Edwards, Louise. "Commemorating China's Wartime Spies: Red Agents Guan Lu and Jiang Zhuyun, and the Problem of Female Fidelity." *Women Warriors and National Heroes: Global Histories*. .. London,: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020. 217–232. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781350140301.ch-012>>.

Downloaded from Bloomsbury Collections, www.bloomsburycollections.com, 26 April 2023, 12:17 UTC.

Copyright © Boyd Cothran, Joan Judge, Adrian Shubert and contributors 2020. Released under a CC BY-NC-ND licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>). You may share this work for non-commercial purposes only, provided you give attribution to the copyright holder and the publisher, and provide a link to the Creative Commons licence.

Commemorating China's Wartime Spies: Red Agents Guan Lu and Jiang Zhuyun, and the Problem of Female Fidelity

Louise Edwards

Once the guns go silent, the post-conflict struggle to write and rewrite the history of war commences. The propagandists who sought to inspire popular participation in the war turn their attention to building “correct” memories of it. Postwar reconstruction often involves invoking normative gender roles as governments hoping to build stability and their own legitimacy, be they victors or vanquished, make frequent use of gendered tropes. The political order they seek to consolidate is at once a sexual order. In narrating the histories of the “War of Resistance against Japan” (1937–45) and the three-year Civil War against the Nationalists (GMD) (1946–49), the government of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) actively invokes a sexual-political order to legitimize the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) rule.¹ In PRC wartime commemoration, visions of noble and courageous men defending their staunch and morally upright women abound. Fidelity to the Chinese nation and to the CCP emerge as key attributes of warriors fighting for CCP victory. But what of those people for whom service to the party and the nation requires duplicity—the spies and secret agents gathering intelligence deep behind enemy lines? Their fidelity is not as easily manifest or as readily recreated in postwar commemoration. Their successful wartime service requires lying, cheating, and trickery.

For women spies, commemoration is particularly problematic because postwar normalcy often depends upon the reaffirmation of patriarchal sexual norms, within which female *sexual* fidelity is central. Women agents are regularly assumed to be “honey traps” who use their feminine charms to seduce their targets. A woman’s active, cunning deployment of feminine sexuality runs counter to mainstream propaganda in which “our women” are pure. Around the world, wartime governments motivate soldiers with calls to defend the chastity of “women at home” against enemy violation. After war, invocations of female sexual fidelity symbolize the return of “normalcy.” In the PRC, idealized visions of “our” women’s sexual fidelity are evident in the prosecution of war, the rebuilding of stability after war, and in the re-narration of the war after its cessation. Just as war is a gendered system, so too is its commemoration.² The treatment of women spies in commemorative processes exposes the contradictions

inherent in the recognition of women's war service presented by the return to a form of patriarchy that depends upon female fidelity.

This chapter focusses on two communist spies from the 1930s to 1940s and shows that for their service to be useful in postwar reconstruction their compromised sexual fidelity must be carefully managed. The renowned author Guan Lu (1907–82) operated in Japanese-controlled Shanghai throughout the War of Resistance using the cover of editor for the leading collaborationist women's magazine—*Nüsheng* (Women's Voice). Her prewar fame as one of the highly desirable Three Female Talents of Shanghai (*Shanghai sange cainü*), along with Eileen Chang (1920–95) and Ding Ling (1904–86), ensured that once she joined the Japanese-sponsored magazine, she was branded a “cultural traitor” (*wenhua hanjian*). Her celebrity status as a desirable beauty, who was supposedly living a glamorous Shanghai life-style consorting with the Japanese military while the rest of the population suffered wartime privations meant that her reputation was irreparably tarnished. The second CCP agent, Jiang Zhuyun (1920–49), worked underground in GMD-controlled Sichuan to mobilize students and workers. Unknown during her short life, Jiang's cover involved living as wife to a male CCP agent despite his already-married status. Their relationship was more than “political” since Jiang soon gave birth to a child. Captured on the eve of the CCP's victory, Jiang was jailed, tortured, and executed. After the war Jiang's story was promoted extensively and she has long been celebrated as a heroic martyr to the nation. Despite her adultery, she is depicted as a revolutionary sister and mother in the patriarchal national family through repeated and often convoluted makeovers that minimize her deviations from the normative sexual-political order and explain away the conjugal irregularity that is at the heart of her war service. Guan Lu, in contrast, became an embarrassment to the CCP and faced extensive public criticism, endured years of imprisonment, and enforced singlehood. She was never recognized during her lifetime for her war service. As this demonstrates, the treatment of the two women spies, one who lived on well beyond the war and the other who died during its course, tells us that sexual fidelity is crucial to the recognition of women's war service.

Guan Lu: A Tarnished Celebrity Trapped by Fame and Longevity

Guan Lu was born Hu Shoumei into the Shanxi family of a prominent local official, the County Magistrate, during the last decade of imperial rule. On the death of her father when she was nine and her mother when she was sixteen, she moved to live with her widowed aunt in Nanjing and eventually relocated downriver to Shanghai where she entered university and joined the city's lively literary scene. Her decision to join the CCP in 1932 at twenty-five years of age was spurred by the Japanese annexation of Manchuria in north-east China. Through the 1930s, she garnered popular fame as a left-wing writer publishing poetry and fiction in a wide range of journals. A celebrity figure, she featured in gossip columns that pondered the glamorous lifestyle of a Shanghai woman writer. Her prominence was confirmed when in 1937, the year the War of Resistance against Japan formally commenced, she penned the lyrics for the theme song of a popular left-wing patriotic film, *Shizi jietou* (Crossroads). Her serialized

Figure 11.1 A glamorous Guan Lu as a celebrity author. Photo credit: Unknown.

autobiography, *Xin jiu shidai* (The era of old and new), appeared through 1938 in the journal *Shanghai funü* (Shanghai women) and narrates the trials and tribulations of a woman of her time.

With Japan's occupation of the city, many left-wing writers quit Shanghai, but the CCP instructed Guan Lu to remain. She undertook a number of small missions until finally in 1939 she was charged with infiltrating Shanghai's collaborationist secret police unit, No. 76. Her goal was to win the trust of one of its key figures, Li Shiqun (1905–43)—himself a former CCP member. The plan drew on good groundwork and Guan Lu had good “cover.” Her brother-in-law and elder sister were old acquaintances of Li Shiqun and his wife Ye Jiqing (n.d.) through various political activities. Guan Lu's brother-in-law had been arrested in the early 1930s and met Li by chance during this incident. But the deeper connection came through their wives. In 1932 or 1933, Li Shiqun and Ye Jiqing were again jailed and faced the prospect of a lengthy internal investigation. Guan Lu's sister took care of their child and provided supplies for them while they were in prison. These acts won trust and gratitude.³ Guan Lu simply had to become friends with her sister's friends to gain access to the highest levels of No. 76. These deep family connections made Guan Lu's cultivation of a friendship with Li

Shiqun and Ye Jiqing credible despite her known leftist sympathies. All the while, she continued to write and gain acclaim as a beautiful, young literary celebrity.

Typical of the celebrity gossip surrounding Guan Lu is a 1937 article in a popular movie magazine which revealed her perceived desirability as a beauty about town. The article commences with the juxtaposition between her “leftist” politics and her “fashionable” lifestyle. “Although Guan Lu is a very progressive poet, she commonly decks herself out in fashionable clothes. When you add that to her really beautiful features, she has no shortage of suitors from amongst the literary world.” The article continues reporting that she forgot a previously arranged date with fellow writer Xu Maoyong, went out herself, and returned late at night, stepping over the sleeping suitor on the steps. On encountering him there the next day, in a disheveled state asleep in his clothes, she couldn’t bear to look at him and no longer speaks to him.⁴ Another article from the same year ran with the racy headline “Are Ba Wei and Guan Lu in Lesbian Love?” Ba Wei (1894–1983) was another woman writer and she and Guan were often compared and critiqued on the basis of literary merit—this article simply sought to sell papers through sexual innuendo.⁵

This frivolous tone would cease once her connections to the collaborationist regime became more public in 1942 when she became editor of *Women’s Voice*—a magazine sponsored by the Japanese consulate’s Office of Information in Nanjing. The journal’s Japanese co-editor Sato Tamura Toshiko (1884–1945) was a feminist writer and journalist with extensive socialist connections—although her socialism was muted during her years in China.⁶ Guan was to use her proximity with Tamura to glean information about the Japanese leadership in Shanghai and to deepen the CCP’s links with the Japanese socialists.⁷ The cost to Guan Lu’s reputation from this public role in a collaborationist publication would prove irreparable. Up to this point, the general public simply knew that the author, Guan Lu, was living in Shanghai since they had no knowledge of her “friendship” with leading figures in No. 76. Once she was appointed editor, her status as a collaborator was confirmed. Academic Wu Peichen argues that despite its outward appearance as a collaborationist publication, and unbeknownst to the reading public, most of the contributors to *Women’s Voice* “were underground members of the Communist Party.”⁸ The complexity of the espionage tactics remained unobserved by ordinary people and Guan Lu was branded a “cultural traitor.”

As editor, Guan Lu traveled to Tokyo in 1942 to attend the Second Annual Greater East Asia Writers’ Meeting, and while there she took messages to Japanese communists from their Chinese counterparts and was able to report back on conditions on the ground in Tokyo.⁹ However, the Japanese authorities used these kinds of events to great propaganda effect—publishing photographs of the Chinese delegates to Tokyo and her status as a “leading cultural traitor” was confirmed. Guan Lu’s role in strengthening communication between the communist movements in both countries remained hidden to all but the top CCP leadership.¹⁰ Instead, her participation in the meeting became key evidence of her treachery in the immediate postwar period, the Civil War, and after the establishment of the PRC.

After Japan’s defeat in 1945, Guan Lu’s name appeared on the Nationalist government’s list of “traitors.” Immediately, the CCP secretly arranged for her evacuation from Shanghai into territory held by their New Fourth Army. Her espionage role was not

disclosed in order to make further use of her intelligence—the general public simply thought she had fled in guilt to evade trial. A report by Tang Qing from 1946 in the popular magazine *Shanghai tan* (Shanghai bund) pondered her sudden disappearance saying that she had been spotted in Hong Kong. But, the article continued, given her “shameless” crimes in collaborating with the Japanese there was nowhere safe for her to ever raise her head again. Tang Qing notes that “one report says she is with the New Fourth Army” but uncertainty about the veracity of the report suggests that few readers would suspect or believe she was a spy for the CCP. In Tang Qing’s various attacks on this “thoroughly hateful person,” he noted that after she returned from the Tokyo conference, she wrote highly positive essays, “totally selling herself out. The fact that she is a woman makes this really scandalous.” It was “disgraceful” that a gifted writer should become a traitor—she had no conception of “shame.”¹¹

The mystery surrounding her whereabouts gave Shanghai’s popular press a further opportunity to compare her with Ba Wei. A 1946 article by Ma Xiang describes Ba Wei as having continued her “progressive” views moving inland during Shanghai’s occupation, while Guan Lu instead cast her eyes upon the “Japanese pirates” (*wokou*), lived a very comfortable life, and wrote “peace literature.” Ma says that after being listed as a traitor, Guan Lu had fled to Subei to escape arrest. Referring to Ba Wei’s return to Shanghai, he wrote, “As one departs, the other arrives.” Ba Wei is cited as saying that Guan Lu has “lost her integrity” (*shijie*). Readers are reminded that for women, the term *shijie* connotes the loss of sexual virtue—the article queries whether there is any difference between collaborating with the enemy and sleeping around with men.¹² Later, in 1947, even once her status as a CCP spy was confirmed, a Shanghai paper noted that the intelligence she gathered was worthless because she didn’t understand military affairs—her experience revolved around writing love poems and flirting. She “didn’t even know how to use a rifle.” Confirming her dubious sexual morals and lightweight politics, the author, Ding Ji, noted that she had recently been seen whispering sweet nothings in the street with the branch head of the Xinhua News Agency, Chen Yiquan.¹³

The negative gossip about Guan Lu published in Shanghai partly reflects the anti-CCP sentiment in the city—but it is also revealing of the way women agents are perceived. The sexualized nature of the insults Guan Lu faced, the diminution of her value as an agent, the minimization of the risks she faced, and the amplification of the privileges she secured in her undercover role all reveal the precarity of life as a female spy. The doubt cast upon her sexual fidelity placed her in an invidious position—she became a pathetic figure whose only hope for reputational rehabilitation was death. For centuries sexually compromised women were presented with long histories of chastity martyrs within an ideology that produced the maxim “to starve to death is trivial, to lose one’s chastity is serious” (*esi shi jixiao, shijie shi jida*). The party would prove to be no more grateful for her work against the Japanese than the Shanghai media despite its rejection of “feudal traditions” such as chastity martyrs.

While the media speculation about her continued, Guan Lu was trying to resume her pre-espionage life in CCP-controlled areas. She had been separated from her boyfriend, a prominent CCP member, Wang Bingnan (1908–88), during her years as an undercover agent—but now free of that role the couple reconnected. Wang was based in Nanjing serving as CCP “foreign envoy” and requested Party permission to

be redeployed nearer to Guan Lu because they planned to get married. Wang's request was denied—Guan Lu's tainted public reputation was regarded as inappropriate for a high-level CCP diplomat.¹⁴ The decision came from the very top echelons of the party with the leading CCP couple, Zhou Enlai and Deng Yingchao, deciding that a marriage between Wang and Guan would run counter to the party's interests.¹⁵ As loyal party members, the couple accepted the ruling and never resumed their relationship. Guan remained single until her death. She struggled to find a meaningful role within the CCP-controlled areas and her mental health became increasingly fragile from this point on. The party's official broadsheet *Xinhua ribao* (New China daily) rejected submissions she made under the name Guan Lu because the name was so tainted that it would generate ire among their patriotic readers.¹⁶ Her inability to resurrect the literary reputation she had secured as Guan Lu caused her great distress. With her literary identity destroyed, and her hopes for marriage thwarted, she shifted around various locations under CCP control, working as a teacher and publishing under pseudonyms.

The years after the formation of the PRC in 1949 would prove to be even more tumultuous. Moving to Beijing, she was assigned work teaching and as an administrator. She continued writing and adopted the Maoist prescriptions for socialist literature—producing a novel *Pingguo yuan* (The apple orchard) in 1951.¹⁷ She secured central government approval for the book to be turned into a movie and commenced the scriptwriting. This creative career success would prove short-lived. In June of 1955, she was accused of being a counter-revolutionary in the so-called “Pan Hannian clique”—Pan (1906–77) had been her “handler.”¹⁸ When Mao Zedong accused Pan of being an “internal traitor” (*neijian*) in 1955, his entire team came under suspicion. After a series of trials, Guan Lu was jailed for two years in Beijing's Gongdelin prison. Released in March 1957, Guan soon found herself buffeted by the Anti-Rightist Campaign during which she was repeatedly “criticized.” A few years of respite followed but with the advent of the Cultural Revolution, she became an early victim of campaigns to “root out bad elements.” On July 1, 1966, Guan was arrested and jailed again—this time in the infamous maximum-security Qincheng prison. Her release came only on May 20, 1975, when authorities resolved that there was no evidence that she was in a counter-revolutionary clique.

During her first incarceration she commenced work on a never-published novel *Dang de nüer*, *Liu Lishan* (Daughter of the Party, Liu Lishan) that narrated the real-life story of a CCP martyr from the anti-Japanese war. Like Guan Lu, Liu (1921–43) worked underground in cultural affairs, editing newspapers and producing dramatic works for the CCP. She was captured soon after giving birth in Shanxi by the invading Japanese and swiftly executed. Liu's heroic martyrdom no doubt contrasted with Guan's embarrassing existence. Guan Lu's CCP minders confiscated the 300,000-word manuscript in 1967 prior to its completion, according to her sister Hu Xiufeng. When it was returned to her in 1975, the second half was lost.¹⁹

Her full political “rehabilitation” was granted on March 23, 1982, when the government overturned the 1955 verdict. Pan Hannian was posthumously rehabilitated a few months later in August. Guan Lu committed suicide on December 5, 1982, at age seventy-five, by taking an overdose of sleeping pills. The scholar Barbara

Barnouin said Guan Lu suffered from deep depression.²⁰ At the commemoration service held at the Babaoshan revolutionary cemetery, Guan was described as leaving four deep impressions. 1. She was intensely loyal to the party and did everything to protect the party. 2. She sacrificed her personal status and reputation without a single word of complaint in serving the interests of the party and the people. 3. She was a warrior who worked in enemy territory to save the country from destruction by the Japanese. 4. “Comrade Guan Lu valued friendship deeply, was steadfast in her beliefs, and her spirit of revolutionary optimism is worthy of our respect.”²¹ Her one-time love, Wang Bingnan, attended but did not deliver a commemorative speech. Because her death was a suicide, there was no official memorial notice.²² Other published commentaries also depict her as a noble, self-sacrificing CCP member and “a staunch proletarian warrior” who sacrificed everything for the revolution.²³ Her sister noted her “complete faith in the communist project” and that despite all the hardship of her life she would never complain about the party. The official CCP daily newspaper *Renmin ribao* (People’s daily) noted her passing with a brief obituary that acknowledged the injustice of her imprisonment. The article explained that she expressed staunch loyalty to the people and the revolution despite facing years of suspicion and mistreatment by the CCP. The article quoted a poem: “Warhorses love the battlefield, they gallop in service and not in order to win a good reputation. Writing led to calamities that produced injustice, yet still I love the rustle of paper and the fragrance of ink.”²⁴ The commentaries and obituaries all reiterate Guan Lu’s political fidelity to the nation and to the party—but nothing could be said to rehabilitate her reputation in sexual terms. The genre of CCP obituaries does not address decades of salacious supposition.

Jiang Zhuyun: Making a “Revolutionary Sister” from an Adulterer

Jiang Zhuyun, aka Zhang Zhijun or Elder Sister Jiang, has been a regular feature of public commemoration of the Civil War in the PRC. A household name in China, she has posters, comics, paintings, poems, plays, opera, fiction, school books, movies, television documentaries, a thirty-episode television series, statues and museums dedicated to her, as well as numerous scholarly histories. Guan Lu enjoyed none of this prestige, despite the posthumous praise at her funeral—with short documentaries of her life only appearing four decades after her 1982 death through suicide. The extent and variety of narratives about Jiang’s espionage work stand in dramatic contrast to the relative silence on Guan Lu.

Jiang’s comparative anonymity while alive combined with the convenience of her death provided extensive scope for CCP makeovers that would present her as a figure of political and sexual fidelity. Martyrs are perfect fodder for postwar commemorative projects and the more anonymous the better. Their “life-stories” are completely malleable and are uncomplicated by reality. CCP mass propaganda includes copious examples of martyred warriors who achieve celebrity status after death—see for example the posthumous fame of women warriors like Zhao Yiman (1905–36) and Liu Hulan (1932?–47) or the young male soldier, Lei Feng (1940–62).²⁵ Jiang Zhuyun’s

sexual and marital history is carefully managed to ensure that as a CCP martyr she emerges as having the fidelity expected of patriots, soldiers, and good women. To make effective use of her memory, her breach of the orthodox sexual-social order needed reconstruction. Ultimately, she would emerge from the multiple recreations of her life as having scrupulous sexual morals and a strong belief in normative patriarchal feminine and maternal values while also being dedicated to the CCP and her comrades.

Joining the CCP in 1939, Jiang Zhuyun was sent to Chongqing's Sichuan University in 1944 to build a secret communist study cell among left-wing students. She and fellow communist Peng Yongwu pretended to be a couple as part of their cover while running this cell, even though Peng was already married. In 1945, within a year of establishing their cell, they were apparently formally married with official narratives describing their "mutual deep affection in work"²⁶—a truly revolutionary couple. The divorce that should have preceded the marriage is not mentioned. With the outbreak of the Civil War in 1946, Jiang was instrumental in rallying students to undermine youth support for the Nationalist government through underground newspapers and organizations like the Anti-Riot Movement. In 1947, Peng and Jiang were sent to the town of Xiachuan to foment anti-government activities and Peng was killed during one of the demonstrations. On his death, Jiang resolved to "fight in his place." The couple's young son was left to the care of Peng's "first" wife, Tan Zhenglun, as Jiang moved to a more active and dangerous role in the struggle. Eventually, Jiang was taken captive on June 14, 1948, in Wanxian and held in Zhazidong Prison in Chongqing. During her eighteen months in prison, Jiang faced numerous tortures and privations as the Nationalists sought to root out further communists. Despite the hardship which reportedly included "the tiger bench, the sling, beatings with a steel whip with thorns, electrocution, and having bamboo sticks placed under her ten finger nails" she never capitulated.²⁷ In holding out, she protected her comrades. Although Mao Zedong declared the formation of the PRC on October 1, 1949, the Nationalists still held pockets of the country—including Chongqing. On November 14, 1949, only days before Communist troops took the city, the Nationalists executed Jiang at age twenty-nine. In the postwar remaking of her as a loyal wife, sacrificing mother, staunch party member, and "elder sister" of the revolution, Jiang's life became a vision of fidelity to family, party, and country suitable for a hero that would help the CCP consolidate the new nation's sexual-political order. Her adultery is either ignored or carefully explained as being part of a grand CCP design.

In 1961, a major novel, *Hongyan* (Red crag), appeared and has been central to building awareness of her heroic sacrifice but also of creating her as a CCP "family member"—a revolutionary elder sister.²⁸ The authors, Luo Guangbin and Yang Yiyan, were in prison with Jiang which gives their narrative considerable weight. Sister Jiang first features in the book in Chapters 4 and 5 when she learns of her husband's death and requests to replace him in serving the CCP. Peng was described as having told her "If you take the masses to be your father, only then will the masses regard you as their son. Dedicate absolutely all your energies to this task through to your dying days."²⁹ Her revolutionary fervor increased after her husband's death. In Chapter 15, after she was imprisoned, readers are told of her dedication to her comrades and her unflinching

resolve in the face of extremes of torture and denial of food. "Everybody knew that Sister Jiang had endured untold bouts of torture in order to protect the party's secrets and in so doing had won the respect of so many comrades."³⁰ The novel provides graphic details of her torture, her capacity to endure, and her willingness to sacrifice but it also reveals the family-like care that her fellow prisoners took in nursing her after torture—the reciprocity of revolutionary modeling is central to her story from this point onward. She models excellent revolutionary resolve and others model respect for those qualities in a perpetual cycle of teaching and learning and family support.³¹

The transmission of revolutionary fervor to those around her also has an intergenerational aspect. The prison includes an orphaned infant—collectively cared for by the prisoners—all that they know of her parentage is that she is the child of a CCP member who perished in prison. Sister Jiang reminds her fellow inmates that "The child is ours, we are all her fathers and mothers."³² With this statement the idea that the CCP becomes the "family" for all Chinese is invoked with her role as Elder Sister reinforcing this familial political bonding. The child becomes a device to remind readers of the new national flag as well. In Chapter 25, word reaches the prisoners that Mao Zedong had declared the formation of the PRC back in October, and jubilant shouts of "The Chinese people have stood up" resound through the cells. The infant's mother, prior to her death, had hidden the PRC's Five Star Flag in her bedding and this is now unfurled. The adults tell the girl, "Child, beloved child! Look at the red flag, it was left by your father and mother."³³ The child, as inheritor of a revolutionary tradition, performs one more significant role before the end of the novel. Sister Jiang's parting words to those around her as she leaves for the execution ground are rousing calls to the imminent success of the revolution with the child called out for special attention. "Child, did you hear Aunty's words? Whether there is roaring thunder or horrendous gales, regardless of the terrifying waves and stormy seas, you must direct the banner of struggle towards the Communist Party!"³⁴ In 1962, the familial role Elder Sister Jiang plays is one of collective mother to all citizens.

In 1964, following the huge popularity of *Red Crag*, playwright Yan Su composed a seven-act operatic play titled *Jiang Jie* (Sister Jiang) based on the novel. Yan Su's play took Jiang as the protagonist and was a major force in her elevation as an independent heroic figure. The play adopts Maoist prescriptions in its characterization and each of the "positive" characters is as staunch as they can be in their communist dedication. In Act 6 Sister Jiang declares, "I am a revolutionary; and you, you are a counter revolutionary! The only relationship between us is one of revolution or counter revolution and a class struggle to the death!" When her opposite declares that Marx and Lenin are both long dead, Sister Jiang declares, "But there is still Stalin and there is still Mao Zedong!"³⁵ The collective spirit and intergenerational parenting are continued in his play, but with a slightly different twist. The jailors call for a particular prisoner, and when she comes forward, she is carrying an infant. The mother, leaving the infant as she goes to her death, is asked by Sister Jiang "Comrade, what is your name?," to which she replies: "Communist Party Member!" The aria Sister Jiang sings is replete with exhortations to the abandoned child to never forget the sacrifices, never forget the red flag and to "struggle forward to welcome the people of the new nation."³⁶

Critic Ren Jia wrote of the opera, using the new garbled language of revolution:

Through its political fervour and abundant revolutionary spirit, *Jiang Jie* has produced Sister Jiang as a glorious figure of a proletarian warrior, has extolled Sister Jiang as a representative of communist party members, and as a revolutionary spirit in the times of new revolutionary democracy and the struggle against enemies. [She manifests] the majesty of lofty heroism, courage in defying obstacles, and the noble qualities of being unafraid of sacrifice, and has offered us deep class education and education on revolutionary traditions.³⁷

Ren's two-page review is replete with emotive repetitions of "revolutionary glory," "heroic martyrdom," "noble warrior," and "party loyalty." Her personal family circumstances as an adulterer and mother of a semi-legitimate child are ignored just as they were in Yan Su's play. The communist mother is the collective mother and the communist wife is a revolutionary partner in these Maoist years. The importance of the opera was confirmed in the immediate aftermath of the Cultural Revolution when it was released as a movie in 1978 and performed by the Shanghai PLA Arts and Culture unit.³⁸ Its appearance, despite the formulaic socialist realist script, was hailed as a mark of the liberalizing of the literary and arts scene with the jailing of the ultra-leftists under Mao.³⁹

By 1996, the cartoon rendition of her story, also based on Yan Su's operatic play, explains the importance of recognizing the sacrifice of those who fought in the underground but includes the line that they sacrificed themselves in the struggle for "the construction of the modern and strong socialist nation of today."⁴⁰ Targeting a youth readership, the images show Sister Jiang as a friend and guide to young teenagers selling papers and helping with communication between communist agents. The final scene includes the sad farewell between Sister Jiang and the infant at the prison doors prior to her execution. Her status as an Elder Sister for all good patriotic revolutionaries is amplified in this version of her story.

From the 1980s onward, the CCP sought to resurrect its reputation as builders of "family values" and family property. In these new times, Sister Jiang's relationship with Peng was revived but it also required some "explanation" by the CCP party historians. In the 1961 novel *Red Crag*, her husband features only in death—he is captured, decapitated, and his head displayed as warning to others—the novel depicts Sister Jiang's horror as she arrived at the town, anticipating a long-awaited reunion with her beloved husband, only to be confronted by the gruesome mutilated body. There was no discussion of their pretense at marriage for the sake of the revolution. Rather, the authors dedicate some pages at the start of their novel explaining that love can coexist with and even spur on revolutionary fervor. Sister Jiang advises her CCP comrades that "Think of the great revolutionary leaders, Marx and Lenin... There were deep and strong bonds of affection between Marx and his wife Jenny, theirs was the love of revolutionaries."⁴¹ This recognition of "bourgeois" sentiments like romance was already pushing the boundaries of acceptability in the Maoist prescriptions of the function of literature and art which dominated in the 1950s through the late 1970s—revealing that

Figure 11.2 Jiang Zhuyun, her husband, and their son. Photo credit: Unknown.

she was actually the “other woman” in an adulterous relationship or a “second wife” in a feudal polygamous marriage would have been impossible.

From the 2000s, the purity of revolutionary martyrs was not as tightly controlled—but Sister Jiang’s life with Peng still required some cosmetic surgery. The official narrative became that they were initially living together and “pretending” to be a couple out of dedication to the Party. They only fell in love through their close work on a shared revolutionary goal for the party and they married to confirm this cover. Zhang Nan’s 2016 explanation of the situation is revealing. “Peng already had a wife and a son in his hometown. Peng and Jiang’s relationship was initially as revolutionary comrades. But engaged in a common pursuit, they gradually developed deep affection for each other, which they tried to repress for moral reasons.”⁴² Similarly, the 2010 thirty-episode television series *Jiang Jie* dedicates considerable time in the first few episodes to the awkwardness of Peng and Jiang’s relationship as it becomes more intimate. But the Party is central to and ultimately authorizes the romantic shift. Peng is advised by his CCP superiors that their cover is threatened by the fact that after a year of “marriage” they have no children. He is advised to *really* become married to Sister Jiang. On discussing the matter, Jiang agrees, and they pick a secret wedding day—a dramatic student demonstration serves as their marriage ceremony. A bond that is marked by a revolutionary protest rather than a public ceremony soon produces a pregnancy, and their cover is confirmed. Another unfortunate twist in the plot sees

her separated from Peng for the birth of their child. Significantly, this 2010 rendition of her life includes her decision to be sterilized immediately after the birth—one child is enough for a dedicated patriotic revolutionary.⁴³ The PRC's One Child Family policy was still operating in 2010 and even wartime spies could be put to use for that contemporary demographic campaign.

These convoluted explanations protect her glorious revolutionary sexual-political fidelity and also bring her back within PRC patriarchal family morality—norms that were not necessarily upheld among the radical youth that joined the CCP in the 1930s and 1940s when radical women and men had multiple partners simultaneously and serially. She and Peng were likely in a *de facto*, adulterous relationship by personal choice. The need to construct a semi-credible moral tale in the Opening up and Reform years is important because the liberalization has meant that scholars and journalists are now undertaking a host of research themselves into the “true story,” “unofficial history,” and “background facts” for many of China's political and popular celebrities. As publishing has become profit-oriented and more open, popular demand for these narratives is strong. The Party controls the story by presenting a credible, moral narrative that also includes the experience of her son and Peng's first wife. For example, Ding Shaoyi's 2011 book *The Real Family History of Sister Jiang* (Jiang Jie zhenshi jiazu shi) reveals that while Sister Jiang may personally have escaped the harsh treatment in the PRC through her death, her family members and son were subject to considerable pressure during the Cultural Revolution.⁴⁴ They suffered despite the impeccable revolutionary credentials of their martyred relative.

Another key mechanism by which the CCP has sought to reinforce her reputation as a good revolutionary mother is through the release of relics—specifically a final prison letter from mother to son. At the Sanxia museum in Chongqing, Jiang's last letter, supposedly written with a bamboo stick just prior to her execution, has been on display since 2007, the 58th anniversary of her death.⁴⁵ It runs “Tortures are insignificant hardships for a Communist. Bamboo sticks are only bamboo, but the will of a Communist is forged of iron and steel.” Such last letters to sons have been “discovered” for other martyred mothers as well—for example, Zhao Yiman.⁴⁶ Museum guides report that the letter and exhibition on Jiang “inspire countless visitors to make contributions to the CPC (CCP)” and that “more than six million people from all over the country each year went to show their respect and condolences to the great member of the CPC.”⁴⁷ As well as her dedication to the party, these post-Mao renditions of her life emphasize “her deep love for her son as a mother.”⁴⁸ In the 1961 *Red Crag* version, no mention is made of her final letter to her son and her feelings for him are not mentioned in the final scene where she departs her jailed comrades for her execution. Instead, the final note written speaks only of revolutionary matters: “Never quail before danger, always advance, and meet all trials without flinching, without our hearts beating any faster!”⁴⁹ But by 2007, a letter is discovered that becomes a relic proving the dedication of the CCP martyr who died for the cause while sorely missing her son. The separation of mother and child becomes a tool for amplifying her sacrifice as a *woman* secret agent. Her deviation from normative marital practices is smothered by her maternal dedication.

Nostalgia for the Glamour of Wartime Shanghai: A Partial Rehabilitation for Guan Lu

Unlike Sister Jiang there are no hagiographic campaigns for Guan Lu and only in the twenty-first century do historical accounts of her life appear on mass media. A living spy, especially a woman who had been used and abused by the party she had served, was not a reliable subject for commemoration. The woman spy's implicit sexual infidelity could not be remade through narratives of sacrificing motherhood in Guan Lu's case because she had been unable to marry: there was no cleansing patriarchal family role available to her. Moreover, in contrast to women soldiers whose non-normative gender roles in taking up arms alongside "our" (male) troops, Guan Lu's fidelity was not purified by the putative nobility of combat or front-line hardship. While neither was Jiang Zhuyun cleansed by the battlefield, her experience of torture and execution along with her elevated status as a sacrificing mother were central to her utility to the PRC state's commemoration of wartime heroism.

However, four decades after Guan Lu's death, she achieves a partial rehabilitation in a series of television documentaries about her life. In these, the romance of a female undercover spy fighting for the CCP emerges within the burgeoning nostalgia about the glamour of wartime Shanghai—complete with its visions of women in cheongsams visiting opulent dancehalls and restaurants. The "sexiness" and "glamour" of being a celebrity and a woman spy are an underlying thread in all these documentaries. CCTV 10's 2013 two-part documentary, *Kang Ri nü qingbaoyuan Guan Lu* (Guan Lu—female intelligence agent in the War of Resistance against Japan), is typical of the format. It reinforces the extent of her sacrifice as she worked within No. 76 connecting Pan Hanmin to Li Shiqun and repeatedly asserts her unflinching dedication to the CCP. Another documentary screened in 2015 transports viewers back into the romance of 1930s Shanghai frequently featuring her contributions to the successful movie, *Crossroads*. Both documentaries present Guan as a young and beautiful woman celebrity working in extremely dangerous circumstances.⁵⁰ Her fidelity to the CCP overrode all personal concerns about reputational damage. A third documentary, CCTV 7's 2013 *Hongse tegong midang* (Secret Archives of the Red Spies) series, includes a forty-minute episode that explains how she isolated herself from her previous left-wing friends in Shanghai once she undertook her undercover role. As a result, she suffered enormous abuse and former friends labeled her a shameless traitor. Viewers are told of her loneliness and hardship, how she facilitated a crucial meeting between Pan Hanmin and Li Shiqun, and how she hoped to be able to join her CCP comrades once her work at No. 76 was over. But instead, she found her undercover role extended through *Women's Voice*. The sacrifice and loneliness that Guan Lu experienced though her life as a result of the work she undertook as a spy are also emphasized. The episode closes with an expert historian interviewee, clad in PLA uniform, explaining that Guan Lu sacrificed her happiness, love, health, and career to build the prosperity and happiness experienced in the PRC today.⁵¹ Unable to be rehabilitated as a mother or wife, Guan Lu's best position is as a blindly-loyal party member who sacrificed her reputation and personal happiness for the CCP. Even after her rehabilitation, Guan Lu emerges as a pathetic figure, rather than a heroic woman warrior, like Jiang.

The contradictions embodied by the commemoration of the wartime female spy are myriad. Women's war service requires a vision of sexual fidelity if these women are to be useful to a patriarchal postwar state that seeks to reassert normative sexual moral boundaries of family values in which good women marry good men. But military states also need courageous women who will sacrifice personal, family happiness when called upon in extraordinary times. So, women spies like Guan Lu and Jiang Zhuyun are depicted as actively choosing to serve the CCP in the full knowledge of the normative sexual moral boundaries they may be called upon to transgress—thus, amplifying their sacrifice. In order to assert the level of fidelity required of a national hero, the party must be the ultimate object of the woman's devotion. Even tainted celebrities like Guan Lu are gathered up—as she was in comments made at her funeral—into a story of the CCP as her supreme devotional object. She was ultimately a pathetic battered wife to the abusive party-husband.

Notes

- 1 On the postwar sexual/political order, see Louise Edwards, "Women Sex-Spies: Chastity, National Dignity, Legitimate Government and Ding Ling's 'When I Was in Xia Village,'" *China Quarterly* 212 (2012): 1059–1078.
- 2 Joshua Goldstein, *War and Gender* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
- 3 Yu Jizeng, "Hongse tegong chuanqi—daru Riwei moku de nü zuojia Guan Lu" (Tales of Red Spies—the woman author, Guan Lu, who infiltrated the Japanese and puppet regime's den), *Dangshi bocai* (Party history collection) 3 (2013): 50. We have no confirmed dates for Ye, but she is said to have died while serving time for her collaboration. For more detail on Ye and other collaborators, see Yun Xia, *Down with Traitors: Justice and Nationalism in Wartime China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017).
- 4 "Xu Maoyong zhuiqiu Guan Lu" (Xu Maoyong chases Guan Lu), *Diansheng* (Light and Sound), 6.20 (1937): 899.
- 5 'Ba Wei Guan Lu tongxing lian'ai? (Are Ba Wei and Guan Lu in lesbian love?), *Zhongguo dianying* (Chinese cinema), 1.5 (1937): 6. For discussion of their literary connections, see Amy Dooling, *Women's Literary Feminism in Twentieth-Century China* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 114–115.
- 6 Tamura's socialist leanings most likely would have been known to the Japanese authorities but her fame as a feminist writer and her ready availability in China possibly enabled her to secure this position. Moreover, she had spent nearly two decades living in North America in the 1920s and 1930s avoiding the censorship and imprisonment of many of her left-wing friends. For detailed discussion about her ambiguous politics during her time in China, see Anne Sokolsky, *From New Woman Writer to Socialist: The Life and Selected Writings of Tamura Toshiko From 1936–1938* (Leiden: EJ Brill, 2015), 44–52.
- 7 Xiao Yang and Guang Qun, *Yige nü zuojia de zaoyu: ji Guan Lu yisheng* (A woman author's calamity: the life of Guan Lu) (Harbin: Beifang wenyi chubanshe, 1988), 152–153.
- 8 Peichen Wu, "Satō (Tamura) Toshiko's Shanghai Period (1942–1945) and the Chinese Women's Periodical 'Nü-Sheng,'" *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal* 28 (2005): 109.

- 9 Xiao and Guang, *Yige nü zuojia de zaoyu*, 152–155.
- 10 *Hongse tegong midang—Guan Lu* (Secret archives of Red Spies—Guan Lu), broadcast January 4, 2014, <http://military.cntv.cn/2014/01/04/VIDE1388830327119695.shtml> (accessed August 10, 2018).
- 11 Tang Qing, “Guan Lu Xianggang baoshang chuxian” (Guan Lu appears in HK papers), *Shanghai tan* (Shanghai Bund) 13 (1946): 11.
- 12 Ma Xiang, “Ba Wei dama Guan Lu shijie” (Ba Wei curses Guan Lu for having no integrity), *Yi zhou jian* (In one week) 11 (1946): 11.
- 13 Ding Ji, “Nü zuojia Guan Lu zhuiqiu Chen Yiqun,” (Woman author Guan Lu chasing Chen Yiqun), *Shanghai tan* (Shanghai bund), 5 (1947): 4.
- 14 For Wang’s official PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs biography, see “Wang Bingnan,” http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/ziliao_665539/wjrw_665549/lrfbjzbzzl_665553/t40525.shtml (accessed August 10, 2018).
- 15 Luo Jiurong, *Ta de panduan: Jindai Zhongguo guozu yu xingbie yiyixia de zhongjian zhibian* (Her trial: loyalty and treachery in the significance of nation and gender in Modern China) (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 2013), 125.
- 16 Ji Hong, “Jingyu zuican hongse nü tegong: 50 niandai beibu pingfan hou zisha” (Tragic circumstances of a red spy: arrested in the 1950s and commits suicide after her name was cleared), [history.ifeng.com](http://news.ifeng.com/history/zhongguoxiandaishi/detail_2013_04/28/24768091_0.shtml) (accessed April 28, 2013), http://news.ifeng.com/history/zhongguoxiandaishi/detail_2013_04/28/24768091_0.shtml (accessed October 13, 2019).
- 17 Guan Lu, *Pingguo yuan* (The Apple Orchard) (Beijing: Gongren chubanshe, 1951, rpt. Beijing: Haitun chubanshe, 2013).
- 18 A 1940 newspaper report notes that Pan returned to Shanghai from China’s wartime capital, Chongqing, with the mission to form “red literary groups” (*chise wenhua zhenying*). But he had barely left his rooms and only his closest literary friends knew he was in town. The “special circumstances in Shanghai” (an allusion to the Japanese occupation) meant he quickly left. This kind of brief visit is typical of a “handler.” “Pan Hannian jiang fan yuezhuan Yu” (Pan Hannian plans return to Chongqing), *Shanghai jizhe* (Shanghai reporter), May 25, 1940, 4.
- 19 Hu Xiufeng, “Huiyi wo de jiejie Guan Lu” (Remembering my sister Guan Lu), in Ding Yanzhao ed., *Guan Lu a Guan Lu* (Guan Lu oh Guan Lu) (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2001), 17. Guan Lu asked Hu to read an early draft in correspondence they exchanged in the 1960s. See Ding Yanzhao, “Guan Li shuxin xuan” (Excerpts from Guan Lu’s correspondence), *Xinwenxue shike* (New literary history studies) 4 (2008): 175.
- 20 Barbara Barnouin, *Zhou Enlai: A Political Life* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2006), 86.
- 21 Xu Xinzhi, “Dao Guan Lu,” (Mourning Guan Lu) in Ding Yanzhao ed., *Guan Lu a Guan Lu*, 86–92.
- 22 Huang Wei, “Hongse jian die: Guan Lu zhi si” (Red spies: Guan Lu’s death), *Chuanqi* (Legends) 1 (2010): 15.
- 23 Xiao Yang and Guang Qun, *Yi ge nüzuojia de zaoyu: ji Guan Lu yi sheng* (A women writer’s calamity: remembering the life of Guan Lu) (Harbin: Beifang wenyi chubanshe, 1988), 1.
- 24 “Shoudu wenyijie renshi jihui jinian zuoyi nüzuojia Guan Lu” (Leading figures in the capital’s literary and art world gather to remember women left-wing writer, Guan Lu), *Renmin ribao* (People’s Daily), December 29, 1982, 5. See also Yu, “Hongse tegong chuanqi—daru Riwei moku de nü zuojia Guan Lu,” 49–53.

- 25 See chapters on Zhao Yiman and Liu Hulan in Louise Edwards, *Women Warriors and Wartime Spies of China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016). On Lei Feng, see Louise Edwards, "Military Celebrity in China: The Evolution of 'Heroic and Model Servicemen,'" in *Celebrity in China*, ed. L. Edwards and E. Jeffreys (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010), 21–44.
- 26 Chen Guozhou, "Sister Jiang: Committed Her Life to Communist Ideals, Died 29," *Women of China*, June 25, 2016, <http://www.womenofchina.cn/womenofchina/html1/people/history/1606/2674-1.htm> (accessed August 10, 2018).
- 27 "Jiang Zhujun," <http://www.womenofchina.cn/womenofchina/html1/special/13/1038-1.htm> (accessed August 10, 2018).
- 28 Luo Guangbin and Yang Yiyang, *Hongyan* (Red Crag) (1961 rpt. Beijing: Beijing dianzi chubanshe, 2001).
- 29 Ibid., *Hongyan*, 105–106.
- 30 Ibid., *Hongyan*, 359–360.
- 31 Ibid., *Hongyan*, chapter 15. This chapter also includes poems that were written by her fellow prisoners in her honor.
- 32 Ibid., *Hongyan*, 376–377.
- 33 Luo and Yang, *Hongyan*, 671.
- 34 Ibid., *Hongyan*, 671.
- 35 Yan Su, *Jiang Jie* (Sister Jiang), *Juben* (Play Monthly) 10 (1964): 24.
- 36 Ibid., *Jiang Jie*, 26.
- 37 Ren Jia, "Kan geju *Jiang Jie*," *Xiju bao* (Drama news) 10 (1964): 25.
- 38 *Jiang Jie* (Sister Jiang), dir. Huang Zumo and Fan Lai, Shanghai dianying zhipian chang, 1978.
- 39 See Wu Ran, "Xuan Jiang Jie" (Selections from Sister Jiang), *Dianying pingjia* (Movie Review) 1 (1979): 13, 19.
- 40 *Jiang Jie* (Sister Jiang), drawings by Men Qingjiang (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1996), front matter.
- 41 Lo Kuang-pin and Yan Yi-yen, *Red Crag* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1978), 62.
- 42 Zhang Nan, "Jiang Zhujun: A Steel Rose Who 'Bloomed before the Dawn,'" *Women of China*, October 27, 2016, <http://www.womenofchina.cn/womenofchina/html1/people/history/1610/3526-1.htm> (accessed August 10, 2018).
- 43 *Jiang Jie* (Sister Jiang), dir. Yan Xiaozhui. Beijing, CCTV, 2010.
- 44 Ding Shaoyi, *Jiang Jie zhenshi jiazu shi* (The real family history of Sister Jiang) (Wuhan: Wuhan daxue chubanshe, 2011).
- 45 "Jiang Zhujun's Letter Goes Public," *Women of China*, November 16, 2007, <http://www.womenofchina.cn/womenofchina/html1/news/newsmakers/8/9691-1.htm> (accessed August 10, 2018).
- 46 See Edwards, *Women Warriors and Wartime Spies*, 130–135.
- 47 Chen, "Sister Jiang."
- 48 "Jiang Zhujun's Letter Goes Public" and Zhang Nan, "Jiang Zhujun."
- 49 Lo and Yan, *Red Crag*, 527.
- 50 *Dangan: Guan Lu—luanshi hongyan de tegong shengya* (Archives: Guan Lu—The career of a beautiful secret agent in troubled times), Beijing TV, 46 mins, 2015.
- 51 *Hongse tegong midang* (Secret Archives of the Red Spies), CCTV-7, 2013, 25 mins.