following are based on the video recordings of (1)Zhang Jiasheng, reciter, "Renmin wansui" 人民萬歲 [Long Live the People], on *Shengdong Qingming: Hebei Dianshitai Qingming langsong hui* 聲動清明: 河北電視台清明朗誦會 (Sounding Qingming: Hebei Television Qingming Recital), 2011; (2) Ding Jianhua and Xu Tao, reciters, "Peiyueshi langsong 'Renmin wansui'" 配樂詩朗誦《人民萬歲》[Poetry Recital 'Long Live the People' with Accompanying Music], on *Mao Zedong of the People: A Concert in Commemoration of the 120th Anniversary of Mao Zedong's birth* 人民的毛澤東: 紀念毛澤東誕辰 120 週年音樂會, December 25, 2013; and (3) Sun Xun 孫遜 , reciter, "Renmin wansui," on *Zhonghua jingdian songdu dasai* 中華經典誦讀大賽(Chinese Classics Recitation Competition), 2019.

The last four stanzas (lines 49–72) mark the dramatic climax of the poem and the performance: a close-up of the scene on Tiananmen Gate that elaborates on how Mao could have earned the acclaim nationwide. The poem continues to repeat the line "Long Live the People" in these four stanzas but to foreground the precondition that allows for Mao's iconic proclamation, that is, Mao's popular support:

> You walking up to Tiananmen Gate
> was to chant Long Live the People,
> That was why the People who own the History
> made you shine eternally in the annals of history
> You walking up to Tiananmen Gate
> was to chant Long Live the People,
> That was why the People who dominate the world
> made you immortal in the world… (lines 61–8)[16]

The poetic repetition is in line with the logical cyclicity that explains what gives Mao the authority. Mao could become the man who chanted "Long Live the People" on Tiananmen Gate because he would chant "Long Live the People." In other words, he could speak and be heard because his voice is not just of his own but of the People. The concluding stanzas have converted a eulogistic poem into a celebration of the socialist democracy Mao represents. Mao's death is only mentioned in text briefly (line 71), and as such in on-stage recitals. With a short digression into the sorrow of mourning over Mao's death, performed with an unsteady and breathy voice, the poem and the recitation swiftly return to the initial high-spirited tone, contrasting the despair of Mao's corporeal death with the immortality of his words. In Wang Huairang's self-selected anthology, the poem "Long Live the People" ends with a repetition of "Long live. Long long live." Yet in its recitals, it is common to repeat the line "Long Live the People" once or twice more as a means of mobilizing the emotions. The end point that does not exist in Wang's initial

[16] Zhang Huairang, 523–4.

version has become the moment for the reciter to bring the emotion to a climax through a full and sonorous resonance. If Wang's version ends the poem with a celebration of the immortal spirit of Mao, by looping back to the scene of Mao on Tiananmen Gate, the recitals change the meaning of the ending from a commemoration of Mao to a celebration of the People as a collective entity. Mao's voice is again supplanted by the voice of the People, but this time, it sounds more profound and resonant —sometimes, with accent corrected — supplementing his real voice that could only be heard in archival footage.

3.4 More Mao is Coming

Through an investigation of what Mao's voice could have represented, this chapter shows Mao's voice as a common currency, not so much for its allure but for its symbolic value that could been appropriated in different contexts. For the former Red Guard members, Mao's voice has provided an object for denouncing their past and reclaiming their own consciousness in post-Mao era. In imitating Mao's voice, contemporary poetry reciters are able to demonstrate their refined skills in communicating the sentiment and eventually elevate Mao's voice to the status of a universal voice of the People. The relative muteness of Mao in state-produced propaganda material like documentary films and newsreel — whether as a result of technological limitation or as part of the pre-censoring of Mao cult in media— paradoxically institutes the oblivion of Mao's voice and subsequently, encourages flexible and creative renderings of his disappeared voice.

The value of Mao's voice is further explored in China today against the backdrop of the increasing governmental interest in and control over its own history. In making of the main-melody documentary film *Long Live the People* 人民萬歲(2023), documentary producer and director Hao Yun 郝蘊 (1970–) has found in archives a surprising amount of unreleased historical footage of Mao speaking on screen. Hao informs the press that at least four sound clips of Mao's

voice included in her latest documentary have never been released to the public. The production team had put efforts to restore and repair the comprised sound, so that the audience would be presented with the "authentic, rare and stunning materials."[17] Mao's original voice is once again put at the center of curious scrutiny and cultural circulation, and this time, it has taken on new commercial and cultural values to cater to a new generation of Chinese youths whose admiration for Mao and his legacies stimulates them to propagate and proliferate Mao's voice through digging into the unopened party archives.

[17] Li Tingjun 李霆鈞, "*Renmin Wansui* Daoyan Hao Yun: Rang Nianqingren Chengwei Lishi Wenxian Jilupian de Zhujue" 《人民萬歲》導演郝蘊：讓年輕人成為歷史文獻紀錄片的"主角" [Hao Yun, Director of *Long Live the People*: Making Young People the 'Protagonist' of Historical Documentary Films], *China Film News* 中國電影報, January 3, 2024, 6.

4. Chapter 4: Voice of a Documentary

This chapter examines the 2003 documentary *Morning Sun* by Carma Hinton, Geremie R. Barmé and Richard Gordon. A film on China's Red Guard movement, *Morning Sun* traces the development of the revolutionary campaigns in 1966 and their aftermaths while also exploring the "psychological and emotional topology of high-Maoist China" that drove the widespread Red Guard violence.[18] In doing so, *Morning Sun* puts considerable attention to the psychological impacts of sound and music from the era. One can easily discern a narrational arc of sound in *Morning Sun*'s portrayal of the Red Guard movement and the Cultural Revolution. By incorporating propaganda radio broadcasts, documentary and newsreel footage, film clips, revolutionary songs, and oral testimonies, this documentary constantly alternates between the sounds of the past and the present. Sound and voice play such a central role that they almost become another theme, apart from the themes of revolution and family, that weaves the documentary together.

This chapter approaches this documentary from the perspective of sound. The frequent mentions of sound and music in recounting the lived experience of the socialist era have drawn considerable scholarly attention. Various efforts are underway, particularly to salvage and decipher the memories associated with sound and listening.[19] Yet what kind of narrative emerges amid these retrospective discussions about sound? What are their underlying assumptions about sound? The purpose of this chapter is to bring attention to the notion of the socialist soundscape

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[18] Carma Hinton, "A Visual and Visceral Connection to the Cultural Revolution," *Nieman Reports* 58, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 79; "*Morning Sun*, A Documentary Film," *Morning Sun*: A Film and Website About Cultural Revolution, Long Bow Group, Inc., accessed November 21, 2023, http://www.morningsun.org/film/index.html.
[19] Mittler, 49–50; Nicole Huang, "Listening to Films: Politics of the Auditory in 1970s China." *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 7, no. 3 (2013): 189–193; Jie Li, "Cinematic Guerrillas in Mao's China," *Screen* 61, no. 2, (Summer 2022): 221, 228; Lei X. Ouyang, *Music as Mao's Weapon: Remembering the Cultural Revolution* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2021), 99–100.

in post-Mao recounts and recreations. This chapter takes the documentary *Morning Sun* as a case study through which the discourses on socialist sounds might be analyzed.

Chapter 3 has examined how the Red Guard generation articulates their initial enchantment and ultimate disillusion with the revolution by engaging with language about sound voice. This chapter then turns to analyze the documentary's own soundscape. Distinct as a documentary narrated *with* sound and *about* sound, *Morning Sun* stands out not only for its self-reflexivity of these discourses on sound and voice but also for the cultivation of its own soundscape. If we consider the film *Morning Sun* as an "innovative audible virtual exhibit" in its own right, what kind of sonic history does it deliver?[20] This chapter reads *Morning Sun* as not so much a recreation of a socialist soundscape but rather an acoustic realism in which the film's own soundscape reflects on the inexorable impact of socialist ideology and aesthetics.

Furthermore, it is particularly interested in how documentary films employ archival sound to provide a historical narrative of China's socialist decades. If we envision one documentary film as, in its own right, a sound archive, what sort of selection criteria and curatorial practice it takes on? What kind of history it aims to present? In *Morning Sun*, the generation of the Communist Revolution and the Red Guard generation (the generation of the Cultural Revolution) are sonically represented through two songs — "The East is Red" and "Let's Swing up Our Sculls" — that forms the two competing soundscapes within the documentary's narratorial space. To make the aural contrast possible, the documentary would use historical sound and music anachronistically and ambivalently for the sake of narrational coherence. Prior to the making of *Morning Sun*, the documentary team has produced the acclaimed documentary *The Gate of Heavenly Peace*, released in 1995, on the 1989 Tiananmen Protests. In many ways,

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[20] Jie Li, *Utopian Ruins: A Memorial Museum of the Mao Era* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 273.

the two documentaries share a narratorial style. Yet, the production of *Morning Sun* is perceivably more challenging as the historical material available to the team is highly restricted. Rather than reading these manipulations as the result of limited sound source or as part of documentary film-making practices, this chapter understands them as performing the convoluted relationship the Red Guard generation has with the Party.

Ultimately, this chapter intends to ask how attending to sound and accounts of sound might offer alternate interpretations — an idea that could also be extrapolated from rereading a Lu Xun's quote (that *Morning Sun* includes as part of its closing credits). This is, in part, to investigate how the filmic soundscape crafts a narrative realm separate from the visual image that allows for expressing personal sentiments and composing alternative histories. By drawing attention to sound, it intends to surface a set of questions not conventionally discernible in an image-centric analysis. In this way, engaging with *Morning Sun* through listening is also to reconsider the role of medium in registering memory and history.

4.1 The Socialist Soundscape Revisited: Sound and Music in Morning Sun

Considerable scholarly attention has been devoted to the research of the song "The East is Red." Following scholarship that traces the song's history and its cross-media adaptations, it is possible to reconstruct the soundscape that people who lived in the socialist era were presented with.[21] Because of the popularity and pervasiveness of the song, for Carma Hinton and the production team of *Morning Sun*, it is almost self-evident to frame the documentary against the song and the homonymous film, especially since "those [they] interview in [their] film speak of

[21] See, for example, Xiaomei Chen, *Staging Chinese Revolution: Theatre, Film, and the Afterlives of Propaganda* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 56–72; Mittler, 100–111.

the profound impact the film [*The East is Red*] had on them."[22] What they did not mention is the changes *Morning Sun* makes to its source materials.

The original song "The East is Red" comprises three verses, each repeated to the same eighteen-bar melody. The song as appeared in the film *The East is Red* extends the original form, adding an instrumental overture and a final verse that repeats the first verse: "The East is Red, rises the sun, / China has brought forth a Mao Zedong. /He works for the happiness of the people, hu-er hei yo, / He is the people's great savior."[23] Moreover, the film version is rearranged with the first and final verses sung in unison, second verse by women's chorus and the third verse by men's chorus. The last verse is sung in an octave higher, completing the song with the emotional immenseness the chorus brings.

The song's cyclical structure, employing a lyrics pattern in an ABCA form where the final verse echoes the first verse structurally and musically, brings a sense of completeness and closure to the film. *Morning Sun,* however, impairs this inherent sense of closure by removing the framing narrative and the instrumental overture. To emphasize the line repeated in the end, "he is the people's great savior," the documentary sutures the image from the first verse with the singing of the fourth verse. Instead of the original overture, the song is introduced by the first four measures of "The East is Red" played on ancient bronze chimes (*bianzhong* 編鐘). This *bianzhong* rendition of "The East is Red" *Morning Sun* uses was reportedly recorded in 1978, resulting in subtle anachronism right at the beginning of the film.

What has *Morning Sun* achieved in breaking and recurating the original film sequence and the song "The East is Red"? Throughout the interviews, a general attitude emerges among

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[22] Hinton, 80.
[23] Modified based on Mittler's translation.

these former Red Guards. The exposure to revolutionary sagas and patriotic films have instilled in their minds an existential question regarding their positionality within the nation's revolutionary past. Whereas song-and-dance epics like *The East is Red* constantly warn them not to forget past revolutions after the revolutions are won, whom another revolution can be waged against, and what forms the future revolutions can take, still leave them in deep confusion. One of the interviewees, referencing Mao's well-known quote on individuals being the screw of the revolutionary machine, sarcastically remarks, "The days of blood and fire of the revolution are over, so we can only be screws now." Mao's quotations are conventionally thought to be concise in meaning and straightforward in the message. Yet the Red Guards would translate them and develop a nuanced understanding that questions their role in the diminishing revolutionary fever.

Through their comments on the song-and-dance epic, it is possible to infer a complex attitude the Red Guards have developed toward the revolutionary past. Even amidst the fervor of the Red Guard activism, the soundscape represented by "The East is Red" carries dual meanings: it is the sound they aspire to emulate and, meanwhile, the sound to surpass and overthrow. For these Red Guard members, the formal circularity of the song "the East is Red" has thrust upon them the very material to transcend. The perceived completeness of the revolution prompts them to ask what they should sound like in this full-fledge soundscape. To do so, they reenact the revolutionary epics in real lives by embarking on another Long March just so they could replace the former heroes immortalized in Mao's verse "The Red Army fears not the trials of the Long March" with their names, rewriting the poem to read "The Red Guard fears not the trials of the Long March." Through embodying historical epics and rewriting old expressions, they found their ways of engaging with the nation's revolutionary past and becoming part of the nation's history. Under this interpretation, *Morning Sun* also joins the Red Guards in embodying the historical epics. The documentary is structured as eight titled scenes with an opening (*yinzi* 引子)

and a final credit. It mirrors the structural design of the song-and-dance epic film *The East is Red*, which also comprises eight scenes with an opening (referred to as *xuqu* 序曲 in the film playscript).

The dynamics between emulation and surpassing also manifest in the film's deployment of the children's song "Let's Swing up Our Sculls" (*Rang women dangqi shuangjiang*). In juxtaposing the highly politicized and also the *de facto* national anthem "The East is Red" with the lively and affectionate "Let's Swing up Our Sculls," the documentary offers two confronting soundscapes. A theme song to the children's film, *Flowers of Our Motherland* (*Zuguo de huaduo* 祖國的花朵, 1955), "Let's Swing up Our Sculls" conjures up the ambiance of a peaceful childhood and the Red Guards' memories of cultural life before the Cultural Revolution. Being considerably unpoliticized, the lyrics of "Let's Swing up Our Sculls" unfold as depiction of a school trip to the Summer Palace in Beijing. The schoolchildren arrive at Beihai Park and begin boat rowing together. They enjoy the beautiful scenery, pleasant weather, and their leisurely time — a reward for completing their homework but more significantly, as reminded at the end of the song, credited to an unspecified somebody — almost certainly the Chinese Communist Party.

The political message in this song is so subtle that it is almost imperceptible to those singing it, turning it into one of the songs that are still widely recognized and circulated through multiple generations.[24] In *Morning Sun*, "Let's Swing up Our Sculls" is first introduced in the second scene with a clip from the film *Flowers of Our Motherland*. The commentary track of *Morning Sun* reminds the viewers to recognize the range of films and art accessible to the youth

[24] A comparable song might be "I Love Beijing's Tiananmen," described by revolutionary song scholar Lei Ouyang as "atypical" for receiving "wide recognition across generations and historical time periods," despite its propagandistic nature. Originating as a children's song "newly composed" during the Cultural Revolution, it serves to promote the Communist Party and nationalism by invoking the images of Beijing, Tiananmen Square and "the great leader Chairman Mao." Ouyang specially highlights that the song's "lack of reference to specific political campaigns has led to its continued promotion in the present day." See Ouyang, 79–80.

in the 1950s, taking this song and this film as examples of the pre-Cultural Revolution artistic production.[25]

The song gradually establishes itself in the documentary as the sonic motif, or the theme song for the Red Guards. It reappears as an original arrangement played by accordion, cello and piano to accompany the historical footage of the Campaign to Destroy the Four Olds (*po si jiu* 破四舊). The violent smashing and destroying of ancient temples and statues are set in contrast with the slow-tempo, elongated melody of "Let's Swing up Our Sculls." This variant of the song reappears in the scene "A New Long March" as a former Red Guard recounts the cooling down of revolutionary fervor upon witnessing the social realities in faraway regions of China. Its final recurrence is at the scene "Down to Earth," which focuses on the Down to the Country Movement (*shangshanxiaxiang yundong* 上山下鄉運動). The testimonies within this scene continue to describe the decline in revolutionary enthusiasm as a result of the everyday experiences in the rural areas.

The song "Let's Swing up Our Sculls" resounds in the narrative line revolving around the Red Guards' growing revolutionary passion and their ultimate disillusion. As the song they had growing up singing in the 1950s, "Let's Swing up Our Sculls" carries the power to counter the soundscape as represented and established by "The East is Red" as well as the film and the performance. Being a children's song, "Let's Swing up Our Sculls" represents a genre of music that is free of didactic words and moral packages and can be enjoyed purely for its aesthetic pleasure.

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[25] The song itself is not included in the official music collections published during the Cultural Revolution, such as *New Songs of the Battlefield* (*Zhandi xinge* 戰地新歌), suggesting that it was endorsed by the Party. Yet, its absence does not necessarily mean that it was banned during the Cultural Revolution. As Mittler highlights, oral histories and other evidence all show that besides the propaganda songs, there were other songs in circulation. Mittler, 112–3.

The idealization of a children's song and music and the hold that it is possible to counteract the sonic impact of "The East is Red" presuppose an apolitical nature of "Let's Swing up Our Sculls." As what has been explained, the song "Let's Swing up Our Sculls" for sure has its roots in the Party's propaganda culture and, despite the subtlety, hints at the Party's role in putting the nation together and ensuring a "peaceful life." If so, why does *Morning Sun* insist on including a song as such?

Morning Sun's incorporation and recomposition of "Let's Swing up Our Sculls" can be interpreted in multiple ways. Firstly, the documentary can be deemed as the Red Guard generation's epic film, a project inspired by the song-and-dance epic *The East is Red* to compose their revolutionary history with "Let's Swing up Our Sculls" as the designated theme song. In this way, the structural parallel to *The East is Red* can be explained as *Morning Sun*'s homage to this performance and film genre and its predecessor. At another level, *Morning Sun* reads like a self-mockery of the formal constraints and challenges in narrating the Cultural Revolution experiences. As the generation born after the founding of the nation, the pervasive influence of patriotic education and political propaganda has established the foundational soundscape. As a result, it is barely possible to deviate, or to hear, sing or compose otherwise. The writing of the Red Guards' history is so predicated on the preexisting historiography that it becomes an impossible task to write differently. The acts of resisting and overwriting the sound of the Party have become a secondary replication, bearing within it the underlying violence reminiscent of a past that they aim to forget or remedy. In this way, in including "Let's Swing up Our Sculls," *Morning Sun* performs the convoluted relationship the Red Guard generation has with the Party, demonstrating their deep entanglement in the nation's past.

In terms of its narrational mode and style, *Morning Sun* is comparable to Gordon and Hinton's 1995 documentary film *The Gate of Heavenly Peace*, which focuses on the Tiananmen

Square protests in 1989. Both documentaries aim to approach histories by including diverse perspectives and angles of participants; and both documentaries alternate between testimonies and historical materials to provide an account from the insiders. Also shared between the two documentaries — in addition to using the same narrator in the Chinese-language versions — is what Ralph Litzinger has observed in his reading of *The Gate of Heavenly Peace* and the audience's reception as the "powerful and conflicting identifications [the film creates] with the subjects in the film."[26] The inclusion of the song "Let's Swing up Our Sculls" is constitutive of creating "conflicting identification" that renders the documentary into a fulfillment of the Red Guards' unaccomplished project, that is, to wage a revolution of their own.

Indeed, *Morning Sun*'s attitude toward its subjects is rather ambivalent. It is not simply because the personal history of the documentary maker Carma Hinton who remained in China until 1971 and witnessed the Red Guard movement's unfolding. More significant is the documentary's narrational impulse to resolve the Red Guards' relationship with the Party by encouraging a narrative of resistance and disenchantment. The documentary is disquieting not so much because it appears sympathetic to the Red Guards but because it occasionally betrays the insolvability of past crimes and sometimes a sense of melancholy towards the sound it intends to forget. The documentary's attitude toward the Red Guards is largely untold and undecided, as if it is relegated to the viewers to determine; or, it might also be the case that, as film scholar Yomi Braester's review suggests, "the film will still leave spectators wondering how it could all have taken place […] as do all treatments of atrocities of this order."[27]

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[26] Ralph A. Litzinger, "Screening the Political: Pedagogy and Dissent in *The Gate of Heavenly Peace*." *Position* 7, no. 3 (Winter 1999): 838.
[27] Yomi Braester, "Review of Morning Sun. Written, Directed and Produced by Geremie R. Barmé, Carma Hinton, and Richard Gordon," *American Historical Review* 109, no. 3 (n.d.): 886–87. Yomi Braester, "Review of Morning Sun. Written, Directed and Produced by Geremie R. Barmé, Carma Hinton, and Richard Gordon," *American Historical Review* 109, no. 3 (June 2004): 887.

As a sound archive, *Morning Sun* collects sound and music symbolically and emotionally rich for the Red Guard generation. It shows a particular way of relating and connecting with the Cultural Revolution that is post-event. We might want to ask how to situate temporally this sound archive in terms of our knowledge of the Cultural Revolution. Is it an archive of the late 1960s during the height of Red Guard movement? Is it of the end of the 1970s when China was gradually transitioning out of the Maoist era and when order had been slowly restored? Or, is it also a sound archive that is in dialogue with the crackdown in 1989, when the song "The East is Red" was reheard during the student protests but this time, there is no savior appearing at the end?

4.2 Revolution, Re-volution, Re-re-volution

The final credits of *Morning Sun* are followed by a rearranged instrumental version of the song "My Country" 我的祖國 (*Wode zuguo*, 1956) and a quotation of Lu Xun from a 1927 article titled "Miscellaneous Thoughts" 小雜感 (*xiao zagan*; literally, "little sundry thoughts"):

> Revolution, counter-revolution, non-revolution.
> Revolutionaries are massacred by counter-revolutionaries. Counter-revolutionaries are massacred by revolutionaries. Non-revolutionaries are sometimes taken for revolutionaries, and then they are massacred by counter-revolutionaries, or again they are taken for counter-revolutionaries, and then they are massacred by revolutionaries. Sometimes, also, they are not taken for anything in particular, but they are still massacred by revolutionaries and by counter-revolutionaries.
> Revolution, re-revolution, re-re-revolution, rev-rev….[28]
>
> 革命，反革命，不革命。
> 革命的被殺於反革命的。反革命的被殺於革命的。不革命的或當作革命的而被殺於反革命的，或當作反革命的而被殺於革命的，或並不當作什麼而被殺於革命的或反革命的。革命，革革命，革革革命，革革……。

[28] Lu Xun 魯迅, "Xiao zagan" 小雜感 [Miscellaneous Thoughts], in *Lu Xun quanji* 魯迅全集 [The Complete Works of Lu Xun], vol. 3 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1998), 554–8. With modifications to the original.

Through citing Lu Xun, *Morning Sun* ends with a juxtaposition between the May Fourth movement and the Red Guard movement, offering a reverberant reflection on what revolution is. The quotation itself reads like a critique of the cycles of violence in the name of revolutions. If different fractions of the revolutionaries keep murdering each other, can it still be considered a revolution? If revolution is indeed "continuous" (as in "continuous revolution," or *jixu geming*), as proposed by Mao and also as perceivable in China's modern history, will it only become an everlasting massacre in which the late-coming revolutionaries wage a new revolution on the preceding revolutionaries? Behind the repetitive sound of "*ge-ge-*," Lu Xun seems to ask whether and when the revolutionary violence will end. Meanwhile, with the ellipsis and a final period, he appears to question if it were to end, would there still be any "life" (as *ming* in *geming*) remained? Through including this quotation, *Morning Sun* carries over not only the revolutionary legacy of the May Fourth but also the doubts and anguish accompanying the May Fourth.

On a second level, Lu Xun here also seems to address the issues of revolution by rendering audible the process of how words become mere sound. He plays with the word "revolution" (*geming*) in order to defamiliarize it, rendering it into monotonous gibberish. The association between sound and language is manipulated to become so loose and fragile that sound surfaces to be the only thing that is left behind after cycles of revolutions. Under this interpretation, rather than rebuking the notion of a revolutionary spirit, Lu Xun appears to leave behind the question of how to attend to sound as such.

In this respect, *Morning Sun*, in quoting Lu Xun on sound and revolution, seems to be self-reflexive. Like Luo Xiaohai and Song Binbin (chapter 3), *Morning Sun* is also negotiating its own soundscape with the socialist sound it intends to capture within its diegesis. Meanwhile, it is almost self-conscious that in creating a documentary soundscape devoted to the Red Guards and the Cultural Revolution generations, it also participates in the continuous revolution that will

eventually render itself meaningless. As such, there is something equally profound and ephemeral in the documentary's ending. After providing an alternative history that is potentially controversial, it ends with a gesture of self-erasure, signaling that whatever has been presented in the film is subject to dissolve into an array of dots and the infinity they represent. Only the sound will persist.

5. Conclusion: An Epilogue

In the entry for *renmin* 人民, or the People, in *China in Ten Words*, writer Yu Hua offers a genealogy of the term *renmin* in the PRC history.[1] Despite its historical significance, the word *renmin* has, as Yu Hua points out, a history of misuse in China. He specifically points out the continuous inclination to appropriate *renmin* into social-political currency, a habit which even he as a young beginning speller cannot help developing. Seemingly a criticism of the commercialization of *renmin* in the reform era, the brief excursion to Yu Hua's childhood appears to question the value of *renmin* in contemporary China if the word has been so implicated in social and political crises that even a kid would also want to take it for his own use. At the end, Yu Hua still attributes the spirit of *renmin* to those passionate protestants he encountered in May 1989 in Beijing. Hearing them singing the national anthem has reassured him the value of *renmin*, as embodied by the protestants rather than a mere word. As Yu Hua listens to the singing voice of the protestants, he is also listening to the reverberations of China socialist's decades, its goals and dreams of voicing the masses, that even Yu Hua would find hard in keeping with his satirical tone.

As we grapple with the sonic legacy of socialist China, the echoes of authority continue to reverberate. Their resurrection does not necessarily suggest that the voice from socialist era reacquires its currency in contemporary China but should be read as an act of conjuring up the spirit of *renmin*. In this sense, the socialist auditory authority continues to be sustained by the People as the voice of *remin* is seeking to be heard.

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[1] Yu Hua 余華, *Shi ge cihui li de zhongguo* 十個詞彙裡的中國 [China in Ten Words] (Taipei: maitian, 2011), 11–22.

Appendix A

"'Long Live the People': A Recitation Poem for Commemorating the 100th Anniversary of Mao Zedong's Birth"

By Wang Huairang

You are walking from the yellow paths
between the paddy fields of Shao Mountains,
You are walking from the dark tunnels
of coal mines in Anyuan,
You are walking from the Mongolian oak
in Xiangxiang that bears many sufferings,
You are walking from the Clear-Water Pond
in Changsha that blood and tears illuminate…

You walk straight up to Tiananmen Gate,
To the People who have created the History
chanting in a deep voice with Hunan accent:
(in imitation of Mao Zedong's voice) "Long Live the People!"

You are walking from Rue Wantz in Shanghai
where the national spirit can be discerned,
You are walking from Yanyu Tower in Jiaxing
that commands a view of misty rain over the last century,
You are walking from the autumn harvest
of the eight-hundred-*li* Jinggang mountains,
You are walking from the valiant marathon
of the twenty-thousand-*li* Long March…

You walk straight up to Tiananmen Gate,
To the People who have reformed the History
chanting in a sonorous voice with Hunan accent:
(in imitation of Mao Zedong's voice) "Long Live the People!"

You are walking from the scene
of the snowy North
You are walking from the torrential flow
of the Great Rivers,
You are walking from the victories
of Qin Shihuang and Han Wudi in Shiji,
You are walking from the literary talent
of Tang Taizong and Song Taizu in Zizhi Tongjian…

You walk realistically up to Tiananmen Gate,
To the People that have turned the tide
Chanting in a penetrating voice with Hunan accent:

(in imitation of Mao Zedong's voice) "Long Live the People!"

You are walking lyrically from the "West River Moon"
light that shines on the wisdom of the People,
You are walking passionately from the "Full Red River"
torrents that roar the power of the People,
You are walking from the inspirational, thrilling rhyme
in "Farewell to the God of Plague,"
You are walking from the restless, cheering tone
in "Return to Shao Mountains"…

You walk romantically up to Tiananmen Gate,
To the People that have shaken the whole world
chanting in a honed voice with Hunan accent:
(in imitation of Mao Zedong's voice) "Long Live the People!"

You walking up to Tiananmen Gate
was to chant "Long Live the People,"
That was why the People made Tiananmen so prodigious
with their own bodies;
You walking up to Tiananmen Gate
was to chant "Long Live the People,"
That was why the People gave Tiananmen the tint of glamour
with their blood and sweat…

— This is the truth you left us.
The man who chanted "Long Live the People,"
when he was alive,
people would chant "Long Live" to him!

You walking up to Tiananmen Gate
was to chant "Long Live the People,"
That was why the People who own the History
made you shine eternally in the annals of history;
You walking up to Tiananmen Gate
was to chant "Long Live the People,"
That was why the People who dominate the world
made you immortal in the world…

— This is the philosophy you left us,
The man who chanted "Long Live the People,"
he was dead, but his thoughts
would long live, long long live!

This poem was first performed in 1993 by reciter and performer Zhang Jiasheng in an event to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Mao Zedong. It was later collected in Wang Huairang, Wang Huairang zixuan ji 王懷讓自選集 *[Wang Huairang's Self-Selected Anthology] (Beijing: Zuojia chubanshe, 1997): 521–4. Nearly in every line of this poem there are references to the historical achievements of the Chinese Communist Party and Mao's own poetry, acknowledging Mao's accomplishments as a political leader and a poet. Mao's poetry has served as a reservoir of socialist vocabulary, even though the content and context of his poems are sometimes set aside in the actual practices of poetry writing. Lines 37–38, for example, allude to ci title of Mao's poem "Jinggang shan"* 井冈山 *[Jinggang Mountain] (Ci title: "Xi Jiang Yue"* 西江月 *[West River Moon]) (1928). A poem for celebrating a military victory and Mao's own role in this major campaign, "Jinggang Shan" turns out to be used in "Long Live the People" as a celebration of the wisdom of the People. In borrowing the ci title, Wang yields to the lyrical and also classical imagery of "West River Moon," eliding the possibilities of engaging with the celebratory mood and political message of Mao's poem per se.*

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