

Collision Domain between Artistic Subjectivity and National Sovereignty:

The Historical Trauma Experience and Political Resistance

by

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A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

Approved July 2020 by the
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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

August 2020

ABSTRACT

The relationship between Chinese modern and contemporary artistic creation and the national sovereignty of China is a worthy subject of debate. Within it, modernism and intellectual/artistic subjectivity are two necessary starting points. However, there is still a good deal of uncertainty around these two points. First, can the modernization process of China be accepted as the general meaning of modernization? Second, are some Chinese modern and contemporary artists actually modern intellectuals? Based on clarification of the above two uncertainties, this thesis is an attempt to argue that the Chinese artists who regard themselves, their artworks and creations, as intellectual, reflect the collision domain between themselves and the political entity of national sovereignty in China: the communist regime controlled by the CCP, Chinese Communist Party 中國共產黨.

In this thesis, three chapters discuss the relationship between Chinese modern and contemporary art and the CCP. In my theoretical exposition, I argue that the artistic/intellectual subjectivity of modern Chinese artists gradually developed and changed during the conflict and struggle with the Communist rule.

In the first chapter, I introduce the biography and artistic creation of Chinese literati painters under the communist rule, exemplified by Wu Hufan 吳湖帆. I analyze and demonstrate how the subjectivity of the traditional literati gradually lost strength under the pressure of nationalism, the disenchantment with modernization, and communism. In the second chapter, I focus on the Scar Art art movement of the 1970s to

the 1980s, as well as representative artists and their works in this direction of art, such as Cheng Conglin 程叢林 and Gao Xiaohua 高小華. In this chapter, I use feminism and Foucault's political-philosophical theories to explain these visual expressions of the memory of historical trauma in Scar Art during this period. In Chapter 3, by discussing the works of two artists, He Gong 何工 and Ai Weiwei 艾未未, in the context of Foucault's political philosophy, I argue that artists how to express their intellectual subjectivity and political resistance through their contributions to Chinese contemporary art.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mother and to all the suffering people under the rule of the CCP.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to thank my advisor and thesis committee chair Dr. Claudia Mesch for her encouraging guidance and support of my thesis. She inspired me to work diligently on refining my writing and on searching deeper into the significance of my topic. Without her expansive knowledge and invaluable advice, I would not have been able to produce a thesis of this caliber. Since 2018, Dr. Mesch has been there for me as a professor and a mentor while she wrote letters of recommendations, shared insightful advice on future career prospects and introduced me the traumatic theory on the research of contemporary art, which is one of the basic theories of this thesis. I feel honored to be one of her students and to work with such an esteemed modern art historian.

I also want to thank Dr. Claudia Brown, another advisor of my MA period in the ASU. She has treated me with nothing but kindness during my time as her student. I am grateful for her willingness to write me letters of recommendations and for taking the time to serve on my committee. In addition, I am grateful for the dedication of Dr. Janet Baker who graciously accepted my request to have her be part of my committee and impart her expertise on Asian art, especially her valuable knowledge of the Scar Art movement research.

Last but not least, I am in gratitude to professor He Gong for his yeas of friendship and first-hand information as a historical witness. Thank you.

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INTRODUCTION

The relationship between Chinese modern and contemporary artistic creation and the national sovereignty of China is a worthy subject of debate. Within it, modernism and intellectual/artistic subjectivity are two necessary starting points. However, there is still a good deal of uncertainty around these two points. First, can the modernization process of China be accepted as the general meaning of modernization? Second, are some Chinese modern and contemporary artists actually modern intellectuals? Based on clarification of the above two uncertainties, this thesis is an attempt to argue that the Chinese artists who regard themselves, their artworks and creations, as intellectual, reflect the collision domain¹ between themselves and the political entity of national sovereignty in China: the communist regime controlled by the CCP, Chinese Communist Party 中國共產黨.

In this thesis, three chapters discuss the relationship between Chinese modern and contemporary art and the CCP. In my theoretical exposition, I argue that the artistic/intellectual subjectivity of modern Chinese artists gradually developed and changed during the conflict and struggle with the Communist rule.

In the first chapter, I introduce the biography and artistic creation of Chinese literati painters under the communist rule, exemplified by Wu Hufan 吳湖帆. I analyze and demonstrate how the subjectivity of the traditional literati gradually lost strength under the pressure of nationalism, the disenchantment with modernization, and with modern communism. In the second chapter, I focus on the Scar Art art movement of the 1970s to the 1980s, as well as representative artists and their works in this direction of art, such as Cheng Conglin 程叢林 and Gao Xiaohua 高小華. In this chapter, I use feminism and Foucault's political-philosophical theories to explain these visual expressions of the memory of historical trauma in Scar Art during this period. I think that during this period, the subjective consciousness of modern Chinese intellectuals began to

¹ Collision Domain is a professional term for network technology, which means collision of information generated when different devices exchange information. I have transferred it to this paper as a historical description of the conflict between intellectuals and national sovereignty.

awaken. And through the expression of historical trauma, the intellectual standpoint of modern Chinese intellectual artists gradually clarified into positions that are different from or even opposed to the communist ideology. In Chapter 3, by discussing the works of two artists, He Gong 何工 and Ai Weiwei 艾未未, in the context of Foucault's political philosophy, I argue that artists express their intellectual subjectivity and political resistance through their contributions to Chinese contemporary art. Taking the 1989 Tiananmen Incident and the 2008 Wenchuan Earthquake as historical nodes, I systematically analyze the politics and sociology of contemporary Chinese artistic creation. I think the relationship between He Gong and Ai Weiwei's artistic creations and the new communist regime of this period is one that precisely epitomizes the conflicts some Chinese artists experience between their own artistic and intellectual subjectivity and the notion of the national sovereignty of China.

As for the theories and documents used in this article, in addition to the Chinese historical documents published in mainland China, Foucault and Hegel's theories are also used to explain the artist's creative ideas and analyze the cultural/political context in Chapter 3. Although Foucault and Hegel both explore related political and cultural psychology topics in the Western context, I still believe their thoughts do present a universal meaning that is very relevant to Chinese artists and their art. In the third chapter, For the analysis of the Chinese intellectual artists who constructed their own intellectual identity through artistic creation in the 1980s, Hegel's master-slave dialectics provides a psychological model of universal value. This is not only because of the accuracy and universality of this model, but also because of the contradictory and unequal political relations between masters and slaves in this model, which perfectly matched the relationship between the intellectuals and the Communist Party in Chinese modern communist totalitarian structure in the 1980s. As for Foucault's political-philosophical theory and the discussion of violent discipline in modern totalitarianism, it is also a powerful theoretical tool for explaining the political/cultural context of modern/contemporary China.

Above all, in this introduction, it is necessary to clarify the Chinese modernization

process through a summary and analysis of the history of modern China after 1949. For modern and contemporary art in China, the issue of modernization is an unavoidable problem. This introduction will identify political motives for the communist regime of China that are related to two clues offered in history. Those clues are:

1. As is mainly reflected in my analysis of Wu Hufan's art and career after 1949 in chapter one, the forced transfer of property ownership from former property owners to the proletariat, and then to the socialist party, is the core economic/political/cultural purpose of the communist/socialist regime.

2. As is mainly reflected in my analysis of Scar Art in Chapter 2 and He Gong's work in Chapter 3, the intraparty political struggle of the CCP concerns the cultural life of the whole society and artistic creation. This is indicated in the notion of the "two-line struggle" 兩條路線的鬥爭.² This phenomenon can be explained by means of Foucault's definition of political operation and that is part of his theory of discipline.

Motivations for the Political Behavior of Modern Chinese National Sovereignty: Chinese Modernization and Property Ownership

Since the Qing Dynasty collapsed in 1912, dismantling the monarchical imperial system, modern China began to form itself. As is characteristic of modern societies, Chinese artists and intellectuals actively threw themselves into public political expression and cultural introspection, criticism, or reestablishment. Meanwhile, another ramification of modernization, communist rule, also penetrated the fragile and nascent modern Chinese political/social system through a

² The 'struggle between two lines or among several lines', is a term of political phenomenon that exists in the CCP for a long time, but it has different meanings in different eras. During the period of the Cultural Revolution, it meant the struggles between the politicians who supported the cultural revolution and the ones who did not. In the era of the reform and opening-up (1979 - 2012), it meant the political struggles between the politicians who supported the reform and opening-up policy and their opponents. Their purposes for this kind of struggle, usually are not just for the controlling of power or the competition of appointing committees in the organization, but also include ideological struggles, personal grudges, and so on. Because of lifelong tenure and hereditary, some struggles can maintain for decades and from generation to generation as the form of political factions in the CCP and the communist army.

geopolitical strategy from the USSR as early as 1919. Because of the full support of the USSR in terms of financial and military force, the CCP defeated and exiled Chiang Kai-shek 蔣介石 and his party 中國國民黨, the KMT/ Chinese Nationalist Party, and also constructed the first modern socialist government of China in 1949, which is the People's Republic of China 中華人民共和國, the PRC.

As a certain historical node, the establishment and rule of the PRC significantly influenced the process of modernization of China for every aspect. At the cultural and economic level, it led to the destruction of the traditional literati artist class, represented by Wu Hufan. Without a doubt, along with the establishment and development of the Chinese communist rule, severe humanitarian catastrophes and uncountable historical trauma arose from generation to generation after 1949. The Chinese socialist state is the dominant force in the industrialization of China since 1949, similar to the role of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in the process of industrialization of the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) or modern Russia. In the 20th Century, for countries with incomplete industrialization like China and Russia, modern communism was almost the only option for these countries if they wanted to compete with other fully industrialized modern countries in the imperialist wars, the Two World Wars, and modern geopolitical wars. As to historical facts, the modern communist regime surely enabled these countries to complete the basic of industrialization at breakneck speed, though the cost of this modern process for these countries is in the uncountable unnatural deaths of their people through man-made great famine, manipulated class struggle or the utilization of concentration camps and holocaust. Traditional literati painters were placed into the old landlord class under the new communist rule. In response to this class, the Chinese Communist Party launched a series of transformation plans, and in the end, in the name of eliminating private ownership, diminished this class in both material and cultural aspects.

In relation to this historical phenomenon (as one of most important reasons that the CCP dominates the modernization process in China), we should raise a question: can we define

modernization exclusively through the modernization process in China after 1949? Or, we deem that Chinese industrialization without the establishment of a democratic political system to even be a general process of modernization? These questions also extend to the lessening of the traditional literati art class. Is modernization a contributing factor toward the tragic fate of traditional Chinese literati painters?

If we refer to the universal concepts concerning modernization or a modern country and choose the earliest or original definitions of what modern country is, and apply that to the PRC, we may have an overview of the essence of the PRC. For example, according to Locke's argument in his *Two Treatises of Government*, the function of (modern)government is:

“Political power, then, I take to be a right of making laws with penalties of death, and consequently all less penalties, for the regulating and preserving of property, and of employing the force of the community, in the execution of such laws, and in the defense of the commonwealth from foreign injury; and all this only for the public good.³
... for in governments, the laws regulate the right of property, and the possession of land is determined by positive constitutions.”⁴

For Locke and the later modern liberal intellectuals, legislating and preserving personal property is the function of modern government. In Locke's view, to interfere with or deprive lawful personal property is tyranny, especially when such force comes from a public power or public authority. Nevertheless, according to Marxism, Leninism, and subsequent Maoism, for the socialist regimes, the basic source of legality is to negate private property and to expropriate individual wealth. The actual historical process is that vast wealth which once belonged to the

³ John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 101.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 121

bourgeoisie, landowner, rich peasant, or middle class, has been managed by the communist/socialist parties (the CPSU, the CCP), and poured into national industrialization and toward the support of international communism.⁵

Therefore, if Locke's definition of modern country still applies, it is hard to say that these socialist regimes, the USSR and the PRC, are modern countries. Because of the actions around private property in their process of establishment and the state apparatus, political control is the essential condition for these regimes, otherwise, these socialist parties cannot successfully obtain property.

Such transfer of property ownership, from former bourgeois to the proletariat, and then to the socialist party (or specific socialist political organization/individual) is a core economic/political/cultural process for the communist/socialist regime. Along with this purpose, the deprivation of social/cultural status, personal insults, and even elimination, almost certainly became the plausible means towards property ownership. It is in this sense that the communist regime has the most efficient executive ability and strict organization, a requirement for it. This mixed historical impetuses of nationalism and modern politics, and the Chinese characteristics of the modernization process that violate definitions of liberal modernism, has finally become a destructive force to traditional Chinese literati and artists. The contradiction between the old intellectual subjectivity and the sovereignty of emerging dictatorship generates historical traumatic experience, also reflected in the artistic creations of these old cultural elites.

Ideological Organization

In the first chapter of my thesis, I examine the relationship between communist ideology and the modern artists who exemplify the cultural and artistic symbols of the old society. These

⁵ Although as an excuse to liberate the proletariat and allot all private property to the proletariat in the modality of equitable distribution, because of the tenet of public ownership, the proletariat actually could not own or trade their property (such as the land for peasantry) which was reassigned by the new socialist regime. These nominal masters of popular sovereignty (The proletariat) only have to release their ownership of means of production (which was pillaged from bourgeois) to the rising Communist regime.

old-school art masters or Western admirers with “bad family background (landowner or bourgeoisie)” were destined to face distinct adversity. The artist Wu Hufan 吴湖帆, who is regarded as one of the three great masters of landscape painting in the Republican China period (1912-1949), swallowed a tragic life's bitter pills until his distressing death in the Cultural Revolution. It is not uncommon for Wu to be punished by the CCP because of his background. And his tragic experience is closely related to the CCP's consistent cultural and ideological policies.

In the process of seizing and establishing power of the regime at the initial stage, the primary goal of the socialist parties was how to lead and mobilize the proletariat to despoil property owners. The concept of class warfare has been introduced, and finally took state power by means of the military, mainly composed of the proletariat, poor and lower-middle peasants.

As an important mode of propaganda, visual art is a category of the modernization process in China. The first systematic official document about the relationship among ideology, artistic creation, and class was published by Mao Zedong leader of the CCP, in the famous “Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art” presented and edited by Mao Zedong and his secretaries in the Yan'an Rectification Movement, 1941. In this document, Mao said:

“Let us consider the first problem. In the world today all cultures, all literature, and art belong to definite classes and are geared to definite political lines. There is, in fact, no such thing as art for art's sake, art that stands above classes or art that is detached from or independent of politics. Proletarian literature and art are part of the whole proletarian revolutionary cause; they are, as Lenin said, cogs and wheels in the whole revolutionary machine. Therefore, Party work in literature and art occupies a definite and assigned position in Party revolutionary work as a whole and is subordinated to the revolutionary tasks set by the Party in a given revolutionary period... Literature and art are subordinate to politics, but in their turn exert a great influence on politics... Furthermore, when we

say that literature and art are subordinate to politics, we mean class politics, the politics of the masses, not the politics of a few so-called statesmen. Politics, whether revolutionary or counter-revolutionary, is the struggle of class against class, not the activity of a few individuals. The revolutionary struggle on the ideological and artistic fronts must be subordinate to the political struggle because only through politics can the needs of the class and the masses find expression in concentrated form.”⁶

This particular speech by Mao produced the Yan'an Rectification Movement of 1941. The incident derived from the War of Resistance Against Japan, and also because the CCP had been incorporated into the Chinese national army led by Kuo Min Tang (KMT). This was the main unit for anti-Japanese action during the Second World War in China. Many intellectuals and artists went to Yan'an to join the CCP and the resistance to Japan. However, to consolidate power and suppress competitors, Mao Zedong launched a political movement, the Yan'an Rectification Movement, to influence, test loyalty, and eliminate his competitors inside the party organization. In this movement, newcomers—intellectuals and artists from non-communist regions—had to manifest their loyalty and abandon lifestyles and artistic views of bourgeois liberalization through the action of self-criticism before the public convention and party organization.

The “Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art” was the main document of Mao's guiding policy in the Yan'an Rectification Movement. The action of disobeying the leadership on the part of art/literary works or creators was not tolerated. As I cited above, the text states: “There is, in fact, no such thing as art for art's sake, art that stands above classes or art that is detached from or independent of politics.” And for them, any art/literary activities should follow the only permissible purpose, which was “Politics, whether revolutionary or counter-revolutionary, is the struggle of class against class.”

⁶ Mao Tse-Tong, *Talks at the Yanan Forum on Art and Literature* (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1960), 30-31. 毛澤東，延安文藝座談會上的講話，外語出版社，北京，1960年版。

As mentioned earlier, in the process of seizing power, their political platforms for the CCP or other communist parties is similar, and focuses on inciting against propertied classes and on transfer of property ownership. And the so-called progressive art/literary activities also follow this revolutionary communist purpose. The lecture was published before the Communist Party took on nation-wide power (1949); but to accommodate wartime conditions, it became the substantial and programmatic document for control and policy that remains influential to the present day.

After the 1949 establishment of the Communist regime, their control of the state apparatus and political resources enabled the Chinese Communist Party itself to construct and consolidate institutions that existed throughout the cultural and educational bureaucracy. The CCP's establishment of the strict bureaucratic organization enabled effective implementation of priorities (transfer of property ownership, from former bourgeois to the proletariat, and then to the socialist party) on both economic and cultural levels.

Bureaucratic construction is reflected in official documents. First proclaimed in 1951, the "Instructions of the central committee of the communist party of China on improving propagandistic institutions at all levels and strengthening the party's propagandistic and educational work" provided many details about communist propaganda and thought in public cultural life:

"For aspects of culture and art, it(the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee) states: 'To formulate policies of the party or local guidelines on culture and art and supervise their implementation. To lead the creation and criticism of literature and art. To lead organizations of writers and entertainers at all administrative levels. To censor films, dramas and other important national or local works of art. To research and guide mass cultural activities/sites such as libraries, exhibitions, educational centers, cultural palaces,

and clubs.”⁷

Sent by the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee to party committees at all levels in the early days of the new China in 1951, the “Instructions” document is a record of guiding policy. It lists specific instructions regarding control and the recruitment that have been displayed in specific institutions, such as *libraries, exhibitions, educational centers, cultural palaces, and clubs*. A central aspect of the Party’s work is to influence public opinion and to attempt to control cultural life. Additionally, it is worth noting that party committees at all levels (state, provincial, municipal, and country authorities) along with their subordinate cultural institutions, such as China Federation of Literary and Art Circles, China Artists Association, and Art Circles or China National Academy of Painting, were the bureaucratic organs that executed these propaganda and censorship tasks. The above-mentioned document shows that even just two years after the establishment, the Party had already efficiently permeated Chinese society and implemented control. As mentioned in this document, all levels of party committees and publicity departments should “give guidance for the party members and progressives in the ranks of professors, teachers, writers, scientists, artists, editors, journalists, actors, and actresses on their work, help them to further their studies, and give them due political treatment.”⁸ “Due political treatment” included rewards of publicity, economic grants, money for childcare and transportation, improvements to housing, or even being installed as a deputy to the National People's Congress. For instance, because of his advocacy for revolutionary realist painting and his criticism regarding the ontology of artistic form, Xu Beihong and his disciples occupied the presidency or vice-presidencies of the Chinese Artists' Association until 2008.

⁷ Instructions of the central committee of the communist party of China on improving propagandistic institutions at all levels and strengthening the party's propagandistic and educational work, *Selection of important documents since the founding of the People's Republic of China, Volume 2* (Beijing: Central Party Literature Press, 1993), 77.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 79.

Cultural/Art Discipline

The Chinese contemporary artists, Ai Weiwei and He Gong, express some dissent by means of a strategy of building their intellectual subjectivity. In the third chapter of this thesis, I argue for the artistic and visual semantic significance of the works of Ai Weiwei and He Gong in the context of Chinese contemporary events such as the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989 and the Great Sichuan earthquake in 2008. I investigate how these two contemporary artists construct their artistic and intellectual subjectivity through the use of a western, Euro-American, contemporary art-visual vocabulary, which breaks through historical and political narrative of the Chinese communist regime. For contemporary Chinese artists, they have long faced the CCP's control over cultural life. Whether through historical events or identity, the political struggle within the Communist Party has also affected their creation to some extent.

The intraparty political struggle of the CCP concerns the cultural life of the whole society and artistic creation. This is indicated in the notion of the "two-line struggle" 兩條路線的鬥爭. On a level of political operation and discipline, the CCP has developed strict standards for disciplinary examination having to do with culture.

For instance, apart from direct measures, the dominant narrative of contemporary Chinese history has played a critical role in socialist cultural life and has been guided by the state. For the Chinese communist state, authority to control the historical narrative is key to establishing the legitimacy and to influencing public ideas in cultural life and the educational system. The narration of history is a method of disciplining; sometimes the comprehension of— or infinite faith in—the communist/revolutionary interpretation of Chinese history also becomes an examination of the operation and process of power. The Criticize Lin Biao 林彪, Criticize Confucius Campaign 批林批孔運動 was a specific historical event for the incorporation of a historical narrative, the examination or disciplining of public ideas, and of politics. After the defection and death of Lin Biao 林彪 in 1971 during the Cultural Revolution, meant as a political blow aimed at Zhou Enlai 周恩來, the number two in the Chinese communist regime

and Mao's court), Mao launched the Criticize Lin (Biao), Criticize Confucius Campaign 批林批孔運動, which connected and criticized the goals of both Confucius and Lin Biao. The latter was once Zhou Enlai's secret ally. Obviously, if this political argument was to hold, this bizarre interconnection – of a philosopher who lived two thousand years ago and a contemporary opponent – certainly required revision of ancient history. Along with the plentiful publishing of comic books (Fig.1), posters, brochures, textbooks, and academic works, the taking of a convincing stand in favor of the new historical conception about Confucius became a standard mode of examination or disciplining for those in the public eye in that period. Those who were deemed not active enough in the Criticize Confucius/Lin Biao Campaign would be regarded as being short on loyalty for the CCP and Mao and as counterrevolutionary sympathizers.

Michel Foucault identifies how “the plague gave rise to disciplinary projects.”⁹ Applying Foucault's analysis to the communist dictatorship of China, I regard history itself to be analogous to the plague “as a form, at once real and imaginary, of disorder had its medical and political correlative discipline.”¹⁰ The Criticize Confucius/Lin Biao Campaign is an example of disciplining, which combines historical narrative, political propaganda, and visual expression (Fig.1). Through this kind of discipline, the Chinese state does not just call for “multiple separations, individualizing distribution, or an intensification and a ramification of power.”¹¹ Via its reconstruction of history, the regime distinguishes the public and the loyalists (and the recalcitrants), and identifies each. As Foucault says:

“The examination combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalizing judgment. It is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to

⁹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Translated from the French by Alan Sheridan, Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, INC. Second Vintage Books Edition, May 1995), 198.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 198

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 198

qualify, to classify, and to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them. That is why, in all the mechanisms of discipline, the examination is highly ritualized. In it are combined the ceremony of power and the form of the experiment, the deployment of force, and the establishment of truth.”¹²

Political persecution and humanitarian catastrophes caused by the intraparty politics, such as the Cultural Revolution and 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, led to further cultural censorship and ideological purges; and like the secondary damage of natural disaster, the Cultural Revolution sparked the Criticize Lin (Biao), Criticize Confucius Campaign 批林批孔運動. The 1989 Tiananmen Square Incident similarly provoked a purge. Within this context, Chinese artists who deem themselves not merely handicraftsmen but intellectuals chose to represent their individual or generational trauma experience, traumatic memory, and political opinion in their art. I examine them in the next chapters.



Fig. 1: Painting: Gu Bingxin/He Youzhi; Comic script: Xiao Gan, *Confucius's Life of Guilt* 孔老二罪恶的一生 (Cover of Comic Book), 1974, Comic Book, Shanghai People's Publishing House.

¹² Ibid., 184

CHAPTER 1

THE RUIN OF THE OLD WORLD: WU HUFAN, LITERATI PAINTING AND THE MODERNIZATION OF CHINA

For the traditional Chinese artists or old-style literati such as Wu Hufan 吳湖帆 and Zhang Daqian 張大千, the establishment of the PRC and the rule of the CCP were something that has to be accepted. When they confronted this modern autocratic regime which never existed before in Chinese history, they were totally at loose ends. In their intellectual/educational background or past lived experience, they could not find any useful theoretical or practical knowledge to enable them to deal with their recent situation effectively. For them, choosing to cooperate with the new regime or exile abroad not only means a turning point in the art career but also determines the way they choose to live: to suffer the modern totalitarian dictatorship or to become a wanderer with cultural identity barriers.

In an epistemological sense, the concept of traditional Chinese art, especially the conception of literati painting, is intellectual and elitist. On account of the monopoly for cultural and educational resources, Chinese traditional literati artists such as Wu Hufan, doubtlessly possessed considerable subjectivity intellectual thought of consciousness. As cultural representatives of the old property-owning class, they became targets of the revolution after 1949, which means they needed to give up their cultural/social status under the pressure of ideological reform. The new idea was that the conception of traditional literati painting is the rotten culture of the leisure class or exploiting class, and it should be eliminated in the new communist/socialist society. This was one main purpose of the communist revolution and class warfare. Therefore, this historical phenomenon - deprivation of their financial/social/cultural property - follows the first historical narrative and background I noted in the introduction: that the enforced transfer of property ownership, from former property owners to the proletariat, and then to the socialist party, is the core economic/political/cultural purpose for the communist/socialist regime. The economic pillage accompanies cultural plunder and ideological control.

This chapter will focus on the conflicts between the modern totalitarian regime (the PRC) and the pre-modern spiritual/intellectual artists such as Wu Hufan. I will argue that their relationship was dominated by the characteristic of the modern totalitarian regime: progress.

Comparison between the Traditional Chinese Monarchy and the Modern Totalitarian Regime of China

Private land ownership ensured that Chinese landowners were autonomous on the political and economic level, and also guaranteed a materialist social foundation for the traditional Chinese literati and literati painters. In the traditional monarchical-bureaucratic political system, due to pre-modern social organization, monarchs could not merely dominate political trends and ideological control of ideas or administrative systems. Positioned opposite the emperors and their palaces, the landlord class was always another economic/political/cultural entity that maintained a level of check and balance. The worlds which the traditional Chinese literati and literati painters described (or painted) emerged from a similar and particular cultural independence: of being distant from the imperial court; of being intellectual; of being unique and even unprofessional. For these literati painters, their artworks are reflections of their own artistic and aesthetic tendencies and artistic pursuits. They are not, however, a reflection of the aesthetic opinions of the emperors or courts. Meanwhile, in the matter of political integrity, literati artists usually served as the models for Chinese traditional intellectuals. Some of them are even hermits or politically marginal persons, such as Ni Zan 倪瓚 and Huang Gongwang 黃公望 in the Yuan Dynasty(1271–1368 AD), or, Chen Hongshou 陳洪綬 in the Ming Dynasty(1368–1644 AD).

Yet, the court's cultural style also imitated or advocated literati culture either as a show of respect or as a kind of cultural policy of mollification. The interaction between the court and the literati is a game of mutual availability. For official recognition, some literati artists were glad to serve emperors within the court, or within unique, official art institutions such as the painting academy 畫院, These emperors were also glad to build images of the protectors and supporters

of traditional culture through their support of literati art. To spread the political ideas and cultural orthodoxy of rulers, the painting academy also played a functioning role in ideological propaganda and social education. Even now, under the communist regime of the CCP, painting academies such as the China National Academy of Painting, the Beijing Art Academy, or the Shanghai Chinese Painting Institute also exist as propaganda organs of government at all levels. Although these artists serve the communist regime as their ancient peers served emperors, in these modern propaganda institutes they do not have any local economic foundation or social resources as did ancient landowners. They only earn a salary from the national budget as cultural bureaucrats.

After 1949, traditional literati artists, especially those who came from landlord's families, became objects of revolutionary transformation due to the requirements of modernization and the communist idea of eliminating the propertied class. The conflict between the new dictatorship and the old intellectuals was inevitable. As cultural symbols of the old landowner class, these literati artists, their heritage and identity, died with the extinction of the entire propertied class. They finally also had to confront corporeal elimination, the gravest consequence in the Cultural Revolution.

1. Traditional Chinese Monarchy and the Modern Nationalism of Modern China

Nationalism is a cultural modernization plan for China, which is a country that cannot spontaneously modernize. It is a product of the integration of communism with modern progressivism. In the modernizing process, Chinese nationalism provided cultural psychology at the time: the idea that the Chinese are now humiliated and invaded in imperialist war and capitalist competition precisely because of the backwardness caused by the self-confidence. Under the ideas of modern progressivism, if China wants to obtain a favorable position in the geopolitical and military competition, it must sacrifice the old social classes and cultural achievements since they are useless within the situation of modern competition.

For Chinese artistic creation in the 20th century, the Chinese communist regime ideologically praised nationalism as much as communism. After 1949, artistic production must not only meet the so-called standards to represent the merits of the proletariat in the communist art form. Their creation should also have Chinese characteristics. In other words, precisely because official ideology is a mixture of communism and nationalism—the CCP claims Chinese communism is socialism with Chinese characteristics—the artist's creations must also meet these same requirements: it shows a mixed feature in artistic semantics, which is political propaganda for the new communist ideology employing traditional Chinese visual expressions. For the emerging communist dictatorship that uses these traditional literati artists, their painting language with the vocabulary of traditional Chinese art form undoubtedly meets the ideological requirements of nationalism within the ideological discourse of the Chinese Communist Party.

Throughout Chinese history, for almost two thousand years, Chinese people were under the control of the bureaucratic monarchy, which is also a despotist political system. However, it is hard to say if those rulers (emperors and bureaucrats) of the bureaucratic monarchy were as progressive as Marxists and socialists. In general, these ancient dictators were conservative and glad to utilize more ancient political philosophy, such as Confucianism, to certify regime legitimacy and consolidate their power base. Except for the possible loss of their political power through political manipulation, most of the Chinese ancient rulers had nothing to worry about. For them and the stagnant (or slowly progressing) society, reformational purpose or the awareness of reformation was unnecessary. Although ancient China was under warlike threat from the empires of the steppes such as the Hun Empire and Mongolian Empire, in the cold weapon era, Chinese rulers still could fill gaps in military skills with relatively more efficient social production, and keep the peace with flexible diplomacy. For these pre-modern traditional Chinese empires, technological revolution and industrialization are not the primaries and urgencies for their policies. Simultaneously, because of being short of the requirements of technological innovation, consequentially these empires also lacked corresponding political/social organizations

to mobilize financial/social resources to deal with the problems of modernity.

For even the most elegant among the emperors of ancient China, artistic creation was more of a political servant or a simple pastime. In the painting academy 畫院, the official art institution of the ancient Chinese court, the art of court painters was restricted. However, as there was no ideological monitoring agency controlled by imperial power throughout the society, to supervise or suppress them, artists who did not serve the court and created artworks as they wished outside the palace, such as literati painters after the Song Dynasty, (960–1279 AD). Thus whether in terms of art theory or artistic creation, literati artists have gradually become the dominant role of traditional Chinese art in Chinese ancient society. This relative freedom of artistic creation, far from the control of political ideology, is a cultural tradition and spiritual orthodoxy inherited by the 20th-century Chinese literati painters (Wu Hufan, 吳湖帆).

Because of the lack of spontaneous industrialization or modernization, the last traditional Chinese empire (Qing Dynasty) was trapped in political/military risk or passivity in international competition with the modern capitalist/colonial empires such as British Empire or the liberal capitalist countries like the USA. In its similarity to other backward countries in the modernization progress such as Iran, Turkey, and Vietnam, for China, this passive situation lasted more than one hundred years beginning in 1840, during the international expanse of imperialism during the 19th century and 20th century. Therefore, for China, at its actual political development level, the geopolitical and cultural revival with nationalist meaning has become the implicit mission of China's modernization process. For Chinese intellectuals and politicians in the 20th century, modernization is not just an industrial upgrade, but the key to the survival of the nation and even the Chinese culture.

Liang Qichao 梁啟超 created the concept of China as a modern national state, barely 100 years old. Before Liang's conceptual creation, it is hard to say if the Chinese had a national/nationalistic identity as a citizen of a modern national state. In 1902, Liang created and utilized the first and most significant Chinese nationalist and ideological term, “Chinese nation

中華民族,” to mold the image of China as a modern national state. In his work, Liang displays China as a great country with an uninterrupted cultural and national identity:

In the largest continent of five continents and the largest country of the continent, which one is? My China; Which one is the third of the world's population? My China; Which one has not had a break in the history of more than four thousand years? My China! 立于五洲中之最大洲而為其洲中之最大國者，誰乎？我中華也；人口居全地球三分之一者，誰乎？我中華也；四千余年之歷史未嘗一中斷者，誰乎？我中華也！¹³

In the chapter that discusses one principality, Qi 齊, from 771 to 476 BCE, the ideological term Chinese nation is mentioned for the first time. Liang says:

*Qi was a maritime power. In ancient times, for our Chinese nation, the one who had ocean consciousness is the only principality of Qi. Hence, there are two conceptions came from it: one is the national view; another is the view of the world. 齊，海國也。上古時代，我中華民族之有海思想者厥惟齊。故于其間產出兩種觀念焉：一曰國家觀，二曰世界觀。*¹⁴

In this work, Liang laid the conceptional foundation for the modern nationalism of China. The Chinese nation is then similar to the Russian nation and Russian irredentism, or the Türk for Pan-Turkism, which is a nationalistic term created by intellectuals to deal with the crisis of modernity and that has little support from historical evidence. Although it is hard to say that nationalism inevitably causes modern totalitarianism, during the 20th century, these historical

¹³ Liang Qichao, *Discussion for the Overview of the Transition in Chinese Academic Thought* 論中國學術思想變遷之大勢, (Shanghai: Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House, 2001), 4-5.

¹⁴ Ibid., 29

phenomena showed us a different view of this process: those backward countries which were trapped in the crisis of modernity almost chose the political system of dictatorship to complete the transformation to modernization from monarchical state to modern nation. So it seems that for these backward countries, nationalism (and subsequent modern political dictatorship) may count as a precondition for the modernization process, and maybe a theoretical basis for the construction of a modern state.

Because of this inseparable historical link between nationalism and modern totalitarian politics in the process of China's modernization, China's original intellectual elites (landlord class intellectuals) inevitably fell into a modernized self-reform, regardless of this change is spontaneous or passive. The Communist Party of China, the ultimate executor of modern totalitarianism and nationalism, completed China's industrialization and nationalist renaissance in a geopolitical sense at a huge humanitarian cost. In the process, the old-style literati class and literati artists tragically became victims: they provided economic and cultural fuel for China's destructive modernization. The literati class, and literati artists such as Wu Hufan, used their tragic life story in mainland China after 1949 to prove that the old-style culture and artistic spirit would inevitably be destroyed under the devastation of modern totalitarian politics.

2. Communism and Totalitarianism in the Modernization Progress of China

For Chinese literati and literati artists after 1949, the role of the CCP in their careers was undoubtedly decisive. If a national revival with nationalism is the political philosophy of the Communist Party of China, then communist totalitarianism is the way to achieve this goal. According to the views of the CCP, it is the representative of the old oriental culture, the landlord class, and the old intellectuals (such as Wu Hufan), who hindered the rejuvenation of the country. Therefore, after the Chinese Communist Party established the regime, it began to systematically destroy the economic foundation and social connections of the old-style literati, turning them into submissive, and, finally, erasing them from history and reality.

In concluding my discussion of the political context of the modernization of China, I note that it is obvious that traditional literati artists, as the crystallization of Chinese traditional culture and as cultural representatives of the accompanying former property owners, had already been disarmed in their confrontation with the establishment of the PRC, a dictatorship of strict totalitarianism which never existed before. This encounter contained profound significance for Wu Hufan, and the entire Chinese sense of modernity.

Through a complex series of political operations and compulsory administrative measures which I describe below, the CCP plundered the private property of old landowners, which naturally included the economic foundation and source of income of old literati and literati painters. After losing ownership of their private property, these literati painters had to economically attach themselves to the CCP's cultural bureaucracy, and eventually became part of the CCP's ideological propaganda machine. At the same time, due to China's economic composition under the control of the Communist Party, the capitalist market economy gradually transformed into a socialist planned economy. Literati painters could not then even rely on the market to sell their works to ensure their survival.

After 1949, the CCP urgently hoped to realize modernization quickly. For them, sacrificing the entire old world, and culture and art with a long historical tradition born from it, is not a difficult choice. On the other hand, because it lacked a complete system of industrialization, the problem of the progress of modernization still haunted China after the collapse of the Qing empire. Therefore, the construction of industrialization and how to accomplish it became a priority for successive governments. Successful industrialization (but not a successful democratic political system) is the basis of legitimacy and determines that the path of modernization is to be full of blood and tears. By hook or by crook, the PRC established and rules by the CCP, accomplished the construction of the basic industrialization for the economic industrial chain with the enormous humanitarian cost.

Even for nations with programmatic industrialization, modernization progress is difficult

and involves testing and adjusting the political-economic system again and again. A responsibility and basic function for a modern democratic government is the balancing of the interests of all parties. However, for these countries, because of being with spontaneous industrialization and earlier than other countries, during the accomplishment of their industrialization/modernization progress, they did not have to confront the international political and military pressure from other countries with a high degree of modernization. Therefore, they can achieve the goals of modernity in a relatively peaceful process without enormous humanitarian cost. In contrast, because it faces the pressure from other nations with high modern development, a backward country in modernization has to accomplish its industrialization in the short term, and thus the utilization of extreme political behavior is understandable.

The extreme political behavior of the elimination of the entire class of former property owners in the name of abolishing the exploiting classes is specific to the PRC; whereupon, the state power of the PRC rapidly promoted the basic industrialization in a few years in the form of the socialist state-operated economy. For the Chinese ruler after 1949, Communism or Socialism clearly provided the easiest solution and ready-made mode of political action, to obtain the industrialization that never existed before. As Milovan Djilas analyzes in his *The New Class*:

“In both instances, socialism was inevitable – as a slogan and pledge, as a faith and a lofty ideal, and, in fact, as a particular form of government and ownership which would facilitate the industrial revolution and make possible improvements and expansion of production.”¹⁵

“The case is entirely different from contemporary Communist revolutions. These revolutions did not occur because new, let us say socialist, relationships were already existing in the economy, or because capitalism was “overdeveloped.” On the contrary.

¹⁵ Milovan Djilas, *The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System*, (London: An Atlantic Press book published by Thames and Hudson, 1957), 18.

They did occur because it was not able to carry out the industrial transformation of the country.”¹⁶

In Djilas’s analysis, it is obvious that because the modernization of backward countries (such as China) lacks an industrialized base, hence their political powers chose Communist/Socialist revolution as an effective solution (through plunder of former property owners), to centralize the economic/social resources into industrialization. For the PRC, in terms of specific administrative operations, the CCP employed three steps to gain social resources from the former agricultural economic elite and to accomplish industrialization: land reform, agricultural collectivization, and intensive development by industry.

First of all, the main objective of land reform is to destroy the local elite as an exploiting class by using the language of class warfare. And the indeed purpose of the CCP is to construct a direct financial levied system without any other intermediary levels between the central government and the underlying farmers. Meanwhile, reaping original social resources from these former “exploiting classes” is another purpose of land reform. Because of the elimination of these former property owners, and then without any obstacles, the national power of the CCP could infiltrate every level of the economic entity: the poor peasant of agricultural production and the worker in industrial manufacturing. For economic extraction, such a direct system of control is more efficient than the old multilevel social structure in the ancient monarchy.

Additionally, the policy of agricultural collectivization canceled pricing rights that depended on the mechanism of market supply and demand. The government also managed the scale of agricultural production because the only agricultural buyer and distributor was the government of the PRC. The government also plans agricultural production according to its requirements and the costs needed for industrial production. On the other hand, when the proletarian government buys agricultural products, it can force prices down as it wishes and

¹⁶ Ibid., 19.

furthest exploit the proletariat.

In his *Origins of the Modern Chinese state* Philip A. Kuhn summarizes this political operation after the establishment of the PRC after 1949:

“The collective system was designed to gather the produce of the weary Chinese farmers more firmly than ever into the hands of the state.....How to control middlemen or put them out of business, how to fix responsibility for tax payment upon human settlements- these were questions the New Regime dealt with in revolutionary ways.....Revolution gave the coup de grace to the old high culture, which had already been fatally weakened by Western influence and the decline of the old system of elite certification.....The new system was imposed on the countryside stripped of effective elite leadership. More important, though, was the revolutionary state's commitment to industrialization. The demands of the new state exceeded anything imaginable under the Old Regime, even in the days of the Guomindang. The days when the state sought only stable maintenance were gone forever. The strategy of squeezing the farmers to bring about forced-draft industrialization, and the administrative power actually to do so, were developments inconceivable without the revolution.”¹⁷

Wu Hufan 吴湖帆 and his works after 1949: Modern Totalitarianism and Artistic Expression

1. Birth, Family Background, and Achievement during the Mainland Period of the Republic of China

As a representative Chinese literati painter of the 20th century, Wu Hufan and his

¹⁷ Philip A. Kuhn, *Origins of the Modern Chinese state*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2002), 110-111.

experience in PRC after 1949 undoubtedly epitomize the tragedy of all literati painters and traditional Chinese art during that period. In the form of modern totalitarianism, the new modernity of China completely changed their destiny and profoundly affected their artistic creation. Wu Hufan's career and artistic creation after 1949 are exemplary of the suffering of traditional intellectuals under modern totalitarian politics, and of the historical traumatic memories that remain to this day. If Max Weber's so-called disenchantment of modernity makes intellectuals and old metaphysical traditions helpless in modern society, then the mark left on them by modern totalitarianism, and that violates basic human values, is even more bloody and brutal.

Wu Hufan 吴湖帆 was born in a family of bureaucratic landlords in 1894. His father, Wu Benshan 吴本善 was a local official and calligrapher. His grandfather, Wu Dacheng 吴大澂, (1835-1902), was a top governor and military region commander in 1894 (the top governor of Hunan province, 湖南巡撫) in the Qing Dynasty, and also a renowned painter, calligrapher, ancient writing scholar and specialist in epigraphy. Wu Hufan's 吴湖帆 maternal grandfather, Shen Shuyong 沈樹鏞, (1832-1873) used to be a cabinet secretary 內閣中書 in the Qing Dynasty, and he was also a renowned litterateur, collector, ancient writing scholar and specialist in epigraphy. The Shen family collection was the most renowned collection of epigraphy in the south-east region of China.

In 1865, because Wu's family was so honored in the Qing Dynasty, at the time of Empress Dowager Cixi's 慈禧太后 60th birthday, Wu Hufan was granted a two products officer 正二品萌生候選主事¹⁸ even he was just a two years old infant.

According to Wu Hufan's family background, compared to other modern Chinese literati artists who came from upper classes or bureaucratic landlords such as Chen Shizeng 陳師曾 or Chen Shaomei 陳少梅, Wu's family was even more distinguished. Actually, after the collapse of

¹⁸ Wang Shuzhong 王叔重 and Chen Hansu 陳含素, *Biographical Chronicle of Wu Hufan*, 吴湖帆年譜 (Shanghai: China Publishing Group, Orient Publishing Center, 2017), 4.

the Qing Dynasty and the establishment of the Republic of China, that several modern Chinese literati artists did come from the families of bureaucratic landlords or even the royal family of the Qing Dynasty (Fu Ru, Qi Gong, 溥儒, 啟功), a phenomenon of Chinese art history. And in a manner of speaking, their existence and artistic creation dominated artistic trends and cultural inheritance during the mainland period of the Republic of China.

Wu's career made considerable progress during the mainland period of the Republic of China (1912-1949). Because of good influences and sound instruction by his family environment, Wu inherited familial artistic talent and cultural attainment. In painting, Wu focused on landscape and also was an expert at flower-and-bird painting. With Zhang Daqian 張大千 and Pu Ru 溥儒, he was honored as one of the three luminaries in landscape painting 山水三鼎甲 by Yu Feian 于非闇 in 1942¹⁹. He was praised as a talented poet, a doctoral connoisseur of painting and calligraphy, and a renowned collector. Because of his rich family collection and well-known connoisseurship in painting, calligraphy, and epigraphy, Wu and Qian Jingtang 錢鏡塘 were honored as two jades in connoisseurship 鑒定雙璧 after 1945.²⁰

2. Wu's Life and Art in the PRC Period

After 1949 that the CCP seized national power from the KMP, the new communist regime provoked a series of political action to purge the old propertied class, which included Wu's family of bureaucratic landlords. During the Land Reform of the early 1950s, Wu and his families had to give up all of their land ownership and assigned their lands to local farmers, which was enforced or encouraged by local government and the countryside basic party organization. After 1949, Wu gradually donated his calligraphy and painting collection to the Beijing Palace Museum and other

¹⁹ On Wu Hufan's career before 1949, see Clarissa von Spee, *Wu Hufan: A Twentieth Century Art Connoisseur in Shanghai*, (Berlin: Reimer, 2009).

²⁰ Wang Shuzhong 王叔重 and Chen Hansu 陳含素, *Biographical Chronicle of Wu Hufan 吳湖帆年譜*, 3.

public cultural institutions, which was also encouraged by the party organization. However, his family situation 家庭成分 was still treated as a family of the large landowner 大地主家庭出身, a fixed identity that followed Wu and his descendants for several generations. With this political or identification tag, Wu and his family were politically monitored by the basic party organization. Thus the original sin of having been part of the old exploiting class seriously and negatively affected Wu and his family in public life and their careers.

The first iconic event in this period was the execution of Wu's first son, Wu Mengou 吳孟歐, (1920-1951), also a renowned painter and calligrapher. The only record of this event states that because Wu Mengou was dedicated to self-abandonment and indulgent, the People's Government of Suzhou executed him. Although some records show that Wu Hufan had family conflicts with his first son and that Wu disowned him²¹, it is hard to say that his son had received fair judicature. Because the execution based on the idea of class warfare and killing by quota was for the new communist regime the best and most efficient alarm system of the early days of the PRC's establishment, more than 712 thousand people were executed during this period. For this, was a political movement (provoked by the CCP and Mao Zedong) and a targeted operation, called the Campaign to Suppress Counterrevolutionaries 鎮壓反革命, (1950-1951). Wu Mengou was very likely one of the victims murdered as part of this movement.

The second tragic event happened in the Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957 反右運動. Because Wu had received a payment sum in a deal with Mao Zedong for a painting in 1956, Wu was suspected of the crime of blackmailing the great leader. His family's background as large landowners also played a part in this issue. Meanwhile, his usual words and behaviors, which were reported to the party organization in this period, he was also suspected of social protest. And what's worse, Wu's private letters with Zhang Daqian, who was living in the USA during this period, revealed that he colluded with foreign forces to the disadvantage of the communist regime. All signs indicated that Wu was very dangerous and to be convicted as a rightist, which

²¹ Ibid., 462.

was the given name and political identity of dissenters to the communist regime. Fortunately, with unexpected help from some friends who were senior bureaucrats in the CCP, Wu evaded the disaster this time by a fluke. Nevertheless, as a scapegoat, his second son, Wu Shouou 吳述歐, admitted all charges and was convicted as a rightist.

According to modern Chinese art history from 1949 to 1977, it is rare that the traditional literati artist expressed discontent or despondent feeling through his visual works. Normally, for traditional Chinese literati, a poem (especially a literary work with traditional Chinese poetic flavour) is a more general form that can be used to express a negative opinion/impression. This creative concept of literature/art is called euphemistic expression. The painting Wu Hufan created in 1959, named *Open-minded Learning and Red Professional* 虛心學習, 又紅又專 (Fig. 2), is an artwork with euphemistic expression that expresses Wu's subtle revolt against the ideological propaganda of the communist regime. Between 1949 and 1977, precisely because there were so few subtly sarcastic visual works of art directed at communist ideology and thought control, this work by Wu Hufan is especially precious. With a title inspired by ideological propaganda (Open-minded Learning and Red Professional 虛心學習, 又紅又專), Wu paints a twig of bamboo holding a red brick (or the brick oppresses a twig of bamboo). Because of its hollow stem, the bamboo means open-mind; and by the red color and a pun, the same Chinese pronunciation of both brick and professional, Zhuan 磚, 專, the red brick means both succumbing to communist (red) ideological identity and keeping professionalism in art creation.

In the traditional Chinese iconographic system of visual art, bamboo with nodulation and a hollow stem means integrity and modesty, which are also the merits of a decent gentleman. Also because of its perseverance in harsh natural environments such as hard winter or wild wind, the traditional literary men and intellectuals attach to bamboo the intrinsic cultural values of insistence on purity/justice and the quality of resistance towards power and politics. Therefore, when the traditional literati artist creates a work of a bamboo grove, the image is a visual variation of self-portrait or the desired mindset.

The traditional method for drawing bamboo is usually the painting of a cluster or several branches of bamboo in one composition. The main points of appreciation within this kind of work are free brushwork, shading of ink, deliberate composition, and thematic interaction between the image and inscriptions or poems, the writing on the edge. For instance, one section of Xu Wei's 徐渭 *Nine Sections of Ink Flowers* (Fig. 3) is a model of this kind of work. In this 16th-century ink painting which accompanies the painter's poem and record of life, two branches of the bamboo stand in the image and are separated in front and back position by the artist's use of two shades of inks. Signing on the right side, Xu's poem talks about how a bamboo pulls through hard winter and springs to life at the call of spring thunder, which is the expression of the traditional iconographic significance of bamboo: its insistence on purity/justice and its consciousness, resistant towards unfriendly environments (power and politics).

Compared with the old master Xu Wei's work, Wu's bamboo painting expresses far more complex feelings about his specific situation of being under the pressure of modern totalitarianism. In Wu's painting, by depicting a red brick, the threatening power politics becomes a concrete image: in a coarse artificiality without any aesthetic design, intellectual merit, or spirit. This reification of national sovereignty and ideological oppression dramatically provokes an opposition within the context of political-ideological taboos. Meanwhile, this unique feature of this work shows a direct contradiction between traditional intellectual subjectivity and totalitarian national sovereignty, which never existed before in traditional literati art. This contradiction also reveals Wu's awareness of crisis and anxiety, when he realizes the threat coming from the communist regime, which is both physical and cultural persecution or elimination directed at the older propertied classes.

Additionally, in comparison with the two frondent bamboo branches in Xu's painting, Wu only depicts one bamboo twig with sparse leaves, especially the part under the brick. If we do some conceptual expansion, it is possible to see that Wu's work also expresses the personal moods of isolation, uncertainty, and despair. According to Xu's work, it is even hard to say that

his work is an ode about his intellectual subjectivity or self-confidence. However, it shows a successful vision that after the harsh trial, a symbol of intellectual/literati spirit still stands out against extrinsic pressures and detriment. This self-sufficiency in the state of mind or full of energy cannot be found in Wu's work. On the contrary, in Wu's painting, whether intellectual subjectivity or literati spirit, traps in extrinsic ideological prejudice and the political threat is trapped withering and cannot get over the fate of destruction. Even in a traditional iconographic context, the bamboo represents the spirit of persistence for just stance and moral force. These inherent merits have almost become causes of the disaster and have supported the bamboo (or Wu himself) for a moment.

Another possible focus is the neighborless psychological status, which is displayed by the number of bamboo branches. Compared to Xu Wei's two flourishing branches, Wu's single twig implies his isolated situation in terms of political status, social relationships, and cultural identity. Because his self-identification is as an orthodox cultural inheritor with literati/intellectual subjectivity, Wu cannot easily embrace communist/socialist ideology which deems that all old-time cultures are representatives of exploiting classes and with original sin. However, Wu cannot cast off his large landowner family background, which eliminates any possibility of receiving economic/social help from his own extended family and clan. These insulting titles, the family of the large landowner and also the rightist, intertwine Wu and his family and trap them in continuous ideological censorship and political surveillance. Because of his sufferings and that of his two sons during political persecutions like the Anti-Rightist Campaign, friends' betrayal and informers' reports became commonplace. At last, political exclusion aggravates self-isolation. Such isolation is expressed in this rare visual work with a similar intellectual identity to that of the ancient Chinese literati.

Not surprisingly, this painting became part of the serious evidence of Wu's counterrevolutionary crimes during the Cultural Revolution. In 1967, to reveal Wu's crime, his workplace, the Shanghai Chinese Painting Academy 上海中國畫院, pronounced:

“The big counterrevolutionary landlord, Wu Hufan, publicly challenges us, fires a poisonous arrow aim to us. He wickedly depicts ‘Open-minded Learning and Red Professional 虛心學習，又紅又專’ as a red brick presses a small bamboo.”

‘Red Professional’ lets the politics to be first-line, commander, and soul, which encourages us to hold the great red flag of Maoism as the principle. However, Wu menacingly likens a red brick without life and soul to ‘Red and Professional’, and likens a little bamboo with hollow and knobby stem to ‘Open-minded Learning.’ He utilizes that the ‘red brick’ presses the little bamboo to stop its regular growth to insinuate the people, who seek to make progress, are under the pressure of ‘Red Professional’ that they are almost dead. Wu Hufan, who is monstrously audacious, deliberately utilizes ‘the red brick’ and ‘the little bamboo’ to attack the ‘Red and Professional’ policy of the Communist Party. (This painting) is a big poisonous weed to bear grudge against the party and to slander Maoism.”²²

According to the reference above, it is clear that Wu’s family background was always his nightmare and became his undoing. For those intellectuals with a family background of being property owners, to label on them with their family background at the beginning of the PRC’s establishment was a strategy preparation for eliminating them with a convenient excuse in the future.

In 1965, Wu created *Celebrate the Success of Atomic Bomb in our Country* (Fig. 4). To depict the intumescent mushroom cloud, Wu uses a unique brushstroke, turbulence cloud brushstroke 亂雲皴, which was a typical brush skill fashionable in the Northern Song Dynasty used to depict cliff rock [the most famous painting with this skill is Guo Xi’s *Early Spring* (Fig. 5).] Through the free use of turbulence cloud brushstroke and its combination with chiaroscuro,

²² Ibid., 525.

Wu represents a powerful scene of the atomic bomb. With his elegant and orthodox painting skills, the theme and object are results of anti-human actions. The atomic bomb is also a final (or period) result of Chinese modernization progress of industrialization. The CCP achieved its political ambitions at this moment, at the cost of the elimination of the entire class of property owners and their intellectual elites. Even so, it is not clear whether Wu Hufan realized his fate in the following years or not. His artwork about ruin has an implication of admonition and apocalypse, whether for Wu himself or the old literati intellectuals.

In 1966, after the Red Guards ransacked his collections and he suffered persecution and social self-criticism, Wu had a stroke. Due to his family background as part of the large landowning class, he was evicted from Shanghai Huadong Hospital. Unfortunately, after intermittent physical and psychological torture, Wu Hufan died on the 12th of June 1968, at the age of 75. Because of his family background as a large landowner, his relatives could neither keep nor bury his ashes.



Fig. 2: *Open-minded Learning and Red Professional* 虛心學習，又紅又專, Wu Hufan 吳湖帆, 1959, Ink painting, 24×44cm, private collection.

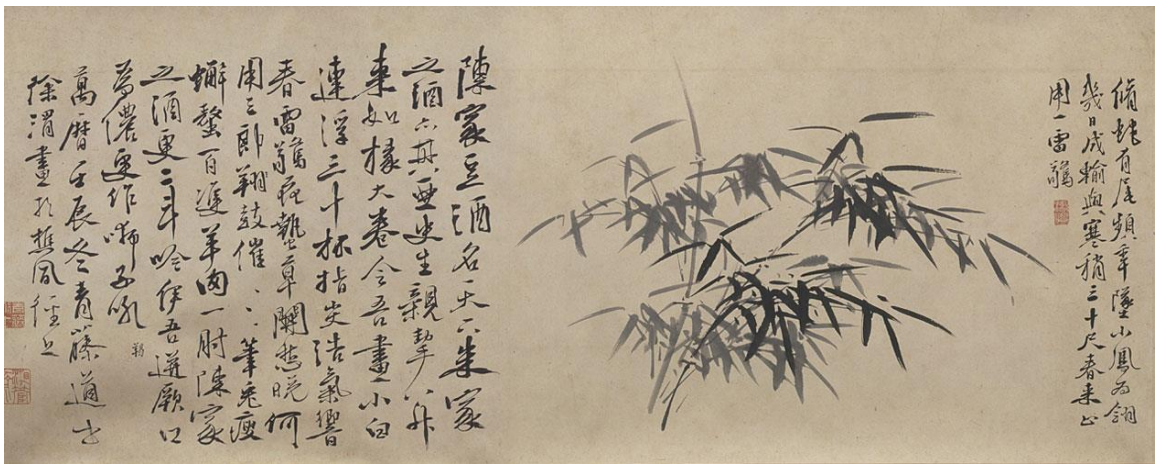


Fig. 3: *Nine Sections of Ink Flowers*, Xu Wei 徐渭, 1591, Ink painting, 46.6x625cm, collection in the Palace Museum in Beijing.



Fig. 4: *Celebrate the Success of Atomic Bomb in our Country* 慶祝我國原子彈爆炸成功, Wu Hufan 吳湖帆, 1965, Ink painting, 135×67cm, collection in Shanghai Chinese Painting Institute.



Fig. 5: *Early Spring* 早春圖(detail), Guo Xi 郭熙, signed and dated 1072, Hanging scroll, Ink and color on silk, 158.3x108.1cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.

CHAPTER 2

THE FEMALE FIGUURE IN SCAR ART

In the period after the Cultural Revolution from 1977 to 1982, a consensus formed around an attitude of introspection/boredom towards it and also for Maoism, and became mainstream public thinking. After flattening the “Gang of Four”, one frustrated innovationist in Mao’s court, Deng Xiaoping 鄧小平, planned to take back the power from Hua Guofeng 華國鋒,²³ who was the successor of Mao Zedong. Because Mao authorized Hua himself when he was alive, and Hua had joined the political action of flattening of the “Gang of Four” 四人幫, the actual successors of Mao Zedong's political ideas, to establish his own authority, Deng Xiaoping had to utilize the force of the military and the general public opinion of being tired of Mao’s style of revolution as a source of his public support, and to help him tactfully taking power from Hua Guofeng (the rightful heir of Mao).

Meanwhile, in the literary and art circles of this period, Scar Literature 傷痕文學 or Literature of the Wounded, was the most famous and mainstream genre. This literary current focuses on questioning the rationality of throwing oneself into communism, especially questioning the justification of violent clashes that occurred in all of China’s cities from 1967 to 1968. On the other hand, it (the Scar Literature) highlights the process of mourning and grieving for the dead young souls lost in these absurd and violent struggles. It also emphasizes individualism as a way to go against the collectivism that is always advocated by official communist ideology. In that time, Deng shrewdly identified the basis of the Chinese people’s needs and strategically utilized every public opinion (including Scar Literature and Scar Art) that was beneficial to his power grab. He eventually captured virtually supreme power in the 3rd Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China 中共中央十一屆三中全會, from December 18 to December 22, 1978.

²³ After Huang Guofeng inherited the power, he basically declared himself as the loyal executor for Mao Zedong and his ideological/revolutionary route. The most famous ideological creed about him is the “Two Whatever”, it means: “We will resolutely uphold whatever policy decisions Chairman Mao made, and unswervingly follow whatever instructions Chairman Mao gave.”

Therefore, according to the historical phenomenon of the intraparty political struggle of the CCP after Mao's death, this chapter follows the second narrative clue of historical background that I mentioned in the introduction: as the name of the "two-line struggle" 兩條路線的鬥爭, the intraparty political struggle of the CCP concerns the cultural life of the whole society and artistic creation. It is precisely because of the internal struggle between Deng and Mao's successors that the Scar Art Movement, an art movement with historical introspection and political criticism, has taken place. Such a phenomenon has an explanation of Foucault's theory of the discipline in the meaning of political operation. Foucault's theory of discipline was applied to the extreme in the Cultural Revolution. The work of Cheng Conglin 程叢林 discussed in this chapter reflects this historical phenomenon: the alienation of female body and gender identity under the suppression of communist totalitarian-patriarchal ideology.

From Scar Literature to Scar Art: Maple and I love the oil field

The first work of the genre of Scar Literature is generally agreed to be Lu Xinhua's 盧新華 short story *Scar* 傷痕, which was published in 1978 in the *Wenhui Daily* 文彙報. It has to do with the tragedy when a daughter draws a line of political isolation between herself and her mother. She then abandons her mother because her mother has been deemed as a renegade of the Communist Party by the Revolutionary Committee that is controlled by the "Gang of Four". Although the heroine finally finds a way out of her absurdity and tries to come back to her mother's side, unfortunately, her mother has already died. The term "Scar Literature" comes from the title of this novel and a sentence from a letter from the heroine's mother which she leaves to her daughter: "Although my child did not suffer as much as I have been whipped by the 'Gang of Four'. But I know, the scars on my child's heart may be much deeper than mine."²⁴

The most direct and representative line of influence of Scar Literature on Scar Art can be

²⁴ Lu Xinhua 盧新華 and other authors, "*Scar*" and other novels(Beijing Publishing House, 1978).

seen in the picture-story book (or comic book, 連環畫). Like a publication, the picture-story book can reach many more people than oil painting, and is more easily comprehended on account of combining images with a story or novel. From 1977 to 1978, two short novels, Lu Xinhua's *Scar* and Zheng Yi's *Maple* 楓 were both adapted to illustrated books by the same group of artists: Liu Yulian 劉宇廉, Chen Yiming 陳宜明, and Li Bing 李斌. Unlike *Scar*, *Maple* 楓 (Fig. 6, 7) is a story about the loss of romantic love (or to say that the narrative style of *Maple* imitated in the narrative method of revolutionary literature, but its content is a romantic love story with doubtful revolutionary characteristics). One couple of young lovers grows up as classmates and friends with the hazy feeling of love; during the Cultural Revolution, they belong to different rebels groups of the Red Guards. The hero's group is victorious in the final battle of the bloody violent clashes. After a heated argument about which group has the more legitimate position concerning Maoism, the heroine, whose name is Danfeng (it means red maple leaf, 丹楓), commits suicide to insist on her ideological ideal which is counter to that of her lover, who leads the red guards of the hostile organization or rebel group.

Aspects of this illustrated book or painting series are very meaningful and deserve to be discussed. First of all, the production process of this famous illustrated book is different from American or Japanese standards, or the commercialized comic standard. Basically, the paintings of the illustrated book are not created with the methods of a comic book (with pen and ben day dot) but they are painted in gouache, and are oil paintings. They are painted in the style of easel painting and are deemed as easel paintings or fine art. In this period of Chinese art, there was no clear conceptual distinction between different artistic functions or mediums.

Additionally, some elements in this painting series became prevalent as iconographic signs that were later taken up by other artists, especially that of the female figure wearing a white shirt. The utilization of beautiful female figures as icons of both youth and subjectively-experienced trauma, became an artistic paradigm or motif in the painting of the later 1970s and 1980s. It is logical that the depiction of a cherubic woman being destroyed in a maniac,

ideological, and violent clash possesses the greatest dramatic and tragical impact for the audience, especially when the heroine figure has been vividly depicted as a youthful young woman with a strong sense of life, and not a crazed, utopian communist soldier. Fig. 7 shows a scene where the heroine of *Maple* is writing a love letter sandwiched between maple leaves. This kind of portrait became fashionable not just because it had been prohibited in the cultural revolution as a representation of bourgeois liberalization. Its highlighting of a general feeling of love and life is also an emphasis (as a comparison) on how human feeling has been contorted, polluted, alienated, and lost in an extreme era.

At times the female figure in the Scar Art Movement is also used to represent traditional value or merit, such as love or of family values, which had been ignored or criticized in the ideological context of the Cultural Revolution. In Gao Xiaohua's 高小華 oil painting, *I Love the Oil field* 我愛油田 (Fig. 8), the artist displays a scene of a couple who are breaking up their relationship because the man wants to stay in the oil field and focus on industrial production. In the period of the Cultural Revolution, such behavior – giving up personal happiness for the construction of the motherland – was strongly encouraged by the CCP in its communist, ideological narrative. Differing from the revolutionary female figure dressed in the white shirt, the woman in this work represents the sacrificial dimension of the Chinese people and the traditional family values of that period. And the work as a whole shows us how, through its ideological propaganda, an inhuman communist ideology invades and destroys inherently ethical relationships.

The manner in which the artist utilized the female figure here can be regarded as a motif of a traditional patriarchal stereotype: the tender woman only cares about love and family but ignores matter of national significance. Even here the artist uses this motif to further criticize mainstream communist ideology. Ironically, this stereotypical representation of the lack of women's self-direction exists not only in the communist revolutionary narrative, which is to stand for equality between men and women. It also exists in the traumatic narrative of the Scar Art

movement, which utilizes the female figure as the symbol of suffering in relation to humanitarianism and traditional values. Between these two phallogocentric contexts, women are shown to keep silent.

The Female Figures in the Traumatic Narrative

Of all the artworks that utilize the new subject of Scar Art, Cheng Conglin's 程丛林 *One Day of 1968, Snowy* (Fig. 8) is one of the most highly representative visual works. Even if there are some narrative ingredients in this painting (such as the title of this work associates with a specific time), unlike *Maple* 枫 and the narrative art form such as the comic book, Cheng's work has no clear clues about where this scene happening or who these people are (they are anonymous). Therefore, this work exhibits a common phenomenon/scene of violent clashes during the most maniac, active period of the cultural revolution: the years of 1967 and 1968. Chen depicts a usual scene after a bloody armed conflict with the calm of historical documentation and based on the understanding of his own experience. He also borrows the methods and genre of oil painting of revolutionary realism coming from the Soviet Union, such as that of Vasily Ivanovich Surikov and his famous painting *The Morning of the Streltsy Execution*.

In this time, students' rebel organizations emerged from almost every high school and university. Because of the different opinions and degrees of understanding of Mao's ideology and his and his trusted followers' provocations, the different organizations fought with each other. After the army also took part in their fighting, cold weapon fighting soon upgraded to violent clashes with firearms. And the most brutal battles happened in Chongqing, a city with arsenals and that produced heavy weaponry and battleships:

“.....‘civil wars’ occurred elsewhere throughout the summer. According to a Chinese historian, ‘in actual fact, violent clashes occurred in all of China’s cities. There were

virtually no exceptions.’Contributing to the increasing violence among workers in particular in the summer of 1967 were inflammatory remarks made by members of the central leadership, most notably Jiang Qing. (P214) Of China’s major industrial centers, Chongqing was among the worst affected, mainly because a heavy concentration of arms factories was the source of an almost endless supply of lethal weapons to the combatants. According to a postmortem conducted by the party center in 1970, the fighting on one particular construction site, on one occasion alone, involved close to 10,000 combatants ‘employing virtually every kind of conventional weapon available’ and ‘resulted in the death or wounding of close to 1,000 class brothers, and the destruction of vast amounts of state property.’ The Chaotianmen harbor district on the Yangtze River was razed to the ground in a battle that saw the use of tanks, mobile artillery pieces, and anti-aircraft guns. Some 10,000 artillery shells were fired in Chongqing in August 1967, and more than 180,000 refugees from the fighting were counted in the provincial capital Chengdu alone. Shipping along the upper reaches of the Yangtze River was interrupted for over six weeks.”²⁵

When audiences confront this painting, they are guided to focus their gaze in the center of the whole image, which is the figure of a wounded young woman, a female red guard member (Fig. 8). She turns her head to her right side, glares at another female leader of the opposing rebels group, who is dressed in a military coat, and stares back at the heroine during the gap of recording her victory in her notebook. It’s worth noting that several details about this heroine. First, the heroine is also dressed in a white shirt (the same as the heroine of *Maple*. In *Maple*, this perhaps implies the purity of the heroine, but in this painting, it may hold an ironic meaning: the raggedness of the white shirt implies her communist ideal has been broken.) The shirt is torn and

²⁵ MacFarquhar, Roderick & Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution* (U.S.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 214.

hard to keep on her body. Her right shoulder is exposed from the big hole of the white shirt and displays her breasts. The heroine seems to be aware of that her sex/gender features are exposed in front of the opponents, and so she subconsciously uses her right hand to keep the shirt on her chest and to uphold her dignity.

Another detail about her is her short-cut hair, like a man's. In the cultural revolution or even in a much more generalized way in terms of cultural/praxiological meaning, the short hair of a woman can be regarded as a behavior of abandon or as the rejection of her sexual feature/nature. On the contrary, women's long hair is an unwritten convention of traditional femininity, or is a symbol of identification in the traditional society. In the revolutionary narratology of communist China, this kind of behavior, the abandoning of female sexual traits, is deliberately encouraged by political power and by official ideology. Cutting one's hair short, restricting the breasts, refusing cosmetics and so on, are considered as revolutionary or progressive behaviors; but the reverse behaviors (even sexual behaviors sometimes) are deemed to be rotten bourgeois liberalization or feudal restoration. Hence, showing or being forced to depict the sexual characteristics or especially the traits of the female gender, demonstrates that the actor or victim no longer has the right to be a member of a revolutionary organization or is otherwise disqualified to be a person of the revolutionary masses. For the heroine of Cheng Conglin's painting is caught in a nightmarish circumstance and has to show her female body and gender characteristics. According to the requirements of the communist revolutionary ideology, such a female characteristic was once she wanted to hide and suppress under the red guard's green uniform. But in the scene designed by Cheng Conglin, the gender characteristics of women are revealed in the most unwilling way: they are humiliated in public as a sign of non-revolution.(Fig. 10)

During the cultural revolution, the targeting of the female gender, the female body, and almost every aspect of women's sexuality was widespread and grim, achieved through the deprecation, cracking down, even slaughter and cannibalism. Thousands of women were raped,

murdered, dismembered in this unprecedented evil terror of communism. There is a rumor about the violent clashes occurred in Chongqing 1967 or 1968, that is because of internecine fighting among classmates in the same school or students among different schools, a rebels group of a high school in Chongqing nailed women's breasts cut from corpses of opposed rebels groups or of five black categories (with family backgrounds of imperialist, the landlord, rich peasant, bad elements, and rightist) to ornament its blackboard as war trophies. If this case is real it is clear that how terrible the situation was in that period, although it is hard to say that such a moment of hatred, dehumanization, evil and absolute discrimination against the female gender is rare in the history of the human beings. The most ironic thing is that the cultural revolution had once been deemed as the paragon of equal rights for men and women, just because Chinese women in that period seem like they did not need to wear skirts. This is an absolutely shameless misinterpretation of barbarism as freedom.

According to Chen's painting and the actual situation of women during the Cultural Revolution, it is obvious that how social turmoil caused by the intraparty political struggle of the CCP influenced gender identity, gender relationship, and artistic creation. In *Discipline And Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Michel Foucault identifies how the plague gave rise to disciplinary projects²⁶. Through his context and interpretation, the plague plays a role in political operations as a disciplined method or tool to screen and distinguish supporters and rebels of the regime. In the situation of the social context of the Cultural Revolution, the rejection of women's gender characteristics played the same role as did the plague in Foucault's theory: through abandoning their obvious gender-based features and own gender identity, women in the context of the communist revolution acquired the right to become members of the revolution. In the push for national sovereignty or dictatorial authority, there was also the conscious instigation and pressuring of women to reject their gender identity. For instance, one of the most famous

²⁶ Foucault, *Discipline And Punish*, 198.

accounts of political incendiarism during the Cultural Revolution in 1966 was Mao Zedong renaming of Song Binbin 宋彬彬 into Song Yaowu 宋要武. After joining an organization of the Red Guard in her high school, Song Binbin, who is a daughter of Song Rengqiong 宋任窮, one of the party bosses, murdered with her Red Guards classmates the headmaster (who was also a woman) of her high school. To further encourage her act of courage in resisting capitalist-roaders hiding in the party, Mao interviewed her and her classmates on the Tiananmen balcony on August 18, 1966:

“The high point of the day was when Song Binbin, one of the students chosen to meet the leaders, was allowed to put a Red Guard armband on Mao’s arm, thus obtaining his imprimatur on the movement and signaling its legitimacy nationwide. When Mao learned that her given name was ‘suave’ (Binbin, 彬彬),’ he said that she ought rather to ‘be martial’ (Yaowu, 要武).”²⁷

In this historical record, although Song is a murderer and member of the communist privileged class, she still cannot retain her female giving name. In some ways, traditional patriarchal oppression gave her a feminine name; the new revolutionary paternity gave her an unfeminine name and incited her to become a murderer. During the whole process, as a woman, Song and other female red guards and even their female victims all had no voice about their gender. The only effective part is national sovereignty or the communist regime. Gender identity was a weapon for discipline.

Because of this dysfunctional political/gender relationship, for the behavior subject/victims, any real sense of sex identification/gender identity is scarce and not just in the revolutionary narratology, but is also rare in examinations of the cultural revolution period. The

²⁷ MacFarquhar, *Mao's Last Revolution*, 108.

main reason for this phenomenon is that because both categories are dominated by men. Women's status was always limited to an objectified position. In the patriarchal haze, the women and their bodies are commonly regarded as *idealized casts of perfect suffering and victimization*²⁸. James Young points out in his *The Stages of Memory: Reflections on Memorial Art, Loss, and the Spaces Between* that:

“.....we often split these women off from their own lives and deaths, their own stories and experiences, We may hold the pain of women in high regard, perhaps, but when we regard it, we also find spectacle in it, converting their suffering into cultural, even psychological objects around which we tell our own stories, find large meanings, fixed and full of symbolic portent. As a result, particular parts of women's experiences as women remain unexpressed, unregarded, and even negated.²⁹

It is the preservation of objectified memory when life itself could not be preserved. The inseparability of male helplessness is both relieved by expressed in the objectification.....”³⁰

Equally, the sexuality or gender of victims has been removed or is very limited in the Scar literature, even in the novel expressing the loss or doom of the romantic relationship (*Maple*). For this, Lv Peng 吕澎 states that this contradictory visual/reading experience between the female beauty and context of revolution/counter-revolution are reflected in *Maple*:

“Through the lament for the whole generation, the author(artist) of *Maple* poetize heroine's death which potentially will be caught in Zolaist's description and finish it (the

²⁸ Young, James E., *The Stages of Memory: Reflections on Memorial Art, Loss, and the Spaces Between* (U. S.: University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst & Boston, 2018), 107.

²⁹ Ibid. 107

³⁰ Ibid., 114

description) through their deep sympathy. For the creators, Maple reflects that DanFeng(the heroine)is not a concrete person, but an aesthetic symbol of beauty, a woman deserving deep sympathy. In the cultural revolution with the ascetic significance, love has been deemed as evil and immorality. Therefore, the artists only imply love through the dedication to the work of class struggle; meanwhile, beauty has inherent ‘class nature’, youth and vitality, gentleness and brightness only are regarded as beauteousness when they are aided by a set of military uniform and shoes which are the symbols of a specific class.”³¹

But in visual art, and especially figurative art, like representational painting and photography, the representation of the female body cannot simply be ignored. In Cheng Conglin’s work, the gender of the heroine cannot be simply split off from the interpretation for this work, even if the expression of the female gender maybe not the most important original theme for the artist and only exists as an implication. Other aspects of this work are significant, like the heroine’s doxastic insistence for the communist ideal—she is trapped in an irrevocable failure and perhaps will be executed by the opponents who also deem themselves as orthodox followers of Maoism). Such group images are important for several generations, in the context of Scar Art.

As I mentioned earlier, violent clashes among different rebels organizations are merely pathetic and meaningless. They are the result of manipulation by the politicians who pull the strings behind the scenes. From primary school on, they are brainwashed by ideological education and by the personality cult of Mao Zedong. For them, being dedicated to the goals, or even dying for the communist ideal, is the purpose of their lives. Fear of death is regarded as inconstancy and cowardice. Like the heroine in Lu Xinhua’s *Scar*, if family affection and ties obstruct their pursuit of communist ideological excellence or progress, the red guards will abandon them as trash or as

³¹ Lv Peng 吕澎. *A History of Art in Twentieth-Century China*(Beijing: Peking University Press, 2007), 648-649.

the spawn of feudalism. Like the situation in *Maple* 楓 or Gao Xiaohua's *I love the oil field* 我愛油田, if love obstructs their pursuit of communist ideological progress, it should be destroyed and buried as petty-bourgeois sentiment.

In this sense, the cultural revolution redefines the inherent meaning of the moral person or social person through the destruction of the past ethical relations. Because of the enforced interventions and violent breaking of ethical connections, communication of living experience becomes absolutely impossible among different generations. This kind of confused feeling or alienation between generations is also on display in Cheng Conglin's painting. The middle-aged, spectacled man who holds a broom is a representative figure of the intellectuals of past political movements who were criticized and flattened; now he has been punished with servitude, and must clean the avenue. Because he has lost the right to be part of the revolutionary masses, he is one of few people (or only person) who does not wear the badge with a profile portrait of Mao Zedong. He is maybe a teacher, helplessly watching his former students killing and tormenting each other, or he may be a father who has been disengaged, hated, and deemed as a class enemy by his own children who are in the alignments in front of him. The children in this work are shown to be apathetic and alienated, which means they already well know about this kind of event; blood, corpses, and violence are no longer fresh for them. This work shows its audience the last phase of communist society which is devoid of any older moral concepts or inherent ethical relationships. The new rules about human beings, which is Mao's style of communism, had already dominated this society and country.

On the other hand, for Scar Art and Scar Literature, it falls short of a clear expression of criticism or thought against the communist political system and power. Its message is limited and not just because of restricted public opinion, but also because of the embarrassment of an entire generation whose identity was attached to the red guard. They are victims of ideological brainwashing and of the violence of the proletarian/communist dictatorship. But they are also guilty of injury and even murder as accomplices of Mao's unrestricted ideological warfare. The

result of this embarrassing identification and also on the part of the artists/authors of Scar Art is their refusal to face the truth of the cultural revolution and the communism which they once regarded as the very purpose of their lives. For the masters of official ideology, it is good that the public cannot really recognize the truth. For them, Mao Zedong is guilty on these ugly issues, but communism and the communist party cannot be blamed as the (evil) source. Even more ridiculous is the notion that Mao's revolutionary path had no problems; the situation went crazy only because the "Gang of Four" utilized Mao's orders and theories to attain their political ambitions.

For these many reasons, in terms of literature and art, the artists of Scar Art and the authors of Scar Literature cannot be regarded as creators with complete freedom or subjectivity in their artistic/literary activity. Their introspection toward the cultural revolution has not reached the ideological level, and they have not connected their traumatic experience with political/cultural criticism. They have just dwelled on the loss of youth and the wasting of lives. For Chinese people who are still living in a regime of dictatorship, the intellectual critique and expression of historical trauma is not just a moral obligation. It also significant for Chinese artists and writers in constructing their own subjectivity as intellectuals who are not just servants of official ideology.



Fig. 6: *Painting in Maple* 楓, Liu Yulian 劉宇廉, Chen Yiming 陳宜明, and Li Bing 李斌, 1979, Gouache on paper, 27.6×17.8cm, National Art Museum China.



Fig. 7: Painting in *Maple* 楓, Liu Yulian, Chen Yiming, and Li Bing, 1979, Gouache on paper, 17.8×27.6cm, National Art Museum China.

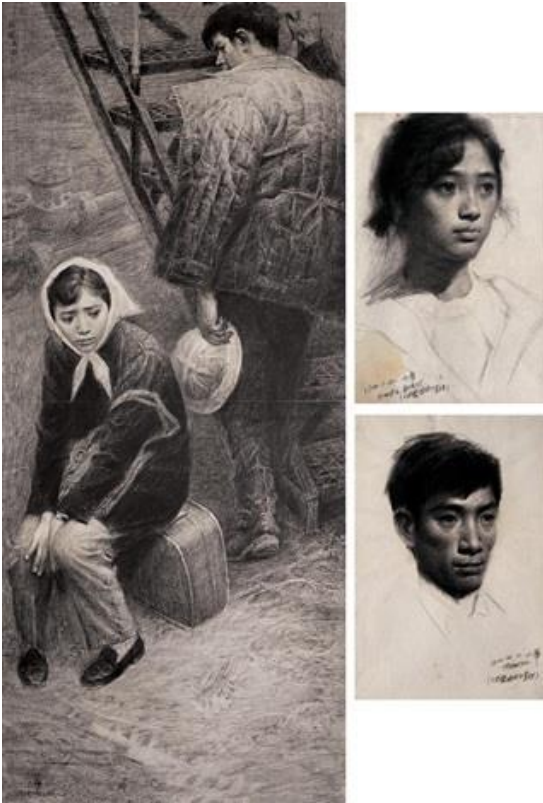


Fig. 8: *I love the oil field* 我愛油田 sketch draft (set of 3), Gao Xiaohua 高小華, 1978, charcoal on paper.



Fig. 9: *One Day of 1968, Snowy*, Cheng Conglin 程丛林, 1979, oil on canvas, 196×296cm, National Art Museum China.



Fig. 10: *One Day of 1968, Snowy* (detail), Cheng Conglin 程丛林, 1979, oil on canvas, 196×296cm, National Art Museum China.

CHAPTER 3

ARTISTIC/INTELLECTUAL SUBJECTIVITY AND POLITICAL PROTEST

For Chinese contemporary artists to reflect on historical events and to represent historical traumatic memories in their work is risky but worthwhile for artists under a totalitarian autocracy. This intellectual standard is precisely a principle of artistic creation held by the artists He Gong and Ai Weiwei, who are discussed in this chapter. That is, their notion is that art can practice political resistance. The focus of this chapter is on how these Chinese artists express their political dissatisfaction, their identity as intellectuals and their intellectual positions, when they encounter a humanitarian catastrophe triggered by the state.

He Gong and Ai Weiwei are both practitioners of Chinese contemporary art with long-term overseas experience. In the context of globalization, their artistic language or style is greatly influenced by Western contemporary art, especially installation art. Their works that I discuss in this chapter are mainly their installations and video works. Of course, all this started with the reform and opening up that took place in 1978. He Gong and Ai Weiwei's overseas trips became possible precisely because of these economic and political changes. Ultimately they then differed from previous Chinese artists in terms of artistic vocabulary and their artistic and intellectual subjectivity.

Sponsored by Deng Xiaoping 鄧小平 and his faction in the CCP, the policy of Reform and Opening-up determined the social development of the PRC since 1978. To save the national economy from near-collapse and a communist regime in crisis, Deng and his faction had to adjust the economic structure from a fully state-owned economy into a market-oriented one. On the other hand, whether the Reform and Opening-up policy (or the self-adjusting of the communist regime and the CCP) or enlightened artistic and intellectual subjectivity, both are the inevitable result of modernization. For the CCP, when it could not support its regime in exclusively relying on enclosed industrialization, it forced itself to abandon a partial economic monopoly and to lessen cultural control. For the Chinese intellectuals and artists He Gong and Ai Weiwei, their

enlightened intellectual subjectivity makes them construct independent political identities, to stand up, argue, criticize, and even change, national sovereignty.

The Tiananmen Square protests in 1989 culminated this trend of what can be called Intellectual Subjectivity withstands National Sovereignty, that had developed during this period. This incident caused social and cultural upheaval, which also impacted art production. This chapter follows a second narrative clue in historical background that I mentioned in the introduction: as the name of the "two-line struggle" 兩條路線的鬥爭, the intraparty political struggle of the CCP concerns the cultural life of the whole society and artistic creation. In this chapter, the contemporary Chinese artist Ai Weiwei's intellectual subjectivity is an actual manifestation of the desire for reform within the Communist Party and the public. It is for this reason that they also have unavoidable contradictions with the increasingly authoritarian and conservative Chinese Communist Party. This phenomenon can also find an explanation in Foucault's theory of discipline in the meaning of political operation; his arguments about the conflict between intellectual subjectivity and national sovereignty are found in his *Archaeology of Knowledge*. He Gong's works systematically reflect Foucault's idea of discipline in his artistic creative concept. Meanwhile, Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* also provides an interpretation to discuss how intellectual subjectivity generates through the work of artistic creation.

Tianmen Square and He Gong's Archaeological Traps

In the spectrum of contemporary Chinese artists, He Gong may not be the most famous. But his artistic and intellectual subjectivity made him a most uncooperative artists toward the Chinese Communist regime. His political resistance and position of uncooperativeness originated not only from his early suffering under the CCP, but also from his study abroad experience in the United States in the 1980s. The political storm that swept the country from Beijing in 1989 also left a deep historical mark on He Gong's artistic creation.

In 1989, the Reform and Opening-up policy confronted serious obstruction from Deng

Xiaoping, the political power core of CCP who has been respected as the chief designer for this policy which brought economic growth lasting almost ten years. However he could not deal with it appropriately when faced with powerful forces who opposed him in the party.

Therefore, as a dictator and a dominant figure of economic innovation in the 1980s, his questionable political judgment led him to make a series of poor decisions that caused the bloody incident on the night of June Fourth and set off a series of negative impacts last until now.

In 1989, the split of the PSC (Politburo Standing Committee, 政治局常委, the political nuclear institution of the CCP and the PRC) caused a series of political struggles and the ‘struggle between two lines’. Meanwhile, because of the death of Hu Yaobang 胡耀邦³² in April, the student movement and political protest appeared in the streets of Beijing and other cities such as Chongqing and Chengdu.

After the night of June Fourth—in that night, almost two thousand people were killed by the troops with heavy weapons in Beijing—the whole country was caught in grief, indignation, and fear of political arrest. Once subjects of political protest, they also had to express the traumatic experience and their intellectual thoughts about the political situation of that time. He Gong’s installation and performance, *the series of Trap Designed for Future Archaeology*, was exactly this kind of artwork.

Inspired by Michel Foucault’s *Archaeology of Knowledge* since the 1980s, He Gong’s work with the title of “The Trap Designed for Future Archaeology” comes from this book. As Foucault considers that:

³² The Death of Hu Yaobang usually is deemed as the blasting fuse of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests. Hu Yaobang, who is almost the only politician that is truly loved and esteemed by the Chinese people, had held the positions of nominal head honcho of the CCP (The General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China) in the 1980s and was respected as one of the leaders of innovationists in the party. Deng Xiaoping, Hu Yaobang, and Zhao Ziyang 趙紫陽 are regarded as the three engines for the Chinese economic reformation and open-up in the 1980s. (Zhao Ziyang is a colleague and most important ally of Hu, and as the successor of Hu after Hu lost his position and died in 1989. Zhao Ziyang also lost power and was under house arrest after the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests because of his overt sympathetic standpoint for the students in the protests. he died in 2005.)

“If the history of thought could remain the locus of uninterrupted continuities, if it could endlessly forge connexions that no analysis could undo without abstraction, if it could weave, around everything that men say and do, obscure synthesis that anticipates for him, prepare him, and lead him endlessly towards his future, it would provide a privileged shelter for the sovereignty of consciousness. Continuous history is the indispensable correlative of the founding function of the subject.....”³³

The *history of thought* (the history of ideas) in Foucault’s model has been deemed as an interpretive plan that theorizes a logical and authoritative explanation for history and reality. In his model, only various discrete objects, incidents, reports and personal narratives, belong to the framework of the history of thought, and they can be understood or meaningful. Such a view of history exactly is an ideological manipulation of structuralist and didacticism, and it supplies a possible political/ideological strategy for “the sovereignty of consciousness.” This could be found in the national socialism for the Third Reich or in the scientific socialism of the PRC: an ideological genealogy of all kinds of dictatorship. But the archaeology and the archive, as *the systems of statements*³⁴ in Foucault’s book, are theoretical antidotes with a deconstructionist perspective. They (the archaeology and the archive) offer a suitable solution for historical explanations of ideological/theoretical monopoly, in order to cope with the crisis from totalitarianism of post-Enlightenment and modernism:

“.....(the history of ideas) It is the analysis of silent births, or distant correspondences, of permanences that persist beneath apparent changes, of slow formations that profit from

³³ Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (New York: Translated from the French by A. M. Sheridan Smith, Pantheon Books, 1972), 12.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 128.

innumerable blind complicities, of those total figures that gradually come together and suddenly condense into the fine point of the work. Genesis, continuity, totalization: these are the great themes of the history of ideas, and that by which it is attached to a certain, now traditional, form of historical analysis. But the archaeological description is precisely such an abandonment of the history of ideas, a systematic rejection of its postulates and procedures, an attempt to practice a quite different history of what men have said.”³⁵

According to the reference above, Foucault asks a brand-new *description* of the history, which must be *a systematic rejection* of the previous historical principle, which is narrated by traditional patriarchal authority, modern totalitarian authority, or communist revolutionary ideological authority. Therefore, the repulsion against this authority is usually based on intellectual subjectivity, (gender) identity, physical experience, and in historical traumatic memory.

He Gong is inspired by Foucault’s theory; he finds that the *history of ideas* in Chinese modern history is also based on communist ideology³⁶. In his teenage education, the communist ideology of scientific socialism and the cult of Mao Zedong are almost the exclusive theoretical resources for several generations in China after 1949. Because his father was betrayed by a friend and endured political persecution in the Anti-Rightist Movement in 1956, He Gong was a son of a political offender at the age of two, a member of social alterity and a political pariah. The CCP gave this type of person a name: children of the Rightist 右派子女. This method of dismissal was similar to Wu Hufan and his family. In his growth process, he was always one of whom the party

³⁵ Ibid., 138.

³⁶ This information comes from personal communication with the artist. In 2019, He talked with me and recalled the evolution of his creative ideas in the late 1980s. After his short study abroad in the United States, he brought back English translations of Foucault's works to China. Later, at Southwest Normal University where he taught, he met a teacher who was also passionate about Foucault's theory and taught the history of Western philosophy. The discussion with this colleague seemed to deepen his understanding of Foucault's theory and made him use it to analyze the political reality of China at that time.

organization must beware, the one unreliable for the revolutionary masses, and the one who has a chance to be a good person but must pass the most rigorous communist ideological education or examination. In a sense, from his birth to the year of 1979, (according to Foucault's theory), his life was an incarnation of the narrative of marginal people, whose story should only exist in the fragmented jottings with black ink (which means evil in the grandiose revolutionary narration). They must be totally excluded from the glorious, correct, and revolutionary central narrative, with the interpretation of writing with red ink (as the symbolic significance of the blood of the communist martyrs and the color of the flag of CCP and the People's Republic of China). Almost fatefully, archaeology (in the sense of Foucault's theory) becomes the only suitable methodology and epistemological perspective for He Gong. It enables him to survey the dysfunction of modern history of China and the sanguinary reality of 1989.

At the beginning of the political protests in April and May 1989, there were several constructive dialogues between the student protesters and politicians. Even Deng Xiaoping himself had difficulty deciding about how to address this issue. Therefore, in public opinion, there still existed a kind of optimistic mood for peaceful political reform. Even if it wasn't, the bloody military crackdown might still not have been imagined as a final solution, even in the most extreme communist's mind. As a teacher in Southwest China Normal University 中國西南師範大學 Chongqing, He Gong could not easily keep out of the affair although he had not actively encouraged his students to join the protests in Chongqing. At last, as a member, he joined in a small protest on the campus in May. After the massacre of Beijing in June, the whole situation dramatically worsened.

On account of a sense of responsibility and intellectual public virtue, He Gong created *The Trap Designed for Future Archaeology*, which included several installations and a performance element. In the performance within of this work (Fig. 11), the artist covers himself with white cloth and sits in an iron cage. The whole space of the exhibition is illuminated only by the red lights and is set in a classroom of Southwest China Normal University Chongqing. Behind

the artist, the shape of a cross can be seen, constituted by the red tape exhibited on the wall. Beyond all doubt, He conveys a clear critical and negative attitude to the communist political system in this work, which is an antihuman jail that is marked with the blood of innocent people. This clear expression distinguishes this work from previous ones (such as Scar Art). He Gong's view is that whoever controls the power, if the whole country and political system are unjust and antihuman, anyone with a conscience is a prisoner, victim, and even a descendent of murder. The white cloth once again becomes the symbol of the weak and innocent victim with historical and contemporary trauma experience, similar to its use in *Maple 楓* illustrated by Liu Yulian 劉宇廉, Chen Yiming 陳宜明, and Li Bing 李斌.

Two aspects of He Gong's series of artworks are worthwhile discussing. Firstly, compared with the artists of Scar Art, He Gong is compatible with the archaeological description but not the mainstream revolutionary narrative, historiographic theory, and viewpoint of revolution history, which can be regarded as the history of ideas in a Chinese communist ideological context. This is because of the connatural status of the political/culturally marginalized person as previously mentioned. Independent thinking and not being under as much ideological control enables He Gong to build his intellectual/artistic subjectivity, perhaps because of this sense of alienation in regard to *the ideology of Genesis, continuity, and totalization*. Furthermore, he denies that the communist political system accomplishes the construction (of his intellectual/artistic subjectivity) by means of a conscious behavior of deconstruction regarding sovereignty in his work: it is integrated with the context of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, and its setting of the iron cage and illuminated red space clearly demonstrates He Gong's critical stance.

The writing of the western philosopher Hegel is of significance in regard to He Gong's work. Through the analysis for the master-slave relation in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel points out the methods for the construction of subjectivity(or recognition):

“Work, on the other hand, is a desire held in check, fleetingness staved off; in other words, work forms and shapes the thing. The negative relation to the object becomes its form and something permanent because it is precisely for the worker that the object has independence. This negative middle term or the formative activity is at the same time the individuality or pure being-for-self of consciousness which now, in the work outside of it, acquires an element of permanence. It is in this way, therefore, that consciousness, qua worker, comes to see in the independent being [of the object] its own independent.

But the formative activity has not only his positive significance that in it the pure being-for-self of servile consciousness acquires an existence;.....For, in fashioning the thing, the bondsman’s own negativity, his being-for-self, becomes an object for him only through his objective negative moment is none other than the alien being before which it has trembled. Now, however, he destroys this alien negative moment, posits himself as a negative in the permanent order of things, and thereby becomes for himself, someone existing on his own account.; in fashioning the thing, he becomes aware that being-for-self belongs to him, that he himself exists essentially and actually in his own right. The shape does not become something other than himself through being made external to him; for it is precisely this shape that is his pure being-for-self, which in this externality is seen by him to be the truth. Through this rediscovery of himself by himself, the bondsman realizes that it is precisely in his work wherein he seemed to have only an alienated existence that he acquires a mind of his own.”³⁷

If we use Hegel’s theory methodologically in the analysis of He Gong’s work, it is obvious that the artist destroys this *alien negative moment* (denying for the political system of

³⁷ G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (U.K.: Translated by A.V. Miller with Analysis of the Text and Foreword by J. N. Findlay, F. B. A., F.A.A.A.S., Oxford University Press, 1977), 117-119.

communist China), and posits himself as a negative (a son of the political offender, a member of social alterity and a political pariah, political offender and protest in 1989). He does so in *the permanent order of things* (the glorious, correct, and revolutionary main narrative with the interpretation by the history of ideas), and thereby becomes for himself, *someone existing on his own account* (discovering himself as an intellectual with a critical/rejective stance on the authoritarian reality and toward the Chinese communist historical narrative of Genesis, continuity, totalization).

Another point about this monumental or counter-monumental work is He Gong's use of the exhibition space for the expression of ideological/political environment. This usage of space reflects the artist's cognition about the trauma experience *as that which remains essentially inarticulable and unrepresentable, that which continues to exist as unresolved trauma just beyond the reach of meaning*.³⁸ In the expression of images of trauma, He Gong chooses not to show the traumatic experience as a grieved face, a bloody scene, and tragic behavior of heroism in the political protests. Instead, he lets the vacant space itself imply the feeling of desolation, silence, and frustration after the bloody military crackdown. The emotional performance in this series of installations is restrained or even repressed, even his sculptures of heads (Fig. 12) which represent the victims of the bloodbath, display calm and impassiveness, not the feeling of the agony of pain. By the above analysis, we can know that when He Gong created this series of installations and performance art, he had already realized that visual language or forms could not represent all aspects of traumatic experience. The audience who can regard the open system or vacant space as the room of introspection which can support the perceptual/sensorial possibility.

Ai Weiwei and his Protest

Compared with He Gong, Ai Weiwei 艾未未 and his works are popular and globalized. The characteristic of being globalized coming from his works is not just caused by Ai Weiwei's

³⁸ Young, 162.

international career, but also because Ai Weiwei's opponent, the PRC, is also in a context of globalism. In his art, Ai did not choose the conceptual strategy which He Gong had chosen in the *series of Trap Designed for Future Archaeology*, which focuses on intellectual criticism of and historical retrospection towards communist ideological authority. Actually, the political protests in Ai Weiwei's work dilute the ideological color or intellectual mission, and concentrate on the universal criteria for political protest and humanitarian disaster. In Ai Weiwei's semantical context, all governments (or national sovereignty) are under suspicion of totalitarianism or anti-humanitarian tendencies. For Ai Weiwei, as a protester or dissident, intellectuals should have the basic characteristics of social conscience and public concern. They should hold independent critique and persevere from the spiritual standpoint of an "edge person," dwelling in a realistic environment. For Ai Weiwei, cultural/historical identity and the authority of intellectual interpretation are insignificant. In Ai Weiwei's own words:

"I think more about now because I lack a sense of religion. History, for me, is just something that happened - inevitable or accidental - and I often think that it doesn't have to be this way. For the future, I feel that there is no future. What I can imagine is today, now. What you can do for today is what you can do for history and what you can do for the future.

By the contemporary people in the context of changes in philosophy, science, and epistemology, Contemporary art is a re-expression of the contemporary perception of the world.....It is only effective and meaningful when it is based on contemporary lifestyles and living conditions.³⁹

What an artist cannot evade is an intellectual. You have a special ideology. This ideology plays a special role in the culture."⁴⁰

³⁹ Ai Weiwei, *Time and Place* (Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2010), 23-24.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 116.

As a corollary of the references above and Ai Weiwei's works in this period, Ai identified himself as a public intellectual who concentrates on public events. The phenomenon of the public intellectual arising during this period (2002-2013) has included Chinese public intellectuals 中國公共知識分子群體 who include human rights lawyers, reporters, and artists.

Meanwhile, from 2002 to 2012, Chinese society under the PRC became more reform-oriented and open-minded. The booming economy has helped increase earnings from private enterprise. Public and citizen groups have arisen as a normalized political protest as have human rights organizations. Due to the tendency of intra-party struggle to be stable, the rulers of this period were more like technocrats but not ambitious dictators. The political structure in this area has been called Hu-Wen New Administration 胡溫新政, since the two dominant rulers, chairman Hu Jintao 胡錦濤 and prime minister Wen Jiabao 溫家寶, both have technocratic backgrounds and do not come from renowned communist families. In this period, these phenomena made the PRC look like a normal country, but not an enthusiastic communist nation that exports revolution. Even western and overseas Democrats had initially hoped that Hu and Wen would push political reform through on the mainland.

Nevertheless, it only looks like a normal country. A natural disaster, the Wenchuan earthquake 汶川地震 in 2008, has proven that the PRC is still an antihuman communist regime. Ai Weiwei's installation artwork *Remembering* (Fig. 13) and his documentaries *Disturbing the Peace/ Old Ma's Scalloped Pig's Feet*, 老媽蹄花 (Fig. 14), and *Little Girl's Cheeks*, 花臉巴兒 are his direct responses on this issue.

Like the Chernobyl nuclear accident, for the modern dictatorship, any disasters, whether caused by nature or by human beings, are not just simple tragedies or catastrophes, but are political crisis. As omnipotent governments based on the ideological control and violent discipline, modern totalitarianism (such as the PRC) always deals with disasters as threats to its legitimacy, since disaster reveals corruption and malfunction in the political structure. The local

governments of modern totalitarianism are not democratically elected but bureaucrats appointed by their superior: the Central Committee of the CCP. Therefore, corruption and dereliction of duty in local governments indicate central policies, and then they become the party's fault. Ultimately, communist ideology itself may collapse or be deconstructed, caused by a mistake from a collapsed primary school in the earthquake or a bioweapon cell leaking out from a biological laboratory. Based on this kind of panic, whether central or local governments under the communist dictatorship, both are inclined to suppress the dissemination of truth or information through the use of existing domestic media blackouts and political/ideological propaganda. Truth-seeking investigators and human rights lawyers are controlled, monitored, stigmatized, persecuted, and put in jail.

The Wenchuan earthquake 汶川地震 in 2008 is just another perfect example of this type of disaster happening in autocratic China. Because of poor building construction resulting from the corruption of local government, a large number of primary and middle schools collapsed in the earthquake. This caused more than 5,192 children's deaths. From the evidence of broken pillars without any iron supports, it is clear that the local government of Wenchuan or other township and county governments in Sichuan province have an astonishing level of corruption in the construction of school buildings. After the quake, the Sichuan provincial government refused to publish a list of the students who died. Ai Weiwei launched an action of investigation on the internet on December 5, 2008, which he called "*citizens' investigation*" 公民調查. Through these investigations, Ai called for specific information about the students, including the school, student's name, age, class, home address, and parental contact information. The principle of Ai Weiwei's activity is to respect every student who died in the Wenchuan earthquake and to publicize the personal information of the victims. The principle of this activity is to seek facts, responsibilities, and rights. Citizens' investigations eventually led to the collection of data on the students who have died, through free information provided by volunteers or field visits and collections by volunteers.

Ai Weiwei's used his blog, and a Google Forum of citizens' investigation, as organizational tools. It made available detailed explanations, introductions, and results of the truth about this event. Without any delay, Chinese government officials have been blocked and interfered with such citizens' investigation activities. At the beginning of the citizens' investigation activity, all information about the investigation activity on Ai Weiwei's blog was deleted by a network controller of the CCP.

Also recording citizens' investigation activity is Ai Weiwei's installation artwork *Remembering* (Fig. 13) and his documentaries [*Disturbing the Peace/ Old Ma's Scalloped Pig's Feet*, 老媽蹄花 (Fig. 14), and *Little Girl's Cheeks*, 花臉巴兒]. *Disturbing the Peace* 老媽蹄花 shows records Ai and his friends travel to Chengdu 成都, provincial capital of Sichuan province, to prove an investor (Tan Zuoren, 譚作人) innocent of citizens' investigation activity. However, as the documentary records, they could not even attend the trial because the local police stopped them through beating and illegal imprisonment. The most interesting and ironic sequence in the documentary is when Ai and another human rights lawyer heckle a Legal Affairs Section Chief in a search for their companions who are being held under illegal imprisonment. In this segment, Ai heckles the Chief: Have you been to the university? The Chief hesitatingly answers: I've studied law (Fig. 15).

While without the criticism for communist ideology and historical retrospection of He Gong's work, Ai Weiwei's documentary shows the ridiculous daily lives of the so-called legal society of autocratic China. Such daily lives (corrupt bureaucrats and widespread violations) were the direct causes of investors' persecution and student's suffering. Ai Weiwei's artistic creation and his very view of his creation are the realizations of his idea of the public intellectual. This creative method and perspective, based on daily experience, is also reflected in his installation work *Remembering* (Fig. 12). In this work, Ai dyed and assembled the schoolbags of the students who were killed in the earthquake into words with a specific meaning: "She has lived happily in this world for seven years" 她在这个世界上开心地生活过七年. As everyday objects, schoolbags

form childish Chinese fonts. This design also reflects Ai Weiwei's emphasis on daily experience and respect for personal circumstances. Compared with the Scar Art, the traumatic memory expressed in Ai Weiwei's creation dispels the powerlessness of communist ideological disillusionment and focuses on the immediate transmission of an individual experience who died in the disaster. Undoubtedly, this method also makes Ai Weiwei's intellectual subjectivity hide humbly within a restrained narrative. This modesty is also more in line with the grammar of public artistic creation within the context of globalization: sensational intergenerational identity and cultural identity of specific ethnic groups (like the Red Guards in the Scar Art) are abandoned. Instead, more universal humanitarian disasters have become the subject of artistic expression.



Fig. 11: *The series of Trap Designed for Future Archaeology* 為未來考古學設計的陷阱, He Gong 何工, installations and performance, dimensions variable, 1989. Image provided by the artist.



Fig. 12: *The series of Trap Designed for Future Archaeology* 為未來考古學設計的陷阱, He Gong 何工, installations and performance, dimensions variable, 1989. Image provided by the artist.



Fig. 13: *Remembering* 他在这个世界上开心的生活过七年, Ai Weiwei 艾未未, 2009, backpacks on the facade of the Haus der Kunst (Munich)

老妈蹄花

LAO MA TI HUA



A DOCUMENTARY BY AI WEIWEI

Fig. 14: Poster of *Disturbing the Peace/ Old Ma's Scalloped Pig's Feet* 老妈蹄花, Ai Weiwei Studio, 2009.



Fig. 15: A screenshot of *Disturbing the Peace/ Old Ma's Scalloped Pig's Feet* 老妈蹄花, Ai Weiwei Studio, 2009.

CONCLUSION

In the thesis, I discussed a selection of China's modern and contemporary art activities within the main context of China's modernization and politics. The focus of my thesis is how modern and contemporary Chinese artists face this humanitarian and intellectual crisis, construct their intellectual subjectivity, express historical trauma experience, and publicize political resistance through their works. Communist totalitarianism has had a tremendous influence on the art-historical phenomena of modern China in the 20th and 21st centuries. The Chinese Communist regime not only caused a large number of humanitarian disasters in the usual sense, but it was also indistinguishable from other modern totalitarian regimes in terms of ideological and cultural control and persecution of artists and intellectuals. These historical phenomena—humanitarian disasters, contradictions between totalitarian regimes and artists and intellectuals—have also carved deep historical traumatic memories into the hearts of generations of the Chinese people.

As I mentioned in the introduction regarding two historical narrative clues, in the 70-year history of its regime China's communist government has targeted both the old intellectual elite and an emerging intellectual group by means of acts of political manipulation and persecution. In China's special historical context, of a need to transform from a traditional monarchy to a modern country, there is bound to be an irreconcilable contradiction between the demand for rapid modernization and a backward political and economic system. Through the analysis in the introduction and the first chapter, I point out that nationalism and communism in the 20th century finally became the historical path for the Chinese to complete modernization. Both ultimately influenced the artistic careers and artistic creations of modern and contemporary Chinese artists.

In the first chapter, I take Wu Hufan as the main object of discussion. Taking his creation and artistic career after 1949 as a clue, I systematically revealed the unfortunate fate of traditional Chinese literati and literati artists like Wu Hufan after 1949, and the political and historical reasons behind it. As mentioned by Philip A. Kuhn:

“More important, though, was the revolutionary state's commitment to industrialization.”⁴¹

The pressure of modernization has made the emerging communist regime treat the old-style social and cultural elite as an object of economic and cultural plunder and to complete the nationalist path toward prosperity and modernization. As a cultural elite, Wu Hufan inevitably became an enemy of the communist revolution. In addition to economic strikes and political persecution, cultural repression and ideological review are realities of life that Wu Hufan had to face. In his works *Open-minded Learning and Red Professional* 虛心學習, 又紅又專, through the re-creation of the typical image in traditional Chinese painting, Wu Hufan also expressed, in his political and artistic creation, the pain he suffered. By comparing different treatments of bamboo, the symbol of intellectual subjectivity for literati painters, Wu Hufan undoubtedly reveals the painful mental state of modern Chinese literati painters.

On the other hand, modernization and accompanying disenchantment are also reflected in the artistic creation of modern Chinese literati painters like Wu Hufan. The modern phenomenon of disenchantment has produced a huge echo in the psychology and artistic creation of traditional intellectuals and literati painters, of which Wu's *Celebrate the Success of Atomic Bomb in our Country* is an example. For them, the atomic bomb is not only a weapon of a devastating modern war, but also a visual and psychological end to traditional Chinese culture. Tragically, the atomic bomb is also a sign of the success of China's modernization. From the standpoint of nationalist revival and as a traditional literati painter kidnapped by the communist regime, Wu Hufan had to use his traditional painting skills to celebrate the success of the atomic bomb. In this chapter, I analyze Wu Hufan's experience and two important paintings and argue for the structural contradiction between traditional literati painters and modern Chinese communist totalitarianism.

⁴¹ Philip A. Kuhn, *Origins of the Modern Chinese state*, 110-111.

This contradiction has also remained in his work in the form of the expression of historical traumatic memory and the destruction of an artistic visual tradition.

In the second chapter, I introduced the genre of Scar Art and focused on how the female figure is utilized in it: as the visual bearer of the memory of the historical trauma of a whole generation during and after the Cultural Revolution. Through an analysis of the female figure in many paintings within the Scar Art movement, I argue that the artistic concept behind these images of women ranges from the revolutionary narrative's virilization and de-gendering of women to the lamenting of the loss of ordinary emotions and traditional values. In these works, the memory of historical trauma is expressed in depicting the normal ethics, personal feelings, and even gender characteristics, that were denied by the Cultural Revolution and communist ideology. In placing female characters in violent Cultural Revolution combat scenes that had to show their female characteristics, artists in the Scar Art movement such as Cheng Conglin express the loss and fragmentation of human nature under the CCP's totalitarian politics.

Through the analysis of Cheng Junglin's *One Day of 1968, Snowy*, we find that, ironically, the heroine in this painting is forced to show a feminine side only after she has been reduced to a class enemy and ousted from the revolutionary masses by a hostile Red Guard faction. The narrative logic of Scar Art is that the Cultural Revolution led by the communist ideology is inhuman or denies humanity, and the bourgeois liberalization, regarded as rotten by the authorities, is humanity instead. In terms of artistic creation, this narrative logic must deconstruct official communist ideology and revolutionary narrative.

In Gao Xiaohua's *I Love the Oil field* 我愛油田, the work of another Scar Art movement artist, the artist regards women as a symbol of humanity and love and even as a symbol of the family. This view is more in line with a traditional patriarchal perspective and patriarchal values. This traditional and conservative identification of women's status in society is another iconic phenomenon in the Scar Literature and Scar Art movement: when revolutionary utopian fantasies and women's liberation become political tools of the new patriarchy (the Communist totalitarian

regime), the family in a conservative sense—that is, designed by male intellectuals and artists—has become a refuge for women again.

However, the artists of the Scar Art movement are not critical toward the culprit, the Chinese Communist totalitarian regime, that caused historical trauma and its memories, and humanitarian disasters. For them, it is not their artistic/conceptual purpose to establish an intellectual subjectivity that opposes national sovereignty and Communist totalitarian ideology.

In Chapter 3, I argue, through an analysis of their works and artistic concepts, that the Chinese contemporary artists (He Gong and Ai Weiwei) adhere to a standpoint of political resistance by establishing an intellectual subjectivity and intellectual identity against national sovereignty. In this chapter, I use Foucault and Hegel's theory as a context to explain He Gong and Ai Weiwei's artistic creations. I also systematically clarify He Gong and Ai Weiwei's conceptual needs and psychological demands for intellectual identity and subjectivity. From the analysis of the He Gong installation *the Trap Designed for Future Archaeology*, we can see that Foucault's theory has profoundly influenced He Gong's creation of this work, concerning the deconstruction of the archaeology of historical authoritarianism. He Gong's criticism and reflection on the political events at that time, and his systematic citation of Foucault's theory, gives him the power to criticize the entire ideological discourse of communist totalitarianism.

In my analysis of Ai Weiwei, I argue that as a public intellectual and through his installation and video works, Ai Weiwei participated in the process of the Chinese citizen movement. As a resisting Chinese contemporary artist who uses his status as an intellectual as his identity label, Ai Weiwei's globalized artistic creation has exposed the humanitarian crisis confined to parts of China to the eyes of all mankind. His artistic creation is based on not only the new concepts and strategies of globalization. His insistence on the conscience and subjectivity of public intellectuals also makes him more active than earlier artists in the civic resistance against communist totalitarian rule.

From Wu Hufan, Scar Art artists, He Gong to Ai Weiwei, we can see a clue about the

evolution of the memory-carrying way of historical scar memory. First, historical trauma is depicted through types, ideals, or symbols, just as Wu Hufan used the traditional artistic image (bamboo) to express the political persecution he received, and the artists in the scar art movement used universally dressed women in white to represent the suffering of a generation. Due to the identification of intellectuals and the establishment of intellectual subjectivity, as for the expression of the same theme in He Gong's artistic creation, with the artist's own image appearing, the individual survival experience began to become the carrier of historical scar memory. Later with Ai Weiwei, historical trauma is depicted as the trauma of individuals. Ai instead shines a light on local corruption and the trauma of specific people, namely, the individual children killed in the Wenchuan earthquake. Ai now requires that the viewer and the whole world, know the identity of the individuals/children whose lives were lost; so we can mourn and remember them as victims and individuals. In Ai Weiwei's works, individual identity and memory are historical memories, and the suffering individual is no longer hidden under a conceptual/group label.

My thesis brings up topics that can be further developed and researched. One is to examine traditional literati painters who created a large number of traditional style landscapes accompanying modern buildings depicted in the painting during the Cultural Revolution. These works not only explore an eclecticism in artistic style and voluntary or involuntary cooperation between these artists and the new regime. They also exemplify, in the broader context of art history, the visual diversity of disenchantment caused by modernization. Another potential and future research topic is how female and gay artists express their identities and gender identities through their works, or, use this expression to challenge official ideology and totalitarian narratives.

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