

The Dis/appearance of Animals in Animated Film during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, 1966–76

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“Wherever there is oppression, there is resistance.”
—Mao Zedong

Conventional studies of the Chinese Cultural Revolution usually come from a human-centered perspective that focuses on politics, revolution, and class struggle dramatized in well-established artistic forms such as literature, live-action film, theater, and painting. This kind of approach is presence-centered by drawing attention to the most visible scenarios under the revolutionary limelight at that time. In contrast, this article calls attention to what was invisible in the much-discussed cultural scene: how animals were represented and underrepresented in animation, a marginalized artistic form.¹ Animation, like fairytale, fable, and parable, is usually an artistic form of fantasy full of (talking) animals. Prior to the Cultural Revolution, animated

film was replete with (anthropomorphic) animals. As animated film began to be dominated by politicized human action in the mid-1960s, animals systematically disappeared from the screen until the late 1970s. The Chinese Cultural Revolution can therefore be redefined as a decade of absent animals. However, these animals did not vanish completely during the Cultural Revolution; rather they took refuge in the bodies of ethnic minorities and villains, waiting for opportunities to return, get revenge, and talk back. The disappearance of animals in the mid-1960s marked the start of the Cultural Revolution but also paved the way for its own ideological demise. When the wrathful animals returned to the screen in the late 1970s, the seemingly impregnable ideology of the Cultural Revolution gradually disintegrated.²

The Double Disappearance of Animals during the Chinese Cultural Revolution

Issues of animals, modernity, and cinema are intertwined with each other because while cinema is usually the material icon of modernity, the figure of the animal is the antithesis of modernity. Akira Mizuta Lippit argues that when humans began to modernize the world and conquer nature with advanced technology, wild animals disappeared: “Modernity can be defined by the disappearance of wildlife from humanity’s habitat and by the reappearance of the same in humanity’s reflections on itself: in philosophy, psychoanalysis, and technological media such as the telephone, film, and radio.”³ At the very time when these animals disappeared from the human world, cinema emerged as a modern technology. It is no surprise that early cinema frequently featured animals, nostalgically mourning their absence. In this way, cinema functioned as a phantom shelter for vanished animals.⁴ Drawing on Lippit, I argue that in the context of socialist modernity during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, wild animals not only disappeared in the real world as Mao launched a series of wars against nature but also vanished from the silver screen as a result of the radical artistic forms and cultural policies adopted at that time. The Chinese Cultural Revolution was characterized by a double disappearance of animals in both the natural world and representations on film.

The transition to Chinese socialist modernity in 1949 was prefigured in a

live-action feature film entitled *Wuya yu maque* (*Crows and Sparrows*, 1949). Revolving around the petty urbanites living in an alleyway house in Shanghai, this film recounts how these residents, although selfish in the beginning of the film, finally unite with each other to expel their evil landlord, who is a defeated nationalist official. After the official is forced to leave Shanghai for Taiwan, the residents celebrate the Chinese New Year in 1949 and welcome in the new socialist regime. Made at a time when the nationalist government was about to collapse and released after the communists seized power, *Crows and Sparrows* is often considered to mark the 1949 political transition in the history of Chinese cinema.⁵ This article approaches *Crows and Sparrows* not from the conventional political perspective but from a nonhuman one. Although it is entitled *Crows and Sparrows*, there are actually neither visual nor linguistic references to either kind of bird in this film. Drawing attention to the relationship between these birds and the emerging socialist context, I argue that the absence of the birds in this film uncannily presaged the fate of animals in post-1949 socialist China.

The absence of sparrows in the film became a reality during the socialist era. During the Great Leap Forward (1958–60) Mao launched the steel-making campaign and ordered peasants to cut down trees in order to provide fuel for steel-making furnaces. Due to deforestation, animals lost their habitats and disappeared. Among these endangered animals, sparrows suffered most. In February 1958, Mao launched the campaign of *chu sihai* (wiping out the four pests), which mobilized people to kill sparrows, rats, flies, and mosquitoes. He especially encouraged children to participate in this battle against animals: “The whole people, including five-year-old children, must be mobilized to eliminate the four pests.”⁶ Thousands of people would rush outside and beat drums at the same time so that sparrows, panicked to extremes, kept flying until they were exhausted to death. After the campaign, sparrows were almost invisible in the countryside for several decades.⁷ While the Great Leap Forward lasted only two years, the Cultural Revolution, which lasted around ten years, further exacerbated the disappearance of animals on a larger scale. After Mao launched a campaign called “Learning from Dazhai” in 1964, peasants continued to cut trees for industrial projects in order to modernize the countryside. Animals disappeared in immense numbers due to deforestation and totalitarian politics. For instance, the

term *zhi laohu* (paper tiger) was often used as a metaphor for the socialists' enemies (US imperialists in particular) at that time and the tiger was consequently hated as a despicable animal by the masses. The South China tiger in particular almost became extinct after these campaigns.

It was also around this time that animals began to largely disappear from Chinese films. Model opera films during the Cultural Revolution are commonly considered to be characterized by class struggle and the cult of Mao. This article argues that the most prominent, as well as the most invisible, feature of these model works is the absence of animals. It was common for live-action feature films before the mid-1960s to feature animals. However, as model works were usually made in theaters, it was practically impossible to accommodate and control real animals on stage.⁸ Also, in line with the Chinese opera tradition, the existence of animals can only be suggested by suppositional gestures or relevant stage props, as tellingly illustrated in the horse-riding scene in *Zhi qu Weihushan* (*Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy*, 1969, fig. 1). The absence of animals cleared the space for revolutionary human action rooted in a realist *mise-en-scène* in these model works. The highly revolutionary cinema was not a phantom shelter for animals but a representational tomb that reflected the real absence of animals during the Cultural Revolution, a decade of radical socialist modernity.

Anthropomorphic animals, common in animated films, fairytales, myths, and children's literature and arts, gradually vanished by the mid-1960s. The ban on these talking animals began with the persecution of Chen Bochui, a famous fairytale writer. In the late 1950s, Chen published several essays advocating for children's literature written from the perspective of *tongxin* (children's heart). According to his argument, it was fantasy that distinguished children's literature from other literary genres. The writer's task was to create works suitable for children.⁹ In 1960, Mao's wife Jiang Qing and her cohorts launched various campaigns to criticize Chen's concept of "children's heart." They opposed Chen's emphasis on fantasy and animals with a rationalist and scientific argument: "Can cats speak? Can roosters sing?"¹⁰ Animated films during the Seventeen Years (1949–66) were concluded to be all about "little dogs and cats, gods and spirits" and most of them were banned during the Cultural Revolution.¹¹

Jiang Qing's negative view of fairy tales and talking animals should



Figure 1 The horse-riding scene, absent a horse, in *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy*, 1969. Author's personal collection

be understood in an international context. In the so-called Third World during the Cold War era, there was an upsurging expulsion of Disney influence, which was conflated with Western cultural imperialism. What were excluded were anthropomorphism and medium plasticity that were regarded as the antithesis of classical mechanics and rationalism. For instance, Donald Duck, as well as other Disney animals, was regarded as a political messenger of capitalist ideology and cultural imperialism in Latin America in the 1970s.¹² However, the more direct influence on Jiang Qing might stem from Nadezhda Krupskaya, Soviet educator and the wife of Vladimir Lenin. Krupskaya was hostile to fairytales and advocated that children should be given stories more centered on reality rather than fantasy.¹³ There were heated attacks on fairytales in the Soviet Union during

the 1920s, but there was no official ban on fairytales and talking animals similar to the ban in China in the mid-1960s.¹⁴ Even under Joseph Stalin's totalitarian rule (1922–1952), when socialist realism gradually became the norm, numerous animated fairytales with talking animals appeared on the silver screen. Undoubtedly, there were also debates over the validity of fairytales in Republican China in the 1920s and 1930s, but these debates did not lead to an official ban.¹⁵ In the United States, there was “the Great Fairy Tale Debate” over the legitimacy of realism and fantasy between 1929 and 1931. However, this debate did not lead to an official ban on fantastic narratives.¹⁶ The double disappearance of animals during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, for all its intense and lasting effects, was a unique phenomenon in the world of children's literature and visual arts.

Animal, Fantasy, and Realism in Chinese Animated Film

Generally speaking, the animal is usually the figure of the fantastic and the antithesis of realism in Chinese animated film. Most of the animated films during the Seventeen Years were fantastic, drawing on myth, folklore, fairytales, and legends that were either set in a remote past or in an exaggerated world. Central to these fantastic animated films was the figure of the (anthropomorphic) animal.¹⁷ When Chinese animated films underwent the radical revolutionary realist turn in the mid-1960s, animals disappeared until the late 1970s. Of course, this revolutionary realist turn did not appear suddenly, without precursors—there were several examples of “realist” animated films during the Seventeen Years. Although the boundary between fantasy and realism was sometimes blurred by these realist moments, fantasy, as embodied in the figure of animals, was still the most prominent feature of animated films prior to the start of the Cultural Revolution.

The first “realist” moment in socialist animation began with the two animated propaganda films produced by the Northeast Film Studio in the late 1940s: *Huangdi meng* (*Dreaming to Be an Emperor*, 1947) and *Wengzhong zhuobie* (*Capturing the Turtle in the Jar*, 1948). The two films, set in the context of the Civil War between nationalists and communists, were satires of

Jiang Jieshi (a.k.a. Chiang Kai-Shek) and his collaboration with the United States. Although the two films had a politically serious motif, they used caricature and were quite humorous. For instance, in *Capturing the Turtle in the Jar*, Jiang Jieshi is transformed into an anthropomorphic turtle after he is arrested by the People's Liberation Army. Thus, although the film addressed a "realist" political conflict, the fantastic element was still present in its use of animals.

The second "realist" moment took place during the Great Leap Forward. A film entitled *Dayuejin wansui* (*Long Live the Great Leap Forward*, 1959) was a direct reference to this political campaign—as indicated by the title. Despite its realist orientation, *Long Live the Great Leap Forward* still had fantastic elements. This film did not portray the campaign directly in a documentary style; rather, it drew on the conventions of fairytales to recount how the peasants, equipped with modern technology, outwit the anthropomorphized black clouds and wind who attempt to conquer the human world. Another film, *Xiao liyu tiao longmen* (*Little Carp Jump over the Dragon Gate*, 1958), adopts a similar style. This film features a group of anthropomorphic carp. After hearing the story that carp who jump over the legendary Dragon Gate can become dragons, they are determined to locate the gate. They jump over what they assume to be the legendary Dragon Gate, which turns out to be the Longmen Shuiku (Dragon Gate Dam), built during the Great Leap Forward.

While the previous two "realist" moments were characterized by a fusion of the realist and the fantastic (anthropomorphic animals and exaggeration), the third moment was more realist in the sense that it portrayed children's daily lives in a mimetic and verisimilar style without animals and fantastic elements. This realist trend began with a film entitled *Shuangbaotai* (*The Twins*, 1957), which revolves around a series of funny stories that result from the mistaken identities of a pair of twins. Another example is *Yige xin zuqiu* (*A New Football*, 1957), which recounts how a child, who is selfish at first, is finally willing to share his new football with other children. This trend of verisimilitude trend continued in the mid-1960s with a new twist. Films like *Lubian xinshi* (*New Deeds on the Roadside*, 1964), *Sidianban* (*Half Past Four*, 1964), and *Xiao gelia* (*The Little Brothers*, 1965) all revolve around children

doing good deeds to emulate the model soldier Lei Feng. While they lack animals and fantastic elements, these films are nonetheless light-hearted and quite humorous.

The fourth moment, or the moment of “revolutionary realism,” began with the release of a puppet-animated film entitled *Hongyun ya* (*Red Cloud Cliff*, 1962).¹⁸ Films belonging to this category include *Banye jijiao* (*The Rooster Crows at Midnight*, 1964), *Hongjun qiao* (*The Red Army Bridge*, 1964), and others. The first film revolves around the struggle between a landlord and his tenants. The second film recounts the conflict between nationalist armies and the villagers who side with the Red Army. Similar to the third group of “realist” animated films, *Red Cloud Cliff* adopts a mimetic style and excludes animals and fantastic elements. The difference between them is that, dealing with the serious motif of death, *Red Cloud Cliff* does not have the humorous and comic twists characteristic of the third group of “realist” films about ordinary children’s daily lives. *Red Cloud Cliff* belongs to the category of *zhengju* (serious play) in the history of Chinese animation. Set in Sichuan Province during the Civil War in the late 1940s, *Red Cloud Cliff* features an old stonemith who sacrifices his life in order to defend the honor of the Red Army. When the nationalist soldiers find out that there is a slogan of *chihua quanchuan* (reddening Sichuan Province) engraved on a cliff, they threaten that if the stonemith does not remove the slogan, they will kill his grandson. The stonemith agrees and climbs up the cliff. However, he does not obey the soldiers’ order but instead changes the slogan to *chihua quanguo* (reddening the whole country). The soldiers, in a fit of fury, kill the stonemith. As a result, the stonemith becomes the first human protagonist who dies in the history of Chinese animation. The death of the stonemith is designed to make viewers feel heavy-hearted. This is exactly the affective function of “revolutionary realism”: to arouse in the audience a love for heroes and a hatred for enemies.¹⁹

The release of *Red Cloud Cliff* triggered heated debates over realism and fantasy in the mid-1960s. Sun Yi, a famous editor of children’s periodicals, hailed *Red Cloud Cliff* as a “successful experiment.” According to him, the film constructs a positive peasant hero and directly inculcates the ideology of class struggle in children.²⁰ In contrast, Jin Xi, a renowned animator, regarded exaggeration as the most important feature of animated

film: “Exaggeration is an indispensable technique in animated filmmaking. There is a reason for this. Animated cartoons, paper cutting, and puppetry cannot represent a real person true to life due to the limitation of the medium. If animated films have to represent persons, the more realistic they are, the more artificial they will become. Animated films are not suitable for realistic representations.”²¹ Jin’s view was echoed by Wu Lun, a script writer for animated film: “Due to the nature of elasticity, animated films can use exaggeration and fantasy to represent life. Animated film has its limitations in that it cannot represent the subtle psychology and sophisticated facial expressions of real people. Animated film lacks stereoscopy, so it is not suitable for representing real persons and real events.”²² Wu then went on to sum up the genres that fit in well with the specific medium of animation: myths, fairytales, comedies, and satires. Dealing with the past, fantasy, and exaggeration, these genres are all distanced from reality. Thus, according to Jin’s and Wu’s arguments, *Red Cloud Cliff* was a failure. If animated films have to represent realities, they should incorporate fantastic or exaggerated elements, like *Little Carp Jump over the Dragon Gate* does. The debate over fantasy and realism soon ended, as the revolutionary realism prominent in *Red Cloud Cliff* later became the official standard of animated filmmaking during the Cultural Revolution. This official standard was established with the release of an animated film entitled *Caoyuan yingxiong xiao jiemei* (*Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland*, December 1965).

The Disappearance of Animals and the Appearance of the Model Animated Film

Compared with the puppet-animated film *Red Cloud Cliff*, *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* is even more realist. *Red Cloud Cliff* draws on revolutionary legends set in the near past, and the characters are fictional. In contrast, *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* is based on the true story of two Mongolian sisters who almost sacrificed their lives in order to protect the sheep of the people’s commune in a snowstorm in February 1964. The two sisters were immediately promoted as national models for children to emulate.²³ Learning the heroic story of the two Mongolian sisters, animators promptly embarked on making *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland*, as if making a

timely documentary or news report. Unlike *Red Cloud Cliff*, *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* adopted rotoscoping and its smooth character movement was based on a live action film.²⁴ The images of the two sisters in this animated film were also based on their real photos, giving the film claims to corporeal authenticity enabled by photographic realism. While the realist trend in *Red Cloud Cliff* was still controversial at that time, it was fully celebrated and became an artistic standard for animated filmmaking by the time *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* was released in December 1965.

It is for these reasons that this article positions *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland*, rather than *Red Cloud Cliff*, as the transitional film between the Seventeen Years and the Cultural Revolution in the history of Chinese animation. As the first *zhengju* that marked the beginning of revolutionary realism in the history of cel-animated film (hand-drawn animation on transparent celluloid), *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* was actually the first animated film that directly portrayed, praised, and deified Chairman Mao.²⁵ Mao's portrait appears in the beginning and end of the film; the theme song of this film also directly praises Mao. This film served as the model animated film for later films to emulate during the Cultural Revolution, a decade characterized by repetition of the realist film styles and revolutionary stories.

It was the disappearance of anthropomorphic animals that gave rise to this model animated film. The script of *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* was originally a fairytale entitled *Xueyuan honghua* (*Red Flowers on the Snowy Grassland*). In the original film script, the Mongolian sisters sing, dance, and play with anthropomorphic sheep. The villain is an evil hawk, who takes the good animals and the sisters to the sky. However, after animators went to Inner Mongolia and sketched from life, they decided to follow a realist and documentary style to truthfully portray the two heroes as news reports did at the time. Animators therefore deleted the anthropomorphic animals that appeared in the original script.²⁶ The wild hawk is gone, and the sheep in this animated film stop talking and become biological animals that are the property of the people's commune (fig. 2). Here the animators most likely self-censored their work because as early as 1964 the artistic coercion characteristic of the Cultural Revolution had already begun, with the criticism of several live-action feature films like *Zaochun eryue*



Figure 2 The domesticated lambs of the people's commune in *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland*, 1965. Author's personal collection

(*Early Spring*, 1964). In addition, criticism of fantasy and fairytales was even more intensified in the mid-1960s. In November 1965, anthropomorphism, regarded as a way of defaming workers, peasants, soldiers, and children, was officially banned in the Shanghai Animation Film Studio.²⁷ The release of *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* in December 1965 was a timely fit. Animated films produced thereafter were all characterized by the absence of anthropomorphic animals.

Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland was the only cel-animated film made during the Seventeen Years that survived the artistic persecution and was even constantly reproduced as a media fetish in different artistic forms dur-



Figure 3 *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* (picture book version), 1970, with animals marginalized to the extent of hardly being visible. Author's personal collection

ing the Cultural Revolution.²⁸ As the film traveled into the depth of the Cultural Revolution, the biological animals featured in it continued to disappear radically. In November 1970, the Shanghai People's Press published a picture book directly adapted from the animated film. Also entitled *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland*, this picture book had the same plot as the animated film. However, in the picture book the role of Chairman Mao becomes more prominent and the emphasis on class struggle is intensified. The sisters' father becomes an oppressed shepherd liberated by Mao. The party secretary also stages "speaking bitterness" campaigns to publically criticize reactionary herd owners. The two sisters are portrayed as little Red Guards who wear Mao badges and read Mao's little red books.²⁹ As Mao, revolution, and class struggle take a more prominent role, the position of animals in the picture book is pushed into the far background and becomes almost invisible in the story, as visualized by the cover picture above (fig. 3).

As *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* was reincarnated in a ballet model work entitled *Caoyuan ernü* (*Sons and Daughters of the Grassland*, 1975), animals become almost entirely absent. In this ballet, the two Mongolian girls become a brother and a sister, played by two adults. In contrast to the picture book and the animated film, the ballet makes the story more dramatic and sensational by adding a class enemy. This class enemy is a reactionary herd owner who purposefully opens the sheepecote to let the sheep run wild. After he is exposed, he even tries to kill the two children. At that



Figure 4 *Sons and Daughters of the Grassland*, 1975, with animals now completely absent. Author's personal collection

critical moment, the People's Liberation Army soldiers appear in time and save the two children.³⁰ As class struggles become the center of attention, the position of the sheep in this film is further marginalized. The animals' existence is only suggested metonymically by the children's sheep whips and suppositional body gestures (fig. 4). Also, the use of stage lighting further foregrounds human protagonists and pushes animals, if any, into darkness and invisibility.

The degree to which animals are invisible or absent is a marker of how intense the revolution is. The more invisible the animal, the more intense the revolution, and vice versa. While the disappearance of the anthropomorphic sheep in the model animated film *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* indicates the start of the Cultural Revolution, the absence of animals in *Sons and Daughters of the Grassland* reflects the intensified revolutionary conflict. It is in this ballet model work that the animated film *Heroic Little Sisters of the*

Grassland was reincarnated as a de facto Maoist model work, of which the most prominent and also the most invisible feature is the absence of animals.

The official disappearance of anthropomorphic animals, which began with *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland*, not only resulted in an emphasis on human action, but also gave rise to the fetishization of machines (such as telegraph poles, power lines, ships, tractors, and helicopters) as icons of socialist modernity in animated films during the Cultural Revolution.³¹ Animals, especially wild animals, were almost replaced by revolutionary humans and modern machines. For instance, as animals disappeared, telegraph poles and power lines take on very prominent roles in the various versions of *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland*.

The cult of socialist machines culminated in an animated film entitled *Shi hang* (*Ship Trial*, 1976), which drew directly on a live-action feature film with the same title (1959). In the animated film *Ship Trial*, the protagonist Lu Dahai and his workers build a ten-thousand-ton ocean-going cargo ship (named “East”) with all parts made in China. Lu Dahai then asks for a ship trial. Chen Zongjie, a party leader, argues that the parts made in China are not of good quality, so he asks Lu to use parts imported from foreign countries. Otherwise, he will postpone the ship trial. Lu insists that China can build its own ship and refuses to use imported parts. Through many political struggles, Lu finally conducts the ship trial with great success. During the trial, Lu and his workers even rescue a fishing boat from Taiwan. During the Cultural Revolution, the ship was usually a metaphor for China, with Chairman Mao as its “helmsman,” steering the socialist course for the country.³² The ship in *Ship Trial* marked the height of the fetishization of machines and the cult of Mao in the animated films of socialist China.

Animals, displaced yet not completely replaced by machines and humans, did not vanish entirely from the revolutionary screen during the Cultural Revolution. If they appeared at all, animals in these films were usually domestic animals represented as the collective property of the people’s commune, such as the sheep in *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland*, the pigs in *Zhu ke* (*The Major Course*, 1975), and the horses in *Junma feiteng* (*Horses Galloping*, 1975).³³ To highlight human action, these domesticated biological animals were usually positioned in the background and were almost invisible. They were also depicted in clamorous herds or packs and did not

have the individuality, personality, dignity, and freedom that solitary wild animals had in animated films prior to the Cultural Revolution. While talking animals completely disappeared, they assumed a spectral existence in the bodies of ethnic minorities and villains in animated films during the Cultural Revolution. It is in these othered human bodies that the anthropomorphic animals temporarily found shelter, waiting for their opportunity to return, get revenge, and talk back.

The Domesticated Lamb of the People's Commune: Ethnicity, Femininity, and Animality

Ethnic minorities began to appear in Chinese animated film in the late 1950s. The first animated film portraying ethnic minorities is entitled *Jin erhuan yu tie chutou* (*Golden Earrings and an Iron Hoe*, 1956), which draws on a Yao legend. In this film, a poor Yao peasant boy takes care of an old man who passes out in front of his house. Grateful for the boy's kindness, the old man's daughter gives the boy a pair of golden earrings, which turn into two golden keys. With the keys the boy opens a cave full of treasures, but he just picks up an ordinary stone mill and an iron hoe, which can produce grains magically. A greedy landlord tries to seize the treasure from the boy but ends up being killed. The boy then marries the daughter and they live happily ever after. Later minority animated films followed the same pattern. *Mutou guniang* (*The Girl Made of Wood*, 1958) draws on a Mongolian legend, *Yifu zhuangjing* (*A Zhuang Brocade*, 1959) on a Zhuang legend, *Mutong yu gongzhu* (*The Shepherd and the Princess*, 1960) on a Bai legend, *Changfu mei* (*The Girl with Long Hair*, 1963) on a Dong legend, and *Kongque gongzhu* (*Peacock Princess*, 1963) on a Dai legend. Incorporating fantastic elements, minority animated films during this period demonstrated an emphasis on ethnic diversity and cultural differences.³⁴

While minority animated films during the Seventeen Years were all about myths and legends in ethnic traditions, those during the Cultural Revolution were set in the revolutionary context. Instead of focusing on ethnic traditions and differences, the films during the Cultural Revolution revolved around cultural homogeneity in socialist China. Ethnic difference was therefore subordinated to class difference, albeit ethnic minorities were

still marked as the internal other of the Han. The aim was to co-opt ethnic minorities into the socialist agenda in order to construct a homogeneous and monolithic national identity. The transition from the past to the present, from fantasy to revolutionary realism, and from ethnic difference to class difference began precisely with the model animated film *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland*.

Issues of ethnicity reinforced the realist orientation of *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland*.³⁵ In studies of African American literature, many scholars have noticed the strong ties between race and realism, even proposing the notion of racial realism. According to Madhu Dubey, “political claims about African-American literature have always depended on realist aesthetics, from the documentary impulse of the slave narratives to the reflectionist principles prescribed by the cultural nationalist program.”³⁶ In her studies of ethnic minorities in China, Dru C. Gladney also notices that while explicit realism was used to portray the female body of ethnic minorities in contemporary Chinese arts, it was restricted by the state to portray the Han female body.³⁷ During the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese government also appropriated ethnic minorities to present a racially authentic revolutionary narrative for the sake of constructing a solid national identity. The logic of this nationalist discourse was: even the unruly barbarians living in borderlands, let alone the more civilized Han people, embraced Chairman Mao and his socialist revolution. Ethnographic revolutionary realism was prominent in the minority films produced during the Cultural Revolution.

Issues of ethnicity, childhood, and animals are usually intertwined with each other. According to evolutionary theory, humans evolved from animals, so it is no wonder that children, before they grow up and become fully civilized in the human world, usually have some atavistic features inherited from animals. Like animals, children are usually unsophisticated and suspicious of nothing; they crawl, cry, bite, eat, and excrete to their heart's content. Children, therefore, have a strong kinship with animals. Functioning as “a liminal figure at the discursive threshold dividing species as well as races,” the child, according to Andrew Jones, is a “housed beast” that needs to be developed and civilized.³⁸ These evolutionary ideas are also pervasive in sociology. Karl Marx once proposed a progressive stage theory of human civilizations: primitive, slavery, feudal, capitalist, socialist, and communist.

In line with this social evolutionary theory, ethnic minorities and aboriginals, regarded as primitive, are positioned as the early stage, or the “childhood,” of human history.³⁹

Imagined as the uncivilized child, ethnic minorities and animals always have a metonymic relationship. In reality, ethnic minorities usually make their living from and live with animals in the borderlands of the country.⁴⁰ In many folktales, myths, and legends, many ethnic minorities’ ancestors are animals or they worship animal totems. For instance, in a semiautobiographical novel entitled *Lang tuteng (Wolf Totem, 2004)*, the author Jiang Rong demonstrates that in many Chinese classics and legends, the Mongolians are descended from wolves.⁴¹ A story from *Hou Hanshu (Book of the Later Han)* illustrates that a dog named Pan Hu is the ancestor of Man-I, or the barbarians in China.⁴² It is no surprise that in the traditional Chinese writing system, ethnic barbarians are often classified with animals. The most popular radicals in ethnonyms were those associated with a bug or beast (*chong*) and a dog (*quan*). It was not until the mid-twentieth century that these animal radicals for ethnic minorities were replaced with human classifiers, but the stereotypic view of ethnic minorities as creatures closer to animals and nature still remains.⁴³

It naturally follows that in many visual representations ethnic minorities always appear with animals. The Mongolian girls and the sheep in *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* is such an example. As a transitional film between the Seventeen Years and the Cultural Revolution, *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland*, compared to its picture book and ballet variations, still has some traces of earlier fantastic animated films. Although the sheep in this animated film stop talking and become biological animals, they are portrayed as adorable creatures and are featured in prominent shots throughout the film. Some animators, while criticizing the rigid stylization of animated films during the Cultural Revolution, still regard *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* as a success and attribute its success to the vivid portrayal of the sheep in this film.⁴⁴ In fact, it is ethnicity that sanctioned the relative overrepresentation of animals in this film in the context of the Cultural Revolution. This is because, as Paul Clark points out, minority films have the propensity to “explore normally avoided subjects” in socialist China.⁴⁵ It is no surprise that during the Cultural Revolution, the re/appearance of

animals was usually associated with ethnic minorities. There were only two animated films directly named after animals at that time, *Horses Galloping* (1975) and *Jinse de dayan* (*The Golden Wild Goose*, 1976). It is no coincidence that the first film takes place in Inner Mongolia, and the second one in Tibet. *The Major Course* (1975) features pigs, and it takes place in the ethnic Zhuang Autonomous Region in Guangxi Province. *Two Little Peacocks* (1977) features wild peacocks and ethnic Dai children.

Ethnic minorities, in the Han imagination, are usually represented as an infantilized and innocent female in companion with animals. It is no wonder that the protagonists of the minority animated films are usually little girls. Paul Clark has argued that ethnic minorities in the north of China tend to be hard, masculine, and virile, while their peers in the south are more soft, feminine, and prone to singing and dancing.⁴⁶ This article does not make a generic argument that in terms of the power relationship, ethnic minorities are completely feminized in the imagination of the Han, but rather proposes using the notion of animality, which straddles both masculinity and femininity, to examine the ethnic minorities. Louisa Schein, an anthropologist, notes the metonymic relationship between feminized ethnic minorities and animals (and nature in general). In mass media representations, ethnic minorities are usually figured through an infantilized woman, who “frequently appeared communing with animals or nestled among trees and flowers.”⁴⁷ Ethnic minorities are therefore associated with primitiveness and natural fauna and flora.

In communing and (over)identifying with animals, the ethnic girl herself becomes an animal or an anthropomorphic animal par excellence. In other words, the ethnic girl and the animal become doubles through cross-species identification. The metonymic relationship between the ethnic girl and animals culminated in an animated film entitled *Peacock Princess* (1963). Based on an ethnic Dai legend, this film features a pretty princess who turns out to be a peacock. The metamorphosis of a peacock into a princess, or the metamorphosis of a princess into a peacock, tellingly illustrates the symbiotic relationship between the ethnic girl and animals. In this case, the peacock becomes the essential icon of the feminized Dai ethnicity. *Peacock Princess* is one of the few animated films that deal with the metamorphosis of a girl into an animal, or an animal into a girl, in the history of Chinese

animation. Metamorphosis, understood as the transformation of body forms between humans and animals or other nonhuman objects, usually takes place among ethnic minorities (girls in particular) in Chinese animated films. For instance, *The Wooden Girl* (1958) deals with a tree stump's metamorphosis into a Mongolian girl. *The Girl with Long Hair* (1963) is about how an ethnic Dong girl's long hair is transformed into a waterfall.⁴⁸ In *Lieren Hailibu* (*The Hunter Hailibu*, 1985), a squirrel transforms into a Mongolian girl, who turns out to be the daughter of Mountain God. Hailibu, the Mongolian boy, understands animal language and is transformed into a stone. *Bainiaoyi* (*The Cloak Made of One Hundred Birds' Feathers*, 1996) is about a canary's metamorphosis into an ethnic Miao girl. Ethnicity is therefore associated with the transgression of fixed categories, and the feminized ethnic bodies become pliant, malleable, and remoldable ones.

It is no surprise that when the anthropomorphic animals disappeared in *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland*, the two Mongolian girls took their place. The sisters are represented as two cute and plump children with big eyes and round faces. The femininity, infantility, and naïveté of the two Mongolian girls impart a sense of patronizing, trivializing, and intense fascination. Radiating with animalistic energy, the two Mongolian girls demonstrate unusual physical strength by running, jumping, talking, and shouting for several days in harsh weather to protect the sheep of the commune.

Ethnic bodies, especially the female ones, have the propensity of being overanimated, in literal and metaphorical terms, with excessive physical movement and vigorous speech, such as chattering, giggling, singing, and dancing. *Wuduo jinhua* (*Five Golden Flowers*, 1959), a live-action film that features Bai ethnic girls, can serve as an example. In *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland*, the two Mongolian girls' excessive anima and vigor come to a stasis when they are extremely exhausted and fall into a coma. The party secretary leads a group of people to come to their rescue and sends them to a hospital. This is the turning point of the two girls' lives.⁴⁹ In the beginning of the film, the sisters still belong to their family and they are very close to their biological father; the girls, as their father's daughters, are symbolically dead after they wake up at the hospital, because they are reanimated by the party secretary who gives them a new life and a new identity as "Chairman Mao's good children." In other words, the two sisters are assimilated into the

socialist state. As Tani Barlow points out, Maoist women/*funü* “got situated first in *guojia*/state and then, through the magic of metonymy, within the modern *jiating*/family.”⁵⁰

Like the domesticated sheep of the people’s commune, the Mongolian sisters are also docile lambs co-opted into the socialist country. The theme song for the film, sung by a childish and feminine voice, directly conveys this message: “Our dearest Chairman Mao, oh Chairman Mao, our grassland is prospering under the sunshine of Mao Zedong thought. Our dearest Party, oh Party, little shepherds are growing up under your guidance; little shepherds are growing up under your guidance.” While the Mongolian sisters are the little shepherds of the sheep in the people’s commune, Chairman Mao is the ultimate shepherd of the Mongolians in socialist China.⁵¹ Ethnicity is therefore associated with compliance as well as transgression in mainstream socialist imagination.

The Wolf in the Forest: Villains, Masculinity, and Animality

It was common for live-action films during the Seventeen Years to feature characters that are ambiguously situated between positive heroes and evil villains. However, because of the intensified revolution, these “middle” characters disappeared in the model works during the Cultural Revolution. Negative characters in these model works include vicious landlords, traitors, and spies who try to sabotage socialism. In addition, while there were both male and sexy female villains during the Seventeen Years, villains were limited to males in the model works during the Cultural Revolution.

In animated films during the Seventeen Years, human villains were extremely rare because the majority of these films revolved around animals and fantastic stories. There were just a few human villains in “revolutionary realist” animated films in the mid-1960s.⁵² However, after the disappearance of anthropomorphic animals in the model animated film *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland*, human villains began to dominate the silver screen. Like those in the model works, villains in animated films were all males during the Cultural Revolution.⁵³ The masculinity of these villains functioned to intensify the life-or-death revolutionary struggles between two

rival parties during the Cultural Revolution, because violent nationalism is usually configured in masculine terms, which is best exemplified in wars.⁵⁴

Rosemary A. Roberts argues that although the villains in Maoist model works were males in physical terms, they were nonetheless effeminized by revolutionary aesthetics, as evidenced in their dwarfed physical statures, high-pitched voices, and feminized body gestures.⁵⁵ Issues of gender were important partly because Maoist model works were dominated by human actions. Since animation is usually regarded as an artistic form full of animals, I propose the notion of animality as a kind of “third gender” that blurs the binary between masculinity and femininity.

The animality of the villains stems from the disappeared anthropomorphic animals, who took metaphorical refuge in the masculine bodies of villains during the Cultural Revolution. In animated films at that time, almost all the villains were named after animals: Shanzhong Lang (wolf in the forest) in the film *Xiao haoshou* (*The Little Trumpeter*, 1973), Liangzhi Jiao de Pangxie (crabs with two legs) in *Donghai xiao shaobing* (*Little Sentinels of the East Sea*, 1973), Beiji Xiong (polar bear) in *Daixiang de gongjian* (*Arrows with Firecrackers*, 1974), and Chou Hetun (stinking fugu) in *The Night of the Flooding Tide* (1975). In a similar vein, villains in model works during the Cultural Revolution were also named after animals. For instance, the villain is named *zuoshandiao* (vulture) in *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy*. The enemy army is named *baihu* (white tiger) in *Qixi baihu tuan* (*Surprise Attack on the White Tiger Brigade*, 1972), and the villain is named *dushedan* (viper gallbladder) in *Dujuan shan* (*Azalea Mountain*, 1974). In this way, animals existed as the vehicle of these living metaphors. When animals disappeared visually from revolutionary films in the mid-1960s, they wormed their way into human language and assumed a phantom existence. Indeed, the language during the Cultural Revolution was replete with animal metaphors. The best example is *niugui sheshen* (ox demons and snake spirits), terms that refer to the anti-socialism and anti-Party reactionaries.⁵⁶

In his studies of wartime animated films, Thomas LaMarre points out that the image of the animal was frequently used to denigrate the racialized wartime other. This wartime translation of racial difference into human and animal difference is what he calls “speciesism,” defined as “a displace-

ment of race and racism (relations between humans as imagined in racial terms) onto relations between humans and animals.⁵⁷ Taking my cue from LaMarre, I argue that speciesism functioned in alternative ways when animals were visually absent from animated films during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, generating what I call a disembodied or invisible speciesism.

Exuberant with animality, these animated villains can only occupy the nonhuman space inhabited by wild animals. Villains in feature films during the Seventeen Years were not radically animalized. They usually assumed human names and lived like ordinary people before they were exposed and captured as enemies of the country. These villains, especially spies, often lived in wallpapered homes or seductive boudoirs away from the infiltration of socialist doctrine.⁵⁸ However, as the disappeared animals found shelter in the bodies of these villains during the Cultural Revolution, these villains became animalized and frequently assumed the names of animals. They were forced to leave their homes and took shelter in caves, lairs, and dens, wandering like wild beasts in the forests and national borders to escape the revolutionary hunters.

These villains' spatial transition from home (realms of humans and homeliness) to wilderness (space of animals and otherness) is most evident in an animated film entitled *The Little Trumpeter* (1973). In the beginning of this film, the major villain, who is a landlord, lives in a spacious and luxurious house and oppresses a little herd boy (ironically the ox is almost invisible throughout this film), who is the protagonist. The name of the landlord is "the wolf in the forest," which suggests his inhumanness and cruelty. The landlord's animality is further dramatized by his animalistic appetite, as he eats the gallbladders of vipers. When the Red Army comes, they oust the landlord and put a pair of revolutionary couplets on the gate of his house. The horizontal couplet says, "Long Live the Chinese Communist Party." The vertical couplets read, "The sickle cut off the old world; the axe carves out a new world." With this pair of couplets, the communists symbolically rename the landlord's house and transform it into a humane revolutionary headquarters. Homeless, the landlord and his cohorts (dubbed "running dogs") flee to the wilderness, waiting for their opportunity to return and get revenge. In this way, the landlord really becomes a "wolf in the forest," who ends up being tracked and killed by the vengeful herd boy.

With animalistic instincts, such villains are often capable of metamorphosis and assume malleable identities for survival in the wilderness. At the same time, they also leave traces of their movement and put themselves in danger. *Little Sentinels of the East Sea* (1973), which was released in the specter of Taiwanese invasion, serves as an example. In this film, a group of Taiwanese spies, dubbed “crabs with two legs” (suggesting their spatial movement across the Taiwan Strait), land at a coastal fishing village and conduct saboteur activities. These spies are exposed and attacked by the people’s peasant soldiers and only three of them survive and escape. The three spies attempt to take a boat and flee back to Taiwan. On their way to the seashore, they meet an older sister and a younger brother who are young pioneers herding the sheep of the commune (the sheep are almost invisible). In order to cheat the children, the spies put on the uniforms of the People’s Liberation Army. However, what betrays the true identity of these spies is their interpretation of the animals. As one of the spies says flatteringly to the children, “You have so many sheep in your family,” the sister becomes alert to their treachery because socialist sheep belong to the people’s commune, not to individual families.⁵⁹ The suspicious sister then asks her brother to go back to the village for help, while she follows the spies. The spies purposefully put one of their bags on the wrong road to confuse the sister, but they still leave footprints that reveal their actual movement. Tracking these footprints, the girl finally finds the spies. Exposed, one of the spies tries to kill the girl, but is shot in time by the pursuing people’s soldiers who come to rescue the sister.

It is animality that joins and separates villains and ethnic minorities, making a common yet nonunified “other” for the communist state to lord over. While ethnic minorities are assimilated “domestic animals” ready to sacrifice their lives for the Party, the villains are vicious “wild beasts” in the forest, to be exterminated by revolutionary hunters. Insofar as ethnic minorities are excluded from the party-state through superficial inclusion, the villains are included in it only through their expulsion. In both cases, humans, like animals (sparrows, tigers) at that time, are reduced to bare life in the sense that their lives can be taken unconditionally for the sake of the party-state. Humans and animals’ shared reduction to bare life, Haiyan Lee argues, is a typical feature of modernity. Here bare life is mainly

based on the concept of exclusion à la Giorgio Agamben: it is about the unprotected human and animal life (like Jews during World War II and the banning of both wild and domestic animals in the 2003 SARS outbreak in China) excluded from the sovereign state.⁶⁰ I argue that in radical socialist modernity during the Cultural Revolution, inclusion in the sovereign state can also reduce humans and animals to bare life, as the case of the animated ethnic minorities/lambs demonstrates. Under such extreme circumstances, everyone, including both humans and animals, can degenerate into bare life without any way out.

While ethnic minorities are infantilized, the villains are depicted as adults, usually the oldest characters in animated films. In sharp contrast to the rosy-cheeked ethnic girls in colorful costumes, male villains usually have dark and gloomy visages and wear clothes in dark colors, reinforcing their affinity with night, secrets, and clandestinity. These villains are either skinny, always dwarfed by heroes, or fat, suggesting their hedonistic behaviors with excessive eating and drinking. Regarded as nonhuman and inhuman, these villains are exuberant with primitive animality, which justifies the relentless revolutionary violence against them. It is only after exterminating these vicious villains that socialist children (including both the Han and minorities) and Chairman Mao/the Party can live happily ever after in these animated revolutionary fairytales—but only until the return and revenge of the angry animals.⁶¹

The Fox that Who Hunts the Hunter: The Return and Revenge of the Animal

While the official disappearance of anthropomorphic animals in the model animated film *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* marked the start of the Cultural Revolution, the reappearance of the fantastic animal in an animated film entitled *The Golden Wild Goose* (1976) declared the imminent end of the Cultural Revolution. The Cultural Revolution, usually regarded as a period of human revolution, can be reframed as a decade of absent animals. Just as the official disappearance of the anthropomorphic animal is associated with ethnic minorities (Mongolians) in *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland*, the return of the fantastic animal in *The Golden Wild Goose*

is again bound up with ethnic minorities (Tibetans). Ethnicity is therefore a self-contradictory category in terms of representation, as it is associated with both revolutionary realism (the most realist and authentic) and revolutionary romanticism (the most unreal and fantastic, which can be turned into a transcendental truth).

The Golden Wild Goose is set right after the Tibetan independence movement in 1959. In this film, Tibet is plagued by grasshoppers. Rumor has it that only the golden wild goose, an auspicious bird in Tibetan legend, can exterminate the grasshoppers and bring happiness to the local people. The Tibetans pray to the Buddha but it is useless. Chairman Mao promises to send a helicopter to Tibet to exterminate the grasshoppers. Before the arrival of the helicopter, several Tibetan children volunteer to do some preparation work, and during this process they successfully thwart the scheme of the spies who attempt to bomb the helicopter. The helicopter finally arrives and kills the grasshoppers. The Tibetans, who marvel at the power of the helicopter, are convinced of the superiority of socialist modernity and the effective leadership of Mao.

The fantastic animal returns in the dream sequence of *The Golden Wild Goose*.⁶² As part of the preparation work, the Tibetan children climb up a snow-capped mountain and pick up a snow lotus flower. They plan to present this auspicious flower as a tribute to the helicopter. After these children successfully obtain the flower, there is a close-up shot of these kids gazing at the flower in ecstasy and reverence. This close-up shot is immediately followed by a sequence of the children's daydream. In their illusion, these Tibetan children ride on the legendary golden wild goose, fly across the Great Wall, the border that separates the ethnic "barbarians" from the Han, and present the snow lotus flower as a tribute to Chairman Mao in Tiananmen Square, where Mao's portrait emerges monumentally among a sea of red banners and balloons with slogans of "Long Live Chairman Mao and the Chinese Communist Party" (fig. 5). Chairman Mao's portrait, which appeared in *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* for the first time in the history of Chinese animation, was displaced into the dream sequence of *The Golden Wild Goose*. In this way, Chairman Mao, as well as the Cultural Revolution he launched, was positioned in a dreamlike and fantastic context in *The Golden Wild Goose*.



Figure 5 Tibetan children riding on the golden wild goose and flying to Tiananmen Square in *The Golden Wild Goose*, 1976. Author's personal collection

In an uncanny way, the re/appearance of the magic wild goose, the return of the oppressed (à la Marx) and repressed (the animal within, or animalistic desire, à la Freud), triggered the demise of Mao and the collapse of the ideological system of the Cultural Revolution. The Tibetan children have the intention of wishing Chairman Mao a long life with the power of the magic snow lotus flower, but what is ironic is that just a few months after the fantastic bird reappeared on the silver screen, Chairman Mao died and the ideological system of the Cultural Revolution soon collapsed, as if the magic wild goose cast a spell on Tiananmen Square. This spell, as it were, is the magic power of the fantastic. The revolutionary rhetoric, though touted as rational during the Cultural Revolution, turned out to be a fantastic and even absurd scenario simply because it was too rational.

The fantastic was associated with the metaphor of wings and flying. As mentioned earlier, the official disappearance of the fantastic animal in children's literature began with the persecution of Chen Bochui in the year 1960. Advocating the concept of "children's heart," Chen argued that the soul of children's literature is fantasy. Chen's advocacy for fantasy was best represented by his book entitled *Huanxiang zhangzhe caise de chibang* (*Fantasy Has Colorful Wings*). One of the stories in this book is about an ambitious cat who wants to fly. In this way, Chen associates fantasy with wings and flying. As a matter of fact, *flying* became the keyword in the movement against Chen and fantasy. The criticism of Chen and fantasy began with an essay entitled

“Shenmoyang de chibang wang naerfei” (“What Kind of Wings? Where to Fly?”), which was published in *Renmin wenzue* (*The People’s Literature*) in June 1960. This essay argued that Chen’s advocacy for fantasy actually demonstrated his bourgeois orientation; therefore his fantasy with colorful wings was unable to fly in socialist China.⁶³ A popular slogan was also coined at that time to criticize the flying animals and fantasy in children’s visual culture and literature: “*Guren dongwu mantian fei, kelian jimo gong nong bing*” (“Ancients and animals fill the sky, who remembers the poor workers, peasants and soldiers?”).⁶⁴ The flying animal became a symbol of fantasy and the antithesis of revolution and socialist realism. Therefore, the disappearance of the flying eagles and sheep in *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* marked the start of the Cultural Revolution, and the appearance of the flying wild goose in the daydream sequence of the film *The Golden Wild Goose* harbingered the imminent end of the Cultural Revolution.

The boundary between the fantastic and the rational in *The Golden Wild Goose* is blurred by the coexisting relationship between the magic golden wild goose and the helicopter. When the anthropomorphic animals began to disappear in the mid-1960s, machines almost replaced them and dominated the silver screen. In *The Golden Wild Goose*, however, while the wild goose, associated with the fantastic and the “primitiveness” of Tibet, challenges the ten-year visual dominance of machines, it is still constantly equated with the helicopter, icon of socialist modernity. In other words, the wild goose and the helicopter become two sides of the same coin. Both of them can kill grasshoppers and bring happiness to the Tibetans, and both of them are associated with spatial movement: the movement of the wild goose from Tibet to Beijing and the movement of the helicopter from Beijing to Tibet. The only difference is that the wild goose resides in dreams and legends, while the helicopter is portrayed as a historical reality. The equation of the wild goose with the helicopter blurs the boundary between the fantastic and the rational, dream and reality, and organic and metallic. This paradox culminates in the tribute-offering daydream sequence. These Tibetan children’s longing for Chairman Mao actually takes place at the very time when Tibet tried to break away from Beijing in 1959. This sequence ironically demonstrates that socialist assimilation of the Tibetans is nothing but a daydream, thus revealing the internal illogic of revolution.

While the fantastic animal just temporarily displaces the machine in the daydream sequence in *The Golden Wild Goose*, it overtly replaces the machine once and for all in an animated film entitled *Hualang yiye* (*One Night at the Art Studio*, 1978). Produced two years after the death of Mao, *One Night at the Art Studio* is a reflection of what happened to children's visual arts during the Cultural Revolution. Set in a children's art studio, this film features two machine villains: a big iron wolf-fang cudgel and a metallic high cap. The cudgel and the cap walk into a children's art gallery at night and destroy the pictures they deem inappropriate: drawings of animals (rooster, elephant, giraffe), children's daily lives (studying, swimming, doing good deeds, greeting their teacher), and landscapes. When the clock strikes midnight, the children and animals come to life and restore the destroyed pictures. However, a human villain in a picture also comes to life. He runs away and asks the cudgel and the cap to come back to the gallery. After the three bad guys come back to the studio and try to damage the pictures again, the children and animals from the pictures launch a battle against them. They finally win the battle, put the three defeated figures into the picture, and restore order to the art gallery. The relationship between animals and machines in this film is much more confrontational and violent than the coexisting relationship between the wild goose and the helicopter in *The Golden Wild Goose*, suggesting the intensified disintegration of the Cultural Revolution.

One Night at the Art Studio is a self-reflexive film about animation during the Cultural Revolution. In the beginning, only the metallic cudgel and cap are animated (animals and children are still in the pictures). The two machines enter the art studio and cross out the drawings of animals (fig. 6). The two lines of the cross function as bandages to permanently freeze the movement of the animals. However, these animals break free of the cross, come off the pictures, and become alive—they are literally animated. After these animals win the battle, they manage to put the machines into a still picture, rendering them *inanimate*. This scenario vividly demonstrates the power relation between animals and machines in animated films during the Cultural Revolution. What to animate and what not to animate was not just an aesthetic issue, but also a political one that involved confrontation and violence during the tumultuous ten years.

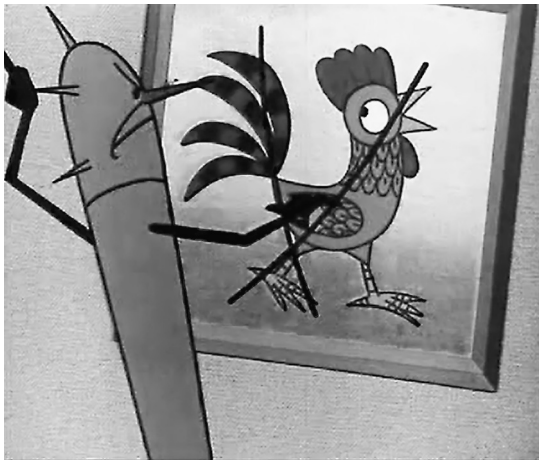


Figure 6 The animated machine (iron wolf fang cudgel) crosses out the inanimate drawings of animals in *One Night at the Art Studio*, 1978. Author's personal collection



Figure 7 The aggrandized rooster in *One Night at the Art Studio*, 1978. Author's personal collection

In fact, the metallic cudgel and cap allude to the notions of *yi bangzi dasi* (beat to death with a cudgel) and *dai gaomao* (put on a high cap), metaphors for the persecution of arts and artists during the Cultural Revolution. The machines' crossing out of animals in the beginning of the film marks the start of the Cultural Revolution characterized by the disappearance of animals, but it also paves the way for its own destruction because these animals come to life and resist the artistic coercion imposed on them. Artistic transformation is a self-generated process and "involution," or a revolution from within. In this battle against machines, the animals side with children. It is only after defeating the machines that the animals can obtain a niche in children's visual arts. The size of these animals is exaggerated, to the extent that the rooster even functions as a horse for children to ride on (fig. 7). In a similar vein, the size of the golden wild goose in *The Golden Wild Goose* is also exaggerated. The magnified size of these returned animals is a radical reassertion of their (over)presence and visual dominance after around ten years' absence on screen.

Language is central to the returned animals. Philosophers such as René

Descartes have pointed out that the difference between humans and animals is language.⁶⁵ While humans have the capacity for language, animals are silent and just have cries, grunts, or croaks. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's rhetorical question "Can the subaltern speak?" is often interpreted from the perspectives of class, gender, and race.⁶⁶ It begs the question of species as well, because animals cannot speak at all and are the lowest of the low among the subalterns. They can only express their discontent through screaming, barking, growling, and roaring. However, in animated film, fairy tale, apologue, parable, and fable, what Akira Lippit calls the "minor genre," animals do speak and even "speak too much."⁶⁷ The talking anthropomorphic animal is probably the most prominent feature of these minor genres, partly because of their oral origins.

However, in animated film during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, animals had been mute for around ten years. These animals could only indirectly express themselves in the form of ventriloquism through the language of ethnic minorities and villains. The return of the animals in the late 1970s gave speech back to them. In *The Golden Wild Goose*, the magic goose does not speak, but it manages to speak through ventriloquism. In the daydream sequence, the movement of the goose to Beijing is accompanied by an off-screen tribute song sung by Tsering Dekyi, a famous Tibetan female singer. The voice of Tibet is figured in feminine terms.⁶⁸ This disembodied voice/song is therefore reembodyed in the body of the wild goose. In *One Night at the Art Studio*, the anthropomorphic rooster does not speak, but he finally manages to utter a triumphant crow before the dawn at the end of the film—a cry that welcomes the sunrise and puts an end to the "night" of the Cultural Revolution.

The first animated film that features a speaking animal after almost ten years' silence is entitled *Huli da lieren* (*The Fox Hunts the Hunter*, 1978). When the animal begins to speak and talk back, it really means to get revenge.⁶⁹ In this film, the animal is no longer satisfied with simply reversing the relationship between animals and machines, as demonstrated in *One Night at the Art Studio*. Rather, the animal aims to subvert the long-established power relation between humans and animals, the hunter and the hunted, and the eater and the eaten. *The Fox Hunts the Hunter* revolves around a smart fox who robs a gun from a young and incompetent hunter



Figure 8 The fox (right) gives the usurped gun to the wolf and asks him to kidnap the young hunter in *The Fox Hunts the Hunter*, 1978. Author's personal collection

and tries to kidnap and eat him (fig. 8). Although an old hunter intervenes and kills the fox, the young hunter is almost scared to death. The male voice-over of the film further confirms the symbolic death of the young hunter: “If a hunter loses his gun and trembles in front of beasts, he is already dead even if he still physically lives.” The talking fox, though dead himself, still triumphs, because he symbolically kills the young hunter. By reversing the role of the hunter and the hunted, the fox reverses the power relation between humans and animals (in biological and representational terms) that began with the tragedy of sparrows in socialist China. The emphasis on the youthfulness of the powerless hunter is also a subversion of the socialist rhetoric, in which children and young people, manipulated by Mao, were the major forces in killing sparrows in the late 1950s. *The Fox Hunts the Hunter* is therefore a self-reflexive film about the relationship between animals and arts during the Cultural Revolution.

A Close-Up of Revolutionary Realism: Animal and Form

Conventional scholarship on literature and arts during the Cultural Revolution usually comes from a political perspective. This political orientation can be traced back to Mao's 1942 Yan'an talk, in which he stipulated that litera-

ture and the arts should be subordinate to politics. More recent studies begin to challenge this political-determinist approach by highlighting the power of the arts in transforming themselves and even social realities. In so doing, these studies draw attention to the internal rupture of the arts that contributed to their own decline, marking the inward turn in studies of literature and arts during the Cultural Revolution. For instance, in her study of the sun-facing courtyards and urban communal culture in mid-1970s Shanghai, Nicole Huang argues that “the reasons for their demise needs [*sic*] to be located within urban communal culture itself.”⁷⁰ In his studies on the model opera films made during the Cultural Revolution, Paul Clark points out that since film is an art that is close to indexical realism and naturalism, the adoption of the highly theatrical and performative opera-inspired aesthetics was an “ill-fit,” an internal illogic that led to the end of the Cultural Revolution.⁷¹ In a similar vein, Jason McGrath argues that the highly theatrical artistic form of model works, which was ironically used to portray revolutionary realities, “must have contributed to the sudden collapse of the ideological authority of Maoism by the end of the 1970s.”⁷² The arts were not completely determined by politics and ideology; rather, they had the uncanny power to shape themselves and even to transform the ideologies which policed them. The rupture between artistic form and revolutionary ideology was also prominent in animated films during the Cultural Revolution. This formalist rupture in the history of Chinese animation was bound up with the disappearance of animals in the mid-1960s.

Animals, which are dominant in animated film, are closely associated with the formal style of animation. Highlighting movement as the nature of animation, Sergei Eisenstein approaches animation as an artistic form of “plasmaticness” that resists formal stability and fixity: “a rejection of once-and-forever allotted form, freedom from ossification, the ability to dynamically assume any form.”⁷³ LaMarre rephrases “plasmaticness” as “plasmaticity,” namely, “the deformation and reformation of characters—stretching, bending, flattening, inflating, shattering,” which encourages “all manner of cruel and violent deformations of the body form.”⁷⁴ This plasmaticity is most evident in the squash-and-stretch technique and the metamorphosis of body forms common in animated films. The plasmaticity or fluidity of line characterizes the medium specificity of animation, an artistic form of

motion and movement. LaMarre further points out that the force of animation, namely the plasmatic movement, is usually channeled into animal as well as other nonhuman characters. This is because the human audience pays less attention to the accuracy of animals' movement and is more tolerant of animals' violent deformation and transformation of body forms than human characters.⁷⁵ Animals therefore play a central role in defining the medium specificity of animation as an artistic form of plasmaticity, movement, and fantasy.

It is for these reasons that animation has long been considered the "home" of (talking) animals. However, these animals disappeared during the Chinese Cultural Revolution because animation was used to portray heroes anchored in revolutionary realities. To make these revolutionary heroes more "real," animators strategically used rotoscoping to trace character movement modeled on live-action films. These animated films became less plasmatic and fantastic due to their rigid and realist orientation in terms of both content and form. Just as the form of opera was an "ill-fit" for revolutionary ideology, animation as an artistic form of fantasy and exaggeration was also incongruous with revolutionary realism.

The disappearance of animals in the mid-1960s resulted in a formalist rupture in the history of Chinese animation. Many Chinese animators and critics pointed out the risks embedded in this formalist rupture in animated films during the Cultural Revolution. As early as 1962, animators had already sensed the dangers of the realist orientation in animated film, as evident in the debates over the release of *The Red Cloud Cliff* in that year. This scepticism culminated in the release of the model animated film *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* in 1965. Although the realist orientation in *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* was officially sanctioned and oppositional views were stifled at that time, many animators still expressed their worries about its realist orientation in retrospect after the Cultural Revolution. In line with the working experience of Chinese animators, in animated filmmaking it is more difficult to portray humans than animals, contemporary than ancient subjects, positive than negative characters, and praise than satire. The model animated film *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* violated all these conventions, because it had a contemporary subject matter and praised a very positive human hero in a documentary style. Although this film was a big

hit at that time, even its own director, Qian Yunda, insisted that animators should not frequently try this kind of realist approach with serious political themes because animated film had its own characteristics that were different from live-action film. Qian wrote in the early 1980s, "In regard to the realist orientation of *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland*, it is fine if it is just experimentation. We should not make this kind of film often. This is because animated film is not suitable for constructing positive heroes in a serious way. This is the same with cartoons, comics, and crosstalk (a traditional comic performance usually with two performers making jokes and funny dialogue), which are not suitable for praising heroes."⁷⁶ Naturally, animated films produced after the Cultural Revolution gradually returned to the plasmatic and fantastic mode.

The rupture between the artistic form and revolutionary/realist ideology was best exemplified in the prominent use of close-ups in animated films during the Cultural Revolution. During the Seventeen Years, animators seldom used close-ups. For them, the essence of animation was motion and movement; close-ups tend to freeze movement and expose the artificiality and limitations of animation, an artistic form of fantasy unsuitable for realist and detailed representations. In the animated film *A Zhuang Brocade* (1959), animators used quite a few close-ups to portray an old ethnic woman's face, and they were severely criticized by reviewers who argued that close-ups, where motion freezes, make the hand-drawn lines more visible and thus expose the artificiality of the form.⁷⁷ However, with the disappearance of animals and the realist turn in the mid-1960s, close-ups, which always occur at the most revolutionary, dramatic, and revelatory moments in animated films, became the norm to portray positive heroes during the Cultural Revolution.

Take *The Little Trumpeter* (1973) for instance. The protagonist of this film is an embittered herd boy named Xiaoyong, whose parents are killed by their landlord. To avenge his parents, the boy joins the Red Army, becomes a trumpeter, and later is wounded in battle. When he regains consciousness and sees his trumpet, the camera cuts to a close-up shot of his longing and determined face, which is gradually superimposed with a semidiegetic communist flag (fig. 9). It is at this thematically revelatory moment that the



Figure 9 A close up of Xiaoyong's face in *The Little Trumpeter*, 1973. Author's personal collection

plasmatic movement is temporarily suspended and the fluidity of line comes to a stasis.

The use of close-ups in these revolutionary animated films was self-subversive. These close-ups were supposed to highlight the little heroes' dignified manner and to draw attention to their big, bright, determined, and piercing eyes with heavy eyebrows, which was the trademark of the animated films during the Cultural Revolution.⁷⁸ Aiming to reinforce revolutionary realism, these close-ups nonetheless paradoxically drew attention to the constructedness of these heroic faces. They let viewers see even more clearly that these revolutionary eyes and faces were nothing but hand-drawn lines and piled-up pigments. It is at this point that the artistic form of animation revealed its internal ruptures. The close-up of revolutionary realism subverted itself and became the close-up of the unreal.

Generally speaking, the majority of animated films during the Cultural Revolution were characterized by the same socialist realism prominent in live-action feature films of the Seventeen Years. After the disappearance of animals in the mid-1960s, animated film lost its medium specificity (plasmaticity and fantasy) and became more like realist live-action feature film, while live-action feature film of the decade also lost its medium specificity

and looked more like theatrical performative opera (best exemplified in the formulaic *liangxiang* pose in model opera films), resulting in a domino chain of what McGrath calls the “formalist drifts” during the Cultural Revolution.⁷⁹ Pushed to extremes, the formalist rupture within animation itself (the use of an essentially plasmatic, fantastic, and artificial form to portray revolutionary and realistic contents) during the Cultural Revolution turned out to be a momentary impulse and fleeting fashion of the time.

Conclusion: Chinese Cultural Revolution as a Decade of Dis/appearance

Conventional studies of the Cultural Revolution are usually “presence” centered by focusing on political struggles and human actions under the revolutionary limelight. Paying attention to what was absent in the cultural scene at that time, this article revolves around animals, which are crucial figures in defining (socialist) modernity (in a negative way) and the medium specificity of animation. Adopting the method of negative inference, I reframe the Cultural Revolution as a decade of dis/appearance (an interplay between disappearance and reappearance). Many animals, as biological animals in real life and as representations on film, disappeared during the Cultural Revolution. Humans also disappeared in the sense that there were only superhumans (lofty heroes) and nonhumans (villains) left in the binarized revolutionary world. In other words, humans also became an endangered species. In addition, many cultural relics, buildings, forests, and even landscapes disappeared due to various political and economic campaigns launched during that time.⁸⁰ Dis/appearance here does not mean nonexistence, because what disappeared, or what was forced to disappear, would return and scatter their traces, registering what Ackbar Abbas calls “a kind of pathology of presence.”⁸¹ The dramatized scenarios of dis/appearance were played out not only in material reality, but also in the realm of visual representations during the Cultural Revolution.

This article focuses specifically on the dis/appearance of animals through the lens of animated film. During the Cultural Revolution, animals disappeared not only from reality due to Mao’s wars against nature, but also from the realm of representations (e.g., model opera films, animated films,

children's literature, and visual arts) due to the radical artistic forms and cultural policies adopted at that time. This is what I call the "double disappearance of animals," a kind of phenomenon unique to the radical socialist modernity during the Chinese Cultural Revolution.⁸² Animated films during the Seventeen Years teemed with (anthropomorphic) animals. However, these animals were systematically disappeared as the form of animation underwent the "revolutionary realist turn" in the mid-1960s and became increasingly like live-action feature films of the Seventeen Years. The animal is therefore the crucial figure of fantasy and the antithesis of revolution and realism. The disappearance of the fantastic animal in the model animated film *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* (1965) marked the start of the Cultural Revolution, and after around ten years' absence, the return of the magic bird in *The Golden Wild Goose* (1976) triggered the demise of the Cultural Revolution. Situated between the earthbound sheep and the flying wild goose, the Cultural Revolution can be reframed as a decade of absent animals.

Displaced yet not completely replaced by humans and machines, these fantastic animals did not vanish completely from the animated films during the Cultural Revolution. Rather, they wormed their way into human language and sought refuge in the feminized and infantilized bodies of ethnic minorities (in the form of metonym) and in the masculine and aged villains (in the form of metaphor), generating what I call the "disembodied or invisible speciesism." While the former were to be assimilated as "domestic lambs" into the socialist commune, the latter were to be exterminated as "ferocious wolves" preying on lambs in the wilderness. In both cases, Chairman Mao, through the assistance of his agents (positive heroes), was depicted as the ultimate shepherd of socialist China. The visual disappearance of animals (in the real world and cinema) in the mid-1960s gave rise to their spectral reappearance in language during the Cultural Revolution.

Animality, as a category of third gender between masculinity and femininity, is crucial for understanding these animated films. While animated films during the Seventeen Years emphasized the humanization of animals (anthropomorphism), animated films during the Cultural Revolution witnessed the animalization of humans (disembodied speciesism in the form of metonymy and metaphor). Metamorphosis, or the transformation of

body forms between humans and animals, no longer functioned in physical terms, but in metonymic and metaphoric relations during the Cultural Revolution. In this way, the fantastic fairytale during the Seventeen Years was transformed into a revolutionary fairytale revolving around Chairman Mao, the lamb, and the wolf through the form of revolutionary realism and romanticism during the Cultural Revolution. What made the revolution more real and fantastic were not the positive and lofty heroes, what Ban Wang calls the “sublime figures of history,” but rather the internal other(s) exemplified by ethnic minorities and villains, who constantly disrupted the ideal of a homogeneous and monolithic national identity under the solid leadership of Mao.⁸³ It was only after the assimilation of little good lambs (ethnic minorities) and the expulsion of big bad wolves (villains) that Chairman Mao and socialist children could live happily ever after in a revolutionary China that was paradoxically both realistic and fantastic—but only until the return and revenge of the wrathful animals in the late 1970s.

Notes

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1. All animated films during the Cultural Revolution were produced by the Shanghai Animation Film Studio, which was established in 1957 as the only (state-owned) animation studio in socialist China. The Red Guards took over the Shanghai Animation Film Studio and

- renamed it Red Guard Film Studio in August 1966. Due to the intensification of revolutions and class struggles, filmmaking at the studio was less productive. From 1966 to 1971, it hardly produced any animated films. The only exceptions were *Shancun xinmiao* (*The New Sprouts of a Village*, 1966) and *Weida de shengming* (*The Great Declaration*, 1968). From 1972 to 1976, the studio produced a total of seventeen animated films. Yan Hui and Suo Yabin, *Zhongguo donghua dianying shi* (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying, 2005), 94–95.
2. For a recent study of Chinese animation, see Daisy Yan Du, “On the Move: The Trans/national Animated Film in 1940s–1970s China” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Madison, 2012). For a representative scholarship on the theorization of animation, see Thomas LaMarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).
 3. Akira Mizuta Lippit, *Electric Animal: Toward a Rhetoric of Wildlife* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 2–3.
 4. Akira Mizuta Lippit, *Electric Animal*, 2, 3, 185.
 5. Yiman Wang, “Crows and Sparrows: Allegory on a Historical Threshold,” in *Chinese Films in Focus: Twenty-Five New Takes*, ed. Chris Berry (London: British Film Institute, 2003), 65.
 6. Mao Zedong, quoted in Judith Shapiro, *Mao’s War against Nature: Politics and Environment in Revolutionary China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 87.
 7. *Ibid.*, 87. A puppet-animated film, entitled *Da maque* (*Killing Sparrows*, 1958), depicts how children used all kinds of methods to kill sparrows in the late 1950s.
 8. For a study of Chinese theater, see Xiaomei Chen, *Acting the Right Part: Political Theater and Popular Drama in Contemporary China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2002).
 9. Chen was not the first one who proposed the notion of “children’s heart.” Zhou Zuoren made a similar argument in the 1930s.
 10. Quoted in Chen Bochui, “Tongxin yu tongxin lun” (“Children’s Heart and the Theory of Children’s Heart”), *Ertong wenxue yanjiu* (*Studies of Children’s Literature*) 3, no. 4 (1980): 1–20.
 11. Jiang Qing and her cohorts, quoted in Yan Hui and Suo Yabin, *Zhongguo donghua dianying shi* (*History of Chinese Animation*) (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying, 2005), 94.
 12. Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart, *How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic* (New York: International General, 1984). This book was first published in Chile in 1972.
 13. Lora D’Anne Wheeler, “Children in Transition: Popular Children’s Magazines in Late Imperial and Early Soviet Russia” (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 2001), 163.
 14. For the debates over fairy tales in 1920s Soviet Union, see Jack Zipes, *The Enchanted Screen: The Unknown History of Fairy-Tale Films* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 323; see also Catriona Kelly, *Children’s World: Growing Up in Russia, 1890–1991* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 98.

15. For detailed discussions of fairy tales in Republican China, see Andrew Jones, *Developmental Fairy Tales: Evolutionary Thinking and Modern Chinese Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011).
16. Nathalie op de Beeck, *Suspended Animation: Children's Picture Books and the Fairy Tale of Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 23–32.
17. As the Cultural Revolution was imminent in the mid-1960s, animated films produced during the Seventeen Years were severely criticized and banned. These denounced films include three categories: films that experimented with various artistic forms, such as ink-painting; films that featured fairytales, folklore, legends, anthropomorphic animals, gods, and spirits; and films that depicted children's daily lives without overt political struggles.
18. This animated film was adapted from a long poem written by Liang Shangquan, a renowned writer in Sichuan Province. For the original story, see Liang Shangquan, *Hongyun ya (Red Cloud Cliff)* (Beijing: Zhongguo qing nian, 1959).
19. For a discussion of love and emotion in China, see Haiyan Lee, *Revolution of the Heart: A Genealogy of Love in China 1900–1950* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).
20. Sun Yi, "Yici chenggong de changshi: Kan meishupian Hongyun ya" ("A Successful Experiment: On the Animated Film *Red Cloud Cliff*"), *Dazhong dianying (Popular Cinema)* 10 (1963): 15. For similar arguments, see Chen Weibo, "Meishupian yeneng fanying xianshi shenghuo: Kan muoupian Hongyunya yougan" ("Animated Film Can Also Reflect Real Life: On the Puppet Animated Film *Red Cloud Cliff*"), *Jiefang ribao (Liberation Daily)* 10, no. 8 (1963): 4.
21. Jin Xi, "Kuazhang yu shufu: Meishupian chuangzuo wenti sui" ("Exaggeration and Moderation: Random Thoughts on Animated Filmmaking"), *Dianying yishu (Film Art)*, no. 1 (1963), 55.
22. Wu Lun, "Meishu dianying fanying dangdai shenghuo wenti" ("View on Animated Film's Capacity of Reflecting Contemporary Life"), *Dianying yishu (Film Art)*, no. 4 (1963), 54.
23. For the two Mongolian sisters in history, see Uradyn E. Bulag, "Models and Moralities: The Parable of the Two 'Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland,'" *China Journal*, no. 42 (1999): 21–41.
24. Rotoscoping is an animation technique in which the movement of an animated film is based on a regular, live-action film. Before making an animated film, animators first film real actors and actresses. Animators then redraw these images and use them in their animated film. This animation technique makes the movement look natural. For example, Disney's *Snow White* (1937) adopted the rotoscoping method.
25. Revolving around revolutionary legends, *Red Cloud Cliff* and other realist animated films made before *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* did not portray and praise Mao directly.
26. Qian Yunda, "Guanyu xiandai tici wenti: Shezhi donghuapian Caoyuan Yingxiong Xiaojiemei de tihui" ("On Contemporary Subject Matter: Reflections on Making the Animated

- Film *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland*”), *Meishu dianying chuanguo yanjiu (Studies on Animated Filmmaking)* (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying, 1984), 129.
27. Chen Bo, *Zhongguo dianying biannian jishi: zonghe juan (A Chronology of Chinese Film: Comprehensive Issue)* (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian, 2006), 387.
 28. Some realist puppet-animated films revolving around class struggle also survived the artistic persecution, such as *The Rooster Crows at Midnight* (1964).
 29. For discussions of Mao’s little red book, see Alexander C. Cook, ed., *Mao’s Little Red Book: A Global History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
 30. Ironically, the image of this class enemy was based on Haschuluu, who actually saved the two sisters’ lives in reality. He became an enemy on film because he was labeled a rightist at that time. It was not until 1985 that the Party of Inner Mongolia finally issued an official document stating that Haschuluu was the first hero who saved the two sisters’ lives. Li Xinyu, “Caoyuan yingxiong xiao jiemei ji ta beihou de gushi” (“*Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* and Its Secret Stories”), *Zhongguo wenshi jinghua nianxuan (Annual Collection of Prime Chinese Literature and History)* (Guangzhou: Huacheng, 2008), 187–91.
 31. A papercut animated film entitled *Wandun shuiyaji zhange (The Battle Song of the Ten-Thousand-Ton Hydraulic Forging Press, 1972)* was a eulogy of a socialist machine.
 32. An animated film entitled *Da chaoxun zhiye (The Night of the Flooding Tide, 1975)* also revolves around a fishing ship. In this film, it is only after the liberation in 1949 that the villagers are able to build their own fishing ship with the help of the party. The saboteurs try to damage the first ship built by the villagers, but their scheme is thwarted by heroic children in the village.
 33. *Liangzhi xiao kongque (Two Little Peacocks)* (1977), which is about the story of ethnic Dai children and peacocks, was the first animated film that foregrounds wild and nonfantastic animals after the Cultural Revolution. The ethnic Dai children find two peacock eggs in the wilderness. They incubate them and bring up the chicks. Later they present the two peacocks to the local People’s Liberation Army as tributes during the water-splashing festival. There is still an attempt to domesticate and collectivize the wild animals in this film. As early as 1975, there was an animated film that used the name of animals as its title: *Horses Galloping*. This film was still about domesticated animals of the people’s commune in Inner Mongolia. *The Golden Wild Goose* (1976) was the first animated film that used the name of a fantastic wild animal as its title after the Cultural Revolution.
 34. For studies of minority live-action film, see Paul Clark, *Chinese Cinema: Culture and Politics since 1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 95–101; Paul Clark, “Ethnic Minorities in Chinese Films: Cinema and the Exotic,” *East-West Film Journal* 1, no. 2 (1987): 15–32; Yingjin Zhang, “From ‘Minority Film’ to ‘Minority Discourse’ Questions of Nationhood and Ethnicity in Chinese Cinema,” *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1997): 81–104; and Chris

- Berry, "Race: Chinese Film and the Politics of Nationalism," *Cinema Journal* 31, no. 2 (1992): 45–58.
35. Chris Berry uses the term *race* for the ethnic minorities in China. Yingjin Zhang questions the term *race* and advocates for the term *ethnicity*. These terms are location-specific. While people usually use the word *race* in the West, people often use the term *ethnicity* in China.
 36. Madhu Dubey, *Signs and Cities: Black Literary Postmodernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 44.
 37. Dru C. Gladney, "Representing Nationality in China: Refiguring Majority/Minority Identities," *Journal of Asian Studies* 53, no. 1 (1994): 116.
 38. Jones, *Developmental Fairy Tales*, 82.
 39. This kind of linear and progressive notion of history has been criticized by many scholars. In *The Savage Mind*, Claude Lévi-Strauss argues that primitive people's way of thinking is neither belated nor inferior to that of modern people. Rather, they just have a different and parallel mode of thinking. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 15.
 40. For issues of ethnic minorities in real life, see June Dreyer, *China's Political System: Modernization and Tradition* (New York: Longman, 2010), 299–326.
 41. Jiang Rong, *Lang Tuteng (Wolf Totem: A Novel)*, trans. Howard Goldblatt (New York: Penguin, 2008).
 42. David Gordon White, *Myths of the Dog-Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 141–42. For detailed discussions of the dog-man, see Haiyan Lee, *The Stranger and the Chinese Moral Imagination* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 77.
 43. Magnus Fiskesjö, "The Animal Other: China's Barbarians and Their Renaming in the Twentieth Century," *Social Text* 29, no. 4 (2012): 57–79.
 44. Qian, "Guanyu xiandai tici wenti," 130.
 45. Paul Clark, "Ethnic Minorities in Chinese Films: Cinema and the Exotic," *East-West Film Journal* 1, no. 2 (1987): 20.
 46. Paul Clark, *Chinese Cinema: Culture and Politics since 1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 96.
 47. Louisa Schein, "Gender and Internal Orientalism in China," *Modern China* 23, no. 1 (1997): 75.
 48. In an animated film entitled *Jinse de hailuo (The Golden Sea Snail)*, a sea snail transforms into a pretty Han girl. However, in this case, the sea snail is not a marker of the Han ethnicity.
 49. The film demonstrates that the two girls are fully recovered. In real life, however, they were paralyzed due to frostbite.
 50. Tani Barlow, "Theorizing Woman: *Funü, Guojia, Jiating* (Chinese Women, Chinese State, Chinese Family)," in *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Prac-*

- tices*, ed. Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 174.
51. Lu Xun, a well-known writer in Republican China, once made an analogy between training animals and ruling the people: “The way of training wild animals is much like the shepherding of the people, which is why our ancients referred to great men as ‘herders.’ And yet animals such as cattle and sheep who allow themselves to be herded are more fearful than wild animals, which is why the ancients weren’t always able to depend on ‘trust’ alone, and had to resort to the fist as well, or what is also known more grandly as ‘legitimacy.’” Lu Xun, quoted in Jones, *Developmental Fairy Tales*, 149.
 52. The evil and exploitative landlord in the puppet-animated film *The Rooster Crows at Midnight* (1964) is one example. There was only one animated film during the Seventeen Years that featured a human villain who is a spy: *Hongse de xin hao* (*The Red Signal*, 1959). This spy disguises himself as a bear (probably alluding to the Soviet Union) living in the forest before he is exposed and captured by revolutionary children.
 53. There were both male and female heroes in model works and animated films during the Cultural Revolution, partly because of Jiang Qing’s rise to power.
 54. George Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Middle-Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 67.
 55. Rosemary A. Roberts, *Maoist Model Theatre: The Semiotics of Gender and Sexuality in the Chinese Cultural Revolution* (Boston: Brill, 2010), 223.
 56. For the use of animals in language during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, see Fengyuan Ji, *Linguistic Engineering: Language and Politics in Mao’s China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2004), 193.
 57. Thomas LaMarre, “Speciesism, Part 1: Translating Races into Animals in Wartime Animation,” *Mechademia* 3 (2008): 76.
 58. Qi Wang, “Those Who Lived in a Wallpapered Home: The Historical Space of the Socialist Chinese Counter-Espionage Film,” *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 5, no. 1 (2011): 55–71.
 59. The collectivization of animals began with *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* in 1965. In an animated film entitled *Shanyang huile jia* (*The Goat Returns Home*, 1977), the animal finally belongs to a family, not to the commune. This film is self-reflexive with double messages. The story is about a child helping a lost goat to return to its home. In the history of Chinese animation, this film marks the beginning of the decollectivization and liberation of animals, which were “lost” during the Cultural Revolution. After that, animals gradually returned to animation, the “home” of animals and fantasy.
 60. Haiyan Lee, *The Stranger and the Chinese Moral Imagination* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014), 84. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998).
 61. The hostile relationship depicted between wolves and sheep changed in post-Mao China:

wolves and sheep began to fall in love with each other. For the representation of wolves and sheep in contemporary popular culture, see Jianhua Chen, “Wolf Comes! Change of Values in Twenty-First Century China,” *Twenty-First Century Bimonthly*, no. 121 (2010): 44–48. For discussions of animals and politics in Republican China, see Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom and Sin-kiong Wong, “Taunting the Turtles and Damning the Dogs: Animal Epithets and Political Conflict in Modern China,” *Indiana East Asian Working Paper Series on Language and Politics in Modern China*, paper 9, summer 1996, www.indiana.edu/~easc/publications/doc/working_papers/Issue%209%201996%20Summer%20IUEAWPS%20Wang,%20Wasserstrom%20and%20Wong.pdf.

62. Dreams also disappeared from films during the Cultural Revolution. *The Golden Wild Goose* is the first animated film that features dreams after the end of the Cultural Revolution.
63. He Si, “Shenmoyang de chibang wang naerfei,” *Renmin wenxue (The People’s Literature)*, no. 6 (1960), 128.
64. Quoted in Mary Ann Farquhar, *Children’s Literature in China: from Lu Xun to Mao Zedong* (New York and London: M.E.Sharpe, 1999), 280.
65. René Descartes, *Discourse on the Method for Conducting One’s Reason Well and for Seeking Truth in the Sciences* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 32.
66. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” in *Can the Subaltern Speak?: Reflections on the History of an Idea*, ed. Rosalind C. Morris (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 21–80.
67. Akira Lippit, “The Parable of Animals: Animated Language,” in *Tiere im Film: Eine Menschheitsgeschichte der Moderne*, ed. Maren Möhring, Massimo Perinelli, and Olaf Stieglitz (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2009), 11–26.
68. The theme song in *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* is sung in a childish female voice, reinforcing the feminized position of ethnic minorities.
69. Language, animals, and ethnic minorities are closely related with each other. A puppet animated film, entitled *Gesheng feichu Wuzhishan (Songs Fly over the Five-Finger Mountain, 1978)*, portrays an ethnic Li girl, who becomes dumb in oppressive “old” society. It is only after her village is liberated by the Communist Party that she is able to speak and sing beautiful songs for the people.
70. Nicole Huang, “Sun-Facing Courtyards: Urban Communal Culture in Mid-1970s’ Shanghai,” *East Asian History*, nos. 25/26 (2003): 163.
71. Paul Clark, *The Chinese Cultural Revolution: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 111.
72. Jason McGrath, “Cultural Revolution Model Opera Films and the Realist Tradition in Chinese Cinema,” *Opera Quarterly* 26, nos. 2/3 (2010): 372.
73. Sergei Eisenstein, *Eisenstein on Disney*, ed. Jay Leyda (Calcutta: Eastend, 1988), 21.
74. LaMarre, “Speciesism, Part 1,” 79.

75. Thomas LaMarre, “Speciesism, Part 3: Neoteny and the Politics of Life,” *Mechademia* 6 (2011): 112–14.
76. Qian, “Guanyu xiandai tici wenti,” 132.
77. Yu Feng, “Zuotan meishu dianying” (“On Chinese Animated Film”), *Dianying yishu (Film Art)* 2 (1960), 37.
78. Ono Kōsei, *Chūgoķu no animēshon (Chinese Animation)* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1987), 128.
79. For detailed analyses of the “formalist drifts” in live-action films during the Cultural Revolution, see McGrath, “Cultural Revolution Model Opera Films.”
80. The representations of ruins in arts also disappeared from the 1950s onward and did not resurface until the late 1970s. See Wu Hung, *A Story of Ruins: Presence and Absence in Chinese Art and Visual Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 186–87.
81. Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 8.
82. Animals also disappeared systematically in arts (such as paintings) during the Cultural Revolution. In order to present a more positive and elegant image to foreign visitors at hotels and railway stations, Zhou Enlai helped to loosen the control on arts, resulting in a reemergence of animal motifs in the early 1970s. These paintings were later criticized by Jiang Qing and displayed at the Black Painting Exhibitions, including Chen Dayu’s *Welcoming Spring* (1973), which features an angry rooster; Huang Yongyu’s *Winking Owl* (1973); and Cheng Shifa’s *Girl and Deer* (1973). See Julia Andrews, *Painters and Politics in the People’s Republic of China, 1949–1979* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 369–77. The disappearance of animals in Chinese paintings and other artistic forms such as posters and linked pictures calls for more research and is not the primary concern of this article.
83. Ban Wang, *The Sublime Figure of History: Aesthetics and Politics in Twentieth-Century China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 2.

