Influencing perspectives

MUTUALLY DEFINED NARRATIVES ON CHINA’S CULTURAL REVOLUTION
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INTRODUCTION

When we try to comprehend the turbulent times of the Peoples Republic of China in the 20th century the Mao era constitutes a particularly difficult moment to make sense of. For one Mao Zedong, China’s former chairman and leader of the Maoist communist regime, became an absolute ruler. How was it possible that so many people trusted and loved him blindly? How was China able to reform in only a few decades? Why did the Cultural Revolution, comparable to a civil war, take place? And how were China, and the Chinese, supposed to deal with their past, once the regime ended?

Popular and academic interest about these topics produced a large amount of literature. There seems to be a gap between two different perspectives. On the one hand there is the perspective of the individual that is studied within the area of memory studies, egodocuments and autobiographies. Yet this kind of research typically pays attention to recognising truth in verifiable facts and the notion of someone’s individual experience. Therefore researchers are inclined not to incorporate the individual perspective in academic research. On the other hand most researchers have preferred to focus on the larger structural approach that uses verifiable information in order to create an abstract narrative that provides answers that apply to the collective.

Can these personal notions of conceptions mean something to the structural approach? I suggest that the personal and the structural respond to each other and influence each other. The personal lives within the structures of its surroundings and vice versa these surroundings are influenced and interpreted by individuals. To understand and differentiate between the two kinds of perspectives I will first explain Susan Stewart’s theory on the perspectives of the personal and structural which she calls the Miniature and the Gigantic. Afterwards I will apply

Anita Chan, Children of Mao: personality development and political activism in the Red Guard generation (London, Seattle 1985) 204-225.
3 Susan Stewart, On longing. Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection (Baltimore 1984) xii.
both perspectives on history and history writing followed by my argument that both perspectives interact with each other and the relationship between them needs to be investigated. My analysis of the existing historiography on the Cultural Revolution will also point to the gap in existing research: how personal narratives can possibly be read as simultaneously undermining and reinforcing structural narratives.

**THEORY ON PERSPECTIVE**

Susan Stewart, professor in the Humanities and professor in English, developed a dual device of narrative. She introduces us to the concepts of Gigantic and Miniature; two perspectives in which one could create meaning for one’s existence. The miniature is one’s private thought and private life. The life we live as an individual. The outer world in which we live, is called the gigantic. After all, when we look from within ourselves to the world, it seems gigantic. When we take the perspective of the world, as the bigger whole, our lives, our day to day pursuits, our motivations and our thoughts seem miniature.\(^4\) When discussing the construction of meaning for an individual’s physical existence in the world, the body, Stewart uses the following words: ‘Although the miniature makes the body gigantic, the gigantic transforms the body into miniature, especially pointing to the body’s toy like and insignificant aspects.’\(^5\) In such an example, the two perspectives constitute and reinforce each other.

The gigantic is nature-like whereas the world just is. Nature will always be nature without humans trying to make sense of it, trying to intervene. We live in a world where nature imposes its conditions on us, where for example rain, cold, hunger or global warming can affect individual life profoundly. It overwhelms us, surrounds us, and we usually cannot escape it. We have to deal with it, whether we like it or not.\(^6\)

These nature-like forces are not necessarily nature itself. They can be man-made. There are man-made instruments which helped us to control this all-consuming gigantic.\(^7\) With the help of dams we control water supply and therefore drought and famine. With the help of fertilisation we increased our food supply. And with the growing demand for food we also eventually created deforestation and global warming. The gigantic can also be instruments of society that influence our individual lives. For humans do not only attempt to control nature, they also attempt to control other humans. We might live under the conditions of war or peace,

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\(^4\) Stewart, *On longing*, xii.
\(^5\) Ibidem, 71.
\(^6\) Ibidem, 70-78.
\(^7\) Ibidem, 78-86.
economic growth or political repression. Cultural models might define the way we ought to be and even see ourselves. Our lives are shaped by the conditions of these kinds of gigantic. It is hard to escape its effects. ‘We live in its shadow’, whether they are man-made or nature.  

In contrast with the gigantic, our own individual lives become the miniature, filled with unique personal experiences, thoughts and memories. We come from a very specific time and place within the world; with our own culture, family, friends, traumas, hopes and dreams. All people experience unique events, in a unique way. These experiences give meaning to one’s lives, those meanings are authentic.

Without articulating it explicitly, Susan Stewart never treats the gigantic and the miniature as separate categories. The miniature constantly attempts to internalise the gigantic. We consider it, ‘place it in the palms of our hands’ as it were and reflect on our place in the world, the miniature, within the gigantic. The gigantic turns into a miniature – the object of our reflection. ‘We are able to hold the miniature object within our hand, but our hand is no longer in proportion with its world; instead our hand becomes like an undifferentiated landscape, the body a kind of background. Once the miniature world is self-enclosed, as in the case of the dollhouse, we can only stand outside, looking in, experiencing a tragic distance.’  

While we try to make sense of the world that surrounds us, the gigantic, we can never truly comprehend or understand it. We can never know the event or development on its own terms. Because we all have our own perspective, our own way of interpreting the event.  

‘We are enveloped by the gigantic, surrounded by it, enclosed within its shadow. Whereas we know the miniature as a spatial whole or as temporal parts, we know the gigantic only partially. We move through the landscape; it does not move through us. (…), both the miniature and the gigantic may be described through metaphors or containments - the miniature as contained, the gigantic as container.’ It is a little piece of the puzzle, one story of the great story. We could call the gigantic a cake, the personal/miniature a crumb. A crumb can never know the cake, only what surrounds it. Maybe it is on the frosting, or the moist bottom, the warm inside, or the cold and dry outside. It is just one perspective of a thing known as cake.

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8 Stewart, *On longing*, 78-86.
9 Ibidem, 71.
10 Ibidem, 70-71.
11 Ibidem, 71.
12 Ibidem.
THE GIGANTIC AS HISTORY AND HISTORY WRITING

The gigantic and the miniature represent two different ways of asserting historical meaning. From this perspective, it is striking to see that both history and history writing belong to the category of the gigantic.

On the one hand there are the historical events that we try to understand. Historians and many other scholars from different fields try to understand, describe and explain what happened and why this happened. One can look at the politics, economics, culture, changing society or even the mentality. Those scholars search for patterns and structure that concern large groups of people. They try to find out why and how those people are influenced. What particular mechanisms activated them and moved them. Events happened for some reason, and started a chain reaction of consequences. Large events are non-personal and affect the lives (and deaths) of millions of people. They are, in other words, gigantic.\(^\text{13}\)

Take the Second World War for example. Many different disciplines are involved in trying to understand what happened, and why it happened. We want to understand the effects it had on the majority of people. We want to know the mentality of the majority. Historians use many different sources from which to deduce what happened. Data, archives, and personal testimonies all contribute to the understanding of the event, the gigantic.

Scholars have traditionally preferred to investigate the structural gigantic because it seems more valuable and relevant to society. It affected many people and explained why society behaved in a certain way. By analysing larger structures scholars and scientists hope to understand the world around them and even attempt to predict the future. In their opinion the gigantic is superior to the miniature because the miniature does not provide universal answers to larger questions. Historians overestimate the power and relevancy of the gigantic, and easily dismiss the miniature. They forget that by investigating the gigantic it becomes flawed.

When we attempt to understand the event, we reconstruct it. First in our minds, then on paper. This, however, is not the actual event anymore. Because we, humans, individuals, scholars, intervened. We attempt to explain the events, but can never truly look at them objectively, as we are children of our time and place. This means that whenever humans try to understand and interpret, objectivity no longer exists. We are biased because we have our own perspective. Our own miniature defines how we understand and reproduce the gigantic. By attempting to describe the old gigantic, popular and scientific writings both reproduce a new

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\(^{13}\) Many different historians use this approach. One example of this is the Annales School. Peter Burke, The French historical revolution: the Annales school, 1929-89 (Stanford 1990).
gigantic. History writings are therefore never objective, as writers can never set themselves free from their own miniatures. All we do is create a new kind of narrative; the ‘story of what happened’.  

**THE MINIATURE AS IN EGODOCUMENTS**

On the other hand there are scholars that focus on individual stories through life writing or autobiography. Those personal narratives are also called egodocuments. Egodocuments like memoirs and autobiographies are documents that have similarities to novels as well as to official history writing. Despite these similarities it is important to understand that egodocuments are neither just novels or official history writing. Because of that they post a problem for scholars in the field of history writing.

The similarities to novels lie in the rhetoric construction of the authors’ lives. They structure, contain a plot, are rational, chose to emphasise certain events and forget about others because the authors decided certain events were not relevant to their narrative. Egodocuments do not even need to be chronological. Authors reflect on their lives and on the events that happened around them and to them and try to make sense of it. By doing so they show us something about themselves by emphasising or avoiding certain events. It tells us how they want to be seen and present themselves, within the realities of their lives.

The similarity to official history writing lies in the claim writers of egodocuments, and especially autobiographies, make to write the truth about their lives. This is also known as Phillipe Lejeune’s *Autobiographical Pact*. This is a pact between the author and the reader where the author claims the events described are real because the author decided to name the narrative autobiographical. That is why people read autobiographies as true histories. The personal narratives can be seen as a historical source: an insider’s description of events, movements and people. In order to seem believable and reliable to the readers authors can add additional research and documents but also use rhetoric as an assertion, justification, judgment,

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14 Yet it is important to remember that scholars never truly operate on themselves; they are dependent and linked to funding, publications, a country, a political and cultural approach. Public authorities and scholars therefore work together to create and formulate a general statement of what happened.


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conviction, and interrogation.\textsuperscript{17} Up till now scholars have actually not preferred egodocuments for professional history writing. Autobiographical writings have some limits in their usefulness. The claim that the miniature perspective describes the truth is actually hard to defend. While those descriptions may contain verifiable facts, the narratives are not ‘factual history’. This means that the ‘facts’ presented in autobiographical writings are written down by someone from their own perspective, which are an interpretation of their reality.\textsuperscript{18} The miniature is therefore the subjective perspective on someone’s, in this case the author’s, life. The miniature, that is written down in egodocuments like autobiographies, therefore shows us how the author gave meaning to their lives as they exist within the gigantic.

Other arguments historians put forward as to why autobiographical writings are different from professional history writings is that historians do not write about themselves. There is a certain professional objectivity, distance or critical reflection, between historians and the events they describe. Autobiographies do the exact opposite. By describing themselves, autobiographical authors actively choose how they represent themselves. Those authors are therefore by definition subjective.\textsuperscript{19}

Historians who focus on egodocuments eventually realised that although autobiographies do not contain ‘factual history’ they entail something else that is also very valuable. Insight into someone’s consciousness. By investigating someone’s, preferably a group’s, mentality we can understand how something is experienced. The debate therefore changed from autobiographies as a source of deficient truth to a source of mentality.\textsuperscript{20}

This, however, constitutes another problem. What the author wrote down are the reflections of the author at the time of writing. They might try to recreate their thoughts of the moments of the events they describe, but with the mechanism of hindsight those thoughts can never truly be reconstructed. They are lost in history. It is a certain fleeting moment in history that has been recorded. Not the actual event and thoughts at that moment in time, nor the events or thoughts of the author right now.\textsuperscript{21} \textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{17} Smith and Watson, \textit{Reading autobiography}, 7, 28-32.
\textsuperscript{19} Fullbrook and Rublack, ‘In relation’, 267, 268.
\textsuperscript{22} These misgivings about the egodocuments’ historicity, of course, do not mean a total denial of their usefulness for historical research. For further discussion of how China scholars turn autobiographical accounts into quantitative data for studying violence during the Cultural Revolution, see page 12.
INTERACTIONS BETWEEN THE GIGANTIC AND MINIATURE IN HISTORY AND HISTORY WRITING

Are memoires part of history? Are autobiographies history writing? Both scholars in memory studies and historians are doubtful. Those who want to know what really happened reconstruct the events into a coherent meaningful narrative. Since the miniature is never capable of providing factual history researchers are inclined to underestimate its usefulness. Mainstream historians prefer to focus on deduced (verifiable) information so it creates an abstract narrative that applies to most people. This obsession with the gigantic leads us to believe that this is all there is to know and individual perspectives are irrelevant and digressive in describing this ‘bigger picture’.

In this thesis, I address this assumption of disconnection between the gigantic and miniature perspective and try to explore the interconnection and interaction between the miniature and the gigantic. In my opinion they are most definitely connected, and the miniature influences the gigantic in a significant way and vice versa. There exist tensions between the gigantic and miniature, but the tensions should be investigated and not dismissed easily.

The gigantic and the miniature interact with each other. It is hard to set them apart as they continuously shape each other. One’s own miniature, one’s individual understanding of oneself and the world or gigantic, is defined by the conditions of the gigantic. The author’s perception of him or herself is therefore also influenced by the gigantic, because the authors were familiar with the cultural norms, models, terms, ideas, customs, language, and politics. They express themselves in the context and terms they know of. Authors are therefore always shaped by their gigantic; the culture they write about and/or write in/for. Miniature is therefore shaped by the gigantic.

On the other hand the gigantic is also shaped by the miniature. Not only do we interpret the gigantic/history through our own miniature perspective, we write about it. We reproduce our own perspective on the matter, even if we do not intend to. Some of those miniature perspectives become dominant in the explanation/description of the gigantic/event. This reproduction of the gigantic creates a new gigantic that in its turn influences other people’s

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miniatures. By doing so we change other’s perspective on the gigantic. Therefore the act of writing is a very powerful tool in changing people’s perception of historical events itself; making them forget or emphasise certain events, and therefore changing the narrative of ‘history’.

HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

GIGANTIC HISTORIOGRAPHY
The Cultural Revolution was a confusing and eventful period in Chinese history that killed between 1.7 to 8 million people and destroyed the existing structure of the society. Scholars in China and in the West sought for explanations when the period ended in 1976, which resulted in a solid foundation of research throughout the 1980s as information became available; why and how could Chinese society have destroyed itself to such an extent? Why was it not stopped? How could people do such things? How can millions of peoples follow one man, Mao Zedong, that blindly? Why did it fail? Can this be compared to other cases? What can we learn from it, in order to prevent something like this in the future? And an important question of the Chinese government and the Chinese themselves; how do we make sense of it, how do we remember this turbulent period? These questions and research tend to focus on the gigantic approach. Scholars investigating the Cultural Revolution have mostly focused on the larger structures of society to provide explanations that are abstract and would apply to many people.

Hong Yung Lee argues in his famous work The Politics of the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1978) that the Cultural Revolution started out as an internal conflict between Party elites. The Red Guards that were the driving force behind the Cultural Revolution were disadvantaged urban youth; they hoped to alter their chances and were dissatisfied by the effects. They were driven by the motive of revenge and envy towards privileged people. Mao soon lost control of his Revolution to these angry Red Guards.25

Anita Chan further elaborates on this by researching the motivations of the Red Guard in her work Children of Mao (1985). According to her research the Red Guards mostly wanted to do well. In the 1960s the competition for the best education and jobs was ruthless. They were taught by their parents that the only way to get ahead of others was to dedicate themselves to Mao and the State. This ensured that the people in the best schools were further stimulated to

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be the most passionate devotees of Mao. The role of the family diminished and was replaced by the State. She also states that Red Guards genuinely felt they could improve China.  

In addition, Lucian Pye argues in ‘Reassessing the Cultural Revolution’ (1986) that it was too simple to solely blame Mao as the cause of the Cultural Revolution. According to him there were deeper underlying cultural, social and political structures at play. He states that the Chinese have a long tradition of peasant rebellions and that the traditional authoritative family structure ensured strong patriotism and loyalty. He nevertheless also acknowledges that Mao’s personality, conflicting factions, revolutionary utopian thoughts, power struggle, conflicts among the elite and organisational problems were all factors that contributed to the Cultural Revolution.  

Tang Tsou argues in The Cultural Revolution and Post-Mao Reforms: A Historical Perspective (1986) something radically different. He investigated positive consequences of the Cultural Revolution. He states that the Cultural Revolution was necessary and a logical consequence of the growing power of the government. The people took back this power and this enabled reforms after Mao’s death.  

Anne Thurston disagreed with Tsou in her work Enemies of the People (1987). She states that the Cultural Revolution was an absolute tragedy where the costs have by far outweighed the benefits. She argues that patriotism and bad behaviour were taught in schools. This was by far the most important factor that contributed to the motivations of the Red Guards. Also the traditional Chinese custom to favour a leader above individuals created the deification of Mao.  

Jonathan Spence agrees in The Search of Modern China (1990) with many of the previous research. He underlined the importance of one’s family background in Maoist China. Many students were intensely frustrated that they could not get better schooling or jobs because of their (distant) families. This frustration was used by Mao to overthrow the existing status quo and label many people as anti-revolutionaries. Spence also confirms that the culture of self-sacrifice and obedience to the state was stimulated by Chinese education.  

Joel Andreas study’s in Rise of the Red Engineers: The Cultural Revolution and the Origins of China’s New Class (2009) points out how class relations and transformation came
about since 1949. He used oral history, secondary literature and archival sources to investigate the case study of Tsinghua University, China’s top science and technology university. He emphasises structural patterns of party organisation, education and class.\textsuperscript{31}

Barbara Mittler argues in \textit{A Continuous Revolution: Making Sense of Cultural Revolution Culture} (2012) that the Cultural Revolution was part of a search for modernity that initially started in the 19th century and continues to this day. In this research she used oral history and other cultural products to show how propaganda appealed to people, how it was built on traditions, and how it was ritualised.\textsuperscript{32}

Initial ‘first wave’ research on the Cultural Revolution relied especially on ‘western’ Chinese documents like refugee interviews that were available outside of China because Chinese sources were to a certain extent censored. They tried to make sense of the event and to explain Mao’s actions using a bottom-up approach. This research shows especially the divisions in society. During the ‘90s scholarship focussed on China’s economic miracle. In the 00’s scholarship on the Cultural Revolution experienced a ‘second wave’. Newly available Chinese material renewed interest in the topic, focussing particularly on elite politics and party organisation.

In their explanation of the Cultural Revolution all scholars mentioned above approached the subject from a structural nonpersonal perspective. They looked for larger problems and aspects that appeared in Chinese society which led to the development of the overall movement. In other words, they tried to understand the gigantic and by doing so simultaneously reinforce the power of the gigantic.

It is noteworthy that some of the most serious advocates of the use of egodocuments for the study of the Cultural Revolution continue to take the gigantic as their primary framework of investigation. A case in point is Lu Xiuyuan’s article ‘A Step Toward Understanding Popular Violence in China’s Cultural Revolution’ (1995) in which he mentions that scholars should not only investigate the Cultural Revolution from the perspective of elite politics, but more as a mass movement. Due to the emergence of a large number of memoirs and autobiographies on the Cultural Revolution, also called \textit{Wounded Literature}, Lu was able to use these personal accounts to investigate general similarities. He shows that people were not passive objects, victims of Mao, but that they actively participated.\textsuperscript{33} Another example is the book by Roderick

\textsuperscript{31} Joel Andreas, \textit{Rise of the red engineers: The Cultural Revolution and the origins of China’s new class} (Stanford 2009).

\textsuperscript{32} Barbara Mittler, \textit{A continuous revolution: making sense of Cultural Revolution culture} (Cambridge 2012).

\textsuperscript{33} Xiuyuan, ‘A step toward understanding popular violence’, 533-563.
MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals Mao’s Last Revolution (2006). They focus primarily on the centre elite level politics of Mao and the Cultural Revolution. Through newly available materials like old memoirs of elite political figures, that they found on flea markets in China, they are able to improve on certain assumptions and reconstruct the party politics. They state for example that the image of premier Zhou Enlai was incorrect and that he was almost subservient to Mao. Both scholars used egodocuments to provide gigantic structural answers and do not take into consideration how their research suppressed the perspective of the miniature. Where Lu used many egodocuments to prove certain similarities, MacFaquhar and Schoenhals used egodocuments to improve assumptions on party politics. Both their research remains in the perspective of the gigantic.

HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE MINIATURE PERSPECTIVE
The Cultural Revolution is often compared to the Holocaust and is therefore also called the ‘Chinese Holocaust’. Both the Holocaust and the Cultural Revolution had a profound impact on society. Afterwards a large number of memoires and autobiographies were produced, in which the authors dealt with their experiences and loss. Holocaust historians incorporated these personal narratives in their historical research to reconstruct the historical narrative. Because of the parallels one could presume that China historians would incorporate memoires in their own field of study. It is important to note that China historians, unlike Holocaust historians, are hesitant to include (certain kinds of) personal narratives to explain historical events.

Personal memories of the Cultural Revolution were first put into words in the genre of Wounded Literature, or Shanghen Wenxue. This genre started out in China in 1978 two years after Mao’s dead. It was stimulated by the government to investigate and describe the memories of the scarred and wounded in order to reflect on the traumas of the past and to reflect positively on the future and the new Chinese government. The underlying idea of this literature was not to describe history but to vent (generally accepted) emotions and give an outlet to painful memories. Therefore it has been studied by scholars in the tradition of literature and Memory Studies, and not as history. The memoirs discussed the horrors they had experienced. The diseases they had suffered, the hunger they had had, the loss of friends and family. They were

36 Wounded Literature, in Chinese Shanghen Wenxue, is also known as Scar literature or Literature of the Wounded. The genre was named after Lu Xinhua’s famous story The Scar from 1978.
encouraged to share their pain and misery, although they were not allowed to be specific about their individual experiences. It needed to be recognisable to all Chinese. Personal motivations for misery, pain or hatred were censured in China. It was not allowed to focus on an individual and in particular not on the founder of Modern China, Mao Zedong. His theories are still being considered good. On the whole this literature was supposed to create a clear break from the past in a mental, political, economic, social and cultural way where the Chinese and the ‘new’ government could distance itself from its past.\textsuperscript{38}

Many former Red Guards and other Chinese emigrated abroad from 1976 onwards when they were allowed to leave.\textsuperscript{39} In the West there were less political, social and cultural restrictions on what authors were supposed to write and remember. These Chinese diaspora communities produced many more memoirs and autobiographies that were based on the tradition of Chinese \textit{Wounded Literature} and still carried a lot of its trademarks. The genre became extremely popular and had great influence on both public and professional understanding of the Maoist regime and Cultural Revolution in the West.

Western reviewers and scholars have commented on some of these books and their authors.\textsuperscript{40} Both books that stand at the centre of this thesis’s analysis were widely noted at the time of their publications. Jung Chang’s famous \textit{Wild swans} (1991) collects much praise. Jung Chang is able to document her life in an astounding scope, while describing the backdrop of the political events. There are many newspaper articles, book reviews, and large internet forums in which the relevance and usefulness of those books are discussed.\textsuperscript{41} Academic reviews and

\begin{footnotes}
\item[40] Q.S. Tong and Ruth Y.Y. Hung, “‘To be worthy of the suffering and survival’: Chinese memoirs in the politics of sympathy’, \textit{Life Writing} 4 (2007) 59-79, especially 76, 77.
\item[41] This genre, in the west also known as Chinese Memoirs, deals with the personal accounts of the Chinese Cultural Revolution written in English and published outside China. Collectively they have thematic commonalities. The authors have lived in China for many years and many participated and witnessed the Cultural Revolution. Some examples are \textit{Son of the Revolution} by Liang Heng and Judith Shapiro, \textit{Born red} by Gao Yuan, \textit{Red flower of China} by Zhai Zhenhua, \textit{A single tear} by Wu Ninkun, \textit{Red scarf girl} by Ji-li Jiang, \textit{A leaf in the bitter wind} by Ye Tingxing, \textit{Thirty years in a red house} by Zhu Xiao Di, \textit{Colours of the mountain} by Da Chen, \textit{Daughter of China} by Xu Meihong and Larry Engelmann, \textit{To the edge of the sky} by Gao Anhua, \textit{Vermilion gate} by Aiping Mu and \textit{Red sorrow} by Nanchu.
\item[38] For further information see also footnote 1 from Tong and Hung, ‘To be worthy’, 76.
\end{footnotes}
articles echo most of the popular opinions. Although academic reviewers state that some nuances or footnotes should be added, true critical reflection seems to be missing. This lack of immediate attentions from the academic circle could be understood in two ways. On the one hand, Jung’s ‘history’ is simply put away as a *herstory* that includes fascinating and unique accounts of women’s lives. On the other hand, the historicity was also accepted at its face value. One reviewer even states that ‘more history texts should be written with such passion.’ ‘That we should keep nudging the myth of an objective past, and there are many different histories.’ Overall reviewers fail to critically reflect on *Wild swans*, or Jung Chang. Besides the notion that she might not be ‘ordinary and therefore representative for other female Red Guards’, they put her away as having written a gripping tale.

Rae Yang’s reviewers on *Spider eaters* (1997) are a bit more critical. Although they also mostly value the book for the additional information on the historical events, they at least mention how Yang reflects on her memories. This awareness might be helpful for those readers interested in the psychological effects. Therefore most reviewers and scholars do not seriously reflect on the historical interpretations contained in these sources. They simply analyse the books as interesting literature and cultural products that can be seen as a source of valuable information and a psychological account of mentality. They fail to mention that the books were carefully crafted by exceptionally smart and successful women, written in the west, for a western audience and have taken many years of reflection to complete. Those researchers do not address the books as history writing.


42 The term *herstory* means a historical story from a female perspective.


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It was only in the late 1990s when more critical analyses of these narratives emerged in academic journals. There are two scholars who have done more recent research on the astonishing popularity of these autobiographies in the west. Peter Zarrow and Shuyu Kong both analyse the personal narratives as cultural products of a particular time and place and focus on the explanation of their creation and popularity. While Zarrow investigated several memoirs, novels and films on the genre, he discovered that the narratives are all quite similar. They all deal with growing up in a turbulent country, going through the motions of the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution, and afterwards the painful realisation that they could no longer live in China.46 He points out that the giving of personal meaning to a text is bound up in self-justification. The narrative is that of survival literature, with the act of suffering as the main story. When he compared this to Holocaust narratives he discovered that there is a big difference; Wounded Literature explains how the events of the Cultural Revolution were a logical continuity from the events that followed the War of Liberation from 1946-1949, whereas the Holocaust narratives explain things as a break from the past where the experiences were extraordinary and came as a shock. Zarrow also points out that all narratives imply a journey from slavery to freedom. The authors state implicitly that they were slaves among the Maoist regime, but that exile and emigration led to a better world of freedom. According to Zarrow this does not only confirm the west’s self-image of ultimate freedom, it also implies that the authors actively chose rationality and freedom over irrationality and slavery in China. 47 This conformation contributes to the positive reception of these works in the West.

Kong overall agrees with Zarrow. She specifically investigated the contrasting memoirs of Jung Chang’s *Wild swans* to Rae Yang’s *Spider eaters*. Kong points out that these authors became so popular because they simultaneously position themselves as victims and survivors of the Cultural Revolution. This ensured that Chang’s and Yang’s stories became representative for all different kinds of Chinese. Kong argues that *Wild swans* became so popular because Chang presented her story as a complete and compelling historical work. Besides timelines and old photo’s she included extensive research on the national and international situation of China to give a complete overview. Kong also studied the paradox between rationality and irrationality in Chang’s and Yang’s works. She thinks that especially Chang’s rational and detached tone would compel the reader to imagine themselves in Chang’s place. Reason compels the readers to pretend that they are also sensitive individuals who would try to avoid violence as much as

47 Ibidem, 184-186.
Chang claims to have done. Therefore Kong finds that *Wild swans* is particularly contrasted by Yang’s *Spider eaters*. Yang’s memoir is emotional and irregular, filled with violence and moral problems. Readers cannot see themselves in Yang’s position because they want to believe that they are rational people. As a last note Kong mentions that *Wild swans*’ popularity can be explained by the simplified image of wrong and right. The readers can convince themselves that most Chinese were just unable to see through the ridiculous and obvious propaganda. On the whole Kong warns that the power of hindsight should not be underestimated. She implies that Chang makes it seem too easy.⁴⁸

By focusing on the commercial success of those miniatures Zarrow and Kong have criticised the memoirs and found that reading these accounts as true versions of history presented many difficulties. Zarrow uses the words of psychologist Martin Conway to underline how memoirists face many problems. “(…) they (autobiographical memories) are never true in the sense that they are literal representations of events, and in this respect, it makes little sense to ask whether an autobiographical memory is true or false. Nevertheless, autobiographical memories may be accurate without being literal and may represent the personal meaning of an event at the expense of accuracy.” Zarrow himself concludes that ‘Each memoir creates its own Cultural Revolution and the memoirs collectively create another Cultural Revolution (…)’.⁴⁹ Kong agrees with Zarrow and uses the words ‘(…) many of their interpretations remain problematic, and reading a single version of events is simply not adequate.’⁵⁰ Kong and Zarrow’s treatment of Chang’s and Yang’s memoirs exemplify how egodocuments are excluded from the considerations of historical research on the Cultural Revolution, and illustrate historian’s quick dismissal of the perspective of the miniature.

**OPERATIONALISATION**

As previously discussed most historians working on the Cultural Revolution have taken the structural approach in their historical research. Their research addresses the gigantic, they look for explanations that are applicable to the generalised situation. Scholars that use egodocuments, like Lu, MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, actually displaced the perspective of the miniature and focussed on the gigantic instead of taking the miniature seriously. Furthermore,

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⁵⁰ Kong, ‘Swan and Spider eater’, 250.
most reviewers on the miniature of the Cultural Revolution simply diminishes personal accounts as interesting stories, a form of literature. They take the gap between the miniature and the gigantic for granted and assume that there is no connection between them. They do not think memoires as such can contribute anything to historical interpretations. While Kong and Zarrow have contributed to the debate by investigating whether the personal accounts can be read as true history their research added to the exclusion of this literature from historical research. Both Kong and Zarrow left unaddressed how these personal narratives can be included back into history.

This thesis uses three post-Mao narratives of the Cultural Revolution to investigate the tension and interconnection between the personal miniature and the abstract gigantic perspectives of history. I highlight the differences and similarities between Jung Chang’s *Wild swans*, Rae Yang’s *Spider eaters* and the official Communist Party narrative; *The Resolution on certain questions in the history of our Party since the founding of the People’s Republic of China*, issued by the Sixth Plenum of the Communist Party’s Eleventh Central Committee on the 27 June, 1981. My research question will be to what extent the miniature perspectives on history in Jung Chang’s *Wild swans* and Rae Yang’s *Spider eaters* echo and reinforce elements of the gigantic perspective manifested in *The Resolution*?

As a specimen of the gigantic I used the official Communist Party narrative *The Resolution on certain questions in the history of our Party since the founding of the People’s Republic of China (The Resolution hereafter)*. In Chapter 1, I will analyse this gigantic Party narrative, and see how the Party presents Chinese history. Although the *Resolution* is mentioned in many scholarly works that focus on the end of the Maoist regime, it seems that scholars have not critically assessed the *Resolution* itself and that there has been little research on its impact on the citizens’ historical awareness. Kerry Brown mentions that the *Resolution* was part of a rectification campaign in which the Party used the bad leaders of the past as a scapegoat to diminish the Cultural Revolution as a leftish error. He explains that Mao was still too admired within the Party to blame him for any other mistakes than being misled.51 My analysis will focus on the Mao cult as demonstrated in this official document. The (re)interpretation of Mao’s historical role constitutes the centrepiece of the piece’s narrative scheme that aims to re-establish the Chinese Communist Party’s legitimacy. The personality cult of Mao will also be the main focus in the analysis of the personal accounts in the ensuing two chapters.

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I will be analysing two interesting and influential miniatures to determine to what extent they confirm and differ from the gigantic in Chapter 2 and 3. The narratives I chose as an example of this literary genre are Jung Chang’s *Wild swans: three daughters of China* and Rae Yang’s *Spider eaters*. *Wild swans* is a logical starting point for this research because her book is quite famous and she is seen as the representative of that genre. It was the first autobiographical account of a Red Guard and thereby she sets the standard for the authors that followed. Her work is published in 37 languages and she has sold over 13 million copies. Her book is controversially banned in mainland China.52 While discussing the lives of her mother and grandmother as well as her own life, Chang also describes Chinese history in exceptional detail, turning this difficult historical event into a manageable story, that people all over the world can relate to. Her work not only reads like a family history but also like a true historical text because she did some extensive research to create a seemingly logical and complete narrative that explains the lives of her mother and grandmother to an astonishing extent. Using maps, photographs, information from other places in China that she could not have known at that time, her work compels people to read her as an authority on the period. Nowadays most people know her as ‘the author’ when it comes to Red Guards memoires. Together with her husband, historian Jon Halliday, Chang is also the co-author of *Mao: the unknown story* (2005), the leading biography on Mao Zedong.53

As Kong has already pointed out Yang’s *Spider eaters* seems written so differently than Chang’s book. Therefore, it would be an interesting contribution to this analysis. Rae Yang is currently the associate Professor of East Asian Studies at Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Her memoir contains aspects of Yang’s family history and how she grew up in Communist China. Yang focusses mostly on her own history and shows how she became a devoted Red Guard and how, near the end of the Cultural Revolution, she became disappointed and disenchanted. Although there were many different autobiographical works written since Chang’s famous *Wild swans* Yang elaborates that her work still has great value as she decided that her strength does not lie in adding compelling details but in investigating her own motivations and thoughts, an area that had so far been neglected according to her and needed attention. She tried to distinguish herself by her identity as an academic and an author living in

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the United States in the ‘90s, from the girl she was at the time of the Cultural Revolution in China. By using *italics* for the thoughts and motivations she had at that time, she is able to reflect on them from her later adult author point of view.\(^{54}\)

I analyse the personal accounts with the help of three focus points: family, Red Guard movement and Mao himself.\(^{55}\) Chapter 2 will focus on the similarities between the miniatures and the gigantic. Because the *Resolution* created guidelines for remembering and narrating the Maoist period it will be not surprising to find that both authors give similar meanings to certain aspects and reinforce the gigantic perspective of the Party *Resolution*. In Chapter 3 I will discuss the differences between the miniatures and the gigantic. Since the miniatures are personal stories that discuss people’s lives they would only specifically address things that they experienced personally. Therefore they can deviate from the gigantic perspective. This research will contribute to the debate and understanding of Chinese history and how individual experiences can deviate from official statements. I will investigate to what extent the miniature and gigantic influence and rely on each other.

My overall argument can be summarised as the following: The authors are dependent on the gigantic because their lives took place in it. They abstract meaning from the gigantic and apply them to their miniature understanding of their world. The gigantic therefore influences them: it provides them with a particular kind of language and concepts, and informs their narrative strategies. Yet they also diverge from the gigantic as their own lives are not general and abstract but specific. It is their personal account. They had their own experiences and private thoughts, that no one else had. They have a unique way of seeing and describing the events that rebel from the gigantic narrative. As such, I intend to further develop Susan Stewart’s theory on how the different perspectives give meaning to one’s existence. She points out how the miniature in this regard is as important as the gigantic. She helps underline that *Wounded literature* was more than just literature, it was also history and can contribute to history writing. My research will contribute to and deviate from Stewart’s theory because it will show how there is always interaction between the gigantic and miniature by their mutual reinforcement. This will point out that both perspectives should be studied together and not separately. The field of personal memory studies can therefore be expanded; miniatures contribute to our gigantic understanding of the world and should therefore be taken seriously in academic research.

\(^{54}\) Rae Yang, *Spider eaters* (15\textsuperscript{th} edition; Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 2013) 13, 14.

\(^{55}\) See *REFLECTIONS ON THE PERSONAL CULT OF MAO*, 33-34, on a detailed explanation as to why those aspects seem important.
CHAPTER 1. - PARTY NARRATIVE

INTRODUCTION
With the death of Mao Zedong in 1976 the Maoist regime ended. This meant that the Cultural Revolution which Mao had proclaimed and which took place from 1966 to 1976 was also terminated. The Cultural Revolution had a profound impact on China and on the Party. For over a decade of chaos had changed China on a political, social economic, and cultural level, as the structures of the society were either destroyed or changed. In the years that followed the Communist Party of China (CPC), which had been the only Party in the People’s Republic of China had to find a way to give meaning to the past and reinforce its power to convince the people that it would be able to bring a better future to China. The CPC had to find a way to explain itself. To do so it drafted the Resolution. In the post-Mao era this statement was of extreme importance. It told people how they ought to remember their past and write about it and at the same time it showed them how to look at the future. In other words, this statement became the narrative of the gigantic.

WHY WAS THE RESOLUTION ON CERTAIN QUESTIONS IN THE HISTORY OF OUR PARTY SINCE THE FOUNDING OF THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA WRITTEN?
The Maoist regime ended in 1976. The Gang of Four was tried by the Communist Party of China (CPC) from 20 November 1980 to 25 January 1981. They were convicted and held mainly responsible for the horrifying incidents that took place during the Cultural Revolution. Jiang Qing, Mao’s widow, who was one of the Gangs’ leaders, defended herself by declaring “I was Chairman Mao’s dog. Whomever he told me to bite, I bit.” This raised the question of the role of Mao Zedong’s own responsibility in the past events.56

As the elected former Chairman of the CPC, Mao initially was to be the head of the Party. He became the image of the Proletarian Revolution and a founding father figure of the People’s Republic of China, similar to that of Lenin in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). While the Party was officially in control, Mao’s popularity and influence grew to such

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an extent that one could speak of a personality cult; he was worshipped in a godlike way and treated as non-human. Through a complex lineage and allegiance system one could regard Mao as an absolute ruler, who was no longer controlled by the Party; in fact he controlled the Party and its members.\textsuperscript{57} In the last decades of his rule many horrible events took place, that took the lives of millions of people.

The Party politicians who inherited this complicated political aftermath had to think about the atrocities committed during the Cultural Revolution and how they were going to represent, and distance themselves from, that period. The Party had to deal with Mao’s image and responsibility in the Cultural Revolution and, as Mao’s inheritors, with their own image and responsibility. Five months after the conviction of the Gang of Four the official Party Resolution was published.\textsuperscript{58} The Resolution on certain questions in the history of our Party since the founding of the People’s Republic of China was issued by the Sixth Plenum of the Communist Party’s Eleventh Central Committee on June 27, 1981. Four thousand Party leaders and theoreticians worked on it for over fifteen months.\textsuperscript{59}

The Party politicians at that time were struggling with their past: most members of the Party elite had been victims of the Cultural Revolution. They were eager to avenge themselves on Mao’s image and legacy. Older Party leaders who held firm positions also remembered and experienced the heydays of the Chinese Communist Revolution, 1945–1950. They were convinced that it was necessary to preserve Mao’s image as a symbol of revolutionary legitimacy.\textsuperscript{60} The Resolution adopted a position that reflected these two sentiments. On the one hand Mao’s image and legacy were preserved. He remained the glorious leader, founder and theorist that had made modern China possible. By doing so the Party would reaffirm their own legitimacy as the stable factor and inheritors of the Maoist regime and Mao’s successes. On the other hand they reassessed the godlike status of Mao. He was reduced to ‘human size’; he played a crucial role in China’s past but he also made mistakes. By diminishing his image the Party also diminished the power of Mao as a symbol of legitimacy. In the heydays of the cult Mao ruled like an absolute ruler in a communist regime. He excluded the Party from important

\textsuperscript{58} Meisner, Mao’s China and after, 461-463.
\textsuperscript{59} MacFarquhar, The politics of China, 330.
\textsuperscript{60} Meisner, Mao’s China and after, 463.
decisions. The Party wanted to ensure that no one would ever again achieve godlike status and absolute power over the Party.\textsuperscript{61}

The Party elite decided that Mao was not godlike/non-human but human; a brilliant theoretician and founder of the regime, yet unfortunately flawed as he had made some grave errors in his last decades. By doing so the Party could inherit the legitimacy of the communist regime and could simultaneously abandon and convict the socioeconomic policies of the last few decades. The new regime under Deng Xiaoping could continue the original ‘right’ policies from before the Cultural Revolution and focus on the future while making sure no one would ever again hold so much power over them. The official \textit{Resolution} set the tone for the Post-Mao decades. It was publicised in all newspapers and spread throughout the nation. All authors and scholars working in China were aware of this endorsed stance of the Party. The \textit{Resolution} is still recognised as the official statement up to this day.\textsuperscript{62}

\section*{MY ANALYSIS OF THE \textit{RESOLUTION}}

The \textit{Resolution} consists of over 23000 words and eight subtopics which are in turn divided into different subtopics ranging from the years before the founding of the People’s Republic to the proposed future of modern socialist China.\textsuperscript{63} About half of the \textit{Resolution} deals with the historical events in chronological order. The other half entails what ‘we’ (the Party and the People) have learnt from this period, and what we envisage for our future. Central in the last half of the \textit{Resolution} is chairman Mao Zedong and his ‘\textit{Mao Zedong Thought}’.

I provide a clear overview of the \textit{Resolution} by making the distinction between: 1. pre-Cultural Revolution era, 1921-1966 period that focusses on the Party history and chronological linear growth; 2. The Cultural Revolution era that focusses on Mao Zedong and his contributions; 3. The relationship between the people, Party and its leader during the Cultural Revolution; and 4. The relationship between the people, Party and its leader which focuses on

\textsuperscript{61} MacFarquhar, \textit{The politics of China}, 330-331.
\textsuperscript{62} Meisner, \textit{Mao’s China and after}, 464, 465.
\textsuperscript{63} Subtopics which I will treat as separate articles in my annotations from now on, and use their paragraph number to provide some directions: ‘Review of the history of the twenty-eight years before the founding of the People’s Republic’, ‘Basic appraisal of the history of the thirty-two years since the founding of the People’s Republic’, ‘The seven years of basic completion of the socialist transformation’, ‘Ten years of initially building socialism in all spheres’, ‘The decade of the “Cultural Revolution”’, ‘Great turning point in history’, ‘Comrade Mao Zedong’s historical role and Mao Zedong Thought’, and ‘Unite and strive to build a powerful, modern socialist China’. 
the period after the heydays and the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution and the role of the Party in this as they reassess their chances in providing a better future for China. I chose to use *Italics* instead of quotations to show the Party’s opinions and choice of words because I have paraphrased certain aspects of the *Resolution* rather than copying the exact text. To quote the exact way the *Resolution* is written would take up a lot of space and irrelevant information. However, I have given special attention to the right tone of words, the structure and the assessment of the events that the Party used in the *Resolution* as they have influenced miniatures understanding of the events. It is important to remember that the opinions and the choice of words in *Italics* are those of the Party and do not reflect my own thoughts.

**PARTY LEGITIMACY THROUGH HISTORICAL NARRATIVE IN PRE-CULTURAL REVOLUTION ERA, 1921-1966**

When the Party summarises the start of the PRC (Peoples Republic of China) it especially chooses to focus on the shortcomings of the political enemies of the CPC (Communist Party of China) in history. The *Resolution* goes all the way back to the initial Communist struggle of 1921, led by the Communist Party of China. It attempts to underline how its past fits into a long Communist tradition that is applied to Chinese custom. *Under influence of the October Revolution in Russia and the May 4th Movement in China Marxism-Leninism was integrated with the Chinese workers’ movement. (...) led the people into the New Democracy.*

According to the Party statement Dr. Sun Yat-sen was able to liberate the people and overthrew the longstanding feudal monarchy, but these initial bourgeois and nationalist (Kuomintang) liberators left most of the society intact. It did not change much. Only with the help of the CPC, which could only successfully exist with the support of the People, the necessary change was realised. By placing themselves in a long and righteous tradition of communist struggle they emphasise their legitimacy. *It was the CPC that was able to overthrow the reactionary rule of imperialism and feudalism and created a socialistic society.*

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64 The Communist Party of China is in short also called the CPC. However in most western literature the Party is referred to as CCP; Chinese Communist Party.
The Kuomintang is presented as slow and reactionary, in favour of imperialism and feudalism. The *Resolution* mentions many struggles between the CPC (themselves) and Kuomintang. The first struggle appeared in 1927, (...)* where the Kuomintang controlled by Chiang Kai-Shek and Wang Jingwei betrayed the Kuomintang-Communists policies of cooperation, anti-imperialism and anti-feudalism. They massacred Communists and revolutionaries. Therefore the Party suffered a great defeat.* The second struggle took place after the Japanese imperialistic invasion when Mao was installed as the leader of The First Division of Chinese Workers’ and Peasants’ Revolutionary Army (Red Army). The Kuomintang agreed to create a united front with the CPC against Japan. This was again on the initiative of the Party, the Kuomintang was passive and opposed them regardless.

With the help of ‘the people’ the Japanese were finally defeated in the War of Resistance Against Japan, 1937-1945. The Party narrative suggests that the CPC mainly seems to exist out of the people’s support. In the War of Liberation, 1946-1949, they defeated the *insincere and treacherous bloodthirsty Kuomintang* that was backed up by the imperialistic United States. In the narrative of the events the good people would seem to always win from evil imperialists. ‘The Chinese people had stood up’. By describing the liberation in great detail the Party tries to reemphasise their rightful place as leaders of China opposed to the Kuomintang/nationalists.

After the War of Resistance and the War of Liberation the narrative focusses on the economic and social progress of the years that followed. *In the first seven years of the PRC, from 1949 to 1956 the CPC led the people to transform from democracy into socialism.* The industry grew rapidly in many different areas and the country was successfully socialised. Under the movement of ‘letting a hundred flowers bloom and a hundred schools of thought contend’ intellectuals and industry worked together for a nation all believed in. *There were many brilliant successes and great triumphs. Among them was the first economical five year plan. Also the main focus of the Party and the people shifted from the struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeois to the struggle between the demands of a developing economy and culture against the economic and cultural reality.* *In the following ten years the industry quadrupled.* It seems striking that the Party seems to forget to mention that this economic

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67 Ibidem.
68 The Sixth Plenary Session, ‘The seven years of basic completion of the socialist transformation’, from marxist.org (accessed 24 October 2017).
69 Ibidem.
growth was not in pace with population growth and resulted in great starvation and consequently in the death of millions of people. This unfortunate event would not reflect well on their capability of leading millions of Chinese people into a prosperous future. It appears that they like to highlight the positive larger structural movements and minimise the negative, if mentioned at all, by placing them in a huge perspective.

To summarise, the Party presented itself as liberators of the poor people where it led the people, with the help of the people, into ‘the new democracy’. It stated that this was something the bourgeois and Kuomintang had failed to do so far, as they were too passive and reactionary in favour of imperialism and feudalism. The Resolution states that the CPC was betrayed by the Kuomintang and so many good communists were massacred. After the War on Resistance against the Japanese this resulted in the War of Liberation which the CPC won; ‘the Chinese people had stood up’. In the years that followed under the CPC industry grew and the country was socialised. All worked together in creating a better nation. The Party overcame many difficulties and through perseverance, faith, and support of the people, it was able to create a new kind of communism and socialist progress. It did not mention what these setbacks entailed, i.e. the lives of millions of people.

**Mao and Mao Zedong Thought, its Assessment, and the Cultural Revolution, 1966-1976**

Mao is mostly mentioned in the part where the Party confesses to have made mistakes in the established guidelines that created the possibility of the Cultural Revolution. According to the narrative there where bourgeois rightist that took the opportunity to voice their opinion and attack the Party. The Party, led by Mao, created a counterattack which was too broad; many intellectuals, patriots, and even communist cadres were wrongfully accused of being rightists. Certain kind of art and science were politically and ideologically criticised. The Resolution states that Mao, because of his enthusiasm and arrogance, failed to realise that the bourgeois rightists were not ‘everywhere’. As a result chaos within the Party and other leading positions began.71

The Resolution also emphasises the ‘leftish mistake’; that the Party did not set realistic economic goals. *The boastfulness and ‘the stirring up of a Communist wind’ were uncontrolled by lack of experience. Mao and other Party leaders became arrogant by their success and*

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exaggerated the importance of a subjective will. ‘The Great Leap Forward’ (second five year plan) was reckless without sufficient and careful thought. The Party emphasises that these mistakes were collective; Mao, although responsible and accountable, did not do this alone. With the Party fractured the Cultural Revolution followed. The Party therefore makes an effort to claim partial responsibility while blaming Mao at the same time. Both the Committee and the Party failed to intervene at this stage. They make Mao appear human, not God-like as the personality cult would have made people believe.

In the decennium of the Cultural Revolution, from 1966 to 1976, there were many major setbacks and great losses since the founding of the Republic. The Resolution does not spare Mao, it states that most of them were initiated by Comrade Mao Zedong himself. He thought there were countless bourgeois and anti-revolutionaries revisionists within the Party, government, army, culture and organisations. According to Mao the only solution was a full-fledged Cultural Revolution to beat them. This ‘Theory of continued revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat’, the official term of the revolution also known as the Cultural Revolution, was not in line with the original ‘Mao Zedong Thought’. The Party chooses to emphasise that although Mao was responsible for many mistakes, he also made the mistake of not following his own theory. By emphasising this paradox the Party wants to draw attention to the value of ‘Mao Zedong Thought’ and therefore the value of Mao himself.

At least half of the Resolution focusses on what can be learned and what remains valuable throughout the century despite the setbacks of the Cultural Revolution. Central in this is Mao and ‘Mao Zedong Thought’. On Mao the Resolution of the Party is quite specific. He remains a great leader, a visionary who created the possibility of further socialist and communist development. Although he made mistakes in the Cultural Revolution, we should not judge him for it. His contributions are far greater than his errors; he founded and build the Party and the Army, realised the liberation, and founded the Republic.

In his early years Mao developed the ‘Mao Zedong Thought’. According to the Resolution this thought is still the core of Chinese communism; to adopt theories from

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73 Ibidem.
74 Mao Zedong Thought entailed the correct Marxist and Leninist theories applied to the specific Chinese circumstances. The Sixth Plenary Session, ‘The decade of the “Cultural Revolution”’, paragraph number 19, from marxist.org (accessed 24 October 2017).
75 The Sixth Plenary Session, ‘Comrade Mao Zedong’s historical role and Mao Zedong Thought’, paragraph number 27, from marxist.org (accessed 24 October 2017).
Marxism-Leninism and apply them to the precise situation. The precise situation at that time consisted of the social construction of the Chinese society. Mao’s development and implementation of this theory are considered vital in the transformation of China’s 20th century. His thoughts about the new democratic revolution consisted of three things. Firstly he realised that the Chinese bourgeoisie consisted of two different groups. One was the imperialistic ‘big bourgeoisie’. The other was the revolutionary ‘national bourgeoisie’. Secondly he wanted to involve both groups in the proletarian revolution. The national bourgeoisie could be convinced by sympathy, the big bourgeoisie if necessary by force. The third necessary act would be the creation of the Party. With unity and a long term goal the society could industrialise and transform into a socialist Republic. The economy should be balanced and gradual; between large and small companies, urban and rural, of all different nationalities. He thought that a weak revolutionary force could overthrow a strong reactionary power, as long as the defeated were given the chance to become part of the proletariat. The ideology and politics are crucial for the economy, as are science and education. The intellectuals have a big and important role in this. The Party should ideologically always be proletarian. We should learn from the past and prevent making the same mistakes. We should cure the disease to save the patient. We should be an ideological unity against arrogance, impatience and bureaucracy.

Overall the Party confesses to the many mistakes it had made, while being led by chairman Mao Zedong. The Resolution does acknowledge Mao’s responsibility in this regard, but defends him; Mao made his mistakes because he became reckless and passionate. This simultaneously ensures that Mao is considered flawed and therefore more human and less god-like. In their narrative they underline how Mao’s mistakes should not outweigh his contributions to the regime. His theoretical contributions like ‘Mao Zedong Thought’ are considered invaluable. The Party also explicitly states that they became powerless because the Party was fractured. In the end they claim that the Party and Mao were both partially responsible for the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution.

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77 Ibidem, 29.
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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PEOPLE, PARTY AND ITS LEADER DURING THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION, 1966-1976

According to the Party Resolution, Lin Biao, Jiang Qing, and others (Gang of Four) were placed in high positions by Mao. They were in fact promoting two anti-revolutionary groups to seize control and abused the mistakes Comrade Mao Zedong made. Definitions of issues that were considered ‘bad’ were unclear. This created a general confusion. Many issues that were in fact Marxist and socialistic (and initiated by Mao) were labelled bad in this period. People were therefore confused when they were considered to be the enemy. This was a frame-up by Lin Biao, Jiang Qing and their followers. 78

The revolution was wild and out of control. It was led directly by the masses, instead of first going through the Party. As a result the Party was under attack and became paralysed. The majority of the people acted through their faith in Mao and the Party except for a small group of extremists. Fortunately the majority of the Chinese were simply faithful to Mao and did not mean any harm. Most Chinese became politically aware and sceptical after a while; they became hesitant and even resisted the Cultural Revolution. 79 Therefore the Party narrative underlines that most Chinese are likely not to be blamed or held responsible. They were misled by their beloved Mao who meant well but was wrong, and the deceitful Gang of Four who wanted to seize power. Simultaneously this statement claims that most Chinese were smart enough to realise the political manipulation. This period (Cultural Revolution) was absolutely different from the previous years. Under true socialist circumstances there should not be an economic or political basis to overthrow the other classes. The leadership of the Committee was taken over by Mao and his ‘cult of personality’. Overall we conclude that the ninth congress that determined the path of the Cultural Revolution was wrong; ideological, political and organisational. 80 By emphasising how people just wanted to do good the Resolution tries to deal with feelings of guilt among the Chinese. The only thing they seemed guilty of was of loving Mao and of being misled by the evil Lin Biao, Jiang Qing and others. They also underline how true socialism does not need to overthrow other classes. This addresses the importance, relevance, and reliability of socialism and communism in the future.

Overall the Resolution discusses the guilt and accountability of the three different levels, politicians in high positions, the Party itself and the common people of China. They do not

79 Ibidem.
spare Mao and the mistakes he had made, but they point towards Lin Biao and the Gang of Four for the events that took place during the Cultural Revolution. They were the ones who abused their power in order to seize control. They were responsible for the chaos and they misled the people who wanted to do good. According to the Party only a few extremists abused their power. Most people eventually realised what was going on and became sceptical and even resisted the Cultural Revolution. The Party states that it became paralysed. It was bypassed as the Revolution went straight from Mao and the Gang of Four to the People. The Party excuses itself by stating that it could not intervene, but emphasises how it declared that the Cultural Revolution was wrong: on an ideological level, political level and organisational level, and that true socialism did not need to overthrow classes. It seems that the Party used Lin Biao and the Gang of Four as a scapegoat for the events in which the Party was unable to intervene and unwilling to blame Mao Zedong or the people for what they did.


In the years leading up to the end of Mao’s regime the struggle for power among some prominent leading Party members became more evident. Comrade Mao Zedong and premier Zhou Enlai prevented a coup by Lin Biao in 1970-1971. Zhou took over the daily management and the situation soon improved. He criticised the leftish errors, but Mao was still convinced of the danger of the rightists. When Zhou Enlai became ill Deng Xiaoping took over. He made many improvements but Mao feared this structural change. Deng was therefore forced to leave. When Comrade Zhou died in 1976 the entire country went into mourning for he was loved by the people. *This triggered mass demonstrations, also known as the Tian an men incident, and the people demanded the return of Deng and of correct leadership.*\(^81\) By using the specific term of ‘correct leadership’ and showing how this was triggered by mass demonstrations of the people the *Resolution* focuses on how the people had stood up. According to the gigantic Party narrative the Chinese communist regime is only enabled by the power of the people. The people are presented as the leading and decisive factor in China’s developments.

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\(^{81}\) The Sixth Plenary Session, ‘Great turning point in history’, paragraph number 25, from marxist.org (accessed 24 October 2017).
Under premier Zhou Enlai and premier Deng Xiaoping socialist China started to improve again, as both men were loved and supported by the people and they loved them in return. After Mao’s death in 1976 and the official ending of the Maoist era, the Gang of Four and Lin Biao were convicted and the society returned to its true socialist state. After Mao passed away the Gang of Four ceased control, but the Committee, on behalf of the Party and the People, smashed the clique and officially ended the Cultural Revolution.\textsuperscript{82} Now we can acknowledge and improve the leftish errors and criticise the ‘Two Whatevers’. We should embrace the ‘Mao Zedong Thought’. In this period we have let go of the personality cult and dogmas. We should think for ourselves, critically, study and think of solutions. Many convicted ‘rightists’ from the past were declared innocent, the local and provincial politics and congresses were established and chosen directly by the people. Jiang Qing and the clique\textsuperscript{83} were publicly convicted in 1981.\textsuperscript{84} The Resolution gloriously emphasises how the Committee on behalf of the Party and the People took back control and convicted the Gang of Four. The Party underlines how it made amends with the past and how it can and have improved itself. The Resolution became a document that provided a guideline for the future.

The Resolution in this sense became the site where the Party declared itself to be of the outmost importance in the long term policies of economic, social and cultural change, and the unity of the people. The Party confirms this point again in its assessment of the future. Socialism had proven to be the only option for a modern China. The role of the CPC in this is crucial. We should always strive to improve mistakes and can always correct them by having trust in the unity between the Party and her People. One should never use the Party’s mistakes as a pretext for weakening or sabotage.\textsuperscript{85}

The Resolution focused on how the people and prominent Party members like Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping were able to notice the mistakes that had been made. They were able to improve China and turn communism in the right direction. According to the Party the people realised this and loved Zhou and Deng for it; ‘with the Tian an men incident they demanded correct leadership’. The people are presented as the decisive factor in China. The committee was able to intervene on behalf of the people to officially end the Cultural Revolution in 1976.

\textsuperscript{82} The Sixth Plenary Session, ‘Great turning point in history’, paragraph number 25, from marxist.org (accessed 24 October 2017).
\textsuperscript{83} Also known as the Gang of Four
\textsuperscript{84} The Sixth Plenary Session, ‘Great turning point’, paragraph number 26, from marxist.org (accessed 24 October 2017).
\textsuperscript{85} The Sixth Plenary Session, ‘Unite and strive to build a powerful, modern socialist China’, paragraph number 34, from marxist.org (accessed 24 October 2017).
when Mao died. The Party underlines that it disapproves of the Cultural Revolution and the Two Whatevers. It states that it prefers the Mao Zedong Thought and a more pragmatic approach to socialism. The Resolution emphasises how the CPC is crucial in creating a better and modern China.

**REFLECTIONS ON THE PERSONAL CULT OF MAO**

In the end this official document is all about the Party’s past, present and future and the way it dealt with Mao’s legacy and the cult of personality to ensure its own control. By doing so it has bypassed certain topics. Individuals, however, from the perspective of the miniature, have shown that these topics were perceived differently. The tensions between the memories of the state and the memories of the individual ran high in the post-Mao decades on these following focal points.

In the Resolution the Party focuses especially on the relationship between the state and the individual. By doing so the Resolution does not acknowledge that the actions of the individual are dependent on their social relations. Social structure, friendship and family are strong ties that link the individual to the community and the state. People give meaning to their lives within the social structures of friends and family. The home became a place of tension especially in communist China where the family was regarded an ‘evil traditional hierarchical structure’ that was supposed to be overthrown in favour of equalitarian brothers and sisters of the same communist ethics.  

Another thing that struck me is that the Resolution does not reveal any details on the Red Guard at all. It does state that the Party lost control of the movement of the Cultural Revolution to the masses. These masses generally meant well but confused. Yet according to ‘Mao Zedong Thought’ they were stimulated to think for themselves and find practical solutions that would apply to their specific situation. Was what they stated about the masses also applicable to the Red Guards? 

Thirdly the Resolution shows a certain ambiguity on the personality cult of Mao. The Image of Mao Zedong was carefully crafted and maintained in a certain specific way. In the Resolution Mao remained a brilliant theorist and strategist who contributed greatly to modern  

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87 Tong and Hung, ‘To Be Worthy’, 76, 77.
communist China. His later contributions as the leader of the Cultural Revolution were downplayed. The Resolution declares that Mao was simply overenthusiastic and repeatedly lost contact with reality. He was being misled by Lin Biao and the Gang of Four. They deceived him into thinking that a more drastic anti-rightist movement was necessary for China. Mao’s godlike status was therefore diminished to ‘just human’, susceptible to mistakes. The Party reshapes Mao’s image to underline that although the person was flawed, his contributions to China still outweighed his mistakes. The Party simultaneously states that they never supported Mao’s cult of personality but were outmanoeuvred. The Party opposed the cult in favour of collective leadership. 88

CONCLUSION

Overall the Party Resolution emphasises its own role as liberator of the poor people. They, and not the treacherous Kuomintang, liberated the desperate and mistreated People of China. By placing themselves in this long history they emphasise that the Communist Party enabled many successes through careful planning and slow progress. Setbacks were to be expected as they were doing something new, by trial and error they made their own version of communist and socialist progress. They chose not to mention that this progress came at the cost of millions of people’s lives.

This same attitude is adapted in their remembering of Mao Zedong. The Party members inherited the difficult situation after Mao’s death. In order to underline their own legitimacy as the rightful successors and simultaneously distance themselves of the ‘minor drawbacks’ like the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, they condemned Mao partially. People ought to look at Mao and consider his overall contributions. By stating that Mao contributed immensely to the theoretical department and liberated the People but failed and made ‘human’ mistakes in his later terms, they ended the deification that was part of the personality cult.

The Party distanced itself from the cult of personality and claimed to have never supported this. According to its narrative there seemed to be a fraction within the Party which was paralysed by ‘evil opportunists that took advantage of the honourable chairman Mao’s mistakes’ like Lin Biao and the Gang of Four did. The Party was unable to intervene because it

was bypassed as the Cultural Revolution was taken directly to the people. The people that contributed to these mistakes were blinded by their love for Mao but eventually saw through it and resisted. Only a few people abused their power. Most were good communists who could not be held accountable for being misled by the opportunists. It seems as if the Party uses Lin Biao and the Gang of Four as scapegoats because they did not want to blame the people or Mao.

By emphasising all the good that the Communist Party had brought China they also state that the Party was crucial for the future of modern China. Overall it is a narrative of glorious progress that the Communist Party brought about in the never ending yet normal struggles of society in China. People and scholars were to remember and obey these ‘guidelines’. It became the only acceptable way of narrating the Gigantic.

To conclude, the Resolution was drafted because the Cultural Revolution created chaos and paralysed the Party. It needed to reinforce its power as the only rightful ruler and representation of the people of China. The Party wanted to emphasise how it would never again accept someone like Mao or the Gang of Four to overshadow and bypass the Party.
CHAPTER 2 – SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE MINIATURE AND GIGANTIC NARRATIVE

INTRODUCTION
As mentioned in the previous chapter on the gigantic Party narrative, the Resolution created guidelines for the remembering and the narrating of China’s Maoist period. This was a carefully constructed account created with hindsight to affirm the position of the Party in the present and future. This dynamic is also at play in the miniature. Both Jung Chang and Rae Yang came of age in the 1980’s, and wrote their autobiographies in the 1990’s. It is therefore not surprising that both authors gave similar meanings to certain aspects as they grew up in that culture and had to accept the gigantic Resolution. They lived under the shadow of that gigantic.

It is important to remember that those miniatures are stories that always have meaning. The authors chose to emphasise certain events and forget about others. The act of writing(,) and the desire to be understood, forces them to create a logical narrative that seems to be in line with other people's understanding of the events. The miniature is therefore inescapably influenced by the gigantic. What we read and find in those miniatures is what the authors want to tell us. They can have many different intentions but it is important to realise that we do not deal with the authors as the young girls who are described in the books. We deal with the authorial self, the adult and aware author; they attempt to describe their younger and oblivious self, which they can never truly reconstruct.

The three aspects that I use to point out how the authors wrote about their experience of the cult of personality are family, the Red Guard and Mao Zedong himself. In this specific order the work of both authors seem to have many similarities to the Party narrative.

1. FAMILY
Both authors chose to emphasise that, regarding their family, the time before the PRC was not all good. Some people were quite unhappy and repressed. By explaining how and why, they underline how it became evident that change was needed; the legitimacy of the Party and of Mao Zedong himself as the figurehead of the regime, is confirmed.
1.1 GREAT- AND GRANDPARENTS.

Chang writes about her grandparents and her great-grandparents from her mother’s side. Her
great-grandmother was nameless (Number two) because Number two was just a girl. Number
two’s parents had died, and she was promised to her future husband at the age of six (he was
not even born yet). When he was fourteen (and she twenty) they married. He gave away his
own daughter, Chang’s grandmother, to an important general; she was to become one of the
general’s many concubines.89

Chang’s great-grandfather is described as cold and calculated, hungry for more power.
Both her great-grandmother and her grandmother appear as passive daughters, loyal to their
family’s wishes and pawns in the greater scheme of men. When the general dies of an illness in
1933 her grandmother is released from her ties to his household.90 She is asked to return to her
father’s household and brings along her child, Chang’s mother. Eventually she meets someone
else, a doctor. As it was love at first sight he decides to marry her, going against tradition and
his children’s wishes. This act changed the strong family hierarchy.91 The contrast between the
narratives of the evil great-grandfather, living within the customs of tradition and the more
modern doctor who went against tradition insinuates that tradition was something wicked and
created passive victims. Chang chooses to emphasise that modernity brought human kindness.

Yang also writes about the misfortunes of her grandmother’s grandfather. Although her
family appears to be quite happy, her great-great-grandfather had been in service of the emperor
and had to preside over trials and beheadings. This job haunted him for the rest of his life but
he never dared to refuse. Having been part of the old imperial regime made him partly
responsible for taking the lives of others. He actively contributed to the old imperial regime, a
regime that the communists condemned. Especially in Yang’s youth, around the 1950’s, this
was regarded as very wrong. The actions of one’s ancestors reflect on one’s own place in
society. It could taint her own family's reputation.92 As Yang grew up and became more familiar
with her family’s history she started to hate and resent her grandfather’s grandfather for the
job he did. Her grandmother became the personification of everything she hated. ‘In fact, in
those years I even wished that I had never had such a Nainai and those ancestors of hers. They
were bloodsuckers, parasites, smiling tigers, piles of garbage, cow ghosts, and snake demons

90 Ibidem, 54.
91 Ibidem, 60-67.
(...) If I could erase them from my memory, I would become a reliable successor to the revolutionary cause like my schoolmates.'\textsuperscript{93} (1966)

Both authors therefore chose to refer to imperial China in a similar way as the Party chose to represent the past. Chang and Yang emphasise that they had ancestors who were victims of tradition who wanted and needed change. This underlines the Party’s narrative as liberators of the people. According to the gigantic Party Resolution only the Communist Party was able to truly reform society and break down these old traditions that had oppressed so many people. Especially Chang’s narrative emphasises the legitimacy of the Party’s power, particularly in the initial stage of the Chinese Communist Revolution. Communism became a symbol of kindness and modernity to her. Yang shows how in her teenage years she cannot believe anyone would oppose communist progress and remain attached to old symbols of imperial China. Yang starts to hate her own grandmother for what she represented.

1.2 PARENTS
Yang chose to focus her narrative more on her own parents instead of her (great)grandparents. She writes that her family was well educated. Both her parents attended university, where her father studied western literature. After they were married and Yang was born they moved to Switzerland where both her father and mother worked as diplomats. Yang states that her family was very modern and loving. They were also supporters of communism. In their household they believed in equality. Yang shares two interesting memories that underline their communist ideology. The first memory is how everybody would sit at the table together and could speak freely without formalities. The other memory is that it took Yang years to find out that her aunt who took care of the children was actually their nanny and not their actual relative.\textsuperscript{94}

It seems that Yang especially shares her family’s history in order to show how communism was initially seen as a good thing. Both her parents, who, according to her, were good people, supported communism because they thought it would change China for the better. She summarises how communism had promised to give work to everybody and how peasants and workers would be released from slavery. Corruption would come to an end and the economy would thrive. By emphasising her heritage in this way she shows that the ruling class also favoured change. Her parents seemed selfless, in line with communist thought. They wanted to help all Chinese.\textsuperscript{95}

\textsuperscript{93} Yang, Spider eaters, 22.
\textsuperscript{94} Ibidem, 41.
\textsuperscript{95} Yang, Spider eaters, 9.
INFLUENCING PERSPECTIVES

On the whole Yang reflected carefully on who she once was and how she was influenced by her family and their position and heritage. Although they were from the educated upper class they were also modern and supporters of Maoism. Diplomats who wanted to change China for the prosperity of everybody. They actively choose to participate in the beginning of Maoism. Their choices seem rational and calm; Yang does not show her parents’ emotional motivations. These are in sharp contrast with her own emotional attachment to the Party.

1.3 CONCLUSION
By emphasising these particular memories in their narratives both Chang and Yang created an atmosphere of logical consistency and rightfulness that underlines the legitimacy of the Party and also confirms the Party narrative. While Chang’s narrative emphasises the way her great-grandmother and grandmother were victims of tradition and needed change, it is Yang who explicitly connected the influence of her ancestors on with her own life. She started to hate her grandmother and her families background intensely, as a good communist probably should have. She also carefully and calmly outlines her parents’ communist affiliation. Both Chang’s and Yang’s reflections on their grandparents and parents seem to have similarities to the more pragmatic kind of communism that is also supported in the Party’s self-narrative in the post-Mao era: to favour practical solutions that are applied to specific circumstances over dogmas. She confirms the legitimacy of the Party by emphasising that it overthrew the old regime; there were victims in imperial China and the Party and Mao liberated them. Communism would bring prosperity and equality to all and selfishness and hunger for power should be condemned as they were the source of evil.

2. RED GUARD
The Party narrative is also confirmed in some aspects of the way the authors describe their experience and motivations as a Red Guard. Although the Party never explicitly mentions them in their official narrative, it is evident that the Red Guards were crucial in the political scene during the Cultural Revolution. They were also the main cause for the Party’s loss of control at the time. According to the Party narrative most Chinese and followers of Mao, who were influenced by the personality cult, did so out of love for Mao and were generally ignorant at first. Only a few fanatics were responsible for extreme violence.
Yang writes that she encountered the Red Guard movement in high school. She, like all her classmates, will actively participate in the Cultural Revolution. She describes how her involvement in the movement seems to start with passion, but in quite a sensible and innocent way; initially they were doing good things and wanted to improve China and the Chinese. One of the activities of the Red Guard consists of counteracting bad habits. Yang and her group went to restaurants and forced people to start servicing themselves. Being waited upon was a decadency that needed to end. The other thing they did was forcing people to finish their plate. Wasting food became a great offence, especially during a time where millions of people starved to death in China. After their actions at restaurants they were asked to destroy gardens which was another relatively innocent task. In the meantime other groups were plundering homes and shops, ruining people’s lives, robbing them of their income and finding evidence to accuse them of being enemies of the revolution.

Chang emphasises that she starts in the same way; she describes how she and her classmates removed the grass at their school and how she ‘attacked’ the flowers. According to Chang’s narrative the Red Guards were ignorant fanatics who initially destroyed material stuff and eventually also beat up and humiliated people. They did not kill at first. That was never their intention, nor was it Mao’s order. Mao’s orders consisted of increasing terror in order to overthrow the capitalist rightist that had remained in society. These deeds of terror were carried out by people who were afraid of being labelled capitalist rightists. So by their own hand, their own people, people were betrayed out of hatred, fanaticism and envy. Chang implicitly suggests that those self-destructive forces of people seem to have a parallel in the old China, where misery is also caused by envy and greed.

Chang’s presentation of the Red Guards accountability remains very defensive. ‘Only a small proportion of the Red Guards was actually involved in cruelty or violence. Many were able to avoid taking part because the Red Guard was a loose organization which, by and large, did not physically force its members to do evil. As a matter of fact, Mao himself never ordered the Red Guards to kill, and his instructions regarding violence were contradictory. One could feel devoted to Mao without perpetrating violence or evil. Those who chose to do so could not simply blame Mao.’

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96 Yang, Spider eaters, 124.
97 Ibidem, 126,127.
98 Chang, Wild swans, 358, 359.
99 Ibidem, 376, 377.
100 Chang, Wild swans, 379.
Does this mean that the Red Guard, as a group, was therefore innocent? That violence was not a part of the Red Guard nor encouraged by the Mao or the Party? That violence was an act of rare and cruel individuals and not caused by Maoism? This was certainly the case at her school. According to Chang they were mostly innocent of anything. ‘(…) there was no bonfire at my school. The head of the school Red Guards had been a very conscientious student. A rather feminine-looking seventeen-year-old, he had been made the Red Guard leader because his father was the Party chief for the province, rather than because of his own ambition. While he could not prevent the general vandalism, he did manage to stop the books from being burned.’\textsuperscript{101} If there were any extremities, which Chang’s narrative makes us doubt since they all seem relatively rational peaceful and calm, she has an excuse. ‘thinking back, I can see the thrill some children must have felt at demonstrating their power over adults. A popular Red Guard slogan went: ‘We can soar to heaven, and pierce the earth, because our Great Leader Chairman Mao is our supreme commander!’ As this Resolution reveals, the Red Guards were not enjoying genuine freedom of self-expression. From the start they were nothing but the tool of a tyrant.’\textsuperscript{102}

In Chang’s presentation of the events Mao was the one who was responsible. Who used the ‘children’ who were easily susceptible to power they never had before. Chang downplays their accountability and responsibility; they were victims, tools, misled.

2.1 CONCLUSION

There are many similarities in especially Chang’s narrative and the Party’s narrative. Both overall depict the Red Guards as quite innocent, trying to do good and simply following (the evil tyrant/mistaken) Mao. They both emphasise that there was not that much violence and that violence was done by some fanatics instead of by everyone, on the order of Mao. Both also state that they were quite rational and calm, trying to save as many people and books as possible. Especially Chang tries to convince the reader, and maybe most of all herself, how she remains passive. She seems to condemn the active part of the cult of personality in the same way as the Party.

\textsuperscript{101} Chang, Wild swans, 388, 389.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibidem, 385.
3. MAO ZEDONG

There are also similarities in the way both narratives and the Party describe the image of Mao Zedong and his role within the Party. He is presented as a brilliant theorist and strategist who lost contact with reality.\textsuperscript{103} Yang artfully explores and illustrates how her love and devotion to Mao felt and grew. The initial stages of the cult of Mao were dreamlike to her. This is similar to the Party’s statement: the masses of the Cultural Revolution acted thus out of love for Mao, not for Party politics. The cult felt all consuming. Chang chooses to expose the first stages from a more factual perspective. She describes how the politics of remembering of the 1950’s-1960’s emphasised the horrible things the Kuomintang did to the Chinese, which are similarly described and elaborated on in the Party Resolution, and how this drove her to follow Mao and see him as some sort of saviour. The Party claimed in its narrative that it has always opposed the cult of personality in favour of collective leadership.

3.1 INITIALADORATION

In her narrative Yang describes rather explicitly how her thoughts about Mao developed and explains the cult of Mao. He was her hero. In her reflection on the past Yang explains how she created two images in her mind. As a shining sun in the sky Mao gave life to everything on earth. He was, in her image and in the image of millions of other Chinese, their great hero, great commander, great teacher and great chairman. He travelled through the country by foot, without money. He spoke to all kinds of people, knew all kinds of people and therefore truly knew China. He survived on friendship and charity. Mao became the personification of the communist thought. This is contrasted with Yang’s reality. Yang, the teenager, was stuck in her boring classes that lectured her and suppressed her freedom. Friendship among peers and classmates was killed in a world where students competed for the best grades and favours. She also loved Mao in her own unique romanticised fabrication. A tragic hero, much younger than his actual age, who was insecure. She could relate to him better than to an older adult Mao. He had known loss; his wife, brother and son had died as true heroes for what they believed in. His other son had gone mad because of their loss. He had sacrificed his family for the new China. Yang also wanted to do this, even when it would cost her her life. For him she would change herself into a little piece of ‘burning coal’.\textsuperscript{104} ‘For such a hero I was willing to do anything he might want me to do. Sleep in a graveyard. Drink a bottle of poison. Stab myself

\textsuperscript{103} The Sixth Plenary Session, ‘Comrade Mao’, paragraph number 27, from marxist.org (accessed 24 October 2017).

\textsuperscript{104} Yang, Spider eaters, 110-114.
in the chest. Like Juliet? No! I mean I would continue to make revolution under proletarian
dictatorship and defend his revolutionary line. Climb a mountain of knives. Jump into an ocean
of raging fire. Face a forest of rifles and charge forward into a shower of bullets. I would do it
for his sake. Proudly and gladly. Let my body be pierced a hundred times and my bones be
shattered. My heart would remain true to him. With my last breath I would cry, “Long Live
Chairman Mao!”” \(^\text{105}\)

According to Chang’s memories, to emphasise the necessity of Mao’s politics, the
regime perpetuated a particular culture of remembering during the Mao era in the 1950’s and
1960’s. There were many, hundreds, of sad stories that were systematically spread around by
the government in the years leading to the Cultural Revolution. ‘Workers and peasants came to
give talks at our school: we heard of childhoods dominated by starvation, freezing winters with
no shoes, and premature, painful deaths. They told us how boundlessly grateful they were to
Chairman Mao for saving their lives and giving them food and clothing. One speaker was a
member of an ethnic group called the Yi, who had a system of slavery until the late 1950s. He
had been a slave and showed us scars from appalling beatings under his previous masters.’ \(^\text{106}\)
The Party made it clear to the students that things were bad before the Communist Revolution.
Starvation, lack of supplies, shelter, slavery, clothes, and death, were all common under the
Kuomintang. They apparently were true enemies, for they had facilitated horrible things to
happen to the Chinese. When the victims declared that Mao was their saviour, since he stopped
the Kuomintang and gave the victims food and clothes, saving their lives in the process, Chang
describes how she also starts to see him like the saviour of China. ‘Every time the speakers
described the hardships they had endured the packed hall was shaken by sobs. I came out of
these sessions feeling devastated at what the Kuomintang had done, and passionately devoted
to Mao.’ \(^\text{107}\) Her words and actions in later parts of her narrative, however, do not especially
show this ‘passionate devotion’. To me she seems rather calm and collected. The way she
presents herself in her narrative might be the product of selective memorising. She chose to
remember the period in a way that made sense, rational.

In comparison with Yang’s narrative, as an adult Chang showed great difficulty
distancing herself from her teenage years. While describing her devotion to Mao, she declares
at the same time that the cult of Mao was founded on manipulation of historical memories.
Those memories might have been exaggerated by the regime, to frighten people of class

\(^{105}\) Yang, *Spider eaters*, 113.
\(^{107}\) Ibidem.
enemies who were linked to the old Kuomintang. The students were told they would lose their schools, shoes and food. And they were told that this was the reason they had to ‘smash the enemies’. At the same time Chang states that Mao could not succeed in generating a clear image of their enemy, for he had smashed all evidence, all traces of the past. It seems like Chang is struggling to narrate her own memories. She is having a hard time distancing her authorial self, her adult self as an author, with all the knowledge of hindsight from her old teenage self. This contrast of the later interpretation at the time of event created tension and contradiction in Chang’s narrative. This tension is also visible when Chang claims that she was moved, devastated, and passionately devoted to Mao’s cause but also states that most of her generation did not truly understand Mao’s cause and reasonings, it was too abstract and too far away. Because Chang appears to have difficulty separating her older self from her younger self it is also not clear what she truly means when narrating about her teenage self. Does she mean she is devoted to Mao as a saviour, but chooses to not support him in ‘smashing the enemies?’ On the one hand she describes herself as devoted, on the other hand she writes that she does not follow through.

Finally, as an explanation for their initial adoration, both authors claimed to have been affected by Mao and his charismatic personality cult. Yang shows that she was passionately devoted to Mao out of love for him; the man who embodied an ideal kind of Chinese. A tragic hero that had known loss and was their commander, teacher and chairman at the same time. Chang’s presented devotion is distant, hesitant. She claims she became passionately devoted to Mao because he had saved them from the evils of the Kuomintang, which is actually a rational explanation. Only three pages later she declares they were misled; scared into thinking that those times of the evil Kuomintang would come back and at the same time state that she did not ‘smash the enemies’. She also suggests that she was critical of Mao and could see through his manipulations at that time. Thereby she bypassed the gap between the author at the time of the experience and the author at the time of writing, as it was not that likely she really could foresee his true intentions and how the events would turn out. It was more likely a product of hindsight. Both narratives confirm the Party statement; people were devoted to Mao out of love for him, or because of rational explanations. Chang’s story underlines the statement that the people would see trough Mao’s ‘mistakes’ and became passive in following his instructions.

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108 Chang, Wild swans, 346.
3.2 **HEYDAYS**

Both authors also describe the moment they see Mao Zedong in person. While Yang is still lost in passion, Chang seems critical and disillusioned.

Yan: ‘At five o'clock, before sunrise, like a miracle he walked out of Tian'anmen onto the square and shook hands with people around him. The square turned into a jubilant ocean. Everybody was shouting “Long live Chairman Mao!” Around me girls were crying; boys were crying too. With hot tears streaming down my face, I could not see Chairman Mao clearly. He had ascended the rostrum. He was too high, or rather, the stands for Red Guard representatives were too low. Earnestly we chanted: “We-want-to-see-Chair-man-Mao!” He heard us! He walked over to the corner of Tian'anmen and waved at us. Now I could see him clearly. He was wearing a green army uniform and a red armband, just like all of us. My blood was boiling inside me. I jumped and shouted and cried in unison with a million people in the square. At that moment, I forgot myself; all barriers that existed between me and others broke down. I felt like a drop of water that finally joined the mighty raging ocean. I would never be lonely again.’

Chang: ‘shortly before noon, hysterical waves of “Long live Chairman Mao!” roared from the east. I had been flagging and was slow to realize that Mao was about to pass by in an open car. Suddenly thunderous yelling exploded all around me. “Long live Chairman Mao! Long live Chairman Mao!” People sitting in front of me shot up and hopped in delirious excitement, their raised hands frantically waving their Little Red Books. “Sit down! Sit down!” I cried, in vain. Our company commander had said that we all had to remain seated throughout. But few seemed to be observing the rules, possessed by the urge to set eyes on Mao. (…) The girl next to me had just pierced the index finger of her right hand and was squeezing blood out of it to write something on a neatly folded handkerchief. I knew exactly the words she was going to use. It had been done many times (…) “I am the happiest person in the world today. I have seen our Great Leader Chairman Mao!” Watching her, my despair grew. Life seemed pointless. A thought flickered into my mind: perhaps I should commit suicide?’

Chang tells that she was critical and negative about Mao in the heydays of the Cultural Revolution, only she saw how crazy and frightening the situation was. She did not succumb to the madness, the wild passionate movement that held millions of Red Guards captive. She implies she is also disappointed in Mao and Maoism, but does not explicitly say so. Both these scenes again confirm that millions of Red Guards loved Mao. Most became ecstatic when they

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109 Yang, *Spider eaters*, 123.
finally met him, losing all reason and critical thinking. By describing these different sides of the official Party statement, the authors try to give the readers an insight account of their feelings.

3.3 CONCLUSION
To summarise, both authors confirm the Party narrative generated in the early 1980s; they both loved Mao although for different reasons. While Yang claims to have loved him more on a passionate and personal level, Chang tells she was devoted to him on a rational level; Mao had saved them from the unspeakable and terrible evils of the Kuomintang. This remembering of those acts done by the Kuomintang was quite biased; they were pure evil and did not do any good. This is also central in the Party narrative as it describes its own legitimacy as the saviour of the people and it depicts Mao as the founder of modern China. To honour Mao as saviour and founder is still part of the personality cult. It seems like Mao singlehandedly defeated the Kuomintang and liberated China. Other Party politicians and the Party in general are not that much mentioned by both the authors and the official Party narrative. Chang’s narrative focuses on experiences that show how she is trying quite hard to appear brighter and more objective than her peers. Her aim might be to seem more reliable to the reader and simultaneously more relatable. Yang’s memoir shows how she submerges herself in her feelings and the overall frenzy, being part of the masses and accentuating herself less as an individual (with individual agency and responsibility). Yang seems to challenge the reader to think what they themselves would have felt, if they were in that situation.

CONCLUSION
Chang’s and Yang’s initial reflections on their ancestors have many similarities to the gigantic Party narrative. It seems like they all have the same historical structure or model that puts their experiences into a large linear perspective. The way they declare how their families were victims within the traditional society and supporters of communism emphasised the necessity of the people’s liberation by the Party in a similar way as in the Resolution. By investigating their distant past they place themselves within the tradition of their family. Their family became an extension of themselves. On the one hand this was important in their past; in communist China one’s family would determine one’s own fate. On the other hand this also reflects on their extent of being likable and relatable to their readers, as authors and people who have been through those experiences. The authors cautiously chose to include the ‘stories’ of their parents,
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grandparents, and great-grandparents. It underlines the gigantic Party narrative by emphasising how communism filled a gap in society, ‘liberated’ the people and would bring true socialism. Rae Yang uses the example of how she dealt with her family’s past to underline to what extent she was influenced by Mao’s cult of personality; she started to hate her grandmother and her family’s background intensely, as it would reflect negatively on herself.

Both authors also emphasised how they supported the movement as former Red Guards and evaluate their morals in a similar way. While Chang prefers to give a more rational account of her former thoughts and motivations, Yang appears quite passionate. Both stories therefore relate to the official gigantic Party narrative for different reasons. The Party emphasises in its Resolution that people were on the one hand logical, reliable and rational; they wanted to improve themselves, do good, and help each other. This is confirmed by Chang’s narrative. On the other hand the Party stated that some were quite passionately devoted to the Cultural Revolution and to Mao as the personification of this Cultural Revolution. But those people were devoted because, according to the statement, they loved Mao and wanted to fight for the rightful cause. This is confirmed in the memoir of Yang; she was passionately devoted to the cause and to Mao as her hero. Yang hardly mentions rational reasons, to her the cult of Mao was more emotional. In the end she realised that she was being misled. Both authors therefore choose the most commonly, yet opposite, accepted narratives. Their contrast shows the tension between rationality versus irrationality or emotion. Chang is desperate to emphasise how she used to be calm, collected, rational, reliable and an authority in her statement and explanation of the events. She even conducted additional research and attempts to give a complete overview. Chang clearly struggles to define and reconstruct her teenage self because she does not clearly distance her authorial self from her teenage self, neither does she completely ignore one or the other. She seems confused and inconsistent in narrating her different selves. Yang chooses the other side of the contrast. She is irregular, her story is sometimes unchronological and deals with illogical emotions. She does not attempt to give a complete and logical overview, she is highly aware that there are already many accounts that deal with a completely rational explanation. She chooses to appeal to people’s emotions and gives the impression she can deviate her authorial self from her former adolescent self.

Both authors underline the Party narrative in that they initially loved Mao (like all Chinese) and supported or were part of the cult of personality, but eventually realised he lost contact with reality and made ‘mistakes’. In their adoration for Mao they were again exact opposites, yet both motivations fit in the gigantic Party narrative; Yang loved him passionately.
as her hero, Chang was devoted to him rationally as their saviour and liberator. This is also central in the Party narrative as it describes its own legitimacy as the saviour of the people. It also depicts Mao as the founder of modern China. To honour Mao as saviour and founder is in my opinion still part of the personality cult. It seems like Mao singlehandedly defeated the Kuomintang and liberated China. Other Party politicians and the Party in general are not nearly as much mentioned by both the authors nor by the official Party narrative.

To conclude, the miniature narratives confirm the gigantic narrative on several aspects. The authors, Chang, Yang, and the Party, all emphasise how they (their families or the Party as an institution) were part of the distant, larger, past. A society that was corrupt and needed change. They emphasise how they are part of this larger linear story that inevitably turns into a better future (although for Chang and Yang not in China), despite the setbacks. The gigantic narrative seems to have provided a historical structure or model for the authors to give meaning to their own memories. All write how they wanted to improve themselves and help people. They address the moral component of the Cultural Revolution, the Red Guard movement and the cult of personality. Chang, Yang and the Resolution keep up the image of helpful friendly Chinese who were mostly victims and were simply unaware of their contributions to evil. Not only does this reflect on the reliability of the authors, it also emphasises how they represent their countrymen. It is a narrative of hope; how people were initially good and meant well. Not of despair and the need to hurt people. The gigantic provided a model for the people to put their experiences in. This is how the authors remember those experiences, and want to be remembered.
CHAPTER 3 – DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE MINIATURE AND GIGANTIC NARRATIVE

INTRODUCTION
In the previous chapter I investigated and concluded that there are many similarities between the gigantic Party narrative and the personal miniatures of Chang and Yang. Chang and Yang seem caught up in the same narrating models as the Party; by emphasising their long history they attempt to underline their legitimacy and explain their choices, their urge to do good, and their devotion to Mao, logical or passionate, as the deification of the movement (of the Party) that initially promised to improve China.

Besides these striking similarities there are also points in which the miniature narratives deviate from the Party gigantic. The miniature can deviate from the gigantic because people’s lives and the meaning they give to their experiences is their own account and is very specific. Although their lives take place in the shadow of the gigantic, the meaning they give to events only needs to apply to the author. In their carefully crafted autobiographies Chang and Yang experienced events in their own ways.

Both Chang and Yang emphasised the things they thought were important. They tell us a specific message that provides a more detailed account. Again it is important to point out that we do not read the accounts of the adolescent girls, but of grown-up women who look back on their previous experiences. This means that, even though the authors attempt to write what they thought and felt at the time of the described events and tried to reconstruct the teenage girl, we actually read what the adult authors with their knowledge of hindsight thought about those events in the past. The adult writer, whom I also refer to as the authorial self, is never able to let go of everything he now knows. This will always influence his work.

My analysis of the similarities was based on the way the cult of personality is experienced by the authors by using the family, the Red Guards and Mao as the primary lens. I will investigate these three aspects again and now focus on their deviations. Although both Chang and Yang are in these aspects similar, as previously discussed in chapter 2, they deviate in their own way, for their own specific reasons. While Chang attempted to create a complete narrative that provides a clear overview of her own (family) history and the Chinese history of the twentieth century and gives answers as to what happened, Yang gave up on doing so and
instead focused on the incomplete, irrational, and emotional, perspective of her teenage self. These different goals create different stories.

1. FAMILY
The main difference from both personal accounts as to the described Party narrative is that the past was not simply bad, it is more nuanced.

It seems quite striking that Yang tries to downplay the difference between the old generation of her grandmother and that of her own parents. Although there is change, Yang presents a logical continuity instead of an explicit struggle in a fight for liberation. Yang tells that her grandmother was a powerful woman, who was not a victim of her surroundings, but followed her own course of action. Although growing up in imperial China and as a woman who had to submit to many rules and traditions she adapted well to the modern age. Yang’s grandmother was happy and content with her life and the way things were. Her daughters were as much appreciated and educated as her sons. The world of Yang’s grandmother and parents does not seem to be black and white, filled with contrast and struggle. Yang writes that her grandmother’s past was bourgeois, but not evil. The past seemed to naturally flow into a modern communist future, without too much thought and ‘proletarian struggle’. Yang depicts her grandmother’s life as quite simple; they were happy and wanted to do good despite the historical circumstances. Yang does not explain that much on the political and social struggle of China during the period when she herself was a child. Supposedly Yang did not know all of it. It was not her world, her reality; one of a child. Maybe this is a realistic reflection of how a little girl growing up actually sees and remembers the world.

Jung Chang uses her family to present an image of love and trust in each other that defied their support for Mao and communism. Chang does this by the way she writes about her past. She makes an effort to create the image of the ‘perfect family’. She mentions the surprise and expectations her father’s family had when they met Chang’s mother after they were married. Since both parents of Chang worked for the Communist Party, they suspected a clash between tradition and radical communism. Chang explains that in Chinese tradition the mother-in-law had a lot of power over a married woman. Once married that woman had to be completely obedient to her mother-in-law and was often tyrannised by her. It was an important

111 Yang, Spider eaters, 20, 31-33.
policy of the Communist Party to liberate these bullied daughters-in-law, which led to rumours about Communist daughters-in-law that would bully their mothers-in-law instead. Chang’s father’s family was very anxious and curious to know how their new daughter-in-law, who was also a communist, would position herself. ‘My mother walked slowly up to her with my father, and stopped in front of her chair. Then she knelt and kowtowed three times. This was the correct thing to do according to the traditional ritual, but everyone had been wondering if the young Communist would go through with it. The room burst into relieved sighs. My father’s cousins and sisters whispered to his obviously delighted mother: “What a lovely daughter-in-law! So gentle, so pretty, and so respectful! Mother, you are really in good fortune!”’ 112

Not only the perspective but also the content of this scene seems interesting to me. Chang’s mother seems to respect both the traditions and Communist policy. She is presented as the perfect daughter-in-law and the grandmother the perfect mother-in-law. There is nothing evil in both of them. Not a single remark or thought that would reflect badly on the other. For the reader Chang makes the distinction of what was to be expected of that time; communists expected to turn on tradition or tradition expected to think poorly of communists. Apparently her family was exceptional. Her family was respectful and showed perfect behaviour towards everybody. The fact that her father did not kowtow is reduced to the mere sentence of ‘although it was expected of him’. 113 Why did he choose not to do it? Why was it expected from him? Out of tradition? Did his family initially distance itself from communism? What were their thoughts on communism? We will never know, apparently Chang decided that those details, thoughts and opinions were irrelevant to her mother’s story. The answers to these questions could also bring discord to the carefully crafted image of the ‘perfect’ family.

In 1965 Chang’s mother, in line with communist thought against western imperialism, decadency, and tradition, decided to dress down and change her colourful flowy skirts for plain clothes and her fluffy bob for short straight hair. Chang’s grandmother starts to wear her jackets in pale grey, but decides to keep the traditional model. She keeps flowers in her hair and still wears make-up. ‘Watching her doing her face was strange, even though I had been watching her do it since I was a baby. The women in books and films who made themselves up now were invariably wicked characters, like concubines. I vaguely knew something about my beloved grandmother having been a concubine, but I was learning to live with contradictory thoughts and realities, and getting used to compartmentalizing them. When I went out shopping with my

112 Chang, Wild swans, 205, 206.
113 Ibidem, 206.
grandmother, I began to realize that she was different from other people, with her makeup, no matter how discreet, and the flowers in her hair. She walked proudly, her figure erect, with a restrained self-consciousness.¹¹⁴

Chang describes that her thoughts and realities were compartmentalised. She does not think ill of her grandmother, despite the knowledge that her grandmother once was an ‘evil’ concubine. The women in books with make-up were simply evil, because that was what Maoism told her. Chang claims in her narrative that she did not connect the dictated theory to her reality. It seems that her love for her family was stronger than Maoism. This is also apparent in the next scene where she visits her father in the working camp where he is detained. She describes how she and her siblings visited him often for months at a time. She notes that her father was so proud of his family because the others had hardly any visitors at all. The Cultural Revolution had alienated many families. Even her little brother, who had been beaten as a child, now loved his father.¹¹⁵ This again, underlines the presentation of the perfect family. Even when her parents were denounced and when she was a Red Guard. It is almost as a romantic narrative that Chang chose to tell the story of the Cultural Revolution, where love for her family conquers all. Despite the logics of communism and hate amongst each other, they behave differently from all the other Chinese. Her family was, as she explains, unique and became closer instead of betraying each other.

Chang seems disappointed and disillusioned towards the end. She had high hopes of communism but in retrospect Chang thinks communism has failed and suspects the future would not bring a better kind of communism. Chang shows how communism affected her family by contrasting the apparent ‘perfectness’ of her family. She described that there were internal tensions in her family. Her father and mother were quite different from each other. Chang explains this by telling how she desperately wanted to go to university, but the entrance criteria had changed. Exams were now no longer relevant, but the political behaviour of the candidates solely decided their entrance. All candidates were now equally worthy to attend; they all had worked in factories, farms, were politically correct and were model workers. The only things that could set her apart from the others were her parents and their influence. As they had been rehabilitated, they knew the right people. Her father promised to help her, but in the end could not follow through; as a true communist he thought it was bad to use the back door of the system. Chang still does not show her pain, still understands her father, is still respectful

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¹¹⁵ Ibidem, 585.
and still obedient. Even when her biggest dream is obstructed in this way by her own father. In the end she gets in with her mother’s help who had different, more pragmatic moral principles. By using the backdoor, as everyone who became successful did, she achieved what she wanted. Chang uses this example to narrate how society was not truly communistic and working on correct Maoism. Society remained dysfunctional, as it has been under the Kuomintang when China was a republic; people who had money and connections would always find a way to come first and bypass the imposed equality principle. Therefore Chang is disillusioned as she thinks that communism has failed as a successful system. Chang also thinks it will not be successful in the future. She argues that because people still deal with things in the same way as centuries before, people would also deal with things in a similar way in the future. Chang underlines that communism has proved to her that it had not been able to change people. She implicitly criticises the Party for its past and future communist course. Nevertheless Chang never explicitly states what she thought and felt about communism at that time, after the end of the Cultural Revolution.¹¹⁶

1.2 CONCLUSION
Both Yang and Chang distance themselves from the gigantic Party Resolution by using the trope of family. Although the authors go back in history to describe their past, and show where they came from in a similar way as the Party Resolution describes the Party’s past in a larger linear perspective, they contradict several important aspects of the Resolution. Among them is the concept of constant struggle, the need of being ‘liberated’, how the love for Mao and communism would overcome the traditional hierarchical family structure, and how communism was able to change China.

Especially Yang nuances the image of the Party and the communist as liberators by emphasising that things were not black and white. Where the Resolution states that the traditional bourgeois was decadent and undermined communist policy Yang contradicts this by showing that her family was simultaneously from a traditional bourgeois background and also modern and communist. Yang shows a more gradual change in society that does not consist out of constant conflict between the bourgeois and communists. Yang therefore chooses to contradict the Party’s official narrative and legitimacy as the saviours of the people. She implicitly raises the question if whether the Chinese were in fact saved and if so from whom?

¹¹⁶ Chang, Wild swans, 609.
As an extension of the Party’s legitimacy Yang also undermines Mao’s legacy and legitimacy because he was supposed to be the founder of the modern republic.

Chang also uses her family and their inner dynamics to prove a different point. According to her she was not influenced by Mao’s cult of personality because she loved her family more than Mao or communism. The Party Resolution saw the traditional family as a hierarchical power structure that undermined the egalitarian concepts of communism. Chang defies the view that family was an evil structure of tradition and abuse of power. She could not hate her own grandmother for coming from a ‘bad’ background and for keeping on to bourgeois customs. Chang states that her love for her family was stronger than her love for Mao. She shows how her family was able to resist the powerful influence of Mao’s cult of personality by the power of love and respect for each other and for their acquaintances. Chang also uses her family to show how there were many different kinds of communists. Some were more literal, like her father, and others more pragmatic, like her mother. Chang mentions how the, according to her, ‘correct’ communist way of her father was not going to help China achieve much. It was too rigid and bureaucratic. Most people were more like her mother, pragmatics. According to Chang most business was still done through the old channels of patronage lineage, and not through modern equalitarian communist ways. Chang therefore shows her disillusion since communism was never truly achieved. Because of this she states that she thinks communism will also fail in the future; it could not truly change Chinese society.

2. RED GUARD

The most interesting difference between the Party Resolution and the authors is that the Party states that most Chinese who participated in the Red Guards did so out of love and adoration for Mao or rational reasoning and support for communism. According to the Resolution most people became aware of the events that happened throughout the country and decided to resist the Cultural Revolution. Violence was supposed to be rare and only committed by a handful extremists. Both Yang and Chang show how they deviate from this statement by showing how they were unaware of all that happened throughout China. Chang emphasises how she did not have individual feelings and rational thoughts because she was supposed to think along the correct guidelines for Red Guards. Chang states she was motivated to join the Red Guards by custom, lack of knowledge and fear. Yang stated in the beginning she did not understand many
of the orders that were given. However, she does admit that she abused her power to get back on others.

2.1 First Stages of the Cultural Revolution, 1965 - 1966
In general Chang describes the year leading up to the Cultural Revolution and the start of the Cultural Revolution as quite innocent. By writing how her first act as a Red Guard consisted of rooting out useful bourgeois flowers and plants (to make room for crops), instead of going out and hurt people, Chang emphasises how things initially started out in a natural and good way, on a small and innocent level. At the same time she underlines how she applied self-criticism and came into conflict with her emotions and thoughts. Although Chang claims she did not resent Mao, in the beginning, in 1965, she did not love him either. ‘I was extremely sad to see the lovely plants go. But I did not resent Mao. On the contrary, I hated myself for feeling miserable.’\(^{117}\) Apparently Mao inspired self-hatred in herself and others. By turning into the best version of themselves and applying collective models of self-criticism Red Guards became a group without individual thought. ‘(…) automatically blamed myself for any instincts that went against Mao’s instructions. In fact, such feelings (of going against Mao’s instructions) frightened me. It was out of the question to discuss them with anyone. Instead, I tried to suppress them and acquire the correct way of thinking. I lived in a state of constant self-accusation.’\(^{118}\) Yet Chang was not able to discuss her conflicts and self-criticism, although it was expected from people to constantly examine themselves in order to improve. This might seem strange and contradictory but it makes sense because this would give people the opportunity to accuse her of not being good enough. The way Chang describes the Red Guards as a group makes it seem that since they had no individual thought, they also did not have individual actions, individual authority and individual accountability. It seems like Mao Zedong Thought was not promoted at this stage, the dogma of the Two Whatever’s (do whatever Mao says) was the only correct way. Chang claims to take ‘responsibility’ for not loving Mao, therefore implying she naturally resisted Mao, and did not fall for the cult from the beginning, although she could not explain why.

Chang explains she did join the Red Guard willingly, although not knowingly. She makes sure to point out that she did not know what to think, but never thought to question Mao, the Cultural Revolution or the Red Guards. ‘They were Mao’s creations, and Mao was beyond


\(^{118}\) Ibidem.
contemplation.’\textsuperscript{119} Rationality seemed to be something normal Chinese could not afford because of the widespread fear and indoctrination. ‘Like many Chinese, I was incapable of rational thinking in those days. We were so cowed and contorted by fear and indoctrination that to deviate from the path laid down by Mao would have been inconceivable.’\textsuperscript{120} Chang shows that deceptive rhetoric’s, disinformation and hypocrisy made it impossible for the Chinese in general to make intelligent objective decisions.

Rae Yang also initially focuses her narrative on a general lack of knowledge and understanding. Her narrative seems shockingly naive and shallow. What bothered her most was that the western books that were in possession of her family were secretly burned in order to avoid prosecution of the family. She was sad and frustrated when she needed to cut her hair and upset when a Red Guard group killed her brother’s cat. Long hair, braids, femininity and pets were perceived as luxury indulgences society did not need anymore.\textsuperscript{121} It makes sense that Yang chose to describe the year leading up to the Cultural Revolution and its first year in such a shallow way, because these things would logically frustrate a teenage girl and influence her day to day life. However, she does not discuss the period with her authorial self. It would have been interesting to see what she thinks of those actions as an adult and in a larger perspective of communist narrative and usefulness, as she sometimes does for other events. Yang chooses to present the narrative about her younger self to be simple and naïve.

\subsection*{2.2 Teachers}

When the Cultural Revolution started in 1966, Chang’s school starts to brand several teachers as reactionary bourgeois authorities. Chang describes her personal experiences with the denunciations in the following citation. ‘Among the victims was my Chinese language and literature teacher, Mr Chi, whom I adored. According to one of the wall posters, he had said in the early 1960’s: “Shouting “Long live the Great Leap Forward!” will not fill our stomachs, will it?” Having no idea that the Great Leap had caused the famine, I did not understand his alleged remark, although I could catch its irreverent tone. (…) In spite of this, I felt the greatest respect for Mr Chi. It broke my heart to see him, and other teachers I admired, being wildly

\textsuperscript{119} Chang, \textit{Wild swans}, 404.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibidem.
\textsuperscript{121} Yang, \textit{Spider eaters}, 126,127.
condemned and called ugly names. I hated it when the work team asked everyone in the school to write posters “exposing and denouncing” them."^{122}

Jung Chang contradicts the gigantic Party Resolution by telling us how she loved her teachers, even going so far as feeling pity for the teachers she disliked. According to the Resolution Red Guards only felt love for Mao and rational motivation for communism. The teachers became victims for being insightful and critical. This seems especially paradoxical to me because the victims were actually motivated communists and followed the Mao Zedong Thought of being critical of communism and applying it to the right circumstances. Chang also states that she did not know the cause of the famine. She chooses not to share the knowledge and insights others might have had at that time. This shows that there was no open discussion or that they shared knowledge about these topics. The way Chang narrates her younger self presents an image of innocence and ignorance: she was ignorant of many things and did not make an effort to find out. Simultaneously, however, she states that she did not resent her teacher for making a remark like that on the Great Leap Forward. Her persistent love and devotion for her teacher actually go against all the facts that were told to her by the government; she was supposed to hate him for that remark together with all the other students. Her narrative emphasises that she trusts (and loves) the teacher ‘naturally’ against all indoctrination. The way Chang presents herself in this regard seems to me like she has censored her true younger self and that this is actually her authorial-self speaking; she desperately wants to be and be seen as respectful, loving, responsible, ignorant, passive and sensible.

On the other hand Rae Yang’s memoir differs from the Party narrative in an entirely different way than Chang's did. She actually was a very motivated active Red Guard. As the Red Guard movement increases she can finally get her revenge on a teacher she does not like that much; ‘time for the underdogs to find justice’^{123}. She takes a pencil and writes a long Dazibao (political poster) in which she criticises her teacher.\(^{124}\) She accused her teacher of lacking proletarian feelings for her students. She supposedly treated her students as enemies and suppressed them. Her classmates signed her pamphlet which was put on the teacher’s wall, where the teacher could read it day and night. She argued (at that time) this was not personal revenge, but justice as she simply replied to Mao’s demands for educational reforms.\(^{125}\)

\(^{122}\) Chang, *Wild swans*, 369, 370.

\(^{123}\) Yang, *Spider eaters*, 117.


\(^{125}\) Yang, *Spider eaters*, 117.
Looking back she explains that the beginning of the Cultural Revolution felt good. ‘Let’s wait and see, Teacher Lin. Someday I will have my revenge. On you!’[^126] ‘Take up a pen, use it as a gun.’[^127] It gave her a feeling of superiority and confidence she never had before. Yang’s authorial-self emphasises how she is no longer afraid to admit to the reader (and mostly herself) that she exploited her power to condemn the teacher she hated. She shows her inner dialogue that argues that the condemnation was just and the teacher was wrong and responsible for her own actions, Yang gives us a unique insight into her decisions. She explains that she absolutely enjoyed her revenge. This deviates from both the Party gigantic and Jung Chang’s narrative because they both state that only a few people abused their power and acted out of vengeance.

2.3 ACTIVE STAGE

Yang deviates from the gigantic Resolution by describing her participation in violent encounters. According to the Resolution violence did not really exist among ordinary Chinese, with the exception of a few radicalised extremists. As the revolution progressed Yang mentions how she encountered more situations where violence was on the increase. What bothered her most was the ugliness of violence. In books, movies, stories and in her dreams, the justified violence was always a heroic act. In this romanticised image there is a battle between right and wrong, where both parties stand for what they believe in. The grim reality, however, was quite different and is absolutely not mentioned in the Party Resolution.[^128] Yang tells that people were quick to admit they were guilty, hoping to spare themselves and others, while Yang knew that their confession, of guilt was not true. Her brothers and sisters of the Red Guard knew it was not true and the authorities also knew it was not true. But in the end that did not matter. The reality was not a righteous battle between right and wrong but a battle of power between life and death, persecution and the will to live. There was no investigation after they had beaten someone to death. They were from the Red Guard, they were from Beijing; so they must be right.

Yang describes an interesting scene of how a group of Red Guard members had seized a man who was a suspected rapist. After they had interrogated him he would admit to anything he could possibly think of. The Red Guards beat him to death because they were appalled by his confessions. Afterwards they reported their actions to the local police. ‘At the other end, the policemen demanded to know who we were. So we told them that we were Red Guards from

[^126]: Yang, Spider eaters, 117.
[^127]: Ibidem, 118.
[^128]: Ibidem, 119.
Beijing. Hearing this, their voices suddenly became warm and cordial (…) They trusted Red Guards who came from where Chairman Mao was and they firmly supported our revolutionary act. (…) The case was closed. (…) Hearing this, we all felt greatly relieved. Who could believe that we were let off the hook so easily? In fact, it was too easy. We began to feel uncomfortable. Thus we tried to persuade the policemen that at least they should send someone here to record the case. “No. It is not necessary.” That was their answer. So that was it.”

According to Yang, authorities and people did not care for the truth, everyone just feared for their life. She explains that this realisation shook her to her core. How can she, a passionate Red Guard, believe in something that appeared to be founded on survival instead of conviction and principles?

Yang tells that at that time she feared how easily people disregarded the truth, but chooses to still her conscience. After the attempt to grasp her thoughts she had at that time in italics, her authorial self, tries to look at the event and memories more objectively. ‘What a pity this man died! But really he was so stupid! If he had said no to all our questions, I’m sure he would have been alive. Maybe the answer would make some of us angry and he’d get beaten. In that case, well, he’d just have to stand it stoically. If he could bear the pain and show us he had courage, even if others wouldn’t, I know I’d have put in a word for him and somehow saved his life. Red Guards all admire heroes. My comrades are not unreasonable. (...) So in the final analysis, everything he said and did was wrong! It was his own fault he was beaten to death. He was so sordid! So disgusting! A real rapist and counterrevolutionary, he deserved what he got, every bit of it! So after we killed this man in the evening, I killed him once more at night, in my mind. I killed him because I had to, or else I would not be able to sleep. When I passed my death sentence on him in the court of my heart, I forgot the fact that I never believed his confession. None of us did.’

She asks herself whether it makes her a hero or a coward. Is she loyal to Mao or a sympathiser of her enemy? The Red Guard held a close eye to one another, as she did to them. They were each other’s witnesses and judges. She tells her younger self she could not afford to show weakness. The more uncomfortable and afraid she became, the harder she fought. In retrospect she is no longer afraid to admit the nightmare she was in. This event could not have happened according to the gigantic Resolution. Not only was violence supposed to be almost non-existent, as previously mentioned, the Resolution also does not mention that people

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129 Yang, *Spider eaters*, 139.
130 Ibidem, 138-140.
131 Ibidem.
would admit to anything when they were being harassed. Although they do state that many correct communists were mistreated and convicted they do not go into any details. Yang’s narrative emphasises how the Red Guards and authorities were both aware of people’s true nature but simply did not care because they were fighting their own battle to survive and to not be accused. It deviates from the Party Resolution because it underlines how people did not try to do the good thing and were not able to resist the bad things that happened. The scene shows how the Red Guards were truly out of control without a mechanism that could make them answer for their actions.

2.4 CONCLUSION
The Party narrative stated that most Chinese who were quick to participate, realised what was going on and decided to become passive or even resist the Cultural Revolution. The miniature memoires actually deviate from this Party narrative in three different ways. Both personal accounts of Yang and Chang tell the story that most Chinese, even those of impressive backgrounds and in families of Party members, were actually unaware of the events that happened throughout the country. Both authors phrase they did not feel able to actively resist the Revolution. Both tell that they were thought to believe Mao in a dogmatic way and were not free to think independently and critically about certain decisions and policies.

In the year leading up to the Cultural Revolution and in the first year, the acts of the Red Guards seemed quite innocent. Chang describes how she could not blame Mao for her contradictory feelings but instead hated herself. She explains how the Red Guards had no individual thought and were unable to think rationally. Fear, indoctrination, deceptive rhetoric, disinformation and hypocrisy were widespread and prevented people from deviating from Mao. The Red Guards were supposed to constantly improve and criticise themselves with the help of a collective model that enabled them to act and think as a group according to the dogmatic way of the Two Whatever’s (do whatever Mao said). She explains that Mao was beyond contemplation. Even though Chang was a Red Guard she still emphasises how she loved her teachers, regardless of what they have said or done. She deviates from the Resolution because she was not supposed to love her teachers but to act out of love for Mao or rational reasons that would help communism. Chang also shows that there was no open discussion and that they did not share knowledge about for example the failure of the Great Leap Forward. This means that people were either unaware of the things that happened around them, or pretended they were unaware because of the danger they were in.
According to the Resolution the Red Guards only acted out of love for Mao and for rational reasons that would improve communism. Only a handful extremists were supposed to have abused their power. Yang proves them wrong. She contradicts the Party Resolution by emphasising how she actually abused her power as a Red Guard to take revenge on her teachers. Yang also contradicts the Resolution by describing how there was a lot of violence that increased over time and that many innocent people were condemned because of false accusations and harassment while both the authorities and the Red Guards were aware of the truth. They did not try to do the good thing but just wanted to survive. Yang declares she was unable to acknowledge her true thoughts at that time and to discuss the events because that would make her a suspect of being a ‘good Red Guard’. She had to silence her conscience in order to survive.

3. MAO ZEDONG

The main difference between the perspectives from Yang, Chang and the Party concerning the position of the cult of Mao and Maoism in general was on Mao’s personal contributions. The other difference is in the Party’s claim to have never supported the cult of Mao. Neither Chang’s nor Yang’s narratives show a clear tendency that favoured collective leadership.

As Chang in general claims that she always hated Mao, she shows the reader she is also very critical of the initial stages of the cult of personality that the Party does not condemn: Mao as a brilliant theorist and founder of the Regime. Chang writes that she remembers how things were initially good because they did good deeds ‘gradually, during the course of 1964, the emphasis began to shift from boy scoutish good deeds to the cult of Mao.’¹³³ The way Chang describes the shift from good to the cult implies that she thinks the cult wasn’t good. According to her the cult was not even good in the beginning. ‘Mao let all this happen in order to generate the terror and chaos he wanted. He was not scrupulous about either who was hit or who were the agents of violence. These early victims were not his real targets and Mao did not particularly like or trust his young Red Guards. He was simply using them. For their part, the vandals and torturers were not always devoted to Mao. They were just having a wild time, having been licensed to indulge their worst instincts.’¹³⁴

¹³³ Chang, Wild swans, 340.
¹³⁴ Ibidem, 379.
Overall, according to Chang’s narrative, Mao appears to be aiming at the use the Red Guards to create a sense of terror and chaos. It did not matter to him who were the victims or who were the perpetrators. This chaos and uncertainty seemed to be the key to his regime. Mao looks like an unreasonable sadist. In the Party narrative it was not Mao who wilfully created chaos; it was the Gang of Four that exploited Mao’s mistakes.

3.1 Party Unity
Both authors describe the moment when Liu Shaoqi falls out of grace. He succeeded Mao as the official president of China from 1959 until 1968 and helped China to recover from the economic drawbacks of the Great Leap Forward. As the second most powerful man of the CPC Liu initially had a lot of popularity and influence in the Party and in China. However Liu opposed some of Mao’s policies and this created tensions between them. When the Cultural Revolution was declared Mao had absolute power to persecute his enemies. Liu was eventually accused of being a capitalist roader in November 1969. It seems that Liu Shaoqi, China’s second man, was an important person in the development of the Cultural Revolution. It is strange that he is not specifically mentioned in the official Party Resolution for what he did. All the Resolution states about him is that he was a good communist leader who was condemned by Mao and should be rehabilitated. Liu had many allies and initially supported the Cultural Revolution. He opposed Mao’s cult of personality and became a victim of the cults consequences. The Party Resolution never mentions this inner struggle within the Party. The Resolution suggests that only a few individuals were persecuted. Although the Party mentions that they could not function well because of the cult, it never states that it was torn between different factions. The Resolution always presented the Party as a unity.

Chang and Yang write about the situation in a completely different way than the Party or from each other. Chang writes: ‘Liu looked subdued and weary. But I did not have any feelings for him. Although he was the president, he did not mean anything to my generation. We had grown up imbued with the cult of Mao alone. And if Liu was against Mao, it seemed to us natural that he should go. (…) Liu and his colleagues may have helped deify Mao in order to appease him, thinking that he would be satisfied with abstract glory and leave them to get on with the mundane work, but Mao wanted absolute power both on earth and in heaven.’

137 Jin, *The culture of power*, 53.
describes rather vividly and passionately how she saw and felt about president Liu Shaoqi. She
did not like him and she explains that he did not mean anything to her generation. Only Mao
was the one who counted to them. So it made sense that Liu had to go since he was against
Mao. Chang claims to have already foreseen that Liu would lose because Mao wanted absolute
power in heaven and on earth; the same status as a God or emperor. Apparently Chang sees this
as a logical and inevitable process. Yang only mentions Liu Shaoqi in a statement; ‘Liu Shaoqi,
the biggest capitalist-roader in the Party.’ 

Both the authors and the Party do elaborately mention Lin Biao, the vice-premier, vice-
chairman and minister of defence. As one of Maoism’s leaders his role was crucial in the
development of the Cultural Revolution and Mao’s cult of personality. As the minister of
defence Mao needed Lin’s support to initialise the Cultural Revolution. Lin Biao also
contributed to the Little Red Book, the book that became a handbook for the Red Guards, and
promoted many other propaganda images that contributed to the cult. The Party afterwards
condemns Lin Biao as one of the five people responsible for the Cultural Revolution.

Yang focuses much more on Lin Biao than Liu Shaoqi, as Lin changed her world view.
She emphasises that she initially trusted and believed in Mao Zedong and his cult. She admits
that her younger self was a passionate follower. Only after the death of Lin Biao her true trust
in Mao as a person and hero starts to falter. Yang tells from her later authorial point of view she
did not know what to believe anymore, as she thought both were great heroes and leaders of the
(proletarian) revolution. ‘This incident shocked me and made me question the nature of the
Cultural Revolution. Was it really an unprecedented revolution in human history led by a group
of men (and a few women) with vision and exemplary moral integrity, as I had believed? Or
was it a power struggle that started at the top and later permeated the whole country?’ Why
did one order the death of the other? Why was one called a traitor? Were they both traitors?
Was the revolution actually special, heroic and sincere? Were its leaders sincere? She tells with
hindsight that this event made her question everything she thought she knew and stood for. In
the end she believes they were all used by dishonest politicians for their own personal political
gain. Chang’s opinion is the exact opposite; ‘I received the news with blinding joy. Not
having been able to challenge Mao in my mind, I blamed Lin for the Cultural Revolution. The

139 Yang, Spider eaters, 123.
Harold Miles Tanner, China: a history (Indianapolis 2009) 522.
141 Yang, Spider eaters, 217.
142 Ibidem, 217, 218.
evident rift between him and Mao meant, I thought, that Mao had repudiated the Cultural Revolution, and would put an end to all the misery and destruction. The demise of Lin in a way reaffirmed my faith in Mao."143 Chang emphasises how she remembers it as a moment of hope; now things would get better as Lin had been responsible for the bad events. Quite simply she writes down those memories of the moment, forgetting that in the other parts of the narrative she claimed to have always seen through Mao and held him accountable. Maybe her authorial self wanted to believe to have seen through Mao all along, or she wanted to believe this event was her brief moment of simple teenage hope at that time. The inconsistency between her so-called old self and her authorial self is concerning and confusing.

3.2 AFTER MAO
After the heydays of the Cultural Revolution Mao repositions the Red Guard to rural areas in order to regain power over the movement and end the chaos. This phenomenon is called sent-down youth or zhiqing. The Red Guards, educated youth, were told it was important to learn to live like people in rural areas, as a more basic life like farming was a humble and high communist ideal. As a result over 16 million youth were forced to relocate to rural areas. Both Chang and Yang spend many years in the country as a result of this policy separated from friends, family, and freedom, which is not mentioned at all in the Party Resolution.

Yang mentions how her disillusion with the Maoist system expands as time passes by. In her epilogue, which describes the moment Yang leaves the village Cold Springs for good, Yang describes how disappointed she is by the dishonesty in China, which has not changed over the years. The people from the city still exploit the country. City people took every possibility from the rural population and did not extinguish slavery. She mentions and accuses that her peers, her comrades, brothers and sisters, had not learnt from what they have experienced during the Cultural Revolution. They had not learnt from their time in the country. And therefore Yang concludes that her country did not improve because of the inability of her generation to learn.144

Disillusioned by the way they were all used she tells the reader that she partly feels she is a victim of the regime. This makes her see Chinese society and the political orders in a new light. She explains how she loses her feeling of agency and make a useful contribution. After her disillusionment she no longer speaks of her love for Mao, not even about Mao at all. The

143 Chang, Wild swans, 589.
144 Yang, Spider eaters, 273.
failure of the regime, the betrayal she felt, is addressed to the corruption of officials of all levels and the Party; a cancer as she explains.¹⁴⁵

3.3 CONCLUSION
The Party Resolution focussed on how the Party took no part in the development of the cult of personality and actually opposed it. It describes Mao as overall good but flawed. He did not want chaos and unhappiness among the Chinese but was misled by Lin Biao and the Gang of Four. The Resolution summarises that in the end communism had brought improvement and would therefore also be the best course for the future. The miniature memoires of Chang and Yang deviate from the Resolution on these points.

The most striking difference between Chang’s narrative and the Party’s is that Chang describes how Liu Shaoqi supported and helped to create the cult of Mao. In the Resolution Liu is hardly mentioned, only as an important person who was condemned by Mao and should be rehabilitated. As the former official president of China he was definitely part of the Party and according to Chang supported the cult of Mao at the same time. It seems that the Party wants to ‘forget’ Liu’s contributions. The Party is desperate to emphasise how it was a unity in the past and that there were no Party leaders in favour of the cult of Mao.

Yang focuses more on Lin Biao, as he changed her world view. The assassination of Lin, one of her beloved leaders of the revolution, made her question Mao’s legitimacy as a just and heroic ruler. The event broke the spell she was under; she no longer believed in Mao. To Chang the event confirmed her belief in the cult and in Mao. Lin Biao was responsible for misery and now things would improve. Although on the same page her authorial self also declares she was wrong, at that time she thought Mao would change things again for the better. She therefore follows the same reasoning as the official Party narrative.

In her narrative and memories Chang chose to simplify herself and her peers as meek, bound, blind, thoughtless followers of Mao. By doing so Chang selects her memories in such a way that it leads to a story that emphasises how Mao was an irrational, crazy, all-consuming evil that no-one could possibly understand. And no-one could possibly want to understand. She opposes the Party narrative in this regard, as she states that Mao was to blame for what he did; he wanted chaos and misery. The Party emphasised that Mao still wanted to do good but was confused and the Gang of Four manipulated him and that it was responsible for the chaos and terror.

¹⁴⁵ Yang, Spider eaters, 263, 264.
Yang’s narrative of her experience of the period after Mao differs from the Party narrative. She declares that she is disappointed and disillusioned by the Maoist system because it failed to achieve its goals; a more socialist society where people would not exploit each other and treat each other equally. The Party stated the opposite; that China overall improved greatly and the only way to improve was in the socialist way, with the Party. Learning from the past, which can be seen as part of Mao Zedong Thought, was central in its future. Although the Party thinks that the last decades were bad, the initial thoughts of Maoism and Mao himself were good and should count for more than his mistakes. Yang chooses to simply dismiss it all; she does not distinguish the initial theories from the (apparently poor) execution.

CONCLUSION

Chang and Yang deviate from the gigantic Party Resolution in several ways. They use the trope of the family to discuss that their families did not truly go through periods of constant struggle. Yang focuses on how there seemed to be a logical continuity. According to her narrative there was no clear struggle between the bourgeois and the proletariat but that it was in general a period of improvement where bourgeois families like hers were dedicated communists in favour of change at the same time. This contradicts the presented role of the Communist Party of China as necessary liberators of the people. Chang also used her family to show how they did not fall for the cult of Mao. They loved each other more than they loved Mao or communism and therefore were able to endure the atrocities of the Cultural Revolution. Her presented image of the ‘perfect family’ would survive all and withstand the presented image of evil traditional family hierarchy. Another aspect that Chang points out using the metaphor of her family is that she is disillusioned about the usefulness and effects of communism. She shows that there were different kinds of communists. Her mother and father differed in their way of literal or pragmatic applications of communist concepts. Chang shows how most people acted like her mother, pragmatic. The old systems of patronage lineage were still influential and undermined the modern equalitarian communist’s ways. Chang points out that she is disillusioned; communism had never truly worked and therefore would, according to her, not work in the future.

Regarding their experiences as Red Guards both authors deviate from the Party Resolution on several aspects. The Party Resolution mentions that most Red Guards were either
passionate or rational followers of Mao but became aware of the things that happened throughout the country. They started to actively resist the Cultural Revolution. Both Yang and Chang point out that they were, on the one hand, unaware of many things that happened in the country. They underline that deceptive rhetoric and disinformation played a big part in their motivation to join the Red Guards and that this prevented them from deviating from this path. On the other hand Chang points out that her motivations for participation in the Red Guard movement consisted of fear and custom. She states these two were the main motivators of most Red Guards; not the love they felt for Mao or rational objective reasoning as the Resolution stated.

Both Yang and Chang mention they did not feel able to actively resist the Cultural Revolution. Chang narrates how she had no individual thought as she was supposed to think as a group so she was unable to think rationally and objectively. There was no open discussion about information or motivations. Chang seems to imply that the Red Guards, and Chang herself, were not rationally accountable for their actions because they had no other choice; they feared for their lives. This undermines the gigantic Party narrative because the Party still stated that communism was something that people consciously chose to pursue because they thought and felt it was best.

According to the Resolution only a few extremists committed atrocities and abused their power as Red Guards. Yang shows how there was actually a lot of violence and how she was happy to abuse her position of power. Yang also states that when violence increased over time many innocent people were wrongfully accused and condemned. According to her both the Red Guards and the authorities were often aware of the truth, but that this did not matter because it simply became a mechanism of survival.

Regarding the involvement of the Party in the creation and support of the cult of Mao, the Party stated in its Resolution that it has always condemned the cult. Chang disputes this in her narrative. Liu Shaoqi who was part of the Party and supported by the Party as China’s former president, contributed to the cult. The Party does not give exact lines between the different people as an extension of the Party. In the gigantic Party Resolution the Party does not go into great detail as to who did what and neither do the authors. Chang and Yang both seem accustomed to using the word Mao when they describe the regime, Party or policies. It appears that people in China were in general not aware of certain distinctions between those two, if there were in fact any.
Yang emphasised her thoughts on the assassination of Lin Biao because the event made her question the legitimacy of Mao as a true and heroic leader. It changed her view on communism for good as she became disillusioned. Chang states that in retrospect she holds Mao accountable for the Cultural Revolution. In Chang’s narrative she seems to have simplified herself and her peers to meek, bound, blind, thoughtless followers of Mao. She presents Mao as an irrational, crazy, all-consuming evil that no-one could possibly understand. This denunciation of Mao goes much further than the Party *Resolution*. In Chang’s narrative Mao did not just make mistakes, but he was responsible and should have been held accountable for what he did; he wanted chaos and misery. The gigantic Party *Resolution* chose to support Mao’s earlier contributions as a brilliant theorist and as the great founder of modern China.

After the regime ended the Party tried to save as much as possible of its reputation and progress of the last decades. Part of its legitimacy was based on the progress China had made and how its socialism seemed to work. Yang’s and Chang’s narratives are in the end both disappointed, disillusioned and rather critical on the overall value of Maoism; was it truly a socialist society that treated people equally? According to both the system had failed. In implementation, but also in theory. People had never lost their old ‘traditional’ ways and Maoism would, because of that, never work.
CONCLUSION

The gigantic *Resolution* that the Communist Party of China drafted in 1981 was intended to deal with its own complicated and conflicted role. As inheritors of the Maoist regime the Communist Party staged a grand historical narrative to ensure their legitimacy of the past, of the present, and the future. Four components are particularly important in placing the Party in the right historical light.

Firstly, they placed the post-1949 turbulent events, such as the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, in a larger perspective. The narrative focussed on a long linear history of continuous struggle that has strived for progress with the help of the people. By focussing on their distant past the Party leaders position themselves as legitimate liberators of the people. Naturally there have been setbacks. But those setbacks are downplayed to ‘moments of learning’ in the process of growth.

Secondly, they rewrite the role of former Chairman Mao Zedong and redefine his legacy. The Party leaders decided that they could not condemn Mao for the many mistakes he had made, because he had created the foundation of China’s developments. In their opinion Mao’s contributions outweighed his flaws and he should still be honoured as a founding father figure and brilliant theorist. By emphasising that Mao was flawed they also underline the humanity of the former Chairman. This was supposed to reduce Mao’s god-like status and his popularity in Mao’s cult of personality.

Thirdly, the Party decided that the responsibility for the Cultural Revolution was to be found with the Gang of Four and Lin Biao. They were ‘evil opportunists’ who had exploited Mao’s mistakes and misled the people into believing that continuous class struggle was necessary and that good communists were evil rightists. They were held accountable for fracturing the Party which had left the Party paralysed. The *Resolution* also dealt with the responsibility of the people. It states that most people wanted to do good but were misled by the Gang of Four and Lin Biao. Most people were blinded by their love and devotion for Mao. The people were initially unaware of the horrible events, but when they realised they were being manipulated they actively tried to resist the Cultural Revolution. The Party distanced itself from the Cultural Revolution. It states that the Revolution was wrong and that the Party never supported it. Under the influence of Mao’s cult of personality, Mao could rule as an absolute ruler. The Party became paralysed and had no power over Mao to change the course of events.
Fourthly, because the Party declared it was not responsible for the Cultural Revolution, it opened up its own future; the Resolution presented the Communist Party as the stable factor in China’s progressive history, it was not actively part of the Cultural Revolution and would continue to bring prosperity in the future. This Resolution set the ideological tone for how people were supposed to give meaning to their past experiences.

The gigantic provided a clear structure or model for individuals to interpret their experiences. The way Chang and Yang narrate their memories of their experiences in their autobiographies shows how they relied on the grand narrative of the Party gigantic to give meaning to their own experiences. The Party, Chang, and Yang state their extensive previous history. Both Chang and Yang adopt the same mode of argument when they use the pre-1949 past for establishing their identity. Apparently only the larger linear past can explain the logic and continuity in their support of the Communism of their youth. Pre-49 society, which was dominated by the politics of the Kuomintang and the civil war between them and the Communist Party, is presented as corrupt and the authors make an effort to emphasise their own relevancy in their support of communism that initially contributed to positive changes in China. Chang and Yang emphasise the Resolution by explaining how they wanted to improve China and help people. They represent most Chinese as victims who did not realise how they were contributing to evil. In general all narratives seem to point out topics of liberation and prosperity. They all emphasise how they wanted to do good and help people, they have a moral component to them. Chang in a rational way and Yang in an emotional way.

Although Chang and Yang were influenced by the gigantic model to give meaning to their lives, they write about their own unique experiences. There are several aspects that especially stood out in the way in which they deviate from the Resolution. Yang uses the trope of her family to question the presented role of the Communist Party of China as ‘liberators’ of the people. Yang shows that there was no particular struggle or people who needed to be liberated and presents an image of logical continuity. Chang presents the image of the ‘perfect family’ to show how its members resisted the cult of Mao because of the love they felt for each other. Chang also uses her family to point out the disillusionment she felt of the usefulness and effects of communism. She emphasising how her parents were two different kinds of communists; one literal and one pragmatic. The first kind clearly did not work, the second one, like most Chinese, was not truly communistic and undermined the equalitarian principles.
Regarding the Red Guards both authors present different motivations than the Resolution (passionate or rational followers of Mao who consciously chose to follow him but who became aware of the situation and resisted the Cultural Revolution). Chang and Yang state they were unaware of it and that deceptive rhetoric and disinformation played a big role among the Red Guards. According to Chang the two main motivations were fear and habit instead of love and rational objective reasoning. Both authors state that they could not actively resist the Cultural Revolution and that it was hard to think rationally and objectively. Yang points out that there actually was a lot of violence and that many, like her, abused the situation to get back on others like her teachers.

According to the Resolution the Party had always condemned the cult of Mao. This is disputed by Chang as she shows how Liu Shaoqi, the former president of China, was both part of the Party and simultaneously supported the cult. Yang focusses especially on Lin Biao because his assassination made her question the legitimacy of Mao as a true and heroic leader. She became disillusioned with Mao and communism. Both authors challenge the legitimacy of the Party based on the progress China had made. They are disillusioned, disappointed and critical on the overall value of Maoism; the system and its implementation had failed.

It is clear that their narratives had a different goal than that of the Party. They all had to deal with their past, but the Party could not condemn its own importance. Chang and Yang can and emphasise their feeling of loss and betrayal. They lost their meaning. They show a past that was dark and hopeless. Violence and fear, the imperfection of humans, the loss of control: it shows a society that was faulted and torn apart. It was probably too much for the Party to repair. In contrast, the gigantic Resolution chose to reflect on the positive effects and tried to build a better future. If they admitted all the horrible events that happened in the past, most of society was to blame for the atrocities committed during the Cultural Revolution.

Chang and Yang created accounts that show how the past was not simply black and white. It was much more nuanced. Reasons, actions, motivations were dual and different for each. They state how they felt like they were simultaneously victims and perpetrators. Yet both seem to have different intentions that seem to explain why their narrative emphasises different aspects of the overall experience.

It is paradoxical that Chang’s narrative in particular mostly confirms the Party Resolution because her book is banned in mainland China. By using a calm and clear tone they both want to create a more distant, rational and logical overview in order to create a bigger
linear narrative that ends in a plot with a happy ending. Chang’s immense popularity can be explained by these reasons and by her own intentions. She evidently wanted to be taken seriously and be considered as a contribution to legitimate history writing. One reason is that she did extensive research to give a comprehensive and complete overview in a clear linear narrative. The other reason is that she did so in a calm and rational tone. This corresponds to what her readers wanted to hear. As discussed in the introduction Kong’s research states that people want to hear that people have the ability to remain rational and calm and would not fall for a cult of personality. That only a few had gone mad and had evil intentions. That only a few, whether it’s Mao or the Gang of Four, were responsible for the planning and execution of the Cultural Revolution instead of the masses. Because those readers want to believe that they themselves would have acted in the same way as Chang presents us that she had acted. In this way people can relate to her, which might have been vital to her immense popularity.

Although Chang provides significant information it is especially Yang’s memoir that I find most compelling. Her very personal, emotional, seemingly raw and unreasonable thoughts might reflect more truly on the opinion of a passionate and disappointed teenager. As Yang had stated, there were many autobiographies that successfully dealt with what happened. Her intention is to focus on why it happened. She rebels against the gigantic and the commonly accepted story people want to read; she did not remain calm, innocent and passive. In her memoir the power that the cult held over her and others is much more visible. Yang attempts to narrate the clear distinction between what she thought at that time and what she thinks now. This enables her to reflect on who she once was; a passionate Red Guard who would have done anything for Mao.

Chang and Yang state that they no longer believed in the same things as in their adolescent past. The authors are now convinced that Mao Zedong was responsible and actively misled them. Both authors state they do not believe that the Communist Party of China is able to bring prosperity and improvement. Although they confirm the general model of the gigantic Party narrative they also deviate from it because they show how the Cultural Revolution can be explained as a period of confusion where people did not really know what they were doing and why. Chang and Yang show the ‘ugly’ side of those decades. They emphasise despair, disappointment and loss of control. Something the Party does not deem constructive to China’s future. This analysis has shown that miniature understanding of the world is influenced by the gigantic larger structures, in this case stated by the Party Resolution. Within the statements of the Resolution the authors gave meaning to their own individual memories of past experiences.
Yet they chose to deviate from the Resolution to a certain extent because these individual memories of the events were more complex. They also have their own intentions that differ from the Party Resolution. This also explains the emphasis on certain events or the specific style of the authors.

These deviations have in turn effects on the gigantic. Although the Party gigantic has already been written and is currently not open for alterations, we in the West came to know Mao as a madman. Not as a flawed but a brilliant theoretician. We also question the legitimacy of the Communist Party of China and its socialist progress up to this day. By reproducing miniature notions like these, autobiographies have influenced our understanding of what happened because they are easy to read yet comprehend complex histories. Readers can relate to the individual experiences of authors, not to an abstract gigantic. Their popularity has influenced the way we understand the experiences of the Cultural Revolution. Therefore the miniature in turn influences the gigantic that became prevalent in the West.

It is evident that the assumed gap between the miniatures and the gigantic is not as big as researchers thought. This research has shown that there is a connection between the gigantic Party narrative and the personal miniature accounts. I have proven that the different perspectives do not necessarily contradict each other even when they have different intentions. So it is remarkable that the personal miniatures and the gigantic Party narrative reinforce each other as they all discuss their moral component with the help of topics as liberation and prosperity within the structures of a large linear perspective. Susan Stewart's theory has been extremely helpful in defining the different perspectives of meaning. She helps underline that the miniature is as important as the gigantic in history and can therefore contribute to history writing. I have analysed the way in which they interconnect. They exist by the definition of the other. The miniature also deviates from the gigantic because of the fact that they are unique, personal and not abstract. By the act of writing the authors reproduce and project their miniatures, their understanding of the events, onto history and eventually influence the gigantic. Their mutual reinforcement therefore underlines that both perspectives should be studied together in further historical research. Memoirs can be considered as an important part of history and history writing. They are after all not just stories. They are stories that write history.
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