The Symptoms of Perpetrator Trauma: Rethinking the Portrayal of Red Guards in Scar Literature

Min Yang
Bowling Green State University

Scar Literature (shanghen wenxue 伤痕文学), the dominant literature genre that emerged immediately after the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976, officially called "the ten-year catastrophe"), triggered sensational responses in the post-catastrophic Chinese society. Named after a short story titled "The Scar" ("Shanghen" 伤痕), Scar Literature consists of short stories and novellas that recount the traumatic memories and experiences of the Chinese people during the Cultural Revolution.[1] From the end of the 1970s to the early 1980s, Scar Literature attracted "national attention for venturing into territory that for years had been off limits" (Link 17), making this literary genre an outlet for the Chinese to publicly purge bitter emotions after the cataclysm, and an avenue to explore together a possible healing. Scar Literature thereby coupled a literary phenomenon with the complex socio-psychological circumstances prevailing immediately after the Cultural Revolution.

This article focuses on the portrayal of the Red Guards in many stories of Scar Literature. The term "Red Guards" (hongweibing 红卫兵) refers to the urban youth (mostly teenagers) who were mobilized by Mao Zedong (1893-1976, founder of the People's Republic of China) at the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution. Intoxicated with Mao's ideology and revolutionary rhetoric, the Red Guards launched highly emotional movements to "smash the Four Olds" (posijiu 破四旧), namely to destroy old ideas, culture, customs and habits (Jiu de sixiang, wenhua, fengsu, xiguan 旧的思想, 文化, 风俗, 旧习惯).[2] From 1966 to 1968, the Red Guards created one of the most nefarious mass movements in the history of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) (Cheek 13), which lead to millions of deaths (Pye 597), including Red Guards involved in their own factional battles.[3] In 1968, partly to attenuate the Red Guards' destructive passions, Mao launched the sent-down movement (shangshan xiaxiang上山下乡) to relocate them to remote regions for reeducation.[4] The rusticated Red Guards, among other displaced urban youths, were called "educated-youth" (zhiqing 知青). During their relocation, the Red Guards endured

physical and emotional difficulties. These hardships, along with their transformation from Red Guards to educated-youth, legitimized their claim to being victims of the Cultural Revolution.[5]

Scar Literature is the first literary genre to reveal the Red Guards' psychology as both violent perpetrators and political victims. As in other examples of collective trauma, the victims' recounting has come to constitute the main discourse of the Cultural Revolution, a discourse that has shaped how the Cultural Revolution is remembered. However, a full understanding of the collective trauma caused by the Cultural Revolution demands the study of the paradoxical situation of the Red Guards as perpetrators and victims. This article explores what psychological mechanisms were in play when the Red Guards committed violence, how they coped with their acts and, in particular, how they viewed themselves during and after the Cultural Revolution. By studying the Red Guard protagonists in Scar Literature, I seek to demonstrate that they display the paradoxical experiences of unwillingly confronting their violent acts and their denial of having committed them. I argue that this psychological paradox evidences that certain Red Guards experienced traumatic symptoms that stem from the interplay between trauma and ideology. Further mapping the portrayal of Red Guards in literature and art after Scar Literature and in the broader sociopolitical context in China, I suggest that this interplay may be an ongoing process in which the their traumatic symptoms have been consistently forming, reforming, and transforming in their vacillations between confrontation and denial, between personal libido and society, between conscious and unconscious, and between compulsively revisiting traumatic memory and denying this repetition.

Defining Perpetrator Trauma

Can perpetrators be traumatized? This question remains controversial in trauma studies. Freud and his contemporaries did not make clear distinctions between perpetrators and victims when they transplanted the discussion of trauma in the context of physical wounds to references pertaining to psychological impact. Trauma was diagnosed according to symptoms such as confrontation and denial (or recurrence and numbing) after individuals experienced a tremendous shock that impaired their social and psychological functions (Laplanche 466; Freud 23). Freud's clinical findings suggest that survivors of traumatic events are seemingly unharmed when the events happen, but compulsively revisit some part of the traumatic experience in

flashbacks, dreams, intrusive thoughts, and obsessive behaviors. Freud called this symptom the "repetition compulsion" (Freud 23). His studies of trauma not only contribute to diagnosing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), but also lay the foundation for trauma studies (or cultural studies of trauma).

Despite its focus on victims, trauma studies initially drew no distinction between perpetrators and victims. In fact, the first literary case that Freud used to explain the concept of trauma describes a perpetrator. The character Tancred in *Jerusalem Delivered* (*La Gerusalemme liberata*, an Italian epic poem written by Torquato Tasso in the sixteenth century) was traumatized after realizing that the opponent he killed was his lover Clorinda who was disguised in armor. Tancred's traumatization is included in Cathy Caruth's groundbreaking work in trauma studies—she pioneered trauma studies in the 1990s. Caruth emphasizes the phenomenon of "belatedness" ("*Nachträglichkeit*" in Freud's nomenclature) that derives from the Freudian repetition compulsion (7). "Belatedness" resides in trauma symptoms—the traumatic moment normally is excluded, remaining unprocessed since it cannot be assimilated into narrative memory; nevertheless, the traumatic experience repetitively haunts the traumatized individual. Belatedness thereby causes difficulty in the narration of trauma, which Caruth defines as the "unspeakable" (7-9). This view on the unspeakable in trauma dominated early trauma studies, but has been questioned in the last two decades. Critics argue that emphasizing the unspeakable blurs the roles of victim and perpetrator (Leys 292-97) and carries the risk to "conceal the responsibility and agency" of trauma (Balaev 7). However, studies of trauma on veterans (MacNair 2002), teen soldiers (Shay 2014), and ex-combatants (Schaal. et al 2015) have widened the language of trauma to include people who suffer PTSD after committing violent acts on others. Moreover, the newest version of PTSD defined by DSM-5 adds that "for military personnel, being a perpetrator, witnessing atrocities, or killing the enemy" are causal factors for PTSD (APA 2013).[6] This addition specifies that, besides moral controversy, some perpetrators experience trauma.

Admittedly, human resilience, that is, the process of adapting well in the face of adversity and disasters (APA 2020), may spare many people from traumatization (McAdams 5); personal and cultural factors do largely affect the degree of traumatization (Mitchell 122). These factors complicate traumatization from intense events, especially

that of perpetrators. Many Nazis, for example, and those involved in the Indonesia Massacre strongly deny their actions and seem not to be traumatized.[7] Similarly, many Red Guards have refused to come forward. However, the denial itself may demonstrate the perpetrators' unconscious defense against overwhelming emotions as they confront moral dissonance and legal ramifications.[8]

Taking up the topic of Red Guard protagonists who experience traumatic symptoms after committing violence, it is important to read trauma symptomatically and include any individual who experiences traumatic symptoms.[9] Furthermore, this present analysis expands the language of trauma and also considers social and cultural factors. The trauma of some Red Guards, I contend, is catalyzed by Mao's ideology and its sudden renunciation because a Chinese individual's traumatic experience (whether a victim or a perpetrator) during the Cultural Revolution is inseparable from specific social, political, and ideological factors (Yang and Kuiken 4-5). It is with this expanded understanding of trauma that I want to examine the traumatized perpetrator in the 1979 novella "Trauma" ("Chuangshang" 创伤), a good example of Scar Literature.

A Red Guard's Encounter with Trauma

"Trauma" was written by Feng Jicai (冯骥才), a celebrated contemporary Chinese writer and a pioneer of Scar Literature. Born to a wealthy family in 1942, Feng's personal life is well connected with the Cultural Revolution (Braester and Zhang 132; Altenburger 56). In 2016, Feng detailed his appalling experience when the Red Guards ransacked his home, humiliated him in public, and inhumanely tortured his parents.[10] The intensity of horror that Feng underwent moved him to write about what he experienced and witnessed, both for discharging his distress (Feng 348) and for recoding the violence for future generations (Gaenssbauer 320-21; Altenburger 58; Braester and Zhang 134). "Trauma" is the first story that he elaborated from his testimonial records.[11] Between 1979 and 1982, following the publication of "Trauma," Feng published stories that reveal the devastating result of the Cultural Revolution. These stories, however, focus exclusively on the extreme mental terror that victims experienced. Stories like "Ah!" (A啊!), "The Sculpted Pipe" (Diaohua yandou 雕花烟斗), and "Tall Woman and Her Short Husband" (Gaonüren he tade aizhangfu 高女人与矮丈夫) document the victims' invisible spiritual wounds. After reading Scar Literature was discouraged by the

Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign (Qingchu jingshenwuran 清除精神污染) that the CCP launched in 1983, Feng published two works about the Cultural Revolution. In 1985, he published "Thanks to Life" (Ganxie shenghuo感谢生活) to diagnose the madness of the Cultural Revolution by describing a victim's fear and pain (Martin 281). He then launched in 1986 a project of documentary literature that he titled "Yibaigeren de shinian" (One hundred peoples' ten years 一百个人的十年) to record the "spiritual experiences of the Chinese" during the catastrophe (Tschanz 260). However, after twenty-nine interviews, Feng terminated the project in 1996, mainly because of declining public interest (Tschanz 272; Altenburger 63; Feng 324-31).

"Trauma" is thus Feng's only story that portrays the psychology of a Red Guard. It centers on the traumatization of Bai Hui (白慧 shortened here as Hui), a seventeen-year-old high school female and leader of the Red Guards in Tianjin City. During a Red Guard rally in which teachers were publicly put on trial, Hui becomes impassioned and violently strikes a teacher, Aihua, with a wooden gun. Hui believes that she has killed Aihua and is shocked by her own violent act—the story later implies that Aihua was tortured to death by other Red Guards after the rally. The tragic moment recurrently intrudes upon Hui in flashbacks and nightmares. Later in the story, Hui accidentally falls into a river while on a Red Guard boating trip. A young factory worker named Ming saves her. She subsequently falls in love with him, but soon discovers that he was Aihua's son. Hui discloses her assault to Ming who refuses to forgive her. Heartbroken, she travels to Inner Mongolia to join the sent-down movement. Several years later, right after Mao's death, Hui returns to her city to visit her father. During the trip, the CCP abruptly announces the arrest of the so-called "Gang of Four" (Sirenbang 四人帮, the four officials who headed the CCP's Cultural Revolution Committee, including Mao's widow Jiang Qing江青). This political event impels Hui to recall her crime against Aihua. Overwhelmed with guilt, she writes a confessional letter to Ming before attempting suicide in the same river where she met him. After receiving the letter through a friend of Hui, Ming rushes to the river to again save her life.

In this story, Feng is the first writer to reveal how the Cultural Revolution transformed an innocent young woman into a violent perpetrator. This revelation adds importance to this story. Many Red Guard victims have wondered, as Ding Ling (丁玲 1904-1986)

and Yue Daiyun (乐戴云 b. 1931) expressed in their memoirs, how seemingly innocent young people suddenly became monstrous torturers (Ding Ling 241-43; Yue 167-93). More important, this story explores the psychological complicity and ambiguity of a Red Guard who experiences traumatic symptoms because of her own violent act. This aspect and the story itself are rarely studied. Although the Red Guards had diverse experiences during and after the Cultural Revolution, the story illustrates an ideological cause for the traumatic symptoms exhibited by certain Red Guards after committing violence.

"Trauma" begins with a realistic portrayal of a Red Guard rally. During the Cultural Revolution, Red Guards organized two kinds of mass mobilizations: massive rallies to stress "class struggle" and home raids. At the rallies, they humiliated "class enemies" in public, verbally, to obtain confessions. Their home raids included torturing "class enemies" and ransacking. These mass movements killed or terrorized many Chinese. In the story, hundreds of the Red Guards, dressed in quasi-military garb and armed with wooden guns, stage a public trial of a group of teachers who were labeled "enemies" (3-5). Their lives threatened, most teachers "confessed to crimes" (认罪5-7). However, Aihua refuses to confess. Instead she accuses the Red Guards of being "fascists" (9). Hui, infuriated by Aihua's accusation, screamed "you profaned the revolution! You rebelled against the revolution!" (你污蔑革命，对抗革命!). Hui's outburst incited the Red Guards to fanatically shout "Beat her (Aihua)! Kill her! Kill this class enemy!" (打！打死她！打死阶级敌人！) and to bodily attack Aihua (9). Impassioned by this collective violence, Hui, as mentioned, hits Aihua on the head with a wooden gun, causing her to fall down and her head to bleed. Hui's impulsive and violent act instantly shocks her. As the story describes:

" Dead?!" A voice swept through Bai Hui's entire body like an electric jolt ("死了？！"这声音如一个电流从白慧全身流过)…. Suddenly it seemed that everything stopped, nothing existed, only a horrible question was left: what actually happened? Bai Hui stood there, motionless.…(刹那间，好像一切都停止了，不存在了，只留下一个可怕的疑问：到底发生了什么？…白慧一动不动地立着…) (9-10) [12]

This intense moment is Hui's first encounter with trauma. The shocking event is what Cathy Caruth calls "a missed experience" (51), that is, in Hui's case, her spontaneous violent act occurs so quickly

and unexpectedly that it cannot be fully available to her consciousness and she becomes numb—this experience is revisited later through nightmares and flashbacks. In one nightmare, she is haunted by "massive fragments of a horrible apparition" (一大堆破碎的、可怕的形象纠缠着她) that of "a woman with short hair, standing with her back toward her" (其中一个短头发的女人背朝着她站着 11). Hui's flashbacks occur when she hears the word "killing" or even sees a hairstyle that is similar to Aihua's (11). As other traumatized individuals whose interpersonal connectedness is impaired (Altmaier xii), Hui distances herself from other Red Guards. The rest of the story continues to describe Hui compulsively revisiting the tragic moment, a fact that indicates that she is experiencing trauma as a perpetrator.

The Impact of Maoist Ideology on Red Guards' Violence and Traumatization

Hui's situation takes the language of trauma beyond its conventional definition in that Hui inflicts a serious physical injury on Aihua rather than suffering an injury herself. Her impetuous "killing" act marks her sudden fall from being a fantasized member of Mao's revolutionary guard to being a violent perpetrator; this fall ruptures the integrity of her inner world. Some contemporary studies suggest that the nature of trauma lies in the rupture of the individual's inner world that may be caused by a crisis of meaning. In general, we lead our lives on three basic assumptions, namely, that the self is worthy (we are generally good, decent, and moral), that the world is benevolent, and that justice exists (good is to be rewarded and bad is to be punished) (Janoff-Bulman 51-63). These assumptions structure the "global meaning" by which we derive meaning from our experiences (Park 257-59; Park and Kennedy 18). An extremely frightening event may shatter these assumptions (Janoff-Bulman defines a traumatic event as one that destroys people's basic assumptions). This shattering can propel global meaning into crisis, which can entail trauma; vice versa, a traumatized individual generally confronts a shattering of basic assumptions (Janoff-Bulman 51-63; Bracken 56-57), which is also termed a crisis of the global meaning (Park 257-59; Altmaier xiii; McAdams 3).

Trauma triggered by a crisis of meaning and the shattering of basic human assumptions is applicable to understanding Hui's traumatic symptoms. However, its evolution is more nuanced than that of other trauma victims because of the ideological interpellation. Like

those of many Red Guards, Hui's basic assumptions were impacted, revised, and reconstructed by Maoist ideology. This ideology (Mao's ideas and thoughts were well articulated in his speeches, essays, and books) shaped the CCP during his era and has continued to have an impact on the CCP's dominant ideology. As Timothy Cheek argues, Mao's basic dialectic for a socialist revolution is the contradiction between the human will/individual and the collective. Resolving this contradiction requires transforming individuals into proletarian actors; this transformation can be realized through a "personality transformation praxis" and ideological education, both operated by the CCP apparatus (Cheek 13-14). Mao's ideology, especially his theory on revolution, educated and mobilized the Red Guard generation. This theory emphasizes "class struggle" and violent revolution. Mao repeatedly stated that "a revolution is an insurrection, an act of violence by which one class overthrows another" (*geming shi baodong. Shi yigejieji tuifan lingyigejieji de baolie xingdong* 革命是暴动，是一个阶级推翻另一个阶级的暴烈行动) and emphasized that the primary task of a revolution is to distinguish friends from enemies.[13] He demonized people labeled as "class enemies" and summoned the Red Guards to "sweep away all monsters and demons" (*hengsao yiqie niuguisheshen* 横扫一切牛鬼蛇神). During Mao's first Red Guard rally, he openly incited the Red Guards to violence by urging them to "want militancy" (yaowu 要武) and added that "to rebel is justified" (zaofan youli 造反有理).[14] His words became "the sacred script of revolution" for the Red Guards (Yang 2). Violence was an element of Red Guard ethos because it defined Red Guard identity and integrated, and ultimately contaminated, their basic assumptions about self-worth, justice, and benevolence. These ideologically revised assumptions undoubtedly resulted in the killing, maiming, and traumatization of millions of Chinese; ironically, they also led to the perpetrator trauma that some Red Guards experienced, the type described in Feng's novella.

Like the Red Guards, Hui is positioned between two systems of meaning. One may be described as benevolent and just and self-worth is shared by most; the other centers on ideologically revised Red Guard assumptions. The first meaning is universal, the second is provisionally referred to in this article as the ideologically revised meaning. In the story, Hui's father (a faithful communist cadre) repeatedly reminded her never to forget that the "class enemies" killed her mother (a revolutionary martyr) just after Hui was born. Hui internalized this

hatred toward "class enemies" and believed that "the evil old world and class enemy" (万恶的旧社会和阶级敌人) broke up her family (13-14). Besides the ideological questioning that takes place within the family, Mao's propagandized literature and art, by demonizing class enemies, fuels Hui's hatred. At the rally, she is disgusted by those teachers labeled as "class enemies" because, in her mind, "the images of disgusting traitors that Hui had often seen in movies and posters are fused in these people" (白慧在银幕和图画上看过的那些特务可憎的形象与眼前这些人重叠在一起了 6). Hui's impulsive act of violence occurs when she psychologically includes Aihua among the "class enemies" demonized by Mao and her own family history. Hui is thus overtaken by ideologically revised assumptions.

This momentary displacement is conflated with Hui's perception of self-worth. At the rally, she views herself as a revolutionary soldier doing battle. Militarization of culture and the arts was typical during the Cultural Revolution. Images of revolutionary heroes dominated the widely distributed "eight model opera" posters, films, literature, sculptures, and nearly all other art forms. This militarization of culture constructed the grand narratives that "matched the militancy of purpose of the Cultural Revolution" (Clark 252). "Trauma" reveals, through Hui, the Red Guard psychology. She and her Red Guard mates performed as revolutionary soldiers at the rally:

> They wore a red band on their left arms. In the past, which people could not forget – that happy and tragic time – all the soldiers of the Red Army, revolutionary workers, and peasants wore it. It was a sacred mark of righteousness and honor. Wearing it today, Bai Hui felt vigorous and yet it also brought her right back to the bitter political struggles of the past – the red sacred duty placed on their bodies. The Red Guards held wooden guns that they used for military training, but they didn't regard them as symbols. They felt that they had real power. They were real weapons that could overthrew the remnants of the Old World. (Feng 3)
>
> (他们的右臂上套着一红色的臂章，在那过去的、使人不能忘怀的、可歌可泣的时代，红军、工人纠察队、农会，都戴过它。这是正义、光荣、和神圣的标志。她感到今天戴着它，不但很神气，还意味着昨天严酷的斗争又回到身边，红色的天职落在他们身上。他们每人手里端着一只军事操练用的木抢，并不觉得是一种象征。感

觉是真枪。是讨伐世界残余的逼真的武器.) (3)

Hui and her fellow Red Guards mimic acts of war. They see themselves as Mao's revolutionary successors who must "keep the revolution going to the end." The red armbands symbolically associate their revolutionary passion with the revolutionary history that they learned from movies, stories, and posters. Their quasi-uniforms assert their revolutionary identity. Articles of clothing, especially uniforms, express social norms and cultural identity (Svensson 62). In fact, such uniforms were symbolic of the Red Guards.[15] Most Red Guards valued wearing their parents' old uniforms because these reflected their identity as revolutionary successors. In the story, Hui wears her father's old uniform, which embodies his and her mother's sacrifice, it "gives her power and courage" (3). War mimesis sets the stage for her later impulse to harm Aihua because, as a revolutionary successor, she is avenging her parents and defending the revolution.

While Hui's violent action comes from her subordination to the ideologically revised meaning, it also opens up the discrepancy between the two systems of meaning. Her act betrays the core value of self-worth, that is, of being a good, moral person (Button 169-70). This incongruence forces her to confront the crisis of meaning. She probes the validity of the ideological revision about self-worth and justice while haunted by two questions: "Is it justice to assault class enemies?" (阶级敌人该不该打); and "Is it right to kill them?" (该不该打死呢 18). She even questions the benevolence of the world as she questions whether or not a Red Guard should be ashamed of showing sympathy or feeling guilt about the use of violence against class enemies (22). Like a traumatized individual who is always pushed to reassess epistemology (Caruth 49-51), Hui is impelled to examine Maoist ideology itself.

Ideology in Trauma Reenactment and Denial

Trauma recovery requires reconstructing the meaning of the traumatic experience. As this process is distressful, traumatized individuals try to avoid it through denial. Hui's reconciliation becomes especially distressful as she is caught between two systems. She questions the justice of violence, but compulsively participates in another rally. In that rally, a Red Guard who has a lamp alleges that his permanent disability is caused by his physical education coach's "bourgeois thoughts of the fame and fortune" (资产阶级功名利禄 21). This allegation arouses the wrath of thousands of Red Guards toward the

physical education coach. Drawn in by this collective animosity, Hui joins thousands of Red Guards' screaming "Kill him! Kill him! Kill him" (打死他！打死他！打死他！21). At this moment, "the heavy burden that was hanging in her heart seemed to be thrown out with her shouting. She felt very relaxed, excited, and released" (一直挂在心里边那个沉甸甸的东西，仿佛随着喊声甩出来了. 她觉得分外轻松，兴奋，痛快淋漓21). According to Freud, traumatic agency lies in its reenactment, that is, the traumatized individual compulsively revisits the missed traumatic moment (Caruth, Brochard and Tam 50). Hui's revisiting and reenacting (verbally this time) the bloody scene, similar to her initial encounter with trauma, engenders a reconstruction of the meaning of her violent act and moderates her feelings of guilt and anxiety. However, Hui soon relapses into the crisis of meaning of her transgression when she happens to see Aihua's photo in Ming's book:

> Suddenly the eyes of the woman in the photo stared at her widely. . . .A cold voice echoed continuously in Hui's ears:
> "She's dead, dead, dead, dead…'
> This voice like a sledgehammer fiercely hit Hui again and again. Hui trembled. . . .Time stopped in her body once again. She already didn't know what was going on, but now what was happening and what was going to happen!
> …
> In a flash, the wound in Bai Hui's heart violently tore out. Her heart was broken. She felt that fate had arranged a trap for her in this place: falling down a well! without bottom! Instinctively, she struggled in despair. Like a person drowning in water, trying with all their strength to grasp a broken piece of wood floating on the surface of the water.
> "She (Aihua) must be guilty!"
> "How could she be guilty? She loved the Party, loved Chairman Mao. . . It's not she who's guilty. Those people who tortured her and killed her – they're the murderers!"…
> "She must have been dissatisfied with the revolutionary movement, hated the revolutionary movement!" Shouting, Bai Hui covered her ears with her hands. (58-62)

(突然，照片上的这双眼睛对她睁大了… 一个冰冷的声音在白慧耳边连续不断地响起来：

“她死了，死了，死了，死了…”

这声音像一只大锤，一下一下猛击者她；她摇晃着，…时间再一次在她身上停止了，她已经不知道到底是怎么回事，到底发生了什么和将要发生什么事了！

…

一刹那，白灰心中的伤口猛烈地撕开了。她心碎了！她觉得，命运在这里偏偏给她安排了一个陷阱；落进去了！没底了！然而凭着生命的本能，她在绝望中挣扎。好似溺水的人拼命去抓漂在水面上的破碎的小木板。

“她一定有罪！”

“她哪里有罪？她热爱党，热爱毛主席，…有罪的不是她，是折磨她，打死她的那些人，那些凶手！”…

“她肯定不满运动，仇恨运动！”白慧双手捂着耳朵大叫.) (58-62)

In this intense episode, Hui and Ming undergo emotional and psychological turmoil caused by the discrepancy between the global meaning and Mao’s ideologically revised meaning. This turmoil can be understood thus. First, Hui is again caught in a symptomatic complex of denial-confrontation. The traumatic moment suddenly resurfaces as the pseudo present. Similar to her initial encounter with trauma, Hui becomes numbed, drowned in hopelessness and helplessness. Second, her trauma revisit is followed by her alleging Aihua’s guilt. This shift suggests a transition from her reliving the traumatic moment to its denial. Third, Ming’s argument on behalf of his mother and his calling the Red Guards murderers interrupts Hui’s denial; nonetheless, it does not shake her ideologically revised meaning. She experiences intense pain resulting from a moral dissonance created by injuring a fellow human (i.e., the global meaning). However, she believes that her violent act is justified because it was directed at counterrevolutionaries and that the ideologically revised meaning helps to ease her pain. Further on, Ming argues that Aihua’s love for Mao and the Party proves that Aihua is an innocent, good person; however Ming’s argument reinforces, rather than challenges, the ideologically revised meaning. For both Ming and Hui, the good lies in loving Mao and the Party. The alternative is the bad/evil that should be punished. For them, the basic assumptions are contaminated by Maoist ideology.

The distress of traumatic confrontation and denial motivates

Hui to choose self-exile in Inner Mongolia as an educated youth. Yet, her exile gives rise to another denial. Once there, Hui volunteers to be trained as a "barefoot doctor" (chijiao yisheng 赤脚医生). Treating patients with "her own hands" calms her (92). The same hands that injured Aihua are now saving lives. The traumatic moment, however, again intrudes into her life when a former Red Guard, whom she happens to encounter, mentions her attack of Aihua (96-97). Hui becomes deeply depressed after this meeting, but selflessly devotes herself to caring for the Mongolian people and saving lives (98). Her saint-like actions temporarily restore her sense of self-worth and make her feel that she is a good person—this restoration functions as a type of redemption through which she represses her feelings of guilt. Nonetheless, although her saving "lives" contrasts with her previous violent act, it does not shake the ideological binary of people (Mongolians) and people's enemies (counterrevolutionary teachers). In her denial, Hui's original ideologically meaning has changed, but not in its entirety.

Red Guard massive violence was subject to a re-evaluation with the radical shift in political ideology that occurred in the late 1970s. Shortly after Mao's 1976 death, the CCP arrested the Gang of Four thereby ending Mao's social revolution (Karl 164). In 1978, the CCP embarked on nationwide discussions on "the criteria of truth," (真理标准) overtly challenging Mao's ideology. These discussions led to a shift in the dominant ideology, from "whatever Mao said is true" (两个凡是) to "practice is the only criterion for testing the truth (实践是检验真理的唯一标准)," which Deng Xiaoping advocated. In 1979, the CCP officially banned the distribution of Mao's little red books, the Red Guards' revolutionary holy script, and soon thereafter dissolved the Red Guards altogether. From 1980 to 1981, the CCP staged a rather theatrical trial of the Gang of Four. Soon afterwards, the CCP published its decision to denounce completely the Cultural Revolution as "a ten-year catastrophe" (shinian haojie 十年浩劫).

All these massive shifts in the political realm implied a full denial of the subjectivities that permeated Mao's period (Lanza 144). Hui's ideological assumptions are thus refuted. As described in the story, Hui is "awakened" (梦醒了119) and made aware that "I am guilty!" (我是有罪的 122). Trauma, by nature, shatters prior meanings. Its failure to sustain them, or to create new ones, can threaten survival (Park 257-59; McAdams 3). Hui's suicide attempt shows her inability to cope

with her violent act. However, she does defend herself through her confession: "We were deceived and manipulated by them (the Gang of Four)" (我们受了他们的利用和愚弄122). Her defensive argument may support some literary critics' claim that "Trauma" is a story about "a cheated generation of the Red Guards" (Martin 279). It may be said that Feng's motivation for writing it is to "break the Chinese wall of silence about the Cultural Revolution" (Martin and Kinkley 14); with "Trauma," he aims to "start a dialogue with the society" (Gaenssbauer 342). Hui's oversimplified explanation about her violent act may allow her to avoid moral and legal ramifications, but it makes a dialogue with society impossible. In my view, her confession equivocally verbalizes her denial of personal responsibility. By claiming that the Red Guards were exploited by the Gang of Four, she unconsciously projects personal guilt onto others, shifting to them responsibility for her violence. Moreover, her confession of guilt now becomes testimony of her victimization. In this transference, trauma becomes an ideological category employed to mediate personal guilt collectively, historically, and ideologically. This ambivalent confrontation and denial unsettle Hui's recovery from her trauma; it is this unsettledness by perpetrators (Red Guards) and victims that the Cultural Revolution trauma has continued to haunt Chinese society. In this sense, "Trauma" opened a dialogue about the suffering endured during the Cultural Revolution, one that has lingered in the memories of many people (including Feng himself) ever since the Scar Literature period.

The Red Guards' Traumatic Symptoms Portrayed in Other Stories

"Trauma" is not the only story in Scar Literature that reveals Red Guard trauma. In fact, many other stories dramatize the emotions of the Red Guards in the face of denial-confrontation symptoms. "On the Other Side of the Stream" (Zai xiaohe nabian在小河那边, published in 1979), a short story by Kong Jiesheng 孔捷生, exposes "a spiritual isolation born of disillusionment" that a Red Guard member experienced during and after the Cultural Revolution (Hayford 168). Liang, an impassioned Red Guard, brutally betrays his parents who are then punished as enemies of the people through various political charges. After his betrayal, Liang self-exiles to Yunnan. However, this treachery becomes a source of recurring melancholy that lingers during his life in exile. In another story by Kong Jiesheng, "The Humans" (Ren yu ren人与人, published in 1978), Xing is a Red Guard leader.

Similar to Hui, Xing viciously beats a teacher in a home raid. In his later rustication on Hainan Island, Xing unconsciously works to alleviate his guilt by undertaking hard labor as self-torture. Nevertheless, when confronted by the victim's son, Xing defiantly asks: "Should I personally shoulder the historical responsibility?" (108). His rhetorical question demonstrates his strong denial of guilt and personal responsibility. Similar narratives of Red Guard protagonists can be found in other Scar Literature stories. In "Maple" (Feng 枫, written by Zheng Yi郑义; 1979) Red Guard Honggang is traumatized by causing his lover's death during a factional clash among Red Guards. "When the Sun is Setting" (Wanxia xiaoshi de shihou 晚霞消失的时候, written in 1980 by Li Ping礼平) features Red Guard Ping who, after violently abusing a girl in a home raid, refuses to admit his guilt.

Maoist ideology led to sacrifice, violence, and betrayal by these Red Guard characters, but the post-Mao shattering of this ideology produced in them a complete loss of meaning regarding their deplorable actions. The gloomy, lost, and emotionally warped characters of Scar Literature cast a shadow over the New Era optimism brought about by Deng Xiaoping's regime. Their melancholic outlook led to ideological denial and spontaneous reenactments of trauma. Melancholia, according to Slavoj Žižek, indicates fidelity to the lost libidinal object (658). Disillusioned during the nationwide denouncement of Maoist ideology, these characters, previously perpetrating violence on others, experienced a loss of their original object of libidinal and revolutionary devotion, which in turn signaled the crisis of meaning for their violence. The justification for their vicious acts was eliminated by the repudiation of the Cultural Revolution and the Gang of Four. Still, by joining in the national denouncement of the Cultural Revolution, they also deny their own personal responsibility, a denial that serves to repress their personal traumatic memory rather than to enable them to cope with it, confront it, and work through it.

Conclusion: Representing the Red Guards after Scar Literature

Scar Literature exists as a short-lived or transitional genre, soon to be replaced by root-seeking literature (xungen wenxue寻根文学), avant-garde literature (xianfengpai 先锋派), and the neo-historical novel (xinlishi xiaoshuo 新历史小说). Although the trauma of the Cultural Revolution continues to be a trope explicitly or implicitly underlying these subsequent subgenres of fiction, Chinese writers of these genres appear more concerned with representing what is

unspeakable. For example, post-Mao author Yu Hua's (余华b. 1960) novella "1986" (published in 1987) introduces fragments of traumatic memories gleaned from the Cultural Revolution. The protagonist, a historian, is arrested as a counter-revolutionary in 1966. After enduring torture, he soon disappears. Ten years later, he returns to his hometown but has become completely mad. During his hallucinations, he brutally tortures himself in public, replicating the treatment received during the Cultural Revolution. His outrageous performance (or acting-out) disturbs the locals who had persecuted or betrayed him during the Cultural Revolution. This story reveals the unassimilated memory that, though repressed, nonetheless resurfaces to haunt people who are trying to forget. However, it is not the memory of a perpetrator, but rather that of a victim. This differentiates the trauma depicted in Feng Jicai's novella and from that of Yu Hua.

Meanwhile, those Red Guards portrayed in Scar Literature have been rewritten and re-represented in literature, popular television dramas, and social media. In the 1992 *Golden Age* (Huangjin shidai 黄金时代) by Wang Xiaobo (王小波1952-1997), Wang recounts the reeducation of ex-Red Guards. Yet, by describing with comical traits a tragedy involving two lovers, Wang somehow describes the Cultural Revolution "as a world of wildness which obeys its nature" (Huang 143). In 2006, Liang Xiaosheng (梁晓声b. 1949) published his autobiography *A Red Guard's Confession* (Yige hongweibing de zibai 一个红卫兵的自白). In its preface, he declares that "I am a Red Guard, but I refuse to confess guilt" 我是红卫兵, 我拒绝忏悔. His declaration constitutes a staunch defense of the Red Guard movement. Besides literature, television dramas have painted a rosy Red Guard past. About hundred very well received dramas, such as *Crimson Romance* (Xuese langman 血色浪漫) in 2004, *Blowing the North Wind* (Beifeng neige chui 北风那个吹) in 2009, *Beijing, People in Beijing* (Shengfeng canlan de rizi 生逢灿烂的日子) in 2017, and *Hawthorn Tree* (Yuanfang de shanzhashu 远方的山楂树) in 2020, represent the Cultural Revolution as a romantic period when Red Guards (or educated youths) formed the purest of friendships or fell in love.[17]

These representations coincide with what Jude Blanchette has termed the neo-Maoist movement in which former Red Guards continuously appeal for the Cultural Revolution to be reevaluated.[16] Such appeals are increasingly visible and vocal. Since 2016, former Red Guards have organized a yearly Internet Gala for Spring Festival

(Zhiqing wangluo chunwan 知青网络春晚) , dedicated to the memory of their generation and their non-regretful youth. The ex-Red Guards, now in their sixties and seventies, are dressed in Red Guard uniforms with red armbands. They sing and dance to "red songs" on stage, claiming that their generation represents "the Soul of China."[18]

These sentimental representations may be construed as the former Red Guards' nostalgic longing for the Cultural Revolution, a yearning perhaps reflecting the anxiety and discontent, as well as the insecurity, of these powerless people (Blanchette 6). However, given the violence committed, it also signifies "denial, denial of a painful past,"[19] which silences the trauma of victims and lessens, even denies, the guilt and anxiety of the perpetrators. It too reveals that the specter of the Cultural Revolution still haunts Chinese society, reminding us that Cultural Revolution trauma, for both the individual and for the nation, remains unresolved and requires further examination.

Notes

[1.] Yomi Braester and Sabina Knight share the trauma perspective when examining Scar Literature. Braester focuses on *My Bodhi Tree* by Zhang Xianliang, insightfully pointing out that it can be read as an allegory about "the shattering blow delivered to Zhang's sense of self and perception of history" (157). Knight points out the importance of Scar Literature as the first attempt to liberate Chinese literature from Mao's doctrines. See Braester 146-57, Knight 293-306.

[2.] I use the translation of MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, 113.

[3.] Lucian Pye (596) quotes the number as twenty million people killed, but adds that the actual number is unavailable.

[4.] Thomas. P. Bernstein translated the sent-down movement 上山下乡 as "up to the mountains and down to the villages." According to Bernstein, the CCP initiated it on a limited scale before the Great Leap Forward that was resumed in the early 1960s, but sharply accelerated in 1968. Although Bernstein's study (2) does not particularly connect this acceleration with the CCP's disbandment of the Red Guards, MacFarquhar and Schoenhals (251-52) point out that the quota of city youth movements shows a larger dispersal of Red Guards from the cities where they had perpetrated much violence.

Other important research dedicated to this movement is Michel Bonnin's *The Lost Generation: The Rustication of China's Educated Youth (1968-1980)*. Bonnin also points out that the sent-down movement

essentially ended the Red Guards (xix).

[5.] According to Chen Yixin, the Red Guard generation refers to those Chinese born in urban areas between 1947 and 1959. Guobin argues that all Chinese born around 1949 and who participated in the movement were called the Red Guard generation. As for the number of Red Guards, Chen believes it was around twenty-seven million, while Yang Guobin thinks it was between ten to thirty million. MacFarquhar and Schoenhals cite the number 16,470,000. See Chen 221, Yang 5-6, MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 251.

This generation experienced two movements, the Red Guard and the sent-down movements and, besides the Red Guard generation, it was also called the Zhiqing 知青 generation or the lost generation 失落的一代. According to Bonnin, the 1968 rustication movement deeply impacted the Red Guard generation because it lasted longer and it gave it a unified identity. Guobin, however, argues that the Red Guards experience is more profound. See Bonnin's "Restricted, Distorted But Alive: The Memory of the Lost Generation of Chinese Educated Youth" and Yang Guobin's *The Red Guards Generation and Political Activism in China*. I believe that these two movements led to the psychological conflict: the Zhiqing experience allows them to claim political victimization, to deny the guilt that resulted from the massive violence that they committed during the Red Guard movement.

[6.] DSM-5 refers to the American Psychiatric Association's 2013 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth edition.

[7.] Perpetrators' strong denials are exposed in the documentary series *The Devil Next Door*. released on Netflix in 2019 about John Demjanjuk, and *The Act of Killing*, directed by Joshua Oppenheimer in 2012, about the perpetrators during the 1965-1966 Indonesian mass killings.

[8.] An example of the perpetrators' denial can be seen in *The Act of Killing*. The film documents how the perpetrators experienced nightmares that brought them back to their killing acts. But during the daytime, they believed that drinking animal blood can avoid the nightmares, and they denied their responsibilities for the deaths of many people that they had killed. They fantasized in the film that they were thanked by the people that they had killed.

[9.] I am aware that many Red Guards were not traumatized; however, this article focuses on those who were traumatized as portrayed in Scar Literature. Recently, a group of ex-Red Guards

confessed their guilt on social media, which shows that some were indeed traumatized by their acts.

[10.] See the first chapter of Feng's *Wuchuketao: 1966-1976 ziwo koushushi* 无处可逃：1966-1976 自我口述史 (No Way to Escape: 1966-1976 My Oral History).

[11.] "Trauma" is the original title submitted by Feng in 1978; however, due to its "sensitive content," the story's publication was delayed until 1979. Feng was advised to rename it *Puhua de qilu* (铺花的歧路an ashtray paved with flowers) to avoid confusion with "The Scar." He insisted that if this story had not been delayed, Scar Literature would have been called "Trauma Literature" (Chuangshang wenxue 创伤文学). See Braester and Zhang 136-37. I use the story's initial title because "Trauma" reveals its content.

[12.] All quotations from the story are translated by the author of this article.

[13.] "The primary task of revolution is to distinguish friends from enemies" is a summary of Mao quotations: Who are our friends? Who are our enemies? This is a question of the first importance for the revolution. 谁是我们的朋友？谁是我们的敌人？ 这是革命的首要任务. These quotations appeared in Mao's works before the Cultural Revolution but were emphasized during this period. Translations come from *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung* (Beijing Foreign Languages Press, 1966).

[14.] Renmin Ribao (People's Daily) Editorial 人民日报社论 published "Sweep Away All Cow Demons and Snake Spirits" 横扫一切牛鬼蛇神 on June 1, 1966, which instantly caused mass chaos and violence in China. Also, Mao's battle cry "to rebel is justified" 造反有理 immediately ignited the Red Guards' violence against the teachers. See Dikotter 73.

[15.] The symbolism and function of the female Red Guard outfit was instrumental in the shaping of the female Red Guards' identity. For details, see Li Li's "Revolutionary Culture, Girl Power, and the Red Guard Uniform during the Chinese Cultural Revolution."

[16.] According to Blanchette, the Neo-Maoism movement emerged between 2002-2003 and has been increasingly visible in China. It is organized by people who advocate the continuity of the Mao Cult. Blanchette calls these people "Neo-Maoists." The Neo-Maoism movement bears some key ideological and political characteristics, such as a strong disenchantment with the extent and autonomy of the

private sector, an effort to renegotiate a balance between control and openness in the market economy, and a concern over China's shying away from its founding Communist principles. Blanchette reports that this movement continues to expand rapidly and effectively via the internet. See Blanchette's *China's New Red Gu*ards.

[17.] Both *Crimson Romance* (Xuese langman 血色浪漫) in 2004 and *Beijing, People in Beijing* (Shengfeng canlan de rizi 生逢灿烂的日子) in 2017 center around romantic love and strong bonds of friendship among groups of Red Guards in Beijing during the Cultural Revolution and the changes of such love and friendship during the economic transformations in China. *Blowing the North Wind* (Beifeng neige chui 北风那个吹) in 2009 and *Hawthorn Tree* (Yuanfang de shanzhashu 远方的山楂树) in 2020 focus on the hardship and romantic love that the Red Guards experienced during the sent-down movement in Heilongjiang Province and their lives after the Cultural Revolution.

[18.] Some Red Guards made this claim in the 2019 educated-youth gala知青春晚. https://v.qq.com/x/page/a0367xaflv6.html; other galas can be seen through http://www.szhgh.com/Article/cdjc/hongge/2018-02-21/161683.html; https://v.qq.com/x/page/a0367xaflv6.html.

[19.] Woody Allen makes this statement in *Midnight in Paris*.

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