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How to cite:

Barnes, Amy Jane (2020). Chinese Propaganda Posters at the British Library. Visual Resources, 36(2) pp. 124–147.

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Version: Accepted Manuscript

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:

<http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1080/01973762.2020.1746498>

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Chinese Propaganda Posters at the British Library

In this paper, I discuss a project designed to increase knowledge of and make more accessible a collection of post-1949 Chinese propaganda posters at the British Library, for the benefit of a global audience of researchers and interested members of the public.

The project identified 90 individual items, dating from 1950 to 1982, with the bulk of the collection published in the mid-1960s just before the commencement of the Cultural Revolution. The paper considers the development of the collection, its thematic scope analysis of its scholarly value. It concludes that beyond the aesthetic value of the posters, the collection has significant scholarly and multidisciplinary value. The posters are documentary evidence of political, social and cultural discourse of the Maoist period and have resonances and significance beyond the national borders of China.

Keywords: china, posters, art, propaganda, collection, British Library

Introduction

The British Library holds a significant collection of post-1949 Chinese propaganda posters (*xuan chuan hua*). Largely collected since 2005, with the bulk of the posters acquired in 2006 and 2008, the collection is housed within the Department of Asia and Africa Collections and is overseen by the curators of Chinese collections. The British Library holdings include several genres of poster that typically do not feature in large numbers in other such collections, at least outside the Chinese mainland and, as such, the collection is relatively unique.¹ It comprises film posters, satirical cartoons and public information posters; genres of posters apparently overlooked by many private and institutional collectors, and largely absent from the scholarly record (in the English language); as well as a set of early revolutionary *nian hua* ('New Year prints'). In addition, the Library's holdings include a number of related items, predominantly boxed loose-leaf reproductions of artworks of various genres published in the late 1970s.

Between October and December 2015, I undertook a three-month postdoctoral public engagement research position at the British Library, which was funded by the British Inter-University China Centre (BICC).² The goal of the project was to research and compile a catalogue of the collection,³ with a view to improving its visibility and accessibility for both scholars and the general public. From an initial estimate of some 40 posters, 90 individual items were eventually located and identified.⁴ These date from 1950 to 1982, with the bulk of the collection published in the mid-1960s just before the commencement of the Great

Proletarian Cultural Revolution (*wu chan jie ji wen hua da ge ming*) (1966-1976).⁵ In this paper, I present the outcomes of this project, the development of the collection, its thematic scope and an analysis of its scholarly value. But, in order to set the context, I begin with a brief introduction to the style, thematic content and use of propaganda posters in their original context.

Propaganda Posters in Mao's China

In 1942, at the Yan'an wartime base of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), Mao Zedong declared that 'There is in fact no such thing as art for art's sake, art that stands above classes or art that is detached from or independent of politics. Proletarian literature and art are part of the whole proletarian revolutionary cause; they are, as Lenin said, cogs and wheels in the whole revolutionary machine'.⁶ This vision for art and its vital role in the dissemination and furtherance of revolutionary zeal continued after the foundation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. Although hardly a new phenomenon in China,⁷ propaganda posters began to be mass produced with their manufacture and distribution based on the Soviet model.⁸ These posters 'struck a chord' with illiterate and rural populations, 'who were accustomed to "reading" messages conveyed visually through shop signs, New Year prints [more about these below], pictures in the temples, flags and banners on the opera stage, and crudely printed fly sheets that began to circulate in the second half of the nineteenth century'.⁹ Cheap to produce and buy from branches of the state-run *Xinhua shudian* (the New China Bookshop), posters were an acceptable form of decoration in homes, schools, factories and state buildings. Immediate and didactic, visually attractive and bold, propaganda posters were accessible vehicles for the dissemination of ideological campaigns and points of reference for political analysis and discourse;¹⁰ so ubiquitous that the bright, dynamic posters, which brought 'colour to otherwise drab places where most people lived and worked',¹¹ enabling 'their political message [to be] passed on in an almost subconscious manner'.¹²

In general terms, and certainly during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), the art reproduced for dissemination in poster form '... was predominantly figurative, depicting workers, peasants or soldiers [sometimes all three - the socialist 'trinity'] in dynamic poses. Colours were brilliant and borderline 'gauche' ... Red predominated, the liberal use of which was used to indicate revolutionary spirit and loyalty to Mao and the Party. Accompanying slogans were bombastic and their meaning unambiguous'.¹³ As Evans and Donald evocatively describe, posters give us a sense of what people saw during the Mao years.¹⁴ During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), 'posters were ubiquitous in public and private

space. They were displayed on billboards and classroom walls and in clinics, workspaces, and domestic spaces ... they were inescapable'. Posters were absolutely 'central to the political culture of the time',¹⁵ and they are 'a major visual text central to the processes of constructing meaning and practice'.¹⁶ Indeed, the former journalist John Gittings writes of the posters he saw during a visit to China in 1971, as being visual 'points of reference ... emphatic and exuberant, often stating topics with greater emphasis and clarity than our own guides'.¹⁷

Background to the project

The visual culture of the Maoist period has achieved greater recognition and engendered more scholarly and museological interest in the last decade, as evidenced in an increasing number of exhibitions and publications that have explored this material.¹⁸ My research has shown that people are attracted to the aesthetic of Maoist visual culture, but do not necessarily have a complete understanding of the context in which these images were produced.¹⁹ I advocate for an approach to the interpretation of this material beyond mere aesthetics, considering both the social and ideological meaning of the material in tandem with its visual appeal within a framework of more nuanced analyses of the Cultural Revolution and Maoist period. This challenges and deconstructs the grand narratives that have characterised both scholarly analyses and pop cultural interpretations of this period of Chinese history.

Since the turn of the millennium and increasingly from the late 2000s, there has been increasing evidence that this is indeed taking place. A number of exhibitions focused on or featuring Maoist visual culture have been held at institutions in Western countries, including - in the UK - the University of Westminster, the British Museum and the Ashmolean Museum,²⁰ and also in Australia (Sydney 2010; Melbourne 2011),²¹ Canada (Toronto 2012)²² and Austria (Vienna 2011).²³ These exhibitions have looked beyond the popularly-held imaginings of the Cultural Revolution by exploring the meanings attached to this material in the time and place of their production and spheres of consumption, rather than from the perspective of the retrospective interpretations of that period that emerged in the years following Mao's death and the fall of the Gang of Four. At the British Library specifically, anecdotal evidence suggests that the Chinese items, and notably a poster of the film of the revolutionary ballet *The White-haired Girl* (see the discussion of this poster below), were particularly popular with visitors to the Library's 2013 exhibition *Propaganda: Power and Persuasion*.²⁴ This suggests a broadly-held interest in this type of material. The British Library's collection of predominantly Mao-era posters are therefore, a valuable but, prior to

this project, largely untapped resource for communicating knowledge and understanding of this period of Chinese history in a nuanced and engaging ways. The goal of the project was therefore, to make accessible a significant collection of Maoist visual culture in Britain to both researchers and members of the general public.

Building the collection

Largely for historical reasons related to colonial policy, and as the national library in the UK with an international reach and global audience, the British Library has and continues to collect books, manuscripts and works on papers published outside Britain. Formed in 1973 from the British Museum Library and India Office Library and Records, the British Library now ‘possesses the finest single resource for Asian studies in the world’ and continues to collect ‘research-level current printed publications across the humanities and social sciences’, items of ‘linguistic or literary significance’, in a vast number of Asian and African languages, and related ‘Reference works and serial titles [that] support the historic collections’ in Western languages.²⁵ Asian language manuscripts and visual material are collected ‘to a limited extent, largely to fill significant gaps in the collection’.²⁶ It is into this latter category that Chinese propaganda posters fall. All but four of the posters in the collection have been acquired within the last decade via Hanshan Tang;²⁷ a London-based bookshop specialising in East Asian books and manuscripts.²⁸

Thematic scope

The project determined that the collection covers a representative range of Chinese propaganda poster genres, visual styles and themes, from new *nian hua* (‘New Year prints’) and revolutionary romanticism, to photographic portraits of leaders (here, principally of Mao Zedong).²⁹ During the course of the project, the posters were categorised thematically: i) those related to the Mao cult, including colourised and heavily airbrushed photographic portraits of Mao Zedong from the late 1960s, and several reproductions of his calligraphy (and poetry); ii) so-called ‘chubby babies’ and children, dating to the late 1970s and early 1980s, several of which promote the one child policy; iii) revolutionary *nian hua* prints, dating from the early years of the People’s Republic; (iv) those eulogizing the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) and Lei Feng; v) satirical caricatures of the ‘Gang of Four’ (*si ren bang*); (vi) information posters designed to be put up public places, one set giving advice on how to act during an enemy air raid and the other providing meteorological and agricultural observations; (vii) documentary and feature films; (viii) scenes from the *yang ban xi*, the

revolutionary model works; and (x) Red Guard art. Each of these genres, as represented by posters in the collection, are explored further below, with a particular emphasis on those themes best represented within the collection.

Early revolutionary *nian hua*³⁰

Nian hua or New Year prints are bold and colourful Chinese woodblock prints, which date back at least to the seventeenth century.³¹ Mass-produced, affordable and designed to celebrate most notably the Spring Festival (also known as ‘Chinese New Year’), they are typically full of auspicious symbols for conferring wealth, longevity, happiness and good fortune on the family. Deities such as stove and door gods, flora and fauna, including the animals of the Chinese zodiac, and well-fed male babies are all common subjects of these posters.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) promoted new or ‘revolutionary’ *nian hua* as early as the second half of the 1920s. Because the woodblock print was an attractive, familiar and accessible format, it appealed to the target rural audience, and was easily and widely distributable. Crucially, it was a uniquely ‘national’ form;³² something ‘past’ that could, to paraphrase Mao Zedong, ‘serve the present’. But the communist authorities did away with subjects associated with religious and so-called ‘feudal’ beliefs, replacing them with revolutionary themes, and shifted production from local workshops to state supervision. In his important study of *nian hua*, James Flath recounts a discussion between Mao Zedong and Gu Yuan, a famous print artist, about new *nian hua*: Mao ‘suggested that Gu Yuan design new “Door Gods” to replace the traditional styles. “How shall I draw them,” Gu Yuan asked; “You know, I don’t believe there really are any gods.” Mao answered, “Make them look like peasants.”’³³ Hung notes that the door gods ultimately transmogrified into peasants, workers and soldiers: the Maoist trinity.³⁴

After the establishment of the PRC, while woodcut-style prints remained popular (see below), new *nian hua* began to incorporate the work of artists working in different types of media and genres.³⁵ From the 1950s on, reproductions of oil and brush-and-ink paintings, for example, began to appear as *nian hua*. Unlike other types of propaganda poster, which were produced all year around, revolutionary *nian hua*, much like their pre-revolutionary antecedents, were designed and published with a view to getting them in bookshops and other outlets in time for the New Year festivities.

Arguably, the most interesting items in the Library's collection, at least from an art historical perspective, are a set of these revolutionary *nian hua* prints housed in a blue silk-covered folio case, decorated with a paper-cut style design. The title reads *Selected New Year Prints (Xin nian hua xuan ji)* (British Library, ORB.40/644 (15)). Bold and colourful, each example in the set was designed by a different artist based in provinces and cities across the PRC. While the prints echo a pre-revolutionary woodblock-style aesthetic, it is likely that they were produced using offset lithography, which allowed for 'flexibility' and 'freedom' in the design and manufacturing process and, presumably, sped up and facilitated mass production.³⁶

This set was published in 1950, around the time of a major CCP directive calling for the production of new *nian hua* and the genre's heavy promotion via exhibitions and special publications.³⁷ The 14 prints reflect the early concerns of the People's Republic of China (PRC) just a year after its foundation. Land reform, which saw the redistribution of agricultural land from landowners to peasants, is referenced, as are policies promoting literacy and agricultural production (many of the prints in this set depict bountiful harvests). Several others reflect on or, perhaps more accurately, *promote* the burgeoning personality cults of Mao Zedong and his Inner Mongolian counterpart at that time, Chairman Ulanhu, also known as Yunze. The prints are in a modified *nian hua* style that Flath credits to the afore-mentioned Gu Yuan: a narrative style with a 'simplified political message'.³⁸

In *Sheng chan ji hua*, 'Making a plan', by Liu Jilu of Tianjin, a city in north-east China (Fig. 1), a group of peasants are shown engaged in discussion and drinking tea while resting in a field. In the background, a number of labourers plough the field with oxen. The titles, artists and place names are given in traditional characters. Simplified characters were not introduced until the mid-1950s, several years after the publication of this set of *nian hua*.

[INSERT FIG. 1]

Figure 1: 'Making a Plan' [*Sheng chan ji hua*], revolutionary new year print [*nian hua*] by Liu Jilu, 1950, © British Library Board ORB.40/644.1.

A number of the prints feature ‘ethnic minority’ subjects, with titles translated into Mongolian and Tibetan. For example, *Jian zheng huan xuan hao ren* - ‘Good people happily select a government’ - designed by an Inner Mongolian artist whose name is transliterated in Chinese to ‘Wulejibatu’ (British Library, ORB.40/644 (12)), depicts a busy scene of people voting, perhaps for local representatives. A similar title is given by the Mongolian text above the frame.³⁹

Despite their heavy promotion, the new *nian hua* failed to appeal to the masses.⁴⁰ People had enjoyed the old, familiar stories purged from the prints by the cultural authorities, and the new versions were too naturalistic compared with the stylised representations and techniques of their antecedents. The new *nian hua* were thought of as elitist by the very audience for whom they had been designed to appeal. Some were considered to be insufficiently colourful, as muted colours were selected over bright, while others were deemed too colourful, using a larger palette than the consumers of old prints had been used to. And they were no longer ‘auspicious’, now devoid of their old meanings and unfit for purpose. In short, the new *nian hua* largely and unsurprisingly flopped.⁴¹ Their production - at least in this form, imitating woodblock prints - dramatically dropped towards the end of the 1950s. The British Library’s examples are, therefore, very much of their time and, while they were not necessarily favourably received by their intended audience, they provide much evidence of a period of rapid cultural reform and the key policy concerns of the CCP in the early years of the People’s Republic.

In addition to these early examples of revolutionary *nian hua*, the Library also holds four specimen pages (British Library, ORB.99 35 i-iv), each providing consumers with a visual ‘catalogue’ of that year’s latest designs. Three were published by the Tianjin Fine Arts Publishing House in 1957, with the remaining specimen page produced by the Shanghai People’s Fine Art Publishing House, also in 1957. It is interesting to note the variety of subjects and genres available at this time, as well as the inclusion of individual artists’ names, before the introduction of rigid cultural controls in the 1960s. Genres include landscapes, cartoon strips, subjects from history and mythology (for example, scenes of Daoist immortals and episodes from ‘Journey to the West’), and brush-and-ink flower and bird paintings, as well as the more explicitly propagandist fare featuring workers, peasants and soldiers. In terms of style, the posters encompass *guohua*, Soviet-style history painting, and romantic realism.

Finally, in this category, is an early example of a single-sheet calendar on a revolutionary theme, likely dating to 1949-1950. Entitled 'Know the next three years in advance' (*San nian zao shi dao*) (British Library, ORB.45/104), the calendar print depicts a multi-generational scene of people bringing in a bumper harvest of wheat on an ox-drawn cart. Above this is the lunar planting calendar for 1950-1952.

Public information posters

The collection includes two sets of what can be loosely described as 'public information' posters, both dating from 1965. One set of 17 deals with what to do in the event of an enemy air raid (*Ren min fang kong chang shi gua tu*, 'People's Air Defence General Knowledge Wall Charts', British Library ORB.99/79), and the other, comprising five posters, presents meteorological and agricultural observations: 'Wall chart of meteorological knowledge (for small scale exhibitions)' (*Qi xiang zhi shi gua tu (gong xiao xing zhan lan)*, (British Library, ORB.99/87 (1-6)). Both sets clearly have a didactic purpose. Each poster comprises a series of colour panels, accompanied by explanatory captions and sometimes charts. Utilising the illustrative style of revolutionary romanticism, the posters cover, in the case of 'Wall chart of meteorological knowledge', such topics as predicting weather from cloud observations, proverbs derived from meteorology, how to predict weather by observing animal behaviour, the correlation between rainfall, soil moisture levels and healthy plant growth, and wind velocity. Interestingly, individuals are credited for this series: the compiler was Wang Weijun, the artwork was designed by Zhao Jingdong, and the scientific advisor was one Zhang Hanzhang. Of course, this set was published just prior to the commencement of the Cultural Revolution and reflects the different ideological mores associated with authorship and the ownership of intellectual property during that period.

The other set - 'People's Air Defence General Knowledge Wall Charts' (see Fig. 2) - gives information on, for example, identifying enemy (US and Taiwanese) aircraft, 'Several types of bomb', how to devise an improvised bunker and evacuate a building in the event of an air raid, what to do (and what not to do) during a blackout, administering first aid, extinguishing fires, dealing with a chemical attack and various methods for shooting down planes. The latter was included in the British Library's *Propaganda: Power and Persuasion* exhibition, the label for which noted that, at the time of the publication of this poster (1965),

China was isolated internationally and engaged in preparing the population for potential enemy attacks.

[INSERT FIG. 2]

Figure 2: ‘Rescuing injured personnel’ [*Qiang jiu shou shang ren yuan*], from a set of wall charts ‘People’s Air Defence General Knowledge Charts’ [*Ren min fang kong chang shi gua tu*], Anon., compiled by the Tianjin People’s Air Defence Committee, July 1965, © British Library Board ORB.99/79.14.

Documentary and feature film posters⁴²

The British Library’s collection appears to be fairly unique, certainly among similar Western collections, in that it includes a number of documentary and feature film posters. This thematic set includes a brightly coloured and attractive poster for the romantic film *Five Golden Flowers* [*Wu duo jin hua*] (1959) (see Fig. 3). The poster uses a highly stylised script that looks barely Chinese and, in so doing, reflects the emphasis on ethnic minority culture in the film’s plot, in which the hero tries to find a girl called Jinhua (‘Golden Flower’), whom he had met at the same festival the previous year. In the course of the film he meets four other girls called Jinhua. Together, they are the ‘Five Golden Flowers’ of the film’s title and are represented, on the poster, by four roses and the flower held by the original Jinhua, seated on a rock at the centre of the scene.⁴³ At first glance, the film is not overtly propagandist, but commentators have noted that the narrative supports the Great Leap Forward (1958-1961) – a programme of industrialisation and agricultural collectivisation.⁴⁴

[INSERT FIG. 3]

Figure 3: ‘Five Golden Flowers’ or ‘Five Golden Blossoms’ [*Wu duo jin hua*], film poster, Anon., undated poster for film released in 1959, © British Library Board ORB.99/172.

The poster for a documentary film, ‘Vast World’ or the more literal translation ‘Vastness of Heaven and Earth’ [*Guang kuo de tian di*] (British Library, ORB.99/166), is undated but the film was released in 1969, with elements of the illustration dating to 1966 (see below).⁴⁵ Produced by the Shanghai ‘Vastness of Heaven and Earth’ Film production

Group, the documentary charts the experiences of Shanghai school-leavers answering Mao's call to 'go down to the countryside'.⁴⁶ The poster features a large painted image, in revolutionary romantic style, of a young woman in peasant dress, carrying a plough alongside an ox. She wears a Mao badge prominently on her chest. This image is similar to a poster dating from 1966, with the slogan 'Determined to be a lifetime peasant'.⁴⁷ In the documentary film poster, beneath this image are series of six captioned, black and white film stills, and a synopsis of the film.

The poster for the documentary film, *Never Forget Class Bitterness, Forever Remember the Hatred in the Sea of Blood* [*Bu wang jie ji ku, Yong ji xue hai chou*] (British Library, ORB.99/170),⁴⁸ features a romantic sketch of a male peasant and young boy, who wears a young pioneer scarf (the youth movement of the CCP, founded in 1924) and holds a copy of Lei Feng's diary (see the section on the PLA hero Lei Feng below). Beneath this image are eight black and white film stills from the documentary, accompanied by synopses of the narrative. The documentary itself, produced by the Shanghai Scientific and Educational Film Studio (*Shanghai ke xue jiao yu dian ying zhi pian chang chu pin*), was based on an exhibition held in Shangdong province and focuses on the lives of peasants in pre-liberation China and the crimes of bourgeois landlords.⁴⁹ The film appears to be an amalgamation of earlier film footage or a reissue of an earlier release. Different sources give the film release date as either 1958 or 1965. The date '7.1958' is shown in the last frame of the film. However, the poster can be confidently dated to 1965, because the aforementioned *Diary of Lei Feng* was not published until 1963.

Lei Feng makes a cinematic appearance in the eponymous film released in 1964. The poster (British Library, ORB.99 173) features a large photographic portrait of Lei in People's Liberation Army (PLA) uniform and holding a copy of Mao's *Quotations*. This image is accompanied by five colourised scenes from the film with a synopsis of the film, and black and white photographs of the principal characters. The target audience for the film was likely Lei's fellow PLA comrades. It was produced by the August First Film Studio [*Ba yi dian zhi pian chang chu pin*] set up by the PLA (the 'August First' commemorates the founding of the PLA) to produce films largely to 'instruct and entertain army personnel'.⁵⁰ The film is described by Leyda as:

... so crammed with lessons, sermons, and virtuous examples that there is no room for anything else. I can imagine a film made just after the death of St. Francis that would look like this. Only three main characters are needed for this morality play: the

righteous little soldier-driver, his easily tempted and back-sliding comrade (Wang), and a priest like political instructor.⁵¹

The remaining film and documentary posters in the collection comprise: *Dong feng*, literally *East Wind* [*Dong feng*] (but also has the meaning, 'Driving Force of Revolution') released in 1958 (British Library, ORB.99/168), about a car factory;⁵² *The Scout* [*Zhen cha bing*] (British Library, ORB.99/169), released in 1974, which Clark notes was 'the first new non-opera feature film to be made after the studios resumed production';⁵³ and *Beacon of Youth* [*Feng huo shao nian*] (British Library, ORB.99/171), released in 1975, which is the story of a young man orphaned by Japanese forces, who goes on to become a heroic soldier.⁵⁴

Revolutionary Opera posters

The *yang ban xi* (revolutionary model works) were, as summed up by Roberts, 'a small group of visually exciting, artistically innovative and ideologically extreme modernised Beijing operas, ballets, and symphonies, that dominated mainland Chinese public culture in the radical Maoist years of the Cultural Revolution'.⁵⁵ Originally numbering eight, and later added to in the early 1970s, the *yang ban xi* were designated by Jiang Qing in 1967 and reflected popular as well as political discourse.⁵⁶ Their performances were strictly controlled, with 'definitive versions of the works' turned into feature films and toured across the country.⁵⁷

The British Library holds seven posters that feature scenes taken from the *yang ban xi*: *The White Haired Girl* [*Bai mao nü*] (British Library, ORB.99/178) - which, as mentioned above, featured heavily in the merchandise for the British Library's 2013 exhibition *Propaganda: Power and Persuasion* - ; *The Red Detachment of Women* [*Hong se niang zi jun*] (British Library, ORB.99/179); *Sha Family Creek* [*Sha jia bang*] (British Library, ORB.99.1977); *Raid on the White Tiger Regiment* [*Qi xi bai hu tuan*] (British Library, ORB.99/167); and *The Legend of the Red Lantern* [*Hong deng ji*].⁵⁸ There are three posters in the collection (part of a series) for the latter alone (British Library, ORB.99/174, 175 and 176); all published in 1970 and each featuring colour stills from the film. ORB.99/174 shows the 'proletarian hero' and underground revolutionary Li Yuhe in a dynamic pose taken directly from the film. ORB.99/175 depicts his adopted daughter Li Tiemei holding the titular red lantern aloft and determined to follow her martyred parents' revolutionary example. In ORB.99/176, Grandma Li tells Li Tiemei about her parents' past. In each poster, the image is accompanied by a synopsis of the scene. The film from which these posters were derived was

produced by the August First Film Studio – the aforementioned PLA film company - and directed by Cheng Yin. It had its cinematic release in July 1971.⁵⁹ This indicates that the propaganda (and marketing) value of the early publication of posters relating to the film was well understood. The posters were clearly popular, with ORB.99/176 into its fifth print run by October 1970. Incidentally, only 13 35mm copies of the film were made for distribution nationwide. Clark surmises that this was to ensure the integrity of film versions of the ‘model works’, copies of which were kept ‘under tight security to ensure the perfection of the celluloid versions reached audiences unsullied by scratched or any other abuse’.⁶⁰

The PLA and Lei Feng

The collection is not particularly strong with regards to posters eulogising and romanticising the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) - a key theme of the early part of the Cultural Revolution - ⁶¹ with only four posters on the subject (not including the film poster mentioned in an earlier section). Lei Feng (1940-1962), hailed by the Party as the embodiment of revolutionary spirit, was a semi-mythical model-soldier, the most famous military martyr-hero of the early 1960s and into the first half of the Cultural Revolution.⁶² Children were urged to ‘Learn from Lei Feng’, in a campaign launched by Marshal Lin Biao in 1963.⁶³ Lei’s dedication, altruism and selflessness, were promoted as a counterpoint to the actions of so-called ‘revisionists’ within the Party.⁶⁴

Three posters in a series called ‘Chairman Mao’s Good Soldier - Lei Feng’ [*Mao zhi xi de hao zhan shi - Lei Feng*], British Library, ORB.99/36 (1-3) - are undated, but estimated to have been published in the early 1970s.⁶⁵ These appear to have been designed for a formal pedagogical context; each features 10 scenes from Lei Feng’s life, accompanied by captions and arranged in a sequential comic book format. The occasional use of *pinyin*,⁶⁶ suggests the posters were used in teaching within schools and/or with adult learners. The fourth poster in this theme (British Library, ORB.99/36 (5)) dates from January 1967 and depicts a series of black and white illustrations, compiled and published by the Culture Section of the Guangzhou Army Political Department and described as ‘lantern slides’, specifically a ‘Lantern Slides illustration page’ (*Huan deng hua ye*); a narrative created from individual slides reproduced for the poster. Lantern slides were used in didactic contexts (as we might use PowerPoint today). The poster depicts a series of revolutionary scenes, featuring leaders including Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, the socialist trinity of worker-peasant-soldier, and the writer, poet, critic and one of the leaders of the May Fourth Movement, Lu Xun. Several of the images are reminiscent of, if not direct copies of well-known propaganda posters.

Red Guard art

Red Guards are a powerful and abiding image of the Cultural Revolution. Comprised of the first generation to grow up under the People's Republic – and numbering around 10 to 30 million individuals - the Red Guard movement was the PRC's 'first major transformative event'.⁶⁷ Broadly speaking, the movement characterised the first 'manic phase' of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1969).⁶⁸ Emboldened by Mao's support, the Red Guards rebelled and struggled against revisionism within the Party, which, in practice, translated to chaotic violence. The Red Guard art movement, described by Wang as 'adding fuel to the flames of the Cultural Revolution',⁶⁹ was 'crucial in establishing the images of the Cultural Revolution'.⁷⁰ It emerged as a distinct movement in 1967, with the launch of a series of art newspapers, periodicals and exhibitions.⁷¹

The movement is represented at the British Library by a single poster printed by the Yunnan People's Printing House [*Yunnan re min yin shua chang yin shua*] (British Library, ORB.99/36 (4)), 'Overthrow Yan Hongyan! Overthrow Li Jingquan! (*Da dao Yan Hongyan! Da dao Li Jingquan!*)',⁷² which is dated to the 23 July 1967 and was published in the seventh issue of a Red Guard periodical *Qian jun bang* ['A thousand jun cudgel'];⁷³ an evocative title originating from *Journey to the West* and invoked by Mao in a poetic response to the writer Guo Moruo in 1961.⁷⁴

Like the Gang of Four posters described in a following section, this poster comprises a series of satirical caricatures, in this example of the discredited Yan and Li. Pozzi notes that satirical illustrations produced by Red Guard troupes have received less scholarly attention than standard genres of propaganda art; the material that was displayed in official exhibitions and reproduced in the movement's publications.⁷⁵ Indeed, it was likely that when they were exhibited, caricatures were categorised alongside *dazibao* and similar textual material - 'the most popular media for expressing political opinions'.⁷⁶ As such, as Wang notes, few examples survive 'because they were considered political products and were not preserved',⁷⁷ thus making the example held by the British Library an important survival.

Mao cult

This theme comprises 14 individual items, ranging from an approximately A4-sized reproduction produced for an English-speaking audience (the title and caption are in English) of the ubiquitous oil painting *Chairman Mao Goes to Anyuan* [*Mao zhu xi qu Anyuan*], painted by Liu Chunhua in 1968 (British Library, Or.5896 Box 3 Sheet 43), to a series of

colourised and heavily retouched photographic portraits of Mao Zedong, each accompanied by a strident slogan. Two examples of the latter are: ‘Long live Chairman Mao, the reddest red sun in our hearts! [*Wo men xin zhong zui hong zui hong de hong tai yang mao zhu xi wan sui!*]’ (British Library, ORB.50/26 (2)), in which Mao wears a long black coat and black cap and is standing alongside a lake in snowy weather; and ‘Chairman Mao, oh Chairman Mao, father and mother are not your equal, the deepest rivers and seas are not equal to the deepness of your affection’ [*Mao zhu xi a mao zhu xi, die qin niang qin, bu ru nin lao ren jia qin; he shen hai shen, bu ru nin lao ren jia de en qing shen*]’ (British Library, ORB.50/26 (5)), in which a smiling Mao Zedong, in characteristic grey *zhong shan zhuang* [aka ‘Mao suit’], stands against a backdrop of trees. Both posters were published by the Shanghai People’s Fine Art Publishing House in June and February 1969, respectively.

There are also a series of handscroll-style posters featuring poetry in Mao’s calligraphic hand. These include examples authored by Mao, such as ‘Spring in Qin Garden. Changsha’ [*Qin yuan chun. Changsha*] (1925) [British Library, ORB.99/41 (i)], and ‘Yellow Crane Tower’ [*Huang he lou*] (1927) [British Library, ORB.99/41 (iii)], both published by the Shanghai Book Group [*Shanghai shu dian she*] in June 1976.⁷⁸ Clearly popular with consumers, both these posters were reissued editions of earlier versions.⁷⁹ Indeed, Gittings notes that posters of Mao or posters connected with Mao dominated the early part of the Cultural Revolution, 1966-1968. But, unlike posters associated with particular political campaigns and slogans, which ‘had a short life span’, popular Mao posters remained in print throughout the whole Cultural Revolution.⁸⁰

Reproductions of Lin Chunhua’s oil painting, *Chairman Mao Goes to Anyuan* [*Mao zhu xi qu Anyuan*],⁸¹ proclaimed by Jiang Qing to be one of the ‘model achievements of the Cultural Revolution’,⁸² were inserted into copies of *China Pictorial* - a periodical published in 16 languages during the Cultural Revolution - in 1968.⁸³ It seems likely that the A4-sized copy of the poster in the Library’s collection (British Library Or.5896 Box 3 Sheet 43, provenance unknown), clearly produced for an English-speaking audience with both title and caption given in English, is, indeed, one of these numbers of reproductions included in a print journal. An identical version was published as the cover image and an inside colour spread, of the September 1968 issue of *China Pictorial* with artist details (‘A collaborative work by students of Peking universities and colleges. Painted by Liu Chun-hua and others’) (see below for a discussion of authorship and intellectual property rights with regards to Chinese propaganda posters) and identical to the Library’s version of the poster.⁸⁴

Gang of Four caricatures⁸⁵

Dating from the immediate post-Mao period (c. 1976-7), this sub-category comprises four posters (British Library, ORB 99/40 (1-4) and a slightly later sheet (published October 1980) from a section of a newspaper entitled *Feng ci yu you mo* ['Satire and Humour'] (British Library, ORB 99/40 (5)), which clearly signals the spirit in which the caricatures were intended to be taken, and which were to be viewed against the backdrop of the soon to commence trial of the Gang of Four (November 1980 - January 1981). The so-called 'Gang of Four' was headed by Mao Zedong's widow Jiang Qing. Jiang had assumed the role of cultural supremo in the 1960s, asserting her power and influence over first the performing arts, and later all forms of art practice via her theory of the 'three prominences', as exemplified by the previously mentioned *yangbanxi* (the eight model works).⁸⁶

In this interregnum period, between the death of Mao and the emergence of Deng Xiaoping as de facto leader in the early 1980s,⁸⁷ Landsberger notes the 'remarkable' freedom given to artists in their overt criticism of the Gang.⁸⁸ This is unsurprising when one considers the notoriety of the subject matter; the humiliating fall of the Gang, which culminated in what has been described as 'The most famous trial in Chinese history'.⁸⁹ In the wake of Chairman Mao's death in September 1976, the Gang of Four and their associates were accused by the Party of having exploited the Cultural Revolution as an opportunity to 'persecute rivals and usurp power'.⁹⁰ Indicted on 48 charges, ranging from persecution of party cadres to the planning of an armed rebellion,⁹¹ the Gang were, at their trial in 1981, handed down a range of sentences, from the death penalty (Jiang and Zhang Chunqiao) - later commuted to life imprisonment - to life imprisonment (Wang Hongwen) and 20 years in prison (Yao Wenyuan). Gittings notes that when they 'featured as targets of poster attack' the Gang and their crimes were 'lampooned' in cartoon form, in an echo of earlier campaigns against purged Party leaders,⁹² and the *dazibao* ['big character posters'] that publicly denounced and criticised their targets.⁹³ It is into this category of political caricature that the posters in the British Library collection fall. Pozzi has coined the term *fenci xuan chuan hua* ('caricature posters') to describe this genre - a term that 'comprises both their content and their function'.⁹⁴

The posters, each from different series produced by three different publishing houses - the Jinan Workers' Cultural Palace, Qingdao Workers' Cultural Palace (both in Shangdong province),⁹⁵ and the Harbin Art Studio (in Heilongjiang province) - are comprised of sequential, biting satirical caricatures in brush and ink (with some photo montage). Jiang and her clique are depicted engaging in devious actions or subjugated and humiliated. This

group of posters represents the propaganda poster in transition, reflecting the ideological shift from Cultural Revolution to the Reform Period's 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' - the key tenet of Deng Xiaoping's premiership.⁹⁶

Chubby babies and children

The most recent examples in the collection comprise seven so-called 'chubby baby' posters, dating from the late 1970s and early 1980s. A particular theme associated with the post-Mao, early Reform period, several of these posters were produced to support the infamous and now defunct 'One Child Policy', introduced in 1979.⁹⁷ In contrast with the majority of the other posters in the collection and particularly those dating from after the 1950s, the artists responsible for these examples are named, likely reflecting the new but precarious freedoms of the Reform period.⁹⁸

The earliest of the set - a reproduction of a work by the artist Su Geng (b. 1943) - was first printed in July 1979 (British Library ORB Misc 113). Entitled 'We ardently love Chairman Hua' [*Wo men re'ai hua zhu xi*], the poster features a painted image of a small girl wearing a blue dress and a pink ribbon in her hair. She holds up a picture she has drawn of the Gate of Heavenly Peace at Tiananmen Square, above which she has written the title of the poster in red crayon. Mao's anointed successor, Hua Guofeng, was Premier of the PRC from February 1976 until September 1980. The other six posters all date from August 1982, around three years into the official one-child policy and a few months before China adopted a new constitution that explicitly directed married couples to practice birth control in December that year.⁹⁹

'Happy and Prosperous Child' [*Fu yu tong xi*] by Zhang Guiyin (British Library ORB.99/104),¹⁰⁰ is particularly interesting in that it echoes pre-revolutionary *nianhua* prints with its use of auspicious motifs (peonies, goldfish, the 'xi' character - denoting double happiness) combined with a 'chubby baby' - here a baby girl, as opposed to the more familiar boy child typically seen in pre-revolutionary prints. 'Young Swallow, Winter Jasmine' [*Ru yan ying chun*] by Li Mubai (1913-1991) and Pang Ka (b. 1935), combines another popular theme of this period - sporting prowess - with the promise of youth.¹⁰¹ In this poster a young girl wearing a tracksuit practises gymnastics in a park. Four other girls dressed in similar and variously coloured tracksuits look on. 'Don't Learn from Them' [*Bu xue ta men de yang*] by Zhang Luan (b.1924) (British Library ORB.99/106), in contrast, harks back to more stridently revolutionary themes. In this poster, four young children are depicted playing with a puppy. A boy dressed in a naval-style costume of red-star emblazoned cap, and blue and white

striped t-shirt, adopts a pose of resistance against another child, who wears a skew-whiff baker boy-style hat, a plaid button-up shirt, thick-rimmed glasses and appears amid scattered playing cards (a reference to gambling, perhaps?). 'Architect of the Future' [*Wei lai de jian zhi shi*] by Liu Zhongfu (1942 - 2014?) (British Library ORB.99/112) encapsulates the new period of economic reform and infrastructural development. A chubby baby sits plays with wooden building blocks while, outside, a high-rise building is undergoing construction.

Gittings argues that while Deng Xiaoping's ascendancy to power briefly revitalised the propaganda poster, albeit a toned down, softer and less strident style of poster (as per the 'chubby babies'), 'Posters suffered from being an art form so closely associated with the previous epoch of turmoil'.¹⁰² 'By the early 1980s, blank spaces were appearing on the walls of the New China Bookshops; very soon most poster themes became anodyne and their images purely decorative. A fresh source of visual appeal was to be found instead on the billboards where advertisements for consumer goods and films at first appeared side by side with, and then replaced, images of Chairman Mao'.¹⁰³ Gittings describes how, by the early 1980s, poster art had begun to seem 'old-fashioned'. He notes that aside from posters designed to support health and education campaigns, the genre largely reverted to decorative purposes. Popular themes included children, animals, film posters, landscapes, figures from mythology, 'traditional' nianhua and 'fairly modest' pinups.¹⁰⁴ After 1984, *Meishu* - the national art journal, largely dropped poster art altogether.¹⁰⁵

Conclusion

In this paper I have provided a thematic overview of the British Library's collection of Chinese propaganda posters and the project designed to make this material more accessible and available to a global audience of researchers and interested members of the public. It has provided insight into the activities and rationale behind the development of a collection that has enormous scholarly and multidisciplinary value. These posters are documentary evidence of political, social and cultural discourse in Mao's China. From a Western perspective, it can be all too easy to dismiss the visual culture of authoritarian regimes. Indeed, for decades of the twentieth century, Western-dominated art history decreed that Chinese art 'finished' in 1911 with the Nationalist Revolution; perceived thereafter to be 'sullied' by Western influence and ideology.¹⁰⁶ Yet, far from moribund and stagnant as these posters demonstrate, there was diversity and inventiveness in the visual culture of this tumultuous period of Chinese history. And the value and significance of the collection to the institution is borne

out by its continued development. Since 2015, the British Library has purchased an additional 25 posters from Hanshan Tang, including a set of 12 dated to the early 1950s and dedicated to the prevention of mosquito-borne illnesses (British Library, ORB. 99/237) and a further set of 12 published in 1976, which extoll health and safety in the construction of railways (British Library ORB. 99/245).

One might ask why it is important to collect, study, interpret and display the visual culture of this period of Chinese history in the UK, when contemporary China appears to be so removed from that reality. I argue that this material can be examined ‘for what it can reveal about an extraordinary period of Chinese history that had implications beyond national borders and which continues to shape China and how the rest of the world perceives the Chinese nation in the present’.¹⁰⁷ This collection represents a material manifestation of the ideological foundations of the Chinese state, increasingly relevant today as contemporary China, under Premier Xi Jinping turns away from economic and social reform towards the consolidation of a Mao-style autocracy: ‘...the Cultural Revolution casts a shadow upon contemporary Chinese politics, society and culture [it remains a difficult period of history to discuss openly in China], to which the West ... [is so economically and imaginatively] tied ... this is our history too’.¹⁰⁸

Acknowledgements:

Many thanks are due to Professor Robert Bickers and BICC for funding the project, to Sara Chiesura and Emma Harrison, curators of the Chinese collection at the British Library, for hosting me and to Sara and Dr Jess Unwin for their invaluable comments on this paper. I would also like to thank Prof Stephanie Hemelryck Donald for her comments on a draft of this paper.

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¹With regards to film posters, exceptions include the Paul Kendel Fonoroff Collection for Chinese Film Studies at the University of California, Berkeley (see: <http://exhibits.lib.berkeley.edu/spotlight/fonoroff-collection>, accessed 31 December 2017); the University of Westminster (see, for example, <https://westminster-atom.arkivum.net/index.php/cpc-1-l-48>, accessed 19 October 2019); the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library at the University of Toronto; and the Stewart E. Fraser Poster Collection at La Trobe University, Melbourne. I thank Prof. Stephanie Hemelryck Donald for this information.

² See <https://www.bicc.ac.uk/>, accessed 6 September 2018.

³ An overview of the collection is available from the British Library website: <https://www.bl.uk/britishlibrary/~media/subjects%20images/east%20asia/pdf/chinese-posters.pdf>, accessed 9 June 2017.

⁴ Since 2015, the collection has continued to grow. See the concluding section of this paper for details.

⁵ It is now accepted that the Cultural Revolution encompassed the years 1966-1976. It began with political purges and ended with Mao's death on 9 September 1976 and the arrest of the 'Gang of Four'. For Mao, the Cultural Revolution was an opportunity to restamp his authority on the Party, while instilling in young people a renewed spirit of revolution. For an extensive but accessible overview of the key policies and events of the Cultural Revolution, see Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

⁶ Mao Tse-Tung, 'Talks at the Yen'an Forum on Literature and Art', in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung: Vol. III*, Mao Tse-Tung, (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1965), 69-98.

⁷ See John Gittings, 'Excess and Enthusiasm', in *Picturing Power in the People's Republic of China*, eds. Harriet Evans and Stephanie Donald (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), 29-30.

⁸ Gittings, 'Excess and Enthusiasm', 29.

⁹ Gittings, 'Excess and Enthusiasm', 29.

¹⁰ See Gittings, 'Excess and Enthusiasm', 28.

¹¹ Stefan Landsberger, 'Contextualising (Propaganda) Posters', in *Visualising China: 1845-1964: Moving and Still Images in Historical Narratives*, eds. Henriot, Christian and Wen-hsin Yeh (Leiden: Leiden, 2013), 397.

¹² Stefan Landsberger, *Paint it Red* (Groningen: Intermed, 1998a), 23.

¹³ Amy Jane Barnes, *Museum Representations of Maoist China* (London: Routledge, 2014), 48, citing Ellen Johnston Laing, *The Winking Owl: Art in the People's Republic of China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 64.

¹⁴ Harriet Evans and Stephanie Donald, 'Introducing Posters of China's Cultural Revolution', in *Picturing Power in the People's Republic of China*, 1.

¹⁵ Evans and Donald, 'Introducing Posters of China's Cultural Revolution', 1-2.

¹⁶ Evans and Donald, 'Introducing Posters of China's Cultural Revolution', 2.

¹⁷ Gittings, 'Excess and Enthusiasm', 27.

¹⁸ Such exhibitions include: *Icons of Revolution* (2008), British Museum, London; *Cultural Revolution: State Graphics in China in the 1960s and 1970s* (2011), Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; *Poster Power: Images from Mao's China, Then and Now* (2011), Regent Street Gallery, University of Westminster; *The Art of Influence: Asian Propaganda* (2013), British Museum, London; *Propaganda: Power and Persuasion* (2013), British Library, London. See also Barnes, *Museum Representations of Maoist China*; Barbara Mittler, *A Continuous Revolution: Making Sense of*

Cultural Revolution Culture (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013); Melissa Chiu and Zheng Shengtian, eds., *Art and China's Revolution* (New York: Asia Society: Yale University Press, 2008); Lincoln Cushing and Ann Tompkins, *Chinese Posters: Art from the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution* (San Francisco: Chronicle, 2007).

¹⁹ Barnes, *Museum Representations of Maoist China*.

²⁰ See Barnes, *Museum Representations of Maoist China*. An exhibition of material from the Ashmolean Museum collection was also exhibited at the William Morris Gallery, London in 2019. See <https://www.wmgallery.org.uk/whats-on/exhibitions-43/cultural-revolution> (accessed 19 October 2019).

²¹ The exhibition *China and Revolution: History, Parody and Memory in Contemporary Art* was shown at the University of Sydney in 2010 (see <http://www.stephaniedonald.info/files/chinarevolutionEN.pdf>, accessed 19 October 2019) and RMIT (Melbourne) in 2011 (see <https://www.rmit.edu.au/events/all-events/exhibitions/2011/january/china-and-revolution>, accessed 19 October 2019).

²² *Workforce: Representing Labour in Chinese Propaganda Posters* held at the University of Toronto Art Centre in 2012 (see: <https://artmuseum.utoronto.ca/exhibition/workforce-representing-labour-chinese-propaganda-posters/>, accessed 19 October 2019).

²³ The exhibition *Die Kultur Der Kulturrevolution: Personenkult und Politisches Design im China von Mao Zedong* was held at Museum für Völkerkunde, Vienna in 2012. See <https://www.musethno.uzh.ch/de/ausstellungen/archiv/kulturrevolution.html> [in German] (accessed 19 October 2019).

²⁴ I owe this observation to Sara Chiesura, with thanks.

²⁵ British Library, *Collection Development Policy for Asia, the Middle East and Islamic North Africa*, <http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/bldept/apac/asiamena/cdpforameina.html> (n.d), accessed 15 August 2017.

²⁶ British Library, *Collection Development Policy for Asia, the Middle East and Islamic North Africa*. <http://www.hanshan.com/>, accessed 7th April 2018.

²⁷ The remainder comprise three donations and one 'provenance unknown'.

²⁸ See <https://www.bl.uk/britishlibrary/~media/subjects%20images/east%20asia/pdf/chinese-posters.pdf> (accessed 6 September 2018) for a download link to the catalogue overview.

²⁹ Parts of this section first appeared as a post on the British Library's Asian and African studies blog (<http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/asian-and-african/2015/12/revolutionary-nian-hua-in-the-british-library.html>, accessed 1 June 2018), which has subsequently been published in Chinese translation.

See Amy Jane Barnes, 'Revolutionary nianhua in the British Library [in Chinese]'. 年画研究 (*Niánhuà yánjiū*) [Nianhua Journal]. Tianjin: Feng Jicai Research Institute of Literature and Art of Tianjin University, 2018.

³⁰ John Lust, *Chinese Popular Prints* (Leiden: Brill 1996), 1.

³¹ See Chang-Tai Hung, 'Repainting China: New Years Prints (Nianhua) and Peasant Resistance in the Early Years of the People's Republic', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42, no. 4 (2000): 775; and James A. Flath, *The Cult of Happiness: Nianhua, Art, and History in Rural North China* (Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press, 2004), 146.

³² Flath, *The Cult of Happiness*, 139.

³³ Hung, 'Repainting China', 779-780.

³⁴ Kuiyi Shen, 'Propaganda Posters in China', in *Chinese Posters: The IISH-Landsberger Collections*, S. R. Landsberger and M. Van der Heijden, eds. (New York and London: Prestel, 2009), 10.

³⁵ Hung, 'Repainting China', 776.

³⁶ Hung, 'Repainting China', 776; Flath, *The Cult of Happiness*, 146.

³⁷ Flath, *The Cult of Happiness*, 143.

³⁸ With thanks to Eleanor Cooper, former Curator of Manchu and Mongolian collections at the British Library, for translating the Mongolian script used on several of the *nian hua* prints.

³⁹ Hung, 'Repainting China', 776; Flath, *The Cult of Happiness*, 784-798.

⁴⁰ Hung, 'Repainting China', 776; Flath, *The Cult of Happiness*, 798-799.

- ⁴² Parts of this section first appeared as a post on the British Library's Asian and African studies blog (<http://blogs.bl.uk/asian-and-african/2015/11/bicc-cultural-engagement-partnership-maoist-posters-at-the-british-library.html>, accessed 1 June 2018).
- ⁴³ See the plot summary on the IMDB entry for the film: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0355036/>, accessed 14 August 2017.
- ⁴⁴ See Zhuoyi Wang, *Revolutionary Cycles in Chinese Cinema 1951-1979* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 138; Yingjin Zhang and Zhiwei Xiao, *Encyclopedia of Chinese Film* (London: Routledge, 1998), 168; and Paul Clark, *Chinese Cinema: Culture and Politics Since 1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 99-100.
- ⁴⁵ To watch this film online, see: http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XODg0NDgzNjY4.html, accessed 1 June 2018.
- ⁴⁶ Wang explains the title as referencing Mao's words to young urbanites sent to work in remote rural areas during the 1950s: 'The countryside is a vast world, where much can be accomplished' [*Nongcun shi yi ge guangkuo de tiandi, zai nali shi keyi da you zuowei de*]. Later, the educated youth who were sent 'up to the mountains, down to the countryside' during the Cultural Revolution shortened this expression into the snappier slogan: 'Vast world, much to be done' [*Guangkuo tiandi, da you zuowei*]. Helen Wang, *Chairman Mao Badges: symbols and slogans of the Cultural Revolution* (London: British Museum Press, 2008), 119. Huang mentions that *guang kuo tian di* was 'an expression that often referred to the countryside.' Nicole Huang, 'Sun-Facing Courtyards: Urban Communal Culture in Mid-1970s' Shanghai', *East Asian History*, 25/26 (2003): 176.
- ⁴⁷ See <http://www.docspopuli.org/ChinaWebCat/detail.np/detail-52.html>, accessed 11 May 2018. This poster is also published in Cushing and Tompkins, *Chinese Posters*, 74.
- ⁴⁸ To watch the film online, see http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMTI4MzgXMTA3Mg==.html, accessed 1 June 2018.
- ⁴⁹ Guo Wu, 'Recalling Bitterness: Historiography, Memory, and Myth in Maoist China', *Twentieth-Century China* 39, no. 3 (2014): 259-260.
- ⁵⁰ George Stephen Semsel, 'Film in China: An Introduction', in *Chinese Film: The State of the Art in the People's Republic*, Ed. George Stephen Semsel (New York, Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, 1987), 3.
- ⁵¹ Jay Leyda, *Dianying: An Account of Films and the Film Audience in China* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1972), 316.
- ⁵² Dong Feng Motors is a state-owned car factory in Wuhan, founded in 1969. See <http://movie.mtime.com/56504/> to watch the film online and to see an image of the poster (accessed 1 June 2018).
- ⁵³ Clark, *Chinese Cinema*, 204n61.
- ⁵⁴ See <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0340114/> for a full synopsis, accessed 1 June 2018.
- ⁵⁵ Rosemary A. Roberts, *Maoist Model Theatre: The Semiotics of Gender and Sexuality in the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-1976)* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010), 1.
- ⁵⁶ Roberts, *Maoist Model Theatre*, 1-2.
- ⁵⁷ Roberts, *Maoist Model Theatre*, 2.
- ⁵⁸ Not to be confused with director Zhang Yimou's *Raise the Red Lantern* (1991). To watch *Hong deng ji* online, see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=inXV8snbUQo>, accessed 1 June 2018.
- ⁵⁹ Clark notes that a pre-celluloid video version, aimed at TV broadcast was available as early as 1970. Paul Clark, 'Closely Watched Viewers: A Taxonomy of Chinese Film Audiences from 1949 to the Cultural Revolution Seen from Hunan', *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 5, no. 1: 86. But given that television ownership was so low in China at this time, it is likely that the audience was insignificant compared to the numbers reached by the cinematic release of the film. Indeed, in the years 1958 to 1965, it is estimated that only around 26,000 television sets were produced and sold within China, and viewing television broadcasts was collective rather than individual activity (see http://www.morningsun.org/living/tv_history.html, accessed 18 May 2018). During the Cultural Revolution, television broadcasts comprised little more than reruns of the *yang ban xi* and news programmes eulogising Chairman Mao (http://www.morningsun.org/living/tv_history.html, accessed 18 May 2018). It should also be noted that the film was based, with some changes, on the May 1970 stage version of *The Legend of the Red Lantern*.

⁶⁰ Clark, 'Closely Watched Viewers', 86.

⁶¹ In contrast, the Landsberger Collection at the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, holds 98 posters on the subject of Lei Feng and on Lei Feng-related themes alone. See <https://search.socialhistory.org>, accessed 27 December 2017.

⁶² Stefan Landsberger, 'Learning by What Example? Educational Propaganda in Twenty-first-Century China', *Critical Asian Studies* 33, no. 4 (2010): 549; 550-1.

⁶³ Lin had been a revolutionary hero and was Mao's designated successor until his death, following what the Chinese authorities cast as an unsuccessful military coup in 1971.

⁶⁴ Wang, *Revolutionary Cycles in Chinese Cinema*, 90.

⁶⁵ This date range seems likely. The title of the poster series matches the title of a print book dating from 1971 and published by the China Youth Publishing House [*Zhongguo qing nian chu ban she*]. See: <http://www.worldcat.org/title/mao-zhu-xi-de-hao-zhan-shi-lei-feng/oclc/39358974>, accessed 27 Dec 2017. The campaign is also likely to date from before Lin Biao's death in a plane crash following a suspected coup attempt and the resulting limitations placed on the PLA's influence. The 'Learn from Lei Feng' campaign found renewed appeal during the 1990s and continues to feature in the contemporary school curriculum. See Hongping Annie Nie, *The Dilemma of the Moral Curriculum in a Chinese Secondary School* (Lanham: University Press of America, Inc., 2008), 72-73.

⁶⁶ Developed in the 1950s and adopted by the PRC towards the end of that decade, *pinyin* is the official romanisation system for mainland Chinese. Accordingly, it is used throughout this paper. Chinese school children and language learners of all ages are taught *pinyin* before moving onto learning characters.

⁶⁷ Guobin Yang, *The Red Guard Generation and Political Activism in China* (New York: Columbia Press, 2016), 5-6.

⁶⁸ Harry Harding, 'The Chinese State in Crisis', in *The Cambridge History of China: Vol. 15, The People's Republic, Part 2: Revolutions within the Chinese Revolution 1966-1982*, eds. Roderick MacFarquhar and John K. Fairbank (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 215.

⁶⁹ Mingxian Wang, 'From Red Guard Art to Contemporary Art', in *Burden or Legacy: From the Chinese Cultural Revolution to Contemporary Art*, ed. Jiehong Jiang (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007): 34.

⁷⁰ Julia F. Andrews, 'The Art of the Cultural Revolution', in *Art in Turmoil: The Chinese Cultural Revolution, 1966-76*, ed. Richard King (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010): 35.

⁷¹ Wang, 'From Red Guard Art to Contemporary Art', 34. See Wang (2007) for a more in-depth discussion of the movement and its outputs.

⁷² Yan Hongyan had been a PLA General and senior party official in Yunnan province. He was purged from the Party during the early years of the Cultural Revolution and had committed suicide (in Jan 1967), some months before the publication of this poster. Similarly, Li Jingquan had been Party Secretary in Sichuan province until his removal from office at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. He was released from prison in 1972 and rehabilitated a year later.

⁷³ See the list of Red Guard periodicals compiled by the Staff of the Lu Hsün [Lu Xun] Library, Prague in 1975. *Qian jun bang* is listed here (#12; pp. 20). Lu Hsün Library (Staff of the), *List of the Red Guard Publications in the Lu Hsün Library of the Oriental Institute Prague* (Prague: Oriental Institute in Academia, Publishing House of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, 1975), http://orient.avcr.cz/miranda2/export/sitesavcr/data.avcr.cz/humansci/orient/knihovna/files/List_of_Red_Guard_Publications_at_the_Lu_Hsuen_Library_of_the_Oriental_Institute_Prague.pdf, accessed 7 September 2018.

⁷⁴ See http://maoist.wikia.com/wiki/Poems_29-35 (accessed 6 September 2018), for an English translation.

⁷⁵ Laura Pozzi, 'The Cultural Revolution in Images: Caricature Posters from Guangzhou, 1966-1977', *Cross-Currents e-Journal*, no. 27 (2018), <https://cross-currents.berkeley.edu/e-journal/issue-27/pozzi>, accessed 11 September 2018.

⁷⁶ Pozzi, 'The Cultural Revolution in Images'.

⁷⁷ Wang, 'From Red Guard Art to Contemporary Art', 43.

⁷⁸ See Mao and Barnstone for English translations of these poems. Mao Zedong and Will Barnstone, *The Poems of Mao Zedong* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2008), 31-34.

⁷⁹ September 1970 is given as the publication date of the first edition of 'Spring in Qin Garden'. The first edition of 'Yellow Crane Tower' was published in November 1971.

⁸⁰ Gittings, 'Excess and Enthusiasm', 34-35.

⁸¹ Shen notes that 'Mao Goes to Anyuan' was first exhibited on 1 Oct 1967 at the Chinese Museum of the Revolution. In it, Mao is shown as the leader of the 1922 Anyuan Miners' Strike (a classic example of historical manipulation - the by 1967 vilified former President of the PRC, Liu Shaoqi, had actually led the strike). The painting was initially reproduced as a colour supplement in leading PRC publications, such as the *People's Daily* in celebration of the anniversary of the foundation of the PRC (1st July). 'This poster ... guaranteed widespread popular familiarity with the image and inspired further reproduction. According to the artist, Liu Chunhua, the painting was subsequently reproduced in various forms, from posters to Mao badges to postage stamps, nine hundred million times...'. Shen, 'Propaganda Posters in China', 13-14.

⁸² Shen, 'Propaganda Posters in China', 13-14.

⁸³ Barnes, *Museum Representations of Maoist China*, 91; Shengtian Zheng, 'Chairman Mao Goes to Anyuan: A Conversation with the Artist Liu Chunhua', in *Art and China's Revolution*, eds., Melissa Chiu and Shengtian Zheng (New York: Asia Society and Yale University Press, 2008), 128.

⁸⁴ The image is used to illustrate an article about the Anyuan Miners' Strike and the then (1968) version of events, the creation of the image (described erroneously as a collective work), and an explanation of the iconographic motifs used within the painting. The article (pp. 12-15), is also illustrated with black and white photographs of 'the masses' (specifically with reference to the distribution of reproductions and printing plates) holding aloft reproductions of the painting.

⁸⁵ A version of this section has previously been published on the *Languages of Authoritarian Regimes* blog (2019), <https://thelanguageofauthoritarianregimes.wordpress.com/2019/03/20/knock-down-the-gang-of-four-caricatures-in-the-british-librarys-collection-of-post-1949-chinese-posters/>, accessed 30 April 2019.

⁸⁶ For a discussion of Jiang's 'three prominences' and the model works, see Barnes, *Museum Representations of Maoist China*, 49-50.

⁸⁷ Immanuel C. Y. Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 780; Barnes, *Museum Representations of Maoist China*, 125.

⁸⁸ Stefan Landsberger, *Chinese Propaganda Posters: From Revolution to Modernization* (Amsterdam and Singapore: Pepin Press, 1998b), 61.

⁸⁹ Alexander C. Cook, *The Cultural Revolution on Trial: Mao and the Gang of Four* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 1.

⁹⁰ Cook, *The Cultural Revolution on Trial*, 1.

⁹¹ Cook, *The Cultural Revolution on Trial*, 2.

⁹² Gittings, 'Excess and Enthusiasm', 36. The most well-known of which is *A Crowd of Clowns* (Weng Rulan, 1967). See <https://chineseposters.net/posters/e39-563.php>, accessed 25 May 2018.

⁹³ See Evans and Donald, 'Introducing Posters of China's Cultural Revolution', 8.

⁹⁴ Pozzi, 'The Cultural Revolution in Images'.

⁹⁵ Workers' Cultural Palaces, built according to Soviet models, provided opportunities for urban workers and their families to take part in cultural, educational and social activities during their leisure time. See Jack Linchuan Qiu and Hongzhe Wang, 'Working-class Cultural Spaces: Comparing the Old and the New', in *China's Peasants and Workers: Changing Class Identities*, eds. Beatriz Carrillo and David S. G. Goodman (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2012), 127.

⁹⁶ See Stefan Landsberger, 'Designing Propaganda: The Business of Politics', in *China Design Now*, eds. Hongxing Zhang and Lauren Parker (London: V&A Publishing, 2008), 54. Amy Jane Barnes, 'Representing the "China Dream": A Case Study in Revolutionary Cultural Heritage', in *A Museum Studies Approach to Heritage*, eds. Sheila Watson, Amy Jane Barnes, and Katy Bunning (London: Routledge, 2018a), 802. Deng Xiaoping instituted a programme of economic reform and, of particular cogency here, the 'de-Maoification' of the cultural sphere (see Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 780; Barnes, *Museum Representations of Maoist China*, 125).

⁹⁷ The 'One Child Policy' was introduced as a means of family planning and population control. It was relaxed in 2013 and was formally amended to a 'Two Child Policy' in 2016.

⁹⁸ In fine art, the politically provocative ‘Stars’ group exhibition of 1979, was testing the limits of the state’s tentative steps towards liberalisation (see Julia F. Andrews and Kuiyi Shen, *The Art of Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 209-210).

⁹⁹ Siu-Lin Wong, ‘Consequences of China’s New Population Policy’, *The China Quarterly*, 98 (June 1984): 221.

¹⁰⁰ For a detail from this poster, see <http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/asian-and-african/2015/04/propaganda-and-ideology-in-everyday-life-chinese-collection-posters.html>, accessed 11 September 2018.

¹⁰¹ China rejoined the international Olympic movement in 1979 after nearly three decades. Landsberger notes that in the post-Mao era, ‘sports were ... seen as an important component to bring [the modernisation of China] about’. Sporting success also carried with it ‘Chinese national pride and patriotism that had been dormant during the Cultural Revolution’ (Stefan Landsberger, ‘Sports’ (2018), <https://chineseposters.net/themes/sports.php>, accessed 13 September 2018.)

¹⁰² Gittings, ‘Excess and Enthusiasm’, 29.

¹⁰³ Gittings, ‘Excess and Enthusiasm’, 28.

¹⁰⁴ Gittings, ‘Excess and Enthusiasm’, 44.

¹⁰⁵ Gittings, ‘Excess and Enthusiasm’, 44.

¹⁰⁶ Barnes, *Museum Representations of Maoist China*, 79-82.

¹⁰⁷ Barnes, *Museum Representations of Maoist China*, 222.

¹⁰⁸ Barnes, *Museum Representations of Maoist China*, 222, citing Amy Jane Barnes, ‘Displaying the Communist Other: Perspectives on the Exhibition and Interpretation of Communist Visual Culture’, in *The Thing about Museums: Objects and Experience, Representation and Contestation*, eds. Sandra Dudley, Amy Jane Barnes, Jennifer Binnie, Julia Petrov and Jennifer Walklate (London: Routledge 2012), 320.