

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Waves of feeling: Emotions, media, and the Chinese Communist Revolution

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Abstract

How did the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) foster emotional engagement with its revolution? How did the advent of new media transform this engagement? Building on research that has noted the importance of emotions in the CCP's revolution, this article explores these questions through a study of CCP radio and the person of the announcer. Using broadcast circulars and directives, memoirs, and diaries, it explores how broadcasters found an appropriate emotional tone for political texts, and how individual broadcasters functioned as nodes in the diffusion of emotions over an expanding network of radio stations. I make three arguments: first, that along with the well-documented normative forces of Party organization, announcers relied on reason and introspection to find their own emotional expression of a text and, with that, an emotional engagement with the revolution; second, that announcers were not anomalous in their reasoned engagement, but represent a consistent strain of community-building emotional practice within the ranks of the CCP; and third, that the advent of radio empowered the CCP to scale up its subject-oriented emotion work, developed at Yan'an but locally bound, to the regional and, eventually, the national scale. In this scaling up, extant CCP work-practice interacted with the promises and limits of the new media to create a distinct broadcasting culture that would shape the use of radio throughout the Mao era.

Keywords: Emotion; media; radio; revolution; CCP; Maoism

Every point on an expanding wavefront may be regarded as a new source of wavelets that expands in every direction.

Huygens' Principle of Wave Motion

Introduction

From 1940 to 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) expanded dramatically across two dimensions: outwards, as the Party transformed from a regional power to a national regime, and inwards, as it became increasingly aware of and focused

upon the phenomenological world of its present and potential adherents. How did the CCP achieve this simultaneous outward expansion and inner turn? Two decades ago, Elizabeth Perry initiated an emotional pivot in studies of the Chinese Communist Revolution. Shifting weight away from previous concern with ideological, organizational, and discursive factors, Perry argued that it was the CCP's 'emotion work' and attempts to 'raise emotions' (提高情緒) that distinguished its political style and shaped its revolution.¹ Through Land Reform, Rectification (1942–1945), and the campaigns of the Mao era, the CCP harnessed 'staged public performances'² and 'group—more than individual—bases of morality'³ to systematize its emotion work as part of a 'conscious strategy of political and psychological engineering'.⁴ Endorsing the emotional turn but returning to a focus on discourse, Liu Yu has since argued that the 'emotional roots of mass mobilization in the Chinese revolution' lay in the 'personalization', 'magnification', and 'moralization' of three key themes of Maoist discourse. 'Victimization' led to feelings of indignation catalyzed through political struggle in movements from Land Reform to the Cultural Revolution; 'redemption' led to feelings of guilt through thought reform movements like Rectification; and 'emancipation' led to euphoria through movements of social transformation such as the Great Leap Forward.⁵ Deepening this turn, through works of film and literature, Lee Haiyan has revealed how a Maoist portrayal of class-based love and hate attacked extant structures of private intimacy and emotional bonds—bonds that were restored and renewed in the reform era.⁶

While focusing primarily on CCP discourse, strategies, and techniques of emotional mobilization, researchers following the emotional turn have also paid increasing attention to the importance of individual and subjective responses. Perry is concerned predominantly with the 'collective' dynamics of emotion work, and with 'violent', 'orchestrated', or 'theatrical' techniques of 'moving the masses'. She points out, however, that this in no way precludes the authenticity of the resultant individually held emotions.⁷ Liu Yu repeatedly notes the fictional or exaggerated in discursively expressed emotions.⁸ Decoupled from veracity in their expression of Maoist discourse,

¹Elizabeth Perry, 'Moving the Masses: Emotion Work in the Chinese Revolution', *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2002, pp. 111–128, <https://doi.org/10.17813/mai.7.2.70rg70l202524uw6>. I am leaving aside here Perry's claims that the CCP was unique in its use of emotion, and that emotion work was the crucial factor in its success. The former claim would require sustained comparative work to prove, and the latter is in some argument with work that stresses economic, military, or other factors as pivotal.

²*Ibid.*, p. 113.

³*Ibid.*, p. 112.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 122.

⁵Yu Liu, 'Maoist Discourse and the Mobilization of Emotions in Revolutionary China', *Modern China*, vol. 36, no. 3, 2010, pp. 329–362.

⁶Haiyan Lee, 'Nowhere in the World Does There Exist Love or Hatred Without Reason', in *Words and Their Stories*, (ed.) Wang Ban (Leiden: Brill, 2010), https://brill.com/display/book/edcoll/9789004188617/Bej.9789004188600.i-342_011.xml.

⁷Perry, 'Moving the Masses', p. 114.

⁸Liu, 'Maoist Discourse', pp. 339, 340, 343, 353, 354.

individuals were therefore most effectively mobilized when ‘practical incentives, psychological pressure, and terror’ were in play.⁹ Liu stresses, however, the importance of including the subjectivity of mobilization targets in any model of Maoist emotion work, because, as she writes, ‘discourse gains its life through communication. Its meaning is built in intersubjective space.’¹⁰ Echoing Perry’s emphasis on mass psychology,¹¹ Lee Haiyan reflects predominantly on the Maoist iteration of a Schmidtian friend–foe binary and its destructive effect on intimate and familial emotional bonds. Lee stresses, however, the individual journey of intellectuals as they merged their ‘emotions and thoughts with those of the masses’.¹² The inclusion of the artistic and propaganda worker as subject as well as agent of emotion work is deepened in the work of Michael Dutton, who, through a study of the Cultural Revolution artwork, *The Rent Collection Courtyard*, depicts the work and the mass campaign it emerged from as a ‘channeling of affective flows’¹³ that acted on both artist and peasant alike.¹⁴

It’s my Party, I can cry if I want to

Noting and building on this awareness of the constitutional importance of individual subjectivity in Maoist emotion work, this article expands the field in three ways. First, it begins with the observation that while ‘the Party’ was indeed a key agent of emotion work and ‘the masses’ were its target, the divide between mobilizer and mobilized is not so clear. The Party was itself made up of a large and growing contingent of people who, before they began their ‘emotion work’, had to be emotionally moved.¹⁵ The ‘intense group pressure’¹⁶ of Rectification at Yan’an and its descendent campaigns may indeed have browbeat forth emotional performances, but what held that group together in the first place? Perry, in noting the mass nature of the CCP’s emotion work, suggests a continuity with earlier Chinese political thought that emphasized the group over the individual—that ‘[t]he Confucian stress upon social bonds and obligations made group ostracism a particularly potent form of emotional discipline’.¹⁷ Such a stress on the collective, however, took serious work by both individuals and

⁹Ibid., p. 357. This echoes Sheila Fitzpatrick’s interpretation of socialist subjectivity in the former Soviet Union, when individuals were motivated to perform an appropriate ‘usable self’ in response to an omnipresent state power and its prescribed models of selfhood. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Tear off the Masks! Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 152.

¹⁰Liu, ‘Maoist Discourse’, p. 331.

¹¹Haiyan Lee, ‘Class Feeling’, in *Afterlives of Chinese Communism*, (eds) Nicholas Loubere, Ivan Franceschini and Christian Sorace (Canberra: ANU Press, 2019), pp. 23–28, here p. 26.

¹²Lee, ‘Nowhere in the World’, p. 156.

¹³Michael Dutton, ‘Cultural Revolution as Method’, *The China Quarterly*, no. 227, September 2016, pp. 718–33, here p. 730, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741016000771>.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 724.

¹⁵As Joel Andreas points out, the Party was only able to mobilize its members, and through them the broader population, because of the ‘extraordinary commitment of those who joined the organization’. Joel Andreas, *The Rise of the Red Engineers: The Cultural Revolution and the Origins of China’s New Class* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), pp. 23–24.

¹⁶Perry, ‘Moving the Masses’, p. 118.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 112.

the Party to bring about and cannot be explained by the catch-all and essentializing descriptor 'Confucian'.¹⁸ How were emotional communities built and maintained within Party ranks? As we enter those ranks, the question arises as to the genesis of collective emotions. That is, where exactly were any normative or predominant emotions created, and how did they travel through the growing Party organization? Were they prescribed from above? Modelled? Theorized? Where Perry, Liu, Lee, and others have suggested that emotional norms or models were first created and then conveyed, this article explores the role of individual subjectivity in the creation of such norms. How did an individual, already in principle committed to the revolution, find their way to emotional cohesion both with the collective and with its guiding ideology? Was it possible to be ideologically in tune but emotionally off-key?

Love and hate, with reason

A further important question is the role of individual reason in the emotional transformation of revolutionary recruits. Studies of East Asian communist regimes have been resistant to the idea of voluntarily and rationally held, rather than coerced or performed, emotions.¹⁹ Previous emphasis on theatricality, on fabrication, and on what Perry calls the 'plasticity and ambivalence of human emotions' have played down the role of reason in emotion work.²⁰ Examples of emotional incontinence during struggle sessions drawn from the work of Chen Yung-fa and William Hinton, in which theatrics stir up a crowd until they are 'unable to restrain their indignation'²¹ and in which violence acts at a somatic level on an audience 'as if an electric spark had tensed every muscle',²² further minimize the role of reason. As Huang Daoxuan has shown, however, emotion work during Rectification in Yan'an involved a great deal of rational introspection. Group pressure, certainly a major factor, was coercive in intent and in cases veered towards the violence of the struggle session. Such external pressure, however, worked only in tandem with rational processes of self-reflection and careful study of key texts. Huang suggests that during what we could see as the formative emotional moment of the CCP, many Party members took an 'inner journey' (心路歷程) that,

¹⁸For a recent study of Rectification that examines Party strategy and individual response, see Huang Daoxuan 黄道炫, 'Zhengfeng yundong de xinling shi' 整风运动的心灵史 [A Xinling History of the Rectification Campaign], *Jindai yanjiu* 近代史研究, no. 2, 2020, pp. 4–26. English translation by Dayton Lekner, Timothy Cheek, and Nathan Gan, 'A Xinling History of the Rectification Campaign', *Revisiting the Revolution*, no. 4, December 2023, <http://prchistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/RtR-2023-4-A-Xinling-History.pdf>.

¹⁹William Mazzarella, 'Totalitarian Tears: Does the Crowd Really Mean It?', *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2015, pp. 91–112, here p. 93.

²⁰Perry, 'Moving the Masses', p. 122. In her approach, Perry resurrects a view of both emotions and 'the masses' from Gustave Le Bon, in which, as critiqued by Ernesto Lacan, 'the distinction between rationality and irrationality would largely overlap with the distinction between the individual and the group': Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005), p. 29. For further discussion on the Chinese context, see Tie Xiao, *Revolutionary Waves: The Crowd in Modern China*. Harvard East Asian Monographs 409 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2017), pp. 59–90.

²¹Yung-fa Chen, *Making Revolution: The Communist Movement in Eastern and Central China, 1937–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 186–187, cited in Perry, 'Moving the Masses', p. 114.

²²William Hinton, *Fanshen; A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967), pp. 112–114, cited in Perry, 'Moving the Masses', p. 115.

while not entirely of their own choosing, involved a crucial element of self-aware voluntarism (自覺自願).²³ In short, even when CCP 'emotion work' was in full swing, its targets were not simply overcome by emotional or affective charge. For most Party members, emotional commitment and expression was the result of, and intertwined with, intellectual engagement.

This reinjection of individual subjectivity into emotion work and reason into emotional practice reflects recent developments in the history of emotions. Historians working in this field are divided as to whether normative emotions were propagated through enforced emotional 'regimes',²⁴ plural and interlocking 'communities',²⁵ or 'styles' formed through social practice.²⁶ They align, however, in their emphasis on emotions as not simply reflexive, but rather formed in interactions between agential subjects and external impulse. William Reddy expresses this through the idea of 'emotives', by which one both 'manages' and 'explores' a feeling through its expression.²⁷ Barbara Rosenwein suggests a similar return to the subject with her critique of the 'hydraulic model', in which emotions, detached from reason, 'well-up' or 'over power' subjects. Rosenwein instead promotes a 'cognitive model' of emotions as informing and informed by internal cognitive processes.²⁸ Monique Scheer elaborates further with four categories of emotional practice: 'mobilization', in which emotions are evoked or charged through various external stimuli; 'naming', in which emotions are organized through language; 'communicating', in which feelings are publicly expressed; and 'regulating', in which embodied emotional norms are acquired through a habitus.²⁹ The major advance in the history of emotions in the two decades since the publication of Perry's foundational work, then, has been the importance placed on the subject and subjective in any emotional regime, community, or style, and on the process whereby such normative feelings are created, inculcated, maintained, and transformed. This implies that any study of revolution and emotions must focus not only on the actions of a prescriptive regime, but on the formation of emotions *within* that regime and processes by which they are normalized and diffused.

Third, we have little research on the impact of mass media on emotion work in authoritarian regimes, let alone in the People's Republic of China (PRC). Wherever scholars locate agency within the Maoist emotional, predominant throughout existing research on Maoist emotions and emotion work is a focus on physical gatherings of people in immediate proximity to one another. These were struggle sessions, forums for bitterness speaking, or other genres of that key media of the CCP revolution and

²³Huang Daoxuan, 'Zhengfeng yundong de xinling shi'.

²⁴William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

²⁵Barbara H. Rosenwein, 'Worrying about Emotions in History', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 107, no. 3, 2002, pp. 821–845, <https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/107.3.821>.

²⁶Monique Scheer, 'Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (and Is that What Makes Them Have a History)? A Bourdieuan Approach to Understanding Emotion', *History and Theory*, vol. 51, no. 2, 2012, pp. 193–220, here p. 216.

²⁷Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*, p. 128.

²⁸Jan Plamper et al., 'The History of Emotions: An Interview with William Reddy, Barbara Rosenwein, and Peter Stearns', *History and Theory*, vol. 49, no. 2, 2010, pp. 237–65, here p. 251.

²⁹Scheer, 'Are Emotions a Kind of Practice?'.

Maoism—the meeting (會). Didactic texts offered theoretical support but the coal-face of ‘emotion work’, and greatest corrective for any errant emotional expression or behaviour, was direct contact with classmates, Party members, co-workers, peers, or friends. Here the theoretical contributions of Reddy, as well as Barbara Rosenwein whose ‘emotional communities’ were based on face-to-face contact, work rather well.³⁰ However, as Jan Plamper has suggested, and Brenton J. Malin has explored, modern mass media and real-time communication over long distances have fundamentally changed both the size and nature of such emotional communities.³¹ Recent work has presented broadcast sound in China as variously a vital medium of information³² and ideology.³³ What of its emotional conductivity? How did CCP emotion work change through the application of new media? What did Party and Xinhua leadership expect of this new medium that was already playing so important a role in how their Soviet role models spoke to the state?³⁴ How did they understand its possibilities and threats? As Jonathan Sterne has argued, while new media technology makes possible new cultural and social forms, the way such technology is put to use is in turn shaped by pre-existing social and cultural forces.³⁵ What, in the case of CCP radio, were those forces?

The announcer, often referred to as the ‘mouthpiece’ (喉舌)³⁶ of the Party, was, from the first CCP vocal broadcasts in 1940, charged with giving voice to Party directives, ideologically charged news, and the words of leaders, including Mao Zedong. This process necessarily involved the encoding of text, often somewhat abstract to the announcer and their audience, with emotional shape. How did they go about finding and performing this shape? Were normative emotions spelled out and enforced by propaganda heads? Did they mimic others? What part did reason and introspection play in their emotional practice? And how was the personal practice of the announcer replicated or enforced across a growing community of CCP-controlled areas through the medium of radio? I open with a discussion of the advent of CCP vocal broadcasting, turn to the problem of emotion for announcers, and then discuss the process by which announcers injected emotion into ideological texts. I then discuss the proximal roots of this emotional practice found in Rectification at Yan’an. Finally, I turn from the emotional practice of individual broadcasters to the role of the broadcaster as a node in an expanding network for the diffusion of emotion.

³⁰Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*; Rosenwein, ‘Worrying about Emotions’.

³¹Jan Plamper, *The History of Emotions: An Introduction*. Emotions in History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 287; Brenton J. Malin, *Feeling Mediated: A History of Media Technology and Emotion in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2014).

³²John Alekna, *Seeking News, Making China: Information, Technology, and the Emergence of Mass Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2024).

³³Jie Li, ‘Revolutionary Echoes: Radios and Loudspeakers in the Mao Era’, *Twentieth-Century China*, vol. 45, no. 1, 2020, pp. 25–45, <https://doi.org/10.1353/tcc.2020.0006>.

³⁴Stephen Lovell, ‘How Russia Learned to Listen: Radio and the Making of Soviet Culture’, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2011, pp. 591–615, <https://doi.org/10.1353/kri.2011.0040>.

³⁵Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), UniM Bail 621.389309 STER.

³⁶喉舌, the literal translation of which is ‘throat and tongue’, has done little to discourage a reading of the announcer as an unthinking embodiment of CCP ideas and ideology.

Drawing on internal broadcast and propaganda circulars, instructional guides for broadcasters, and diary and memoir, I make three claims. First, the emotional practice of announcers involved, by design and in practice, the subjective and reasoning agency of individual announcers in tandem with the normative forces of peers and the guiding voices of other announcers. Second, this practice, rooted in the small group (小组) of Rectification in Yan'an, and continuing after 1949, reveals a lineage of CCP emotion building that relies on, rather than erases, individual subjectivity and reason. Third, that the potential and limitations of CCP radio both empowered and necessitated CCP expansion of its modular emotional practice to the regional and, eventually, the national scale, in the process creating a distinct broadcasting culture that would shape CCP radio throughout the Mao era.

In the person of the announcer we find a model for the individual in Maoism—fully cognizant, reasoning, but embedded as a node in the normative forces of a network for the diffusion of emotion. This moves our understanding of the Maoist emotional beyond the mechanics of the masses mobilized by the CCP, without seesawing towards the idea of a liberal individual pitted against the Party-state. In doing so it brings the history of emotions in twentieth-century China into conversation with a global history of emotions and with developments in major works by Reddy, Rosenwein, Scheer, and others.³⁷ CCP emotional practice and community building was not reliant on the media of either mass agitation, nor on radio as an empty channel by which thoughts and feelings are transparently relayed. Instead, CCP emotion work over mass media was shaped both by the medium of radio, and by the subjectivity of the individuals who gave it their voice. As with the wavelets in Huygens' principle of wave motion that opened this article, the individuals who lived and made the Chinese Revolution were both receptors and propagators of emotions, each at once on the perimeter and at the centre of an expanding and deepening revolutionary wave.

Wireless first steps: From signals intelligence to an emotive voice

In 1958, the Soviet broadcaster Comrade Ilynsky, working in Beijing at the Central Broadcasting Station, commented that the difference between newspapers and radio was that 'newspapers act upon people's intellect. Radio not only does this, but also acts upon people's emotions.'³⁸ CCP awareness of radio as a tool and medium for the transmission of feeling as well as ideas, however, has its own history, building on the Party's early forays into wireless communication. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, CCP radio communication was largely limited to signals intelligence (SIGINT) between various Party bases in Shanghai, Hong Kong, as well as Jiangxi, Ruijin, and other rural areas. In Shanghai, for example, commercial and Kuomintang (KMT) broadcast and reception developed rapidly throughout this period. The CCP, however, was restricted to glean-ing whatever equipment and technical knowledge it could from the Soviets, infiltrating KMT radio training programmes, and scouring the burgeoning commercial market for

³⁷Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*; Rosenwein, 'Worrying about Emotions'; Scheer, 'Are Emotions a Kind of Practice'.

³⁸'Yili yin si ji tongzhi de tanhua ji lu' 伊里因斯基同志的谈话记录, *Guangbo Dongtai* 广播动态, 10 January 1958.

radio parts. It then put this technology to use almost entirely in intra-Party communication and predominantly through telegraphic code rather than broadcast voice.³⁹ This SIGINT development was vital in CCP-KMT skirmishes, perhaps most notably during the KMT encirclement campaigns, in which SIGINT provided key information as well as a means for obfuscation.⁴⁰

When, in Yan'an, the CCP did begin to develop the capacity to broadcast voice, it naturally inherited the SIGINT focus of the previous decade. In 1940, Zhou Enlai returned from Moscow with the components (broken down into separate parts in his luggage to avoid detection and confiscation) needed to broadcast voice rather than code. This provided the technical basis for what is now held as the People's first radio station—Xinhua Guangbo Diantai (新华广播电台), with the callsign XNCR, launched in Yan'an on 30 December 1940. With the launch of XNCR, based in a cave at Wangpi Wan (王皮灣), about 40 *li* from Yan'an, the CCP began its experiments with vocal broadcasting. It did so, however, within the very particular context of war, at first with the Japanese, and then, from 1945, with the KMT. Building on the previous decade's experience in SIGINT, Xinhua's Broadcasting Department (广播科) (with a staff of three) continued to broadcast, letter by letter, texts sent through code (文字广播) to other communist bases and military excursions. The content included domestic news (including news about the liberated areas, guerrilla areas, and Chiang Kai-shek areas), and international news (mainly military, political, and commentary on diplomatic developments).

Across the cave in Yan'an, however, the Oral Broadcast Group (口播组) created its own oral broadcast scripts (口語廣播稿).⁴¹ The textual-oral categories divided broadcast scripts in multiple ways and had a lasting impact on both CCP broadcast culture and on who heard what in early broadcasts.⁴² Post-1949, this division into two (or more) audiences was to be an important one, with text-broadcast scripts to be transmitted for publication in urban newspapers, and oral-scripts to be relayed to rural radio stations for re-broadcast, both reflecting and enhancing the urban-rural divide that characterized the Mao era. But in 1940 at Yan'an, the distinction was even more meaningful, because at that time the two modes of broadcast were not only pitched at audiences with different educational or literacy levels, but were broadcast through different wireless technology. Text-scripts followed the early CCP SIGINT pattern of relay in code, directly from Yan'an, and (once decoded back to text) were for the eyes of Party leadership and for publication in local Party newspapers. Oral-scripts, however, were rewritten at a separate desk for a general audience that included those living

³⁹David Ian Chambers, 'A "Lantern in the Dark Night": The Origins and Early Development of China's SIGINT Service', *Journal of Intelligence History*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2014, pp. 204–222, <https://doi.org/10.1080/16161262.2014.906147>.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 221.

⁴¹Wang Weizhen 王唯真, 'yan'an guangbo de mengya shiqi bianji renyuan de gongzuo, xuexi laodong he shenghuo' 延安广播的萌芽时期编辑人员的工作、学习劳动和生活, in Beijing guangbo xueyuan xinwen xi bianxuan, *Zhongguo renmin guangbo huiyili* 中国人民广播回忆录 (Beijing: Guangbo dianshi chubanshe, 1983), pp. 43–48.

⁴²The practice continued at least until 1960, with news items divided into 文字 and 口語 广播. 文字广播 scripts were to be transmitted for publication in the newspapers of cities, factories, and mines, and 口語广播 were for the use of rural radio stations. In the 1960s it seems the distinction is purely one of audience, with 口語广播 offering a simplified language, with 成語 or other potential sophistries excised.

in KMT-controlled areas, then sent by courier to Wangpiwan, where they were given voice by an announcer.⁴³ Thus, in oral-broadcasts, we see the very beginnings of CCP concern with a wider audience that listens rather than reads, something called the ‘listening masses’ (聽眾); the consideration of choice of spoken language for a diverse audience; of tone; and of something referred to repeatedly throughout the documents of the era—emotion (感情).

The announcer's voice as emotional medium

Paulina Hartono has given us an excellent introduction into the creation of what she calls the ‘ideal Communist voice’. This was a prescriptive vocalization that, she argues, was inspired by Stanislavsky’s proto-method acting and that stressed the emotional commitment of the announcer. One could not simply deliver information through the microphone and over the airwaves, but had to let one’s true feelings be heard in every syllable, and thus at once ‘communicate party loyalty and serve as a sonic representation of political authority’.⁴⁴ Certainly, even a brief survey of the available sources confirms the emphasis placed on emotion and emoting in CCP broadcasting culture. Announcers were instructed to, praised for, and even hired on the basis of a full expression of emotion. On 3 April 1947, we see the instruction from Handan Broadcast Station (邯鄲廣播電台) that broadcasts should always be ‘fluent, natural, and full of emotion’ (流利、自然、充滿感情).⁴⁵ The announcer Qian Jiamei (錢家楣) recalls broadcasting from Shahe Village, in She County at the foot of Mt Dahang in March 1946, and receiving praise for an announcing style that was, ‘emotionally rich (感情充沛)’.⁴⁶ In the summer of 1948, Liu Xia (劉峽), aged 15 and just graduated from middle school (where he studied politics and recitation), was recruited as an announcer for Northeast Xinhua radio station (東北新華廣播電台). Both his age and education were below the advertised requirements for announcers, but, as Liu Xia later learned, he was hired ‘because my voice was mellow and sonorous and my recitation full of emotion’ (聲音圓潤洪亮, 朗誦富於感情).⁴⁷

The dilemma for the first generation of CCP broadcasters, then, was not *whether* to express emotions, but *which* emotions to express and *how*. For while early broadcasting directives as well as praise and criticism from leaders all stressed the importance of this thing called *ganqing*, they also stressed that such emotion had little to do with personal or individual feelings. Rather, they laid out a rather narrow emotional range

⁴³Guidelines for the transposition of 文字广播稿 to 口语广播稿 can be found in ‘Cong wen bo gao gaixie cheng kou bo gao de ji ge yuanze’ 从文稿改写成口播稿的几个原则, March/April 1948, in Zhao Yuming 赵玉明, *Xinwen guangbo yewu xilie jiaocai zhi ba — zhongguo xiandai guangbo jian shi* 新闻广播业务系列教材之八: 中国现代广播简史 (Beijing: Beijing guangbo xueyuan, 1986), p. 239.

⁴⁴M. Paulina Hartono, ‘A Good Communist Style’. Sounding Like a Communist in Twentieth-Century China’, *Representations*, vol. 151, no. 1, July 2020, pp. 26–50.

⁴⁵‘Handan tai boyin jishu de diandi jingyan’ 邯郸台播音技术的点滴经验(1947年4月21日), in Beijing guangbo xueyuan xinwen xi bian, *Jiefangqu guangbo lishi ziliao xuanbian* (1940–1949) 解放区广播历史资料选编(1940–1949) (Beijing: Zhongguo guangbo dianshi chubanshe, 1985), p. 284.

⁴⁶Qian Jiamei 钱家楣, ‘Shanbei zhanzheng qijian boyin gongzuo de pianduan huiyi’ 陕北战争期间播音工作的片段回忆, in *Zhongguo renmin guangbo huiyili*, p. 73.

⁴⁷Liu Xia 刘峽, ‘Nan wang de 1948’ 难忘的1948, in Zhu Lianjun zhubian, *Longguang boyinren huiyili di yiji* (1945–1949) 龙广播音人回忆录 第一辑 (1945–1949) (Self-published, 2016), pp. 47–51.

for broadcasters to follow. The April 1947 'A Few Lessons on Broadcast Technique From Handan Station' called for:

In terms of tone, the main thing is to be vivid, to be bold. Different identities will have different tones, but your voice should always be natural (don't put on airs), fluent (avoid sounding strange or stilted), calm (don't get flustered), and composed (avoid frivolity at all costs).⁴⁸

Despite advice to be 'fluent, natural, and full of emotion', it would be wrong to assume that announcers simply 'let go' in front of the microphone. Indeed, we only need to attend to the numerous accounts of broadcasters suppressing certain emotions in order to perform others to realize that whatever feelings were conveyed through the wireless and then wired broadcast networks were not simply 'released' or 'vented'.⁴⁹ Rather, broadcasters expended considerable effort overcoming what they felt were inappropriate emotional or somatic states.

Wang Ou (王謳), for example, was given the role of narrator and director for a 30 October 1947 live broadcast of the 'Yellow River Cantata' to mark the first anniversary of the death of the poet Xing Hai. Wang remembers the makeshift orchestra and recording studio that he managed to cobble together in Shanbei, and particularly his own nervousness prior to the performance: 'Everyone was nervous, and no one more than me, but I had to pretend to be steady.'⁵⁰ Or take Meng Qiyu, who describes her first broadcast in summer, 1946, and her embarrassment and anxiety over her Southern accent, so acute that...

...when I sat in front of the microphone, I panicked and forgot everything. The tone, the emotion, everything went out the window. After the broadcast, my face became hot and my hands and feet were cold.⁵¹

Also stressed was the importance of suppressing any fear felt, given the proximity of the frontline. Such suppression was doubly important as there was widespread understanding that early CCP broadcasts were a way of allaying such fears among its audiences.⁵²

What these recollections show is not that the broadcasters 'faked' emotion at the behest of the Party or Xinhua leadership, but rather that they struggled to reconcile their internal or somatic state at any given moment with an appropriate emotive

⁴⁸'Handan tai boyin jishu de diandi jingyan', p. 284.

⁴⁹Barbara Rosenwein, in Plamper et al., 'The History of Emotions', p. 251.

⁵⁰Wang Ou 王謳, 'Huiyi "huanghe dahechang" de bochu qianhou' 回忆 '黄河大合唱' 的播出前后, in *Zhongguo renmin guangbo huiyili*, pp. 120–121.

⁵¹Meng Qiyu 孟启予, 'Wo zai yan'an Xinhua guangbo diantai boyin de shihou' 我在延安新华广播电台播音的时候, in *Zhongguo renmin guangbo huiyili*, p. 51.

⁵²See, for example, *Zhongyang renmin guangbo diantai, taishi ziliao huibian* (1949–1984), 中央人民广播电台, 台史资料汇编 (1949–1984), *Zhongyang renmin guangbo diantai taishi bian* (Beijing, 1985), p. 626. On allaying the fears of the audience, see Zhang Zhu 张柱, 'Xiaofeng zhu jing jin' 肖风祝敬近 in *Hebei geming huiyi lu di 4 ji* 河北革命回忆录 第4辑, Zhou Xihan 周希汉 bian (Shijiazhuang: Hebei renmin chubanshe, 1982), pp. 41–51.

form. Here we get a clear example of what Reddy refers to as ‘emotional effort’ as individuals endured personal physical discomfort while attempting to align themselves with an accepted emotional performance.⁵³ That is, to reconcile what were referred to as ‘personal feelings’ (個人的感情) with an ideal emotion that, while repeatedly stressed, remained only vaguely delineated. As with the Handan ‘Lessons’, it was not specific emotions that were being mandated or enforced, but rather certain styles that were to be avoided. To be ‘full of emotion’ was a repeated refrain, but it lacked a clear description of what kind of emotion, or how an announcer might find such emotional fullness.

How to know how to feel—emotions as practice

What is clear is that throughout the 1940s, while a definitive programmatic statement on emotion in broadcasting remained unforthcoming, announcers gradually began to establish, if not an emotional template, a *process* by which to arrive at an appropriate emotional performance of key texts. The memoir of Chen Hongsheng (陈鸿声) gives us a detailed example. In early January 1949, Chen, then announcing for Qiqihar Xinhua Radio Station (齊齊哈爾新華廣播電台) in Heilongjiang, received a broadcast script via encrypted telegram. The text to be broadcast, ‘Comment on War Criminals Suing for Peace’, was signed off by his supervisor Lin Qing (林青) along with the request for Comrade Hongsheng to broadcast it. As Chen recalls, the process began with a collective appreciation of the text:

It was a glorious and proud thing to be the first to pass on the latest news and instructions of the CCP Central Committee to the masses. This particular manuscript also brought great excitement to everyone. So, comrades spontaneously read parts of it aloud and discussed the content of the article.⁵⁴

Chen then describes his personal engagement with the text:

After everyone discussed ‘Comment on War Criminals Seeking Peace’, I recalled the feelings of Comrade Qi Yue (齊越 1922–1993) broadcasting this comment a few hours before [from Xinhua in Shanbei], and walked slowly out of the room. In a daze I drifted away from the station and wandered along the street. The content of the manuscript and how to process it for broadcast were churning over in my mind. I analysed the mental state of war criminals who started the war, met with failure, and now were seeking peace; considered the ridiculous logic of maintaining the state and legal system when such criminals sued for peace, pondered the essence of the author’s exposure of the war criminals’ demands and their positions, opinions, and feelings, and thought about the all contradictions in the article, how to give them a tone of voice and expression...⁵⁵

⁵³Reddy, in Jan Plamper et al., ‘The History of Emotions’, pp. 241–242.

⁵⁴Chen Hongsheng 陈鸿声, ‘Wo bo “ping zhanfan qiuhe” 我播《评战犯求和》’, in *Longguang boyinren huiyilu di yi ji*, pp. 63–65.

⁵⁵Ibid.

After Chen's streetside reverie, he returned to the station. His fellow broadcasters were looking for him and Lin Qing was worried. Chen told them he was now ready to broadcast the text, but Lin would allow this only after one more vital step:

Lin Qing was still concerned, so he invited many people to the broadcast group to listen to my trial broadcast. Having thoroughly prepared, I was able to express the spirit of the document (文件的精神) very accurately. Lin Qing and his comrades were very satisfied after hearing this.⁵⁶

Chen's recollection of the process, from receiving a script to delivering a voice with an appropriate tone and expression, lays out the stages involved in triangulating and shaping the emotional contours of a text for broadcast. First, came an engagement, along with his peers and leaders, with the text itself, an awareness of its importance, of its 'tone and language', as well as a summoning of the voice of his broadcasting model Qi Yue, who had given voice to the same text a few hours earlier. Second, a retreat inwards (or street-wards) during which Chen ruminated alone on the document, imagining the 'mental state' and the 'logic' of the KMT and the stance, opinion, and feelings of the author of the text. Third, he returned to his peers to practise his reading and test it against the ears of his leader, comrades, and other announcers. It was this three-stage process that enabled Chen to deliver a vocalization that appropriately expressed what he referred to as the 'spirit of the document'.

Text as a spirit medium

Chen Hongsheng's three stage process reveals the mingling of reason and emotion and the balancing of subjective discovery with social discipline. Diary, memoir, and Party documents from the period reveal that the introspective path to emotional performance as well as a focus on the 'spirit' of political texts were not unique to Chen but a constant component of CCP broadcasting practice in the 1940s. Xiao Yan 肖岩, who announced for Yan'an's Xinhua Broadcasting Station from the early 1940s, describes the formative stages of CCP broadcast culture. After a manuscript had arrived to Wangpiwan, announcers would read a script many times, both silently and aloud. As she writes, strict adherence to the original script was demanded: 'you could not mispronounce a word'. You 'read the script silently several times to carefully understand the central idea of the text so as to accurately convey the *spirit* you felt to the audience'.⁵⁷ We also find this 'spirit' in the writing of Chen Hongsheng's vocal model. In Qi Yue's 'Broadcast Diary' for 31 May 1948, he notes his own struggle to find the correct tone for the 1948 'CCP CC Instruction on the Work of Land Reform and Party Consolidation'. Wen Jize (温济泽, 1914–1999), director of Xinhua's Oral Broadcasting Department, nominated Qi Yue to broadcast this key document, writing at the top of the script 'Chairman Mao instructs that no mistakes be made when broadcasting this

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Xiao Yan 肖岩, 'Yan'an boyin shenghuo huiyi' 延安播音生活回忆, in *Zhongguo renmin guangbo huiyili*, p. 42. This source is, of course, a memoir and thus may reflect a projection back onto the time of this concept of the 'spirit of the document'. The language, however, also appears in Qi Yue's 1947 diary, and has its provenance in Yan'an Rectification, to which we will turn shortly.

text'. To not misread any characters was, for Qi Yue, a clear enough instruction to follow, but to find the correct emotional tone for the manuscript Qi Yue followed the same stages as Chen Hongsheng had:

At that time, I put all my will and strength into preparations, exchanged opinions with my comrades on the *spirit* of the document and the specific method of dissemination, and did everything I could within an hour...⁵⁸

Qi Yue was himself following the advice of Meng Qiyu (孟启予, 1920–?), his group leader (组长), broadcasting for Xinhua since August 1945, who had stressed the necessity of deeply understanding the content of the manuscript and grasping its 'spirit' (精神). The more you concentrate on these elements, according to Meng, the better the emotion and tone of the broadcast.⁵⁹

The idea that the correct emotional expression was to be derived through a personal communing with the 'spirit' of the text to be broadcast would find even fuller expression in the 1950s, particularly with Mei Yi's (梅益 1913–2003) speech at the National Conference for Announcers on 2 April 1955:

Where does emotion come from? It is obviously inseparable from our own standpoint, so we must every day constantly improve the level of our thought concerning policies ... We ask the announcer to grasp the whole *spirit* of the manuscript first, the more they understand the *spirit* of the manuscript, the more free the expression of emotion will be, and then concentrate on it, just like reciting their own work, then the broadcasting effect will be better. I think that thinking plays a leading role in our broadcasting effect, and correct thinking produces full emotions.⁶⁰

We are seeing here the gradual elaboration and exposition of the relationship between the feelings and voices of individual announcers and those of key Party texts, finding ever more nuanced and theoretically coherent statements on this relationship. Indeed, these discussions, centred around the 'spirit of a text' continue in Party broadcast circulars and directives throughout the Mao era.⁶¹ From the 1940s onwards, then, entrenched in CCP broadcast culture was a practice of encouraging announcers to engage subjectively and rationally with a text in order to discover and voice their own emotional response.

The emotional practice of announcers such as Chen Hongsheng, then, reveals both the centrality of subjective engagement and the co-dependence of emotion and reason in the creation of revolutionary sentiment. This process could be understood as what

⁵⁸ Qi Yue 齐越, diary entry for 31 May 1948, in 'Guangbo riji' 广播日记, in *Yan'an xinhua guangbo diantai huiyili*, pp. 62–63.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Mei Yi 梅益, 'Yi jiu wu wu nian si yue er ri zai zhongyang tai boyin yewu xuexi hui shang jianghua zhaoyao' 九五五年四月二日在中央台播音业务学习会上讲话摘要, in *Mei Yi tan guangbo dian-shi* 梅益谈广播电视 (Beijing: Zhongguo guangbo dianshi chubanshe, 1985), pp. 69–70.

⁶¹ See, for example, '一九六三年七月三十一日和播音部同志的谈话' in *Mei Yi tan guangbo dian-shi*, pp. 270–275.

Reddy calls the ‘explorative’ aspect of emotions, in which their expression necessitates a testing of that expression through introspection.⁶² It also brings Rosenwein’s ‘cognitive theory’ of emotion into relief, as we must accept that announcers reasoned as well as felt their way to an emotional commitment and voice.⁶³ Of course, waiting for them at the end of this process were their comrades and supervisors—not disinterested, but with a keen ear for emotional commitment to the CCP’s Revolution. Announcers thus modulated their expression in response to social cues and direction from their supervisors, embedded as they were in the regulating forces of CCP work style, bringing Scheer’s Bordieuan ‘social practice’ into play. The other side of Reddy’s ‘emotives’ equation, in which emotions are both explored and managed, suggests that as announcers modulated their emotional expression, they in turn managed their own feelings towards the text—mingling and smoothing the edges between subjectively held and socially reinforced feelings until they were indistinguishable. Such monitoring and testing of emotional performances, however, departs from both the prescription of particular emotions, and the attempt to mobilize emotion directly as per Perry’s ‘emotion work’ model. Rather, we see a back-and-forth between individual introspection and collective management of emotions, focused on the ‘spirit’ of a text. The announcer was neither a ‘mouthpiece’ of the Party, nor a wilful individual set against or suppressed by it. Rather, the emotional practice of the announcer was created through the interplay between reasoning introspection and the socializing forces of Party organization and discipline.

Reasoning subjects and CCP emotion work

Where then did the emotional practice of announcers such as Chen Hongsheng come from? Was it peculiar to Xinhua broadcasters, or does it reflect a significant and enduring vein of CCP emotionality? While the ‘spirit’ (*jingshen*) of a text could point us to either Hegelian or Confucian readings, the more proximate roots of the concept take us to Yan’an and the seminal movement in which CCP culture and work style were forged—Rectification of 1942–1945. In this campaign, as Party members were urged to render themselves as one with the documents they were studying, it was the ‘spirit’ of each text that had to be grasped in order to go beyond a surface (看来看去) reading of the document, and to enter deeply into its inner essence.⁶⁴ The goal here was not simply to intellectually understand a text, but to reconcile that text with one’s subjectivity and personal history. As Kang Sheng spelled out:

In this movement of study and inspection work, every comrade must first think deeply, reflect on their own way of thinking, and on all of their work and their

⁶²On this, see Plamper et al. ‘The History of Emotions’, p. 240.

⁶³Ibid., p. 251.

⁶⁴See, for example, Xu Yisi (1911–1994), ‘學習與領導’ in 解放日報, 11 June 1942, in which Xu writes: ‘How should general cadres improve their learning quality? Of course, relying on leadership alone is not enough if you don’t work hard. If you work hard on your own, coupled with the guidance of leading comrades, it is guaranteed that every cadre can grasp the *spirit* and essence of the document. At present, the common difficulty of ordinary cadres is how to link documents with themselves. What ordinary cadres are troubled by is the so-called “Reading back and forth, but not getting in”.’

own history. Only by such introspection can they comprehend the *spirit* and quality of the texts and convert them into a weapon of their own.⁶⁵

And as instructions to cadres carrying out Rectification made clear, this personal engagement was to enable each cadre to 'grasp the central thread of their thoughts, and to meld together the act of self-reflection and the *spirit of the documents* so that they become inseparable'.⁶⁶ The *spirit* of a text, then, implied something more than the 'gist' or basic idea of a document that one should learn to repeat and moved beyond both the Hegelian *geist* and the Confucian *jingshen*. Rather, it was a reading of a political text specifically oriented towards the reader and their own internal transformation. We can think of it as the interface between Party text and personal experience, or between ideology and subjectivity.⁶⁷ It was this 'spirit', inaugurated at Yan'an, that broadcasters such as Chen Hongsheng sought to locate, commune with, and express through the discovery of an appropriate emotional tone and voice. Through the location and performance of this *spirit*, a theoretical or political text from the Party centre was rendered both particular and subjective in the person and voice of the announcer.

At Yan'an also we find a precursor for Chen Hongsheng's emotional practice, with its back-and-forth between introspective engagement with, and collective expression of, Party texts. During Rectification, Party members were pushed to engage with Party texts through a similarly stadial process. This began with collective reading in 'small groups' (小組) of three to five individuals. It then progressed to a stage of introspection, during which the Party member was to reconcile, as Kang Sheng called for, the 'spirit of the text' with their own subjectivity. Finally, a third stage returned the individual to the collective to both reveal and test the results of their 'inner journey' (心路歷程) through the all-important stage of criticism and self-criticism.⁶⁸ This process, deeply embedded in Party work style during Rectification, stressed 'self-awareness' (自覺) as the correct path to subjective engagement with revolutionary ideology.⁶⁹ As Huang Daoxuan writes, the process was 'quasi-coercive'.⁷⁰ While clearly programmatic, it relied for the most part upon the agency of the individual and a continued alternation and mutual reinforcement between personal discovery and collective management of subjective and emotional experience.

The omnipresence of a subject-oriented 'spirit' in Party documents, diary, and memoir, reveals the Party's sustained interest in active subjective engagement with

⁶⁵Kang Sheng 康生, 'Zenme yanjiu zhongxuanbu si yue sanshi hao dingjue' 怎麼研究中宣部四月三十號定決, in *Gaizao xuexi gaizao xuexi* (Hong Kong: Hongmian chubanshe, 1944?), p. 2.

⁶⁶Xiao Yang 蕭揚, 'Di san zu de xuexi fangfa' 第三組的學習方法 [Study Methods of the Third Group], in *Jinsui xue xun* 晉綏學訊 [Jinsui Study Bulletin], no. 2, 31 March 1943, p. 18.

⁶⁷This interpretation of the CCP's focus on *jingshen* aligns to some degree with discussion found in Wendy Larson, *From Ah Q to Lei Feng: Freud and Revolutionary Spirit in 20th Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), pp. 94–96.

⁶⁸Huang Daoxuan, 'Zhengfeng yundong de xinling shi', pp. 20, 23.

⁶⁹Cong zhengfeng lai kan ganbu sixiang yu jinhou de ganbu jiaoyu wenti—Taihang qu dang wei xuanchuan buzhang Panshi tongzhi zai 1944 nian 8 yue huiyi shang de baogao' 從整風來看幹部思想與今后的幹部教育問題—太行區黨委宣傳部長磐石同志在1944年8月會議上的報告, in *Yi er jiu shi ji Ji Lu Yu junqu kangri zhanzheng shi fujian zhi er. ziliao xuanbian* 一二九師暨冀魯豫軍區抗日戰爭戰史附件之二. 資料選編 (Zhongguo Renmin Jiefangjun di er ye zhan jun shi bianji shi, 1962), p. 702.

⁷⁰Huang Daoxuan, 'Zhengfeng yundong de xinling shi', p. 23.

political texts, not only for announcers but for all Party members.⁷¹ In turn, the process of giving voice to ideological texts by announcers such as Chen Hongshen illustrates that such interest was indeed put into practice beyond Yan'an. Post-1949, manuals for announcers reveal that both collective and introspective practices and a focus on the *spirit* of a text were propagated after the founding of the Republic.⁷² This suggests that, in both Party theory and personal experience, how an announcer should feel in relation to given ideas, and how they should communicate those feelings, were not prescribed through an explicated set of normative emotions by which Reddy defines his 'emotional regime'.⁷³ Indeed, such an enforcement, in which emotions were externalized from the self, would be unlikely to have the capacity to expand any emotional norms or bonds beyond the quasi-military discipline of Yan'an, let alone to a national community. What was scalable, however, was the practice of subjective, reasoned, emotional, and vocalized engagement with political texts through collective reading, personal introspection, and the simultaneous expression, testing, and management of emotional styles for the ears of others. In the emotional practice of the announcer, we see a means of creating and maintaining subjective and emotional engagement with revolutionary ideology, not through the external stimulation of emotionally reactive subjects and potential revolutionary recruits (as Perry described the struggle session),⁷⁴ but through the active participation of those within the choir of Party ranks. In Chen Hongshen and other announcers then, we see a lineage of CCP emotional practice that complicates binaries between Party and individual, between organizational discipline and subjective experience, and between emotion and reason. Revolutionary feelings were generated in constant interplay across such fictive borders.

Feeling, mediated: The announcer as emotional node

How that practice travelled from Rectification at Yan'an to Chen Hongshen out in Qiqihar in 1949 and beyond is also complicated. It involved two intertwined processes: the revolutionary organization of the CCP and the revolution of radio. First, Rectification was not limited to Yan'an but held across CCP bases in North China, becoming a formative movement for the Party organization. More crucially, Rectification also took place at all Xinhua radio stations in the years 1947 to 1949. With Rectification came the distribution of key texts (including Kang Sheng's, above) and the twin-pronged method of small-group expression and individual study. The practices of Rectification noted above were thus organizationally enforced throughout the CCP's broadcasting infrastructure, and further reinforced through the constant transfer of personnel from Yan'an to outlying stations in the network. Added to this were campaigns such as the anti-*keli-kong* (反客里空) drive in 1947 (named after a long-winded character in the Soviet play *Front*), in which pretentious airs and sophistry were

⁷¹Such interest in what was called 'living thought' 活思想 over rote learning and repetition of documents first came to prominence during Rectification at Yan'an. See Huang Daoxuan, 'Zhengfeng yundong de xinling shi', pp. 22–23.

⁷²Guangbo tongbao, di ershiqi qi 廣播通報, 第二十七期 (Guangbo shiye ju, December 1950), p. 45.

⁷³Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*.

⁷⁴Perry, 'Moving the Masses'.

attacked, and announcers encouraged to embody, rather than preach, the communist spirit.⁷⁵ Second, however, was the communications revolution unfolding in tandem with its communist counterpart, and the role of the announcer as both receptor and transmitter of an emotional voice.

As it had around the globe, radio offered the CCP the promise of expanding terrestrially bound interpersonal communities to the national scale.⁷⁶ The single and controlled voice of the announcer had the potential to both unite and educate geographically and culturally diverse audiences.⁷⁷ Such potential, however, was in constant tension with the technical limitations of the medium, a tension that would shape Xinhua broadcasting not only during but after the 1940s. We can see these limitations reflected in the manner in which Xinhua incrementally established its broadcasting network, centred initially about Yan'an, with outlying stations including those in Qiqihar, Jiamusi, Harbin, Andong, Mudanjiang, Yanji, Linjiang, and Jinan. As noted in the introduction, CCP broadcast infrastructure before 1940 was limited to telegraphic code. Even after the December 1940 launch of XNCR at Yan'an, Xinhua often relied on telegraphic code transmitters (发报台) that had been converted to oral broadcast devices.⁷⁸ These converted devices could transmit text at an output of 500 watts, but voice at only 2–300 watts.⁷⁹ This meant that, despite the theoretical promise of radio, in practice the CCP could still relay text further, and with greater reliability, than voice. To expand the range of vocal broadcasts, as the broadcast network grew through captured territory and broadcast facilities, Xinhua workers at outlying stations attempted to retransmit central broadcasts. But again, technical limitations hampered this effort as retreating KMT or Japanese troops often destroyed or sabotaged expensive retransmission equipment. Additionally, the improved broadcast conditions at night-time, when reduced solar radiation levels meant a higher ionosphere (300km rather than 100km during the day) and thus greater broadcast range, limited XNCR to three hours of broadcast each evening. Finally, the position of Xinhua's central station close to the front line meant repeated forced relocation and outages of the central node of the CCP's broadcast network.⁸⁰ Throughout this period, the exigencies of war and associated technical limitations and failures meant that even when XNCR could send

⁷⁵Kang Minzhuang 康敏庄, 'Xuexi zhangwo he yunyong guangbo gongju—huiyi dalian diantai jian tai chuqi qingkuang' 学习掌握和运用广播工具—回忆大连电台建台初期情况, in *Dalian guangbo huiyili* 大连广播回忆录 (Dalian: Dalian ren min guang bo dian tai, 1986), p. 13.

⁷⁶Michelle Huasha Zhang, 'Left to Their Own Devices: Radio, Radiomen and Radio Stations in the Making of Tibet's Modern Political Landscape', *Past & Present*, vol. 263, no. 1, 2024, pp. 170–204, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtad008>.

⁷⁷See, among others, Michelle Hilmes, 'Radio and the Imagined Community', in *The Sound Studies Reader*, (ed.) Jonathan Sterne (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 351–362.

⁷⁸Su Jingshi 苏景轼, 'Wo wei mao zhuxi zhuangpei shouyinji' 我为毛主席装配收音机, in *Yan'an xinhua guangbo diantai huiyili*, p. 261.

⁷⁹Ibid. See also Zhang Zhu, 'Xiaofeng zhu jing jin', p. 42.

⁸⁰In early March 1947, both Xinhua headquarters and the broadcast studio were evacuated from Yan'an, moving first to Houpingou, and then on 28 March to Taihang District. On 30 March 1947, Handan took over broadcasting from Shaanbei, and in May, after a CCP victory, the broadcast studio was moved to Pingshan 平山, Hebei. Finally, on 2 February 1949, Xinhua Beijing went on the air for the first time, and in March, its headquarters moved formally to Beijing. In fact, this diffuse network remained so until early 1949 as the staff of several Xinhua Guangbo diantai all converged on the city following KMT defeat, each expecting

out a voice, it could only be heard, and not always retransmitted, by outlying stations in the network, like Chen Hongsheng's, some 1,300km away in Qiqihar. Even when retransmission was possible, the three hours of night-time broadcast from XNCR left the majority of the day and evening to be filled with the voices of on-site announcers. In this diffuse centralized model, there was substantial room, and indeed necessity, for branch stations to improvise, both in content and broadcast style.

Such centrifugal forces were enhanced by the fact that as each new outlying station was established, its operators and announcers relied on both equipment and broadcasting practices that had been inherited from either Nationalist or Japanese broadcasters. Challenging any unification across CCP broadcasting practices, those sent to establish new stations often had limited, even zero, broadcasting experience, coming instead from newspaper or theatrical backgrounds but called upon to master the technical and operational challenges of radio within a matter of days. Thus, as announcers filled the hours of programming outside the attempted nightly retransmission of central Xinhua broadcasts, they both catered to local audiences and drew on the broadcasting model of their ostensible enemies. Lin Ming (林明 n.d.), for example, was charged with taking over a station in Zhangjiakou (張家口) on 23 August 1945. His recollection of the takeover noted not only that technical knowledge, equipment, and even record collections were sourced from the previous Japanese operators, but that he drew inspiration for the broadcast schedule and programming from what he had heard of KMT broadcasts.⁸¹ Finally, in areas, such as Dalian, where the audience was constituted of a mix of CCP supporters and the general public, attention needed to be paid not only to political message, but also to attracting listeners through entertainment.⁸²

My own limitations of space and time prohibit a station-by-station account of early CCP local broadcasting culture, but what we can see from the Zhangjiakou example is that throughout the 1940s, the CCP centre and its drifting broadcasting headquarters dictated content, form, and style in only a limited sense. This scattered network made any goals of a unified Xinhua broadcast style and singular Party voice difficult to maintain. Needless to say, it presented an even more formidable obstacle to a unified emotional reception of Party broadcasts. Ol'ga Kuptsova has described the challenge for eighteenth-century Russian theatre practitioners of divergent emotional reactions across multiple performances of the same theatrical play. At one performance the audience would sob, in another laugh, or have no visible or audible reaction at all. Kuptsova notes that it took the broad dissemination of the prescriptive writings of Nikolai Gogol and Vissarion Belinskii to unify the emotional response of audiences on a normative plane.⁸³ It was not until the 1950s that the CCP would begin to circulate texts, couched in the genre of reportage, that would delineate the appropriate

to establish the Beijing branch of Xinhua broadcast. See Yang Zhaobi 杨兆辟, 'Cong Yan'an dao Beiping' 从延安到北平, in *Zhongguo renmin guangbo huiyili*, pp. 79–93.

⁸¹Lin Ming 林明, 'Ji Zhangjiakou xinhua guangbo diantai de dansheng' 记张家口新华广播电台的诞生, in *Zhangjiakou wenshi ziliao* 张家口文史资料 (Zhangjiakou: Zhangjiakou zhengxiwenshi ziliao yanjiu weiyuanhui, 1985), pp. 122–130.

⁸²See, for example, Kang Mingzhuang 康敏庄, 'Xuexi zhangwo yu yunyong guangbo gongju' 学习掌握和运用广播工具, in *Dalian guangbo huiyili* 大连广播回忆录 (Dalian: Dalian renmin guangbo chubanshe, 1986), pp. 3–20, here p. 11.

⁸³Plamper et al., 'The History of Emotions', p. 287.

emotional response to key political broadcasts.⁸⁴ Through the 1940s, any unified emotional response to radio broadcasting across diverse cultural and linguistic territory presented a major challenge for a Party so intent on the mobilization of emotions.

This diffuse network forecloses on the idea of the CCP radio as a transparent system for the replication of revolutionary emotion from the Party centre outwards. In the 1940s the CCP simply did not have the human or technological resources to install such a system. What the Party did have, however, was an emotional practice developed at Yan'an, the organizational capacity to expand that practice to outlying stations, and a jerry-rigged radio network capable of transmitting a model voice, if not reliably to all radio listeners, then to the expanding circle of announcers who populated the network. In this manner, throughout the 1940s, the CCP developed a broadcast network of emotional propagation in which a central but migratory node emitted signals that were quasi-regularly received, and less reliably retransmitted by an unevenly expanding wave of outlying stations stretching from Jinan in Shandong to Jiamusi in Heilongjiang. Each of these stations in turn also created its own local content through the voices of its own announcers. In doing so, the CCP relied on the discovery, management, and performance of emotion by individual announcers at each outlying node, in productive tension with the small group practices developed at Yan'an and relayed throughout the CCP organization. As at Yan'an, it was the emphasis on the individual subjective rather than its erasure that powered the expansion of emotional commitment to the Revolutionary cause and to the CCP regime. And as at Yan'an, a cellular approach centred around the subjective and the voluntary as well as the socially normative proved remarkably effective. Indeed, while technical limitations necessitated this broadcasting model, and Xinhua broadcast leaders such as Mei Yi would no doubt have preferred to have a single voice relayed at maximum clarity, power, and uniformity out of Yan'an, it nonetheless ensured that in each locality, listeners would hear local voices, intoning and engaging with the texts of the Chinese Revolution.

Do as I sound. The announcer as model and guide

Of course, absolute regionalization, whatever its advantages for local appeal, was not coherent with CCP goals for national unity. So how did the emergent Xinhua broadcast network avoid a diffusion into divergent emotional expression of the same Party texts? As Chen Hongsheng recalls, not only did Xinhua's central station broadcast valuable information (domestic and foreign news, CCP Central Committee decisions, updates from the frontline of the war), it also broadcast the art of broadcast—a style to learn and follow and a model voice that offered audible clues for how ideology from above could meet subjectivity within. As Chen noted, his process of finding voice for 'Comment on War Criminals Suing for Peace' was not only influenced by his peers at the station in Qiqihar, but by the disembodied voice of Qi Yue. With his voice, Qi Yue modelled this sentiment for Chen, and Chen in turn modelled it for other broadcasters, and finally for the broader radio audience. Vocal modelling and mimicry were in evidence across the early Xinhua broadcasting network. Xiao Feng (萧风), who was

⁸⁴ See, for example, 'Beijing sishi wan ren shou ting kongsu guangbo shikuang' 北京四十万人收听控告广播实况, *People's Daily*, 22 May 1951, p. 3.

charged with establishing the Handan Xinhua Radio Station (XGHT), from March 1947, recalls attempts to create a 'nationwide colloquial broadcast' by 'not only receiving the broadcast effect of the original Shaanxi station, but also to resemble the original announcer's emotion, accent, and tone'.⁸⁵ Such modelling was of course already present at Yan'an in the person of the informal small group leader and in activists who spoke at enlarged meetings, but radio allowed the Party to take this model, disembodied, and relay it through the skies of KMT-controlled areas, across the vast regions of geographically volatile but ever expanding CCP control. Such modelling, then, created a consistent emotional fingerprint to early Xinhua broadcasts, ensuring that the Yan'an model of individual and collective engagement with the 'spirit of the document' would not, once applied across disparate stations and through a diverse range of accents and educational backgrounds of its announcers, devolve into widely divergent emotional readings of key texts.

Waves of feeling

The emotional practice of announcers such as Chen Hongsheng has shown us that Xinhua announcers found emotional commitment and expression through a comingling of reasoned introspection and social discipline. For announcers such as Chen Hongsheng, reason played a major role in their emotional response to, and expression of, revolutionary texts. This brings the emotional world of the Chinese revolution into closer relation with recent research on the history of emotions in which individual subjectivity and agency are seen as essential in the creation of shared emotions. It also brings the Chinese case into conversation with its Soviet counterpart, in which, according to Jochen Hellbeck:

in activating the individual, ideology itself comes to life. Ideology should therefore be seen as a living and adaptive force; it has power only to the extent that it operates in living persons who engage their selves and the world as ideological subjects.⁸⁶

The announcer, as we have seen, makes precisely such engagement with CCP ideology. They represent a model of emotional engagement not as a corporal part of the reactive masses, but as a reasoning and introspective individual embedded within a social context that both constrains them and which they simultaneously help to create. It is a model of individual-Party emotional relations that remains operative in the all-important periods and spaces between and away from the mass campaign. Individual introspection and social discipline were omnipresent sparring partners throughout the Mao era, as indeed they are, in various states of balance, in any society. This aligns with William Reddy's observation that 'emotional suffering' and emotional freedom'

⁸⁵Xiao Feng 萧风, 'Hong bo chuan zhenli—ji handan xinhua guangbo diantai' 红波传真理—记邯郸新华广播电台, in *Handan xinhua guangbo diantai huiyili* 邯郸新华广播电台回忆录 (Shizhuang shi: Hebei Sheng guang bo dian shi ting shi zhi bian wei hui, 1988), p. 10.

⁸⁶Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 13.

are not by necessity in opposition,⁸⁷ and that emotional freedom under authoritarian regimes could in fact be greater than for certain groups in contemporaneous liberal democratic societies.⁸⁸

Tracing this emotional practice, along with its emphasis on the 'spirit' of a text, back to Rectification at Yan'an and then onwards beyond 1949, reveals that it was not unique to Xinhua announcers, but represents a consistent mode of emotional engagement by those within CCP ranks. This mode was not one in which old emotional bonds were broken, or in which emotions were 'stirred up' by external impulse in order to disrupt or overturn extant social orders. Rather, it served to maintain, deepen, and propagate emotional connection within the rapidly growing community that was the CCP. While it had its origins in the often-coercive Rectification campaign, the emphasis on introspection and reason in tension with social reinforcement exhibited milder iterations both in the person of the broadcaster and throughout the Mao era. We can see examples such as the artist Liu Chunhua, who painted the now famous *Chairman Mao Goes to Anyuan* (毛主席去安源), and described in an interview the subjective, reasoned, and socially tested process by which he imagined, planned, and executed what would become a central image of Maoist propaganda.⁸⁹ This mode of emotional practice, constructive rather than disruptive, would be increasingly important for the CCP as it left behind the mass campaign as its key medium for the engagement of emotion.

The import of the emotional practice of the announcer, however, lies not only in representing an important alternative strain of CCP emotional practice, but in revealing the interaction between the advent of a new media and extant CCP emotion work. Announcers such as Chen Hongsheng not only inherited the emotional practices of Yan'an, they rendered them expandable to a potentially unlimited and eventually national scale. The scaling-up of a subjective and emotional commitment to the Revolution was, of course, an aspiration and a practice already in full swing at Yan'an. Prior to and through Rectification, the CCP developed a work-style built upon the expansion and reinforcement of subjective and emotional engagement through gatherings that gradually escalated in size from the 'small-group' (小組), to the Party branch (支部), to the enlarged meeting (大會).⁹⁰ It was in these expanded meetings that the emotional alchemy described by Elizabeth Perry took place as emotions were charged, released, and the affective power of a mass of people in tight proximity catalysed. But at the enlarged meeting of Yan'an lay too the terrestrial limits of CCP emotion work, as the reliance on the intimacy of physical gatherings, powerful as they were, could not be expanded beyond the perimeter of a single room or courtyard, let alone traverse great distance. Its expansion to the regional or national scale would require either the physical penetration of CCP forces in sufficient density (not achieved until

⁸⁷William M. Reddy, 'Emotional Liberty: Politics and History in the Anthropology of Emotions', *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 14, no. 2, 1999, pp. 256–288, here p. 273.

⁸⁸Plamper et al., 'The History of Emotions', p. 244.

⁸⁹Zheng Shengtian, 'Chairman Mao Goes to Anyuan. A Conversation with the Artist Liu Chunhua', in *Art and China's Cultural Revolution*, (eds) Melissa Chiu and Zheng Shengtian (New York: Asia Society, Yale University Press, 2008), pp. 118–132. Many thanks to Oliver Moore for bringing this example to my attention.

⁹⁰Gao Hua, Stacy Mosher and Jian Guo, *How Did the Red Sun Rise?: The Origin and Development of the Yan'an Rectification Movement, 1930–1945* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2018), p. 466.

after 1949), or the technological means by which the emotional practice of Yan'an could be transmitted across space. Similar meetings could and did occur at other base areas, but prior to widespread social penetration, such meetings remained atomized rather than regional or national events.

Radio, however, allowed the emotional practice of Yan'an, through the announcer's engagement and personal expression of revolutionary texts, to be relayed outside the walls of the expanded meeting, across and even beyond CCP territory. In this, both the potential and the technical limitations of radio were factors. The CCP adapted to the new media with the instruction throughout the expanding Xinhua broadcast network that announcers deliver performances that were 'full of emotion', coupled with the establishment, at every station, of the small-group practices of introspective and collective engagement with a text. These adaptations of extant Party practice enabled the CCP to radically enlarge its modular method of creating subjective and emotional commitment to the revolutionary cause. Rather than a top-down regime in which prescribed sets of emotions were relayed from the Party centre downwards or outwards, the Xinhua broadcasting network of the 1940s expanded a reasoning, subjective, and focused model of emotional management developed at Yan'an in which the injection of voluntary and agentful emotional commitment in each cellular unit, in constructive tension with the discipline of that unit, served as the generative source for an emergent emotional style. The CCP announcer provided not simply the 'mouthpiece' (喉舌) of the Party, but acted as the embodied and vocalized representation of the act of Revolutionary commitment. Through the expanding network of Xinhua stations, the announcer could carry out the combination of introspective and collective practice developed at Yan'an, exploring and testing their own way to an emotional connection and expression of a key text while listening to vocal models such as Qi Yue. Then, leaning into the microphone, they relayed the results of this process to other announcers and potentially unlimited listeners, while preserving the tight vocal intimacy of the small group at Yan'an.⁹¹ The potential of radio, then, freed the CCP to expand from proximal to distant emotional engagement, a challenge that faced all burgeoning national states.

Post-1949, the tension and balance between local modulation and a centrally projected model voice enabled the CCP to expand both its broadcasting network and its emotion work to the national scale, despite the ongoing limitations of broadcasting equipment and personnel. From December 1950, internal broadcast circulars such as *Guangbo Tongbao* institutionalized the three-stage system deployed by Chen Hongshen and others and circulated it nationally.⁹² With the expansion of the national broadcast network from 1951, further outer nodes were added through the establishment of provincial and local radio stations, and the deployment of in-situ 'radio operators',

⁹¹Such a focus on the announcer as both agent and subject of emotion work departs from that of the KMT, whose contemporaneous ideal announcer was tightly focused on the impact of their broadcast on their audience, with little concern for their own emotional commitment or transformation. Contemporaneous KMT publications on broadcasting stressed only the emotions of the radio audience, with instructions for the announcer concerning technique but never how they might feel or respond to a given text. See, for example, 星芒 Xing Mang, 'Lixiang zhong de boyin yuan' 理想中的播音員, *Guangbo zhoubao* 廣播週報, 29 September 1946. Many thanks to Wei Lei for this source.

⁹²*Guangbo tongbao*, di ershiqi qi 廣播通報, 第二十七期 (Guangbo shiye ju, December 1950), p. 45.

who tuned into Xinhua broadcasts, grasped their ‘spirit’, and relayed this spirit in their own voices to villagers who lacked access to radio receivers.⁹³ Ostensibly outer nodes in the propagation of revolutionary ideology, such radio operators, like announcers, functioned also to inject and relay their own emotional commitment to the revolution.⁹⁴ As the network expanded to a national scale, this broadcast culture ensured that far from attenuating the expansion of emotional engagement with the Party’s cause, the technical limitations of CCP radio, as they had in the 1940s, forged a radial network of broadcasters who injected and recharged political texts with personal emotion at every node, no matter how far from Beijing. To maintain consistency, however, we see indications in internal circulars such as *Broadcast Trends* (广播动态) that local stations should follow provincial stations, including the directive to emulate their vocal performances that were ‘full of emotion’.⁹⁵ The announcer, therefore, like all nodes in CCP propaganda and mobilization, exhibits what Liu Yajuan calls the ‘double role of receiving as well as exerting influence’,⁹⁶ both subject to and active in the creation of any collective emotional style or community. And as they had in the 1940s, central models created a consistent emotional fingerprint for Xinhua broadcasts, ensuring that the Yan’an model of individual and collective engagement with the ‘spirit of the document’ would not, once applied across disparate stations and through a diverse range of accents and educational backgrounds of its announcers, create wildly divergent emotional readings of political texts. Such a network, mimicking Huygens’ expanding wavefronts and wavelets and combining centrifugal and centripetal forces, meant both a base tone of model voices like Qi Yue’s and regional variations on that tone like Chen Hongsheng’s. To listeners across the PRC the voice of Xinhua was heard as both centrally conceived and locally borne—at once at the centre and the periphery of the revolutionary wave.

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⁹³For discussion, see Yu Wang, ‘Listening to the State: Radio and the Technopolitics of Sound in Mao’s China’, PhD thesis, University of Toronto, 2019, pp. 17–47.

⁹⁴We can see the modelling of this sort of behaviour in publications such as Qu Yankun 曲延坤, *Shouyinyuan xiaowang xia xiangji* 收音員小王下鄉記 (Jinan: Shandong renmin chubanshe, 1954).

⁹⁵Gansu guangbo shiye yuejin guihua’ 甘肃广播事業躍進規劃, in *Guangbo dongtai*, 8 April 1958.

⁹⁶Liu Yajuan 劉亞娟, “‘Zhang shunyou Shijian’: yige dianxing de “shu dianxing” ge an’ 张顺有事件」: 一个典型的「树典型」个案, *Zhongyang yanjiu yuan jindai shi yanjiu suo jikan* 中央研究院近代史研究所集刊, 第84期, 2013, pp. 159–200.