

## Abstract PhD project: Mittler, Barbara

### **Pop and Propaganda**

When and why does propaganda go popular? What are the motives behind the renewal of the Mao Cult since the 1990s? Why does a tragic moment in Chinese history such as the Cultural Revolution become the background for "Nostalgia restaurants" and theme parks?

In a study that deals with the continuities of different manifestations of cultural revolution culture with the popular and the high culture before and after the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, making use of, on the one hand, close readings, and, on the other hand, qualitative interviews, these questions which are crucial to an understanding of contemporary China, are addressed.

### **New Woman**

Women's magazines can be attributed with having formed a powerful image: the so-called New Woman (xin nǚxing) who came into prominence in the first decade of the twentieth century. My study involves readings of women's magazines and newspaper advertising from the beginnings to the present day and illustrates that the portrayal of this woman is characterized by blatant ambiguities: she represented an ideal to be defined and constantly redefined but there are also interesting parallels between new women in the early period and around the turn to the 21st century. The new woman is always the obvious product of a new age but she also retains many qualities of another, older age, not quite gone by. In all her ambiguities, she is a telltale sign illustrating competing models for the enactment of feminine selfhood.

As modernity and now post-modernity became spiritual adventures for China, this New Woman became its most powerful symbol. She stood for all that was weak and "wrong with China" and at the same time, was seen as the locus of change, the embodiment of what "(post-)modernity" could mean for China. Accordingly, women's magazines which played a pivotal part in creating the New Woman, are important sources for the social and cultural developments in early modern China.

### **Research Interests**

- New Chinese Music
- Cultural Politics in the People's Republic of China, Taiwan and colonial Hong Kong
- Propaganda Cultures
- Literary and cultural theory
- Media Studies
- Gender Studies
- For more information go to my [homepage](#)