JIE LI

Utopian Ruins

A MEMORIAL MUSEUM OF THE MAO ERA

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SINOTHEORY

A series edited by Carlos Rojas and Eileen Cheng-yin Chow

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To my mother and father, and to Renate

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SERIES EDITOR'S PREFACE

In the late 1990s, Turkish author Orhan Pamuk began planning a novel set in Istanbul between 1975 and 1984. The work would feature a secret romance between a wealthy Turkish businessman and a poorer, distant relative—and after the protagonist finds himself unable to be with his beloved, he begins obsessively collecting everything that she has touched. Likewise, over the years that Pamuk spent writing the work, he himself began collecting a wide range of artifacts from the period in question—artifacts that he not only described in exquisite detail in the novel but would also put on display in an actual "Museum of Innocence" *museum* that he planned to coincide with the release of the novel. The novel was eventually published in August 2008, making it the author's first major publication after winning the Nobel Prize in 2006, and although Pamuk had intended to have the museum debut two months later in Frankfurt to coincide with that year's Frankfurt Book Fair, the debut was delayed until 2012, when it finally opened in a house that Pamuk had purchased in Istanbul for that purpose.

This rather unusual literary-museological project juxtaposes two rather different representational modes—with the novel representing objects through narrative and the museum re-presenting the same objects by putting them on public display. In addition to straddling these two different representational practices of literary description and exhibitional display, the project also strategically blurs the boundaries between attachment and loss, public and private, and between reality and representation. At the same time, the museum also functions as a miniature history of Istanbul itself, offering a glimpse into the materiality of daily life four decades ago.

In August 2018, almost precisely ten years after the publication of Pamuk's novel, a similar project opened to the public in Shenzhen, China. Just as Pamuk's *Museum of Innocence* spans roughly four decades of modern Turkish history (from the 1975 beginning of the novel to the 2012 opening date of the actual museum) and is structured around a public display of an assortment of quotidian and previously private artifacts, the opening of the Shekou Museum of China's Reform and Opening Up similarly commemorated the fortieth anniversary of the beginning of Deng Xiaoping's Reform and Opening Up campaign. Deng's campaign marked the beginning of a decades-long period of rapid privatization, industrialization, and economic growth: it is hardly surprising, therefore, that the museum adopts a triumphant tone, celebrating the remarkable achievements that Shenzhen—not to mention China as a whole—had made over the past four decades. The Shenzhen museum is organized chronologically and includes not only historical photographs, charts, and full-size re-creations of rooms and even entire alleys but also numerous artifacts from the periods in question. These artifacts include ordinary objects like tools, appliances, and clothing, as well as highly personal items like letters, ID cards, and examination booklets. Some of the objects will still be familiar to many viewers, while others, like rotary phones and cassette tapes, will be less so. Consequently, this Shenzhen museum also carries a distinctly nostalgic tone because it straddles many of the same boundaries between attachment and loss, public and private, reality and representation, as does Pamuk's museum in Istanbul.

Located just outside the frame of the Shenzhen museum's celebratory and nostalgic gaze, meanwhile, is a much more complicated historical period, and it is probably no coincidence that China's only Reform and Opening Up museum is in the special economic zone of Shenzhen, which literally didn't even exist before the beginning of the 1978 campaign. The Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) had officially ended only two years earlier and itself had been preceded by the highly volatile, and deeply traumatic, "Seventeen Years" period that extended from the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 to the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966.

Jie Li's *Utopian Ruins*, meanwhile, focuses precisely on this historical period immediately preceding the beginning of the Reform Era, though it attends to a set of representational and exhibitional practices that resemble the ones featured in the Shenzhen museum. More specifically, Li's study takes inspiration from Ba Jin's call in the early 1980s for a museum memorializing the Cultural Revolution. This proposal was compelling yet profoundly challenging since the question of how to memorialize this tumultuous and traumatic period remains

deeply contentious. In her study, Li takes Ba Jin's proposal a step further and considers various attempts to memorialize not only the Cultural Revolution but also other particularly traumatic periods from the Maoist era, ranging from the Anti-Rightist Movement (1957) to the Great Famine (1959–1961). In six eloquent and moving chapters, Li uses a variety of different case studies—straddling an array of different media—to illustrate how the Chinese state used a dialectic of propaganda and censorship to shape not only beliefs but also lived realities, while at the same time attending to the private voices and memories that were often embedded in the fissures within this larger regime.

Just as the historical turmoil of the Maoist period lies just outside the Shenzhen museum's celebratory gaze, a similar shadow of turmoil and suppression also haunts the nominal innocence of Pamuk's *Museum of Innocence*. Specifically, on July 15, 2016, just four years after Pamuk's museum opened in 2012, there was an attempted *coup d'état* against the Turkish government by a group advocating for democratic rule and human rights. After the coup failed, President Erdoğan retaliated by orchestrating a massive wave of arrests and purges targeting journalists, authors, and academics, among others. In fact, as early as 2005 (even before the attempted coup and subsequent purge), Pamuk himself had been arrested and charged with "public denigration of Turkish identity" after he tried to draw attention to Turkey's complicity in the Kurdish and Armenian genocides. Although the charges were subsequently dropped, he nevertheless cited this incident three years later in his opening address at the 2008 Frankfurt Book Fair—at which Turkey was the country of honor, and where Pamuk had originally planned to stage the debut of his *Museum of Innocence* exhibit. Speaking along with Turkey's then-president Abdullah Gül, Pamuk made an impassioned plea in defense of intellectual and artistic freedom, noting that "there are at this moment hundreds of writers and journalists being prosecuted and found guilty under [the same article for which Pamuk had been arrested in 2005]."[1] Pamuk's Frankfurt lecture, and the even more severe crackdown on human rights and intellectual freedom that unfolded in Turkey a decade later, serves as a sober reminder that the sorts of repressive practices that Li examines in *Utopian Ruins*—and the corresponding memorial practices that they invite—are hardly confined to the past.

—Carlos Rojas

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As a memorial museum seeks to preserve and pass on historical testimonies, the generations of my family epitomize the bequest and inheritance of memories. My grandparents—Li Baoren, Wang Zhengwen, Yao Zhanghua, and Zhu Yuehua—shared many stories and lessons from their lives before the fading of their memories. Besides checking my scholarly inquiry against their generational experiences, my parents, Li Bin and Wang Yaqing, gave their wholehearted intellectual, moral, and logistical support from the inception to the conclusion of this project. My parents-in-law, Anne-Dore and Klaus Koss, created an enviably serene environment for writing over several summers in Speyer, Germany. Finally, this book was completed under the benediction of Daniel, Anton, and Renate, who imbue my every day with happiness, meaning, and wonder.

MEDIATING MEMORIES OF THE MAO ERA

On August 5, 1966, Bian Zhongyun 卞仲耘, vice principal of a girls' middle school in Beijing, was beaten to death by Red Guards. The next day, her husband, Wang Jingyao 王晶垚, bought a camera (figure I.1) and took pictures of her bruised and distended body. He photographed their children as they washed and dressed their mother. He photographed the vilifying big-character posters that covered the inside and outside walls of their apartment. He also photographed the smoke rising from the chimney of the crematorium after her body was burned. For four decades, he hid the photos and her bloodstained clothes, waiting all the while to transfer them to the Cultural Revolution Museum, if such a museum were ever built.[1]

The idea for a Cultural Revolution museum comes from the renowned writer Ba Jin 巴金 (1904–2005). In several essays published in 1986, Ba Jin called for a memorial museum "exhibiting concrete and real objects, and reconstructing striking scenes which will testify to what took place on this Chinese soil twenty years ago! . . . It is only by engraving in our memory the events of the 'Cultural Revolution,'" he proclaimed, "that we will prevent history from

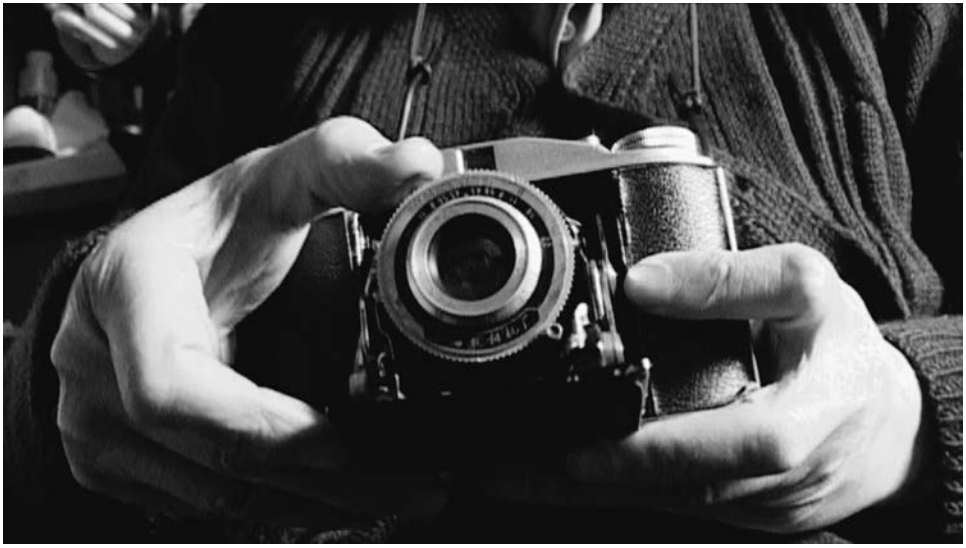

Figure I.1. Wang Jingyao holding his camera (photo by Hu Jie).

repeating itself."[2] Ba Jin's proposal for a memorial museum found widespread resonance, but there has been growing dissonance about its appropriate form and content, message, and audience.[3] To this day, Chinese history textbooks and official museums gloss over the traumatic upheavals of the Mao era—not only the Red Guard and factional violence from 1966 to 1968 but also the Anti-Rightist Movement (1957) and the Great Leap famine (1959–1962)—while nostalgic memories for the Maoist decades have found expression in popular media and memorabilia markets.

The largest collection of Mao-era memorabilia since 2005 can be found at the Jianchuan Museum Cluster (建川博物館聚落) in the small town of Anren in Sichuan. With five museums devoted to the "red age," this private complex displays a myriad of Mao badges, propaganda posters, newspapers and magazines, LP records, films, photo albums, diaries, dossiers, and everyday artifacts such as mirrors and clocks. Outside the exhibition halls, the museum complex has the atmosphere of a theme park: loudspeakers blast hosannas to Chairman Mao; visitors can pose as "Red Guards" for souvenir photos (see figure I.2), eat at the "People's Commune Restaurant," and purchase *Little Red Book*s, "Serve the People" khaki bags, or model revolutionary opera porcelain in gift shops. Since the 1990s, the playful and nostalgic consumption of red memorabilia has been the most prevalent form of commemorating China's socialist past.[4]

Figure I.2. Photo stand-in at Jianchuan Museum (photo by Denise Y. Ho).

Yet these commodified spaces are a far cry from what Ba Jin had originally envisioned—a museum where young people could learn about the causes and ramifications of mass violence, about the ideals, pain, and complicity of their parents and grandparents.

This book takes up Ba Jin's proposal for a memorial museum but extends the original emphasis on the Cultural Revolution decade (1966–1976) to accommodate a plurality of memories spanning the entire Mao era from 1949 to 1976. The term "Cultural Revolution," as Michael Schoenhals contends, loses its explanatory value when described as manic, bizarre, or otherwise abnormal and exceptional vis-à-vis the prior seventeen years.[5] Even histories focusing on the Cultural Revolution trace its origins to earlier campaigns.[6] Instead of conflating the Mao years into an undifferentiated monolith, this broader periodization takes into account the vicissitudes, interconnectedness, and sedimentation of events in historical memory. Privileging continuity over rupture, this book's engagement with palimpsest memory formation also considers the legacies of the Republican era and post-Mao commemorations of the Mao era.

How might we then curate a "memorial museum" of the Mao era? What can and should be included in its collections and exhibits? Although contemporary

politics prevents the realization of Ba Jin's dream, a memorial museum remains a salient conceptual framework to examine the mediation of memories under and across the decades of state-sponsored amnesia. In recent years, museums throughout the world have been undergoing a paradigm shift from houses of *collection* to spaces of *recollection*, and new curatorial strategies do less to impose authoritative master-narratives than to accommodate formerly marginalized memory communities.[7] Rather than mausoleums of ossified and irrelevant antiques,[8] the goal of memorial museums is to enliven memories of crucial historical events "deemed essential for interpreting the present and envisaging the future."[9] Even in Mao's China, museums served as classrooms to pass on historical memory to younger generations as well as stages for commemorative rituals.[10] As sites of memory, museums are akin to shamanistic mediums that facilitate conversations between the living and the dead, between present audiences and past spirits.[11]

While envisioning potential exhibits of a future museum, this book explores vital questions about the politics and poetics, mechanics and ethics of memory-making. Given state control of recording and communication technologies, what kind of written, audiovisual, and material testimonies can a memorial museum draw on? As embodied memories of firsthand experiences give way to mediated cultural representations, how can historical knowledge and empathy be passed on to future generations? With vehement disagreements over the Mao years, how might a memorial museum reconcile contradictory memories into a shared understanding? I argue that a future memorial museum should mediate memories in three ways: by cultivating conversations between accounts of utopia versus catastrophe; transmitting testimonies across generations; and curating exhibits of primary documents and traces that illuminate broader memory-making processes. These three senses of memory's mediation map onto three meanings of "utopian ruins," as a dialectic between nostalgia and trauma, anticipation and retrospection, propaganda and testimony.

Mediating between Utopia and Ruin

During the Mao era, hundreds of millions of Chinese devoted themselves to the building of a better world yet suffered from hunger and strife at unprecedented scales. The revolutionary visions of bounty, equality, and community and the tragic realities of famine, violence, and destruction left behind two major paradigms for remembering those decades—as a series of never-to-be-repeated totalitarian crimes, or as experiments of alternative modernity whose inspiring ideals should be rescued from their failures.[12] These two positions

have bifurcated into two opposing camps among Chinese intellectuals and have also permeated popular discourse.[13] The liberals, or New Enlightenment intellectuals, generally hold the "catastrophe thesis" to condemn revolutionary violence and its resultant suffering as well as the breakdown of social trust after decades of "class struggle." For them, such human casualties not only indict Mao's dictatorship but also spell the bankruptcy of Communist ideals, thus arguing that it would be better to bid "farewell to revolution."[14] At the opposite end of the spectrum, many "New Left" intellectuals mourn the "end of the revolution" and seek to salvage utopia from its ruins. Critiquing inequality, corruption, and the apparent triumph of global capitalism in postsocialist China, they seek to reclaim the egalitarian ideals of the socialist past to find an "alternative modernity."[15] For Chinese leftists, the Chinese Revolution also responded to historical problems and holds meaning as a "national independence movement against imperialist encroachments."[16] Debates between the liberals and the leftists have been passionate and polemical, yet both sides share the injunction, "Never Forget!"—be it the revolution's yet-to-be-mourned ghosts or its unrealized dreams.

This book mediates between these two polarized positions within the critical framework and curatorial strategy of "utopian ruins," which highlight, on the one hand, the hopes and aspirations that moved so many to participate in the Chinese Revolution, and, on the other hand, the mass suffering and cultural wreckage that occurred in its wake. I argue that a memorial museum of the Mao era must commemorate both the revolutionaries and the revolutionized, motivating ideals and human costs, victimhood and complicity, without disaggregating theory from practice or dreams from realities. To ask how utopia came to ruins is to trace where and how things went wrong as well as to examine the complicity of the utopian visions in catastrophes. To ask what utopian impulses can be salvaged from the ruins is to reexamine the longings of the Chinese Revolution and to consider their renewed relevance in contemporary China.[17] While sharing the missions of global memorial museums in their "commemoration of mass suffering,"[18] the "exhibits" in this book also highlight the thwarted ideals, complicit participation, and envisaged futures. They demonstrate how the massive human costs of the Revolution were inextricable from its propagated ideals that helped to mobilize the populace. Such utopian visions were not merely a dictator's delusions or deceptions but also mass mediated and collectively pursued, inspiring much voluntary sacrifice and making it difficult to delineate the perpetrators from the victims. Although the traumas of the Maoist past have yet to be worked through, the era's utopian impulses have taken on a critical potential due to the growing

grievances against neoliberal developments. Hence a future memorial museum should mediate between traumatic and nostalgic memories and suggest ways to reckon with the man-made catastrophes that originated with utopian longings.

Juxtaposing utopia and ruin, trauma, and nostalgia raises questions about the relationship between elite and grassroots memories and their representation. Anthropologist Mobo Gao's provocative book *The Battle for China's Past* argues against the hegemonic memory production of intellectuals whose families suffered during the Cultural Revolution and instead argues for recognition of "the vast majority of people in China" who remember the Mao era as "the good old days."[19] While pinpointing unequal access to media technologies and platforms, Gao fails to take into account the role of media propaganda and censorship in cultivating such nostalgia, or the fact that Maoist cultural legacies are the most ostensibly legitimate yet scathingly symbolic resources of the disenfranchised in postsocialist China.[20] The appropriation of revolutionary symbols to protest the status quo does not readily translate into positive lived experiences under socialism.[21] Without polarizing Mao-era memories between "elite trauma" and "grassroots nostalgia," the exhibits in this book pay tribute to the plurality of the memoryscape—collecting memories of dictatorship, everyday life, and alternative modernity. Instead of directly collecting oral histories from rural villagers and urban workers,[22] however, this imagined memorial-museum-in-book-form curates from existing textual, photographic, and cinematic records about the subaltern. Without such records, first-generation embodied memories would perish rather than being passed on and shared, which brings us to the second meaning of "utopian ruins."

Mediating across Generations

In addition to mediating between dreamworld and catastrophe, the curatorial principle of utopian ruins seeks to combine prospective and retrospective perspectives to evoke the layered accumulation of memories. Marianne Hirsch has coined the term "postmemory" to describe the "relationship that the 'generation after' bears to the personal, collective, and cultural traumas of those who came before."[23] Whereas Hirsch focuses on the "postmemorial" work performed long after the passing of the remembered events, I argue that transgenerational memories are made both in the past and in the present, coproduced by the generation(s) that bequeath testimonies and by the generation(s) that inherit memories. Transgenerational memories are mediated through interpersonal communications between sentient bodies—voices and gestures, stories and acts—and more lastingly, through inscriptions onto insentient

artifacts—texts and images, objects and places.[24] "Memory-making" thus refers to a palimpsestic process whereby multiple agents and technologies, both past and present, contribute to the documentation and transmission, erasure, and excavation of memories in externalized form.

Instead of equating memories with retrospective narratives, to study memory as palimpsest formations departs from existing scholarship that locates memory production of the Mao era entirely in the post-Mao era. Whereas previous studies examine first-generation accounts in the forms of oral histories and memoirs[25] or alternatively fictional reconstructions in literature and film,[26] a memorial museum must exhibit primary documents, indexical traces, and material remains, which "attest to the past by emerging from it."[27] Those past traces can also remind the audiences of the forward-looking, anticipatory outlooks of earlier generations without the benefit of hindsight. As well as memory-formation processes, "utopian ruins" refer to memorial media that bear layers of inscription from the remembered past and the remembering present.

If a memorial museum seeks to bridge memory gaps between past, present, and future generations, then such a task is particularly challenging in contemporary China. Astrophysicist and dissident Fang Lizhi 方勵之 describes the Communist Party's "techniques of amnesia"—those policies that purge past facts that are not in the party's interest from "any speech, book, document, or other medium," thereby creating "generational breaks" of historical memory.[28] Memoirist Zhang Yihe 章詒和 similarly laments: "People who are fifty know nothing of the Anti-Rightist Campaign; people who are forty know nothing of the great famine; people who are thirty know nothing of the Cultural Revolution; people who are twenty know nothing of 1989."[29] As independent filmmaker Hu Jie 胡傑 asks: "Will history enter our memory? How will it enter our memory?"[30] Will propaganda and censorship whitewash the blood and tears of the past, turning bodies into dissipating smoke? Or can a memorial museum and its exhibits bear witness to history and pass on its memory to future generations?

Mediating Technologies and Ecologies

Besides mediating between trauma and nostalgia and between generations, "utopian ruins" suggests a tension between imagination and reality, propaganda and testimony. Challenging conventional wisdom that equates memories with lived experiences,[31] I argue that memories are inseparable from their mediating technologies, especially when the state filters the documentation

and transmission of knowledge and experience through the sieves of propaganda and censorship. Rather than exercising total control over memories, however, state surveillance can also generate important resources for unofficial, even subversive, memories in the changing media ecology of the post-Mao era.

Recent synergy between memory studies and media studies has highlighted not only cultural artifacts and social practices but also technological media.[32] Marita Sturken uses "technologies of memory" to refer to "memorials, souvenirs, bodies and other objects" as well as "visual technologies of mass and mediated forms—photographs, films, television shows, and digital images."[33] Besides devices that help us remember, memory technology also suggests "memory as technology," as a tool of power or resistance, with corollaries in "techniques of forgetting" and "regimes of memory," to be elaborated in a later section.

Technologies of memory can be parsed further into technologies of storage (recording, collection, archiving, and preservation) and technologies of transmission (inclusive of communication, circulation, reproduction, and dissemination). Media theorist Friedrich Kittler argues that media technologies determine "recording thresholds," that is, the changing ratio between perception and inscription,[34] thereby affecting what and how the past might be documented. This book will explore those recording thresholds enabled or inhibited by memory storage technologies, as well as human uses of those technologies—including writing technologies (ink and letter), archiving apparatuses (police files), audiovisual recordings (photography and cinema), physical spaces and material collections (factories, museums, cemeteries). Whereas technologies of storage refashion embodied memories into inscribed memories and preserve those traces against the ravages of time, technologies of transmission catapult certain past persons, texts, images, and relics into present consciousness. That is, they transform "storage memory" into "functional memory," a distinction cultural theorist Aleida Assmann likens to a museum's collections in a depository versus its exhibitions on display.[35] Studying memory transmission through mass communication helps us understand how selected past traces have come to meet with broader audiences and taken on public afterlives.

To illustrate how different media technologies contribute to the recording, transmission, and remediation of memories,[36] let us revisit the case at the beginning of this chapter: In 1966, when photographic technology belonged to state institutions or commercial photo studios, Wang Jingyao acquired a camera to record the last glimpses of his wife and to embalm visual evidence of the violence that caused her death. He preserved those photos alongside other

textual, material, and bodily relics in his home, until independent filmmaker Hu Jie remediated this private collection, together with Wang's oral testimony, into a 2006 documentary film shot on digital video and distributed on the internet. Recollected into this "virtual museum," one family's private photos met a much wider contemporary audience and served as metonymic visual testimony to the violence of the Red Guard movement.[37] This case demonstrates how technological development and access, representational conventions, and (re)mediating platforms can reshape historical memory.

Tracing the remediation of body into photography, into digital video, and into the internet heightens our awareness not only of changing media technologies but also of the evolving ecologies of memory. Under the phrase "new memory ecologies," media theorist Andrew Hoskins argues that memory nowadays finds itself in "a media ecology wherein abundance, pervasiveness and accessibility of communication networks, nodes, and digital media content, scale pasts anew."[38] Finding a media ecological approach just as useful for studying memory-making processes in the predigital age, I define "memory ecology" as a holistic study of the environment in which remembering and forgetting take place, where a dynamic constellation of political, economic, cultural, and technological forces affects the survival and perishing, reproduction, and dissemination of memories.[39] For example, although photography and cinema were hardly new technologies in Mao's China, chapters 3 and 4 demonstrate that uneven access to cameras and film, as well as visual conventions and taboos, impacted what and how images and sounds were recorded. Conversely, examining the selective preservation and transmission of the past brings into sharp relief political, socioeconomic, technological, and informational inequities. As James Young reminds us, "memory is never shaped in a vacuum, and the motives of memory are never pure."[40] This book thus studies memorial artifacts to understand the broader ecologies that condition memory formation.

Testimonial Exhibits and Museum Witnessing

Collecting memories of the past for a present audience, a memorial museum underscores the "exhibit" as display and as evidence. In the sense of *display*, contemporary memorial-museum exhibits feature a combination of archival documents, audiovisual media, and material artifacts. More than master-narratives and canons, memorial museums highlight life stories and personal recollections, providing a platform "for victims of atrocities and for minorities who find it difficult to make themselves heard."[41] Compelling exhibits generate

empathy and help visitors take on what Alison Landsberg calls "prosthetic memory."[42] In the sense of *evidence*, a memorial museum's exhibits make truth claims and have documentary, indexical, and testimonial qualities. Unlike fiction that *represents* the past, a memorial museum *re-presents* the past in Jacques Derrida's sense of "rendering present, of a summoning as a power-of-bringing-back-to-presence."[43] Its exhibits rely on indexical traces—including archival documents, camera images, and material relics—that might "bear witness" to the past by virtue of "having been there."[44] Yet as Paul Williams points out, there is a "basic difficulty with the object base of memorial museums," because "the injured, dispossessed, and expelled are left object-poor," not to mention the "clandestine nature of much political violence" in which the perpetrators "purposefully destroy evidence of their destruction."[45] Since indexical traces are partial by definition, a memorial museum must juxtapose different perspectives, make metonymic inferences from fractured records, while also acknowledging the gaps and limits of our knowledge.

As much as memory, witnessing and testimony are keywords for what memorial museums exhibit and for what they do. The intricate term "witness," as John Durham Peters points out, can refer to "(1) the agent who bears witness, (2) the utterance or text itself, (3) the audience who witnesses."[46] The historical roots of witnessing can be traced back to legal, religious, and philosophical traditions, yet massive catastrophes and mass media in the twentieth century have also transformed its meaning.[47] The impossible and yet ethical imperative to bear witness to atrocity emerged in parallel with the rise of what communication scholars call "media witnessing"—"the witnessing performed *in*, *by*, and *through* the media," whereby photography, cinema, and broadcasting enable "systematic and ongoing reporting of the experiences and realities of distant others to *mass audiences*."[48]

Inspired by the notion of media witnessing, this book focuses on what I call "museum witnessing," or witnessing *in*, *by*, and *through* the memorial museum, with emphasis on both subjective human experiences and "objective" recording technologies. Witnessing *in* the museum refers to evidentiary exhibits of texts, images, and objects, as well as retrospective testimonies. Witnessing *by* the museum refers to the museum as "witness stand" for persons, recordings, and objects, contextualizing as well as cross-examining their testimonies.[49] Finally, witnessing *through* the museum turns audiences into "secondary witnesses" who constitute a "moral community"[50] to judge the past and empathize with historical actors.

Museum witnessing can become entangled with thorny politics, for "all existing memorial museums . . . [are] the result of particular power struggles."[51]

But even leaving aside political censorship, museum exhibits raise intriguing ethical questions about *provenance*, *representation*, and *impact*. For the justness of the provenance, we ask about the roots and routes of the exhibits: Who made those textual, visual, and material artifacts, and under what circumstances? In addition to the "records themselves," what is the "story of their composition and their tenuous survival?"[52] For the justness of representation, we ask about the selection, display, and narration of the exhibits: How should a memorial museum balance between contested memories? How do we work with a dearth of documents, images, or objects that can attest to violence and tyranny? How do we resolve the "strain between authenticity and evidence and the desire to create emotive, dramatic visitor experience?"[53] This brings us to the justness of impact: How should the exhibits differ when addressing natives and foreigners, elder and younger generations, students and consumers? Taking a cue from Tony Bennett's idea of the "exhibitionary complex," whereby museums help discipline society through exemplary spectacles,[54] do memorial museums make their visitors better citizens or more docile subjects?

As with memories of violence in other national contexts, a primary ethical concern here is the self-positioning of a postgeneration. How are we implicated "in the aftermath of crimes we did not ourselves witness"?[55] Who are the legitimate heirs when it comes to the "inheritance of loss?"[56] The most obvious ethical position of sympathy for victims can turn into unearned self-righteousness, even the appropriation of victimhood as symbolic capital.[57] Further complicating ethical judgment is the Chinese "revolutionary cycle"[58] that turned victims into accomplices of violence and vice versa, as well as the revolution's idealistic origins and traumatic aftermath. When the revolution devours not only its children but its ideals, are those ideals to be abandoned and negated?

Born after the Cultural Revolution, I wish to reiterate here that we are at the historical juncture of memory's generational transfer, a paradigm shift from lived to mediated, from possession to inheritance. As memory recedes and modernization speeds, there is a growing desire to salvage past stories and remnants from death and demolition and to give more enduring form to ephemeral memories. Yet the postgeneration is not only cursed with amnesia. After all, as writer Han Shaogong 韓少功 argues, now that the Mao years have "receded to an adequate distance that allows careful observation," we should not allow a polarized narrative of demonization and deification to cloud our understanding.[59] In this spirit, this book curates exhibits that highlight the gaps and fissures of more mainstream red legacies and offers suggestions for future mediators of memory.

The Maoist Regime of Memories

"A backward gaze," as Stephen Owen points out, "can be found in the earliest works of Chinese literature," where the past "became an absence and an object of desire that had to be earnestly sought, its remains recovered, its losses lamented."[60] "I transmit, I do not make," said Confucius, "whose act of remembrance is more vivid than the object of his memory,"[61] thereby creating a chain of remembrances that continued to manifest itself over centuries of Chinese cultural tradition in various commemorative practices, from the compilation of histories and genealogies to the recitation of classical texts. The onset of modernity, starting with the May Fourth Movement in 1919, began to assail the long-standing cultural canon and to break this chain of remembrances. Land reform and collectivization from the 1940s to the 1950s further dispossessed old lineages, desecrated commemorative spaces, and shattered filial rites.[62] The radical attack on everything old as feudal culminated in the Cultural Revolution, which not only traumatized millions but also destroyed the cultural heritage on an unprecedented scale. Instead of adding links to a chain of remembrances, revolutionary violence left behind a palimpsest of ruins, which prompted a renewed grasp for premodern memorial resources.[63]

While abolishing time-honored memory practices, the Communist Revolution brought about a regime change of memories—a *propagandization of memories* that mobilized memories for propaganda and turned propaganda into memories—and a *surveillance over memories* that entailed both a crisis of documentation and the archiving of otherwise ephemeral memories. I argue that the Communist Revolution was also a participatory mass media revolution, whereby the party reached the masses *with* media and turned the masses *into* media. Mass media and the masses as media magnified and prolonged the influence of Maoist utopianism, whereas the state monopoly over media technologies hindered documentation of its atrocities.

The Communist Party began turning memories into propaganda during the land reform of the 1940s and 1950s, using "speaking bitterness" (訴苦) to mobilize and politicize the rural folk and the urban proletariat.[64] In the 1960s and 1970s, "speaking bitterness" was reprised as "recalling bitterness" (憶苦) in order to transmit class consciousness to the younger generation.[65] In successive political campaigns, the party summoned, collected, recorded, selected, visualized, staged, ritualized, broadcast, synthesized, fictionalized, manipulated, and propagated memories of the prerevolutionary suffering from peasants, workers, and soldiers.[66]

Whereas the formerly oppressed remembered bitterness through public speaking, the formerly privileged—that is, much of the literate populace—had to indict and reform themselves through graphomania: writing and rewriting their life stories for their dossiers (檔案). As a technology of surveillance, the dossier aligned individual lives with official master-narratives and made the writers ventriloquists of state ideology. The dossier also had the potential to confiscate private memory inscriptions—letters, diaries, photos—while committing otherwise ephemeral memories to more permanent storage, turning official archives into a privileged site of testimony in the post-Mao era. Chapters 1 and 2 will focus on the dossier, which thus far has attracted little scholarly attention, as a site of cultural and memory production.

While autobiographical memories were transformed into public performances and entered closed archives, literature, art, music, cinema, and exhibitions disseminated visions of a Communist paradise as an alternative to the "hell" of the "old society." Relying on mass media to spread its utopian visions, the party took over existing printing presses, radio stations, and films[67] and vastly expanded the media infrastructure to the countryside through literacy campaigns, propaganda posters, wired broadcasts, and mobile film projections.[68] State-sponsored propaganda, which receive insightful analysis in recent scholarship, have had an enormous impact on perceptions and memories of the Mao era.[69]

Whereas most prior cultural histories privilege the creative production of socialist "fictions," this book focuses on the Maoist production of "facts" and "truths," and its modes of witnessing and documenting reality, including journalism (chapters 1 and 3), police files (chapters 1 and 2), photography and documentary film (chapters 3, 4, and 5), and the collection and exhibition of material objects (chapter 6). In an age when revolution was a "holy word" with an inviolable sacred aura,[70] I argue that the mission of Maoist mass media was to testify—as a profession of *faith*—to revolutionary teleology and socialist futures at the expense of documenting atrocities, failures, or everyday life under actually existing socialism. Such "testimonies of revolutionary faith" privileged "reality as it should be" over "reality as it is." Thus, utopian expressions not only eclipsed documentation of but were often complicit in producing many disasters of mass mobilization. Rather than seeing propaganda as a dictator's sinister lies that "brainwashed" a mindless populace, understanding propaganda as inspiring ideals can help us fathom the massive support for the Communist Revolution—including support from its later victims—as well as the massive scale of its failures. Rather than be passive victims of indoctrination, many Chinese people actively turned their bodies and voices into revolutionary media.

In addition to considering how the party deployed media to reach the masses, I extend the notion of mass media from modern communication technologies to include the *masses as media*—people as the vehicles of the revolution as a total work of art. Mao Zedong himself spelled out such an idea in a 1958 speech:

> Apart from their other characteristics, the outstanding thing about China's 600 million people is that they are "poor and blank." This may seem a bad thing, but in reality, it is a good thing. Poverty gives rise to the desire for changes, the desire for action, and the desire for revolution. On a blank sheet of paper free from any mark, the freshest and most beautiful characters can be written; the freshest and most beautiful pictures can be painted.[71]

The people, following William Schaefer's interpretation of Mao's statement, were not merely the subjects or objects of representation; they were the very medium of revolutionary politics and aesthetics.[72] When human beings served as the medium to realize revolutionary dreams and schemes, utopian visions ceased to be a matter of illusion, deception, or theory disconnected from reality. Instead, they exacted all-too-real human sacrifices, both voluntary and involuntary. My central contention is that propaganda produced not only fictions but also realities—albeit not the realities envisioned in the original blueprints, thus leaving behind "utopian ruins." Chapter 1 will show how, for several generations, revolutionary mobilization relied on the hot blood of youth in the boiler of activism, who understood martyrdom as the most noble end of a human life. Chapter 2 argues that the party's surveillance over its citizens relied not so much on panoptic cameras or wiretapping devices but rather on the eyes and ears of the masses. Chapter 3 demonstrates how photography during the Great Leap Forward projected grand agricultural and industrial visions that mobilized laboring bodies and produced famished bodies. Chapter 4 explores how chosen members of the Chinese populace produced an image of a new, revolutionary China for foreign film crews. Chapter 5 considers the imbrication of workers' bodies and lives into the ecosystem of the socialist factory, and chapter 6 studies the memorialization and museumification of the human and material remains of the Mao era. Instead of assigning agency to only a small coterie of political elites, this book shows how the Chinese people actively invested in a revolutionary project that exacted staggering human costs.

Apart from arguing that propaganda produced realities as well as fictions, this book also contends that censorship—the flip side of propaganda—

played a decisive role in shaping perceptions, documentations, and memories of the Mao era. Indeed, state surveillance over memory-making technologies and practices distinguish the Chinese "crisis of witnessing" from the original concept in trauma studies. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub use the term "crisis of witnessing" to describe the unspeakable and unimaginable trauma of the Holocaust, as "the unprecedented inconceivable historical occurrence of . . . 'an event eliminating its own witness.'"[73] The impossibility and the imperative to give and receive testimony became the core paradox of trauma studies, also influential for modern Chinese literary and cultural studies.[74]

Whereas trauma studies focus on the psychic effects of violence, this book provides a media-centered explanation for the Chinese crisis of witnessing. As propaganda—or the aforementioned "testimonies of revolutionary faith"—saturated mass media and surveillance obstructed testimonies of suffering, I contend that the traumatic events of the Mao era are "repressed memories" not only in a psychoanalytical sense but also in the sense of state monopoly over media technologies. Rather than witnesses too traumatized to speak, censors denied witnesses the means—in some cases literally the pen and paper (as discussed in chapter 1)—to inscribe, circulate, and transmit their testimonies. What renders past reality "inaccessible" to present consciousness is not only the immenseness of the trauma but also the inaccessibility of historical archives (discussed in chapters 1 and 2), the scarcity of audiovisual records (discussed in chapters 3 and 4), and the erasure of physical spaces and material traces (discussed in chapters 5 and 6).

The Chinese crisis of witnessing can be illustrated by Cicero's story about the poet Simonides, the "inventor of memory," who was invited to a banquet at a nobleman's palace. When he stepped outside, the palace ceiling suddenly collapsed and crushed the bodies of the victims beyond recognition. However, Simonides, who survived, remembered where each one had been sitting at the table, so that their relatives were able to identify and bury their dead. As in ancient Greece, memory in China has long been associated with mourning,[75] yet even that right was often denied the families of the millions designated as political pariahs. When Wang Jingchao 王景超—erstwhile revolutionary journalist condemned as a "Rightist" for his criticisms of the party—died from starvation in a labor reform camp in 1961, his wife, He Fengming 和鳳鳴, our female Chinese Simonides, could not even visit his grave. Thirty years later, a friend helped her locate the camp's burial ground, where each grave was marked by a stone picked from the nearby Gobi Desert. With the victim's name written with paint, each stone was placed

facing down to protect against erosion. Yet after decades of ravaging weather, most names had faded and could not be deciphered, so He Fengming turned over hundreds of stones but still could not find her husband's grave. She later learned that the stones had actually been placed there in 1979, two decades after the famine, so the names very likely did not correspond to the buried human remains.[76]

As metonymy and metaphor, He Fengming's story resonates with those millions of Mao-era victims never properly identified or mourned. The faded names on belated "gravestones" randomly assigned to a mass grave poignantly illustrate that memorials in stone depend on political legitimation and commemorative vigilance. The revolutionary storm wreaked havoc time and again, and millions of bodies under the crushing weight of man-made disasters and totalizing ideologies were deprived of proper identification, mourning, and burial, so that a Chinese Simonides could not exercise her art of memory. She had to give in to silence and amnesia until a later opportunity opened for memorialization. As I will demonstrate throughout this book, the state's technologies of surveillance and propaganda can sometimes be reclaimed by later generations and remediated to testify against the official historiography.

The Post-Mao Memory Ecology

Whereas the Maoist regime of memories propagated utopian visions and censored testimonies to their ruination, the post-Mao memory ecology allowed for the blooming and contending of official and unofficial, elite and grassroots, traumatic and nostalgic memories. With Mao's death in 1976, the country shared an overwhelming awareness that a momentous historical era had, for better or worse, come to an end, leading to prolific commemorations. The official reversal of many leftist policies dating back to the 1950s[77] occasioned the release, rehabilitation, and return of millions of incarcerated or displaced people, thereby unleashing a flood of previously unsanctioned memories.[78] With the liberalization of publishing and other media industries, an influential body of scar literature recollected bitter memories of Maoist campaigns.[79]

Although initially bolstering the Deng regime, this eruption of grievances threatened the legitimacy of the Communist Party. Moreover, because former victims and perpetrators as well as members of polarized factions often continued to work and live together, silence about the recent past seemed to be the best way to patch over the torn social fabric. In 1981, the party imposed official closure of the Mao era by passing the Resolution on Party History that negated the "mistakes" of the Cultural Revolution and urged the nation to look

into the future.[80] With tightening censorship, individuals channeled traumatic memories of criticism sessions, beatings, incarceration, and exile into narratives of illness, and peer groups spoke about common experiences at closed social gatherings.[81] Within the limits of the 1981 resolution, intellectuals searched for the roots of the Cultural Revolution in earlier campaigns and called on one another to "repent."[82]

By the 1990s, official repression of Mao-era memories exiled scar narratives overseas, where victim status became symbolic capital. Several English-language memoirs became bestsellers for their vivid and sensational depictions of Cultural Revolution horrors, which the protagonists could finally leave behind after they departed for Europe and America.[83] The transplantation of such scar memories has flourished in exile and fed a Western master-narrative about the Maoist "dark ages."[84] The same ideological atmosphere fostered a mainstream Western fascination with contemporary Chinese cultural products whereby "banned in China" could be worn as a badge of honor.[85]

Although scar literature and film became a new master trope of the Mao era overseas, nostalgia for the "red age" grew within China. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the re-release of films, songs, and books from the "seventeen years" prior to the Cultural Revolution evoked the 1950s and 1960s as "a halcyon age of simplicity and purity."[86] By the early 1990s, discontent with the market reforms gave rise to a posthumous cult of Mao, whose portrait hung from taxi rearview windows and presided over villager homes.[87] The Red Guard generation nostalgic for their youth became avid producers and consumers of a "flourishing memory industry."[88] By the late 1990s, workers who had been laid off from state-owned enterprises missed their "iron rice bowls" and held up Mao portraits in their protests.[89] In the realm of thought, Geremie Barmé critiques a "totalitarian nostalgia" for "a language of denunciation that offered simple solutions to complex problems."[90] As I suggest in chapter 5, the demolition of the socialist-built environment in the form of work units and neighborhoods has also contributed to nostalgic sentiments.

As those with firsthand memories of the Mao years have begun to pass away, it is worth asking what memory resources young people can now use to access the experiences of their elders. Whereas popular fiction, films, and TV dramas "play a profound role in shaping the public imagination and (mis) conceptions of history,"[91] a memorial museum must still be grounded in primary documentary evidence. Just as my analysis of the anticipatory memory production of the Mao era focuses on the documentation of realities, my study of the post-Mao period is concerned with accessing historical reality from a retrospective distance. My methodology not only checks "memory texts"[92]

against the historical facts but also examines "memory-making" as a dynamic and diachronic process.

Although state censorship continued in the post-Mao years, new technologies and ecologies of memory have allowed for the remediation of various textual, visual, and material traces from the Mao era into commemorative media that circulate through print, cinema, museums, and the internet. Distinct from retrospective representations and fictional reconstructions, remediations that re-present indexical traces remain anchored to the actual past while drawing attention to their distance from the present.[93] Defined as the process whereby a new medium reproduces and refashions older media, remediation bears what Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin call a "double logic": "every medium promises to reform its predecessors by offering more immediate or authentic experience," which in turn causes an awareness of the new medium's "hypermediacy."[94] In post-Mao China, remediation has often meant a broader dissemination of previously inaccessible archival materials with both speed and ease, thereby creating a sense of the past's "immediacy" while also raising self-reflexive debates about its epistemology. Studying remediated records and traces means paying attention not only to their content but also to the broader conditions that allowed them to meet with a present audience and to our memory gaps of undocumented realities.

In China as elsewhere, digital remediation has introduced new modes of sharing memories.[95] As Hoskins argues, memories nowadays are not only "collective" but "connective," since digital networks enable the instant retrieval of past traces and the spontaneous formation of new memory communities.[96] In the Chinese context, sociologist Guobin Yang shows how digital technologies help to "record, reproduce, transmit, and transact" alternative, unofficial memories.[97] Lightweight and affordable digital video cameras also facilitate the articulation and sharing of unsanctioned memories with niche audiences. Digital media and the internet have played a crucial role to remediate the exhibits in this book, so that submerged historical figures, documents, and images can resurface in cyberspace and contribute to public memory.

Whereas remediation generally tends to solidify and update cultural memory,[98] digital remediation of Mao-era traces has also resurrected muted voices, reproduced previously inaccessible archives, and reenlivened public discussions of forgotten history. A part of each chapter in this volume is devoted to the digital afterlives of the Mao-era traces: chapter 1 shows how a digital video documentary remediated a suppressed dissident's prison writings in blood and generated a digital cult around a martyr of free speech. Chapter 2 discusses

how published excerpts from a police file stirred up an online controversy over the complicity of Chinese intellectuals in the Maoist denunciations. Chapter 3 engages with the contemporary reinterpretation of photography from the Great Leap Forward and famine, and chapter 4 examines the retrospective reception of European documentaries about the Cultural Revolution that became available in digital formats. Chapter 5 submits that digital cinema can memorialize socialist factories condemned to demolition, just as chapter 6 explores how the materiality of red memorabilia collections and the physicality of trauma sites interact with real and virtual commemorative communities. If the verb "curate" is derived from the verb "care," remediation of past traces can also be "remedial" and serve, to borrow the words of Marianne Hirsch, "as a form of counter-history" to engage "in acts of repair and redress."[99]

Overview of the Exhibits

The memory environment in the People's Republic may be likened to an enormous garden tended by a giant—the Chinese Communist Party—that both carefully cultivates and brutishly chops off memory plants to serve its own needs, just as Maoist politics labeled cultural expressions "fragrant flowers" or "poisonous weeds."[100] Yet the giant loosened its control over the garden in the post-Mao era, allowing much wild flora to grow in the cracks and ivy to extend beyond its walls. This book cultivates its own botanic garden of memories by curating archetypal and rare memory flora, tracing their histories of emergence, preservation, transmission, proliferation, imminent extinction, and potential revitalization. Which memories thrive or wither and in what climate and soil? Why do some memories become viral, others die out, and still others mutate? How might remediation expand and extend the life and reach of memories, or perhaps resurrect and reanimate certain past figures and events consigned to oblivion? How do different memories—official and popular, traumatic and nostalgic, elite and grassroots—coexist, compete, and interact? How are memories implicated in the larger ecosystem of cultural, political, socioeconomic, and technological forces? Thus, the memorial museum of the Mao era consists not only of lifeless and inert objects but also of faces and voices, stories and lives that illuminate an evolving memory ecology and disseminate, or plant the seeds of, memory as a legacy for future generations.

In this botanic garden of memories, each chapter curates a memorial exhibit centering on a different species of document or trace that has prompted public commemoration in the post-Mao era and that can attest to the utopian ruins of the Mao era. Moving from the corporeal and the written to the (audio)

visual and the material, the six chapters are devoted to "blood testaments," "surveillance files," "utopian photographs," "foreign lenses," "factory rubble," and "museums and memorials." Chapters 1 and 2 examine embodied and written testimonies in the police files of intellectuals, revolutionaries accused of counterrevolutionary crimes, in order to flesh out the interconnections between idealism and violence, victimhood and complicity. Chapters 3 and 4 analyze photography from the Great Leap Forward and documentary films from the Cultural Revolution as eyewitness testimonies to communist miracles—from agricultural bounty to proletarian power—that exclude darker realities from the audiovisual record. Chapters 5 and 6 study physical spaces and material relics as tangible testimonies, from the ruins of socialist factories and their cinematic remediations to a survey of existing museums and memorials that bifurcate between red memorabilia collections and Maoist trauma sites.

As much as cultural artifacts are valued for their rich content and sophisticated form, the exhibits in this volume draw on primary and nonfictional written, audiovisual, or material traces that have survived from the Mao era to the post-Mao era. Since the remediated afterlives of these fragments stimulated public discussions, every exhibit features palimpsest metatexts with layers of additions and erasures, revealing the struggles and processes of memory and forgetting. More than close readings, all the chapters trace the production, censorship, circulation, and reception of testimonial media to extrapolate broader media and memory ecologies.

The most intuitive way to organize a Mao-era museum is to present an overview of its major political events, yet such dry chronologies cannot convey their accumulated human impact. Privileging instead life stories that bridge over historical ruptures, the first two chapters in this volume—"Blood Testaments" and "Surveillance Files"—are devoted to the extraordinary dossiers of Lin Zhao 林昭 and Nie Gannu 聶紺弩, which connect the utopian ideals of the Chinese Revolution to its human costs and comment on the crisis of media witnessing under state censorship. Both intellectuals followed Communism in their youths but were condemned as "Rightists" and incarcerated as "counterrevolutionaries" for their writing. Anticipating a future audience, Lin Zhao's prison writings in blood—corporeal relics that also mediate her voice and thought—powerfully testify to the passion and pain of the Maoist past, suggesting that this was an era saturated by the hot blood of idealistic youths and the cold blood of state-sponsored violence. Also posthumously remediated, Nie Gannu's police file triggered memories of and debates over widespread complicity with authoritarian power as well as a network of eyes, ears, and writing hands that contributed to surveillance and violence in the Mao era.

The vivid details within both files animate historical moments with nuanced sentiments, choices, and actions, so that memories of Maoist campaigns might resonate with contemporary dilemmas.

Curating exhibits from these archives highlights the dossier as a technology of surveillance and a medium of memory. Everyone in the People's Republic ever affiliated with a school, work unit, or the CCP has had one or more surveillance files that have been inaccessible but have held great sway over individual pasts, presents, and futures. Dossiers tell us not only about the individuals about whom they are compiled but also held surveillance over all acts of memory-making, record-keeping, and even interpersonal communication. The basis of prison and death sentences as well as the remnants of lives, these files reveal the possibilities and limits for the production and transmission of memories. Ironically, when it became too risky to keep nonconforming thoughts in a drawer, the dossier became the last haven for the safekeeping of personal records and mementos.

After the Cultural Revolution, dossiers compiled during the Mao era became an important repository of historical memory. Unlike fiction, films, or memoirs, dossiers are not smooth retrospective narratives but rather shards and ruins of history, buried inside or excavated from the messy strata of the past. Although most dossiers remain inaccessible, Lin Zhao's and Nie Gannu's files became partially available to the public through serendipitous circumstances. With excerpts circulating via print journalism, digital video, and the internet, the remediation and reception of these files marked the gradual liberalization of the postsocialist mediascape as well as the remnant taboos and legacies of the Maoist past.

Turning from the textual to the visual, from the closed archive to public culture, chapters 3 and 4 discuss camera images of the Mao era, focusing on photography of the Great Leap Forward and two European documentary films about the Cultural Revolution. I argue that the creation of visual testimonies of the Mao era—or lack thereof—depends not only on technological hardware like photo cameras, the printing press, and cinematic apparatuses but also on the period's visual culture and visual economy. With utopian imagination on the one hand and ever more rigid conventions on the other, photography and cinema were tasked to visualize the revolution's aspirations, even miracles, rather than to bear witness to its atrocities, shortcomings, or quotidian experiences. In the postsocialist era, (audio)visual memories of the Mao era have been either dismissed as propaganda detached from "real socialism" or celebrated as evidence of an "alternative modernity." In examining the afterlives of these photographs and films—their remediation and reception in the post-

Mao era—I argue for an accounting of the way images document the fantasies and anxieties of an era, thereby turning propaganda into testimony and wresting justice from "just images."

Examining the making of photographic memories during and of the Great Leap Forward, chapter 3, "Utopian Photographs," explores aesthetic, economic, ideological, and technological explanations for the production of what we now may regard as "fake" or "staged" photographs as well as for the absence of famine photography. Using previously untapped primary sources, this chapter finds that journalistic, social, and amateur photography all flourished during the Great Leap. Thousands of professional photographers went to the countryside to take pictures of the "laboring people" and to "bear witness" to revolutionary miracles. Meanwhile, affordable domestic-brand cameras became available for the first time to amateur photographers. Yet when all texts and images were considered expressions of their makers' ideological stance, any image suggesting poverty or hunger would have been considered a sacrilege against idealistic pursuits. Moreover, many patriotic photographers sought to create proud and dignified images of the Chinese to shatter the "backward" or "savage" iconography of China through the "imperialist" lens. This chapter chronicles nuanced theoretical debates about photographic truth and tracks changing practices of photojournalists as well as social and amateur photographers, showing how the expansion of photographic technology at the grass roots coincided with a narrowing of visual conventions. Photography also served to mobilize labor and promote production, whereas the doctrine of revolutionary romanticism promoted the staging and manipulation of photographs, especially as photomontages. Finally, this chapter scrutinizes a handful of alternative images of China during the Great Leap to consider the possibilities and limits of photography to memorialize the ensuing famine.

Chapter 4, "Foreign Lenses," focuses on the production and reception of two early 1970s European documentary films about China—*Chung Kuo: Cina* by Michelangelo Antonioni and *How Yukong Moved the Mountains* by Joris Ivens and Marceline Loridan. Antonioni's film invoked the ire of Chinese officials, and millions of Chinese were mobilized to take part in a mass criticism campaign against a movie few had actually seen. Following a genealogical overview of foreign filmmaking about China from the early twentieth century to the 1960s, this chapter examines the "justness" of these films as historical documents and as visual legacies of the Cultural Revolution. I argue that these films re-present officially sanctioned, iconic, and coded images that were nevertheless torn and frayed at the edges, due to the directors' creative defiance or unawareness of representational formulas. Coproductions between the cameras

of Westerners and a Maoist mise-en-scène, these films provide metacinematic testimonies to some utopian aspirations as well as quotidian realities of the Mao era with affective intimacy and critical distance. The controversies they invoked further provide us with a critical lens with which to examine other cinematic legacies from the Mao era. This chapter will flesh out three components of this audiovisual memory ecology: the Maoist audiovisual regime, the global audiovisual economy, and postsocialist audiovisual memories.

Whereas chapters 1 and 2 focus on writing and archives and chapters 3 and 4 focus on photography and cinema, chapters 5 and 6 highlight the roles of material ruins and memorials in mediating memories of the Mao era. For ordinary people not in the habit of keeping diaries or taking many photos, the physical places where they have lived and worked, and the everyday objects they have used, become significant sites of memory.[101] As the post-Mao market reforms accelerated in the 1990s and laid to ruins socialist institutions and built environments, artists and filmmakers, collectors and curators salvaged memories from demolition and transformed them into art, films, memorials, and museums. Following Ann Laura Stoler's approach to "ruins not necessarily as monuments but as ecologies of remains [which] opens . . . to wider social topographies," chapters 5 and 6 both analyze how the Mao era's spatial and material ruins persist in their postsocialist local contexts as well as examine the processes of ruination and memorialization.[102]

Focusing on the ruins of socialist factories that used to be the life-world for millions of workers, chapter 5, "Factory Rubble," analyzes how three filmmakers remediated memories from vanishing industrial neighborhoods into "cinematic memorials" of Mao's working class. Following the bankruptcy of many state-owned enterprises in the 1990s, the dilapidated yet still monumental spaces of former factories and associated residential districts attracted the attention of many contemporary artists, photographers, and filmmakers. Cinema in particular excavated, scavenged, and remediated memories that used to be held together by communal spaces for the broader public and for younger generations. Apart from collecting workers' testimonies to their socialist experiences—mixing pride and pain, idealism and endurance—cinema has also witnessed and documented the slow ruination of socialist factories. Reading three seminal films—Wang Bing's 王兵 *West of the Tracks* (鐵西區, 2003), Jia Zhangke's 賈樟柯 *24 City* (二十四城記, 2008), and Zhang Meng's 張猛 *The Piano in a Factory* (鋼的琴, 2011)—in terms of "rust," "memory," and "legacy," this chapter asks whether the Mao era was truly utopian for Chinese workers. What can we salvage from its ruins? And finally, how might cinema serve as memorials in an age of demolition?

Returning to Ba Jin's original idea for a Cultural Revolution museum, chapter 6 studies contemporary Chinese museums and memorials that commemorate the Mao era by collecting, preserving, or exhibiting its material remains. This survey shows that materializations of Ba Jin's museum concept have bifurcated between red memorabilia collections and trauma sites. After tracing the intellectual genealogy of a Cultural Revolution museum and contextualizing it in a global memory culture, the bulk of the chapter provides a guided tour of specific museums and memorial sites within China's borders—most of them local and private initiatives—where visitors may encounter the Maoist heritage in tangible form. In surveying museums devoted to the "civilization" of Mao-era cultural artifacts as well as memorials devoted to its "cataclysms," or man-made catastrophes, I examine the agents behind the creation, maintenance, and neglect of sites over time; the form and media in which the past persists into the present; and the meanings that these sites might convey to real or virtual visitors.

After tracing the mediation of memories from the Maoist to the post-Mao era through six studies, the epilogue presents "notes for future curators." Reflecting on China's vanishing memories in comparative perspectives, I distill the curatorial method of "utopian ruins" into five active verbs—*excavate*, *account*, *exhibit*, *converse*, and *imagine*—and outline several concrete curatorial proposals. Instead of any monumental museum to provide an authoritative master-narrative, I argue for grassroots memorial sites that bring together different generations of survivors, scholars, artists, and audiences in active and collaborative searches for the past. Such sites should feature the ruins of the cataclysmic events and memorabilia of everyday life, textual and visual documents, material objects, and recorded remembrances, and they might even reinvent Maoist cultural practices to commemorate the Mao era. This way, we might hope to transmit testimonies and memories of the Chinese Revolution for future generations that will do justice to its unrealized dreams and unmourned ghosts.

Series Editor's Preface

1 Alison Flood, "Frankfurt Book Fair: Orhan Pamuk Denounces Turkish Opression," *The Guardian*, October 15, 2008.

Introduction: Mediating Memories of the Mao Era

1 See Hu Jie's 2006 documentary film *Though I am Gone* (我雖死去).
2 Ba Jin 巴金, "'Wenge' bowuguan" "文革"博物館 (A Cultural Revolution Museum), in *Suixiang lu*, 601–4. An English translation of this essay: http://www.cnd.org/cr/english/articles/bajin.htm (accessed July 5, 2019).
3 See Song, ed., *Wenhua da geming*, esp. 916–40, 1004–16.
4 Chapter 6 of this book provides a more extensive analysis of the Jianchuan Museum Cluster and other spaces that facilitate a nostalgic engagement with the Maoist past. For discussions of the afterlife of the Mao cult and the proliferation of red memorabilia, see Barmé, *Shades of Mao*; Schrift, *Biography of a Chairman Mao Badge*; Hubbert, "(Re)collecting Mao"; Conceison, "Eating Red."
5 Schoenhals, "Is the Cultural Revolution Really Necessary?"
6 MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*; Wu, *The Cultural Revolution at the Margins*; Hinton, Barmé, and Gordon, *Morning Sun* (documentary film).
7 Arnold-de Simine, *Mediating Memory in the Museum*, 1–8. Also see Crane, ed., *Museums and Memory*; Williams, *Memorial Museums*.
8 Zhong and Wang, eds., *Debating the Socialist Legacy*, 2–3.
9 Arnold-de Simine, *Mediating Memory in the Museum*, 10.
10 Ho and Li, "From Landlord Manor to Red Memorabilia," 3–37.
11 I borrow this idea of cultural memory as a shamanistic medium from Assmann, "Texts, Traces, Trash," 123–34.
12 Popular books espousing the catastrophe thesis include bestselling memoirs and biographies by Jung Chang such as *Wild Swans* and *Mao: The Unknown Story* and historian Frank Dikötter's trilogy history: *Mao's Great Famine* (2011), *The Tragedy of Liberation* (2013), and *The Cultural Revolution: A People's History, 1962–1970* (2016), all published by Bloomsbury USA. Directly contradicting the catastrophe thesis is Mobo Gao's *The Battle for China's Past*, whereas the alternative modernity thesis is best represented by Wang Hui's influential works, especially *The End of the Revolution*.
13 For a thoughtful commentary on the two intellectual factions, see Andrew Kipnis, "Neo-Leftists versus Neo-Liberals," 242–46. Also see Davies, *Worrying about China*.

14 "Farewell to Revolution" comes from the famous essay by Li and Liu, *Gaobie geming*.
15 Goldman, *From Comrade to Citizen*; Wang, *The End of the Revolution*.
16 Wang, "Understanding the Chinese Revolution through Words," 7.
17 I borrow the term "utopian impulses" from Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*.
18 Williams, *Memorial Museums*, 8.
19 Gao, *The Battle for China's Past*, 3.
20 Lee, *Against the Law*, chap. 1; Shao, "Waving the Red Flag," 224.
21 For more nuanced studies of how Maoism was experienced and remembered at the grass roots, see Lee and Yang, eds., *Re-envisioning the Chinese Revolution*; Brown and Johnson, eds. , *Maoism at the Grassroots*.
22 For a magisterial study of grassroots remembrances of the Mao era, see Hershatter, *The Gender of Memory*.
23 Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 5.
24 The mediation of memories through bodies and artifacts is implied in classical memory theories that distinguish between *communicative* and *cultural memory* (Assmann), *milieux* and *lieux de mémoire* (Nora), and between *incorporated* and *inscribed* memory (Connerton). See Assmann and Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity"; Nora, "Between Memory and History," 7–24; Connerton, *How Societies Remember*. Marianne Hirsch similarly argues that postmemory depends on mediation through "stories, images, and behaviors" from elder generations, "imaginative investment, projection, and creation" from younger generations, as well as cultural memory technologies "like literature, photography, and testimony." Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 22; Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory,* 2, 35.
25 Exemplary interview-based studies of Mao-era memories include: Kleinman and Kleinman, "How Bodies Remember," 707–23; Rofel, *Other Modernities*; Lee, *Against the Law*; Mittler, *A Continuous Revolution*; Hershatter, *The Gender of Memory*; Davies, "Old Zhiqing Photos"; Yang, *The Red Guard Generation and Political Activism in China*; Watson, ed., *Memory, History and Opposition under State Socialism*.
26 Notable studies of post-Mao literary and cinematic representations of the Mao era include Braester, *Witness against History*, chaps. 6, 8, and 9; Wang, *Illuminations from the Past,* chaps. 3–5; Knight, *The Heart of Time*, chaps. 6 and 7; Berry, *A History of Pain*, chap. 4; Huang, *Tapestry of Light.*
27 Rosen, *Change Mummified*, 115.
28 Fang, "The Chinese Amnesia."
29 Zhang Yihe has made this statement in various contexts. I quote here from a newspaper article by Richard Spencer, "A Lone Voice Fights Chinese Censorship," *The Telegraph*, April 25, 2007.
30 These are the intertitles closing Hu Jie's 2004 independent documentary, *In Search of Lin Zhao's Soul*, to be discussed in greater detail in chapter 1.
31 Most scholarship on Mao-era memories focuses on first-generation accounts of personal and familial experiences that can be generalized to represent social groups defined by class, gender, generation, and geography. For example, books that focus

on women's memories of the Mao era include: Hershatter, *The Gender of Memory*; Zhong, Zheng, and Bai, eds., *Some of Us*; Rofel, *Other Modernities.*

32 Van Dijck, *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age*; Erll and Rigney, eds., *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*; Neiger, Meyers and Zandberg, eds., *On Media Memory.*

33 Sturken, *Tangled Memories*, 9, 19–20; the quotations can be found in Sturken, "Memory, Consumerism and Media," 73–78.

34 Kittler, *Discourse Networks*, 284.

35 Assmann, "Canon and Archive," 98–107; Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization*, 130.

36 Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation*, 18. To trace the remediation of memory is to highlight the "medial frameworks" of memory-making in addition to the political institutions and civil societies. See Erll and Rigney, "Introduction," 2.

37 I discuss *Though I Am Gone* in greater detail in Li, "Virtual Museums of Forbidden Memories," 539–49. Also see chapter 3 of Hillenbrand's *Negative Exposures* for an extensive discussion of the remediations of Bian Zhongyun's photograph.

38 Hoskins, "Media, Memory, Metaphor," 29; Hoskins, "Memory Ecologies," 348–57; Neiger, Meyers, and Zandberg, eds., *On Media Memory*.

39 This definition of memory ecology is inspired by work on "media ecology," first introduced by Neil Postman. For a lucid explanation of how ecology is used as a productive metaphor in media studies, see Scolari, "Media Ecology," 204–25.

40 Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 2.

41 Arnold-de Simine, *Mediating Memory in the Museum*, 13

42 Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory*.

43 Derrida, "Sending," 307.

44 Rosen, *Change Mummified*, 18–20. For a discussion of indexicality with a focus on the "having-been-there" of the photographic image, see Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 36–78.

45 Williams, *Memorial Museums*, 25.

46 Peters, "Witnessing," 25.

47 I shall discuss the term "crisis of witnessing" in greater detail in the following section.

48 Frosh and Pinchevski, eds. "Introduction," 1.

49 Even when people, artifacts, and other indexical traces "bear witness" to a bygone era by "having been there," there remains what John Durham Peters calls a "veracity gap" or "epistemological gap" between their testimonies and the "real past." See Peters, "Witnessing," 34.

50 In *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, Dominick LaCapra discusses "secondary witnesses" as oral historians or interviewers of Holocaust survivors, as ones "bearing witness both to the witness and to the object of testimony conveyed by the witness" (97ff.). Aleida Assmann also discusses the way testimonies by survivors of trauma appeal "to humanity at large, which—to the extent that it registers and

memorializes the event—constitutes itself as a moral community." See Assmann, "History, Memory, and the Genre of Testimony," 261–73.

51 Williams, *Memorial Museums*, 107.

52 I borrow the quoted phrases from Owen, *Remembrances*, 82.

53 Williams, *Memorial Museums*, 21.

54 Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*.

55 Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 2.

56 Koga, *The Inheritance of Loss*.

57 Buruma, "The Joys and Perils of Victimhood," 4–8.

58 Zhuoyi Wang, *Revolutionary Cycles in Chinese Cinema*.

59 Han, *Wenge houji*, 104–5.

60 Owen, *Remembrances,* 8.

61 Owen, *Remembrances*, 17–18.

62 Jing, *The Temple of Memories*.

63 See chapters 1, 2, and 6 in this volume.

64 Wu, "Speaking Bitterness," 3–23. Also see Sun, *Social Suffering and Political Confession*.

65 Wu, "Recalling Bitterness," 245–68.

66 Such political mobilization, as Xiaobing Tang argues, served to empower the wretched of the earth, giving them a new vocabulary, discourse, and worldview to articulate and make sense of otherwise ineffable experiences. Tang, *Visual Culture in Contemporary China*, 20–24.

67 Xu and Luo, *Chengshi de jiyi*, 159–66; Ying Du, "Shanghaiing the Press Gang."

68 Chen, "Propagating the Propaganda Film," 154–93; Li, "Revolutionary Echoes."

69 In *Mao's New World*, Chang-Tai Hung examines how the Communists forged a new political culture in the 1950s by transforming public spaces, staging mass parades, exhibiting revolutionary history, disseminating visual propaganda, and constructing monuments. In *Socialist Cosmopolitanism*, Nicolai Volland analyzes literary exchanges and influences between the PRC and other socialist countries. For studies of the visual arts during the Mao era, see Andrews, *Painters and Politics* and Tang, *Visual Culture in Contemporary China*. In *Revolutionary Cycles in Chinese Cinema,* Wang examines the production, distribution, and reception of fictional films. In *Curating Revolution,* Ho studies how exhibitions supported political movements. In their respective monographs on the Cultural Revolution, Paul Clark's *The Chinese Cultural Revolution*, Barbara Mittler's *Continuous Revolution*, and Laikwan Pang's *The Art of Cloning* propose that the revolutionary model works combined innovation with prerevolutionary traditions, held popular appeal, and engaged active audiences.

70 Liu, "That Holy Word, 'Revolution.'"

71 Mao, "China Is Poor and Blank" and "The Question of Agricultural Cooperation."

72 Schaefer, "Poor and Blank."

73 Laub, "An Event without a Witness," xvii; Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 5.

74 Studies of modern Chinese literature and cinema that have engaged with trauma theory include Berry, *A History of Pain*; Braester, *Witness against History*; Wang, *Monster that is History*; Wang, *Illuminations from the Past*.

75 Watson, "Making Secret Histories."
76 He Fengming, *Jingli*. Also see Wang Bing's 2007 documentary film *Fengming : A Chinese Memoir*.
77 Cook, *The Cultural Revolution on Trial*.
78 Béja, "Forbidden Memory," 94.
79 See Knight, "Scar Literature," 527–32; Link, *The Uses of Literature*; Wang, *The Monster that is History*. For a thoughtful distinction between scar and wound, see Huang, *Tapestry of Light*, 10–13. For a discussion of "scar" cinema, see Berry, *Postsocialist Cinema in Post-Mao China*.
80 Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, "In Search of a Master Narrative for 20th-Century Chinese History," 1087.
81 Béja, "Forbidden Memory" 94–95; Yang, "Days of Old Are Not Puffs of Smoke," 21–22; Kleinman and Kleinman, "How Bodies Remember"; Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, "In Search of a Master Narrative."
82 Lin, "A Search for China's Soul," 173, 178.
83 Most prominently, Chang, *Wild Swans*; Nien Cheng, *Life and Death in Shanghai*.
84 Zarrow, "Meanings of China's Cultural Revolution," 165–91.
85 Kaplan and Wang, eds., *Trauma and Cinema*, especially the chapter by Ban Wang.
86 Barmé, *In the Red*, 318–19.
87 Barmé, *Shades of Mao*.
88 Yang, "China's Zhiqing Generation"; Yau, "Film and Digital Video as Testimony of Chinese Modernity," 156.
89 Hurst, "The Power of the Past."
90 Barmé, *In the Red*, 316–17.
91 Berry, *A History of Pain*, 3.
92 Kuhn, "Memory Texts and Memory Work."
93 Media scholars have debated whether digitization eliminates the indexicality of photographic images. I subscribe here to Tom Gunning's argument that "storage in terms of numerical data does not eliminate indexicality" and Frank Kessler's argument that "new media have brought forth a proliferation of practices that foreground the indexical properties of digitally recorded images." See Gunning, "What's the Point of an Index?" and Kessler, "What You Get Is What You See," 187–98.
94 Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation*, 17.
95 Analyzing mediated memories in the digital age, José van Dijck argues that even personal recollections are inextricable from recording, sharing, and archiving technologies, such as cameras and computers, blogs and playlists. See van Dijck, *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age*.
96 Brown and Hoskins, "Terrorism in the New Memory Ecology," 87–107; Hoskins, "7/7 and Connective Memory."
97 Yang, "A Portrait of Martyr Jiang Qing"; Yang, "Alternative Genres."
98 Erll, "Literature, Film, and the Mediality of Cultural Memory," 392–94.
99 Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 15–16.

100 Mao Zedong formulated the contrast between "fragrant flowers" and "poisonous weeds" in a key speech during the 1956–57 Hundred Flowers campaign. See Barmé, "Beijing, a Garden of Violence," 612–39.

101 This is an argument I have elaborated in *Shanghai Homes*, chap. 2.

102 Stoler, ed., *Imperial Debris,* 22.

Chapter 1: Blood Testaments

1 The total number of Rightists has been estimated to be anywhere between a half-million to 1.8 million. See Ding Shu, *Yang mou*, 297–310.

2 This is how Lian Xi describes Lin Zhao in the biography *Blood Letters*.

3 Peters, "Witnessing," 23–48.

4 I borrow the phrase "blood letters" from Lian, *Blood Letters*.

5 Paul Ricoeur has highlighted the connection between the witness and the martyr in "The Hermeneutics of Testimony." Also see Assmann, "History, Memory, and the Genre of Testimony," 261–73.

6 Wegenstein, "Body," 33.

7 The journalist Chen Weisi 陳偉斯 first copied this poem from the court archives in 1981 and published an excerpt in "Lin Zhao zhi si" 林昭之死 (The Death of Lin Zhao), *Minzhu yu fazhi* 民主與法治 (Democracy and Law) (March 1981); reprinted in Xu Juemin, ed., *Lin Zhao*, 2.

8 *Suzhoushi zhi*, vol. 3, 1222. Also see Zhao Rui, *Jitan shang de shengnü*, 19–21.

9 "Peng Guoyan yu Xu Xianmin" 彭國彥與許憲民 in *Suzhou difangzhi* (Suzhou Gazetteer), accessed May 15, 2019, http://www.dfzb.suzhou.gov.cn/database_books_detail.aspx? bid=3677.

10 Zhang Min, "Interview with Peng Lingfan," 2004.

11 Feng, "Xu Xianming ershinian ji"; Zhao Rui, *Jitan shang de shengnü*, 9–29.

12 Zhang Min, "Interview with Peng Lingfan." Also see Peng, "He waipo yiqi duguo de rizi."

13 Ouyang Ying 歐陽英 [Lin Zhao's pseudonym], "Dai he dai" 代和代 (Generation and Generation), *Chusheng* 初生 (Newborn), no. 3 (June 1947). Reprinted in *Beijing zhichun* (北京之春) (Beijing Spring), April 2015, accessed May 9, 2019, http://beijingspring.com/bj2/2010/550/426201544408.htm. At this time, Lin Zhao's father worked for the KMT Bank of China and her mother served as a representative to the KMT National Assembly while secretly helping the CCP collect intelligence with two radio transmitters.

14 For a detailed account of Lin Zhao's Christian education, see Lian, *Blood Letters*, 16–30.

15 Zhang Min, "Interview with Peng Lingfan" Zhao Rui, *Jitan shang de shengnü*, 30–31.

16 The poem is quoted in Zhao Rui, *Jitan shang de shengnü*, 35–38.

17 Lin Zhao probably had in mind land reform novels such as Ding Ling's *The Sun Shines over the Sanggan River* and Zhou Libo's *Hurricane*, both published by 1949 and written in a Socialist Realist style. For studies of the land reform novel, see Wang, *The Monster that is History*, 165–68.

18 Xu Juemin, ed., *Lin Zhao*, 170–90, 229–34.