2017


Annie Wang
awang5@wellesley.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.wellesley.edu/thesiscollection

Recommended Citation
https://repository.wellesley.edu/thesiscollection/497

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Wellesley College Digital Scholarship and Archive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Thesis Collection by an authorized administrator of Wellesley College Digital Scholarship and Archive. For more information, please contact ir@wellesley.edu.

Annie Wang

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the
Prerequisite for Honors
in History
under the advisement of C. Pat Giersch

April 2017

© 2017 Annie Wang
# Table of Contents

Introduction: The Origins of the Little Red Book .......................................................... 4

Chapter One: Scholars and Academia ........................................................................... 24

Chapter Two: Satire and Parody .................................................................................. 53

Chapter Three: Arts and Culture ............................................................................... 73

Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 95

Bibliography ............................................................................................................... 100

Appendices ............................................................................................................... 107
Acknowledgements

There are many incredible people that I must give thanks to for helping me realize this project. First and foremost, I owe Professor Pat Giersch my gratitude for his guidance through nearly three years of my Wellesley career. Thank you for your thought-provoking conversations and feedback, your eternal patience, and your undying enthusiasm as I have pushed through the thesis process. This project would have been little more than a dream without your support.

To Professor Matsusaka and Professor Greer, for their knowledge and insightful advice. Your eye-opening classes truly broadened my horizons. A special thank you to Professor Joseph for sitting down with me and sharing his experiences as a member of the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars, and to Professor Berman and Professor Tham for serving on my thesis exam committee.

To my friends, Ruby, Michelle, and Lisa, for sticking with me through thick and thin, for keeping me sane during those late-night sessions, and for patiently listening to my lengthy recitations about Maoism and Chinese-American relations. You all were the ones who have helped keep me going.

To my thesis writing partners, Anna and Meredith, for our fruitful discussions and mutual encouragement, and to Professor Grandjean for keeping us motivated. We did it!

Additional thanks to the Provost’s Office for providing funding for my research. I am indebted to the Clapp Library, the Harvard-Yenching Library, the Harvard University Archives, and the Wisconsin Historical Society for their assistance in gathering materials.

Last but not least, thank you to my parents for their unconditional love and support. You have been with me every step of the way, and I cannot thank you enough for sharing your childhood stories of the Cultural Revolution and instilling in me a fascination for the past. This thesis is dedicated in their honor.
Introduction

In January 2016, journalist and author Carol Pogash published *Quotations from Chairman Trump*, a compilation of quotes skewering the eponymous business mogul and then-presidential candidate. If the name itself was a blatant reference to the original *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*, then Pogash took a step further in drawing parallels between Trump and former Chinese leader Mao Zedong by publishing her book in a similar palm-size format with bright red binding. Trump’s lofty countenance is etched on the cover in the style of Socialist Realism, one of the most recognizable styles used in mid-century Communist artwork, and is wreathed within a stylized sun — once again symbolic of Mao, who himself was revered as the “Red Sun” at the height of his power.\(^1\) Quotes in *Chairman Trump* include unflattering and provocative sayings lampooning his legitimacy in holding public office, including “I’m, like, a really smart person” or “I will absolutely apologize sometime, hopefully in the distant future — if I’m ever wrong.”\(^2\) Pogash’s selection of quotes are undoubtedly to make Trump appear foolish, and the book’s overview emulates the stilted English-language translations of Communist literature: “Generations of schoolchildren will memorize these rubies of wisdom from President Trump.”\(^3\)

---

1 Such an attribution was common in Chinese propaganda of the 50s and 60s. Perhaps the most famous example of the sun as a symbol of Mao’s power and party is the folk tune and unofficial anthem “The East is Red,” which begins with the following lyrics: “The East is red, the sun rises/From China comes Mao Zedong.”


Pogash, however, did not necessarily choose to utilize the *Quotations* because of her familiarity with the original material. In fact, according to her interview with on MSNBC’s *Hardball with Chris Matthews*, she revealed that she had “not exactly” studied the work before beginning work on *Chairman Trump*. When asked by Matthews about similarities that she saw between Trump and Mao, she replied that both leaders “have a certain grandiosity [about them]” and “an authoritarian streak.” Matthews, in turn, responded that *Chairman Trump* could be used like a “Gideon Bible,” comparing the book to a holy book, a religious text meant to provide some means of spiritual guidance. Pogash’s comments reveal something surprising about modern American political culture- despite her lack of detailed knowledge about the *Quotations*, she had a preexisting understanding of its usage that she applied onto Trump. This “preexisting understanding” can be summarized as the dogmatic “bible” of a despotic leader, meant to be carried by the mindless masses.

How did Pogash, with her lack of knowledge about *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*, know of the “Little Red Book”? How can the comparison of Trump, a vehement capitalist, to Mao, an anti-establishment Marxist, even make sense? Finding the answer lies in understanding what the *Quotations* are, where they came from, and how Americans during the societally fractured global 1960s took it upon themselves to interpret one of the most prolifically printed texts in modern history.

---

4 See Chapter 1.

The Origins of the Little Red Book

The advent of the 1960s marked one of the most tumultuous decades of modern global history. Externally a call for a “return” to Marxist values and politically a crackdown on the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP’s) political detractors, the Cultural Revolution was set in motion by CCP Chairman Mao Zedong in 1966. For much of the next decade, the sociopolitical movement seemingly meant to purge China of anti-Marxist “revisionists” helped to consolidate Mao’s political power. The ideological fanaticism that emerged from the movement propelled Mao to the forefront of the CCP’s leadership and secured him, in both the eyes of Chinese citizens and the international community, as the leader of China until his death in 1976. The country itself was left behind with political factionalization, mass civil unrest, and the violent persecution of millions.

The Cultural Revolution’s volatile nature can be strongly attributed to the cult of personality that grew around Mao over the course of the 1960s. By triumphing his Sino-centric version of Marxism, Mao and his advisors gained mass popular support among the citizenry. Consolidating popular support among the Chinese population (over 677 million in 1960) came in many forms that seeped into numerous aspects of Chinese society. Political slogans promoting Mao’s most popular sayings were scrawled onto building walls, printed in state-run newspapers, and pasted on cars and aircraft; Chinese film and literature were limited to state-approved productions glorifying revolutionary struggle. Even in the early days of the Cultural Revolution, visualization of loyalty to Mao was a ubiquitous aspect of Chinese propaganda campaigns.

---

Instrumental to the creation of the Mao personality cult was Minister of National Defense and Vice Premier Lin Biao, a marshal of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) and, during the early years of the Cultural Revolution, Mao’s designated successor. An army man who had served the CCP since the late 1920s, Lin had had extensive experience with promoting Mao and criticizing his opponents. After the Communist victory in the Chinese Civil War (1927-1949), he continued to work extensively with the People’s Liberation Army into the 1960s. One of Lin’s primary duties was to manage the army’s newspaper and foremost mouthpiece, the People’s Liberation Army Daily, while ensuring political education for army members. To implement that political education, Lin combined extensive study of the stories of Communist martyrs with short, memorable quotes treated as moral lessons for PLA soldiers to live by, many of the sayings pulled (and sometimes carefully revised) from Mao’s former speeches and writings. These quotes ranged in topics from Marxism to self-criticism to the role of women, with one appearing in each issue of the PLA Daily.

A PLA Daily deputy editor later suggested merging these quotes into a small booklet sorted by topic chapters. The first iteration of this book was known as 200 Quotations from Chairman Mao. Six months of revisions after the booklet’s first appearance in mid-1963, 200 Quotations was granted its official title, Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong (Mao zhuxi yulu). The first edition of the Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong (henceforth referred to as the Quotations) was released in May 1964 with a run of 4.2 million copies, printed by the army-run People’s Liberation Army Publishing House. It contained 33 chapters and 267 quotes, sorted

7 The People’s Liberation Army is the name of the armed forces of the People’s Republic of China (1949-present).
by topics including “The Communist Party,” “Relations Between the Army and the People,” and “Correcting Mistaken Ideas.” Lin himself contributed a foreword to the first edition, supplementing his introduction with handwritten calligraphy drawn from the diary of Chinese martyr Lei Feng: “Read Chairman Mao’s books, listen to Chairman Mao’s words, act according to Chairman Mao’s instructions.” An addition to his foreword in the second edition encouraged readers to wield the book as an ideological weapon “for opposing imperialism, revisionism and dogmatism,” establishing it as a literary tool that was intended for both spiritual and practical usage — food for thought and faith.

The small size of the book (roughly that of an average man’s palm) made it easy to fit into a soldier’s shirt pocket; the bright red, waterproof vinyl cover and photo portrait of Mao on the first page made the purpose of its usage visually obvious. Soldiers, or cadres as they were known, were expected to study from the book in their time off, discussing in groups and using the relevant quotations in order to better their service to the CCP. The book rapidly became a mainstay of soldiers’ standard issue equipment — a 1965 forward for the Quotations issued by the General Political Department explained that the army issued the book “to every soldier in the whole army, just as we issue weapons.” A 1966 directive from the PLA General Political Department furthered the connection between cadre and book, urging soldiers to “put themselves


11 Ibid, xxxii.
in [to serve the country],” molding their beliefs to further the ideological revolution and “serve wholeheartedly” China and the Communist world.12

Print runs were limited at first, with Chinese publishers printing enough copies for each PLA member to receive one. However, the Quotations would soon begin appearing within civilian society as well. When Mao announced the “Learn from the PLA” national campaign in 1964, heralding the beginning of military-style reorganization in Chinese civilian society, the Quotations drastically increased in importance.13 Ensuing civilian demand for the Quotations was largely an artificial construct created through Mao’s national campaign and simultaneous political study sessions that were emulated across the country, particularly in rural regions. This “military idolization” campaign was vital for the popularization of the Quotations across the country, as it urged civilians to regard the book as not simply a commodity, but an ideological necessity. The new era of “military worship” created explosive demand for the book from nationwide booksellers, so much that publication grew exponentially to 75 million in early 1966.14 Between 1966 and 1968 (the zenith of the Cultural Revolution), demand skyrocketed, and over 300 publishers within China were devoted to printing the Quotations and other volumes of Mao’s writing. An article in the People’s Daily newspaper (Renmin Ribao) claimed as many as 740 million copies were produced in this two-year period. Some contemporary foreign observers later claimed that the Quotations, at one point, had outsold the Bible worldwide. It certainly could be concluded that the book had become the “bible” of the Chinese masses.


14 Leese, Mao Cult, 117.
The Quotations rapidly became the foremost emblem of both revolution and obedience in China. Large swathes of text were painted on the walls of buildings, and propaganda posters often featured characters holding or studying the book. The Quotations proved especially popular among the Red Guards, student cadres comprised primarily of middle- and high-school aged teenagers who formed the paramilitary social movement in 1966. Fanatically devoted to Mao’s word, it was a common sight for crowds of Red Guards to march together, holding up copies of the Quotations and waving it above their heads while chanting “Long live Chairman Mao!” Encouraged by the chairman himself to overthrow local social and political structures, the Red Guards primarily asserted their given power through tactics ranging from public beatings of “intellectuals” to destruction of Chinese cultural and historic sites. It also became part of their duty to ensure that all citizens carried a copy of the Quotations — punishment could even be administered to those who failed to keep one on their person in public. As the Cultural Revolution wore on, the book took on the attributes of its most outspoken readers, becoming a prominent part of the Red Guard arsenal. The Quotations soon became symbolic of the dogmatic aspects of Mao philosophy, as well as its underlying brutality.

Lin Biao’s influence over the Quotations, and thus, the primary method for how China studied Mao thought, came to an abrupt end in 1971. That same year, he fell out of Mao’s favor and was officially disavowed by the rest of the CCP. After Lin’s mysterious death in a plane accident over Mongolia, his foreword was scrubbed from every subsequent edition of the book, civilians and publishers alike tearing pages out from pre-existing copies for fear of being

associated with the disgraced marshal.\textsuperscript{16} The \textit{Quotations} proved to be just as potent of an ideological symbol as it was a reflection of the turmoil within the Chinese Communist Party during the twilight of Mao’s reign.

The \textit{Quotations’} potency was, however, short-lived. The beginning of rapprochement with the United States in 1972 began eroding the power of anti-western sentiment of Maoist literary material, and 1976, the year of Mao’s death, marked the end of the chairman and the “old” CCP. Following a chaotic scramble for power in the next two years, publication of the \textit{Quotations} halted under the leadership of paramount leader Deng Xiaoping in 1978.\textsuperscript{17} The book’s perception gradually shifted from that of a “must-have” to that of an outdated relic of a bygone age, and millions of copies were destroyed with this new belief in mind. Although Mao was gone, his cult had not faded. Subsequent “first-edition” printings in much smaller scale began again in 1993, the centenary of Mao’s birth.\textsuperscript{18} In China today, the \textit{Quotations} remains a nostalgic symbol for some, and is viewed as a piece of Communist kitsch for others.

\textbf{The “Little Red Book” in the United States}

Initially, the CCP labeled the \textit{Quotations} as “internal reading” and did not intend it to be sold overseas. The Party’s internal documents, revealed that, in 1966, it was “strictly forbidden” to sell the book to foreigners. The State Council Foreign Affairs Department initially justified the

\textsuperscript{16} Oliver Lei Han, “Sources and Early Printing History of Chairman Mao’s ‘Quotations,’” Bibsite: The Bibliographical Society of America, January 10, 2004.

\textsuperscript{17} “Paramount leader,” or \textit{zuigao lindao}, refers to the most prominent political leader in contemporary Chinese politics without regard for their official title, position, or lack thereof. This term came into common use with Deng Xiaoping’s rise to power in the late 1970s.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
decision, suggesting that the summarized quality of the book made it not “comprehensive” enough to fully explain Mao Zedong thought.\(^{19}\) However, this did not stop citizens from exchanging the book with foreigners, or for foreign visitors to seek out copies. The book’s distribution through private channels (in particular, via personal gift-giving) eventually spurred a change of heart and subsequently international distribution. International translation and distribution of the book added yet another symbolic facet to the *Quotations*: as a symbol of Communist Chinese soft power.\(^{20}\)

Published primarily through the Beijing Foreign Language Press, Chinese publishers began producing translated books with the publication of the Second Edition in 1967. Translated books, in languages including but not limited to French, Russian, Hindi, and Indonesian, were made available through limited channels, primarily at state-run “friendship stores” overseas.\(^{21}\) Chinese newspapers triumphed stories of the book used among foreign allies, publishing stories of Maoist political groups and even soccer teams gathering into PLA-style groups to read from the *Quotations*.\(^{22}\) Visiting Communists were presented with copies of the *Quotations* at pro-Mao rallies.\(^{23}\) The translated books, in the eyes of the CCP propaganda machine, now celebrated international kinship through the little tome that could be shared and discussed among so many.

\(^{19}\) Leese, *Mao Cult*, 119.

\(^{20}\) Defined by Harvard professor Joseph S. Nye Jr. in the 1980s, soft power refers to the ability of a country to persuade and attract others without the use of coercion or force (hard power). For more information, see Joseph S. Nye Jr., “Soft Power,” *Foreign Policy* 80, Autumn 1990, 153-171.

\(^{21}\) There is no substantiated number as to how many books were shipped overseas; Beijing’s New China News Agency gave an unsubstantiated claim of “over 800,000 in 117 countries and territories” as of 1967. From “Names and Faces in the News,” *The Boston Globe*, July 3, 1967.


Despite the fractured diplomatic relations between the United States and China during the 1960s, copies of the *Quotations* were disseminated to the United States. Initially, it appears to be unusual that the CCP chose to ship pro-Maoist literature to a decidedly anti-Communist enemy nation, as the United States refused to recognize the Communist People’s Republic of China as the official government of China after the Chinese Civil War ended in 1949.\(^{24}\) In order to explain this discrepancy, it is necessary to consider how Chinese government officials saw China’s then-current place in the world.

The CCP’s stance on foreign relations established China as a third party unaffiliated neither with the U.S. nor the Soviet Union, the latter with which the CCP had experienced a deep ideological split and severed diplomatic relations in the early 1960s. In his essay “On New Democracy,” Mao established three major state systems in the world: republics under bourgeois dictatorship led by the United States; republics under the dictatorship of the proletariat led by the Soviet Union; and “transitional” republics under the joint dictatorship of several revolutionary classes. China, he determined, was a member of the third group, which consisted primarily of former colonial and semi-colonial states in the midst of revolution.\(^{25}\) This idea, known as the Three Worlds Theory, was first introduced by Mao in 1940, in the midst of the Second Sino-Japanese War. Although he likely had not considered China a “leader” of this exploited group in 1940, his definition of the so-called Three Worlds Theory proved to be a flexible definition over

\(^{24}\) The Republic of China (ROC, or Taiwan) was recognized as the legitimate government until the U.S., under the Carter Administration, recognized the PRC and severed official relations with Taiwan on January 1st, 1979.

time. The worlds and actions of the CCP during the zenith of the *Quotations*’ domestic and international influence suggest an attempt by China to assert itself as an ideological world leader, and thus the “true” champion of Marxism. In this period, the People’s Republic had represented itself as a “third state system” that was separated from both the United States and its rival, the Soviet Union. Diplomatic relations between China and the U.S. continued to be tense, further exacerbated by a trading embargo placed by the U.S. and open conflict between American- and Chinese-backed forces in the then-ongoing Vietnam War.

Despite these ongoing tensions, the Foreign Language Press began publishing English translations of the *Quotations* in 1966, with Chinese-English bilingual editions appearing in August 1967. Copies of the “Little Red Book” were shipped in limited quantity to the United States and sold in “friendship stores” primarily located on the West Coast. This is where the *Quotations* truly transformed into soft power, diplomatic tools created to reshape American beliefs and opinions of China. Much like how soft power was used by the United States and Soviet Union to indirectly influence the thoughts and minds of neighboring states, the Chinese government desired to use the *Quotations* and similar material to attract foreigners to Maoism. Newspaper articles that boasted of Chinese-foreign friendship and cooperation also made certain to include numerous anecdotes of “foreign friends” raving over Mao, Maoism, and China’s “great proletarian revolution,” often elevating him not only as a guiding light for China, but for

---


27 For the stereotype (metal mold) plate used for the first English language printing, see Appendix 4.

28 Justin Schiller, interview by author, email message, August 13, 2016.
the rest of the world. 29 The Brilliance of Mao Tse-tung’s Thought Illuminates the Whole World, a book in the Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung series, was even dedicated to listing the students, revolutionaries, and proletariats from every major continent who integrated Mao thought into their daily lives. Foreigners from Japan to Ghana were depicted welcoming Chinese entourages with shouts of “Long live Mao Tse-Tung!” and gleefully accepting copies of the Quotations as gifts. 30 While these anecdotes were questionably truthful and more likely than not exaggerated, it is true that substantial numbers of foreigners, including Americans, were drawn to Maoism during the late sixties through the use of exported literature.

One section in The Brilliance of Mao Tse-Tung’s Thought is of particular interest, labeled “Mao Tse-Tung’s Thought Shakes the Capitalist World.” The section mentions Robert F. Williams, an African-American civil rights activist and writer. Williams was deeply inspired by Maoist thought and produced writings and developed armed self-defense tactics. When interviewed, he explained the following to his Chinese interviewers: “Who is it that most firmly supports us? We Negro brothers know best. It is Chairman Mao Tse-tung who most resolutely supports the struggle of our Negro brothers the world over.” 31

Despite the recurring criticism within the Quotations of the United States and American imperialism (with one particularly infamous chapter labeled “[U.S.] Imperialism and All Reactionaries are Paper Tigers”), the editors of the book used Mao’s quotes to express sympathy

29 “Foreign Friends.”

30 Note that “Tse-Tung” was a common romanization of Mao’s name in written English until the 1990s, when the hanyu pinyin system largely replaced the then-common Wade-Giles system in mainland China.

31 The Brilliance of Mao Tse-Tung’s Thought Illuminates the Whole World (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1966), 13.
for American citizens suffering from oppression at home. Of particular importance is a quote in the chapter “Classes and Class Struggle”:

...national struggle is a matter of class struggle. Among the whites in the United States, it is only the reactionary ruling circles that oppress the black people. They can in no way represent the workers, farmers, revolutionary intellectuals and other enlightened persons who comprise the overwhelming majority of the white people.

There is thus a division between the American “capitalists” and the common citizens not complicit in “imperialist” actions overseas. Described as “enlightened persons,” the context of this quote suggests that these Americans could be good, reasonable people and thus Maoist sympathizers. It can thus be concluded that this was the mindset that CCP publishers held when sending translated English editions of the Quotations to the United States: that despite the national-level political misgivings between the two countries, China could successfully influence Americans through distribution of the Quotations. American leftists and political radicals dissatisfied with the then-current state of American society, including African-American political leaders like Robert Williams, were more susceptible to Mao thought and were thus of particular interest to the CCP.

In the United States, civil unrest underlined by the increasingly controversial war in Vietnam had led to mass ideological fracturing within American society. Radical individuals and organizations, ranging from Asian nationalists to socialist militant groups, from across the United States drew inspiration from the English editions of the Little Red Book. The Black Panther

32 The quote in question is “...In the West imperialism is still oppressing the people at home. This situation must change. It is the task of the people of the whole world to put an end to the aggression and oppression perpetrated by imperialism, and chiefly by U.S. imperialism.” From “6. Imperialism and All Reactionaries are Paper Tigers,” Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung (Beijing: Foreign Language Press 1966), PAGE NUMBER.

Party for Self-Defense was most directly responsible for the distribution of the *Quotations* across the country and bringing mainstream attention to the book. The BPP, as it was called, was a black nationalist association founded in Oakland, California by Bobby Seale and Huey Newton in 1966. Like many other American radical groups of the time, they saw China as supporters of the black nationalist struggle. While it was far from the only left-wing radical group openly influenced by Mao thought, it was by far the most visible in the United States. Many of its members and predecessors first discovered Mao through the pro-Communist revolutionary struggles occurring in post-colonial Africa and Cuba during the 1950s and early sixties. China had supported such African anti-colonial struggles, stating in the *Quotations* that “[China] must give active support to the national independence and liberation movements in Africa, Asia, and Latin America as well as to the peace movement and to just struggle in all of the countries of the world”.

A pro-Maoist response to social unease and structural violence within the country, the BPP’s protest tactics and language of self-defense, as powerful as they were controversial, drew inspiration from Chinese (particularly PLA and even Red Guard) materials. The Black Panther Party made substantial use of the *Quotations* during its formative years, and employed it for varying purposes: as an ideological tool, a commodity, and a symbol of defiance. As was true for other American radicals, the BPP was attracted to the *Quotations*’ lightweight portability and its organized, understandable language that was flexible enough to apply to American as well as Chinese concerns. The BPP sold paper copies of the book on college campuses as part of a fundraising campaign and made it required reading for all members. When Huey Newton was jailed under allegations of murder in 1967, “Free Huey” rallies organized in his honor saw

---

groups of BPP members gathering together and participating in group studies of the *Quotations*,
or organizing into large crowds and waving it in the air in the style of the Red Guards.

Relations between the CCP and the Panthers were amicable, Mao having formally voiced
his support for “Afro-American” liberation in a statement released in 1963. Members of the
Black Panther leadership became part of the miniscule number of Americans to visit China
between 1970 and 1971, months ahead of President Nixon’s historic visit to China. Huey Newton
later recalled his ten-day visit in 1971 with a sense of awe, particularly when his visiting
entourage was greeted with crowds of civilians waving “Little Red Books” and holding signs
denoting their support of Black Panthers and the American people. However, the positive
sentiment towards leftist radicals was considerably less prevalent within the United States. The
BPP was, in contrast, stereotyped and painted as “villains” and “militants” in local press.

Within the circle of American radicals, the *Quotations* did exactly what the CCP
intended: to increase support for Maoism, and to exert Chinese influence overseas. Visitors to
China itself were deeply influenced by the literature they had consumed beforehand; Newton,
even when aware of the societal and environmental problems that developing China could run
into, concluded that “Everything I saw in China demonstrated that the People’s Republic is a free
and liberated territory...There was...little to find fault with.” However, the book would not
remain exclusive to Maoist sympathizers for long. In fact, Americans had been made aware of

---

35 For more information, see Mao Zedong, “Statement Supporting the American Negroes In Their Just Struggle


37 Jules Boykoff and Martha Gries, “‘We're going to defend ourselves’: The Portland Chapter of the Black Panther

38 Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, 326.
the *Quotations*’ existence for years before it was popularized by the BPP. To supplement the “friendship store” copies of the *Quotations* and the Black Panther copies, the first official American-published edition of the *Quotations* appeared in March 1966, edited by China scholar Stuart Schram with a foreword by A. Doak Barnett.\(^{39}\) Non-leftist American media would prove to be less sympathetic to the book’s message, if not outright hostile to this piece of “Communist propaganda.” A 1967 article in the *Chicago Tribune* labeled the *Quotations* as “Mao’s *Mein Kampf,*” placing Mao’s quotes on the same level of Hitler’s autobiography.\(^{40}\) A paperback edition of the *Quotations* printed by the conservative Christian radio show *Voice of Americanism* described the text as “dull and terrifying… claims made by the sycophantic Red Chinese dupes,” warning on the cover “Danger! This book is Communist propaganda!”\(^{41}\)

Although it might be imagined that only American leftists were influenced by the *Quotations*, this is not accurate. Such preconceptions cannot truly encompass the breadth of American reactions and understandings of the Little Red Book, particularly during the late 1960s to mid-1970s and the volatility of Chinese-American relations during the same period.

My thesis thus attempts to bridge two separate areas of scholarship within Chinese-American relations: the effects of the “global sixties,” and America’s shifting perceptions of China.\(^{42}\) This project builds off of Cook’s global history of the *Quotations*’ international

\(^{39}\) Han, “Sources and Early Printing History.”

\(^{40}\) Clarence Petersen, “Paperbacks: Mao’s ‘Mein Kampf.’” *Chicago Tribune*, March 26, 1967.

\(^{41}\) Mao Zedong, *Quotations from Chairman Mao-Tse-Tung (Danger! This Book is Communist Propaganda!)* ed. W.S. McBirnie (Glendale: Voice of Americanism), iii.

propagation and Lovell’s exploration of the relationship between Maoism and international revolution, in particular drawing influence from Mullen’s study of the 1960s and 1970s American Afro-Asian resistance.43 Previous scholarship, including that of Mullen, has thoroughly reflected on the significance of the Quotations within specific circles of American society, particularly the book’s most probable audience: American political radicals sympathetic to Maoism. As is true with understanding the Quotations purely through the view of American newspapers and religious right, such specific focus lends itself to a narrow perception of the text’s diverse array of interpretations, and tends to ignore how non-Maoists lent their understandings (or lack thereof) to accentuate their own thoughts and beliefs. As such, I seek to complicate the narrative of American reflections on Maoist literature by moving beyond the Quotations’ most direct audience to examine instances of its usage that were not necessarily literal interpretations but artistic, literary, and scholarly analyses that may have had subtle rather than explicit connotations and agendas.

In reference to American historical perceptions of China, my thesis primarily builds on three major publications: Isaac’s interviews of American political officials during the 1950s, which analyzed how American political and military leaders built up stereotypes of China; Jespersen’s research on pre-1949 American media conceptions of China, which explored American fascination and interaction with Chinese images and people; and Haddad’s analysis of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American understandings of Chinese exported product, which further discussed how Chinese artisans constructed images of themselves to cater to the

preconceived notions of an American audience and thus exerted control over their own representation — a feat that, centuries later, continued to reflect China’s role in actively shaping its own image. I also introduce a new perspective on Li Jie’s reflections of how domestic and diplomatic events occurring within China may have helped shape U.S.-China relations by studying how shifting American perceptions of China may have also changed understandings of the Quotations over time. My work differs from these previous analyses by examining a significant and controversial exported literary product and placing its American-centric social-cultural impact in the foreground, while also recognizing the importance of contemporary politics in influencing individual understandings of the Quotations.

Although the Quotations will be the most extensively discussed work in these chapters, it cannot fully represent the extent to which images and representations of “Red China” permeated American society. The primary purpose of this project is to explore the dissemination of Mao and Maoism in the United States, in which the Quotations held an undeniably important role. In any case, it is impossible to separate the history of the Quotations in the United States from the history of “imported Maoism” and 1960s social struggle. Thus, this project will consolidate scholarly analyses of the Quotations alongside scholarly interactions with China, Maoism, and in certain examples, Mao himself.

The following three chapters examine the influence and impact of the Quotations in three different venues of American society between 1967 and 1980, corresponding with the first


appearance of the English-language *Quotations* in the United States and official rapprochement between China and the United States (and thus the “end” of the *Quotations*’ reign), respectively. The first chapter discusses the *Quotations*’ interpretation by American academic scholars and China experts, the second chapter examines political satire and parody based off of the *Quotations*, and the third chapter presents visual and literary interpretations of the *Quotations* by artists, playwrights, and other media creators. Internationally-inclined Americans of diverse political, cultural, and social backgrounds were deeply influenced by *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* and similar material exported from Maoist China, which itself was actively working to shape American hearts and minds towards greater support for Mao’s regime. Between 1967-1980, Americans were influenced by the *Quotations*’ unique structure, language, and rhetoric while employing the book, its image and ideas to produce their own understandings of Mao, Cultural Revolution-era China, and the tumultuous countercultural movements of the mid-century United States.

Chapter One reflects on scholarly interpretation of the *Quotations* and similar works by American professors, students, and other academics working in China or East Asian studies, with a particular focus on the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars (CCAS), a left-leaning and Maoism-sympathetic group of academics formed in protest of American actions in the Vietnam War. The chapter further explores Maoism’s influence on the beliefs of disenchanted scholars, and subsequent conflicts that appeared among different generations of academics regarding the study of contemporary China. Younger researchers took issue with their superiors’ interpretations of Chinese history, and debated topics of war, revolution, and imperialism primarily through writing. The study of the *Quotations* and similar Maoist material would not only impact
academic understandings of new China, but also how radical scholars inadvertently began to
shift from a western-centric approach of understanding China to a China-centric, imperialism-
critical approach that continues to shape modern approaches to China studies.

Chapter Two focuses on the usage of the *Quotations* in satire and parody by American
writers, along with how media saturation of images of “Red China” shaped and influenced
American popular media. It analyses how writers, ranging from college students to full-time
novelists, utilized the recognizable structure and language of the book in order to lampoon or
uplift varying political figures ranging from President Richard M. Nixon to conservative
commentator William F. Buckley Jr. to Mao’s successor, Chairman Liu Shaoqi. The *Quotations*
became a template for these frustrated writers working to impart criticism — towards Mao,
China, the United States, and, in one particular example, the state of society itself.

Chapter Three discusses the origins of Mao’s, and ultimately the *Quotations’,
significance within American art and culture. The chapter focuses on two particular artists:
Playwright Edward Albee, who wrote *Box and Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* (not to
be confused with the Little Red Book) in 1967; and Pop artist Andy Warhol, who created two art
series that emulated different aspects of the *Quotations*: the *Mao* series of 1971-73, based off the
infamous Mao portrait lifted from the *Quotations*, and the *Little Red Book* series of 1971-1975,
which was inspired by the book’s portable qualities and mass production aesthetic. These artists
and American citizens made use of the limited, slanted information they received from American
news coverage to formulate their own understandings of Mao, Maoism, and China, which they in
turn passed on to their audiences to form a unique image of China in American popular culture.
Chapter One

Maoism in American Academia

The advent of the Cultural Revolution led to a mad scramble among Western experts to ascertain what, with the limited knowledge available, was going on in China. The *Quotations* and Maoism became part of a greater discussion among academics about the state of social upheaval and political revolution in both China and the United States. However, not all agreed on how to interpret the restricted information coming out of China. Left grasping at straws by the lack of information regarding contemporary China, scholars searched for methods of piecing together, through the Little Red Book and its contemporaries, a cohesive narrative of China, Mao Zedong, and Mao thought. The *Quotations* became one field of analysis in which scholars worked to redefine modern China’s new role and the methods as to how American academia was to comprehend “new” China.

Whether by coincidence or spurred by the actions of the unorthodox Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the *Quotations* emerged during a period of extreme social unrest in the United States and subsequently great debate within the East Asian studies scholarly community. During this period, Chinese revolutionary messages became ingrained into radical left-wing academic circles, providing a new language of instruction and granting a different venue of understanding for which frustrated young university students and researchers utilized to broadcast a new, anti-imperialist message of scholarly revolution within American academia. Scholars split along generational lines as radical academics clashed with the “old guard” over interpretations of
China that the radicals considered outdated or pro-imperialist. Some of these young scholars, incensed by academic debate and the tumultuous political climate in the United States, formed Maoist-sympathetic political organizations like the Committee for Concerned Asian Scholars (CCAS). Their study of Maoist material, whether it was through the Quotations or other sources, helped to nurture and promote a pro-CCP agenda that influenced how CCAS politicized China’s image, and how American scholars, regardless of their respective stances, shaped and modernized China studies leading into the latter half of the 20th century.

Between 1967 and 1970, China scholars from various backgrounds and beliefs presented their respective analyses of the Cultural Revolution, but many came to similar conclusions: that the future — and thus, the legacy — of the unprecedented movement was too uncertain to predict. In his 1970 evaluation of “China’s new socialism,” Bruce Douglass predicted “a return to the original aspirations behind the original [Bolshevik] socialist idea,” but ultimately concluded that China’s flavor of socialism, tying together the original Marxist-Leninist philosophy with industrialization, was too novel to draw any firm conclusions.46 He wrote, “Are the social and spiritual ideals of the original vision really compatible with industrialism? …the Chinese Communists simply assert that they are. But it remains assertion, not yet explained or demonstrated.”47

Douglass’s skepticism was not unwarranted, particularly with the aforementioned lack of information regarding the Cultural Revolution’s policies. If the how (implementation of Cultural Revolution policy) was not discernible, the why was more widely available in the form of literary

compilations like *Quotations by Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*. As familiarity with the *Quotations* grew and spread among the American public, its unprecedented appearance became a part of discussion and debate among American academic scholars, particularly students, researchers, and professors in China or East Asian studies.

This chapter draws inspiration from the theory first established by Richard Madsen. In his book *China and the American Dream*, Madsen suggests that American academia was divided three major “camps” of China scholars between 1960 and 1980: the “conservative” camp, which made up much of the “old guard” who allegedly held on to old, outdated myths of new China as a threatening Communist aggressor; the “radical” camp, which consisted of institutions and individuals allegedly seeking to redefine the People’s Republic in positive terms, often influenced by way of CCP informative and propagandistic sources like the *Quotations*; and the “liberal center,” which maintained a neutral, cautious stance that considered the American-led fight against communism necessary, yet remained wary of some of the methods used to contain communism. Although not all scholars fit into or even considered themselves part of Madsen’s groupings, flying accusations tended to group individuals into certain camps more often than others. I also seek to complicate Madsen’s analysis of this debate among camps by suggesting that in the midst of this internal debate, there were external influences actively seeking to sway scholarly opinions of China: China itself, specifically the Chinese Communist Party, by way of literary propaganda disseminated into the United States and through invitations for scholarly groups to visit the then-reclusive country.

---

The “conservative” camp is in itself a misleading term, as scholars (often accused of the term by members of the liberal camp) belonging to this group included giants in China studies who had been established in the field for decades, and thus may certainly have held less “modern” views towards their country of study, in particular the infamous “impact-response” model of Fairbank’s Harvard School. This does not suggest, however, that their views were orientalist or pro-imperialist or that their beliefs regarding China studies were not invulnerable to change over time. Arguably, many of these individuals may have belonged in Madsen’s “liberal center,” but were accused by radicals by virtue of being “not progressive enough.” This chapter analyzes the individuals in question (including but not limited to Schram, Barnett, John Fairbank, and John DeFrancis) and organizations (The American Historical Association, to name an example), with a particular focus on two aspects of their studies: academic publishings and annotations of the *Quotations*, and the academic conflict that ensued between the so-called “conservative” and “radical” factions — and often, different generations — of China scholars.

The radical camp is also an umbrella term, and thus in this chapter will be narrowed down to the analysis of one significant scholarly group, the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars (CCAS). An academic-political organization founded in 1968 by graduate students and university faculty dedicated to revising Asian Studies in an anti-imperialist, pro-internationalism light, the CCAS was a significant voice in promoting “radical” China studies. The CCAS trips to China between 1971 and 1974 will be examined in particular detail, especially in context to the published chronicle of the 1971 visit, *China! Inside the People’s Republic.*
Scholarly Understandings of the Little Red Book

Americans living in China during the Cultural Revolution were few in number, with many missionaries, diplomats, and other non-Chinese having been expelled or detained since the Communist takeover. As such, comprehensive news from China was limited, often obscured by propaganda or simple lack of evidence. One of the challenges of documenting contemporary Chinese history for scholars in the late 1960s and early 70s was compiling the story of the Cultural Revolution through a piecemeal network of limited foreign journalism from Beijing and state-run news sources. The dearth of data, however, did not prevent their analyses of what little information was available. Although details of the Cultural Revolution were not made fully available to the international public until the late 1970s, western scholars had formulated their own interpretations of the chaos that had become Chinese national politics. The sheer amount of sensational propaganda stemming from China along with evidence of the CCP’s previous ‘failures’ in maintaining order led some western scholars to conclude that the Cultural Revolution was in danger of failure.

University of Glasgow researchers Jack Gray and Patrick Cavendish, in a critical response to what they gleaned of Mao’s decisions, suggested that the People’s Republic had been built upon shaky economic and fiscal foundations. Although they primarily focused on discussing economic policy in *Chinese Communism in Crisis*, Gray and Cavendish did note the power of ideological literature in strengthening Chinese domestic unity. Pointing towards the rising issues that may have arisen from drawing inspiration from Soviet attempts at

49 The small number of foreigners permitted to live in China, including Mao’s supporters, were often targeted during the Cultural Revolution for their association with “imperialist” nations or for other reasons. For more information, see Anne-Marie Brady, *Making the Foreign Serve China: Managing Foreigners in the People’s Republic* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003).
collectivization and labor exploitation, Gray and Cavendish suggested that a diverse combination of socioeconomic struggles contributed to party infighting in the late 1950s and early 60s. As reuniting the factionalized CCP would require great effort in manufacturing and coalescing support, the influx of “Mao thought” writing and campaigns in subsequent years could be interpreted as an attempt to establish national unity.

Gray and Cavendish further argued that works like the Quotations were a vague “distillation” of Mao thought meant to ensure greater understanding of Mao’s goals among the relatively uneducated masses. The Glasgow researchers concluded that the Quotations was a piece of work specifically meant to address “Chinese problems,” a “response to Chinese circumstances… generally misunderstood in the West.”

What would strike a Western reader as “extreme” or “totalitarian” would, according to their observations, have actually stemmed from centuries of Chinese philosophy and political thought. However, in line with their skepticism of Chinese government policy, they further argued that the “public morality” that formed the backbone of the Quotations was “fraudulent” and consisted of perverted Confucian ideals within a Marxist system: ultimately, an unstable combination. Still, they concluded, the ultimate message was quite powerful; “one must appreciate the strength and persistence of China’s elitist, bookish, and bureaucratic habits of thought.” Gray and Cavendish’s observations later became part of an underlying point of contention among other scholars, particularly researchers studying the Quotations and considering its possible relevance to ongoing events in and outside the United States. Was it appropriate, they wondered, to consider what was going on in China a new


51 Ibid, 49.
beginning for the country, or merely another chapter in its long and turbulent dynastic history? Scholars would struggle with these questions for the next decade, working to answer them through multiple perspectives.

Several American scholarly publications and annotations of the *Quotations* appeared in the late 1960s and early 1970s, published both in competition with and alongside the “official” Beijing Foreign Language Press edition also being distributed in the United States. The first officially published American edition of *Quotations by Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* appeared in 1967, edited and annotated by esteemed Mao scholar Stuart Schram with a foreword by journalist and political scientist A. Doak Barnett. Certain editions were bound in bright red, the covers extolling the book (in large yellow letters) as “the most powerful — and challenging — document of the century!”

Printed significantly larger than the pocket-size Beijing Foreign Language Press edition of the *Quotations*, the sensationalist language of the Schram edition cover was clearly meant to draw in American readers curious about Mao’s unusual tome. In the chapters preceding Mao’s quotes, Schram and Barnett took a deeply critical tone towards the *Quotations* and its implications in both China and the international arena. Barnett described the *Quotations* as a centerpiece of Mao’s unprecedented “massive [sic] reindoctrination campaign,” while Schram compared it to the likes of holy texts like the Quran.52 Furthermore, both scholars drew attention to the significance of the book’s international circulation, evaluating its probable usage in the subsequent decade. Schram acknowledged the book’s possible appeal among anti-imperialist

forces around the world, citing developing countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America “humiliated” by American interventionism. “China,” he wrote, “appears to be the only nation with both the will and the power to resist American domination of world affairs.” Barnett, addressing hypothetical reader concerns or disinterest in reading “Maoist dogma,” suggested that American citizens needed to bolster their own education in order to better understand the forces at work within this rival nation. Americans could thus put the book to good use and improve their “understanding of the forces now at work [in Cultural Revolution-era China].”

Nonetheless, both scholars, like their contemporaries, were faced with significant gaps in evidence and could only guess at what could await China in later years. Barnett had also authored China After Mao in 1967, evaluating the challenges that could face Chinese leaders after Mao’s inevitable death. Much like Schram, Barnett considered the Quotations a sort of “holy text” that was followed by the Communist regime. His concern over China’s indeterminate future was also reflected in the foreword, where he concluded that in the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution, “scripture” like the Quotations would provide the baseline for Communist Chinese ideology and policy for years to come. “Whoever wins the struggle [over China’s future],” he stated, “...are likely to appeal to — and quote — concepts and sayings that are included in this book.”

Schram, too, was deeply critical and skeptical of the rosy worldview presented through the Quotations. The editor’s notes that followed the translated text served two primary purposes:

53 Ibid, xxii.
55 Ibid, vi.
to point out omitted and edited sections of text from different editions, and to point out hypocrisies in Mao’s words. In his essay preceding the translated text, he analyzed several passages from Mao’s Selected Works (many of the more famous sayings were distilled into the Quotations) and concluded that Mao’s repeated emphasis on “struggle and drama and...conviction” was largely irrational. He continued, “These attitudes are likely to prove less appropriate to...the complex problems of a modernizing society than they were to [Mao’s] experience in the Chingkang Mountains.”\textsuperscript{56} If this was to be the official “scripture” of the Cultural Revolution, which Schram conceded at least had a few “excellent aims,” then it was unlikely that the movement would successfully accomplish its goals. In Schram’s eyes, the Cultural Revolution (which he rarely refers to as such in the essay, seemingly preferring “the revolution” or “the Chinese Revolution”) contradicted itself in that it encouraged readers to apply Mao’s works “in a creative way” while simultaneously pushing them to think only “correct” thoughts.\textsuperscript{57} Ultimately, he inferred, “it is highly doubtful whether such a Spartan philosophy can long maintain its hold even in China itself, still less in Africa or Latin America.”\textsuperscript{58}

While the Schram/Barnett edition was packaged for public perusal, certain American-edited copies were structured for serious academic review for a highly specific audience. John DeFrancis’s \textit{Annotated Quotations from Chairman Mao} is one such example. The Schram/

\textsuperscript{56} Schram, “On the Quotations,” xi. Schram refers here to the Jinggang Mountains, located between Jiangxi and Hunan Provinces. It was the former Communist base of operations during the CCP’s struggle against the Kuomintang, which was established in 1928 and abandoned in 1934 at the onset of the infamous Long March. Today, it is better known as the “birthplace” of the People’s Liberation Army.

\textsuperscript{57} Schram, xix.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid, xxiii.
Barnett version combined the Beijing Foreign Language English translation of the Quotations with accompanying essays from both scholars; in contrast, the DeFrancis edition produced the *Quotations* solely in Chinese with accompanying *pinyin* romanization. This book is intended, he wrote in the introduction, to “further facilitate Chinese language learning among students.”

While the Schram/Barnett version discussed in some detail the sociopolitical significance of the *Quotations* and its international connotations, DeFrancis seemed to spare little time on discussing the text in terms of its political meaning. University of Massachusetts linguistics professor Teng Shou-Hsin, in his review of DeFrancis, observed a “disturbing” trend within the reader that “glossed over” the component (Chinese) characters of proper names, particularly those of states and political leaders. Instead, much of DeFrancis’s textual analyses focused on treating the *Quotations* not as a political reader, but as a vehicle for learning the Chinese language. More than half of the DeFrancis edition is taken up by translations of Chinese terms and idioms, with only a select number of terms directly referencing the names of Chinese Communist party leaders or ideological jargon.

DeFrancis noted in the introduction that he chose to annotate the *Quotations* because of its repetitive qualities, with the author “hammer[ing] away at the points he wishes to get across.” This is the closest that DeFrancis got within the annotated volume to making any political commentary regarding the *Quotations*’ messages. While one can only surmise what DeFrancis was intending with this avoidance of discussing contemporary Chinese politics, as he simply states that he intends the book to be “used” by “students at various levels of language


competence,” it is evident that the *Quotations* underwent some sort of depoliticization under DeFrancis’s pen.⁶¹ Although this may or may have not been deliberate on DeFrancis’s part (he was, after all, a linguist) the segregation of historic and literary analysis from contemporary political discussion that was so common among academics would contribute to growing rifts among China studies scholars.

Although Madsen’s grouping of scholarly stances is crucial in that it helps to highlight divisions, the metaphorical “lines in the sand” between scholars of the period, “conservative,” “liberal,” and “radical,” are ultimately subjective terms that were often thrown around as accusations. Perhaps the most accurate way to consolidate the breadth of China-centric frameworks utilized in American academia is by two major categories: the “impact-response” model that was first elaborated upon in John K. Fairbank’s influential *China’s Response to the West*, and the more contemporary anti-imperialist model that was espoused in challenge to the impact-response model by newer scholars.

Fairbank (1907-1991) had been actively studying Chinese history since the 1920s, and during the Vietnam era was well-established as the founder of modern China studies at Harvard University. The impact-response model was shaped by Fairbank and his contemporaries, and it became the hallmark of his so-called “Harvard School” of Chinese historiography in the late 1940s. Succinctly put, this framework places China in the role of the passive responder, reacting and developing only as the West influenced China and the rest of the East. Paul Cohen, one of Fairbank’s former students, describes this as the “Western impact” and “Eastern response”

---

⁶¹ DeFrancis, *Annotated Quotations*, ix.
model. Fairbank elaborated on this seemingly one-sided relationship in his book *The United States and China*, arguing that the technological advancement that began in the late eighteenth-century West allowed it to continuously modernize from within; China, on the other hand, did not exist within the boundaries of Western innovation and was compliant to what innovations and demands came from the West. Furthermore, although Chinese society had once surged ahead of Europe in terms of scientific innovation, Fairbank suggested that a potent historical mixture of “tyrannical” language, scholarly fixation on spiritual matters, and the “Confucian straitjacket” had ultimately caused China to lag behind. In other words, the West’s technological superiority naturally made it the primary shaper of modern Chinese history, while any response from the Chinese could only be attributed to decisions or responses to the West. If China was to grow and develop into a twentieth-century nation, it was not adequate enough for it to modernize; it had to westernize. The impact-response model would be a crucial building block of the “modernization theory” that was championed by many of the colleagues in Fairbank’s generation, which would be met with scorn by others, including several of his own students.

Radicals, in contrast, scorned the impact-response model as overly western-centric and smacking of imperialist rhetoric. Furthermore, subscribers to anti-imperialist models utilized their criticism to further denounce their scholarly superiors. In the event that, perhaps, first ignited the inter-scholarly drama of the late 1960s and early 1970s, Harvard graduate student James “Jim” Peck published “The Roots of Rhetoric: The Professional Ideology of America’s

---


64 Ibid, 75-59.
China Watchers” in a 1969 issue of The Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars accusing leading China scholars of being both lofty and elitist. According to Peck, modernization theory was an ideological construct that was used to justify “the [post World War II American] involvement in the domestic affairs of numerous East Asian nations.” Drawing primarily from the combined work of Fairbank and his fellow Harvard professor, Japan and East Asia scholar Edwin O. Reischauer, Peck argued that, although modernization theory recognized the negative influence of imperialism in Chinese history, its longstanding effects were ultimately downplayed in favor of American interests in modernizing and assimilating East Asia. China, meanwhile, was stereotyped by these “China watchers,” as Peck called them, as being too rebellious and stubborn to listen, which would lead to its gradual downfall. In unspoken support of violent social change like the Cultural Revolution, Peck accused his superiors of clinging onto the notions of a world order where the United States was situated safely at the top. “For American interests,” he wrote with underlying sarcasm, “are incompatible with violent upheavals; as they see it, we live in a world where ‘violence is too dangerous.’” He contrasts these hesitant scholars with the “revolutionary Marxists” who were in the process of “modernizing” China, suggesting that “order, like violence, is politically defined...the conceptions of orderly and nonviolent change only reflect the interests of those powerful enough to enforce their definitions upon the population.”

Ultimately, scholarly reactions to China varied on individual accounts. Some, like Barnett and Schram, expressed their skepticism as to the effectiveness of the sociopolitical upheaval;

---


66 Ibid, 66.
others, like DeFrancis, remained hesitant in bringing contemporary politics into historical
discussion. Many other, oft-younger scholars dissatisfied with previous methods of historical
understanding began to search for new venues for comprehending Communist China, either
working to fit it into a new chapter of China studies or revamping the field and viewing the
country through a completely different lens. Unlike their older counterparts, these young scholars
also expressed a tendency to accept the propaganda coming from China as truthful, going
“against the grain” by espousing the narrative created by the CCP. Perhaps the loudest voices
within young academia were members of the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars. The next
section will detail some of these deeply personal clashes, which often pitted teachers against
students in an intellectual battle over the future of China studies, which was influenced in no
small part by China itself.

**China and the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars**

The Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars (CCAS) had formed in response to two
major events: American participation in the ongoing Vietnam War, and hesitance from the
Association for Asian Studies (AAS) in issuing a response to the conflict. Although initially a
much smaller organization than the AAS, the CCAS rapidly grew and expanded across college
campuses in the United States, eventually boasting dozens of chapters in major research
universities from coast to coast by the 1970s. Initially, it had formed in response to the conflict in
Vietnam; however, the organization’s interests soon broadened to much of Asia. In 1969, the
CCAS issued its statement of purpose:
[The CCAS] seeks to develop a humane and knowledgeable understanding of Asian societies and their efforts to maintain cultural integrity…We realize that to be students of other peoples, we must first understand our relations to them. CCAS wishes to create alternatives to the prevailing trends in scholarship on Asia, which too often spring from a parochial cultural perspective and serve selfish interests and expansionism. Our organization is designed to function as a catalyst, a communications network for both Asian and Western scholars…"67

In seeking to create alternative scholarship of modern China, CCAS members developed a stance towards the country that was decidedly more pro-government and pro-Cultural Revolution than the mainstream stance that had grown from decades of anti-communist sentiment and international unease. It may be tempting to dismiss the CCAS understanding of then-modern China as idealism or naivete, and indeed it was a certain uninformed optimism — and righteous anger towards outdated modes of historical interpretation — that drove these younger scholars towards positive portrayals of China.

The hesitance of major scholarly organizations to enter the political realm spurred the creation of groups like CCAS and fueled mass debate among scholars over the subject. James Peck’s infamous essay “The Roots of Rhetoric” provoked a stern critical response from John Fairbank. Fairbank and Peck’s written debate, a battle between teacher and student, was published in full in *The Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*. As previously described, Peck had accused Fairbank and his contemporaries of supporting an outdated model of China studies that conflated revolution with irrational violence and stressed the importance of “American interests” at the detriment of the Chinese, thus making them as guilty of anti-Communist sentiment as many of the policy makers in the U.S. government. Fairbank neither explicitly confirmed nor

denied the accusation, but instead chose to consider himself in “general agreement” with Peck’s article while also pointing out “dangerous” generalizations in Peck’s arguments.

In his response, Fairbank acknowledged Peck’s concerns about “cultural imperialism...as part of our [American?] cancerous growth and expansion,” but also accused him of lumping together the opinions of all mid-20th century China scholars with John Foster Dulles, the former Secretary of State under the Eisenhower Administration who had pursued a vehemently anti-Communist agenda. Chinese historiography had changed dramatically in the last few centuries, Fairbank argued, to the point where “China experts could... be classified according to the time when they entered the field, just as one could tell in the treaty ports when a foreign woman had left her homeland by looking at the style of her clothes.” He elaborated:

“China-watchers have never been a unified group... Their historical efforts have only marginally influenced American policy formation, which is only semi-rational at best. (Professors are not so important outside universities.) Mr. Peck is also a China-watcher now, not merely a watcher of China-watchers, and the hang-ups of the past call for his detailed unhinging, just as the [sic] inscrutabilities of the China Revolution still wait to be unscrewed.”

Peck responded to Fairbank’s accusations with retorts of his own, especially that the field of China studies in the 1950s (during the establishment of the People’s Republic) was decidedly anti-Communist, regardless of political affiliation. In his eyes, both liberal and conservative


69 It would be vital to note something that Peck failed to address: that Fairbank was considered one of America’s “China Hands,” a group of prominent China experts that consisted of respected academics, journalists, diplomats, and military leaders knowledgeable about China and Chinese culture. The China Hands had predicted the Communist victory in the Chinese Civil War, and were subsequently accused by American anti-communists of sabotaging the war and undermining the Nationalists, thus “losing China.” The organization lost much of its credibility, and many China Hand diplomats were expelled from service during Senator Joseph McCarthy’s infamous Red Scare.
scholars ignored the corruption and ineptitude of the Nationalist government, formed a “subtle consensus” that “accepted a view of American society as the unambiguous leader of the ‘free world’,” and managed to simultaneously defend globalism and McCarthyism by keeping Communism in check through globalism while ensuring the safety of McCarthyist doctrine.\(^{70}\) In Peck’s eyes, American political leaders had been searching for methods to keep the Chinese Communists down and continue maintaining China as “theirs,” and its academics were no exception. Once the Communists seized power, China was, as many believed, “lost.”

How, then, could the U.S. safely contain China and hold on to its global dominance? Peck argued that Communist China had inaccurately been conceived as a beastial, totalitarian society that had unprecedented “control and elite manipulation of the masses.”\(^{71}\) In fact, the opposite was true; American mainstream rhetoric ignored or twisted the “truth” of the Chinese revolution. His interpretation of Mao doctrine immediately points to his positive understanding of the Cultural Revolution, a belief shared by his fellow CCAS members:

Mao has repeatedly argued that liberation requires constant mutual education of leaders and led….local initiative undertaken within an ideology that provides meaning for the effort; and a radically active leadership which recognizes that liberation must come through education. It is with this approach towards social change...which has rarely received serious treatment. That it is viewed primarily as a manipulative and totalitarian approach may reflect far more about American observers than about the observed Chinese.\(^{72}\)

Most inter-scholarly conflicts took place in written communication or scholarly articles, but a few notable confrontations became physical. In 1968, Boston University historian and

\(^{70}\) Ibid, 56.

\(^{71}\) Ibid, 64.

\(^{72}\) Ibid, 65-66.
activist Howard Zinn wrestled with Fairbank for control of the microphone at an American Historical Association conference in what Fairbank would later call their “briefly-famous Struggle for the Mike.” A year later, Brandeis Political Science professor I. Milton Sachs allegedly objected to the presence of CCAS members at a “Southeast Asian Development Advisory Group” meeting and “stormed out” after vocally announcing his resignation from the group. In the eyes of the conservatives and centrists, the CCAS was foolish for taking Mao’s words at face value. In the eyes of radical scholars like the CCAS, the “old guard” of China studies were stubbornly grasping onto outdated, pro-imperialist discriminatory understandings of a foreign entity that granted the Chinese people little agency in their future. The People’s Republic, in contrast, was an agent of its own free will, and for some academics, even a potential model for international revolutionaries.

Not all examples of inter-scholarly interactions resulted in such violent altercations. Written evaluations of the new “radical studies” conducted by the CCAS and similar groups were met with a mixture of skepticism and reserved praise, suggesting that some peaceful exchange of ideas and beliefs among different scholarly circles had indeed occurred. East Asia historian and Harvard lecturer James C. Thomson Jr. reviewed China and Ourselves: Explorations and Revisions of a New Generation, Douglass and Terrill’s compilation of explorative essays on China in 1970. Thomson dubbed China and Ourselves as “refreshing and irritating,” an example of a new generation of scholarly work in the field. (The Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars is mentioned later as an example of radically inclined China studies, 


refreshing but “also irritating.”) He reflected on the absence of “Cold War cant” that colored previous years of academic research and appreciated the application of “surprising insights from history, sociology, and even theology to the Chinese Revolution.”75 On the other hand, Thomson criticized the perspective or lack thereof of the younger scholars, pointing towards the tension-ridden geopolitical environment of previous decades that had so deeply influenced earlier generations of China studies research:

“What is irritating, and perhaps inevitable among these “children of Vietnam,” is a one-sidedness in the authors’ views of both China and America. The young remember Joe McCarthy, Dulles, Chiang Kai-Shek, and the Vietnam War. They tend to forget Stalinist totalitarianism, the Korean invasion, and what seemed to be the mortal threat of monolithic Communism.”76

Thomson’s observations, along with Fairbank’s arguments and DeFrancis’s academic annotations of the Quotations, reflect two major themes that academics struggled to answer during this time period: how to interpret new China, and how scholars would reshape China studies through direct and indirect interactions with Chinese material. In working to reinterpret China studies for the modern era, the CCAS, whether intentionally or not, also absorbed and reiterated some of the messages broadcasted by their foreign subject. They published books on China that reinterpreted Chinese history through a pro-revolutionary and anti-imperialist lens, proudly throwing off the cloak of modernization theory.77 Several CCAS faculty members engaged in self-criticism sessions not unlike that of the Chinese Red Guard, encouraging their


76 Ibid.

students to spend several minutes criticizing “themselves and each other” after class in order to better “see through Chinese eyes.”

Personal correspondence between members commonly concluded letters with the endings “in struggle” or “in solidarity,” not only associating themselves with their Chinese subjects, but making them one and the same. Their eventual visits to China itself would, as they believed, penetrate the veil of mystery surrounding the country and grant Americans a more balanced insight into the Cultural Revolution.

**Americans Visit China**

The Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars were among a very small group of Westerners allowed to visit China during the Cultural Revolution. The few delegations permitted to enter the formerly isolated country were part of a greater campaign, especially on China’s part, to shape foreign hearts and minds. Heavily regulated by the CCP, Mao-era China’s “Track II diplomacy” included the leaders of radical social groups as well as individual journalists, writers, and researchers, all taken on national tours traversing strategic locations around the country.

Westerners allowed this opportunity fell into one of two major categories: leftists sympathetic to Maoism and journalists with visas seeking to peek into the inner machinations of the movement. As such, these tours were meant to leave foreign observers with the same impression: observations of then-modern China as a country that had been denigrated and villainized by

---


79 “Track II diplomacy” or “second track diplomacy” is defined by Diamond and McDonald in *Multi-Track Diplomacy: A Systems Guide and Analysis* as “non-governmental, informal and unofficial contacts and activities between private citizens or groups of individuals, sometimes called ‘non-state actors.’” For more information, see Louise Diamond and John McDonald, *Multi-Track Diplomacy: A Systems Guide and Analysis* (Grinnell: Iowa Peace Institute, 1991).
western media, one that had successfully implemented a Marxist-Leninist government system supported by loyal citizens. Indeed, some observers came away with positive impressions: Black Panther founder Huey P. Newton recalled his 1971 visit to China with an unparalleled sense of awe, writing that it was in China where he had felt “absolutely free for the first time in my life, completely free among my fellow men.”

Although Newton attempted to moderate his words with a brief paragraph of criticism regarding China’s environmental and developmental policy, noting that “no society is perfect,” many other visitors maintained a greater level of skepticism regarding Chinese government portrayal of the Cultural Revolution. Journalists in particular were actively seeking opportunities to explore the then-isolated country, delving beyond what was provided by the government to seek the “truth” of the Cultural Revolution.

One particularly jarring analysis of late-1960s China came from Austrian journalist Louis Barcata, who published *China In the Throes of Cultural Revolution* in 1967 with an American release in 1968. A correspondent who had previously visited the country in the late 1950s, Barcata was deeply unsettled by the drastic changes that had taken place in “Red China.” Much of his visit was spent observing and interviewing Chinese civilians — children, loyal citizens, and “revisionist” outliers alike — about their experiences. Unlike the young American radical scholars, Barcata found the Maoist stance on American imperialism both horrific and hypocritical. Ultimately, he concluded that the Cultural Revolution had revealed a great weakness in Chinese politics, that Mao had opponents in both the army and the Central

---


Committee whose power and influence were yet unknown. Despite Barcata’s ominous reflections, it is evident that his concerns were not shared by American radicals, who, in contrast, were thrilled for the opportunity to experience new China for themselves.

The advent of the 1970s marked the first official talks of rapprochement between the Chinese and American national governments, starting with Secretary of State Henry Kissinger’s secret visit to Beijing in June 1971 and President Richard Nixon’s official announcement of his plan to visit the People’s Republic a month later. Roughly around the same time, CCAS received its first invitation from the Chinese government to visit the People’s Republic. Despite the academic infighting, “conservative” and radical scholars had access to the same limited pool of information. As such, by the early 1970s, a number of American scholars had publicly come out in support of the Cultural Revolution, including Fairbank in 1972. It was thus with great excitement (and jealousy) that young scholars vied for spots in the first group of American academics to visit China in decades. The final group who made up the first entourage consisted primarily of academics in their twenties, students and teachers who, in their own words, “represented a new generation of China scholars.”

They published their 31-day experience touring China in the volume *China! Inside the People’s Republic*, hoping to shift American public opinion towards the favorable. The first entourage arrived in Hong Kong in summer of 1971, and passed over the border where they were greeted by members of the China Administration for Travel and Tourism. Upon reaching China,

---


the scholars were quickly saturated with images of China’s past: photos, galleries, and museums commemorating the “years of bitterness” and suffering that had befallen the Chinese people since the advent of the 20th century, as well as messages of how the Communist regime and subsequently the Cultural Revolution had transformed things for the better. The scholars, under careful supervision, toured numerous cities and villages, visiting schools, factories, hospitals, and laboratories where the Cultural Revolution was supposedly in “full swing.” Much to the delight of the CCAS, the visit concluded with a meeting with Zhou Enlai in Beijing, where they discussed foreign policy and Chinese-American relations, then presented the Chinese Premier with CCAS paraphernalia.

The citizens the CCAS members spoke to — primarily students, soldiers, and other beneficiaries of the revolution — spoke at length of how following Mao doctrine was improving their lives; dissenting opinions were dismissed as “selfish ambition,” for the modern Chinese social system was first and foremost meant to “serve the people.” Furthermore, the scholars as a collective group did not recognize moments of cultural repression. For example, they acknowledged the notable decrease of creative writing in China since the 1950s and 60s, as well as the disappearance of most novels from national bookstores. However, with their lack of knowledge about the censorship and repression of Chinese media, this premonition was spun into a positive light. Literary culture, they justified, was elitist so long as education was unequal.

85 Ibid, 30-34.
86 Ibid, 212.
Thus, it was a good thing for the Chinese to replace literature with “the forms of culture which can be enjoyed by anyone, literate or illiterate: the visual arts.”

This was not to say, however, that the entourage accepted everything that they saw as truth. Members were ultimately uncertain of what they had truly experienced in China; the writers of *China! Inside the People’s Republic* conceded that “not all of us agreed with each other.” Moreover, every so often they witnessed events during their visit that left them troubled. Despite the apparent gender equality in new China, they saw women, including local leaders, remain subservient to male members of their household; when visiting a space research center and questioning the resident scientists about their work, the Americans were given only answers about “the necessity of satellite research” that could only be described as “cryptic.” William Joseph, former CCAS member and current professor at Wellesley College, recalled visiting a Tianjin mental hospital during the organization’s 1972 visit and seeing patients undergoing therapy by reading the *Quotations* — a evident rejection of western mental health standards. “Although it was a little startling [to us],” he said, “it seemed to be a good thing — serving its purpose as a way of uniting the people.”

Still, the entourage returned to the United States carrying an overwhelmingly positive view of Mao’s China, and received significant attention in the scholarly community for their uncommon feat. The 1972 CCAS visit was also well received, but the trips were not without 

---

87 Ibid, 252.
88 Ibid, 1.
89 Ibid, 134, 283.
91 Madsen, *China and the American Dream*, 100.
their detractors. Older China scholars not involved with the organization were resentful that they were not afforded the same opportunity. Within CCAS, some members insisted that the organization should focus on its original mission in Vietnam. After Nixon’s China visit and the signing of the Shanghai Communiqué, the CCAS received an invitation for a third visit in 1973. Despite overwhelming demand for spots on the delegation, the trip proved controversial. Members argued over whether or not to boycott the invitation because of China’s allegedly pro-American foreign policy shift, which stood against their idealized preconceptions of the country that had been built from the pre-rapprochement years. When several CCAS activists gave public lectures criticizing China for “not living up to [their] expectations,” the Chinese government canceled the trip. Because of what was retrospectively dubbed “the imperialism of the left...there was never again to be an official visit to China by a delegation of the CCAS.” The image of revolutionary China, transmitted through material like the *Quotations*, had so deeply ingrained itself into the minds of CCAS scholars that they felt entitled to denigrating the resumption of relations between the U.S. and China, resulting in the loss of their own diplomatic privileges.

**New Revelations and the End of CCAS**

Perhaps the most jarring news to the China studies community of the late 1970s, radical or not, was the “truth” of the Cultural Revolution coming to light after Mao’s passing and the rise of Deng Xiaoping. Formerly repressed horror stories of the movement recounted by Chinese


\[93\] Madsen, *China and the American Dream*, 101.
civilians proved shocking to American academics, forcing many of them to reassess their previously “rose-tinted” views of what had been going on in China. In 1983, Stuart Schram revisited a 1968 quote accusing Mao of crimes against humanity on par with Stalin, which in his own words had “led me to be denounced at the time as an ‘anti-Chinese element.’ Now the evaluation just quoted would probably be regarded by many Chinese as if anything too indulgent.”

CCAS members, among the most vocal supporters of the Cultural Revolution, were also reeling from shock at the unwelcome news. As vehement defenders and so-called dedicated scholars of “revolutionary” China, it was only after the damage was done when they realized the extent of the shallowness of their knowledge. Emotions were strong and varied — although many scholars remained defiant, some felt embarrassment, indignation, or shame over their actions. Another, more deeply critical member reflected on his colleagues:

I was amazed at their confidence that they knew exactly what was happening and what it meant and that it had all of these consequences and implications...And so people who were going out there and wanting to tell me why a dictatorship was a wonderful kind of thing are not having very much of a positive impact on me...And the Cultural Revolution... as if it was telling us the better future for the human species. I mean, God, that's all beyond me.95

After 1972, the CCAS’s foundational goals had begun to erode. American military involvement in Vietnam officially ended in August of 1973; around the same period, the tentative beginnings of rapprochement commenced between the federal governments of China and the United States. With the understanding that the international realm was changing around them, the


95 Nathan Karnovsky, “The Other Cultural Revolution,” 95.
scholarly organization searched for new venues of interest in the mid- to late-1970s. However, it was evident that the organization, with its goals of implementing anti-imperialist and unapologetically leftist academic policy, was gradually nearing its end. The CCAS evidently had faced some trouble with reaching out beyond the academic community. A letter addressed to historian Ruth Mischeloff described the difficulty in doing so, admitting that “with the exception of some individuals and chapters, CCAS people don’t know too much about community education to begin with.” By 1975 and the reunification of Vietnam under Communist rule, the CCAS had by and large faded as an organization. As has been outlined throughout this chapter, most of its members would move on to become researchers and faculty at universities around the country, largely less radicalized than before.

Meanwhile, tensions among scholars had begun to simmer down, and respectful professional relationships were slowly but surely reestablished. In 1971, Joseph Escherick, a CCAS member and then a professor at the University of Oregon’s Department of History, had published a firm-handed critique of his former undergraduate mentor John Fairbank and the Harvard school, accusing the latter parties of imperialist apologism by way of allegedly supporting a pro-western paradigm that, as Escherick described, contributed to the social and economic destabilization of early modern China. In 1978, in jarring contrast, Escherick sent a cordial message to Fairbank requesting a reference for a University of Chicago position, commenting on his hopes that “you will not be offended or annoyed by this imposition from a


97 William Joseph, interview with author.

student from such a distant past — and such a disloyal student at that!” Although Escherick was keen on making amends, no records exist of Fairbank’s response — Esherick would later chair the Chinese Studies program at the University of California, San Diego.

**Reflections**

The limited amount of information available for American scholars of China studies was deeply concerning all around, leading academics to scramble for methods to search for a stronger understanding of their reclusive subject. Even more of concern was the information actually available — scholars split along ideological and generational lines on how to interpret it, how to place it into the greater historical context, and simply on what was actually factual. While some older scholars were keen on taking a distant, objective stance on this deeply politicized chapter of Chinese history, younger far left-leaning scholars who were incensed by the revolutionary atmosphere of the late 1960s and deeply discontented with older methods of historiography were determined to pioneer a new chapter in China studies, with China — the new leader of the global revolution in their eyes — at the forefront. These academics not only studied “China,” but worked to “become” China, willingly incorporating Maoist doctrine into their speech and language. The Chinese Communist Party under Mao was also an active agent in encouraging this scholarly unruliness, leading to an affable if short-lived relationship that would dissipate amidst the progression of 1970s Cold War geopolitics.

The hopes that these young scholars, particularly the CCAS, laid upon China were constructed on unstable ground, but their anti-imperialist theoretical frameworks would be

---

improved upon and endure into the present day. Paul Cohen observed how the post-Cold War wave of “postmodern” scholars focused on “impassioned critique of colonialism,” the West, and the United States,” clearly making them “the spiritual descendents of the graduate students and young academics who formed the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars a generation ago.”

Cohen credited these “practitioners of the craft” with challenging the western-centric impact-response model with a system that continues to drive China studies today. Despite their fundamental misunderstanding of modern China, the CCAS inadvertently advocated for a “China-centered” approach that, according to Cohen, “begins Chinese history in China...and adopts, as far as humanly possible, internal (Chinese) rather than external (Western) criteria for determining what is historically significant in the Chinese past.”

Perhaps the legacy of the CCAS remains in the field of China studies, if not entirely in the way that its members had intended.

---

100 Paul Cohen, Discovering History in China, xx.
101 Cohen 186.
Chapter Two

The Little Red Book in Parody and Satire

Chairman Mao is not the only leader of Communist China: there is also President Liu, head of state, and here at last he is able to speak for himself. As the Chairman has said: ‘Let a hundred flowers blossom!’

— *Quotations from President Liu Shao-C’hi*, 1968.

Across the Pacific, Western, and particularly American writers were working to reinterpret the words, tone, and structure of the *Quotations* to both serious and humorous effect. Parodists and satirists popularly used the structure and image of the *Quotations* as a vehicle for their judgements of both Chinese and American society: as a tome of stupidity for lampooning politicians and other controversial public figures, as a vehicle for humor, social awareness, and education, and as a frame of reference for familiarizing the *Quotations*’ visual identity and textual significance for American audiences.

The quote above is taken from *Quotations from President Liu Shao-C’hi*, a Western parody of the original *Quotations* published in Melbourne and distributed in the United Kingdom and United States in 1968, one year before the aforementioned Chinese Communist Party statesman Liu Shao-Ch’i, more properly referred to as Liu Shaoqi, fell out of Mao Zedong’s

102 *Quotations from President Liu Shao-C’hi* (Melbourne: Paul Flesch & Co., 1968).
favor and died in prison after allegedly receiving “harsh treatment.”\textsuperscript{103} The editors intentionally chose to make the vinyl cover of \textit{Quotations from President Liu} bright yellow as opposed to red, noting the greater irony that “yellow was also the color of old Imperial China.”\textsuperscript{104} By drawing visual parallels between representations of “old” and “new” China, the authors of \textit{Quotations from President Liu} implied that there was little difference between the then-present regime that was allegedly trying to throw off its imperial, “despotic” past.

The Hong Kong-based Chih Luen Press, a group of “distinguished Chinese scholars,” had compiled and translated the quotes in 1966, during the brief period when Liu was at the zenith of his power and influence. By the time the book was to be published the circumstances around Liu were extremely unclear. The publishers, however, were acutely aware of the rift that had previously formed between Liu and Mao and the public shaming rituals that had been inflicted on Liu by Mao’s most ardent supporters, and acknowledged as such.\textsuperscript{105} In the Publisher’s Foreword, the anonymous publishers insisted that publishing their “little yellow book” was done “for purely objective reasons...Still less do we desire to take sides in the family quarrel that keeps the Chinese Communist household in turmoil.”\textsuperscript{106} Such a description may give the impression

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{103} Lowell Dittmer, “Death and Transfiguration: Liu Shaoqi’s Rehabilitation and Contemporary Chinese Politics,” \textit{Journal of Asian Studies} 40 (1981): 459-460. “Harsh treatment” in this example denotes brutal torture. Internal sources suggest that Liu Shaoqi had been denied treatment for his diabetes and ensuing pneumonia before his death, along with a number of other inhumane actions. The circumstances around his death were left unclear for many years in both China and the West — even 1970s western sources regarding Liu were uncertain about his status after his expulsion from the CCP in 1968. See Li Tien-min, \textit{Liu Shao-ch’i: Mao’s First Heir-Apparent} (Taipei: Institute of International Relations, 1975) and Lowell Dittmer, \textit{Liu Shao-ch’i and the Chinese Cultural Revolution: The Politics of Mass Criticism} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974). As noted in the previous citation, Dittmer later published an article in 1981 reflecting on the new information that had surfaced regarding Liu’s demise.

\textsuperscript{104} \textit{Quotations from President Liu Shao-C’hi}, 15.


\textsuperscript{106} Ibid, 135.
\end{flushright}
that these scholars were behaving as bemused bystanders watching the drama unfold. In contrast, C.P. Fitzgerald, Australian sinologist, took a more academic tone in addressing the purpose of *Quotations from Chairman Liu* in the book’s introduction immediately following the foreword. “The Western reader, for whom this translation has been prepared,” he wrote, “will be able to form his own judgement on the nature and character of the dispute within the Chinese Communist movement.”

Indeed, as Fitzgerald stated, understanding was ultimately left to the reader. Western readers of the original *Quotations* would need to put their respective talents to work in order to express their unique “judgements.”

Although it is not explicitly stated that *Quotations of President Liu* was a parody of the Little Red Book, there is an undercurrent of dark humor that runs through the entire volume. Following the compilation of quotes sorted by subject-based chapters (the title of one chapter being “Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao Have Made Mistakes,” the last being a dangerous observation that was at least partly responsible for Liu’s fall from grace) is a biography of Liu and the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China. The former is drawn entirely from information from “Chinese Communist sources,” while the latter emphasizes articles within the federal document regarding citizen rights and government autonomy while omitting “inconsequential” parts of the Constitution “for present purposes.” The publishers of *Chairman Liu* present an unbalanced sort of hypocrisy that emerged from Chinese censorship, which also helped to quantify Western world views of China as an unstable dictatorship teetering on the brink of collapse.

---


Chairman Liu is one example of a contemporaneous Western parody, and one created outside of the United States. This chapter will focus on several pieces published in the U.S. between 1967 to 1979, all of them drawing some degree of inspiration from their Chinese source: visual, organizational, or both. Unlike the authors and translators of Chairman Liu, the American parodists were often not scholars by name, but were united in some understanding or desire to educate and entertain their readers on the state of American society. These writers took advantage of the versatility of the Quotations and poured their beliefs, frustrations, and desires into their work. The books that will be reviewed, in the order that they will appear in this chapter, are Quotations from Chairman LBJ by Jack Shepherd and Christopher Wren, a compilation of parodic quotes from then-president Lyndon B. Johnson; Quotations from Chairman Bill by David Franke, a similarly structured book of quotes from conservative activist William F. Buckley Jr.; and Quotations from Chairman Jesus by David Kirk, a revolutionary text restructuring quotes from the Bible through a pro-community service lens. Although each of these books came from different backgrounds and were intended for vastly different agendas, they share a number of stylistic similarities that will be discussed later in further detail.

Henry Luce and Shifting American Perceptions of China

In order to understand the Quotations’ place within American media, it is vital to understand where images of China in American news media were first popularized. This history can be traced back to the early 1930s and to the efforts of magazine magnate Henry R. Luce, the co-founder of Time Inc., publisher of Time, Life, and Fortune magazines. Luce grew up in China as the son of American missionaries and, distilled from their religious philosophy, was a fervent
believer of American exceptionalism. The United States, he wrote in his infamous essay “The American Century,” was unique above all other nations — in fact, such traits as “a love of freedom, a feeling for the equality of opportunity, [and] a tradition of self-reliance and independence” were traits that were uniquely and inherently American.\(^9\) A shrewd businessman, Luce was determined to bring his message of American exceptionalism to the entire United States and realize American values in the rest of the world.\(^10\) China, Luce’s beloved childhood homeland, was to be one of his, and Time Inc.’s, most popular targets.

The thirties and forties saw much positive imagery of China and the Chinese government circulating within the United States. The reasons were many, with one of the most prominent being *Time*, *Fortune*, and *Life*’s rapidly growing circulation boosting the image of China as an extension of American hegemony. *Life* alone saw circulation grow from 360,000 in 1923 to over 1 million in 1936.\(^11\) Encouraged by the Christian faith and pro-American stance of Nationalist Party leader (*Kuomintang* or KMT) Chiang Kai-Shek and his American-educated, devoutly religious wife Soong Mei-Ling, Luce took a pro-Chiang stance through his publications.\(^12\) In disseminating his pro-Chiang ideology, Luce also encouraged a pro-China stance through the Sino-Japanese War of 1936-45, praising the “know-how and morale” of the Chinese army in their fight against the Japanese forces. Even the Mao-led Communist forces, temporarily allied with the KMT against the Japanese, also received a limited amount of positive commendation.

---

\(^{10}\) Henry Luce, “The American Century,” *LIFE Magazine*, February 17, 1941.


\(^{11}\) “Pictorial to Sleep,” *Time*, March 8, 1937.

“Sharing the gospel” in China was of utmost importance to Luce, so much that in a speech at a pro-China service in New York City, he exclaimed, “China challenges our Christian faith...and if we fail there, we fail totally.” In Luce’s eyes, the fates of China and the United States had become intertwined.

Luce’s efforts proved pivotal during the post-war period. His magazines’ widespread circulation (and in particular, *Life’s* focus on photojournalism) meant that millions were exposed to vivid imagery of Chinese people and places, often for the first time. Along with radio and newsreel, Luce’s magazines were responsible for shaping first impressions of China for countless Americans. However, as American ideals of China shifted over time, imagery of China within American media changed as well. Resurgence of civil war within China, lack of support from the Truman administration in supporting the ailing Nationalists, and the subsequent Communist victory would see the collapse of Luce’s grand vision and increasingly negative media portrayal of the newly Communist — and strongly atheist — People’s Republic. This negativity, constantly embodied in visual depictions of China’s new leader, would shape American understandings of China well into the latter half of the 20th century.

If Chiang was the failed messiah, then Mao Zedong was the usurper, the sinister leader of a new “Red China” long lost to the United States or its Christian philosophy. The Chinese Communist Party’s ideological divide with the United States translated itself into increasingly negative imagery of America’s former ally. In *Time* magazine alone, Mao appeared on 12 covers between 1950 and 1980; Chiang, in comparison, had appeared 8 times between 1931 and 1949. Often shown as an enigmatic, leering figure by cover artists, Mao’s image was often captioned

113 Ibid, 15.
with heavily slanted vocabulary pertaining to his decisions: “warlord,” “chaos,” “tyranny.” A 1958 cover featuring an unflattering, grim-faced countenance of Mao was emblazoned with a ominously modified quote from Napoleon: “Let China sleep. For when she awakens, the world will be sorry.”\footnote{Harold R. Isaacs, \textit{Scratches On Our Minds: American Images of China and India} (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1958), 233-235.} Other publications describing Chinese citizens were no less forgiving; under the pen of journalists and politicians alike, individuals coalesced into a faceless and formless “human wave” of “uniformed robots,” recalling racialized rhetoric from earlier decades when Americans feared the “yellow peril” of Chinese immigration.\footnote{Look magazine editors Jack Shepherd and Christopher S. Wren and published by Simon and} By the 1940s, Time Inc.’s magazines had collectively reached 3.8 million volumes in national circulation, the number rising slightly in later decades.\footnote{Jespersen, \textit{American Images of China}, 12.} This meant that millions of American households were exposed to this deeply critical imagery, often for generations. Combined with the efforts of other new media sources that adopted Time Inc.’s stances towards the People’s Republic, these representations would evolve into the mainstream mindset that was carried into the sixties and seventies and used to group Chinese works like the \textit{Quotations} under the ‘Red China’ umbrella, as well as American works that used the \textit{Quotations} as inspiration.

\textit{Quotations from Chairman LBJ}

\textit{Quotations from Chairman LBJ} is arguably the most famous of the examples given in this chapter, as it attracted considerable media attention at the time of its release. It was produced by

\textit{Look} magazine editors Jack Shepherd and Christopher S. Wren and published by Simon and

\footnote{Time, December 1, 1958. The apocryphal quote by French military and political leader Napoleon Bonaparte is often translated as thus: “China is a sleeping giant. Let China sleep, for when she wakes, the world will tremble.”}


\footnote{Jespersen, \textit{American Images of China}, 12.}
Schuster in 1968, in both the midst of the Cultural Revolution in China and the United States’ embroilment in the Vietnam War. Both young journalists and editors at the time of publication, Shepherd (1937-present) and Wren (1936-present) were international correspondents for multiple prominent publications of the period. Shepherd focused primarily on sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East, while Wren traveled through much of Europe, Russia, and Central Asia, and was posted at one point in the *The New York Times* bureau of Beijing; both would become lecturers and Dartmouth professors later in life.\(^\text{117}\)

As evidenced from the title, the target of Shepherd and Wren’s work was then-president Lyndon B. Johnson, who at the time was facing considerable criticism for the rising costs and American casualties of the Vietnam War.\(^\text{118}\) Not only did Shepherd and Wren attempt to draw visual parallels between *Chairman LBJ* and the *Quotations*, but they also made an effort to craft a persona of President Johnson that greatly resembled the American image of Mao. By depicting Johnson as a ridiculous and irrational caricature through the appropriation of Chinese Communist literature, Americans could draw connections to a real-life political figure. As such, *Chairman LBJ* reflected both how Americans carried previous perceptions of Mao from news media (Henry Luce’s magazines, for example) and how thinly veiled political satire continued to qualify these perceptions. Shepherd and Wren, as both journalists and American citizens, were not exempt from this phenomenon.


The correlation between *Quotations from Chairman LBJ* and *Quotations from Chairman Mao* are visually obvious — both are small, palm-sized, and bright red. A modified photograph of Lyndon B. Johnson wearing a “Mao suit” (or Zhongshan suit, commonly worn by Chinese men including Mao during this period) is placed on the cover, creating a physical parallel between the American president and most Chinese politicians of the day who wore the same uniform.\(^{119}\) The cover page attributes a quote to “Chairman Johnson”: “Don’t spit in the soup. We’ve all got to eat.” The quote is strikingly collectivist, perhaps a parallel to Mao’s Communist ideology. Further examination of the first pages of *Quotations from Chairman LBJ* (henceforth referred to *Chairman LBJ* for conciseness) reveals a deliberate attempt to replicate the stilted English of the Beijing Foreign Languages Press translation of the *Quotations*, if in a rather overblown manner. The introduction by the “translators,” not editors, reads as follows:

> These quotations have been taken from speeches, musings, and digressions of Lyndon Baines Johnson. Their date and source are noted for reference. No effort has been made to rework these heroic thoughts into grammatical English. Let workers, peasants, students, housewives and Republicans study, memorize and digest the exhortations of Chairman Johnson. Let little children add their tiny voices to public and private recitations of these joyous inspirations.\(^{120}\)

To compare, below is a portion of the foreword to the original *Quotations* as written by Lin Biao. Note that the pseudo-Marxist language and imagery of citizens of all backgrounds uniting under a powerful, intellectually forward leader is largely similar:

> The broad masses of the workers, peasants and soldiers and the broad ranks of the revolutionary cadres and the intellectuals should really master Mao Tse-tung's thought;

\(^{119}\) See Appendix 5.

they should all study Chairman Mao's writings, follow his teachings, act according to his instructions and be his good fighters.\textsuperscript{121}

In these words, Shepherd and Wren create parodies of themselves as lackeys of Johnson, encouraging Americans to lend credence to Johnson’s words as they believed the Chinese did Mao. However, the parallel equivalent to Lin Biao was not represented only by the personas of Shepherd and Wren, but also by a quote from then-presidential aide Jack Valenti who proclaimed, “I sleep each night a little better, a little more confidently, because Lyndon Johnson is my president.”\textsuperscript{122} Valenti was represented as a lackey of the book’s subject, much as Lin was for Mao, and was notorious for his unfettered devotion to Johnson. His quote was placed before the table of contents, roughly where Lin Biao’s foreword had been located in early editions of the \textit{Quotations}. Not only was Johnson Mao, but the people around him were shaped into members of Mao’s inner circle.

Many chapters within (the book numbering roughly 190 pages, 100 less than the \textit{Quotations}) were labeled with humorous yet macabre titles like “Glorious Democratic Party,” “Unworthy Other Party,” “Benign Despotism,” and “White Man’s Burden.” One chapter, “Humility and Self-Criticism,” was marked by a single blank page, pinning Johnson as a man who apparently lacked either virtue.\textsuperscript{123} Certain titles were copied directly from the \textit{Quotations} or from Mao’s most famous quotes. For example, “Let a Hundred Flowers Flourish” compiled quotes regarding Johnson’s self-contradictory beliefs regarding disagreement and dissent. “Let a


\textsuperscript{122} \textit{Quotations from Chairman LBJ}, 5.

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid, 83.
Hundred Flowers Flourish” refers to both a line from the *Quotations* and a Chinese cultural movement in 1956 where Mao and the CCP encouraged open expression regarding the Communist regime. The “Hundred Flowers Campaign” (*Baihua yundong*) ended with the sudden crackdown of so-called “anti-rightists” and other intellectuals allegedly opposing the regime. This irony was not lost on Shepherd and Wren, who drew similarities between Mao and Johnson with out-of-context quotes from the latter, including “I haven’t come here tonight to say anything ugly about my opponent [Barry Goldwater], do any muckraking, talk about anybody,” and “There is a limit to how much [criticism] you want, and there is a ceiling on how much is good for you.” The careful structuring of these quotes were evidently meant to paint Johnson as an authoritarian, an incompetent leader, and a bumbling hypocrite.

1968 marked both the last full year of Johnson’s term and the American presidential elections, which, as previously stated, correlated with the release of *Chairman LBJ*. It also marked the infamous Tet Offensive, when North Vietnamese forces launched a brutal surprise attack against the South Vietnamese forces and their American allies on the Vietnamese New Year. The attack was a significant turning point of the Vietnam War that left many Americans stunned and doubtful of an American victory, shifting public support away from the war and Johnson. The discontent around “Lyndon Johnson’s War” may have been what spurred Shepherd and Wren’s comparison of the president with Mao, the latter having already received significantly negative media attention in the United States.

The book itself received significant media attention, with many newspapers immediately noting its similarity to the *Quotations* which had come into the American consciousness one year

before. The *Chicago Tribune* and the *Los Angeles Times* observed that the book had become popular among Johnson’s “key aids,” one even snatching a copy out of a reporter’s hands, and suggested that “just about everyone around the White House, it seems, wants to get hold of it.”

A similar article in the Boston Globe alleged that *Chairman LBJ* had even reached the president’s attention; Johnson’s unofficial response was that he “would just as soon forget about it.” These newspapers, including a multitude of others like *The New York Times* and the Washington-based, conservative *Human Events*, printed lists of sample (often the most jarring or outrageous) quotations drawn from *Chairman LBJ* under their respective chapter headings.

There are evident similarities between these lists of Johnson quotes printed in nationally circulated newspapers and the Mao quotes published in the state-run *People’s Liberation Army Daily* and similar Chinese newspapers years earlier. In some manner, this is proof that Shepherd and Wren had accomplished their goal: to recreate Johnson in Mao’s image, and appropriate the language, style, and messages of the *Quotations* to lampoon and ultimately criticize the demeanor and decisions of a prominent political figure in American society.

*Quotations from Chairman Bill*

*Quotations from Chairman Bill* (henceforth referred to as *Chairman Bill*) was published in 1970, two years after *Chairman LBJ*. Compiled and edited by David Franke (1935-present), *Chairman Bill* was a substantial collection of quotes from William F. Buckley Jr. (1925-2008).


famous conservative commentator, columnist, and author, ranging from the brutally honest to the witty and humorous. The founder of *National Review* magazine, Buckley was one of the leading conservatives in the United States during the twentieth century and a prolific writer. In his introductory notes, Franke noted that he had drawn quotes from Buckley’s “books, nearly 15 years of [his] National Review, his syndicated newspaper column, “On the Right,”” and his occasional articles, speeches, and lectures,” and gave personal thanks to “Bill Buckley” for granting him access to the appropriate material.\(^{128}\) Although it neither makes explicit reference to Mao’s *Quotations* nor satirizes its subject like in *Chairman LBJ* (at least, not in a negative manner), the name, structure, and choice of language used in *Chairman Bill* point to the strong possibility that it simultaneously parodies the original *Quotations* and pokes gentle fun at a fondly admired subject.

Franke, much like Shepherd and Wren, was a young reporter, writer, and editor during the time of publication. Unlike them, his activism waned and his political conservatism began forming in the early 1960s, with Franke writing years later that “my disillusionment in 1964 and afterwards was enough to cure me of any further crusading.”\(^{129}\) Buckley, an older patron of the conservative movement, was very likely a man Franke greatly admired. However, little explanation, whether within *Chairman Bill* or in retrospect, is given as to why Franke chose to base the name of his book after that of a Communist political leader. Multiple theories may be given, with none that can be fully substantiated; perhaps it was given the name simply because of


the *Quotations*’ widespread fame, or was borne out of a desire to rival the *Quotations* with something more attractive to the American conservative movement. In any case, what can definitely be substantiated is that by 1970, the *Quotations* had become iconic enough in American society that its name could be borrowed for a variety of usages, and understood widely enough that Americans could determine the nature of its contents.

*Chairman Bill* proves to be substantially different from *Chairman LBJ*, with the most evident example being that it has a different organizational structure than the original *Quotations*. While these books are fundamentally similar in that they are organized collections of quotes from one man, *Chairman Bill* lacks the chapter structure of the previous examples. Instead it is organized alphabetically, with each subtopic (“Cold War,” “Collectivism,” and “College Administrations,” for example) nested under individual letters. The overwhelming majority of the quotes appear to be opinion-based, reflecting Buckley’s personal thoughts, quips, and witticisms regarding life, the United States, religion, liberalism, and a number of named individuals who he, more often than not, denigrated. Although Buckley disparaged Communism in great detail throughout the given quotes, there is no mention of Mao or Maoism given in *Chairman Bill*.

Being that it is a conservatively oriented work, it is unsurprising that subsequent reviews of *Chairman Bill* did not mention the influence from Mao or the *Quotations*. In fact, reviewers did not appear to interpret the book as satirical. F.S. Meyer described *Chairman Bill* as “the conservative’s *vade mecum* (handbook),” praising it as a “feast of Buckley for the connoisseur.”

---

was created as a direct rival to the pro-leftist and pro-revolutionary intents of the *Quotations*. (It should be noted that this article was published in Buckley’s own magazine, *National Review*.) Carol S. Straub’s review also lauded the book as “a must for every library,” taking time to note that “the quotes are not in chronological order but are arranged by subject.” Breaking down long and complicated bodies of work into small, digestible “doses” of material was a hallmark for the *Quotations*, as it was for *Chairman Bill*. Ironically, American conservatives were learning from Mao.

Unlike *Chairman LBJ*, *Chairman Bill* seems to have been intended to promote, rather than denigrate, its subject. In such a case, it may be more appropriate to compare it directly with the *Quotations*, which at its core was intended to elevate and publicize Mao and his word. It can definitively be described as a parody — there is an undercurrent of lightheartedness that underscores the quotes that Franke chose — for, in some manner, Buckley is placed into Mao’s position as the leader of American conservatism. *Chairman Bill* may indeed have been intended as a “bible” for conservatives of the period, Buckley’s “most” significant quotes able to be accessed and read at a moment’s notice.

**Quotations from Chairman Jesus**

*Quotations from Chairman Jesus* was published in 1969 and became deeply politically charged through its title alone, labeled as a “revolutionary bestseller” soon after its release. However, it differs from the previous two examples in that it is a work that appeared to have been meant to promote social change, rather than deride or elevate the “chairman” in question.

---

(As per the previous examples, *Quotations from Chairman Jesus* will be shortened to *Chairman Jesus* when mentioned.) The deeply serious tone of the works suggests that *Chairman Jesus* was not a parody of the *Quotations* in the humorous or comical sense; instead, it may be interpreted as a satire of the Bible, whose scathing messages were combined with and morphed into the distinctive, recognizable structure of the *Quotations*.

As may be ascertained from the title, Jesus Christ is placed in the position of Mao, perhaps marking Mao as China’s “god,” and the quotes within are drawn from the Bible. The almost blasphemous juxtaposition was intentional — the quotes were compiled by civil rights and anti-poverty activist Father David Kirk (1935-2007), founder of the Harlem-based Emmaus House and a self-described radical. A Roman Catholic convert originally from Mississippi, Kirk was trained as a young man under Dorothy Day, one of the founders of the Catholic Worker Movement. Organized as a series of semi-connected houses and institutions across the United States, the Catholic Worker Movement was “committed to nonviolence, voluntary poverty, and the Works of Mercy.” Emmaus House was no exception to the guideline; Kirk himself described it as a “stepchild” to the movement. Still in operation today, it was intended as a Christian community center open to all individuals, regardless of background, race, or faith (a number of non-Catholics were known to have attended Sunday evening mass).

*Chairman Jesus*, too, evoked Kirk’s pro-revolutionary, pro-community stance on Christianity. Along with being a place of worship and hospitality, Emmaus also hosted guest speakers on Christianity and politics, and Kirk’s office held stores of literature and pamphlets


that “championed a variety of radical religious and political causes.” Kirk argued vehemently several major points: that religion and politics could not be mutually exclusive; that revolution, defined by him as historically having involved both spiritual and physical civil disobedience and violence on the part of Christ, was a necessity for church reform; and that revolution was ingrained deeply into Christianity from its historical beginnings. “Praying,” he remarked, “after all, is a form of picketing.”

With the dissemination of the *Quotations* in the United States during the late 1960s, Kirk would have had a template on which to impress his pro-revolutionary agenda. Father John Garvey, who assisted Kirk with compiling quotes, remarked years later that the title of Chairman Jesus had indeed been inspired by the radical furor of the late 1960s, “when Mao’s little Red Book was all the rage with campus radicals.” If the *Quotations* was the so-called “bible” of the Chinese masses, *Chairman Jesus* was an augmented version of the English-language Bible meant to communicate a radical version of Christianity to the American masses.

Internally, *Chairman Jesus* is organized by theme, with subthemes (for example:” Jesus was Tempted to be Fully Political” under “Jesus and Revolution”) under each and occasional analyses of certain biblical quotations. Examples include “The New Age” and “Jesus’s Style in Revolution: The Suffering Servant.” The final section is of particular interest, including a disclaimer from the editors arguing that the early Christian church was “communist in the broadest sense; Christians...owned all things in common…[and] were absolutely non-violent and

---

134 Ibid, 42.

135 Ibid, 64.


66
opposed to any war.” The insertion of religious faith into Communism, which as a historical political practice was often decidedly atheist in nature, is particular to Kirk’s argument. However, his argument was not to make the revolution itself Christian. Kirk made certain to separate yet weave together certain aspects of revolution and religion, for in a preceding chapter of *Chairman Jesus* he wrote:

There is never a ‘Christian revolution.’ Our task is not to set up Christian states or societies, but to humanize the secular order, or the revolution. The coming of the Kingdom confronts Christianity and society with the dynamic principle of a society always reforming. If revolution means ‘change of relationships,’ ‘new life,’ ‘new men,’ etc., these are clearly Christian concepts.

As can be ascertained from the evidence above, Kirk understood the *Quotations* as a template for revolution and impressed his personal agenda by reshaping and adding onto its structure to suit his arguments. Unlike *Chairman LBJ* or *Chairman Bill*, *Chairman Jesus* is presented as a deeply serious text as well as a modernized literary analysis of religious scripture. In some sense, it is incendiary like the *Quotations*, presenting a call for community engagement and action through a Maoist lens. The last page of *Chairman Jesus* supports this notion — the final line is “THE BREAD IS RISING!,” both the name of Emmaus House’s published journal and an alleged code word used by rebels of the 1789 French Revolution.

---

138 Ibid, 53.
139 Ibid, 159.
Reflections

The social unrest of the late 1960s and early 1970s provided fertile ground for writers and satirists seeking to explain or capitalize upon the sociopolitical upheaval of American society. The *Quotations*, with its Chinese Communist origins, unique visual form, recognizable writing style, and chapter organization, was a popular source of inspiration for Americans of varying political beliefs, providing them with the means to publish their thoughts in a format contemporaneously relevant to what their audience had seen and read from the news.

The original message of the *Quotations* did not always matter to American writers, who removed or replaced it as needed in their books. Although the Little Red Book’s message was undeniably radical and was thus borrowed for “revolutionary” texts like *Chairman Jesus*, it was also appropriated, ironically or not, for books spanning the political spectrum from left-leaning (*Chairman LBJ*), to right-wing (*Chairman Bill*), copying the chapter-by-theme style to various degrees of accuracy. What truly ties the three parodies and satires to their original source is such: each removed quotes from their original context, with the likelihood that the original meaning was changed in the process, and structured them in a manner that suited their respective agenda. The *Quotations* was a versatile enough blueprint to parody powerful men, praise other powerful men, or even to remind readers of a higher power. In this manner, these parodies and satires can be compared directly to the *Quotations*, which had been formed through the careful compilation and organization of hundreds of scattered quotes. The “Mao” that was created through this juxtaposition of quotes was not the man himself, but the character that the *Quotations*’ publishers wished for readers to see; the same concept applies to the aforementioned parodies, all of which created caricatures, both respectable and ridiculous, of their subjects.
Finally, it is telling that out of the three given examples, *Chairman LBJ* was the most popular and received the most mainstream media attention. Comparing politicians, CEOs, and other men of influence to the created caricature of “Chairman Mao” rapidly became a common way to denigrate them as self-important and otherwise absurd. Over the ensuing decades, the correlation between the *Quotations* and overblown political dogmatism gradually became synonymous in American popular media, and has been a widely held association that persists to the modern day.
Chapter Three
The Little Red Book, The Cult of Mao, and American Arts and Culture

“Is great pleasure to have sexual congress according to Marxist-Leninist-Mao Tse Tung theory for procreation of right-thinking offspring only!”

— Bill Griffith and Jay Kinney, Red Guard Romance, 1977

Origins of the Little Red Book in American News Media

Despite the Quotations’ status as an ideologically subversive text from a Communist nation, both its image and contents eventually seeped into the attentions of American artistic and literary culture. Through the Quotations, media creators could look “inwards” and “outwards” towards China under Mao, comparing the state of China to the state of the U.S. and, perhaps, cast greater judgment upon humanity itself. However, the need to critically interpret the contents of the Quotations was often waylaid in favor of studying the book as not simply a text, but a cultural object. The Quotations was visualized as a bombastic political work symbolic of the ideology it represented, an ideology so foreign and so unusual that it could become a source of entertainment in American eyes. Alongside fabricating their own understandings, media creators provided a layer of critical interpretation (and obfuscation) for their Cold War-era American audience.

---

140 Bill Griffith and Jay Kinney, “Red Guard Romance,” Young Lust (San Francisco: Company and Sons, 1977), 1. This is the opening dialogue from the comic, part of a series parodying romantic comic books from prominent publishers DC and Marvel. “Red Guard Romance” is a pornographic work that utilizes imagery of the Little Red Book to satirize the dogmatic devotion of the Red Guards.
On October 13th, 1966, *The Hartford Times* in Hartford, Connecticut published “The New Religion” by resident political cartoonist and Pulitzer Prize winner Edmund Valtman. The cartoon depicts a massive procession of identically dressed Chinese civilians, supporting an enormous, Buddha-like caricature of Chinese Communist Party Chairman Mao Zedong on a sedan chair. The parade is led by Marshal Lin Biao in full uniform, hands folded and eyes lowered in prayer, flanked by men and women reciting from small, palm-sized books labeled “Mao’s Thought.” The “Mao’s Thought” books depict one of the earliest appearances of the *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* (henceforth known as the *Quotations*, or nicknamed the “Little Red Book”) in American news media. By portraying the cult of personality Mao had built during his years in power as China’s newly adopted religion, Valtman’s cartoon takes on a sardonic mocking quality towards the Communist regime.

Valtman went on to continue satirizing Mao during his nearly twenty year tenure at *The Hartford Times*. During that time period, his work was reproduced in several major newspapers around the country, such as *The New York Times*. He was, however, not the only media creator during the sixties and seventies to use the *Quotations* as a symbol of Mao’s expansive political influence. Although the *Quotations* was no book club favorite in mainstream, non-politically inclined America, the book became a source of bemusement to American media creators — artists, writers, and other individuals who produced media content during the period — and the audiences who subsequently gleaned their own understandings and misunderstandings.


However, it would be wrong to assume that artists were solely lampooning the *Quotations* for entertainment’s sake. There were multiple reasons as to why the book struck a chord among Americans across a wide swathe of backgrounds and beliefs, particularly between the late 1960s and early 1970s. In the mid-century decades of Cold War discontent and debate, the *Quotations* was a work that gradually became familiar among the politically aware viewers of American news media, one that stirred emotion among both sympathizers and detractors of Maoist ideology. In other words, Americans were increasingly likely to have seen or heard of the book via magazines, newspaper, and TV. Thus, the *Quotations*, paired with its association with the notorious Chairman Mao, simultaneously carried a political and “pop” cultural gravitas. Recasting the *Quotations* as not merely a political statement, but also as a work of art, proved to be fertile ground for further artistic or literary interpretation. In the struggle to better portray the conflicted world around them for an equally conflicted audience, artists and literary greats used the *Quotations* as a template.

The following sections will elaborate on the appearance and underlying significance of the *Quotations* as an inspiration for art. The two examples are the Mao-based works of Edward Albee and Andy Warhol, both esteemed artists (a playwright and Pop artist, respectively) who were themselves American citizens both aware of the implications and their own interpretations of the *Quotations*, yet vulnerable to outside media influence. The section on Albee focuses on Albee’s 1968 play *Box-Mao*, which premiered a year after the *Quotations* was released in the United States. The section on Warhol analyzes two of Warhol’s art series: the *Mao* silkscreens of the early 1970s and the *Little Red Book* polaroid series of the same period. Albee’s and Warhol’s
works were significant not only in the usage of the *Quotations* as a source, but the greater context of Mao, China, and contemporary geopolitical struggles.

**Box-Mao**

In the fall of 1968, *Box and Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* or *Box-Mao* opened at the Billy Rose Theatre in Manhattan after a debut several months earlier at a Buffalo arts festival.¹⁴³ The play was written and produced by Edward Albee, acclaimed American dramatist who had received a Tony Award for *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* in 1963, as well as a Tony and a Pulitzer Prize for *A Delicate Balance* in 1967. At the time of the premiere, Albee was a well-known yet “moderately young pretender” in the world of theater, his style already unorthodox with the times.¹⁴⁴ A fiercely outspoken liberal in his later years, Albee’s politically ‘experimental’ work would prove divisive among the critics who were among the audience on *Box-Mao*’s opening night.

Albee released *Box-Mao* in 1968, a year of great unease in both American and foreign politics. On the domestic front, negative opinion of the Vietnam War escalated with the unexpected Tet Offensive and media-recorded brutality of the My Lai Massacre; civil rights demonstrations and the continued proliferation of political radicalism fueled further discontent in the 1968 presidential elections. Within China, Mao’s power had been consolidated by the widespread destruction of old Chinese customs, culture, ideas, and habits by the Red Guards in the final stages of the Cultural Revolution. The fanatical student movement, after beginning to


¹⁴⁴ Ibid.
turn to factional infighting, was personally disbanded by Mao in June of the same year. In October, the same month *Box-Mao* opened on Broadway, Mao and his most adamant followers were purging both the Communist Party and the People’s Liberation Army leadership of possible dissenters, including Mao’s would-be successor Liu Shaoqi.\(^\text{145}\) Albee’s previous plays had been subtly political at most; it is thus significant that he chose to publish *Box-Mao* at such a restless time in history. Despite attempts by critics to skim over the politically charged aspects of the work, *Box-Mao* must be regarded for what it is — an affirmation, if not a response, to the relevance of both domestic and global conflict using a political divisive work as a source.

Albee’s choices in using the *Quotations* to write *Box-Mao*, along with the cautiously positive yet tentatively critical connotations picked up by reviewers, may have also tied into the playwright’s leftist sentiments.\(^\text{146}\) While it is impossible to pin down exactly when and where he came in contact with the *Quotations*, it may be likely that he encountered Communist literature before or during his most productive decades in the 60s and 70s, corresponding with his most fervent experimentations with abstraction and the release of *Box-Mao*. Albee’s political expression through his theatrical work was often nuanced, carrying no explicit political meaning; *Box-Mao*, drawing both source and inspiration from a blatantly Communist work, was the first of its kind in his repertoire. Albee had had a vested interest in exploring complicated, disconcerting situations through his plays. This work could scandalize his audience — as he described it, “I want the audience to run out of the theater… but come back and see the play again.”\(^\text{147}\)


the *Quotations* was still a fairly recent phenomenon in the United States in 1968, there is reason to believe that it fit neatly into Albee’s interests.

A heavily abstracted piece of limited casting size and minimal prop usage, *Box-Mao* consisted of two separate yet intertwining plays: “Box” and “Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung.” “Box” had been produced before “Mao”; after its initial rejection by Broadway director Chuck Gnys, who described *Box*’s unorthodox style as “boring and pointless,” *Mao* was added.148 *Box-Mao* became the unusual juxtaposition of an actor dressed up as Mao reciting selected quotes from the Little Red Book, the rambling, melancholy narrative of a well-to-do “average” American woman, “Over the Hill to the Poorhouse” by Will Carlton recited by a poor elderly woman, and a recorded feminine voice emitting from the eponymous box sitting on the stage. Otherwise, *Box-Mao* contains no discernable narrative, with all dialogues performed simultaneously. Many of the actors are seemingly aware of the audience, spending most of their time immobile on stage, and yet (as emphasized in the stage directions) remain unaware of the others. From beginning to end, about an hour overall, the show remains static. The characters barely move from their starting positions, and there is little advancement, if any at all, in their respective stories.

The work itself is left open to interpretation, as Albee gives no official explanation. Performed simultaneously with “Box”, “Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung” takes on multiple meanings, often depending on one’s own political leanings. For a viewer more sympathetic to the Chinese Communist regime, *Box-Mao* seems to contrast the legitimate concerns of imperialism’s effects on the international community with the frivolous personal

---

worries of an anonymous American woman. For one more skeptical, particularly a viewer who willingly accepted images of China from mainstream American news media as truthful, it juxtaposes the ramblings of a repressive dictator with the comparatively more wistful narrative of a more relatable individual. The majority of critical reaction to the play seemed to have overlooked the possibility of Albee’s emerging political tendencies in favor of understanding the play’s content.

Within the context of the play, Albee recreated Mao as both a representation of the actual chairman and as a theatrical character. Authenticity, while valued, was not essential in bringing Mao to life. Mao the character, as outlined in Albee’s notes, would ideally be played by “an oriental actor who resembles [him].” But, as Albee noted in his general comments, a non-Asian actor using “makeup or a face mask” was also acceptable, as proved by Pendleton’s casting. Mao, in contrast to the other players of *Box-Mao*, is given an actual name, a manifestation of the real man down to the “padding to give [him] figure.” He evokes “characteristically Chinese mannerisms” in his communication with the audience, bowing and gesticulating before, after, and during his addresses, emphasizing his foreignness and assuring the audience that he is, indeed, Mao the Chinese leader. Furthermore, he is the only character who is completely aware of the audience’s presence, spending the duration of the play lecturing them “rather like a teacher.” It is thus safe to assume that Albee’s careful approach to authenticity is meant for

---

149 Edward Albee, *Box and Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* (New York: Dramatists Play Service Inc., 1969), 4-5.

150 Ibid, 43.


152 Albee, *Box and Quotations*, 5.
audience members to immediately figure out who the character is supposed to be, and interpret him as Mao the chairman attempting to sway their beliefs with his quotes.

Mao loftily walks up and down upon a raised platform above all of the other characters, quoting primarily pro-revolutionary and anti-imperialist lines from the *Quotations*. Most of his lines appear to have been drawn from the *Quotations* chapters “War and Peace,” “Imperialism and All Reactionaries Are Paper Tigers,” “Patriotism and Internationalism,” and “Dare to Struggle and Dare to Win,” all of which are chapters with an incendiary, revolutionary slant. Chapters that dealt with more theoretical topics like self-criticism, discipline, and service were ignored. Consider the last and incredibly provocative line in the play Mao speaks in English, which is drawn from “Dare to Struggle and Dare to Win”: “People of the world, unite and defeat the U.S. aggressors and all their running dogs!”153 Although he primarily speaks English, he occasionally speaks *Quotations* lines in Mandarin, the latter written phonetically in the script. As it is unlikely that most of the play’s viewers understood Mandarin, Albee likely meant for the lines to provide some degree of authenticity, as if the audience was truly listening to Mao speak. Mao the character paraphrases his “own” quotes, which were themselves distilled into the *Quotations*, thus offering a very narrow and American-centric insight into the work’s content. It is uncertain whether or not Albee presented this juxtaposition intentionally. Foreignness, thus, was contrived in *Box-Mao*, but without particular regard for authenticity, reflecting American understandings of the tumultuous 1960s through limited news media.

What is known is that the mannerisms of Mao the character were strongly influenced by media footage of Mao the person; Albee cited “documentaries, posters, and photographs” to get

153 Ibid, 38.
the actor into character. The actor also carried a copy of the “real” Quotations in which his lines were pasted over the book’s text, allowing him to read distilled lines from an already-distilled collection of sayings. Later in his career, Albee would reflect on the “indirectly political” essence of plays, which could impart upon their audiences subtleties that could not be well expressed through other media. It is evident that he was already experimenting with more blatant examples of this possibility in Box-Mao, juxtaposing the abstraction of the play with the political realities of Maoism.

Albee's tactics appear to have been effective. Critics, when reviewing Box-Mao, took it upon themselves to review Mao the character as well, responding to his Quotations as if they were simply a part of the theater drama and not an actual written work appropriated by Albee. In his review as published in The New York Times, acclaimed theater critic Clive Barnes commented on the quotes lifted from the Quotations as if a potential audience might mistake them as part of the crafted absurdity of the play, being certain to add that “Mr. Albee wrote not a word of them.” Barnes, writing as an Englishman working in the United States, evidently found the Quotations’ messages too ludicrous to analyze rationally. To support this revelation, he continued to write, “the voices [of the play] seem to have an awful relevance...but the mood is one of carefully studied, haughtily urbane nonsense.” Barnes’ article comes paired with a photograph of the play’s opening cast in action. Mao, as played by veteran theater performer Wyman

154 Solomon, “Forging Text into Theatre,” 87.
156 Barnes, “Theater: Albee's Adventurous Plays.”
157 See Appendix 2.
Pendleton, wore a face-concealing mask that only tentatively resembles the real man, further adding to the absurdity. The choice of using a mask, rather than makeup, added yet another layer of separation between Mao and the overwhelmingly Western audience.

As Albee critic Anne Paolucci noted in 1972, “recreating” Mao disconnects him from his role as Chairman of the People’s Republic, and yet, the so-called attempts at authenticity immediately makes him recognizable to an American audience. By removing Mao from his real-world political position and placing him in the foreign environment of the American theater stage, Albee transformed him from a political figure to a character to be criticized and critically interpreted. Words from the Quotations are, thus, repackaged into pieces of drama. His words are universally hopeful, but belie an “arrogant optimism” that can never truly come to fruition. Albee himself confirmed the character in his best form as “factual and ironic.” The Quotations, thus, were interpreted as Mao’s true, unfiltered words, rather than the efforts of Mao’s aides to paraphrase them for a relatively less skeptical Chinese audience.

A great number of other reviewers focused on grouping Box-Mao into Albee’s experimental works of the late 60s and early 70s, washing away any political affiliation altogether and distilling the play into an experimental piece — in other words, theater for theater’s sake. Critics struggled to define the newfound politico of Albee’s work. American director and drama critic Harold Clurman, when reviewing Box-Mao, described it as a “polyphonic chamber work.” He would continue, “[sic] Box-Mao-Box is like no other play

158 Anne Paolucci, in “Partita: Box and Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung” in From Tension to Tonic: The Plays of Edward Albee (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972), 126-127.

159 Solomon, “Forging Text into Theatre,” 87.
[Albee] has written and like very few others written by anyone else.”\textsuperscript{160} It is unsurprising, then, that analytical summaries of \textit{Box-Mao} often simply described the play with the politically neutral term “abstract”, when the words of the \textit{Quotations} were definitively not so. Such a work was unprecedented in the modern American theater world.\textsuperscript{161}

\textit{Box-Mao}, relative to Albee’s more famous plays, did not appear to receive mainstream attention during its tenure at the Billy Rose Theatre beyond observers within the theater world. However, its influence seems to have earned itself a place among Albee’s body of work. A notice on the \textit{Sun Reporter} included \textit{Box-Mao} in a 1978 conglomerate of Albee’s “most famous” short plays as performed in San Francisco’s American Conservatory Theater.\textsuperscript{162} Running only two years after Mao’s death, the chairman remained alive still through “his” book and “his” play, of which he had no ownership and yet still claimed a significant amount of attention. The unsettling quotes and vivid messages pulled from the \textit{Quotations} had recognizable significance for the theater-going public.

Although it may never be entirely certain what exactly Albee intended by reconstructing Mao in \textit{Box-Mao}, it is evident that he was recreated as a theater character to be critically interpreted, someone that the audience was meant to react to in whichever way they saw fit. Yet, Mao stands out from his white, American cohorts through careful attention to visual representation, whether through clothing, weight, or mannerisms. In a performance as abstract as

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{160} Mel Gussow, \textit{Edward Albee}, 321.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{161} For more reviews of “Box” and “Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung,” please see Robert Mayberry’s \textit{Dissonance in a Chinese Box: Edward Albee’s Box and Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung} and C.W.E. Bigsby’s \textit{Edward Albee: a Collection of Critical Essays}. While there are numerous other commentaries of \textit{Box-Mao} among Albee scholars, most tend to be minimal at best, as if attempting to dodge the political essences of Albee’s work.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}
Box-Mao, Mao’s character was simultaneously realistic yet fantastic, obfuscating the lines between theater and real-life politics with his presence alone. The staunchly anti-imperialist rhetoric Albee assigned to Mao the character created a provocative and memorable persona that, while not an authentic representation by any means, was one that was firmly rooted in American mass media depictions of Mao the chairman.

**Andy Warhol, Mao, and the Red Book Albums**

As evidenced by Albee’s character portrayal, the character of Mao and the teachings of “his” book had become synonymous in American eyes in the late 1960s. Mao’s visual presence is also particularly significant when his own portrait appears as the frontispiece of all English editions of the *Quotations*. The picture itself varies from edition to edition, but most recognizable in American-published editions is Mao’s ubiquitous painted portrait, an annually updated tradition begun by portraitist Wang Guodong, which now hangs over Tiananmen Square in Beijing.163 The chairman’s countenance has also been subject to reinterpretation by numerous contemporary artists, perhaps most notably the brightly colored silkscreens made by Pop Art great Andy Warhol between 1971-1974, in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution in China and continued dissemination of political and social countercultures in the United States.164 In his *Mao* series, Warhol removed the chairman’s image from the *Quotations* and recast it as a mass-

---


produced capitalist commodity, utilizing the ubiquity of Mao’s image, recasting it numerous
times in unique, garish shades, and popularizing Mao for the American audience.

Warhol’s interest in Mao seems to have stemmed from his longtime fascination with pop
culture imagery. In the latter half of a seven year hiatus from art, which began in 1964 after
finishing his *Flowers* series, Warhol searched for an appropriate human subject to continue his
work. His idea to utilize Mao’s image allegedly first emerged from a conversation with his
friend, the Swiss art dealer Bruno Bischofberger. After Bischofberger’s suggestion that Warhol
portray the “most important” person of the 20th century (Bischofberger had had in mind Albert
Einstein), the artist responded, “I was just reading in *Life* magazine that the most famous person
in the world today is Chairman Mao. Shouldn’t it be the most famous person, Bruno?”

It is uncertain which volume of *Life* Warhol had been referring to in his conversation with
Bischofberger, although the January 20th, 1967 issue of the magazine is the most
contemporaneous and thus the most probable source. The cover of that issue was labeled “China:
Crisis in Mao’s Purge,” capturing a fleeting moment during the Cultural Revolution with a troop
of male Red Guards stationed in Canton (Guangzhou). One anonymous Red Guard carries the
ubiquitous Mao portrait, swathed with red fabric. Regarding sources like the magazine cover
depicting Chinese devotion to Mao, Warhol would say the following with great enthusiasm:
“I’ve been reading so much about China. They’re so nutty. They don’t believe in creativity. The
only picture they ever have is of Mao Zedong. It’s great.”

---


Warhol’s quote reflected the image of China that he had gleaned from American media sources, and is significant in that the “picture” of Mao mentioned would eventually influence a wide swath of his most popular work. (He would eventually visit China for himself in 1982, taking photos of famous Chinese landmarks and bemused Chinese citizens.)

Life was not the only media source at the time where Warhol could draw inspiration; images of “Red China” were ubiquitous across American print media during the sixties and seventies. Warhol’s observations on Mao’s “cult of personality,” too, were substantiated by news media. As was common among mainstream, anti-communist sources of the period, Americans were casting a critical eye upon the ongoing Cultural Revolution, despite the uncertainty of the human toll of the movement. At the center of the chaos was Mao, the “sunshine that lights up China” and the center of a seemingly unstable movement supported by an equally unstable ideology. It was this uncertainty and resulting “irrationality” of the CCP leadership that drew the attention of Americans, including Warhol, towards China, and cast a sceptical light on internationally disseminated propagandistic sources like the Little Red Book. Mao, like “his” Quotations, was just as difficult to ascertain.

Although Warhol’s series began only four years after Albee’s Box-Mao ran on Broadway, the two media pieces emerged in two substantially different geopolitical environments. As Albee had likely witnessed just years earlier, Warhol too would have been exposed to American media representations of “Red China.” However, Warhol had the advantage of a very different

167 The infamous image of Warhol in a Mao suit and People's Liberation Army Cap stems from this visit. For more information on his visit to China, see Christopher Makos, Andy Warhol in China: The Photographs of Christopher Makos (Hong Kong: Blue Kingfisher Press, 2008).

perspective on China in 1972 that Albee would never have experienced in 1969: A substantial shift in Chinese diplomatic policy, U.S. rapprochement (resumption of harmonious relations) with China, and President Nixon’s subsequent visit to Beijing in the same year. The mid-60s had marked Mao’s gradual change of heart towards relations with the United States, and the chaotic aftermath of the Cultural Revolution pushed him to urge restraint within the Communist Party and reconsider his staunchly “anti-imperialist” foreign policy. High-level political discussions between Chinese and U.S. leaders during the early 1970s would begin normalizing relations between the former rivals.

With Nixon’s diplomatic visit, Mao was suddenly no longer the enigmatic figure lurking in the dark realms of American imagination, but a tentative ally of the United States in the latter’s struggle against the Soviet Union. Likewise, mainstream views of China began seeing positive trends. The first American visitors to the People’s Republic, diplomats and civilians alike, returned with glowing anecdotes of (heavily regulated) tours of the once-isolated country, most still unaware of the Cultural Revolution’s tolls. The Mao series thus emerged in a period where old perceptions of a foreign country and its leader thoroughly clashed with new narratives. Warhol’s understandings, however, were mixed: they fell solidly in the former, influenced by the slow-to-shift mainstream media from where he drew much of his inspiration, yet contained essences of the latter, showing in how Warhol utilized hand-picked news imagery to recreate Mao as an American icon.


Warhol’s first version of *Mao* (the silkscreen), a massive, sprawling painting scrawled with unnatural splotches of pink and yellow, appeared in 1972.\(^{171}\) His first executions of the *Mao* portraits varied from poster size to over fifteen feet in height, perhaps resembling the oversized portrait of Mao he had seen in *Life*. The five portraits produced in 1972 maintained much the grayscale color scheme of the original photograph, but subsequent iterations, produced well into 1973, became increasingly garish in color. The neon-colored splotches of the beginning evolved into more intentional coloring on Mao’s lips, eyes, and cheeks, giving the impression of the chairman wearing glamorous and very Western makeup. The severity of Wang Guodong’s portrait takes on a feminized, parodic quality.

Mao was not Warhol’s first attempt at recreating the image of a popular celebrity, nor that of a prominent political figure under mass media scrutiny. After actress and model Marilyn Monroe’s death in 1962, Warhol produced the famous *Marilyn Diptych* utilizing a repeating silkscreen method later incorporated into the *Mao* series. The *Jackie* series from 1963-1964, created in the wake of President John F. Kennedy’s assassination, appropriated numerous images of the widowed First Lady Jacqueline “Jackie” Kennedy from newspapers and magazines and placed them on neon-colored canvas panels.\(^{172}\) These images were grouped by critics with Warhol’s “ready-made” work of recreated Brillo boxes and Campbell’s soup cans, reflecting both his fascination with “mass production” aesthetic and the frustration in assigning conventional artistic meaning to Warhol’s atypical style. Poet and critic David Antin described Warhol’s agglomeration of work as “beautiful failures” — “beautiful” in their aesthetic quality, “failures”

---


in their inability to function as either art or useful object. Fellow critic Wyston Curnow qualified Antin’s argument by reflecting on the mass-produced works as part of Warhol’s capitalist identity, describing the emptiness of his pop culture imagery as “nonsense.” It would be an attitude that would be carried over to the Mao series, which began production only a year after Curnow’s analysis.

While not the only American artist to recast Mao’s visage (fellow Pop artist Roy Lichtenstein had produced lithographs in 1971, also titled Mao, based off a different portrait), Warhol’s work was particularly striking to his audience. Warhol’s controversy from his previous works also factored into their reactions, reflecting on his ability to create “hollow,” shallow work devoid of meaning. Somehow, that same understanding that colored critical interpretation of his paintings of Marilyn Monroe and Jackie Kennedy also translated over to Mao, and critics therefore often grouped his countenance in with American celebrities. Mao became another face in the aesthetic propagated by Warhol, a Chinese statesman who, through the lens of silk, paint, and mass production, becomes just as quintessentially American as Warhol’s other subjects. Some art exhibitors played with this notion; a 1979 Warhol-exclusive exhibit at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York juxtaposed three giant Mao silkscreens along the likes of American figures like writer Truman Capote and musician Mick Jagger. The Mao portraits, however, were housed in their own “special, chapel-like pavilion” of

174 Ibid, 244.
the exhibition space.\textsuperscript{176} Mao, along with a myriad of other international art subjects, had been granted a particular spot of significance — American, but not quite enough to intermingle with images of American figures.

Considering the \textit{Mao} series as strictly commodifying the chairman’s image with capitalist notions of production, however, risks (and has created) interpretations of Warhol’s work as apolitical, or at least stripped of political affiliation. In a similar light to Albee’s work, some of Warhol’s contemporary critics attempted to draw a division between art and politics. Wrote Anne Rorimer in 1975, “the portrait of Mao is not based off political views or propaganda…[there are] no personal feelings or opinions beyond those in inherent choice of subject.”\textsuperscript{177} Rorimer’s analysis is grounded in Warhol’s aforementioned beliefs, but also ignores the \textit{Quotations’} influence, and by indirect, impersonal means, Mao’s, on his art. While it is arguable how much Warhol truly cared about the abstractions of geopolitical struggle — also reflected in his aforementioned personal statements on Chinese creativity — such an observation contrasts with the source material from where he found his inspiration.

A contrasting, more politically weighted analysis of the series comes not from the United States, but from London’s Mayor Gallery where the \textit{Mao} series was exhibited in 1974. Caroline Tisdall reflected on Mao’s image, in contrast to the Western-centric media saturation of Marilyn Monroe or Jackie (then) Kennedy, as “a changer of society.” Warhol, Tisdall argues, adopts and adapts “the most influential image of Maoism” and weighs it with a degree of “cynical paradox


about two systems.”¹⁷⁸ Therefore, *Mao* can best be explained as an uneasy balance between the forces of capitalism and communism. In some manner, much like Albee’s Mao, Warhol’s interpretation tears painting-Mao and Chairman Mao apart: one a real-life communist leader, the other a communist leader trapped within capitalist commodity. Warhol himself wondered about this juxtaposition in a stream-of-consciousness essay published in *Vogue*: “Would Mao like my Mao?”¹⁷⁹ Even without agenda or straightforward intent, Warhol’s work carries with it significant political weight.

The connection between Warhol and the *Quotations* strengthens with the existence of one of his other collections, the *Little Red Book* Polaroid series. As with *Box-Mao*, the artistic series will henceforth be in italics to differentiate it from the *Quotations*. Produced between 1970 and 1975, the *Little Red Book* polaroids were created concurrently with the *Mao* silkscreens. While Warhol himself never explicitly mentioned the inspiration for the name, the existence of the *Mao* series combined with his knowledge of the world’s “most famous” man makes it most probable that the *Quotations* was the inspiration, as opposed to American sources like *Redbook* magazine.¹⁸⁰ Driven by his impulse to capture and collect images and influenced by the mechanical immediacy of the camera, Warhol carried around a Polaroid to nearly all of his social functions, documenting them in hundreds of photos and compiling them into organized albums.


¹⁸⁰ Bob Colacello, *Holy Terror*. 
Hundreds of the Little Red Book pieces still exist, each bound in a red Holson Polaroid album reminiscent of Foreign Language Press-produced editions of the Quotations.\footnote{For examples of Warhol’s series that were eventually granted to art museums through the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, please see Little Red Book #178, 1974, Polaroid film, Frye Museum, Seattle; Red Book, 1974-75, Polaroid film, Guggenheim Museum, New York; Little Red Book #296, 1974-75, Polaroid film, Philbrook Museum of Art, Tulsa.}

It would again be tempting to dismiss this series as apolitical, considering the subject content. In complete contrast to the textual organization in the Quotations, the Little Red Books are, more often than not, portraits of individuals. This is in direct contrast to the Quotations, which, alongside featuring the portrait and sayings of one individual, was designed to submerge the individualism of others in favor of a collective greater good. The overwhelming majority of the photos’ subjects were members of Warhol’s social circle — artists, actors, models, and other men and women captured in informal candid photographs, both aware and unaware of the camera’s presence. Some contain multiple celebrities; others, like Little Red Book #133, showcase the life and activities of only one individual (in the case of #133, the subject was television personality Dick Cavett). The contrast, likely intentional, is startling; the unity and collectivism so emphasized in the Quotations was turned on its head in the Little Red Books, where American individualism and personal expression reigns.\footnote{Mao, “25. Unity” from Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1972).} These snapshots do not reply on its subjects behaving in a certain manner, but merely capture moments of them behaving as themselves. However, the albums are not so much a subversion as a “translation” of the same genre for a different audience. Much like popular editions of the Quotations, the Little Red Books were pocket-sized, portable, and created in mass quantities, with the innate ability to be widely distributed and disseminated to a celebrity-conscious audience. Although a visual rather than
literary creator, Warhol conveys his message through the use of photography, reflecting the power of Mao’s portrait while simultaneously parodying it with the variety of appearances from his social circle. A viewer could thus peruse a *Little Red Book* as they could the *Quotations*. In some manner, Warhol steps into the position of Mao, becoming the leader of his own personal universe.

**Reflections**

As *Box-Mao* and the *Mao* series have shown, Mao himself, and subsequently China’s image continuously shifted with the advent of the sixties and early seventies. The aforementioned examples of artistic reinterpretations of the *Quotations* reflect and defy the media-based understandings of Mao, Maoism, and subsequently China. Despite the fact that they were both prominent and educated media creators, Albee and Warhol were still civilians. They worked within the confines of what they could receive from American news coverage and thus were left with a slanted understanding of their source material. However, through the subtleties granted through artistic expression, Albee and Warhol were able to formulate unique perspectives on the *Quotations* that could be ruminated on by their (American) audience and allow viewers to formulate their unique opinions. Where Albee paradoxically demanded a “realistic” performance of Mao within his abstracted play that produced a skewed and provocative characterization, Warhol parodied the Chinese leader through the means of paint and capitalist-style mass reproduction. Both men utilized different aspects of the *Quotations* to recreate Mao, turning him from real-life figure to Americanized character.
Albee and Warhol were only two facets of a tumultuous American artistic culture forming in the 60s and 70s, borne of a mixture of biased foreign news coverage, civil unrest, and multiple frustrations within American society. The *Quotations* became both a template and a source on which these media creators impressed their thoughts and beliefs. Mao’s popular image helped to accentuate the *Quotations*’ popularity, as it became a “reliable” source of his own words. As was true among the scholars and writers elaborated on in the previous chapters, the development of the *Quotations*’ meaning within American culture correlated with Mao’s, and ultimately China’s, position in the American popular image.
Conclusion

*Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* was a critical element of cementing Mao’s power and spreading the chaotic fervor of the Cultural Revolution throughout China. Through the active translation and dissemination of Maoist ideology, the *Quotations* also played a significant role in shaping and reshaping the political and cultural landscape of the mid-century United States. The societal discontent among Americans in the late 1960s and early 1970s, stemming from a potent political mixture of domestic disagreements, international turmoil, and ongoing movements for social equality, provided a “perfect storm” of opportunity for the *Quotations’* message to disseminate from China to the United States.

As a display of “soft power,” the Chinese Communist Party intended to court greater American sympathy through the *Quotations*, “advertising” it as a comprehensive introduction to Mao thought and thus an introduction to New China. Although they were successful in earning the loyalties of many members of the 1960s “radical left,” ultimately the CCP may not have accounted for possible usages of the “Little Red Book” beyond their original intentions. Americans, whether sympathetic to Maoism or not, used the book, its image, or its ideas to create, reinvent, and display their own thoughts and beliefs regarding Mao, China, the United States, or a combination of the three. This thesis discussed how the *Quotations* and its Maoist sympathies were transformed a vehicle of thought and innovation in three major venues: universities and academia, literary satire and parody, and the arts and culture.
In academia, China studies scholars debated fervently over how to understand the Cultural Revolution through the lens of Maoism, which allowed them to push beyond Fairbank’s impact-response model and develop a more “China-centered” approach to China studies scholarship. For a brief time, they were split over this matter; older scholars struggled to connect New China with its imperial past, and younger scholars, displeased with the lofty objectivity of their elder peers, accepted much of China’s propaganda as truth and began incorporating Maoist rhetoric into their lives and careers, eventually forming such radically inclined organizations like the Committee for Concerned Asian Scholars, which were active in spreading pro-China and anti-imperialist rhetoric alongside their non-academic leftist peers. Writers of varying political inclinations were also inspired by the influx of Chinese materials into the U.S., and utilized the structure and language peculiar to the *Quotations* to parody or praise American political leaders and even religious figures, appropriating the Chinese text in their attempt to communicate their respective messages to audiences. Finally, artists, too, were inspired by the sociopolitical climate of the 1960s, and incorporated visual and textual understandings of the *Quotations* in their respective works that revealed both the depths of their beliefs regarding the state of American society as well as the limitations of their knowledge, owing to contemporary mainstream American news media.
It would now be beneficial to return to the present and consider, with this given knowledge, how the *Quotations*’ influence continues to be relevant in the American imagination.

As of April 2017, the first few months of President Donald Trump’s presidency have been fraught with controversy, leading some observers to draw parallels between the Trump Administration and Mao’s regime. Artists have created images literally combining the two leaders’ recognizable faces, producing Warhol-style works like the portrait above where Trump and Mao, American capitalist and Chinese Communist, are one and the same. Some journalists have gone as far as to call Trump “America’s Mao Zedong” or the “true new Maoist,” and their accusations are generally based in Trump and Mao’s similarly populist and authoritarian natures. The comparisons are many — Elizabeth Lynch compared the Trump presidential campaign’s
ideological demands to that of Mao’s “harebrained ideas” (the Great Leap Forward), suggesting that both were irrational plans based on ideology rather than logic, equally doomed to fall.\textsuperscript{183} Kerry Brown noted how Trump’s constant appeals to the general public mimicked Mao’s rousing of the peasantry in order to take down the societal elites.\textsuperscript{184} Perhaps the most damning opinion of the lot lies in Jiayang Fan’s observation, which focused on the charismatic yet divisive qualities of the two leaders that Americans considered unsettling, but modern Chinese saw as eerily familiar. She wrote:

\begin{quote}
The us-versus-them dichotomy, a cornerstone of Maoism later enshrined in [Mao’s] Little Red Book, effectively painted the world in black and white, banishing diversity, difference, or considerations of civil liberty. Yet that worldview has found curious potency sixty-odd years later in the mouth of another bombastic demagogue, reared in a wholly different political system, who shares Mao’s knack for polemical excess and xenophobic paranoia.\textsuperscript{185}
\end{quote}

Is this, then, the legacy of the \textit{Quotations} and similar CCP literature in the United States? Certainly, it can be determined that the \textit{Quotations’} image, structure, and language has become a comedic political archetype in American popular culture, but its influence is more significant than simply as a parodic template. In the international realm, it helped to shape how American citizens, not simply powerful political leaders or experienced diplomats, understood China in the late 1960s and early 70s. Moreover, as this thesis has repeatedly proven, its influence extended far beyond the leftist radicals that the CCP intended for the \textit{Quotations} to reach; liberals,\textsuperscript{183,184,185}

\begin{flushright}


\end{flushright}
conservatives, and non-partisans alike digested its messages and reshaped them for their own
purposes. The *Quotations* was not simply borrowed, but appropriated, or even completely torn
apart and reshaped to suit the desires of Americans struggling to make sense of a rapidly
changing world. It is my belief that this project has opened new pathways in understanding a
window into where Americans caught a fleeting and sometimes misleading glimpse of what was,
for decades, one of the most inscrutable and isolated countries in the world. This is a relatively
new angle of discussion regarding shifting American views of China, and it will be illuminating
to see how future studies could continue to elaborate on what I have already written here. I also
believe that this may open up more inquiries as how media, both textual and visual, could have
impacted the turbulent social movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s while influencing
intercultural dialogue between nations.

It is difficult to say whether the *Quotations* will continue to remain significant in modern
China, more than a relic of its recent past. Within its native country, it has become a piece of
Communist nostalgia, with rare undamaged copies occasionally commanded on the auction
block; in the United States, it speaks to a brief and tumultuous time period in which the “global
sixties” collided with Americans’ struggle to reshape their understanding of the foreign world.
Although the Little Red Book’s short-lived popularity may gradually become a thing of the past,
its significance will likely remain in the greater context of Chinese-American relations. The
*Quotations* was one venue in which Americans connected with China; time will tell how further
interactions between the two countries will continue to influence each other, whether on the
federal or civilian level.
Bibliography

Primary Sources


Mao Zedong. Quotations from Chairman Mao-Tse-Tung (Danger! This Book is Communist Propaganda!). Ed. W.S. McBirnie. Glendale: Voice of Americanism.


“Pictorial to Sleep.” Time, March 8, 1937.


“President’s ‘Quotations’ in Demand at Capital.” Los Angeles Times. February 14th, 1968.


“Quotations from Chairman LBJ.” Human Events. March 23rd, 1968.


Secondary Sources


Kinsella, Eileen. “Sotheby’s to Offer Rare Warhol Mao for $40 Million.” *Artnet News*. October 1, 2015.


Appendices

Appendix 3: *Mao* (1972), Andy Warhol. Silkscreen on canvas. 82 x 57 in.

A massive portrait that displays some of the typical characteristics of other portraits within the prolific series — bright, unnatural colors and lipstick-like paint smeared onto the canvas. Auctioned by Sotheby’s in 2015.
Appendix 5: Front cover of *Quotations from Chairman LBJ* by Jack Shepherd and Christopher Wren.